


The publication of Humanities and Social Sciences journals in the techno-scientific and information age

Ricardo Mendes Antas Jr.

Universidade de São Paulo. Faculdade de
Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas.
São Paulo. São Paulo. Brasil

ricardomendes@usp.br

 0000-0001-8393-0964

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The publication of Humanities and Social Sciences journals in the techno-scientific and information age

Geosp Journal: space and time has experienced different moments throughout its 26 years of existence. When it was launched in 1997, publication in journals were very important; however, differently from the present moment, when this type of publication is at the top of the measurement and qualification of the academic production of researchers. The metrics until the mid-1990s for researchers in the academic universe were different, more qualitative, and the “impact” of the publications was not mathematically measured. Nevertheless, this did not apply to the business world journals, as demonstrated by the detailed study by DuBois & Reeb in 2000. Such publications (and measurements) have probably affected the universe of scientific knowledge dissemination.

Until the mid-2000s, most scientific publications were printed, which imposed on the editor some inherent specificities and difficulties, such as the more time-consuming work, the average time with which most articles were published, smaller quantities of articles per issue, the difficult access to these publications... and the accumulation of hundreds of paper volumes in some warehouse for years, due to lack of transportation to the places of greatest interest.

In fact, the moment we are currently going through has few parallels with the past of publications in specialized journals. As all the activity of researchers, including those in formation, began to be measured by the publication of articles in journals with greater or lesser indexing, we have been witnessing a new logic for the dissemination of academic production. Since the creation of electronic databases, the publication of articles in digital media has grown exponentially and production metrics began to define the qualification of the academic professionals, justifying their career achievements or even allowing them to join an educational and research institution, especially the public ones as in the case of Brazil.

This process made us aware of the segmentation of an “emerging market” of publications in digital databases of journals, some of them giant private global publishers, others coming from public institutions, but paid - and very well paid - as Dorfman has already pointed out, mentioning the “Plan S”, aimed at stimulating public science within the European Research Council:

Despite aimed at public science, Plan S establishes the payment of fees. What fees? Fees paid by authors to publish and by readers to access articles, remunerating editorial services. And how much does it cost to publish? An extreme example is the prestigious journal *Nature*, which priced the open access to an article at € 9,500, more than R\$ 50,000. (DORFMAN, 2022, p. 2.)

However, it is important to consider that the importance of this type of publication varies from area to area of knowledge. In the medical and biological sciences, they are of the utmost

importance and serve as a measure of the quality of the researcher in a more objective way than in the social sciences and humanities. This is also valid for other so-called “hard” sciences and applied sciences, such as law or economics and their ramifications.

In the Social Sciences, in general, publications always have the commitment and the obligation to bring more complete approaches and rarely present only occasional results of a research or “laboratory test” as it is possible to verify in medicine, for example, where an article can be divided among 7, 8 or more authors, for a three-page text and with minimalist writing. This becomes a big problem when these specific productions become the evaluation parameter, for example, in a university that gathers a great diversity of professionals and areas, and the evaluation/measurement does not differentiate between the contents or the type of effort involved in the articles from each area of knowledge when it comes to qualifying its researchers. It does not mean that one is easier than the other, but rather that a research project in one area may yield 20 articles involving 40 researchers and, in another area, an equally financed and promising project may yield 4 articles for few or only one researcher.

These are some implications regarding the production of articles in digital journals at the center of the scientific production arena, in any area of knowledge indistinctly. But I would like to draw attention to other aspects that concern scientific publications in humanities and social sciences in Brazil

The production of knowledge and its documentation and registration began to gain an unprecedented volume particularly with its convergence with information technologies and the conformation of a new historical moment, the technical-scientific and information age, as defined by Milton Santos (1994). Thus, the large publishers of this specific segment quickly came to configure a global scenario of scientific publications, such as Elsevier, which owns Scopus and Science Direct among others (and which in turn belongs to the RELX Group corporation), Pearson, MEDLINE and its PubMed, Taylor & Francis and Routledge, Thomson Reuters, JSTOR, Springer Nature, Oxford University Press, to name a few from the Global 50 Ranking of the International Publishing Industry 2021, whose value ranges from 1 to 6 billion dollars (WISCHENBART; FLEISCHHACKER, 2021) - noting that some of these names are institutions or companies of public origin and that some private labels operate in a broad spectrum of publications

Some of these brands hold a wide range of journal titles, some owned by them and others hosted on their platforms and with access through different forms of payment, including subscriptions of universities to their databases. In any case, it always involves large sums of money, particularly for researchers and third world institutions.

This is where the Brazilian specificity in the production of this field comes in. In Brazil, the use of the open-source platform “Open Journal System - OJS” has been disseminated throughout the country and in different areas of knowledge; however, it is in the social sciences and humanities that it has been more widely adopted. And, in the case of geography, it is where the rates are highest, with estimates of 90% or more of the journals currently in operation. We also have an initiative of the utmost importance that is Scielo (Scientific Electronic Library Online), in which Geousp is honored to participate, and that has in Redalyc (Red de Revistas

Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal) a parallel Mexican initiative that seeks to give greater insertion and visibility to scientific production in Latin America. These are the largest databases of journals dedicated to disseminating the knowledge produced in Portuguese and Spanish.

Something to regret in the specificity of the dissemination of Brazilian scientific production is that journals that use only the OJS platform cannot receive funding from CNPq, the largest funder in the country, even if they are classified at the top of Qualis/CAPES. Before there was the compensation that, at least, journals indexed in Scielo could plead for funding, but now, it is necessary to be also in Scopus, PubMed or other large foreign journals like those mentioned. However, it is still possible to be indexed in Scielo and Redalyc, together, and apply for public funding in CNPq's edicts. Nevertheless, the question remains: until when will the large ones of this global market not be a *sine qua non* condition for the financing of Brazilian journals?

Finally, a last consideration to be made about scientific publishing in Brazil is the alienation of part of the academic community about how a specialized journal is made in the technical scientific and informational period (SANTOS, 1994). Despite the fact that such production has become the center of measurements and "success" of academic research careers, most of those who decide how a journal should operate, or who simply act as faculty researchers not involved in the production of a scientific journal, are unaware of the reality of the heroic journal editors present in thousands of departments, faculties and graduate programs throughout the country, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, as these do not have the same form of institutional incentive as the other areas of knowledge. And it seems to us that this fact is closely related to the internationalization policies of Brazilian universities, because how can one publish in countries that do not accept social theories that do not adhere to the explanations of the realities of the first world?

Therefore, the production of a periodical nowadays is reduced to the thought that it consists in receiving a text from a colleague, gathering a minimum number of collaborations and sending it to the printer, printing it, and distributing it. This process disappeared decades ago; however, for those not involved, this is what it entails. It is not considered that some periodicals a hundred of submissions a year, while others do not receive enough publications for an issue; the need for professionals to work as editors of specific articles is ignored; the arduous task of finding quality reviewers for each theme and sub-area of the texts submitted for evaluation is not even imagined...

The result is a great paradox installed in the Brazilian scientific dissemination and in Latin American countries in general. The publication of articles is very expressive, because it is always necessary to publish, from the undergraduate student to the full professor at the apex of his career; however, the task of the journal continues to be unknown, despised and hindered. The fact that most of the scientific knowledge produced in Brazil, of great quality, originates from public institutions seems to be ignored. There is a lack of incentives from all sides, and not only because of the lack of state funding for well qualified journals.

Simple incentives, almost normative, such as valuing the faculty members who themselves edit the periodicals, participating in forums, searching for resources, elaborating formulas to

maintain the normal functioning of a journal - as is the case of the “conquest” of a permanent editorial board, are also ignored. Furthermore, it is also necessary to encourage those who promote the quality of each article and, therefore, of each journal: the reviewers. We say “almost normative incentives” because, as an editor of the *Geosp* journal, I noticed - together with several other editors in the social sciences - the lack of a policy to encourage the practice of peer review. And this policy could start by valuing the professionals who accept to collaborate, since it is a fundamental step in the production of the article that, in fact, will feed the metrics of each researcher, of each university professor. Rather than the absence of financial compensation, it is the lack of institutional recognition from the academic community that will make the professional decline to issue an opinion.

As a result, as widely discussed in a humanities forum promoted by Scielo in 2021, this *metier* of journal publications has been facing a crisis, since the number of reviewers willing to read articles and offer a lengthy and careful appreciation, without which the quality of the publication is compromised, is decreasing. And, of course, between the editor-in-chief and the *ad hoc* reviewer there is a series of other tasks performed by professionals, teacher-researchers, equally ignored despite being fundamental pieces in this academic division of scientific work.

Unfortunately, the solutions available are still inspired by very distant realities, those of countries that have greater resources (financial, technical and organizational), which propose, for example, the adoption of the so-called Open Science (see, for example, MARTINS, 2020) that may even present interesting paths, but require more financial and human resources, which would mean excluding more than 50% of the journals currently operating in Brazil if made mandatory in each of the items that compose it. It is necessary that we turn more to our specificities to try to encourage and foster initiatives from the public teaching and research institutions, trying to strengthen them rather than discouraging them.

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editor, widely recognized by the authors, and from whom I have learned a lot about publishing and about our mother tongue.

I sincerely wish a happy journey in this world of Geography publishing to Professor Paula C. Strina Juliasz, who from now on takes on the role of Geousp's editor

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