



EDITORIAL NOTE

Grim perspectives for Brazilian periodicals

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Tough times lie ahead. This is the general feeling on almost everyone's mind. That Covid-19 would turn into a world-crisis (e.g., Martelli Júnior et al. 2020), with devastating effects that go beyond the economy (e.g., Droit-Volet et al. 2020), was quite clear right from the start. Now, a year after the World Health Organization characterized Covid-19 as a pandemic, the situation is far from being resolved, despite the arrival of vaccines that offer the possibility to immunize the population - faster in some countries than in others.

As one can imagine, the publication system was also impacted. Thousands of articles have been published and several special issues dedicated to the coronavirus disease 2019 were organized (e.g., Souza et al. 2021). Some governments have poured resources into science, trying to understand the SARS-CoV-2 virus and how to manage the pandemic, and there was - and still is - great concern regarding how the information circulates (e.g., Garrett 2020). But not in Brazil, where lack of funding is negatively affecting science in numerous ways (e.g., Oliveira et al. 2020). In addition, it appears that scientific journals published in the country are at the end of the line of priorities...

That the life of editors of journals published in South America, particularly in Brazil, was

getting harder in the last decade is not a secret. Increased competition for good papers with international journals, particularly those issued in Europe and United States of America (e.g., Brandão et al. 2017), greater asymmetry between resources and funding (e.g., Salager-Meyer 2008), and predatory journals (e.g., Memon 2019) are some of the setbacks. All these adversities impact the manuscripts and bibliometric indices of a periodical, which can vary depending on the scientific field (e.g., Kellner 2020). Especially the limitation of funding in the face of general myopia in relation to the basic needs for the improvement of Brazilian and perhaps other South American periodicals is a trend that has started long before the pandemic.

As has been pointed out several times before, a minimum of predictability is needed to provide stability to the publication system. And funding is the key aspect for this. Proposals to extend grants for a minimum of three years have been suggested (Kellner 2017) but were never implemented despite public discussion. To make matters worse, in 2020 there was no call from the Brazilian government funding agencies to provide financial support for periodicals. Such calls are essential to the publication system in the country and their lack means that in 2021 each journal is on its own.

The 2019 Journal Citation Reports (JCR) lists 122 periodicals published in Brazil, of which 55 have an Impact factor (IF) equal to or greater than one. A brief survey of this last set shows that about half (27) charge authors for publication, usually after the article is accepted. So far, the Annals of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (AABC) is avoiding taking this step for a number of reasons, but it is not sure for how long this policy can continue. Asking authors to subsidize publication costs may be the future of all journals, as long as they survive these harsh times, because even after making the decision to implement publication fees, this measure will only show concrete results about a year later. Every journal has a backlog of manuscripts accepted for publication or being evaluated and, therefore, editors are morally obligated to the author not to apply conditions that were not in force when the manuscript was received - particularly in relation to fees. In the case of the AABC, a survey carried out from the beginning of this year until March 16th shows that there are 376 accepted manuscripts and 397 under evaluation (several submitted in the year before), in addition to the 204 already published or with designated issues. Letters and editorials not included. Considering that last year the AABC has published 350 articles, one can get a feeling on the scale of the problem. Without financial support, this periodical, which is the oldest of continuous circulation of the country, cannot increase the staff to allow the publication of more articles.

Furthermore, whether and how much a journal charges for publication might also be a factor that authors consider in the decision-making process to which periodical they will submit the result of their research. It remains to be seen if the scientific community, especially in developing countries such as Brazil, which already faces severe limitations in carrying

out research, will find room for these extra costs. One way or another, solutions must be discussed by the relevant stakeholders (e.g., scientific institutions, funding agencies, editors, scientific societies) to avoid the collapse of the publication system that lies ahead of us - at least in Brazil.

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