



Editorial

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Editorial

Toward a mighty publishing culture in Latin America and the Caribbean

In the inaugural editorial for *Neotropical Biodiversity* [1], Juan Manuel Guayasamin and Adriana Lucio-Paredes indicated opportunities and challenges for the journal, and for research on the biodiversity of the Neotropics in general. They identified the enhancement of scientific communication and sharing of information in the region as main challenges for science in the region. And thus, as key objectives on which to base the journal's aim and scope.

Juan Manuel Guayasamin is stepping down as Editor-in-Chief after he successfully initiated this journal, establishing it among colleagues as a prime outlet for scientific findings. He risked a great deal doing this, tying his reputation, work, and efforts to the success of the journal. And he pulled it off. Now, I step in, truly grateful for the work he and Associate Editors did for the journal. The journal is rapidly changing now, with an increasing number of articles and additions to the editorial board, but there is still much to do. We must remain ambitious, with our journal, and with the state of biodiversity research in the region.

Personally, I found it quite difficult to publish my first scientific article. I still struggle, but, I did manage to publish at least some of my work, thanks to the support from my mentors and peers. And, let's be honest. I was quite privileged: privileged to conduct my research in English, the leading language for scientific communication; privileged to work in the US, where access to digital resources allow for quick dissemination of results. Perhaps most importantly, I was privileged to be given encouragement to publish, nestled in a scientific culture that stimulated self-confidence in my ability to publish. I recognize these biases in my favor. And now, as the new Editor-in-Chief for *Neotropical Biodiversity*, I can more effectively pay it forward, and help others receive the same opportunities.

Prospects for biodiversity research are bountiful in the Neotropics. There is the sheer abundance and diversity of organisms and interactions in this biogeographic region that makes original research such a joy to conduct. Moreover, the region provides unique opportunities for discovery (from actual species discovery, to the exploration of newly described phenomena) and extensive data with which to test original hypotheses.

However, the challenges for diffusion of research are also daunting in the Neotropics. It is not that people don't publish any of their work. It is just that there is so much potential left unexplored due to financial and other limitations. Many institutions lack a culture where publishing peer-reviewed

articles is a priority, or even an opportunity. In Latin America and the Caribbean, researchers often down-play their ability to publish high quality articles.

I think that *Neotropical Biodiversity* can and should aim to play at least a role in changing the publishing culture in Latin America and the Caribbean. My vision for the journal contributes to that (and pays forward those advantages I received). First, I suggest that we continue the line set by Guayasamin and colleagues: open access publishing without economic or financial barriers. With lowered language barriers, as we accept papers in English and Spanish. But, I also suggest that we make a few additional changes to the journal that make us even more accessible and approachable.

Many worthwhile contributions to biodiversity science in the region are 'locked up' in undergraduate theses. In unpublished reports and unwritten observations. Let us try to access that potential, without reducing the quality of the journal, by offering Notes (short communications of maximum 2000 words) as an article type. These articles offer the possibility to publish work that is of high quality, but of less extensive scope. (Note: a common question is: will we start accepting checklists or species records? No, unless it pertains to a significant contribution to the field, such as consequences for conservation or hypotheses on speciation patterns).

Let us also truly embrace the full scope of the journal. Guayasamin and Paredes mentioned the broad range of areas that *Neotropical Biodiversity* should cover, and thus we will add several members to our already excellent editorial board, to include experts on an even wider range of taxa and geographic regions (e.g. the Caribbean). And we will start 2018 with the opening of special issues to showcase the work that is done in the region, for example on biogeography (one of the first Specials Issues will be linked to the I Congreso Latinoamericano de Biogeografía held in Tena, Ecuador, November 2017).

We will aim to achieve a lot in 2018 with *Neotropical Biodiversity*, yet I am realistic and acknowledge that one journal will not change a culture. But can we lower thresholds for publishing? Yes. Can we get people to publish work that would otherwise go unpublished? I believe so. But only if we support each other – colleagues, mentors, supervisors, and students – in our efforts to publish. Then, I have the confidence that publishing research can be a practice just as commonplace in Latin America and the Caribbean as it is in many other parts of the world. *Neotropical Biodiversity*, for one, is ready to receive your manuscript submissions.

Reference

- [1] Guayasamin JM, Lucio-Paredes A. A new open access journal for publishing research on Neotropical Biodiversity. *Neotrop Biodivers*. 2015;1(1):1-1.

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