

Charum and Garfield. Two lives devoted to understanding scientific communication

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This year we mourn the losses of Jorge Charum and Eugene Garfield. Professor Charum left a greatly relevant legacy to our national scientific system, being one of the pioneering scholars of scientific production in our country and one of the first to explore the relationship between knowledge producers and users (Charum & Parrado, 1995).

Understanding the social dynamics of knowledge production in socio-technical networks not only reveals their cognitive products but also the multiple relationships amongst the intervening groups. Professor Charum was also interested in measurement systems of the national scientific production, and that interest led him to make significant contributions to the Publindex journal assessment system and to the process of measuring groups and research centers. Despite the criticisms, these assessment systems made researchers change their scholarly practices and influenced the ways in which we conceive the impacts of our research work. This work, naturally, goes beyond knowledge artifacts such as patents, papers, books, and the like, and extends towards true societal impact.

This year we also lost one of the most relevant researchers in the field of Scientometrics: Professor Eugene Garfield, who started his training in Chemistry but ended up getting his doctorate in Linguistics and declared himself a scientist of information. According to Jiménez Contreras (2017), Garfield's seminal 1955 paper "Citation Indexes for Science. A new dimension in documentation through association of ideas" has been regarded as a fundamental work in Scientometrics. Garfield developed measurement indicators, of which the most famous is the Impact Factor (IF), but he also published more than 800 works, which contain numerous ideas on science metrics and measurement in general. Garfield also started the company that would let him put these ideas to the test: the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), created in 1961. Then, in 1975, he developed the Journal Citation Reports (JCR). Some of the first computer databases had the input of Garfield (Jiménez Contreras,

2017), which would be of significant importance for the development of Scientometrics as a field. The impact of Garfield's contributions has been considerable on journal assessment systems and on impact measurement systems for scientific knowledge by researchers, groups, institutions, and countries.

Charum and Garfield came from distinct intellectual traditions. Charum worked from Latour's and Callon's sociology of science, whereas Garfield's work stemmed from a more traditional sociology of science proposed by Merton and Pierce. Despite this difference, it is clear that their contributions, Charum's in the Colombian context and Garfield's at an international level, transformed the practices of scientific communities and the ways in which we regard scientific production, communication, and impact.

References

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