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Facing Predatory Journals in An Era of Open Access

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Profile

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<http://researchmap.jp/min2fly/>

Today's Topic

Predatory Journals

or

Bad Academic Journals

The following article of Mainichi newspaper was shown on the screen on the day of the presentation.

<https://mainichi.jp/articles/20181215/k00/00m/040/219000c>

What is Predatory OA?

Predatory publishing

- Journals (predominantly OA journals) that accept submitted articles for publication without reviewing, editing, proofreading, or otherwise processing them, in order to gain article processing charges (APCs) from authors
 - Summarized from the Wikipedia article in English
- The designation “predatory” was used for the first time by a librarian Jeffrey Beall.
 - The Japanese “hagetaka” (literally meaning “vulture”) was used for the first time to mean “predatory” by Mr. Masamitsu Kuriyama at Tokyo Metropolitan University.

Essentially, “open access” means:

- A movement aiming to realize the free distribution of research achievements (mainly peer-reviewed achievements)
- There are two major approaches:
 - Publication of repositories (PMCs, institutional repositories, etc.)
 - Open access (OA) journals
 - Money for publication costs is raised by any means other than subscription fees.

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- There are two major approaches:
 - Publication of repositories (PMCs, institutional repositories, etc.)
 - Open access (OA) journals
 - Money for publication costs is raised by any means other than subscription fees.
 - **Predatory journals are of this kind.**

Spread of Predatory Journals

The following website was shown on the screen on the day of the presentation.

<https://www.enago.com/academy/growth-predatory-publishing-predatory-journals/>

The change in the number and percentage of OA articles in predatory journals quoted from reference material 4 was shown on the screen on the day of the presentation.

The number and percentage of OA articles
in predatory journals (Brazil) (4)

Inclusion in Literature Citations and Elsewhere⁵⁾

- Survey of citations of articles appearing in journals published by OMICS International
- A total of 250 journals (54.5%) were found to have citations from other journals.
- There are 157 systematic reviews with citations from articles appearing in predatory journals.
 - And 137 of these reviews are also published in non-predatory journals.
- Some such reviews are even listed in PMC and hence are found in a PubMed search.

The following article of Mainichi newspaper was shown on the screen on the day of the presentation.

<https://mainichi.jp/articles/20180903/k00/00m/040/110000c>

Misunderstandings of Predatory OA Journals and True Problems

Misunderstanding 1: Are All Publishers that Collect Article Processing Charges Suspicious?

- APC (Article Processing Charge) is a common business model.
 - A total of **3,131** APC-collecting journals are listed in DOAJ (a list of OA journals considered not to be bad) (as of 2018).
- Many renowned highly evaluated journals are included in the list.
 - Nature Communications (IF 11.8~)
 - PLOS Medicine (IF 11.6~)
- **APC-type OA journals are unproblematic.**

Misunderstanding 2: Are “Bad Academic Journals” Problematic? (1)

- Bad = “low quality”
- What is the “quality” of a journal?
 - Quality of the articles published?
 - Quality of the editorial?

Misunderstanding 2: Are “Bad Academic Journals” Problematic? (2)

- Journals of “low” quality exist commonly.
 - Peer reviews are available but relatively lax.
 - Essential lack of peer reviews = transactions
 - No established management and editing system.
- Required as an option for publication destination.
 - Journals issued by developing countries and the like: Growth is attempted.
 - Fledgling researchers having achievements they don’t consider wonderful but want to publish...

True Problems with Predatory Journals: False Statements of Peer Reviews

- A false statement of “peer review journal” in the absence of peer review.
 - Not “simply bad” but “evil”, hence fraud.
 - The court recognized this point in the OMICS lawsuit.
- Deceiving the contributor: A peer review was expected but not performed in reality.
- Deceiving the reader: The article was believed to have been peer-reviewed but not so in reality.
 - This includes the evaluators.

Background for the Issue of Predatory Journals: Decreasing Resources for Peer Reviews

- Intensified research competition and increasing pressure for article publication
 - What is wanted is the number of accepted articles in peer-review journals • • •
Increasing contributions
 - Researchers are busy surviving with intensified competition • • • Increased reluctance to work as peer reviewers
 - Imbalance between contributors (increases in China and India) and peer reviewers
- Wish to undergo a peer review and want to quickly obtain results.
 - Not so good to be accepted by a leading journal • • • “My target is no more than a peer review journal.”
 - This gap was targeted by the “predators.”

Measures against Predatory OA Journals

Measure 1: Black List

- Listing predatory publishers and journals
 - Beall's list (disclosure suspended)
 - Successor versions updated by volunteers.
 - <https://beallslist.weebly.com/>
- Problem: Can it be identified accurately?
 - The experiment reported in Science: About 18% of the journals listed in Beall's list were removable.
 - A study suggested that 4% to 14% might not be predatory journals.⁶⁾
 - Another study stated that there was a bias for developing countries.⁷⁾
 - An error could become a major risk (just exemplified by the case of Beall).

Measure 2: White List

- List “acceptable journals.”
 - Create a list by yourself.
 - Require listing in certain databases and elsewhere.
- Problem: “Judgment” as by the black list.
 - Even a JCR-listed journal (with its own impact factor) was later considered a predatory journal
 - Even PubMed is not fully reliable.
 - One day, a non-predatory journal may become a predatory journal: “Hijacking”
 - A list with the simple statement “absolutely OK” alone may be too rigorous?

Measure 3: Checklist Method

- Ask individual authors to confirm by showing the phrases “Journals that meet these requirements are OK” and “Dangerous.”
- Think. Check. Submit.
 - <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
 - <http://thinkchecksubmit.org/translations/japanese/>
- **Problem: Essentially, the judgment is made at the discretion of each author.**

Measure 4: Peer Review Assurance and Proof System

- It is favorable that a system be available to allow authors to become confident about “the presence of peer review” (from before submission).
- Specific Measure 1: Open peer Review
- Specific Measure 2: Use of External Assurance Tool

Open Peer Review

- An attempt to disclose the peer review processes
 - Names of peer reviewers
 - Peer reviewers' comments and processes of their answers and revisions
- Example journals with open peer reviews: F1000, PLOS, PeerJ, Nature series (optional)
- The existence of peer reviews can be assured nearly completely.
- Only a few journals have such a system in operation.

Example: <https://gatesopenresearch.org/articles/3-1473>

The website of Gates Open Research was shown on the screen on the day of the presentation.

External Assurance Tools

- A third-party entity ensures the existence of peer reviews.
- Peer Review Evaluation Badge
 - Meta-data are collected from a peer review system, and a badge indicating a peer-reviewed status is displayed.
 - Not in operation • • • ? (existence cannot be confirmed)
- Publons
 - A peer review registration service (peer review reports can be registered)
 - The primary aims are to compile peer review information, and to facilitate search for peer reviewers.
 - This system also allows the existence of peer reviews to be demonstrated by a third-party entity.

Measure 4: Peer Review Assurance and Proof System

- It is favorable that a system be available to allow authors to become confident about “the presence of peer review” (from before submission).
- Specific Measure 1: Open peer Review
- Specific Measure 2: Use of External Assurance Tool
- **Problems: currently neither is widespread**

**The best solution is
yet to come**

**Academic has just started
working on solutions**

Definition of predatory OA journals (OSF ver.)

Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship.

Characteristics:

- False or misleading information
- Deviation from best editorial and publication practices
- Lack of transparency
- The use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices

Currently the definition is still being worked on!

Source: Nature 576, 210-212 (2019) doi: 10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y

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