

From graphs to the digital age. Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología: 35 years

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Citation:

Prieto-Ortiz RG. From graphs to the digital age. *Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología*: 35 years. *Rev Colomb Gastroenterol*. 2021;36(2):160-162. <https://doi.org/10.22516/25007440.772>

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Received: 30/04/2021
Accepted: 03/05/2021



Caius Titus is credited with saying “spoken words fly away, written words remain” before the Roman Senate more than 20 centuries ago. It has come down to our times as “what is written is written” or “words are but wind.”

It is not so simple to think that spoken language came first and then written language. Although some twentieth-century semioticians believed that writing came first before verbal language, they now agree with linguists that writing came after articulated verbal language. It is believed that the origin of writing composed of logograms and graphemes dates back to the fourth century BC and that it appeared in isolation but simultaneously in China, Egypt (logograms and graphemes) and Mesopotamia (graphemes). In the American continent, it appeared later with the Maya hieroglyphic writing system

Despite the invention of the printing press in the 15th century and the existence of many medical texts at the time, scientific advances or inventions were communicated through letters and handwritten texts or *manuscripts*, and it was not until the 17th century that scientific societies created the first journals: *Le Journal des Sçavans*, in Paris, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, in London (1665), and *Acta Eruditorum Lipsiensis*, in Leipzig (1682)⁽¹⁾.

Medical journals first appeared in Europe in the late 18th century, and then in the United States and Canada. Of the journals founded in the 18th century, only 24 are still active, with the most well-known being *The New England Journal of Medicine* (1812), Boston; *The Lancet* (1823), London; and the *British Medical Journal* (1840), London. In the mid-20th century, medical journals adopted the experimental method for scientific research and a format that included abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion, followed by references. Also, peer reviewers were established, allowing for the selection and promotion of the quality of published articles⁽²⁾.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, electronic journals began to appear as a supplement to the printed version, or as the sole form of publication. This, combined with the increased use of virtual channels and social networks in recent years, has favored the dissemination of the journal contents and, by extension, medical knowledge.

The Asociación Colombiana de Gastroenterología (Colombian Association of Gastroenterology) was founded in 1947 under the name of Sociedad Colombiana de Gastroenterología (SCG) and, following the tradition of scientific societies, promoted the creation of the *Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología* (Colombian Journal of Gastroenterology), whose first issue was published in 1985 (**Figure 1**). Dr. Germán Liévano Rodríguez (vice-president of the SCG) and Dr. Paulo Emilio Archila Falla were

its founders and first editors⁽³⁾. To date, and after 35 years of continuous work, 13 editors have led the various work teams (**Table 1**) and, as leaders, have favored the Journal's progress and advancement to position it. The Journal has been the official organ of the Gastroenterology, Endoscopy, and Coloproctology associations since its inception, and of Hepatology since 1987.

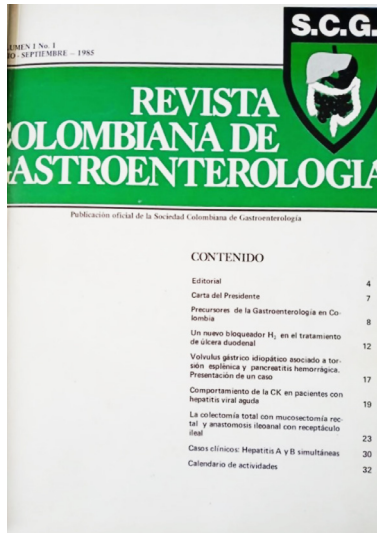


Figure 1. First issue of the Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología (July-September, 1985).

For a little over a year, under the editorial direction of Dr. Diego Aponte, the Journal has undergone a series of changes that have allowed its growth and modernization. One of the most important aspects is the work developed with the idea of reversing the pyramid in which the editor and the editorial group traditionally occupy the apex, and the base is made up of readers and authors. The concept currently used in the Journal is that the top of the pyramid is occupied by the readers and authors, who are the *raison d'être* of a journal, while the bottom is made up of the editor and the editorial group, who, together with the peer reviewers, work with the former in mind.

Another very important aspect on which we have been working is the *academization* of the Journal, which is based on the team's ongoing research to better understand the editorial process and all that it entails. The number of peer reviewers has also increased, and they recognize that their support, in addition to being an honor for us, expedites the process in which they play an important role. Supported by social networks, more direct communication channels have been established, and virtual meetings have been held to attract and retain our authors and readers by ensuring more dynamic processes adjusted to their expectations and international editorial recommendations.

Table 1. Editors of the Revista Colombiana de Gastroenterología in chronological order

Editor	Period
Dr. Germán Liévano Rodríguez	July 1985 to December 1985
Dr. Paulo Emilio Archila Falla	January 1986 to March 1995
Dr. Carlos Manuel Serrano Mora	April 1995 to March 1998
Dr. Alberto Rodríguez Varón	April 1998 to December 1999
Dr. Fernando Sierra Arango	January 2000 to September 2001
Dr. Luis Alejandro Orozco Linares	October 2001 to September 2002
Dr. Mario Humberto Rey Tovar	October 2002 to December 2003, October 2005 to September 2007
Dr. Oscar Alfredo Beltrán Galvis	January 2004 to September 2005
Dr. Luis Fernando Pineda Ovalle	October 2007 to December 2009
Dr. Rómulo Darío Vargas Rubio	January 2010 to December 2011
Dr. John Ospina Nieto	January 2012 to March 2012
Dr. Jaime Alvarado Bestene	April 2012 to December 2019
Dr. Diego Mauricio Aponte Martín	Since January 2020

As a member of the editorial committee, I believe that short-term goals, such as improved journal design, strict compliance with publishing standards, inclusion of the authors' open research and contributor ID (ORCID) and digital object identifier (DOI) for each article, improvement of the journal website, and the elimination of the printed version, have been met.

The Journal's transition into the digital era has some relative disadvantages for some, such as losing the pleasant smell of paper and ink and relying on electrical energy or cell phone charging. However, there are undeniable benefits such as the immediate availability of information, the ease of dissemination of the Journal, the increase in the number of articles published per issue and the readership, and the inclusion of videos and links that enhance learning; all this is favored by the support and impetus provided by social networks. Furthermore, there is a significant reduction in costs and it is a more environmentally friendly form of dissemination.

These achievements have been possible thanks to the support of the Asociación Colombiana de Gastroenterología, as well as the accompaniment and collaboration of representatives from the Digestive Endoscopy, Coloproctology, and Hepatology associations.

In the medium term, the process of internationalization of the Journal will continue, as more and more articles by foreign authors are being published. Of course, the largest number of readers are in Colombia, but there is also a sig-

nificant number of readers from countries such as Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Spain and even the United States, thanks to the proper distribution of the digital version and the use of social networks.

As is customary, a pause has been made, and looking back has allowed us to appreciate the significance of the work done by all those people who have been the architects of what is now the Journal, and to give them the recognition they deserve. We look forward to the future, with a dedicated attitude and hard work in the search for clear and common paths and goals for all, a difficult task that will most likely involve stumbles and falls, but that will be accomplished with everyone's support.

Last April, a webinar was held specifically for authors and readers, in which the current editorial process and the focus of the Journal were clearly exposed, and the steps for submitting an article were explained in a very didactic manner. Moreover, the work of the editors who have forged the history of the Journal, the work of editorial assistant, Ms. Olga Mejía, for 18 years, peer reviewers and authors who continue to forge it, was recognized (**Figure 2**). At that event, the editor-in-chief stated that: "It is very important to know and be part of the entire editorial process, to be a good reader, a great author, a disciplined reviewer, and a responsible editor, all in order to keep this a Journal for everyone."



Figure 2. Recognition of authors, peer reviewers, editorial assistant, and editors.

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