

A time of changes

Tiempo de cambios

BEYOND BORDERS: THE CONTEXTS OF THE EPITEXT

Editorial work is the result of a conversation among many actors. Editors, authors, peer reviewers, readers, as well as the organizations that evaluate journals, the entities that develop regulatory frameworks and the indexing services converge on the same stage. This conversation should be a consensus based in bi-directionality and symmetry; this is the path we are proposing to follow.

As Pedro Urra González highlights, "much of what we receive comes to us recycled" (a), even the ways of understanding our own editorial work in Latin America. It is no accident that, in many countries in the region, economic and political processes have prevented the sustained growth of scientific editorial work, leading to periods of consolidation followed by periods of fragmentation. In Argentina, the "*Noche de los Bastones Largos*" or "Night of the Long Batons" (b), in 1966, was just the beginning of a dismemberment that continued for decades. These disruptions and discontinuities hampered the development of consensually produced practices and the accumulation of experiences that could lead to the transmission of consolidated editorial knowledge. In view of this instability, the efforts of editors and scientific publishing houses were limited to ensuring that their products could survive the economic and political fluctuations; the resulting isolation of each editorial process provided scant opportunities to problematize and reflect upon the development of editorial work in the specific contexts of our countries.

The current challenge is to unite those isolated efforts in order to develop values, criteria and concepts that contemplate the situation of editorial work in Latin America and the Caribbean within the health sciences and the social sciences. This initiative arises in the context of the Technical Cooperation between Countries, "Development of editorial processes in health sciences" (c) a Cuban-Argentine project that includes participation on the part of Cuba from the journal *Revista Cubana de Salud Pública* and several scientific journals of Editorial Ciencias Médicas (ECIMED), as well as *Salud Colectiva* on the part of Argentina.

In different meetings that took place in Buenos Aires and Havana, several problematic issues faced by the editorial process in our countries were analyzed. In the last several years, the proliferation of repositories, institutional websites and diverse electronic publication formats have distorted criteria traditionally respected both by authors and editors, which compels us to expressly redefine what is meant by unpublished material and redundant or secondary publication, as well as the relevance these concepts have for primary sources. Moreover, the pressure to publish has incited practices such as parallel submission to more than one journal, the segmentation of results or the adoption of unclear authorship criteria. These practices, which in many cases are the result of lack of information or misinformation, merit continued discussions among all those involved.

These are some of the issues which, along with our Cuban colleagues, we have included in an agenda for discussion and upon which we hope to progress joined by other editors in the region.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS: THE CONTEXTS OF THE PERITEXT

In our own editorial process we have made some changes that seek to respond to these new needs. In order to unify criteria, we dedicated ourselves to writing a new guide for authors in which we incorporated some definitions that serve as a basis for the discussion and the creating of consensus around meanings and practices. We especially wish to thank María Cecilia de Souza Minayo, Scientific Editor of *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, for her collaboration, generosity and warmth throughout this process. The new extended guide is already available online in our institutional Website (d) and we believe that it will be a valuable contribution both to authors and peer reviewers.

Given the increase in the number of articles received, this year we have incorporated new associate editors that will both participate in the pre-evaluation of the articles submitted (e) and follow the peer review process for each thematic field. In 2010, 40% of the articles rejected in the pre-evaluation stage had already been published in print or electronic media at the time of submission. In this stage, it is impossible to detect duplicate submissions, which in some cases were spotted later on by the peer reviewers and, in other cases, before the article's publication. We consider the condition of unpublished as essential for an efficient use of resources and to avoid the unnecessary duplication of content that could be accessed by other means.

In order to maintain the transparency of the external evaluation processes, the journal annually rotates part of the membership of the Advisory Council. As this year we have more peer reviewers, we welcome the new members who have joined us in 2011 (f) and express our thanks for the important job performed by the outgoing peer reviewers, acknowledging their time and the valuable opinions about the texts that they have offered.

Needless to say, we thank everyone who has in any way offered their cooperation; without them this growth would not have been possible.

We look forward to your continued involvement and participation.

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END NOTES

a. In a dialogue published in this issue under the title: "Information Systems in Health: A conversation with Pedro Urra González."

b. On the night of July 29th 1966, the federal police forced their way into five faculties of the Universidad de Buenos Aires and forcibly removed the students and professors who were

occupying the university premises. They were protesting against the decision of Juan Carlos Onganía's military government to take control of the universities and revoke the regime of the 1918 university reform, which established the political autonomy of the university through a tripartite government of students, professors and graduates. In the following months, hundreds of professors were fired, resigned their positions, or left the country.

c. The project was developed during 2010 with the support of Pan American Health Organization and the Cuban Ministry of Health.

d. Due to its length, the new guide will only be available on the journal's website and may be consulted at: <http://www.unla.edu.ar/public/saludColectivaNuevo/guia.php>. [The guide is available in English from the journal's English website: <http://www.unla.edu.ar/public/saludColectivaNuevo/index.php?eng=1>]

e. The purpose of the pre-evaluation stage is to verify that the works presented are unpublished and that they comply with basic editorial criteria.

f. The complete and updated list is available at our institutional website: (<http://www.unla.edu.ar/public/saludColectivaNuevo/editorial.php>) and will soon be updated in SciELO Argentina.

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