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**Scholarly community led open access in Latin America,  
looking for a shared vision with other developing regions**

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## Scholarly community led Open Access in Latin America

In Latin America, a region with 20 countries, 626 million inhabitants and two main languages (Spanish and Portuguese), research and research dissemination are mainly government-funded (national funds and international cooperation).

Scholarly publishing is in hands of universities and other research institutions, as well as scholarly and professional organizations, with no APC tradition (article processing charges) and not outsourced to commercial publishers. Journals are published in local languages (Spanish-Portuguese) with a limited number of articles in English.

Only a very small number of quality journals published in Latin America are included in WoS or Scopus, which are used to evaluate researchers and research institutions in the region. Local research output published in English in international journals lacks regional visibility and access for non-subscribers and people not reading English. Output published in local language, in local publications, lacks international visibility and access.

The lack of visibility and access to journals published in our region, plus the rising costs of subscriptions to international journals where our researchers is published, added to the opportunities provided by Internet and the Web, have all contributed to early adoption of open access in Latin America.

## Journals

In a region with strong tradition of regional cooperation for subject information systems<sup>1</sup>, two regional cooperative platforms managed by the scholarly community with public funds have started operations 15 years ago to provide peer-review journals published by universities and other scholarly institutions with a regional platform to ensure international visibility, open access and indicators for journals, their institutions and countries.

[SciELO-Scientific Electronic Library Online](#)<sup>2</sup>, a decentralized platform sponsored by FAPESP in Brazil with national focal points located in research councils and other scholarly organizations in 14 Iberoamerican countries, and also in South Africa, now provides open access to 1.249 peer-review journals (573.525 articles) and has recently signed an agreement with Thomson Reuters for a SciELO citation Index.

[REDALYC](#)<sup>3</sup>, operated by the Autonomous University of Mexico State (UAEM), provides international visibility and open access to 1.079 peer-review journals (458.851 full-text articles) from 16 Iberoamerican countries. Journals, institutions and countries receive scientometric and production reports. Authors can create their author webpage. Redalyc has signed and agreement with CLACSO for its 750 social science and humanities journal collection.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g.: health <<http://bvsalud.org/>>, agriculture <<http://www.sidalc.net/>>, social sciences  
<http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://scielo.org/php/index.php?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.redalyc.org/home.oa>

A [regional harvester of journal portals](#)<sup>4</sup> is managed by **Latindex**, an initiative of the National Autonomous University of Mexico-UNAM, and harvests metadata from SciELO, Redalyc and other Iberoamerican journal portals, providing users with a search engine in a collection of 1.508.122 full-text articles from Iberoamerican countries.

Also universities and institutions started managing their journals in open access in parallel to the printed version, or born digital journals. Nearly 3.000 academic journals from Latin America use the Open Journal System software (OJS/PKP), and several research intensive universities have OJS platforms to manage their own journal collections in open access, e.g. the [Autonomous University of Mexico](#), the [University of Sao Paulo](#), and the [University of Chile](#) are examples of this trend, with more than 100 journals each.

## **Repositories**

A more recent trend in Latin America are institutional repositories. Today 320 repositories are registered in OpenDOAR and main content types are thesis/dissertations and journal articles. Other contents include book and book chapters, reports and working papers, multimedia and audiovisual contents, conference papers, and learning objects. Research datasets are only starting to be present in very few repositories, this is why CLACSO is promoting open access to research data and has participated in the Accord “Open Data in a Big Data World” (ICSU, IAP, ISSC, TWAS)<sup>5</sup>

## **Open access policies and legislation**

Three countries in the region (Peru and Argentina<sup>6</sup> in 2013, and Mexico in 2014) have approved in Congress legislation that requires that publicly-funded research results be available in open access digital repositories. In Venezuela and Brazil the legislation proposal has been introduced in Congress but not yet approved.

At institutional level, in the region there are 41 open access institutional policies registered in ROARMAP, but these policies mainly recommend, more than mandate, open access to research results.

## **Strengths and weaknesses of open access in Latin America**

A summary of strengths:

- Tradition of regional cooperative information systems that contribute to build regional open access initiatives in decentralized business models sharing costs
- Scholarly-led publishing of journals and open access initiatives
- Government-funded scholarly communications and open access initiatives
- Open access journal platforms strengthen the quality of publications

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.latindex.ppl.unam.mx/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.icsu.org/science-international/accord>

<sup>6</sup> [http://repositorios.mincyt.gob.ar/pdfs/Law\\_26899\\_Digital\\_Repositories\\_scientific\\_data\\_Argentina.pdf](http://repositorios.mincyt.gob.ar/pdfs/Law_26899_Digital_Repositories_scientific_data_Argentina.pdf)

- Open access legislation approved by Congress in several countries requires government-funded research results to be available in open access repositories
- Regional strategy developed in regional consultation sponsored by UNESCO
- Cooperation among open access regional initiatives, e.g.: book on open access indicators<sup>7</sup> sponsored by UNESCO; research on open access sponsored by IDRC<sup>8</sup>.
- Regional mailing list and Facebook group to share information on open access issues.

A summary of weaknesses:

- Weak open access institutional policies (recommendations more than mandates)
- Evaluation rewards publishing in English in international journals
- Open access indicators not yet used for research evaluation
- Research policy and funding agencies influenced by lobby from international commercial publishers: APC business model
- No regional open access formal coalition

### **Strengthening scholarly community led open access in developing regions**

In a large part of the world a significant portion of scientific research and the production of knowledge within the academic environment are publicly funded, and the means for scholarly communications are managed and funded by the scholarly community.

In some parts of the world, mainly in Europe and North America, for decades the scientific and academic sector has outsourced to commercial publishers much of the scholarly communications published in journals and books, and also the production of indicators necessary for evaluating research, resulting in an enclosure which makes access difficult to these services managed with commercial priorities.

The disproportionate increase in prices and the embargoes of these international services to access publications whose contents, authors and reviewers are largely financed with public funds, together with the opportunities provided by Internet and the Web to have open and participatory scholarly communications, have contributed to the raise of the international open access movement, which over the past 20 years has achieved significant progress in the number, quality and editorial strength of freely available publications in the web, as well as progress in national and institutional policies that require that the outcome of publicly funded research be available in open access. In the past years the “pay to publish model” (APC’s article processing charges) is presented as the way forward for open access business models, with great impact for developing regions authors to participate in the global conversation of science.

Concerned about this situation that requires us to ask ourselves about the public role of scientific and academic knowledge in our societies, and about the negative impact of the commercialization of knowledge and its indicators, CLACSO has issued its

<sup>7</sup> <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20140917054406/OpenAccess.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20150921045253/MadeInLatinAmerica.pdf>

“CLACSO’s Declaration on open access to knowledge managed as a commons by the scholarly community”<sup>9</sup>

approved by its General Assembly in Medellin, Colombia, on November 10th, 2015 which states that in order to contribute to the democratization of production and access to knowledge necessary for the development of our societies, we recommend governments, agencies and institutions that fund and/or perform research and researchers who manage research project, to promote policies, actions and funding necessary to implement the following principles in scholarly communications:

Principles:

1. Provide open access to publicly funded research results, both texts and data (open access and open data).
2. Promote and fund projects and working groups aimed at improving the quality of scholarly editorial processes; as peer-review and internationalization (e.g.: publication in local language and in English when research is of international interest) in the contents of open access digital repositories, publishing platforms and journals.
3. Encourage editors of scholarly journals to retain control, experience and knowledge of the editorial processes and its products, regardless of the platforms of visibility and indexing with which they share metadata and content.
4. Ensure that open access repositories, publishing platforms and publications are interoperable with national, regional and international systems and portals to achieve a multiplying effect on the visibility and access to research results by local, regional and international public.
5. When evaluating researchers and institutions, consider indicators provided by open access repositories, publishing platforms and publications, as well as other measures of impact and relevance in local and regional contexts, to complement traditional international bibliometric indicators that poorly reflect the production and impact of research from developing countries.
6. Support and promote worldwide access to knowledge as a human right, and its management as a commons by the scholarly community.

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