“The rapid rise of predatory journals—publications taking large fees without providing robust editorial or publishing services—has created what some have called an age of academic racketeering. Predatory journals recruit articles through aggressive marketing and spam emails, promising quick review and open access publication for a price. There is little if any quality control and virtually no transparency about processes and fees. Their motive is financial gain, and they are corrupting the communication of science.” (Clark & Smith, 2015)

As the trend of open-access journals grows, more and more researchers and academics are being solicited by dubious journals to submit papers. Sometimes, it is obvious that the journal is unreliable and disreputable. Other times, however, it may be somewhat more challenging to determine if a journal is trustworthy and credible. When trying to decide if a journal or publisher is authentic, consider the following criteria.

Criteria

**Editorial Board**
Is the editorial board listed online? Be wary of journals or publishers that do not list their editorial board. If it is listed online, examine the names of the editors. Do they have academic or professional affiliations? You may want to do a preliminary search some of the editors’ names to determine whether or not they are credible.

**Quality of Articles**
Read through some of the articles in the journal. Are they high-quality articles? Would publishing your own research alongside them be positive or negative for your reputation?

**Contact Information**
Does the journal provide its contact information? Take it as a warning sign if there is no contact information listed. If there is information listed, you could search the address in Google or Google Maps to determine if it is a valid address.

**Rejection Rates**
How many articles does the journal reject? Is this number comparable to reputable journals? Many predatory publishers or vanity presses will publish anything and everything that comes their way, regardless of quality.

**Publishing Fees**
Are the author fees prominently displayed? Are the rates consistent throughout the website? Beware if the fees are not explicitly stated, or if they differ from page to page. Predatory publishers often have hidden costs and fees.
Resources

There are also some resources which can help you determine whether or not a publisher is questionable.

**Think. Check. Submit.**

This campaign is an initiative supported by many well-established open access associations and publishers to encourage researchers to critically examine a journal before submitting articles. There is a list of questions and resources for researchers to consider and to help determine the validity of a journal.

**Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA)**

OASPA is an association for open access journal publishers. Publishers must apply for membership and, as members, must follow specified criteria. A list of members can be found on the OASPA website. Does the journal you are investigating belong to OASPA?

**Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)**

DOAJ is an association of open access journals. Journals must apply, and DOAJ evaluates the quality of the journal to grant it membership to the association. You can search through the directory to see if a journal is included.

**Ulrichsweb**

Ulrichsweb compiles the bibliographic information of over 300,000 periodicals. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it is a good reference to determine if a journal is recognized and reputable. If the journal you are searching for is not recognized by Ulrichsweb, you should be cautious. You can access Ulrichsweb through the Dalhousie Libraries’ website.

**Remember: these lists are comprehensive, but not exhaustive. If a source does not appear on any of the lists, you should still consider the evaluative criteria to determine if it is a credible avenue for publication.**

If you have the slightest bit of doubt, proceed with caution. Examine journals and publishers critically, reflect on whether or not they meet the criteria, and evaluate their reputation.

If you still have questions, be sure to contact your library for more help.

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References


