

Thirty years of *Ecología Austral*

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Today we found ourselves in the position of having to teach young researchers some procedures and dilemmas that we have naturalized, but let's face it, are not very honorable. To stay up-to-date and access critical scientific articles, they will need to visit a pirate website that regularly changes URLs to avoid legal pressure. To publish their results, they mostly have two options: journals that charge readers versus journals that charge authors. Furthermore, when submitting a manuscript to one of the former, they must prepare for the article to be rejected with a tempting invitation to transfer it to a "sister" journal of the latter group, which will publish it for hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Troubled, these young researchers will ask us who or what built this system. They will probably venture some working hypotheses. It was the multinational publishers. Maybe the big pharmaceutical companies. Perhaps some States trying to control the research agendas. After thinking about it, with regret we will have to confess: "It was us".

It will be good, then, to remember that there are not just two alternatives among scientific journals. Some journals do not charge readers nor authors. It is a very small and sometimes discredited group that struggles to attract authors who have good potential articles. However, whenever we have good articles, we feel attracted by the light of the journals that charge to read because they own prestige, sometimes very well earned. And when we are not lucky enough to combine ideas and data that are sufficiently original or relevant, we are attracted to journals that charge to publish, which with very few exceptions, manage to give a patina of false prestige with their camouflaged names. For those of us who work in countries with extremely limited resources to investigate, this second option is out of reach and, from the point of view of the functioning of the scientific system, incomprehensible.

Ecología Austral belongs to that small group of journals that do not charge for anything. It is sustained by the contribution of the members of the Argentine Ecological Society and the generous work of editors, reviewers, collaborators, and authors, who in turn are supported by their member institutions, such as universities and scientific and technical organizations, among others. The mere existence of this group of journals is living proof that the costs to read and the costs to publish are ridiculously inflated because the journals that do charge to read or publish are also supported by the same *generous work of editors, reviewers, collaborators, and authors, who in turn are supported by their member institutions, such as universities and scientific and technical organizations*. This paradox reveals that we are trapped. We inhabit a suboptimal peak of the adaptive landscape of scientific activity in relation to the publication system. We can see a much higher peak nearby, but we cannot or do not dare to go down to the valley and then reach it. We remain huddled in the low peak that provides quality control and prestige in a way so costly for everyone, beneficial for a few.

Ecología Austral celebrates its first 30 years of life with this special issue. This issue gathers a small sample of what Argentine Ecology can offer to the region and the world: quality science achieved with scarce means, but with a creative use of opportunities to advance knowledge. Our perspective and context allow us to cover a wide variety of topics with great implications for ecosystem management. As editors, we would like to greatly thank those who collaborated with articles, peer review, edition of each article, and administrative and editorial management. We also thank the members of the Argentine Ecological Society for their contribution in the form of a fee that does not give them any privilege other than the satisfaction of contributing to the cause. Finally, we apologize to the authors who were left out of the invitation, whom we

encourage to spontaneously contribute articles at any time.

Perhaps if we dare to descend from the suboptimal peak that we have been populating with our most precious publications and move towards journals such as *Ecología Austral*, which is exactly what the authors have done for this special issue, one day we will not have to introduce young researchers to dishonorable procedures and dilemmas.

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