

## EDITORIAL

# The first hundred years of the Revista Chilena de Historia Natural

Los primeros cien años de la Revista Chilena de Historia Natural

FABIAN M. JAKSIC

Editor in Chief

Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas P. Universidad Católica de Chile  
Casilla 114-D, Santiago, Chile Fax (562) 686 2615  
E-mail: fjaksic@genes.bio.puc.cl  
<http://sbch.conicyt.cl:9090/revistas/revchi01.htm>

### *How come the first hundred years?*

Yes, the Revista Chilena de Historia Natural was founded in 1897 by Carlos E. Porter. Technically, we should not start celebrating until October 1997, because that was the real date the first issue of the Revista was launched (Etcheverry 1987). Nevertheless, by then the Revista consisted of a single annual issue/volume, and now we are up to four issues per annum. It seemed to me worthy to start celebrating with the very first issue of the centennial year. If the Revista has survived for a hundred years, there is a reasonable expectation that it will make to October of 1997!

By the way, Isn't it wonderful that a developing country has been able to sustain publication of a scientific journal for so long? Yes it is. Anguita (1921) was amazed that this Revista had reached a respectable 25th anniversary. Gigoux (1936) was still more astonished that the Revista had been in print for forty years. Looser (1943), on the other hand, parsimoniously noted that the Revista had reached half a century since first published, and Etcheverry (1987a) succinctly reported the 90th anniversary. It is just a coincidence that I happen to be the Editor of the Revista to witness its centennial volume. Evidently, the Revista has survived, and will survive, longer than any of us!

### *Who was the founder of the Revista?*

It should be transparently clear that the push to keep alive the Revista from 1897 onto 1942 (a period of forty-five years) owes chiefly to its first Editor—called Director in those days—, Dr. Carlos E. Porter. This energetic person born in 1867 was the engine behind the miracle of the Revista, as has been recognized by authorities too many to list here (suffice it to look up references in Etcheverry 1988a, 1992b). Porter must have been a Renaissance man: He not only edited the Revista from 1897 on, but also edited *Anales del Museo de Historia Natural de Valparaíso* from 1897 to 1910 (Etcheverry 1988b), founded in 1914 and edited until 1922 the *Anales de Zoología Aplicada* (Etcheverry 1987b). Porter was also Director for Life of the Academia Chilena de Ciencias Naturales (publisher of the “Anales” of said Academy, see Etcheverry 1988c), Member since 1892 of the now defunct Société Scientifique du Chili (publisher of—sequentially—the “Actes”, “Boletín” and “Revista Científica” of said Academy, see Etcheverry 1989), Charter Member of the Sociedad Entomológica de Chile (publisher of the “Boletín” of said Society)—which was succeeded by the Sociedad Chilena de Entomología— (publisher of the “Revista” of said Society, see Etcheverry 1992a).

Carlos E. Porter died in 1942, not without leaving ready for press volumes 45, 46, and 47 of the *Revista*, all three published posthumously (Etcheverry 1987a).

*Who have been the editors of the Revista?*

After the death of that imposing person named Carlos E. Porter, Francisco Riveros Zúñiga succeeded him in the capacity of Director. As such, he was able to push to print the volumes already put together by Porter, and to continue publication of volumes up to 53 in 1951. From 1952 to 1955 the single volume published was number 54, composed of 17 thin issues, under the Directorship of Nivaldo Bahamonde Navarro. From 1956 to 1963, a single volume—number 55—, consisting of seven separate issues was published by the then Director Ernst Hajek Girardi (Etcheverry 1985a).

From 1963 to 1982 the *Revista* was dormant. That year—at an unknown date but unforgettable after-dinner chat—Jorge Babul, Ernst Hajek, and Tito Ureta pronounced that Chilean naturalists did not have a reliable outlet for publication of their scientific results (Hajek, pers. comm.). It was then proposed that the Sociedad de Biología de Chile acquired and revived the *Revista Chilena de Historia Natural* from its owner, the Sociedad Chilena de Historia Natural (Hajek 1983). Publication resumed with volume 56 in 1983, under the Editorship of Ernst R. Hajek (Etcheverry 1985a). He was the Editor of volumes 56 to 64 (1983 to 1991), which regularly published two issues per volume per year up to 1989 and three from 1990 to 1991. Starting in 1992, editorship was transferred onto Fabian M. Jaksic (Jaksic 1992a), with the explicit instruction of increasing periodicity to four issues per year. His tenure terminates at the end of 1998, with publication of the fourth issue of volume 71.

It is amazing that over a hundred years, the *Revista* has had only five editors! Of course, the 45 years of editorship of Carlos E. Porter still overshadow his four much more modest successors. Transferal of ownership from the withering Sociedad Chilena de Historia Natural

to the younger and ebullient Sociedad de Biología de Chile has been part of this success story (Bahamonde 1983). Indeed, it was a prescient decision of the then-President of the Biological Society (Ernst Hajek) to revive an almost dying journal rather than start a new one (see Herbs-taedt & Ureta 1980 for an intellectual forerunner). I am not aware of what happened with Editor Riveros, but Editor Bahamonde went on to receive in 1996 the prestigious National Award in Science. Editor Hajek will always be remembered for having been the person to re-found and place the *Revista* in international indexes—among them, the much coveted Science Citation Index of the Institute for Scientific Information (Pennsylvania, USA)—. Editor Jaksic does not have much to show, except for having started with a semi-annual journal and transformed it into a currently quarterly journal.

*Why Revista Chilena de Historia Natural instead of Chilean Journal of Natural History?*

Although some creative members of the Sociedad de Biología de Chile have raised this issue from time to time, the last two editors (Hajek and I) have resisted the temptation of drinking from what we believe is a poisoned chalice. Yes, Why not? After all, the *Revista* publishes a lot of its material in English—witness this Editorial. I am not sure why we keep our Spanish name. I, for one, am proud to honor the centennial name coined by that Renaissance-man Porter. On the other hand, keeping our Spanish name, and allowing publication of papers in Spanish does not seem to have hurt us a tiny bit. Indeed, a lot of Natural History information is only of national or regional interest, and it seems reasonable to publish it in our official language. Particularly when considering that not all educated people in our country are proficient at reading English.

I also believe that, rather than forcing a choice between Spanish or English, we live in the best of the two worlds by being open to both languages. Say, a given author wishes to impress (or depress) his or her colleagues in foreign countries and not his/

her own country people? Let that author choose his/her own readership! And be acclaimed or pooh-poohed –or worse, be ignored– by it.

*Is the Revista an exclusively ecological journal?*

Definitely not! Camus (1995a) explicitly dealt with this contentious issue (for some). Camus (1995a) analyzed 338 papers in 13 volumes and 36 issues published from 1983 to 1995. During that period, the Revista has kept a healthy balance of papers: Sixty-four percent in Ecology (including autecology, population and community ecology, and ecological aspects pertaining landscapes or habitats). Eleven percent in History (including biogeography, paleoenvironments and paleobiology in general). Six percent in Taxonomy and Systematics. Six percent in Ecophysiology (including organismal biology and related physiological aspects in general). Four percent in Evolution (including population genetics, life histories and evolutionary biology in general). Four percent in Conservation (including conservation biology and aspects related to biodiversity, human impact or human use of the environment). Two percent in Reproduction (including reproductive and developmental aspects with regard to functional, morphological or genetical attributes associated to the life cycle of organisms). And 2% in Management (including exploitation strategies and aspects related to the cultivation and restocking of natural resources).

Ecology is already well developed in Chile (Hajek 1981, Jaksic 1988, 1991, 1992b, Grez et al. 1994) and has substantial bibliographic impact (Jaksic & Santelices 1991, Jaksic 1994, Santelices 1994, Welljams-Dorof 1994a, 1994b). No, we do not wish to disintegrate our already small naturalist community (González 1983, Allende & Ureta 1993), or allow the hegemony of a single discipline at the expense of others (Fuentes & Sánchez 1982). I take it as my duty as Editor to keep a balance such as the one stated above. Further, I will take any nat-

ural-history paper,... as long as it is a good natural-history paper.

*Is the Revista an international journal?*

Yes it is. Otherwise we would not be listed in Current Contents (series ABES), and we would not be publishing ever increasing numbers of papers coming from Argentina or Uruguay, the United States of America or Mexico, Germany, South Africa, or Australia. We currently reject about 40% of the papers submitted, a rather high figure for a supposedly third-world journal. And from time to time we do our dirty laundry in full view of the readership. For instance, denouncing the misuse of statistics in some of the papers we have published (Camus 1995b). And we have not failed to appear regularly, despite of what some folks proclaim (Krauskopf & Vera 1995).

Of course, I foresee that we could be more aggressive in promoting institutional subscriptions to the Revista. There are few complete collections of the Revista even in Chile (Etcheverry 1986). Nevertheless, thanks to the thankless efforts of María Etcheverry, we have an exhaustive and nearly updated index of all the issues ever published of the Revista (Etcheverry 1985b, 1992b). Also, since 1995 we have a web page in the World Wide Web (<http://sbch.conicyt.cl:9090/revistas/revchi01.htm>), thanks to past-Editor Hajek.

*What will the future bring?*

A silly question taken at face value: the future will only bring more future! (Sure thing, the present is almost gone, and the past is gone forever). But regarding the future of the Revista, I am confident that as long as it is laid in good hands, it will remain in the mainstream of natural history journals. I see no clouds in the horizon. What I see is a growing generation of ever more competent naturalists ready to carry on the flag once and every time it is relinquished. And in due time –before the turn of the millennium– it will be passed to a better scientist than me, I am sure.

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