

Reflections on a Scientific Journal

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Abstract

These reflections are distilled from my experience as the editor-in-chief of the journal 'Scientific Annals of Computer Science'.

My journey as the editor-in-chief of the journal 'Scientific Annals of Computer Science' started sixteen years ago. The path has not always been smooth and there were ups and downs during the years; however, I learned many new things throughout all my experiences there. Part of the adventure for me was understanding the role of such a journal and why it was started by the university. I discovered that the roots of the journal are related to the developments of mathematics in Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași. This did not come as a surprise to me, because the new Faculty of Computer Science is derived from the Faculty of Mathematics, and so it inherits some of its culture and publishing tradition. Etymologically, the word tradition indicates the transmission of things and ideas; in this case, it refers to the transmission related to the original scientific creation and publication.

A modern law for superior education (coordinated by the mathematician Spiru Haret) was issued in Romania in 1898 (more than 120 years ago); the law asked university professors to conduct original scientific research and to have a doctoral degree. As a consequence, the Faculty of Science in Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași started the journal 'Annales scientifiques de l'Université de Jassy', and new professors with doctoral degrees in Mathematics obtained at good German and French universities were appointed. An important role in the development of the mathematical research in Iași was held by Alexandru Myller. Professor Myller attended courses at the University of Göttingen with famous professors like David Hilbert, Felix Klein and Hermann Minkowski. At that time, Göttingen was

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a global reputable centre of mathematics, well-known far beyond the borders of Germany. It was also famous for its mathematical library, holding valuable collections of journals and books, largely accessible to faculty and students. Myller was impressed by the atmosphere at this university, remained there and got the PhD title under the supervision of David Hilbert (having Felix Klein as member of his examining committee). In the same period, Vera Lebedeva from Russia was also supervised by Hilbert. Vera Lebedeva married Alexandru Myller, and both came to Iași in 1910, where the scientific atmosphere was strong with high aspirations (Vera Myller became the second woman full professor of mathematics in all of Europe). Alexandru Myller attracted competent professors to the University of Iași, encouraged original scientific creation and developed a rich mathematical library following the model of that visited in Göttingen. This library established links and exchange agreements with several academic partners, and subscribes to more than 200 journals; the exchanges were performed by using the 'Annals of the University of Iași - Mathematics', a descendant of 'Annales scientifiques de l'Université de Jassy' founded in 1900. The journal was devoted to the publication of original papers in all the fields of mathematics addressed to a broad mathematical audience. Moreover, for the most part of its existence, the journal was free to both the authors and the readers.

In 1991, the department of computer science (founded initially in 1971 as part of the Faculty of Mathematics) became the Faculty of Computer Science. Following the rule of the university that each faculty should have its own journal, the first issue of 'Analele științifice ale Universității A.I.Cuza Iași - Informatică' was published in 1992. In 2005, the first editor-in-chief of the journal (Professor Toader Jucan) retired and moved to his (grand)children in Canada. I was not involved in the editorial board during these first years of the journal that included the print of 16 printed issues. I still remember the few meetings of the faculty members in 2006 to appoint a new editor-in-chief. It seems that the journal was in a rather precarious situation. Since there were no candidates, it was discussed to shut the journal down. I decided to be involved in keeping the journal alive, just as a duty to the great scientists of the past that transmitted their knowledge and created my lineage in mathematics³, but also looking towards the future of publishing the original scientific work of other scientists. The start was difficult. Without any knowledge inherited from the previous editorial team,

³Gabriel Ciobanu is a descendant of Alexandru Myller and David Hilbert (see Mathematics Genealogy).

the first issue was quite a challenge. Several questions occurred in my mind. What is actually a scientific journal? What are the academic journals for? Consequently, some changes were operated. The title of the journal was appearing now in English (the events of 1989 in Romania changed substantially the international communication). A new cover was designed. Since the goal of an academic journal is to publish high-quality and significant scientific content, a new (and more international) editorial board was formed. We focus on quality vs quantity, and the journal contains a rather small number of papers. This is also related to the low rate of acceptance. Being responsible for the final result, the editor-in-chief should impose the editorial principles and rules for the publication, trying to be consistent with these rules for every issue of the journal. For instance, even if the editor-in-chief may write an occasional editorial piece, it is not allowed to publish articles.

Along the years, several problems have come up, and we were struggling with doubts and debates on certain aspects⁴. Since the importance of journals in academic life goes beyond providing a means of communication, being crucial to career paths, funding and appointments, it was clear that the journal should provide a certification, usually by peer review, that the published research was conducted properly. We paid special attention to this aspect, and each manuscript was evaluated by at least two referees before being accepted and published. Moreover, it should ensure a dissemination by sharing the results to the right audience. For this, the journal was free to both the authors and the readers. Since the authors and readers want a permanent access to the articles (such that they can be found and cited), archiving was a problem to be solved. All the 27 issues of the journal produced in these sixteen years are archived, and posted online.

Even the first academic journal was published long time (around 350 years) ago, the academic journals are still perceived as an important method of publishing despite innovations in communication in the 21st century. However, the new innovation in communication cannot be ignored. In the last decade, the journal became a digital one, having its own website. The submissions are managed electronically, and each article receives a Digital Object Identifier (DOI). For checking an article for plagiarism, it is used a plagiarism software (available for all the journals of the university). The journal is registered on various international platforms, including Web of Science, SCOPUS, SCImago, DOAJ and DBLP (among others).

⁴The status of the journal in 2016 is presented at <https://www.info.uaic.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SACSafter10years2016.pdf>

My journey has now come to an end. Being the editor-in-chief of a scientific journal was stimulating and rewarding. As long as it is an ending and an inflection point, I express my gratitude for the several things that have been learned and the problems that have been solved. My sincere thanks go to Sorin Iftene for his help during several years, to both past and present members of the editorial board, and to many other colleagues who kindly gave their time and knowledge to review the manuscripts; it is the generosity, sincerity and integrity of their work which ensure the quality of the journal. Many thanks to all the authors whom have contributed over this time. Finally, I extend my support and wish good luck to the incoming editor-in-chief, Bogdan Aman. He was prepared for this transition during the last years when he was involved in all the steps required by the publication of the journal. I very much look forward to where he will conduct the journal next, combining the past with his vision for the future of a scientific journal.