

# Impactofactorian Rhapsody - Reflections on publishing to come to the point and to earn a point

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*Hark, who knows what?  
Nobody anything knows;  
Fragile is the knowledge.*

Dr. Karaklaić

## Overture

This short contemplation of a phenomenon popularly named *impactomania* aims at sharing the author's thoughts about the contemporary challenges of scientific publishing in a hopefully unbiased manner. It also tends to propose some personal suggestions about its future and a place of an ordinary researcher in these, still unstable and unpredictable conditions. For the sake of clarity and collegial correctness, no publisher, journal or author will be by all means explicitly mentioned: the essence of this writing is conceived of being strictly out of anything backchat- or condemnation-like. By the same reason, there is a deliberate decision of not quoting references, regardless of what assistance they could be, and not summarising the text, since it is brief enough to have its sentences excerpted and compiled in an abstract.

## Adagio

During the past few decades, there has been occurring a constantly increasing change in evaluating an individual research contribution. Irrespective of the country status, in terms of the amount of its budget

expenses foreseen for science, the researchers worldwide are basically in the same position. Unlike what was more or less common in many countries of the last century, an average researcher today is heavily pressured to publish papers, book chapters and monographs in order not solely to *advance* in his local scholar hierarchy, but to *survive*. Due to a general trend of cutting down the grants and, indirectly, the number of active researchers, we are witnessing a kind of desperate struggle to publish 'what counts' in the journals 'where it counts', with myriads of publishers and journals attempting to attract the authors to join their editorial boards and write for their journals, promising as fast publication as (im)possible.

## Pas de deux

The aforementioned lucidly coined term *impactomania*, translated as *the madness for impact factors*, has a complex structure and compound *impact* upon an individual dealing with science and being within a system of evaluation: due to an obligate kind of *impactoscopy*, a researcher is underwent something akin to an *impactotomy*, with uncertain, long-term and often irreversible consequences. These two processes may be easily the chief tools for amortising the overwhelming explosion of the number of publishers, papers and authors, leading to a disablement of being aware of, if not all, then, at least, majority of pivotal published works on a certain issue. The needle is becoming tinier

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and thinner, while the haystack seems not to cease growing: as a consequence, a natural reaction of *impactophobia* is desperately needed to be overcome and transformed into the *impactophilia*, at any price.

### Andante

In order to meet the firmly established standards, it seems that each researcher manages for himself. There are many peer-reviewed journals, which are official heralds of national or international associations, and where it is no secret that the membership may, without any negative attitude towards these by the author of these lines, may help in finding a kind of shortcut in publishing one's paper. On the other hand, we must not forget the fact that the researchers are not alone in their travails, since the publishers are obviously in the identical circumstances, judging by the rapid growth of call-for-papers and other sorts of announcements, usually distributed by e-mail and targeting the authors with whom they had already collaborated. On the one hand, the so-called *traditional* journals, without publication fees and providing the access to the full text of a paper in case one is subscribed or purchase it, have been rapidly begun to offering the facultative option of paying for the open access to one's paper. At the same time, the very idea of obligatory open access is substantially good, since it definitely enhances the citing parameters of a scientist, but is definitely not affordable for everybody. The amounts need for this service can surpass thousand(s) of US dollars and, in return, require available funds, provided by projects, which, again, are more and more difficult to win.

For the last fifteen years or more, we have been observing an unequal attitude towards the exclusively open access journals from developed countries, on one side, which have developed and are developing in enterprises, and the same type of publications from developing or the third-world countries. It would be quite sufficient to take a quick look at the position of both groups of journals and see that the latter often get and, in just few years, are able to lose their impact factors, because of numerous reasons, including and unexperienced journal management without elemental review procedures and obvious preference for the authors of their own surrounding. However, these sad facts are true for the former too: although those publishers and journals are much more successful in transparent management and using their accumulated know-how, it is equally true that the reviews of the manuscripts submitted to their journals often demand months to be communicated to the author and too succinct, as if they were written in the last moment and

despite all time devoted to the reviewing process. In this way, a high esteem and correspondingly high impact factors of the developed ones become as questionable as those of the developing ones, but with a certain final outcome that the former are privileged and by far less exposed to losing their minimally fluctuant and essentially firm positions on the most significant yearly updated lists for any researcher.

### Allegro

In a sharp contrast to *impactomania* and all its accompanying manifestations, there is a category that may be called *impactosanity*, widely present among numerous research communities out of the English-speaking area, such as Chinese, Russian or Portuguese and Spanish South American, which are not evaluated for the world's most important impact factor, seeming quite happy with publishing the articles solely with abstracts in English and devoting their editorial and publishing efforts primarily to their own country's scientific benefit. It is curious that such approach is present in the countries with their scientific communities entirely orientated towards *impactomania* as well, but, there, it usually represents a kind of luxury, reserved mainly for the researchers with the top titles, who are thus free, at last, to write articles on the topics of their own preference and not imposed by current scientific trends, which were breathing in their neck during their whole career.

### Coda

On the basis of a most modest experience of the author of these paragraphs, all researchers, irrespective if they are from Serbia or elsewhere, are *free* which way to choose. With a little additional effort, it is possible to meet both the current but ephemeral demands relating to a specific project or other obligations and fixed date goals, and, in parallel, to maintain, develop and bring forth one's own scientific desires, to whatever extent they may be linked to their official research duties. This should make one more personally satisfied and thus substantially more motivated to stand before the future scientific challenges. If we ask ourselves what all this has to do with *Ratarstvo i povrtarstvo*, we may just say that such a journal, with more than a half a century long and ceaseless production of the free open access papers, may assist both local and international community in fulfilling such individual goals: the choice of threading one or another path, though, remains exclusively within the responsibility of each of us as genuinely free individuals.

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