For researchers across all disciplines, research dissemination is the intellectual core of scholarly work. Publishing in a high-quality peer-reviewed journal remains a prime goal for academics, especially for early-career researchers focussed on promotion and tenure.

Selecting the most appropriate journal based on disciplinary reputation, peer-review quality and selectivity standards is an important first step for scholars when submitting a manuscript for publication.

It is more important than ever that scholars carefully evaluate and select the publications in which they wish to disseminate their work. With the explosion in the number of newly-formed scholarly journals, the selection task can be daunting. While many journals are respectable, adding important conversations and discoveries to the scholarly landscape, others are not. Of greatest concern are those that engage in predatory practices.

The landscape of predatory publishing
So-called predatory publishers are those that lack discernible scholarship, academic rigour or credibility. They use aggressive practices to recruit authors and editors. Predatory publishers’ opaque operations and editorial processes are suggestive of an intention to deceive both authors and readers (Butler, 2013).

Some print-on-demand publishers, also known as vanity presses, produce scholarly monographs. They will require authors to pay for the editing, printing, marketing and distribution of the finished product, but the authors will not benefit from the same high peer-review and editorial standards of a university press, for example.

Predatory practices even extend to conferences and associated conference proceedings. Organizers of such forums use pushy tactics for gathering submissions. Beware of meetings that lack evident scholarship or academic standards, such as an open call for submissions and a named selection panel of known experts.

A more prevalent problem than you might think
Although most open access journals hold to the same high peer-review and editorial standards as do highly-regarded subscription journals, predatory open access (OA) journal publishers have become more prevalent in recent years. University of Colorado at Denver researcher and librarian, Jeffrey Beall, defines predatory OA journals as ones whose primary goal is “to generate profits rather than promote academic scholarship” (Stratford, 2012).

Many OA journal publishers collect a fee from authors to pay for publication and website maintenance. But predatory OA journal publishers exploit this business model, taking fees from authors without providing the services, such as peer-review and copy editing, one would expect from established reputable publishers.

Is anybody tracking and documenting these so-called predatory journals?
Yes. See Beall’s list: “Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers”
http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/
Avoid being duped by an unscrupulous publisher

Ensure you select a reputable, accredited journal before publishing. Is the journal one that your peers read and publish in? Verify a lesser-known open access journal (open access or subscription-based) before submitting your work. Are its claims of prestige valid? Is it actually ranked in tools providing impact measures? Bottom line: “Consider the source” is just as applicable to the choice of publication venues as it is to research methods (Anggraeni, 2014).

And remember, if your goal is open access, you can also publish in a reputable subscription journal and place a copy of your accepted article manuscript in your institutional repository. CARL maintains a list of Canadian OA repositories at http://www.carl-abrc.ca/ir.html.

To find reputable journals, look for those listed in one or more of the following:

- Lists produced by associations where only reputable journals are selected for listing
- The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) - An online directory that indexes quality open access, peer-reviewed journals http://doaj.org
- The Journal Guide - Journal lists that can be sorted by discipline https://www.journalguide.com
- The Ulrich’s Web Global Serials Directory - Can be limited to peer-reviewed journals (open access or subscription-based) http://www.ulrichsweb.com/ulrichschweb/faqas.asp
- The Web of Science Journal Citation Reports - A multidisciplinary index to journals with impact factors http://thomsonreuters.com/journal-citation-reports/
- Scopus – An abstract and citation database including benchmarking and analytical tools that allow researchers and librarians better compare and evaluate journals http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/scopus

Consult a librarian

When in doubt, turn to your campus library. Staff there are familiar with a broad range of scholarly publications, and can provide guidance that helps determine whether a potential publishing venue presents the best opportunity for you.

Further reading


