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**S**cientific publication in Brazil today faces a number of difficulties which in part mirror the country's ongoing political and economic dilemmas. With few exceptions, the great majority of the more than 2,000 journals published in the country are going through recurrent problems due to shortage of funding or to the lack of good manuscripts to publish. These and other shortcomings delay publication schedules, making it even more difficult to obtain institutional funding or sufficient numbers of original manuscripts necessary for maintenance of the journal's regular publication schedule. As a result of this situation one can point to the small number of Brazilian journals indexed in international data bases, and the relatively high proportion of back issues in stock compared to the amount actually distributed. In addition, some authors and well established research groups feel that there is little encouragement to publish their manuscripts in Brazilian journals.

These and other issues were intensively debated during the Fourth Meeting of Scientific Editors promoted by the Brazilian Association of Scientific Editors (ABEC), which took place in Caxambu, Minas Gerais, November 26-29, 1992. The activities of the Meeting centered around eight round tables which dealt with central issues concerning scientific publishing in Brazil.

The communication of research results both to the academic community and to society in general was highlighted as one of the major goals to be achieved by scientific journals. These journals are also important in setting up reference standards for scientific research and in the evaluation of individual and institutional scientific production. In addition, scientific journals should play a key role in the preservation of *science memory* and in the dissemination of Brazilian scientific production beyond national frontiers.

In order to achieve these goals, it is of paramount importance to ensure the journal's scientific integrity. This is attained through careful evaluation of manuscripts by experts. The peer review process is essential in guaranteeing informed and prejudice-free

evaluation of manuscripts, imparting credibility to the journal and, in turn, to the articles published therein.

At the meeting, there was a consensus among participants that there should be no differences in the criteria used for the evaluation of *national* and *international* science. Brazilian journals must value originality and quality, since, by overlooking such premises, they run the risk of compromising not only their acceptance and credibility within the scientific community, but also the accurate memory of national science. These considerations highlight the responsibility which rests on editors and reviewers in the establishment of national journals as vehicles for rapid and wide circulation of accredited scientific information, both nationally and internationally. In addition, federal and state funding agencies have a strategic role to play in the provisioning of continued support for the efforts made by ABEC and the editorial boards of the many journals to ensure quality, regular publication and improvement of Brazilian scientific publications.

As well as supporting the production of journals, it is essential to ensure their distribution. The number of individual and institutional subscriptions to Brazilian journals is small, and is insufficient to cover production or distribution costs. In contrast, North American and European journals manage to cover most of their costs by means of subscriptions, especially those at institutional rates. However the reality of Brazilian libraries at higher educational and research centers are quite different. In recent years, the situation has become so critical that, with few exceptions, subscriptions to major foreign journals have been dropped, and the national titles still received are mostly donations from editors. Therefore, the official support to Brazilian scientific journals should not be limited to production costs, but ought also to ensure wide distribution through the national system of public libraries.

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