To Catch a Predator: Predatory Journals, Fraudulent Conferences and How to Avoid Them

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Abstract

• The scholarly publishing landscape is changing nearly as quickly as technology will allow. One of the most significant changes is open-access publishing. Open-access publishing offers scholars a way to maximize availability of their work and allows institutional libraries a way to eliminate price and permission barriers. However, predatory journals exploit the open-access concept for profit. This presentation will outline the perils and promises of predatory publishers and how to avoid them.¹

Scholarly Publishing

Publication Process

- Scientists study something.
- Scientists write about their results.
- Journal editor receives an article and sends it out for peer review.
- Peer reviewers read the article and provide feedback to the editor.
- Editor may send reviewer comments to the scientists who may then revise and resubmit the article for further review. If an article does not maintain sufficiently high scientific standards, it may be rejected at this point.
- If an article finally meets editorial and peer standards it is published in a journal.

www.iosrphr.org/pages/publication-process.html
“Academic publishing is a very strange business indeed. It became established at a time when all publishing was on paper, when duplication and delivery were demanding problems, and when publishers provided an important service to researchers.”

1 Shaw 2015
Changing Times

• With the expansion of the internet and the digitization of data, there has been an “increasing pressure to provide new scientific content as quickly as possible.”¹


Image: iStock.
What is Open-Access?

• “The free, immediate, online availability of research articles, coupled with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment.”¹

  • Formerly print-only journals now also offer free digital versions of their articles.
  • Some journals are entirely open-access.

¹ Bowman 2014 as cited in Shaw 2015.
Open Access

• Open Access movement began in the early 2000s\(^1\)

• The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), founded in 2003, high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.\(^2\)
  
  • “Stated aim of the DOAJ is to increase the visibility and ease of use of OA scientific and scholarly journals, thereby promoting their increased usage and impact.”\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Bowman 2014

\(^3\) Ibid

Image: hpampel/Flickr
Benefits of Open-Access

• Accelerates availability of scientific results.
• Authors retain their copyrights.
• Facilitates communication of research results.
• Lowers costs.

1 Shaw 2015
2 Bowman 2014
Image: iStock.
“Predatory” Journals

• Exploit the emerging acceptance of open-access academic journals.

• Appear legitimate.
  • Websites that closely resemble those of legitimate online publishers.
    • Frontiers in Bioscience (right images)
    • Jokull (see next slide)
  • List names of respected scientists on their editorial boards (often without their knowledge or permission).

Source of images: https://www.bioscience.org/.
Predatory vs. Real Journals

Hijacked journal
http://www.jokulljournal.com/

Authentic journal
http://jokulljournal.is/

Articles on hijacking of authentic journal also appeared in the search results.

Note that when searched, the hijacked journal appears before the authentic journal.
“Predatory” Journals

• Target:
  • those who feel pressure to publish, advertising rapid publication.
  • senior scholars to build journal’s credibility
  • those most unfamiliar with the scholarly communication ecosystem—junior faculty, postdocs, and graduate students.

Source: Yucha 2015
Image: iStock.
“Predatory” Journals

• Look Enticing
  
  • Promise rapid peer review and acceptance.
  
  • Send flattering emails praising earlier work and requesting another, inviting authors to submit manuscripts or serve as “guest editors” for their journals.

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Subject: [Journal of Educational Issues] Recruitment and Call for Papers

Dear Dr. Samuel V. Bruten,

I have had the opportunity to read your paper “Education Journal Editors’ Perspectives on Self-Plagiarism” in Journal of Academic Ethics and can tell from your work that you are an expert in this field.

I am Priscilla Ann, the editorial assistant of Journal of Educational Issues. Journal of Educational Issues is a peer-reviewed new journal published by the Macrothink Institute. The scopes of the journal include, but are not limited to, the following fields: Educational Administration, Language Education, Teacher Education, Educational Technology, Business Education, Medical Education, Sociology of Education, Social Content of Education, Curriculum Studies, Technology and Design Education, Educational Change, Theory of Education.

Right now, with the Vol. 1 No. 2 issue scheduled to publish in second half of 2015, it is a great pleasure to invite you to contribute your best knowledge and research. Your contribution will help us to establish a high standard. If you are interested, please find the journal’s profile at http://sei.macrothink.org and submit your manuscripts online. Or you can send your paper directly to the e-mail: jej@macrothink.org. If you have any questions, please contact the editorial assistant at jej@macrothink.org.

We are recruiting reviewers for the journal. If you are interested in this position of reviewing submissions, we welcome you to apply for. Please find further details at http://recruitment.macrothink.org

We would appreciate it if you could share this information with your colleagues and associates.

Thank you,

Best regards,

Priscilla Ann
Journal Manager, Editorial Assistant
Journal of Educational Issues, Macrothink Institute
September 12, 2015

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Image: E-mail forwarded to author, September 12.
But…
Problems with Predatory Publishers

• Predatory journals can be more than just annoying spam mail
  • Submissions not reviewed by legitimate peers.
    • Result: methodologically, statistically, and scientifically unsound papers are being published.
  • No safeguard against fraudulent and plagiarized work.
    • Often cited in later studies, poisoning future work.
• Lack digital preservation
  • Use single server without any backups resulting in lost content.

Source: Yucha 2015
Image: iStock
• Predatory journals also demand a fee for publication.
Consequences

• Authors who fall prey to predatory journals often find that
  a) their career progress is hindered by the lack of credibility of the publishing venue,
  b) they are subjected to hidden fees, and/or
  c) published articles may suddenly cease to exist, become inaccessible through established search mechanisms or reside in legal limbo, with the copyright signed away to a nonexistent publisher and their contractual arrangements unenforceable.

Source: Yucha 2015
Image: iStock.
Do you know how many predatory journals are out there?
A Lot!

• Just in 2014, approximately 420,000 papers were published by predatory journals in comparison to 53,000 in 2010.¹

• And it is not slowing down.

So what can you do?
How to Avoid Predatory Journals

1. Avoid journals or publishers listed on Beall’s List.
2. Use only journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).
3. Use only publishers that are members of recognized professional organizations that commit to best practices in publishing, such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE); the International Association of Scientific, Technical, & Medical Publishers (STM); or the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA).
4. Verify that journal is indexed in databases such as PubMedCentral (free) or the Web of Science (USM subscription).
5. Note contact details for the journal and its staff (email, postal address, working telephone number).
6. See if the costs are associated with publishing clear.
   • Credible journals do not ask for a submission fee.
7. Consult a USM librarian
   • Contact Elena Azadbakht (Elena.Azadbakht@usm.edu) or your library liaison at http://www.lib.usm.edu/services/collection_development_liaisons.html.

Source: Clark 2015
Remember this image?

- Though the image does a good job at illustrating the publication process, the website where this image was located came from a predatory journal. (See next slide)

- Visit the website and apply what you have learned to identify that it is a predatory journal.
  - IOSR Journal of Pharmacy... The Unit of International Organization of Scientific Research
Note the awkward grammar in the name of the journal, cheesy red blinking arrows, fishy payment options, no physical address, etc.
Note the promise of rapid peer review.
Fraudulent Conferences

• Like predatory journals, the goal of fraudulent conferences is PROFIT.

• Predatory conferences invite participants via email and charge registration fees.
  • Meetings may not exist or are often cancelled with no refund of registration fees.
  • Often use names of scientists without permission to promote these meetings.
  • Conference “names can be deceptively similar to other well established meetings.”

Source: Bowman 2014
Image: iStock
“The New York Times reported that scientists recruited to appear at a conference called Entomology-2013 mistakenly believed they were to make a presentation to the leading professional association of entomologists. In fact, the prestigious conference was named Entomology 2013 (without the hyphen). The speakers for the fraudulent conference were recruited by e-mail and later charged a fee for the privilege. Most of those who paid the registration fee were offered the opportunity to make a presentation that could be used for resume purposes if they chose to do so.”

How to Avoid Predatory Conferences

• Though little has been written on the issue, there are a few websites that list predatory conferences.

  • Bogus Conferences
  • Fake Conference BlogSpot
  • Scholarly Open Access


Source: Bowman 2014
Additional Resources


Acknowledgments

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