Predatory Publishing: How Not To Fall Prey

by Craig Arthur

Dear Colleagues/Professors/Authors/Librarians/Other,

We would like to call people to participate as peer reviewers and submitters in the following journal: The Universal Journal of Library Studies.

Our most humble goal is to globalise knowledge. If you have unpublished papers, our journal (UJLS) is aN avenue for online publication. Please submit your works thought email (ktcpg@hotmail.com) We will be excited to be your publisher. UJLS is a monthly journal that is open access and reviewed by peers. We help people to get credit for their work and we help edit the works by providing you with comments of experts. Reviewers will be on the list.

Who Are We? We help the people with the publications. Why Work With Us? Because we give you the benefits.

Open Access: All articles are availabel to all the people anywhere in the world. US$0,00 submission or publication fees: If you submit before October 31, 2014. Indexing: We will be indexed with reliable places like the Ulrick, DOGE, and the others.

Thank you for spending your tim reading this message and we look forward to your submission. It is vigorously appreciated if you shared this information with all your colleagues.

Best Regards,

Michael Jones
Kut The Check Publishing Group
Tel: +2813308004
E-mail: ktcpg@hotmail.com

*H*ave you received an email that looked eerily similar to this one? If you have, you were likely part of a predatory publisher's fishing expedition. If you are yet to receive this kind of brash solicitation, you will probably find at least one when you check your spam folder.

The number of gold open access journals, freely available journals sometimes supported by article processing charges, has steadily increased over the past decade.[1] According to a recent report roughly eight percent of journals with impact factors are open access.[2] With hundreds of identified existing predatory publishing companies, it is difficult to fault our teaching partners and/or students if they fall for a predatory publisher's solicitation.[3] Academic librarians are arguably any campus' best-suited guides to the quickly changing academic publishing landscape and have much to gain from leading the discussion. Library sponsored workshops on open access publishing opportunities and hazards provide an excellent opportunity to further strengthen outreach to both faculty and graduate students.

While open access publishing opportunities cannot be described as a simple duality, there are definite indicators that an opportunity may not be what it claims. Librarians must consider the nuance and grey area of academic publishing as the models of publishing continue to evolve.[4] This article will (re)familiarize librarians with helpful tools that empower us to serve as effective advocates for members of our campus communities as they evaluate options for publishing their research.

Warning Signs

Unsolicited emails offering seemingly appealing publication and editorial board opportunities regularly flood our inboxes. While not all predatory publishing operations operate in such a crass manner there are numerous red flags that routinely appear in solicitations from counterfeit journals.

Questionable solicitation emails typically contain grammatical and syntax errors.[5] Unidiomatic use of English is often a sign of an overseas predatory publishing operation. Their awkwardness knowing no bounds, solicitors routinely dredge the Internet for conference programs and insert entire abstracts into their emails in hopes of feigning familiarity with a potential victim's work.

Craig Arthur serves Radford University as an instruction librarian. When he is not attempting to convince undergraduate students that research can be both fun and life changing, he enjoys DJing, whitewater canoeing, and collecting spam emails.

It is rare for a non-predatory journal to make promises of quick, hassle-free publication to authors. Predatory publishers routinely make this claim. Speedy publication is often possible because there is rarely a peer review process to slow things down. Explicit "cold call" blanket offers to serve on an editorial board should also cause pause. Individuals who agree to serve on the board of a predatory journal often find it difficult to force publishers to acknowledge and accept resignations.[6] Some journals have gone as far as to add academics to their editorial boards without first asking their permission.[7] Contacting editorial board members directly provides valuable insight and is one of the best ways to determine a journal's legitimacy.

In the sample email, the counterfeit journal was not yet indexed but the solicitor indicated that it would be soon. This is another common sign of predatory publishing.[8] If a journal is not indexed it may be difficult or impossible to find content in the future. What good would it do anyone to publish research in a largely inaccessible journal? As librarians, we know how difficult it can be to track down articles in even legitimate, if esoteric, journals. Imagine the difficulty of finding an unindexed ten-year-old article that was published by a fly-by-night below-board operation that is no longer existent.

> ... predatory publishers often use this tactic as an appealing hook.

Did you notice that the solicitor's email address was provided by a free email service? This is yet another red flag. Also, it is unclear where publishing is based. Predatory publishers often obscure their true locations to appear more legitimate.[9]

It is by no means uncommon for open access journals to charge authors article processing fees. However, these fees should be stated in a forthright and honest manner.[10] It is rare for a reputable open access journal to solicit submissions with extremely limited promises of free publication; predatory publishers often use this tactic as an appealing hook. While several open access journals have fee waivers for which authors can apply, the terms are rarely this restricted.

Open Access Resources for Evaluating Publication Opportunities

The Directory of Open Access Journals (http://www.doaj. org) provides pertinent information on each of its nearly 10,000 listed titles. Operating for the last eleven years, it aims to be "a one-stop shop for users of open access journals." Its coverage includes all scholarly and scientific subjects and all journals have researchers as their intended audiences. Numerous languages are included and the advisory board has a decidedly

international reach. Notably, all journals featured must make their content available for free in full text and, keeping true to the goal of being a "one-stop shop," the content is directly available via the site. *The Directory of Open Access Journals* considers the quality control of each journal before they are added. According to *DOAJ*, quality control is defined as either peer or editorial review. In an effort to better serve as a "white list" of only trustworthy publishers, *DOAJ* recently tightened its listing criteria.[11] *DOAJ* presently adds approximately three and a half titles per day while weeding somewhere around two hundred titles a month.[12]

Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association's website (http://www.oaspa.org) is another valuable resource when publication opportunity questions arise. *OASPA's* Code of Conduct and "whitelist" of publishers is especially helpful. The importance of peer review, the value of expert editorial boards, the explicit statement of any and all publication fees, and limited direct marketing are all important concerns to the organization's members. These guidelines are useful when evaluating the practices of potential publishers.

A similar code of conduct is available from the *Committee on Publication Ethics* (http://www.publication-ethics.org). This nearly twenty-year-old organization includes situational flowcharts, specific examples of the organization's code of conduct in practice via a searchable database of cases, and position statements. Like other professional organizations, more resources and counsel are only available to full members but *COPE* does provide free access to many documents to non-members. While beneficial, criteria listed by *OASPA* and *COPE* often lags behind trends of academic publishing, so at times it may be dated and incomplete.

Beall's List of Predatory Publications (http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/) is a freely available listing of many predatory journals found on the personal blog of the University of Colorado Denver's Scholarly Initiatives Librarian Jeffrey Beall. Beall is the only librarian (at least in recent memory and not adjusted for inflation) to be threatened with a billion dollar lawsuit due to his work.[13] He coined the phrase "predatory open access journals" and for several years has been the highest profile librarian, and, more often than not, critic, in the open access discussion. The product of a contentious figure and a one-person shop not without limitations, his site is worth reviewing.

Subscription Resources to Vet Publication Opportunities

Another resource is *Ulrich's Periodical Directory* (http://www.serialssolutions.com/en/services/ulrichs/). In addition to indexing academic journals, Ulrich's seems to index anything that currently is or was at one time published periodically. It does not provide the level of detail for each listed title that *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities* does, but it does list all of the respective abstracting and indexing databases and provides information on the online availability for each of its 300,000 titles. This makes *Ulrich's Periodical Directory* a superior resource for verifying a journal's index and abstract availability.

While much narrower in breadth, *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities* (http://www.cabells.com/) is also a helpful tool. *The Directory* is a subscription resource many librarians already know. With nearly a forty-year history and over 8,500 titles listed, *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities* is one of the longest standing and largest of publication vetting tools. *The Directory* covers journals in the areas of accounting, economics and finance, management, marketing, education curriculum and methods, educational psychology and administration, education technology and library science, psychology and psychiatry, computer science, health administration, and nursing and provides detailed information on validated journals, calls for submissions, and rankings. *The Directory* lists topic areas, acceptance rates, and publication guidelines for each of its entries. The review processes, number of reviewers, time required for review, and availability of reviewers' comments are listed for each journal as well. Journals are ranked in *The Directory* by citation count, difficulty of acceptance, and institutionally by specific topics. Open access journals are included in *The Directory* but understandably the majority of the listings are for traditional, for-profit journals. *The Directory* also accepts recommendations for journal listings and assesses each suggested title critically before inclusion. Journals are considered on the basis of their intended audience, relevance to the fields covered by the database, sponsorship by professional organizations and/or government agencies, the quality of content, and the thoroughness of the peer-review process. Speaking to the nuance inherent to modern academic publishing, *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities* lists *Virginia Libraries* review process as "editorial." The articles in this issue, however, received a full peer review.

> **Fostering dialogue on our campuses can help our teaching partners and students avoid falling prey.**

Conclusion

The past decade has seen many changes to long-standing academic publishing models. Predatory publishing, a consequence of the open access publication model that sometimes uses article processing charges, will likely continue to be an issue for the foreseeable future.[14] Fostering dialogue on our campuses can help our teaching partners and students avoid falling prey. As publication models continue to evolve, so do the multifaceted responsibilities of academic librarians.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Heather Morrison, "Dramatic Growth of Open Access: December 31, 2013," *The Imaginary Journal of Poetic Economics,* last modified January 10, 2014, http://poeticeconomics.blogspot.com/2014/01/dramatic-growth-of-open-access-december.html.

2. Joel Cummings. "Open Access Journal Content Found in Commercial Full-text Aggregation Databases and Journal Citation Reports," *New Library World* 40, no. 4 (2013): 177, accessed June 1, 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03074801311304078.

3. Gina Kolata, "Scientific Articles Accepted (Personal Checks Too)," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/health/for-scientists-an-exploding-world-of-pseudo-academia.html.

4. Bonnie Swoger, "It's Not About Predators, It's About Journal Quality," *Scientific American*, May 24, 2013, http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/information-culture/2013/05/24/its-not-about-predators-its-about-journal-quality/.

5. Monica Berger, "To Catch A Predator: How To Recognize Predatory Journals and Conferences," Information Interventions! @ CUNY, http://openaccess.commons.gc.cuny.edu/files/2013/11/To-Catch-a-Predator-handout.pdf.

6. Kolata, "Scientific Articles Accepted."

7. Jeffrey Beall, "Predatory Publishing: Over Zealous

Open-Access Advocates are Creating an Exploitative Environment, Threatening the Credibility of Scholarly Publishing," *The Scientist*, August 1, 2012. http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/32426/title/Predatory-Publishing/.

8. Jeffrey Beall, "Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers (2nd Edition)," *ScholarlyOA.com*, http://scholarlyoa.com/2012/11/30/criteria-for-determining-predatory-open-access-publishers-2nd-edition/.

9. Ibid.

10. Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, "Code of Conduct," *OASPA.org*, http://oaspa.org/membership/code-of-conduct/.

11. Declan Butler, "Investigating Journals: The Dark Side of Publishing," *Nature* 495, no. 7442 (2013): 433–435, accessed August 8, 2014, doi:10.1038/495433a.

12. Morrison, "Dramatic Growth of Open Access."

13. Jake New, "Publisher Threatens to Sue Blogger for $1-Billion," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 15, 2013, http://chronicle.com/article/Publisher-Threatens-to-Sue/139243/.

14. Jeffrey Beall, "Predatory Publishing is Just One of the Consequences of Gold Open Access," *Learned Publishing* 26, no. 2 (2013): 79, accessed June 1, 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/20130203. **VL**