Open access to social science journals in Latin America

During the 2000s, Latin America has contributed to the development of alternative journal portals intended to improve the visibility of and access to regionally published social science journals.

The relatively poor visibility of regional journals and their authors is often due to budgetary constraints for the distribution of printed journals, and their limited presence in international indexes. These are an incentive for the development of open access (OA). Although they do not yet necessarily have a sustainable business model, a number of Latin American journals have chosen to take up the challenge of online OA as a means of dealing with these problems.

In order to bolster online OA, funding has been channelled principally towards national and regional journal portals rather than individual publishers, while the latter assume a great portion of the costs of journal indexing, platform development and updating, and building bibliometric indicators. A growing number of journals are also using open source journal management and publishing systems (for example Open Journal System, OJS) in order to increase their efficiency on the web, reduce costs and ensure harvesting by journal portals.

Building upon a long history of regional bibliographical information networks[1] and taking advantage of the existence of one common language for most Latin American countries, several regional journal portals have been developed, improving the visibility of and accessibility to social science journals. These developments have also contributed to the provision of much-needed regional scientific indicators (SCIELO and REDALYC), facilitating the evaluation of research.

SCIELO – Scientific Electronic Library Online
(www.scielo.org)
SCIELO is a multidisciplinary OA journal portal with 631 fulltext journals, of which 79 are in the social and human sciences. The journals are selected by national scientific focal points in 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries as well as in Spain and Portugal. SCIELO was initiated in 1998, and after ten years could boast a monthly average of 1,865,369 full-text downloads of social and human science journals. The SCIELO project, based in BIREME (www.bireme.br),

1. Examples: BIREME-OPS (health, www.bireme.br); REDUC (education, http://biblioteca.uahurtado.cl/ujah/reduc/catalogo. htm); CLACSO (social sciences, www.biblioteca.clacso.edu. ar); CLAD-SIARE (public management and policies, www. clad.org.ve/siare/).

has developed a methodology for the preparation, storage, sharing and evaluation of electronic scientific publications.

REDALYC – Red de Revistas Científicas de
América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal
(www.redalyc.org)
REDALYC is a multidisciplinary open access journal portal with an available collection of 550 peer-reviewed full-text journals, of which 401 are in the social and human sciences. REDALYC offers open access to 79,702 full-text social and human science articles. In 2008, there was an average of 1,445,221 monthly article requests in the social and human sciences.
REDALYC was developed in 2002 through a research programme of the Autonomous State University of Mexico (UAEM). The main objectives were to increase the visibility of and access to Ibero-American journals, to develop regional bibliographical indicators for research evaluation, and to periodically provide analyses of regional socioscientific networks.

CLACSO – Red de Bibliotecas Virtuales de
Ciencias Sociales de América Latina y el Caribe
(www.biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar)
The CLACSO network of virtual libraries is an open access and cooperative digital library that offers over 11,000 fulltext social science publications (books, working documents, journals and papers). The various documents come from CLACSO´s network of 250 social science institutions in 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries. Collections are regularly updated by a working group of CLACSO-affiliated publishers and librarians. This social science portal was established in 1998 to support education, research and policy by improving the visibility of and access to social science research. This regional cooperative digital library functions through an open software Greenstone platform, providing advanced search options and download statistics. In 2008 there was an average of 600,000 text requests per month. CLACSO and REDALYC have signed an agreement to improve the complementarities of both their platforms (REDALYC indexes forty-nine journals from CLACSO´s network) thereby avoiding the duplication of indexing costs.

Latindex – Sistema Regional de Información
en Línea para Revistas Científicas de América
Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal (www.
latindex.org)
This online regional information system for Latin American, Caribbean, Spanish and Portuguese scholarly journals is

grounded in a cooperative network of national scientific organizations that gather and disseminate bibliographical information on regionally produced scientific publications. The Latindex database, which is run by the National Autonomous University in Mexico (UNAM), provides information on approximately 8,609 social science journals. Out of this total, 3,810 profiles include web links to the journal webpage.

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