



MU's Position on Predatory Publishing and Open Access Scholarly Journals

Recommendation for authors, published on 7 January 2016

The aim of this document is to draw the attention of MU's authors on a very serious problem of the so-called predatory scholarly journals and take an active approach to its resolution.

1) What is a “predatory journal” and how it can endanger the integrity and credibility of research

The expansion of the model of open access to the results of research work has brought also one negative and very specific aspect – the so-called **predatory (scam) open access publishers / journals**.

A predatory open access publisher / journal abuses the open access model for the purpose of gaining profit to the detriment of the scientific quality of the final product, i.e. in the absence of a reliable peer review process. Provided that the author pays the publishing fee, they can usually be certain that the text will be published – irrespective of its quality. This model may result in **fatal decline of credibility of the entire system of scholarly publishing**.

Scientists who publish in predatory journals expose themselves to the risk of general **discrediting of their own scientific work and eventually of the work of their institution**. If there are a sufficient number of authors interested in such easy publishing, predatory journals may be capable of defending themselves and even flourish and displace well-proven and high-quality publishing media. Moreover, it is obvious that without a thorough peer review of the scholarly qualities of the articles to be published and with frequent, often mutual, quoting of these publications (where low quality generates low quality), it may soon be difficult to distinguish between high-quality and low-quality science and between honest and dishonest scientists.¹ Despite strict criteria of the large and reputable publishers, predatory journals may soon penetrate into the respected global databases of

¹ Jeffrey Beall, Predatory Publishing. The Scientist, August 1, 2012
<http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/32426/title/Predatory-Publishing/>

the Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) or SCOPUS (Elsevier). This is already happening in a small extent, which further complicates the existing non-transparent situation.

It can be difficult to detect a predatory open access publisher / journal. Probably the best known anti-predatory activity is a list of scholarly journals and publishers that has been updated since 2011 by Dr. Jeffrey Beall of the University of Colorado, Denver. The so-called [Beall's list](#) cannot, of course, be accepted without a critical review, it depends to a large extent on individual intuition and experience. The list is probably not complete and, on the other hand, may be affected by the strict and uncompromising approach of its author, for which reason it also contains certain suspicious, but not "convicted" predatory activities. Nonetheless, it is still the best possible way to detect predatory activities in the Czech Republic. The information register of research and development results (RIV) has no tools for distinguishing these outputs, which paradoxically means that the current scoring system supports the development of intentional or unintentional publishing in predatory journals, sometimes even with a relatively high IF, in order to gain points in RIV. In October 2015, a permanent information campaign "[Think. Check. Submit](#)", with the aim of assisting scientists to correctly understand the offers of various publishers and to be able to identify predatory open access publishing.

In the Czech environment, the existence of "predatory articles" in RIV is addressed by the initiative [Antipredator](#) that operates within the framework of the civic association Věda žije (Science is Alive).

2) What is the response of MU?

Masaryk University resolutely condemns any for of using the system of predatory open access publishing for the purpose of easy multiplication of publication outputs and artificial increasing of the response to the actual scholarly works.

Masaryk University also wishes to motivate its authors to focus on high scholarly quality and thorough consideration where and how to publish their outputs. The aim is to define the principles of publishing activities so as to avoid publishing, for any reason or purpose, in any media with merely fictitious or poor quality peer review process or in any media with negligible scientific impact.

It is definitely not our objective to denounce the authors themselves who participate, mostly unaware, in this system. However, MU **does recommend its authors careful and thorough consideration, verification and, where applicable, review of their publication strategy and termination of their cooperation with any potentially predatory publishers/journals** unambiguously identified in the Beall's list. At the moment, we consider this recommendation optimal, even in light of the certain level of subjectivity of the Beall's list.

We present below an overview of certain typical signs of predatory open access publishers, as well as recommendations how to avoid publishing in journals of dubious scholarly quality.

3) How to distinguish predatory publishers/journals²

1. E-mail spam – invitations to publish in a journal (often not known by the author), to participate at various questionable conferences (often as a key-note speaker), invitations to questionable or fictitious boards of editors. Predatory publishers frequently employ so-called acquisition editors who actively search potential authors (e.g. authors of master's theses) and contact them by means of spam.
2. Use of titles very similar to those of reputable journals or spectacularly sounding titles (e.g. "World Journal of xxx", "International Journal of xxx", etc.), or highly general titles, such as "International Journal of World Research", etc.
3. Non-existing or merely fictitious peer review process; insufficiently described peer review process; stating the names of reputable scientists in the boards of editors without their knowledge.
4. Suspiciously high number of works with negligible impact on the development of scientific findings; greater amounts of ballast.
5. Suspiciously easily given consent with the publication of the sent work; focus on the fee payment; promise of extremely quick review process or immediate publishing after receipt.
6. Failure to observe publishing standards.
7. Insufficient contact details, for example only via contact form.

4) Recommendations for authors

1. When selecting your publication media, benefit from the experience of your colleagues, scholarly communities, and use your common sense – if something seems suspicious, be most cautious.
2. Use open channels, optimally journals indexed in WoS and SCOPUS or registered in ERIHplus.
3. Do not respond to any unsolicited e-mails inviting you to publish (in particular review-type articles) in their journal (of which you have not heard and know nothing about).
4. If you have any doubts about a certain publisher/journal, always try to search (for example on the Internet) whether the journal does not display any of the signs of predatory publishers/journals, as listed above.
5. If you have any doubts about a certain publisher/journal, you can also use the service *Think Check. Submit*. Available here: <http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>.³
6. If the given journal is an open access journal, verify it through the service [Directory of Open Access Journals](#), a respected directory of good quality open access journals. This service also prepares its own heuristics of predatory journals.⁴ Verify whether the publisher is registered in the [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association](#).
7. If possible, avoid publishing in journals (publisher's houses) included in the Beall's list as predatory journals. There is definitely always an alternative...
8. In case of any queries, contact the MU's Research Department.

² It must be noted that all the signs specified here need not necessarily indicate that the given journal is a predatory one. However, these are signs that should present a warning. The criteria are available here: <https://scholarlyoa.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/criteria-2015.pdf>.

³ For more information on the service, see: <http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2015/10/01/think-check-submit-how-to-have-trust-in-your-publisher/>

⁴ <https://doaj.org/faq#predatory>

Recommended resources:

<http://scholarlyoa.com>

<http://antipredator.vedazije.cz/>

<http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

Interesting articles and blogs:

<http://metodikahodnoceni.blogspot.cz/2015/12/predatorum-se-v-kafemlejнку-libi.html>

<http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/21850-predatori-a-upiri-aneb-horor-vedeckych-publikaci>

<http://euro.e15.cz/archiv/predatorska-vydavatelstvi-utoci-vysavaji-cesky-rozpocet-na-vedu-1255068>

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