

About questionable publishers

Contribution to panel discussion at the 8th Annual
Meeting of the National Scholarly Editors' Forum
of South Africa, Cape Town, July 30th 2014

Lars Bjørnshauge

lars@doaj.org

- This presentation is very much inspired by the works of Walt Crawford as they appear in:
 - Ethics and Access 1: The Sad Case of Jeffrey Beall
 - Ethics and Access 2: The So-Called Sting
 - Journals, “Journals” and Wannabes: Investigating The List
- All from Walt Crawfords **Cites & Insights, Crawford at Large/Online Edition**

Questionable publishing is **not** a
phenomenon that is specific to
Open Access publishing!

Definition

- Definition of predatory:
- inclined or intended to **injure or exploit** others for personal gain or **profit** (Mirriam-Webster)
- A predatory publisher can then be described as
- a publisher who **intends to injure or exploit** others for personal gain or **profit**.

-

- Consider this:
- “Does **exploiting the divide between libraries** (that typically pay for subscriptions) **and scholars** (who typically use the subscriptions) in order to make **extraordinary high profits** constitute predatory conduct?”
- or this:
- “Does **continuing to raise prices at several times the rate of inflation**, even as those increases cause direct injury to libraries by robbing them of budget flexibility or even make it impossible for them to continue to provide resources – does that constitute **predatory publishing**?”

My definition:

Questionable publishers is publishers, who are **not living up** to reasonable standards in terms of **content, services, transparency** and **of business behavior.**

- **Investigation of Beall's list (March 2014):**
- 9219 journals (501 publishers and 320 independent journals)
- Probably thousands of the “journals” does not have an ISSN!
- 1142 journals (12,6%) are either hybrid journals, not OA or unreachable/unworkable
- 386 journals (4,2%) are dying or dormant
- 2836 “journals” (30,8%) haven't published a single article in 2012, 2013 and the first months of 2014!
- 896 journals (9,7%) essentially empty
- 1832 journals (19,9%) has published less than 30 articles (in total) in 2012, 2013 and the first months of 2014

- So far **77,4%** of the journals on the list are covered.
- The rest (23%):
- 784 journals (8,5%) should be regarded as highly questionable
- 961 journals (10,4%) needs investigation
- 385 journals (4,2%) are apparently good

- COPE, OASPA, WAME & DOAJ:

Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing

Introduction

The Committee on Publication Ethics, the Directory of Open Access Journals, the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, and the World Association of Medical Editors are scholarly organizations that have seen an increase in the number of membership applications from both legitimate and non-legitimate publishers and journals. Our organizations have collaborated in an effort to identify principles of transparency and best practice that set apart legitimate journals and publishers from non-legitimate ones and to clarify that these principles form part of the criteria on which membership applications will be evaluated.

These criteria are largely derived from those developed by the Directory of Open Access Journals. Note that additional membership criteria may also be used by each of the scholarly organizations. The organizations intend to share information in order to develop lists of legitimate journals and publishers. We do not intend to develop or publish a list of publishers or journals that failed to demonstrate they met the criteria for transparency and best practice.

This is a work in progress and we welcome feedback on the general principles and the specific criteria. Background on the organizations is below.

- <http://oaspa.org/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice-in-scholarly-publishing/>

The Principles

1. Peer review process
2. Governing Body
3. Editorial team/contact
4. Author fees
5. Copyright
6. Identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct
7. Ownership and management
8. Web site.
9. Name of journal
10. Conflicts of interest
11. Access
12. Revenue sources
13. Advertising
14. Publishing schedule
15. Archiving
16. Direct marketing

- The new application form:
- <http://doaj.org/application/new>

DOAJ Journal Application Form

All the information provided will help our Editorial Team with their assessment, to help them make an informed decision based on the information that you provide.

If you know a journal that should be in DOAJ, please contact the publisher and ask them to complete this form.

BEFORE YOU START, please remember that **all** the content of the journal you are applying about **must** be available **immediately** upon publication.

Basic Journal Information		Quality and Transparency of the Editorial Process	
1) Journal Title *	<input type="text"/>	34) What is the URL for the Editorial Board page? *	<input type="text"/>
2) URL *	<input type="text"/>	The journal must have either an editor or an editorial board with at least 5 clearly identifiable members and affiliation information. We may ask for affiliation information and email addresses as part of our checks.	
3) Alternative Title	<input type="text"/>	35) Please select the review process for papers *	<input type="text"/>
4) Journal ISSN (print version) *	<input type="text"/>	Only provide the print ISSN if your journal has one, otherwise leave this field blank. Write the ISSN with the hyphen "-" e.g. 1234-4321.	
5) Journal ISSN (online version) *	<input type="text"/>	36) Enter the URL where this information can be found *	<input type="text"/>
Write the EISSN with the hyphen "-" e.g. 1234-4321.		This field is optional if you have selected "None" above.	
6) Publisher *	<input type="text"/>	37) What is the URL for the journal's Aims & Scope *	<input type="text"/>

Spot a questionable publisher in 5 mins

- Check list from Gavia Library (the library loon)
-<http://gavialib.com/2012/04/assessing-the-scamminess-of-a-purported-open-access-publisher/> – april 2012 :
- Competent web-site?
- Mass e-mails asking for editors and submissions?
- In the DOAJ? – if not: worrying
- Usage statistics?
- Stable in the discipline?

- Misspelled journal titles?
- Journal launch dates – many at the same time?
- Empty shells- no/few articles?
- Regularly publishing?
- Many “Edited volumes”?

- Quality of writing, copyediting and typesetting?
- Archiving arrangement?
- Editorial Board – identifiable?
- Other financial support – only relying on APCs?
- Relevant Advertising?
- Running many/expensive conferences?

Beall's list:

- Maintained by one (1) person, a serials librarian,
- with remarkable ignorance about just serials,
- who explicitly dislike OA and
- operates as prosecutor, judge and jury
- Re Ignorance:
- Beall: Gold OA means charging APC's –
- Fact: most Gold OA-journals do not charge APC's.
- Beall - June 6th, 2012 is surprised, that a fair number of subscription journals charge various page charges, thought that such arrangements did not exist.
- Fact: a study by Thomas Munro in 2005 found that 75% of 9000 subscription journals do charge author-side fees!
-
- Conclusion: a higher percentage of subscription journals than OA-journals have author-side charges!

**Our ambition: DOAJ to be the
white list!**

and make other lists superfluous –
that is:

if a journal is in the DOAJ it complies
with accepted standards