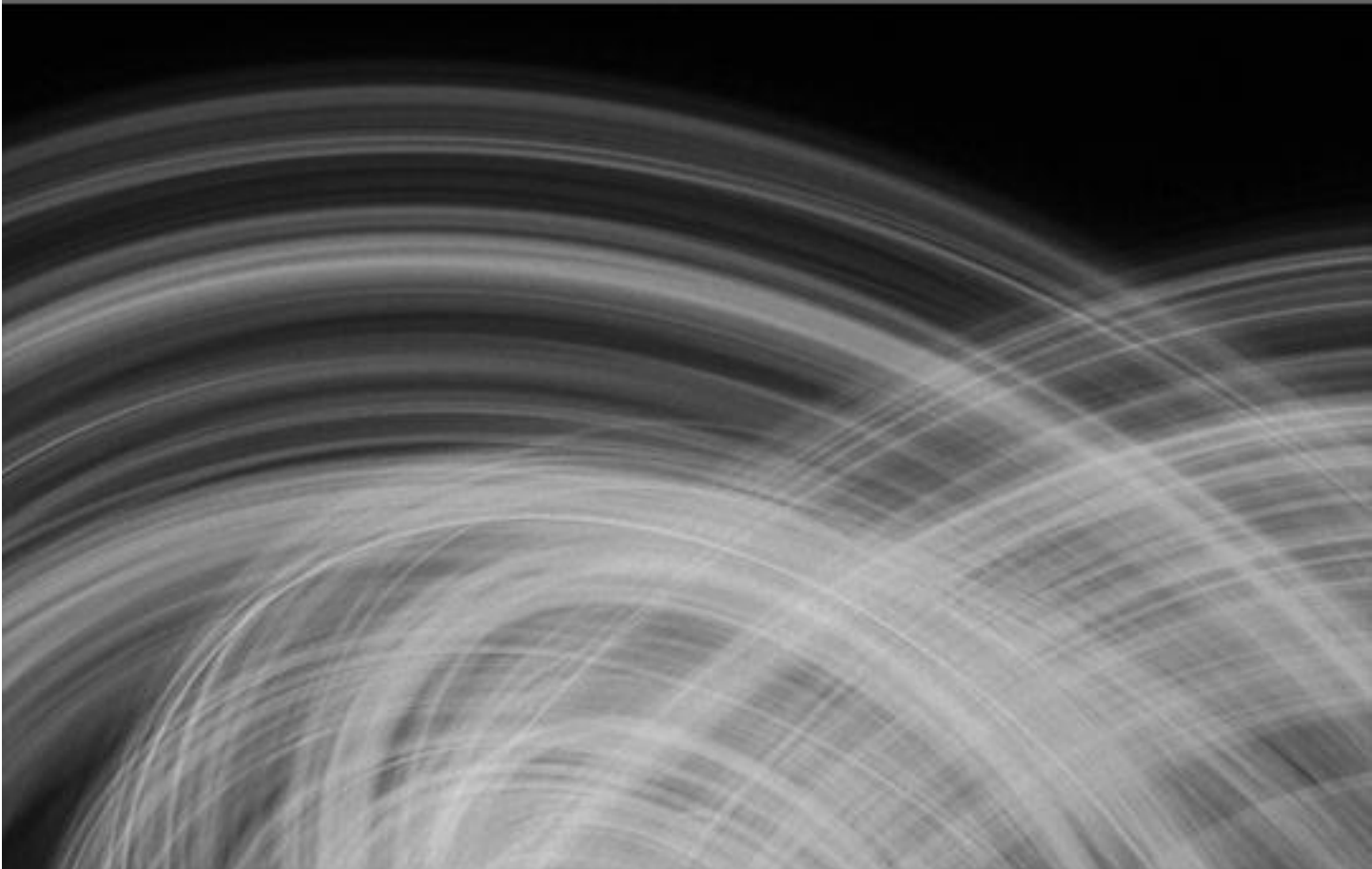




Vetting Scholarly Journals

School of Advanced Studies Tip Sheet



Tip Sheet: Vetting Scholarly Journals

Because of changes in technology in recent years, it is extremely easy for an individual or organization to create what appears to be legitimate research conference, publication, or both. If you are submitting your research to a journal in the near future, ask yourself the following questions to help ensure that the journal is a reputable and worthwhile source.

It is vital to investigate all aspects of journals – recommended lists by reputable associations, impact factors, indexing, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), adherence to open access (OA) best practices, and fees – as you make a decision about where to submit your research.

Is the journal or publisher predatory?

Jeffrey Beall – an associate professor and a librarian at Auraria Library at the University of Colorado, Denver – maintained a website dedicated to scholarly open access materials and lists of predatory publishers and predatory standalone journals until 2017. This list was part of an on-going discussion in academia about journals and publishers that would prey on faculty publication demands. Predatory journals and publishers will look like an academic, peer-reviewed journal but upon closer inspection and interaction it becomes clear that the journal is focused more on profits than upholding academic integrity and standards. Here are some links to learn more about predatory publishers:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predatory_open_access_publishing
- <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/04/predatory-publishers.aspx>

Review everything you can about the journal and its publisher before submitting your work. We highly suggest asking your peers and University Research Center chair about the journal before submitting. If you are a UOPX faculty and will be applying your publication to your faculty credentials, reach out to the review team for your school about the journal before submitting can save heartache later.

Some things to be mindful of include:

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- Promising a quick turnaround time – often just a few weeks — from submission to publication. *More on publication time in the next section of this document.*
 - Using a fake impact factor, sometimes with the wrong number of digits or a made up measure to make claims about the journal's standing or reputation. *More on impact factors in a later section of this document.*
 - Claiming the journal content is indexed when it is not. *More on indexing in a later section of this document.*
 - Surprise fees after submission. *More on fees in a later section of this document.*
 - Spam requests for submissions and/or peer reviewers.
 - Minimal or no copyediting or proofreading services.
 - Not disclosing a physical location.
 - Copying submission and author guidelines from other publishers.
 - Broad journal titles and/or combination of fields that do not usually go together.
 - Journal titles that are similar to other established journals or differ by one word.
 - Grammatical errors and/or dead links on website and emails.

How long does publishing a peer-reviewed research article take?

Resist the temptation to publish quickly and easily. Often predatory publishers promise quick turnaround times of just a few weeks. While researchers are under pressure to publish, a quick publication can be a lot more trouble than it is worth. It can also be costly due to hidden fees charged by predatory journals. Finally, there is the potential for a quick publication in a predatory journal to tarnish your image as a legitimate researcher since you risk publishing in low quality outlets that do not follow legitimate peer-review practices.

Publication in most reputable journals will often take a couple to several months from the time of the initial submission, revise and resubmit requests, proofing, to final publication. Rejection is also a very common part of attempting to publish in reputable sources. Do not be scared of rejection. Instead, take reviewer comments in rejection notices seriously and consider revising your article for a reputable publication that might be a better overall fit for your research and try the submission process again.

Does the journal have verifiable impact factor?

An impact factor is a means to help assess the relative importance of a journal within and across academic fields of study. It is a quantitative measure that takes into account how often and how many articles from a particular publication are cited within a given period of time.

Journal Citation Reports (JCR) by Thomson Reuters is the leading journal impact factor tool. The Scientific Journal Ranking (SJR) is another, though much less widely used, measure of a journal's impact factor. Often JCR and/or SJR impact factors are posted on journal websites. JCR and SJR impact factor numbers are never the same as these are two different ranking systems. The SJR impact factor is always a smaller number than the JCR impact factor. Both impact factor numbers consist of a number followed by three decimal places (e.g., 1.986).

Thomson Reuter's JCR website, <http://about.jcr.incites.thomsonreuters.com/>, provides annually updated impact factors for a subscription fee. To download the list of journals, go to http://wokinfo.com/products_tools/analytical/jcr/ and click on "2015 JCR Journal Coverage."

The SJR impact factor list is a free alternative to the JCR. The SJR can be found at:

<http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>

Predatory journals will often claim to have an impact factor and provide a made up impact factor in communications and on their webpages. Do not follow links to impact factors originating from a journal's website. The linked site, while it might look like the JCR or SJR sites, might be fraudulent. Instead, go directly to the JCR or SJR sites in separate browser window.

Is the journal indexed?

Journal abstracting and indexing services make articles searchable by subject and keywords in databases. This service is important because it is vital to a journal's ability to disseminate research online to those who are searching for research articles using online databases. Some of the indexing services that are highly regarded are EBSCO (supports databases such as SocINDEX, Criminal Justice Abstracts, EconLit, and others), ProQuest, PubMed, MedLine, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Scopus.

Predatory journals will claim to be indexed by well-known and frequently used indexing services in order to attract authors who will pay their fees. Many predatory journals will claim to be indexed in places that are not actually indexes such as Scribd and Cabells. These are simply digital libraries rather than legitimate indexing and abstracting services. Additionally,

some predatory journal content is indexed within highly regarded services, so remain cautious. Indexing is just one of the many factors to consider in evaluating the legitimacy and standing of a journal.

Do not blindly accept claims in email solicitations or on journal websites about being indexed. Check journal databases such as those available to you as a University of Phoenix student or faculty member through our library. From e-Campus go to:

1. Library
2. University Library
3. Journal Indexed and Abstracts

Does the journal claim it is an open access (OA) journal? If so, is the journal in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)?

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a list of journals that meet very specific open access (OA) criteria, and functions as a quality control mechanism in the scholarly publishing industry. Go to <https://doaj.org> (this website is also linked from the University Library website). DOAJ allows you to search for specific journals or to search within subject areas.

DOAJ currently contains over 10,000 journals across multiple subject areas. More journals are being added on a regular basis, but many reputable, peer-reviewed scholarly journals are not yet listed on DOAJ.

Is the publisher of the journal affiliated with an organization that recognizes publishers who adhere to publishing best practices?

Organizations including Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE); and International Association of Scientific, Technical, and Medical Publishers (STM) will only grant membership to publishers who follow publishing best-practices. It is a good idea to verify that a publisher of a journal is listed as a member on one or more of these sites listed below.

If the journal's publisher is not listed as a member, that does not necessarily mean they are a predatory publisher. However, if they are listed, you can assume they have met that organization's criteria for best-practices and membership.

- For OASPA's list of publishers, see: <http://oaspa.org/membership/members/>
- For COPE's list of publishers, see: <http://publicationethics.org/members/publishers>
- For STM's list of publishers, see: <http://www.stm-assoc.org/membership/our-members/>

Does the journal charge fees?

While journal subscription fees are common, other types of fees are not standard practice among reputable, peer-reviewed journals. The vast majority of reputable, peer-reviewed journals require no submission fee and will never have "surprise" or hidden fees. Reputable journals also never charge a fee to "expedite" your submission. Submissions to reputable journals are generally reviewed based on appropriate and qualified reviewer availability. Fees charged by reputable journals will be made known prior to the submission of your work. Any fee information is generally under author guidelines sections of the journal's website.

If a peer-reviewed journal requires a fee, it should be relatively small. For example, the American Economic Review, a top-ranked economics journal, charges \$100 for submissions for American Economic Association members and \$200 for non-members. This is clearly stated in author guidelines. Typically submission fees will be less than \$200 (US).

As an author you will often, but not always, have the option to pay open access (OA) fees for reputable journals (often \$1,000 - \$3,000 US) . Large, reputable publishers such as SAGE, Wiley-Blackwell, and Taylor and Francis allow you to opt in or out of OA fees. Reputable journals typically specify required and optional fees upfront on their websites prior to submission. At this time it is recommended that you not pay costly OA fees. An exception to this is the large OA publisher BioMed Central (<http://www.biomedcentral.com>), which charges processing fees for its journals. These journals are indexed in PubMed, carry impact factors, and are listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Additional Tips

- Be skeptical of unknown and start-up journals. When in doubt, ask several research professionals in your field which journals are reputable, and use the tips provided in this document.
- Be cautious of promised journal publication associated with conferences.
- When asked to sign any type of release or other forms, read the forms carefully so you know what you are signing. Do not sign away the copyright of your work.
- Contact OSS@phoenix.edu and your Research Center Chair if you need additional assistance investigating a journal.