Can There Be Shades of Gray on a Blacklist?
Assessing Predatory Journals and Their Impact

Hillary Corbett | Northeastern University
SSP Annual Meeting – May 31, 2017
What do we mean by “predatory” in scholarly publishing?

pred·a·tor  (prē’də-tər, -tôr’)

n.
1. An organism that lives by preying on other organisms.
2. A person or group that robs, victimizes, or exploits others for gain.

... and is the dictionary definition always appropriate?

Not all predatory journals are alike

- Intent to defraud
- Deceptive business practices
- Implying journal is higher quality than its articles suggest
- Providing cheap publishing services with little editorial/review process
What if we’re talking about ice cream instead of journals?

• Worst-case scenario: manufacturer says its ice cream contains ingredients that it does not
  – Fraudulently implying higher quality of product

• Least worst-case scenario: manufacturer is up front that its ice cream is poor quality
  – Appealing to an opportunity in the market for people who want to eat ice cream but don’t have a lot of money to spend
Intent is important!

Not all low-quality OA = predatory
Parting Company with Jeffrey Beall

By JOSEPH ESPOSITO | DEC 16, 2013
58 COMMENTS

It turns out that his definition of “bad actor” is too broad…

The open-access movement isn’t really about open access. Instead, it is about collectivizing production and denying the freedom of the press from those who prefer the subscription model of scholarly publishing.
Why do authors choose to publish in predatory or low-quality journals?

• Quicker time to publication
• Reputation of journal not important to them
• Institutional incentives for publishing
• Institutional disincentives for publishing in high-quality journals

Early-career researchers/Grad students

• Sometimes need more guidance on choosing a publication venue
  – Disciplinary variation
  – Dissertations
• May have more difficulty parsing intent from e-mail solicitations
Choosing a Publication Venue: What is a "Predatory Publisher"?

A guide for researchers looking for places to publish their work.

Introduction

Have you received an unsolicited e-mail from a publisher, inviting you to submit your article or conference paper? Or perhaps you’ve received what sounds like a wonderful opportunity to have your dissertation published? Use the tools on this page to determine if you’ve been approached by a questionable or predatory publisher—one that is really only interested in your money and will not help you establish a good publication record.

Is This Journal Publisher Legit?

Signs a journal or publisher might be "predatory" or that it might not be a good fit.

1. The journal is not listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).
2. The journal is not listed in the Ulrichs directory. It is not included in one or more major indexes.
3. The publisher is not a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA).

Where to Find More Information About Journals

- **Journal Citation Reports (JCR)** — Use this resource to locate citation data (metrics) for a particular journal title.

- **Publication Index Lists** — Use these lists to determine if an open-access or hybrid journal is included in a traditional, respected indexing source:
  - Web of Science: includes arts, humanities, and social sciences, science/technology/engineering
  - Chemical Abstracts (SciFinder Scholar): science/technology
Predator or Low-Quality?

- APC is only $45, but...
- Making claims that can’t be substantiated – “renowned and widely acceptable in major universities,” “prestigious academic editors/reviewers,” as well as one that can be easily substantiated...
- Not indexed in “all major online bibliographic journal databases” – not in Web of Science or Compendex (or listed in Ulrichs)
Call for Papers

Launched in October 2006, the [redacted] aims to foster communication between scientists publishing high quality, innovative research at the frontiers of the life sciences. Peer review is designed to allow for the unique requirements of such papers and is overseen by an Editorial Board with members from different disciplines.

Paper Submission Page

JCR 2013
5-Year Impact Factor: **2.467**
Coverage: Science Citation Index

If you don't want to receive our emails in the future, please click [here to unsubscribe].

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Predator or Low-Quality?

- Per Ulrichs (and even the listed website!), journal changed in 2012
- Now published by T&F with different ISSN
- Current 5-year impact factor is 0.886
- TOC on listed website does not match TOC on T&F website
- Is this a case of SPOOFING?
Call for Papers for December Issue

Sent: Friday, December 4, 2015 at 2:01 AM
To: Corbett, Hillary

Journal’s 16 issues have been completed

Dear Doctor / Researcher

This is an invitation for you to submit manuscripts for publication in our Monthly Published Online International Journal. It publishes original and full-length research papers. Submitted papers will be reviewed by technical committees of the Journal. All submitted articles should report original, previously unpublished research results, experimental or theoretical, and will be peer-reviewed. Articles submitted to the journal should meet these criteria and must not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Frequency: Monthly Issue
Status: Published Online (Open Access)
Submit your manuscript online: [Redacted] or
also sent by e-mail attachment to [Redacted]

Predator or Low-Quality?

- Based in India; offers half-price APC in rupees for Indian authors (otherwise $50)
- Five journals listed on website, flagship title is indexed in “International Innovative Journal Impact Factor” (?) list; not in Ulrichs
- Not much grandiose language
- Issues have 2-3 articles each, mostly Indian authors
- Articles not all written in good English, appear to be published as submitted w/ no editing
What about the reader?

• May be even harder to determine predatory vs. poor quality
• Difficult to tell if poorly written articles contain good research
• Even a well-written article will suffer by association with a journal that publishes bad writing or bad research
What about the reader?

Impacts of SMS on Writing Skills of the University Students in Sri Lanka (A Case Study of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka)

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What about the reader?

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, this is an accepted arena that a lot of the young generation, specially students, while talking, walking, eating, reading, even in classroom, in foreground of teacher, continuously striking the keys of an accessory that seems to be a part of their hand, called mobile phone, a lot of deliberate interactive media. That’s all about messaging which is the recent development in the field of communication technology and the favorite of youth especially acceptance about the globe due to its inexpensive tariff. This analysis is concerned with the entertaining and rational impacts of SMS argument messaging or “texting” on the university acceptance of Sri Lanka which is an advanced over extension and revolutionizing advice in today’s world. Why this is happened, because adaptable phone, the latest accumulation media.
We know that our users, undergraduates in particular, start their research with Google or Google Scholar rather than the library website.

With the proliferation of predatory and low-quality online journals, we need to rethink how we’re teaching evaluation of information resources – it can’t be just about scholarly journals vs. websites any more.
Thank you!

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