



ACTA MANILANA... *Through The Years*

Fifty years ago in 1965, ACTA MANILANA launched its first issue. It was established to be the official publication of the University of Santo Tomas Research Center which was then on its third year of existence. Its mandate was to provide a venue for the publication of research work done in the Research Center.

The need for the journal was highlighted by Rev. Fr. Jesus Gayo, O.P., the Provincial of the Order of Preachers, in his message for the inaugural issue of the ACTA MANILANA:

“Vivimos en un tiempo en que se hace necesario pensar en alta voz. El sabio o científico que limite sus conocimientos e investigaciones a la aula o al gabinete de trabajo no encuentra el reconocimiento que se le debe . . . La revista será portadora de sus mensajes. Con ello, todos alcanzarán nuevos conocimientos y la humanidad sabrá aceptar una gran deuda de gratitud hacia nuestros investigadores.”

(We live in a time where we have to think aloud. The sage or the scientist who confines his knowledge or research work to the lecture hall or the cabinet will not get the recognition he deserves The journal will present his message. Through this, all will be able to access the new knowledge and mankind will accept this great deed with gratitude to our researchers.)

The ACTA MANILANA was a profession of the commitment of the University to enrich the stock of human knowledge through research and to disseminate the knowledge generated by the researchers. The University Rector Rev. Fr. Jesus Diaz, O.P. expressed in the Foreword of the first issue of the ACTA MANILANA that the journal was “an acknowledgement . . . of the inescapable mission of institutions of higher learning . . . to conduct research, so that it will be possible for them, not only to diffuse knowledge, but also to expand the frontiers of knowledge — for one cannot be undertaken without the other.”

The fifty years of the ACTA MANILANA are a witness of the continuous growth and progressive evolution of the research culture in the University. Its development parallels the progress of the Research Center which has aimed and attained international standards in the quality of the research work it hosts. Its longevity is derived from the consistent productivity of the researchers in the University. Its quality flows from the excellence of the research work carried out by faculty members and their students in the University.

The merit of the ACTA MANILANA has been recognized by the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) (now the Thomson Reuters) Web of Knowledge, a leading international research platform for information in the sciences. The ACTA MANILANA has been one of the few Philippine journals included in the ISI Master List of Journals. It has been cited in important bibliographic indices such as the Biological Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts and the Life Sciences Collection. Its high level of quality has been accredited by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) which classified it as a Category A Research Journal.

The ACTA MANILANA can claim to be one of the longest-existing university research journals in the country. It has persisted and survived past through the economic crises that have beset Philippine academia during the past half-century. It has struggled through and surmounted the technical challenges of publishing high quality research work done in the university. It has become a model of an enduring and dynamic research journal in the country.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE

In its first decade, the scope of the ACTA MANILANA encompassed the broad range of areas of studies explored by the researchers in the Research Center. Their research work covered the highly diverse academic disciplines pursued in the University, from the humanities to the social sciences to the natural sciences to the formal sciences. The ACTA MANILANA served as a melting pot of the output of the creative and productive work of the scholars in the University.

The initial issues of the ACTA MANILANA focused on either the experimental sciences or the non-experimental sciences due to the difference in the format and approach of the papers. The first volume which was published on August 1965, featured papers from the pharmaceutical and medical sciences. The succeeding volumes were devoted to history and the humanities. In 1968,

the distinction of the papers was formalized, and the ACTA MANILANA was published as two series — Series A for the natural sciences and Series B for the socioeconomic and historical sciences.

The Series B was published until 1978, when the Research Center re-directed its orientation and concentrated on the natural sciences. New platforms have risen in the University for the publication of research papers on the social sciences and humanities, and presented a unique focus on non-experimental research work. Consequently, the research output in the fields of arts and humanities, social science and education and the sacred sciences were featured in the *Philippiniana Sacra*, the official publication of the Ecclesiastical Faculties of the University and the *UNITAS*, the scholarly journal of the University.

The short-lived Series B spotlighted a number of important historical research work written by Dominican friars and Thomasian scholars. Several of these papers were based on documents found in the archives of the Dominican community of the University. Milestone research work were published on the Batanes Islands, the Mayaoyaos tribe, Camiguin island in the Cagayan Valley and the province of Nueva Vizcaya. Documents on the assignment of Spanish missionaries in the Philippines and on the British occupation in Manila were translated and featured in the ACTA MANILANA. The history of pharmaceutical education in the Philippines and the history of the University of Santo Tomas were also recorded in the ACTA MANILANA.

The Series A volumes have been published continuously and constituted the main volumes of the ACTA, which later on dropped the “Series A” tag. The publication of the volumes was sustained by the productive research work carried out in the Research Center for the Natural Sciences (later known as the Research Center for the Natural and Applied Sciences). Faculty researchers from the Faculty of Pharmacy, the College of Science, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, the Faculty of Engineering and the Graduate School contributed their output in various issues of the ACTA MANILANA.

The ACTA MANILANA volumes included papers on a wide spectrum of research work in the various fields of the biological sciences, chemical sciences, medical sciences, engineering sciences, and pharmaceutical sciences. A number of papers dealt with the diversity and occurrence of organisms in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in several regions of the country. Several papers described the chemical constituents and the biological activities of Philippine medicinal plants. Biomedical research papers in the ACTA MANILANA have broadened their approach from the morphological to the molecular level. Innovative materials and devices based on emerging technologies were reported in papers published in the recent decades. Research output in the formal sciences and even in applied philosophy were discussed in several issues of the ACTA MANILANA.

These papers were authored by faculty members in collaboration with their graduate and undergraduate students. A continuum of at least three generations of researchers and authors can be traced in some research areas covered in the ACTA MANILANA. Several papers were recognized as outstanding and given awards by government institutions such as the National Academy of Science and Technology and the National Research Council of the Philippines, and by professional organizations such as the Philippine Medical Association, the Philippine Federation of Chemical Societies and the Philippine Microbiological Society.

The ACTA MANILANA was initially conceived to have no definite dates of issues. The founding editor, Fr. Lorenzo Rodriguez, O.P. stated that the journal will only be published “when any given research project could be featured in its entirety.” However, the Research Center was quite productive such that journal has been regularly issued every year since 1965. The ACTA MANILANA missed publication in 1989 due to technical difficulties associated with the transition to digital technology. From 1968 until 1977, two (and on two occasions, three) issues were published annually due to the length of the featured papers.

EDITORS AND RESOURCES

The publication of the ACTA MANILANA was integrated as one of the mandates of the Research Center. The Director of the Research Center acted as the editor and chair of the research journal. The Committee for Research provided assistance in the evaluation of the submitted papers. The framework and logistics for the ACTA MANILANA issues was established by its founding editor, Fr. Lorenzo Rodriguez, O.P. This organizational scheme has persisted with a panel of section editors, functioning as the Committee for Research, together with an International Advisory Committee.

The succeeding editors implemented innovations that enhanced the quality of the ACTA MANILANA. Fr. Jacinto de Juan, O.P., who succeeded Fr. Rodriguez, introduced Series A and Series B in the ACTA MANILANA. The reputation of ACTA MANILANA as a research publication was strengthened during the term of Fr. Ciriaco Pedrosa, O.P. as editor. A Call for Papers and a Guide for Authors was introduced by Dr. Fortunato Sevilla III, during whose term research papers from overseas were submitted for possible publication in the ACTA MANILANA and distribution was expanded to include more academic and government libraries. Further improvements through digital technology were seen during the editorship of Dr. Maribel Nonato and Dr. Christina Binag.

The publication of the ACTA MANILANA was supported for several years by the Benavides Foundation, which also provided funding to the research projects in the Research Center. Since 1986, the ACTA MANILANA was published through the financial resources allocated by the University to the Research Center for the Natural Sciences. In the 1990s, several issues were subsidized by grants from the Philippine Council for Advanced Science and Technology Research and Development (PCASTRD) of the Department of Science and Technology. In the past years, financial support was awarded to the ACTA MANILANA from the Commission on Higher Education as a Category A research journal.

Though limited copies of the ACTA MANILANA are printed annually, its circulation includes important academic libraries in the Philippines and overseas. It is in the holdings of the Library of Congress (United States), the British Library (United Kingdom), the National Library of Australia (Australia), the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Library (Switzerland), the National Central Library (Taiwan), the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Spain), the University Library Hannover (Germany), the Vatican Library (Italy), the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico Library (Mexico), the University of California Berkeley Library (United States), the Smithsonian Institution Library (United States), and the Yale University (United States).

The ACTA MANILANA availed of digital technology to enhance its world-wide visibility and accessibility. It is a participant journal in electronic databases, such as the Philippine Journals

Online, Asian Journals Online and the Health Research and Development Information Network (HERDIN) of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development.

Computer technology greatly impacted in the production of the ACTA MANILANA. During the early years of the ACTA MANILANA, the editorial assistants labored in typing and re-typing drafts of the manuscripts and the printers patiently composed the type-set of the dummy. With the advent of offset printing, the typists had to count and allocate spaces to make each line of the manuscript justified on both side of the pages. Electronic typewriters and the daisy-wheel facilitated the preparation of a good quality manuscript. The advent and the improvements in desktop computers reduced significantly the production time of an issue and enhanced the physical quality of the journal.

CONCLUSION

In the final sentence of the Editorial in the first issue of the ACTA MANILANA, the editor Fr. Lorenzo Rodriguez expressed:

“With humility at heart, tempered with courage, strong will and determination, we hope to be able to contribute to the advancement of Philippine science and that of the world as a whole.”

This message continues to resonate as the ACTA MANILANA enters its second half-century of existence. Faithful to the vision of its founding editor, the ACTA MANILANA upholds an Open Access policy and will make its research paper easily and freely available to the world-wide science and technology community. It is strongly committed to a free flow of knowledge and facilitates wide dissemination of knowledge and scholarship in its featured research papers.

The University has affirmed and fortified its commitment to its research mission, and the ACTA MANILANA will ever provide a venue for the publication of the contribution of the University to the advancement of science. It will immortalize through the printed word and disseminate through the digital medium the increasing and improving research output as a permanent and lasting affirmation of the research culture thriving in the University.