

**BREAKING THE INFORMATION BARRIER :
A COMPUTERIZED RESEARCH JOURNAL PRODUCED BY AND
FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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ABSTRACT

A computerised research journal was launched in Colombia in late 1989, with the specific aim of promoting communication among scientists and decision makers concerned with the role of livestock technologies in rural development in the Third World. Three numbers have been published and the fourth is ready for distribution. Of the forty papers published or in press, 52.5% are in English, 37.5% in Spanish, 7.5% in French and 2.5% in Portuguese. Papers have been received from 14 countries 11 of which are "developing". There are correspondents in 49 countries and four international agencies participating in the distribution network. From replies received so far, support for the concepts and philosophy of the journal is almost universal. Concern has been expressed about the potential risk from virus-infected diskettes. However, no specific cases have been reported. Some readers have expressed a wish for all papers to be translated into English. It is too soon to draw firm conclusions but it is clear that some of the objectives have certainly been met. The journal is being received enthusiastically by the target audience -- professionals in developing countries. The authors and all the papers have their origins in developing countries. The logistics of preparing and distributing the journal have proved to be simple, effective and inexpensive. The time lag between receipt of a paper and its publication is less than two months. The project has a high degree of self-reliance. The journal was launched and is being sustained without external financial assistance.

RESUME

A la fin de l'année 1989, un journal de recherche sur support informatique a été lancé en Colombie dans le but exclusif de promouvoir la communication entre les scientifiques et les personnes chargées de prendre des décisions touchant à l'impact des technologies d'élevage sur le développement rural du tiers-monde. Trois numéros ont déjà été publiés et le quatrième est prêt pour la distribution. Parmi les 40 articles publiés ou en passe de l'être, 52,5% sont écrits en anglais, 37,5% en espagnol, 7,5% en français et 2,5% en portugais. Ces articles proviennent de 14 pays dont 11 sont des pays en développement. Le réseau de distribution est constitué par des correspondants situés dans 49 pays et par 4 agences internationales. Les réponses reçues à ce jour permettent de dire que les concepts et la philosophie du journal rencontrent un adhésion quasi unanime. Certains

se sont inquiétés du risque potentiel que présenteraient des disquettes infectées par des virus, cependant à ce jour, aucun cas d'infection n'a été rapporté. Quelques lecteurs ont exprimé leur souhait d'une traduction systématique des articles en anglais. L'expérience est trop récente pour tirer des conclusions définitives, cependant, il est clair que certains des objectifs recherchés ont déjà été atteints. Le journal est reçu avec enthousiasme par le public ciblé: les professionnels des pays en développement. Les auteurs de tous les articles sont originaires de pays en développement. La logistique pour la préparation et la distribution du journal s'avère être simple, efficace et peu coûteuse. Le délai entre la réception d'un article et sa publication n'excède pas deux mois. Le projet présente un bon niveau d'indépendance, le journal a été lancé et est maintenu en activité sans soutien financier extérieur.

BACKGROUND

Communication among scientists working in developing countries has always been difficult. There are many reasons for this. International scientific journals are without exception published in the industrialised countries. Their editorial policies reflect the interests of these countries; not those of developing countries. Many of them levy page charges (in hard currency!). They are also highly expensive and beyond the reach of most individual scientists. In libraries and other educational and research institutions in the developing world, budgets are invariably restricted thus it is difficult to subscribe to all, or even a reasonable proportion of, the current journals and research periodicals.

The information published in the scientific journals of developed countries

development, transfer, training in and and diffusion of, sustainable livestock-based technologies for tropical rural development. A major feature of CIPAV's activities has been to acquire and disseminate appropriate information at all levels. It soon became apparent that conventional procedures for doing this were woefully inadequate and likely to be exorbitantly expensive. The idea of using computer technology to overcome these limitations is not only eminently feasible but is specially suited to the needs of developing countries where information, rather than publications, is (or should) be the first criterion determining the nature of the transmitting medium.

The computerized journal "LIVESTOCK RESEARCH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT", the medium for which is the floppy diskette, was conceived and launched in late 1989.

OBJECTIVES

The long term aims of the journal are:

- To promote the development of livestock production and associated technologies which are appropriate and sustainable, and contribute to self-reliant ecologically balanced rural development.
- To take advantage of developments in computer technology in order to

The title of the journal is **LIVESTOCK RESEARCH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**. The principal language is English but papers are accepted and published also in French, Spanish and Portuguese. Each paper has a summary and key words in English and in the language in which the paper is written. One volume is published each year, consisting of three or more numbers, each number consisting, on average, of 10 papers together with lists of contents and indices.

THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

LIVESTOCK RESEARCH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT can be read on any IBM compatible microcomputer with a minimum memory size of 256 Kbytes and one floppy disk drive, either 5.25 or 3.5 inch size. It operates under MS-DOS 2.1 or more. It requires no modification to the CONFIG or AUTOEXEC files, no drivers to be installed and no specialised computer training. It can be viewed on monochrome, non-graphics screens and can be printed out on any printer that can reproduce the standard (USA) ASCII character set. The basic equipment (computer and printer) can be purchased for as little as US\$500, before local taxes and duties. The same equipment will run a word processor and spreadsheet/database which are the essential tools of the research worker.



presentation. As soon as 10 papers are available the particular number of the journal is closed and the table of contents and indices prepared. The journal is copied on both 3.5 and 5.25 inch disks and sent to sub-editors and to institutions and individuals who copy and distribute the disks for individual subscribers.

SUBSCRIBERS TO THE JOURNAL:

Subscriptions to the journal are paid for in the form of one floppy disk (or equivalent) for each number. To receive the journal the potential subscriber simply sends TWO blank disks (3.5 or 5.25 inch) with a return stamped and addressed envelope, to the nearest collaborator. The journal will be copied onto one of the disks which will be returned to the subscriber. The second disk will be retained as payment. Alternatively, payment can be made by cheque or international money order to OXFORD COMPUTER JOURNALS Ltd, 31 Northmoor Road, Oxford OX2 6UR, UK). The yearly subscription is US\$20.00.

FURTHER POSSIBILITIES

LIVESTOCK RESEARCH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT is not only a cheap medium for publication; it affords new potential for the transmission of scientific data.

Despite the simple form of the original disks, the journal may be printed on



Foreign exchange shortages present an opportunity for developing new production systems using local resources which are less dependent on fossil fuel derived inputs. Environmental pressures will force a decreasing role for fossil fuel and an increasing reliance on renewable biomass. Concern for animal

The exact number of diskettes that are in circulation is not known. There are correspondents in 49 countries and four international agencies participating in the distribution network. With the financial support of CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, Wageningen, The Netherlands) 1,500 diskettes of Volume 1 No 1 were distributed throughout ACP countries. With support from IFS (International Foundation for Science, Stockholm) a further 100 copies were sent to IFS centres in Animal Production, Farming and