

CORRESPONDENCE

Poverty of Indian chemistry periodicals

A chemist who would not take an oath guaranteeing the authenticity, as well as the accuracy of his work, should never publish his results, for if he were to do so, then the result would be detrimental, not only to himself, but to the whole science.

—Fresenius

We may talk about the life of journals in several contexts. Those who are associated with science publishing in this country would struggle a lot in sustaining the life of S&T journals under several socio-economic conditions.

Any information analysis would take into account four major factors namely, accuracy, currency, context and cost of information production, storage and dissemination/distribution to the larger community. As any serious economic analysis could generate a lot of polemics, an information analysis can also make people rise to the occasion. We are presenting an information analysis on Indian chemistry journals in order to evoke sympathy for the sorry state of a few journals.

Presuming that Indian chemists are anxious to publish their hard earned and accurate data/information from several months'/years' work, we are concerned about the facilities available to them for prospective 'publishing and disseminating' of their contributions. This has given rise to several Indian journals

1. *Indian Journal of Chemistry* (Parts A and B)
2. *Proceedings of the Indian Academy of Sciences (Chemical Sciences)*
3. *Journal of the Indian Chemical Society*
4. *Bulletin of Electrochemistry*
5. *Indian Journal of Heterocyclic Chemistry*
6. *Journal of Polymer Materials*

7. *Bulletin of the Kineticist of India*
8. *Journal of the Electrochemical Society of India*
9. *Transactions of the SAEST*
10. *Current Science* and several other titles like *Asian Journal of Chemistry*, *Oriental Journal of Chemistry*.

The above list indicates the 'presence' of both general and specialist periodicals from Indian soil. Problems in bringing out the journals 3 and 7 are highlighted below.

Journal of the Indian Chemical Society is one of the oldest journals published at Calcutta by the Indian Chemical Society. This journal is mainly run by the membership subscriptions and the financial viability is not so good. Ironically, this journal had attracted/published a bulk of the papers from Indian universities and there is a condition that one of the publishing authors be a member of the Indian Chemical Society. It is regretful to note that this journal has not been published in time for the past one and a half years. It is also sad that several elite institutions like IISc or IITs neither subscribe nor contribute to this journal. If one were to kill this journal, the members of Indian Chemical Society, an open society in my opinion, need to contemplate about the affairs in chemistry publishing. Learning about the hard facts on the financial viability and the efficiencies of 'public utilities' available for the purpose of publication activities are the agenda of the day. A little introspection is called for.

It appears that the journal *Bulletin of Electrochemistry*, published by the Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CECRI), Karaikudi is counting the days of existence. Since 1992 the turn-around time of

this journal is 10–15 months for this monthly periodical! We may however point out the rarest and most heartening fact that in 1992 this journal attracted 58 papers out of the 133 published (with the delayed schedule) from foreign authors. Though the access to current literature is a difficult affair (because of the poor conditions of several academic and research libraries), the Indian science publishers must have a high level of ethics in keeping the publication schedule. It is disappointing that though CECRI and PID—Publication and Information Directorate (CSIR), a major public utility for Indian science publishing—are sister institutions, they could not maintain a single standard in their publication schedule. We suspect the malaise of unfocused and undesirable rivalry.

Despite the poverty of these journals, the prospective publishing authors do prefer to publish in more than 150 foreign chemistry journals for several sociological reasons. Where is the political will power and determination to give life to Indian journals? I wish to recall the debate in the pages of *Current Science* in 1991 regarding the desirability of Indian edition of several popular foreign journals. Since the users of chemistry literature have the twin problems of difficulties in the access to foreign journals and the dying Indian journals, a resurgent campaign for the cause of Indian journals is called for, for the future of Indian chemistry. The knowledge about the functioning of the information facilities must be transparent enough to the people concerned.

T. MURUGESAN

SA2, NAL Quarters
Bangalore 560 017, India