Predatory Journals and Publishers

Predatory journals / publishers misuse the paid open journals model and benefit from publication fees without complying with established standards of scientific publishing.

The phenomenon of predatory journals and publishers is most known for the American librarian Jeffrey Beall and his list, who published the names of fraudulent subjects on his website Scholarly OA. His personal blog has long served as a useful tool for identifying low-quality journals and publishers. However, in January 2017, J. Beall deleted his blog.

Characteristics of a predatory journal / publisher

Typically, predatory journals/publishers show several of the following characteristics:
- **Peer review** is only formal (fictitious) or is missing entirely.
- They accept any text in return for payment, **regardless of its quality and contribution**.
- They do not comply with **established publication standards and ethics**.
- **They misuse the titles of prestigious and well-established journals** (a predator often only changes the word order or adds/deletes a word) or choose general and vague titles without any specification of a particular field (an exception are so-called megajournals – e.g. PLoS ONE – which are multidisciplinary journals otherwise complying with common standards).
- They do not provide **specific contact details** (often only a non-personalized e-mail or a contact form is available), they do not provide clear information about publication fees, peer review, internal processes, etc.
- They provide a list of **fake names of the editorial board members** or, conversely, names of well-known and prominent scientists, but without their knowledge and consent.
- They state the Impact Factor and/or the SJR, despite the journal **not having the metrics and not being indexed** in the Journal Citation Reports – JCR and/or Scopus .
- They present **fictitious quality indicators** (e.g. Universal Impact Factor, Global Impact Factor, Journal Impact Factor, etc.).
- They provide **false information about indexation in established databases and indexes**, or boast of being indexed in services which do not carry out any content quality checks before indexing a journal (e.g. CrossRef, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, etc.).
- They **aggressively and intrusively reach out to potential authors** and call for them to publish (or to participate in a conference such as key-note speaker) via unsolicited e-mails.
- The composition of an editorial board of predatory publishers is often **the same or almost identical for more than one journal**.
- Predatory journals are often strikingly similar in appearance and content of their webpages.

To learn more about the criteria of a predatory journal and publisher, see Jeffrey Beal's document: Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers (copy, original deleted along with the Scholarly OA blog).

How to avoid predatory journals / publishers?

Publishing in journals of questionable quality conflicts with the Code of Ethics of Charles University , damages your reputation and the reputation of CU. Likewise, membership in predator editorial boards or quoting predatory articles sheds a bad light on researchers and their work.

If you are interested in an open access journal, **we recommend that you evaluate whether it is a predatory journal before submitting the article**, using the following steps:
- For unknown or new journals / publishers, pay attention to quality verification, carefully evaluate whether the journal / publisher shows characteristics of predatory journals/publishers .
- On the ISSN Portal , check whether the journal actually exists, what is the journal's ISSN and its official website.
- Check the information provided on the pages of the journal (e.g. whether there is an institution listed as a publisher, whether information on publication fees is given, who is a member of the editorial board, etc.).
- Check if the journal actually has a reported **impact factor** (in Journal Citation Reports - JCR) or **SJR** (in Scopus).
- Check that the journal is indexed in the databases it claims to be on its website (access paid databases via the CU Electronic Resources Portal).
- See if any of your colleagues have published in the journal and ask about personal experience.

The website   Think.Check.Submit . offers further steps to assess trustworthiness of a journal.

If you are unsure of the credibility of your chosen journal, contact   OA Central Support   or consult your supervisor, faculty library, or field colleague.

Useful resources

GROFOVÁ, Šárka. *Predatory journals and open access: predators in the world of scientific publishing* [online]. Praha: Ústřední knihovna Univerzity Karlovy, 2020 [cit. 2020-04-06]. Available at: https://zenodo.org/record/3738003