

## Towards a new Acta Botanica Brasilica

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This year *Acta Botanica Brasilica* (ABB), the official journal of the Botanical Society of Brazil (SBB) is celebrating 25 years of publishing the first Brazilian botanical journal to be listed in the Journal of Citation Reports (JCR), with an impact factor (IF) from Thomson Reuters as of 2011. This recognition reflects the improved quality of articles published in the magazine over the years, a joint effort of various groups of successive editors and directors of SBB. The improved quality can be measured in terms of IF that increased from 0.116 in 2003 to 0.282 in 2008 (projections made by Scarano *et al.* 2009), and is now 0.368 according to JCR (29 June 2011). One important fact that increased ABB's IF is current online availability, which allows anyone with an internet connection access worldwide, and, if appropriate, citing the articles. The publication of more articles in English is also another important factor to increase citation potential of articles published in ABB.

Availability of online content and articles written in English improves the citation potential of articles published in any scientific journal. However, the most important factor, without a doubt, is the content of the articles. Articles that are overly descriptive or that have no connection to other areas of science beyond the expertise of the author/researcher tend to be cited less frequently than articles with interconnections between areas. Fewer citations per article affect the IF of the journal as a whole.

As the scope of ABB is broad, encompassing virtually all fields in Botany, the journal traditionally also publishes many works that deal with Biodiversity, including surveys of flora, revisions and other articles related to taxonomy. Traditionally, these kinds of works tend to be less cited when compared to other fields of Biology, and this fact has been widely discussed (see for example Krell 2002). Many times, however, the problem is not the taxonomy itself, but the low-coverage or regional nature of the article. The Impact Factor of floras and taxonomic studies are directly affected by the geographic ranges that are covered in these studies. A survey such as "Flora of X municipality", for example, can be useful to people that work in that area, but less important to other researchers. Even floras of Brazilian states can be seen as regional works. Likewise, low-coverage articles such as new occurrences of species for a certain Brazilian state

have little probability of being cited by other researchers, and publication should be avoided (especially now that these additions can be made on-line at the List of Flora of Brazil website). Actually, De Toni *et al.* (2009) suggest that the provision of more accurate discussions on morphology, ecology and/or evolution in floras, floristic surveys, or any area of Botany can be stimulated, increasing the interest in descriptive articles.

The examples cited above are familiar to an editor of phanerogams, where the geographic range of the study often affects the possibility of citation of an article. Some colleagues from the ABB Editorial Council, however, in their impressions of the content published, pointed out examples of articles with restricted content, in different areas of botany. The publication of low-coverage articles and/or with a narrow geographic range is in agreement with one of the problems noted by Scarano *et al.* (2009) in the ABB-profile study: the journal's reach is still mostly regional, that is, the subject of the articles many times is not broad enough to attract the interest of a wider audience, and remains restricted to an essentially domestic public. The use of the Portuguese language in many articles reinforces the domestic profile of ABB. Our editor-in-chief, Francisco de Assis dos Santos, at the Botanical Congress in Fortaleza in 2011, presented some astonishing (but not surprising) data: there are 386 articles from ABB on the ISI Web of Knowledge (data from July 2011), but 268 (69%) of these have no citations, not even self-citations. These facts have deeply affected ABB IF, still considered to be low for a 25-year old journal.

What should be done to increase ABB IF? Besides the use of English and availability of on-line content, the editorial board must be absolutely rigorous when evaluating articles, according to the scope of the journal, in an effort to choose those that are more interesting in terms of quality, originality and coverage and avoiding low-coverage/regional works. This task is never-ending, since the acceptance policy of the journal is revised from time to time: an article that would have been accepted a year ago would not necessarily be accepted today. Major scientific journals are constantly increasing the demand for broader discussions by the authors in their articles, which may be used by a wider range of professionals.

The publication of four issues quarterly and the subsequent increase in the number of pages published per year since 2002 in ABB, as stated by Ferreira (2011), should be commemorated as an opportunity for publication of more articles by SBB members. However, without a rigorous filter for article acceptance, ABB's IF may be negatively affected, as noted by Scarano *et al.* (2009). It would be preferable to publish fewer pages per year with potentially more citable articles than more pages, but with low-coverage, regional, less-citable articles. Of course, a more rigorous filter for article acceptance leads to a higher rejection rate, but this is the price to be paid to achieve a better journal for our Botanical Society. On the other hand, the acceptance of fewer, but more citable articles makes the publication of content faster.

## References

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*Acta Botanica Brasilica*, the first Brazilian botanical journal listed in Thomson Reuters and in the JCR international indexes, now has the opportunity to grow, to enlarge its audience and leave its regional/low-coverage profile behind, assuming a leading position as the official journal of a national Society of one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, whose flora is of interest to many researchers outside Brazil. A domestic profile is not adequate for ABB, as already pointed out by Scarano *et al.* (2009). There are many researchers in Brazil who have made excellent contributions in many fields of Botany that could send some of their best papers to ABB. But this will only happen if these authors begin perceive ABB as more rigorous in accepting manuscripts and faster in publishing the results of more-citable articles. Then, the journal will finally reflect the botanical science which is done in our country.