

## EDITORIAL

### **LANKESTERIANA AFTER TWENTY YEARS: TIME FOR A CHANGE**

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With the fascicle that our kind readers now have in their hands, *Lankesteriana* has concluded its twentieth year of publication. Since in its first year the magazine only published two issues instead of three (in May and October), and there were other years during which double issues were released (in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2013), the latest issue this year represents number 54 in a series, that now proudly occupies two entire shelves in our library at Lankester Botanical Garden.

Over the past twenty years, with a short break, I have had the honor of continuously directing *Lankesteriana* and helping to make it – as I believe I can state without false modesty– the most important journal exclusively devoted to scientific orchidology in the world. Satisfied with the goals we have achieved, but also aware of the challenges that still await the journal and that require renewed “visions”, this editorial is intended as a farewell from my function as the Editor-in-Chief of *Lankesteriana*. In fact, with this fascicle of the journal I conclude my twenty years of directorship of *Lankesteriana* to leave this honor - and this burden - to the younger forces of our research center.

In 2001, in the first year of a new century and a new millennium, *Lankesteriana* was born under the auspices of benevolent and favorable constellations. A close friend and colleague, Brian Holley, then director of the Cleveland Botanical Garden, funded the journal's first issue, in exchange for a handshake and a promise to discreetly place “his” botanical garden's logo on the acknowledging page of the newly born journal. With the essential help of Lankester Botanical Garden's forward-thinking director of the time, Jorge Warner, we had to convince the authorities of our university that *Lankesteriana* was

not – and would not be – a duplicate of the *Revista de Biología Tropical*, also edited by the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR). If I remember correctly, we did not succeed, and we had to publish Lankester's scientific journal under the radar for several years, without making too much noise in the corridors at UCR.

But the truth is that *Lankesteriana* was well received by the scientific community from its inception. No wonder. Most of the authors, great luminaries of orchid science, were personal friends and friends of our botanical garden. The journal not only was born with a world-class international scientific committee, but it could count on the generous contributions of the greatest and most recognized orchid scholars on the planet. *Lankesteriana* also arose at a time when the niche of scientific orchidology, which had been occupied for over fifteen years by the American Orchid Society's prestigious scientific journal, *Lindleyana*, was unoccupied given the premature discontinuation of that splendid serial publication. The other major scientific journal with an emphasis on the orchid family, *Selbyana*, was in those years rather focused on the general themes of epiphytism; *Lankesteriana*, which in its first issues published almost exclusively manuscripts devoted to orchids, was somehow perceived as *Lindleyana*'s heir and the new standard-bearer of orchidological science.

Those first years were a time of great enthusiasm, and for me, it was an extraordinary adventure to captain the journal in the great sea of scientific publications and to see it take, issue after issue, a firm and steady course. Even today I am infinitely grateful to my friends of the time, who belonged to the greatest contemporary generation of orchid scientists, for having unconditionally and generously

supported *Lankesteriana's* first steps. Without the explicit support of their splendid names - the Dressler, Cribb, Chase, Ackerman, Whitten, Gerlach, Hágsater, Pridgeon, Romero, Williams, to mention a few, who represented the *crème de la crème* of scientific orchidology - *Lankesteriana* could not have developed and consolidated so rapidly in the competitive world of printed science. Not only did our friends look over the quality of the magazine, they contributed with their manuscripts to make it an essential tool in the world of science, and helped to keep *Lankesteriana* attentive and open to the leading trends in orchidological and botanical science more generally. Being at the center of the best possible group of orchid scientists was a stimulus to unparalleled excellence for the editors of *Lankesteriana*.

Initially *Lankesteriana* was not, however, a journal devoted exclusively to orchids, at least not explicitly. It was inevitable that manuscripts of more general subjects, and often of more local botanical interest, found their way into the pages of a scientific journal that was rapidly establishing itself thanks to the quality of its articles and the internationality of its authors. General botany is a tough scenario in which to compete. There are, in the world, many journals of proven prestige and established trajectory in the field of botany for a new journal, published in a country not of the first world, to attract the attention of the best scientists. The experiment has been attempted numerous times in countries of great biological diversity in tropical regions, where it would perhaps be legitimate to expect that instruments for the dissemination of botanical knowledge can and should be successful. History indicates, on the other hand, that most of these journals rather end up devoting themselves progressively to local botany, with subjects of local interest written and read by local authors, and enter a vicious circle that progressively limits their aspirations of scientific impact.

*Lankesteriana* was not exempt from this risk, from which our University paradoxically saved it. In its sixth year of life, the magazine was “discovered” by the administrative apparatus of the UCR, which noticed its anomalies according to the regulations governing all publication that want to make use of the University’s official logos. Having long been a *lawless* journal (albeit a successful one) in the eyes

of the University, *Lankesteriana* was required to “get in compliance”. Part of the regularization process consisted in the formal appointment of a Director of the journal by the University Council, the supreme decision-making body of our University. At that time, I took advantage of the opportunity to condition my candidacy to transforming *Lankesteriana* into a journal devoted exclusively to the science of orchids, in all its aspects, abandoning the terrain of general botany. Fifteen years later, I believe that the University Council was right in accepting this proposal.

Today, *Lankesteriana* is an established tool that is widely used worldwide to publish research in the field of orchids, ranging from systematics to ecology, reproductive biology, anatomy, mathematical modeling, micropropagation, phylogeny and evolution, and ranging across all regions of the planet rich in orchid diversity. The real impact of the journal is evident to anyone who browses any article or book on orchid science: *Lankesteriana* is cited constantly and with the greatest frequency, and I venture to say that there is virtually no scientific publication on the Orchidaceae family that does not include at least one quote from our journal.

In spite of the fact that it occupies a very specific niche in the field of botany, *Lankesteriana* has continued to grow steadily, but getting to this point hasn’t always been easy. We had to survive the obtuse and unjustified obstinacy with which Thompson Reuters not only has not assigned the journal an impact factor — which the journal deserves also using the highly questionably evaluation methods used by that commercial enterprise —, but continues undeterred and notwithstanding our repeated calls to index *Lankesteriana* in the equivocal group of scientific publications — as if it were dealing with zoology.

Should we care? As signatories of the DORA declaration, and in consideration of the truly limited scientific relevance of that specific metric package, we should not and we do not. We cannot deny, however, that the blind and now completely anachronistic decision of many universities not to assign an academic score to the publications of their researchers except when published by a journal that has an impact *according to Thompson Reuters’ criteria*, has obviously affected

*Lankesteriana*, since many of our colleagues are not able to choose our journal to publish the results of their research. During the times when Thomson Reuters “ruled the waves”, it was a tough fight. Fortunately, authors know the influential role of *Lankesteriana* in its field, and now that the era of questionable metrics and arbitrary assessments – or lack of – is fortunately at sunset, for the great benefit of scientific journals and science in general, I can safely say that we have survived, more forcefully, the arbitrariness of extraneous evaluations. I am pleased to know that my successor at the helm of the *Lankesteriana* will be able to avoid dealing with this increasingly less relevant topic, to focus on the thing that have always counted and really matter: publishing good, correct, original, clean and honest science.

That the journal remains at the center of this science requires, however, that its editors participate personally in the great scientific challenges of the contemporary world. Whoever wants to observe the splendid list of the figures that make up our international committee of *savants* will not be able to avoid noting that they belong mostly to a single generation. As I said, they are perhaps the greatest generation of orchid scientists of all time, the ones who gave birth - to use an expression Alec Pridgeon once told me - to *the fifty golden years of orchidology*, 1960–2010. Many of these friends, colleagues and great scientists are now retired, or close to retirement age, and some have already disappeared leaving a great void in life and science. This group of *Lankesteriana* tutors, advisers and custodians, as well as the person who held its reins for twenty years, now requires to be accompanied by new figures, and to be replaced by new scientists on the crest of the wave, to the good of the magazine and its continuity.

Recently, I calculated that in the twenty years of *Lankesteriana*’s life, I spent more than six hundred *real* days of work sitting at my desk in front of the journal’s computer. Translated into working time, this adds up to two and a half years of my full labor days. Strictly speaking, this is probably not true, because *Lankesteriana*’s editorship is mostly done in “free time” from work, but it can give an idea of the personal commitment required to perform with the functions of *Lankesteriana*’s Editor-in-Chief. Time for a change, also from a personal point of view.

With this fascicle, which concludes the first twenty years of *Lankesteriana*’s life, we present readers with a Cumulative Index of the works published by the journal, accompanied by an Index of Authors, a Thematic Index, an Index of Taxonomic Novelties, and an Index of the Scientific Reviewers who have helped the journal to reach and to maintain its high standard of quality. These indexes have now become necessary to orient oneself in the broad variety of articles published by the journal in two decades, to be able to easily retrieve the plethora of information that *Lankesteriana* has given to the press during its existence, and to recognize by name and surname the authors and reviewers who supported the development of the journal. But these indices are also, without doubt, a monument to the immense effort taken by *Lankesteriana* to make the results of extraordinary research on the diversity, biology and conservation of orchids available to everyone.

It is with great pride and satisfaction that I leave the direction of *Lankesteriana* in the hands of Diego Bogarín, a colleague, a friend, a pupil, and certainly one of the most skilled scientists active today in orchidological research. Diego’s variety of interests, ranging from alpha-taxonomy to evolutionary systematics, from floristics to bioinformatics, from anatomy to genetics, his experience as a researcher, author and scientific reviewer, certainly make him the best possible candidate to continue the journey of our journal successfully and to maintain its position as the leading scientific journal in Costa Rica, the number one journal of non-applied botany in Latin America, and one of the most relevant in the world in this field in terms of use and visibility.

As for me, I will remain at the side of the journal as one of the Associate Editors, where I hope to continue to support *Lankesteriana* with the editorial experience accumulated over many years. I close my farewell with a heartfelt thanks to all the colleagues of the Lankester Botanical Garden who have worked with me for years, dedicating their time, their knowledge, and their patience to our journal. Thanks to Diego, Adam, Melissa, and Noelia, who formally served as Associate and Technical editors of *Lankesteriana*, and thanks to Jorge, Melania, Lizbeth, Grettel, Gustavo and Isler for serving as readers and reviewers.

