

## India's science journals need vigorous marketing

Several articles in the recent issues of *Current Science* have discussed problems related to the impact factor (IF) of India's science journals. A recent letter had highlighted the improving impact factors of India's medical science journals, which is good news<sup>1</sup>. After a quick search of the journal citation report for the categories Environmental sciences agriculture/multidisciplinary, agriculture, dairy and animal science, and veterinary sciences in the ISI Web of Knowledge (Thomson Scientific), I found that the following five journals with lowest impact factors were from India – *Journal of Environmental Biology* with 0.197, *Journal of Applied Animal Research* with 0.211, *Indian Journal of Agricultural Sciences* with 0.106, *Indian Journal of Animal Sciences* with 0.064 and *Indian Veterinary Journal* with 0.036.

Sadly, one of India's oldest journals, the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, published by the prestigious Bombay Natural History Society (founded in 1883), has still not entered the scientific citation index. All leading field biologists from India have published papers in the journal. After submitting a manuscript, the processing time for some of these Indian journals takes about two years, which is too slow. By the time a paper is published, the information is likely to become outdated. Due to the journal's limited circulation to the local scientific community, citation opportunities become a limiting factor. Data based on scientific results fail to capture the dynamics of a market, that basically consists of scientists who need easier, faster and free access to scientific information.

Journals such as the *Indian Journal of Agricultural Sciences* and *Indian Journal of Animal Sciences*, both managed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, can be combined to make it interdisciplinary, by revamping the editorial team to increase efficiency and speed. Full articles

published in these journals are not accessible electronically, which makes it difficult for scientists at home and abroad to read them; this limits the opportunities for frequent citing. The easier a journal can be accessed, the faster will it be cited, which would ultimately improve the IF. For example, one of Taiwan's local journals, *Zoological Studies*, which had an IF of 0.518 in 2002, has reached 0.943 in 2006, mainly due to faster processing of manuscripts and increased circulation using free electronic media. Besides, the editor and authors who publish papers in the journal frequently seek colleagues around the world to cite their papers.

What is crucial for India's science journals now is to vigorously market their products. Even leading journals such as *Science* and *Nature* continue to powerfully market their products with the support of dynamic marketing teams. They adopt various strategies, including the cheapest way of sending mass mails to scientific communities around the world. A recent e-mail advertisement that I received from *Science* states, 'It's not too late to give the gift of *Science*'!

Journals such as *Science* and *Nature* do not need publicity, but they still adopt aggressive marketing strategies to boost not only their IFs but also profit margins.

According to Thomson Scientific, the number of research papers written in India has increased from 75,923 during 1996–2000 to 98,558 during 2001–05. Similarly, citations nearly doubled from 113,824 during 1996–2000 to 221,563 during 2001–05. India has recorded the third highest rate of increase in total citations in the world for countries having more than 100,000 citations between 2001 and 2005, but lags behind China and South Korea<sup>2</sup>. So it is time for the publishers of India's science journals to reorient their marketing strategies by speeding up the process of publication

and reaching out to maximum scientific audience to enhance the journal IF.

Although the IF of *Current Science* has increased from 0.533 in 2002 to 0.737 in 2006, the readers should make sincere efforts to market the journal by citing recent articles frequently when they publish in *SCI* journals. Most developed countries do not have the advantage of the enormous scientific manpower that India has, since thousands of scientists and graduate students work in various research institutions across the country – if they cite papers published in *Current Science* more aggressively, its IF would improve rapidly within a short period.

It is time to remember what C. V. Raman said over a half century ago, 'In the past, India had shown her greatness in the fields of scholarship, philosophy and science but today, we are helplessly dependent on Western countries for knowledge of science. India should not be a camp-follower, but a leader in science. It is no use getting our ideas from the West. We have to think out our problems and find the solutions to them'<sup>3</sup>. Thus, improving the IF of India's science journals would not be a daunting task, if the scientific community of the country stands united to face the problem.

1. Menezes, I., Shetty, B. S. K., Kanchan, T., Lobo, S. W., Kumar, T. S. M. and Shetty, M., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **93**, 1467.
2. Thompson Scientific, 2006; [www.thomson.com/content/pr/sci/2006\\_0726\\_thomson\\_india](http://www.thomson.com/content/pr/sci/2006_0726_thomson_india)
3. Venkataraman, G., *Curr. Sci.*, 1998, **75**, 1085–1094.

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