

## CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE EDITION OF RELIEVE

*[Adaptación continua y mejoras en la edición de RELIEVE]*

by

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### Abstract

The changes in RELIEVE (*Electronic Journal of Educational Research, Assessment and Evaluation*) during the last year are presented and commented.

### Keywords

Scholarly Journals; Electronic Journals; Electronic Publishing; Information Dissemination; Internet; Primary Sources; Users (Information).

### Resumen

Se revisan los cambios en la evolución de la Revista Electrónica de Investigación y Evaluación Educativa (RELIEVE) durante el último año.

### Descriptoros

Revistas académicas; Revistas Electrónicas; Edición Electrónica; Comunicación de la Información; Internet; Fuentes Primarias.

## Presentation

It makes a year now that we excitedly take the reins of the *Electronic Journal of Educational Research, Assessment and Evaluation* (RELIEVE), inaugurating in this way a new stage (Aliaga and Suárez, 2002). As we commented then, we had a constructed building on solid foundations, on which our undertaking was to consolidate and diffuse this pioneer project, to our understanding very interesting.

It has been a year full of activity and novelties with all of them destined to increase. Even more is the quality of this academic journal that, we repeat with undiminished pride, is Spain's first electronic journal and has a certain international vocation. In this text we would like to comment on some of

the novelties outlined in RELIEVE during the lapsed year.

The first has been the change in the server's location and, therefore, of the Journal's electronic address that due to technical reasons has passed from being at the University of Cádiz, where this publication was born, to its new address at the University of Valencia ([www.uv.es/RELIEVE](http://www.uv.es/RELIEVE)). In order that no already existent connection to the Journal becomes lost, redirection programs were installed to automatically redirect the visitor to the new location. It was also necessary to transfer all the available information in order that new electronic versions be made of all the articles published in the Journal since its beginnings, maintaining the number of visits in the counters, and specifying, in a new heading, the old address as well as the new.

In order to better take advantage of the advances that have been appearing in the design of web pages, a new graphics environment has been constructed, based on *frames* that have marked a change in the journal's appearance. A fixed area of identification, in which the new logo appears (based on that of the main association, AIDIPE) and the name of the Journal (in Spanish and in English), has been included in the superior part so it is always present for the readers. On the left side, a surfing menu has been included leading to the different parts of the Journal. When you click on the objective, it appears in the main area that can also be visualized in an independent way as a page to complete screen.

A bilingual presentation in Spanish and English (the current *lingua franca of science*) is being developed for each information screen of the Journal that, thanks to of the ease of communication provided by the internet, not only allows a diffusion to the Hispanic community, but to an even wider population of potentially interested readers.

In formal aspects, in consonance with the above-mentioned, the appearance of articles has also been changed. The presentation of articles has been systematized (title, summary, and keywords) in Spanish and in English for each article. In the heading of each one appears the complete reference of the article, in order to facilitate the citation of the works published in RELIEVE (by means of "cut and paste"), as well as for its easy identification. We have continued with the practice, started during the previous stage of RELIEVE by its previous executive director, Gregorio Rodríguez, of installing a specific counter that measures the differential diffusion of all and each one of the published articles. We have added, at the end of each of the articles, a connection to *nedstat* ([www.nedstat.com](http://www.nedstat.com)), one of the principal and more noted institutions of statistics of visits to internet web pages, having this way an external audit on countries of origin of the

visits, frequency, temporary distribution, etc.). We believe that this measure contributes a control of the extraordinary important diffusion to not only endorse the quality of the Journal, but also each one of the articles separately. This allows for the construction of profiles of interested users in each one of the texts, going this way beyond the classic measures of a journal's impact that is used by, for example, the *Journal Citation Report* of the *Institute for Scientific Information*, and that in a very inadequate way are sometimes used to evaluate the authors' specific work (Garfield, 1998; López Piñero and Terrada, 1992; Fernández Cano, 1995; Aliaga and Orellana, 1999, 2001).

In each one of the articles a group of goal data has been included (hidden for the ordinary reader) with the intention of facilitating the localization of texts. We have opted for the *Dublin Core* code, one of those that has a larger diffusion in the field of academic publications.

In the superior part of each one of the articles some small "windows" have been included with a clear blue background that contribute an *added value* to the texts, allowing the advantage of the possibilities that hypertext offers. In this way, links appear to other related articles, the possibility to send, with a single click, comments to each one of the articles, the possibility to print the article directly (only the article, without the problem of managing the frames), connect to the authors' presentation record, etc. These windows appear in Spanish (on the right side) and in English (on the left side).

From such hypertext windows, one can also gain access to articles in PDF format. This is a wide-spread format on the internet that contributes several advantages. On one hand, it unifies the presentation, since the format is the same on any computer and with any operating system. Equally, it contributes the paging that could facilitate the citation of concrete texts of an article.

Finally, within the formal aspects of the articles, we have added to the end of each article a record of its fundamental data with the intention of facilitating its classification and eventual inclusion in different databases.

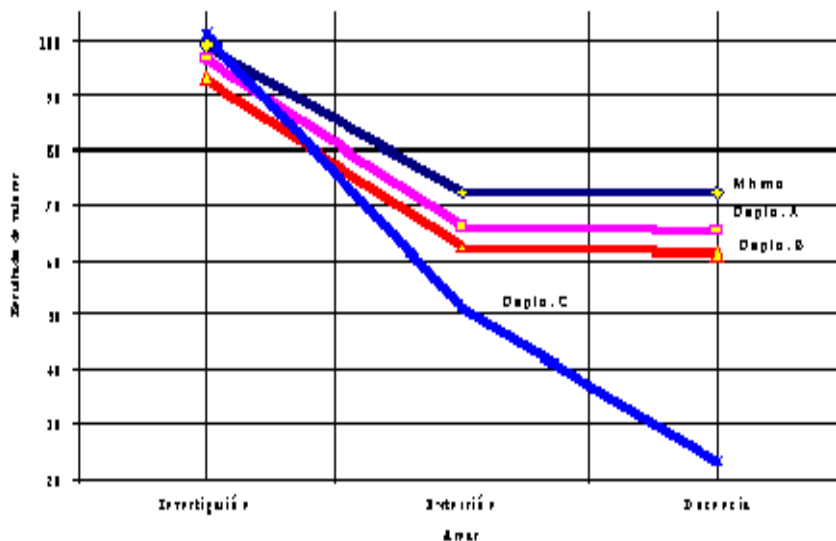
### Data of the last volume

Throughout the year of 2002, volume 8 of RELIEVE has been published and we have added a combined index of the whole vol-

ume (its two biannual issues) (<http://www.uv.es/RELIEVE/indexv8.htm>).

The Editorial Board decided to maintain a stable quantity of published articles for the two issues (four articles); although in the first one, an editorial article presenting the Second Stage of the Journal was also included. However, one must note that the number of received manuscripts increased considerably for the second semester in relation to the first (passing from 7 to 10), as it is appreciated in Graph 1 that can be seen next.

Graph 1 - Variation in the articles received and published



Starting with the commented data, we can easily calculate the percentage of rejected articles (or removed by the authors after receiving the report of the reviewers) which was 42.9% in the first issue and rose to 60% in the second (giving 53% for the total of volume 8). We believe that these data are an evident sample of the high-level demand which the process of *blind peer-revision*, adopted by RELIEVE, subjects to the received manuscripts, guarantee in turn of a high level of quality and of the interest to publish in our Journal on the part of the authors.

The quality of a journal owes itself in good measure not only to the adopted editorial politics and the work of the authors that send their works, but also to the quality of the reviewers' work. RELIEVE feels proud and grateful to the wide cast of specialists that have contributed unselfishly with their time, knowledge, and kindness to a frequently dark, but indispensable work. In the edition of the first issue of volume 8, twelve reviewers participated, while they were fourteen in the second. It is necessary to keep in mind that some articles were directly rejected by the Editorial Committee, when judging that they were not adapted to the Editorial Politics of RELIEVE, for which no reviewer

ended up participating. In total, for the published articles, ten reviewers participated (in the first issue) and nine (in the second issue), making a mean of 2.5 reviewers per article in the first semester (in one article we ended up resorting to four different opinions) and 2.25 in the second, what gives a mean of 2.38 reviewers per published article for the whole of volume 8.

The objective that we have posed is that the revision and edition processes of an article, from when we receive the original manuscript until it is published in the Journal, does not exceed one month. It is, without a doubt, a very ambitious objective, especially if we compare it to the publication time periods in printed journals. But we believe that ability to respond quickly is one of the main benefits of electronic journals (Rodríguez, 1999; Aliaga and Suárez, 2002). We have established the system of continuous edition so each article is published as soon as the Editorial Committee, in view of the reports of the reviewers, approves it, without having to wait to for the approval of other articles in that same issue. This concept makes the notion of an "issue" of a journal, which is fundamentally maintained for formal reasons, more flexible.

In the issue corresponding to the first half of 2002, the longest edition process (period

that lapses between the reception and the publication of an article that includes revision by external judges, rectification on the part of the author, new revision in their case, layout, authors' confirmation of the first draft and its inclusion in the different indexes of the Journal) was 5.3 months, while the shortest was hardly 0.2 days (referring in this case to an article rejected directly by the Editorial Committee), giving a mean for all the manuscripts of 2.1 months that ends up being 3 months if we refer exclusively to the articles that were eventually approved and published (that is to say, without including the quick rejections). We believe that although it still doesn't reach our objective, they are, however, some notably inferior figures to that of other printed journals. With experience and greater adjustment within the Editorial Committee, these figures improved for the second issue of volume 8. In this way, the longest revision process was completed in 4 months, and the shortest in 0.1 month, the mean of the edition process for all the manuscripts of that second six months being 1.9 months, and only 2 months for the articles that were eventually published. We trust to continue improving these time periods, although it is not always in our hands, as it depends on some very busy reviewers, the authors' speed in carrying out modifications or justifying their arguments, etc.

*Table 1 - Edition process duration in RELIEVE*

	<b>Vol.8 Iss.1</b>	<b>Vol.8 Iss.2</b>	<b>Total Vol. 8</b>
Duration of the longest edition process	5.3	4	5.3
Duration of the shortest edition process	0.2	0.1	0.1
Mean of the edition duration for all manuscripts	2.1	1.9	2
Mean of the edition duration for published articles	3	2	2.76

*Duration measured in months*

The level of the Journal's internationalization has also been progressing gradually. For the first issue, a total of 28.6% of the received manuscripts hailed from outside of Spain, a value that rose to 50% for the issue corresponding to the second half of the year, proof of the growing interest in our publica-

tion which transcends borders. We believe that the ease of electronic communication, in which RELIEVE is published, as well as its growing diffusion and impact, will continue to give a more and more international profile to this publication, a tendency that will be necessary to confirm in later volumes.

## Data about diffusion, impact and quality

The data are varied, coming from different sources that indicate that the diffusion of RELIEVE is growing notably. At the beginning of 2002, the home page's visitor counter lightly surpassed 60,000 visits, a remarkable number for a specialized academic publication. It is necessary to point out also that this number only covers the visits to the home page of the Journal (each article has, as we said before, its own specific counter) and that it doesn't include all those received, as the counter was not utilized until February of 1997. During the year 2002, the rate of visits accelerated, surpassing 100,000 before the end of the year.

This analysis, exclusively countable, didn't allow us to carry-out a study on the visits' areas of origin, causing us to add to the home page two links with different statistic services for visits throughout the first half of 2003. In spite of the different methodology used by each one of these services (nedstat and hispastats), we can affirm that nearly a third of the visits come from Spain, a lightly inferior percentage comes from Mexico, and the rest from other countries, fundamentally Hispanic and North American.

A specific index that allows for the measurement of the electronic Journal's diffusion is the number of prestigious institutions that have links to the Journal. In the case of RELIEVE, such institutions are very numerous and they include noted organizations such as the AERA, ERIC, EERA, etc. as well as a great quantity of university libraries.

There are other indexes and databases that have come to include RELIEVE, which indicates diffusion and important international recognition. Nevertheless, there is still much remaining in this task that we will address in later issues.

In summary, the *Electronic Journal of Educational Research, Assessment and*

*Evaluation* (RELIEVE) continues in a process of upgrade and continuous improvement in its desire to become a publication of interest, utility, and prestige in the field of education. We will succeed in thanks to the combined collaboration of the authors, the reviewers and, let us not forget, the readers. To all of them we extend our most sincere gratitude.

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