

Submitting for Publication: Avoiding Predatory Publishers

By Jill Turner, Library Professor, Dental Library, and Jennifer Bowen, Assistant Library Professor, Dental Library

The manuscript has been written and now all that remains is to find a venue in which to publish. Although not the only option, journals are the popular choice for faculty, especially those pursuing tenure or promotion. Authors may wish to consider a few criteria when deciding which journal to approach. The answers to these questions will help guide publishing possibilities.

- **Is the journal peer-reviewed?** This will be an important factor for faculty seeking tenure and promotion and those wanting to publish a research manuscript. Consult your college promotion and tenure documentation for scholarship requirements.
- **Which databases (if any) index the journals under consideration?** Choosing a journal that is indexed in discipline-specific databases increases an article's discoverability.
- **Does journal impact factor matter?** While most faculty prefer to publish in a high-impact factor journal like *Chemical Reviews* or *The Lancet*, the higher the impact factor, usually, the harder it is to get a manuscript accepted. Some high-impact factor journals will not even consider a manuscript not authored by a researcher from an R1 institution. Publishing in high-impact factor journals is important for tenure in some institutions, while in others, there really is no practical benefit other than bragging rights.
- **Is journal publication frequency important?** Some journals publish bi-monthly and some only semi- or even annually. Time-sensitive research or an approaching tenure application deadline may factor into the journal's decision.
- **What is the journal's acceptance rate?** This metric is not always included in the *About This Journal* section, but if it is, it will provide some idea of how much competition a manuscript might face.
- **Is publishing Open Access (OA) an option?** There are some definite advantages to choosing the OA route (e.g. copyright control). Some journals are exclusively OA, but many well-known journals offer a hybrid; authors can choose either OA or traditional publishing.

Open access (OA) journals are a publishing model for scholarly communication that offers free online access to the reader. There are pros and cons to publishing via the OA model. First the pros: the OA model allows authors to keep copyright control. When publishing

with a traditional journal authors sign away the rights to their article to the publisher. This is important to consider, especially if the article contains a tool, scale, or questionnaire developed by the author. Second pro: there is potential for a wider audience for the article if it is published in an OA journal. The reader will not be hindered by the lack of a subscription or a pay-per-view barrier. Some of the cons: in the OA model the author pays the publishing fee which can range from several hundred to several thousand dollars. Another con is the potential for exploitation by predatory publishers.



Predatory publishers use an “exploitative academic publishing business model that involves charging publication fees to authors without checking articles for quality and legitimacy, and without providing editorial and publishing services that legitimate academic journals provide” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predatory_publishing). With open-access journals becoming more established as legitimate avenues for publishing, authors need to be aware there are thousands of predatory journals. The following can help determine if a journal is legitimate or predatory:

- **Did the journal email specifically to solicit an article?** Does that email contain multiple glaring grammatical errors or awkward wording? When this happens, these are almost always predatory journals or publishers.

- **Check the journal website - is the peer review policy clear?** If it is not – that is one sign that perhaps the journal is not a legitimate journal.
- **Check to see if the journal is indexed in any academic databases.** Academic databases have already done the work and vetted the journals that they index. Databases or database vendors provide a link to included publications (e.g. [EBSCO A-Z](#)).
- **Check if the journal is listed in resources that are specific to open access journals:** [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#) or [FlourishOA](#). Another option is [SherpaRomeo](#), based in the UK, they also deal in open access, and included journals have been reviewed and analyzed. If the journal is not included in any of the open access resources, it may be a predatory publication.
- **Check to see if the publisher has a membership in an open access publishing organization like [COPE](#).** Legitimate open access publishers are usually members of at least one organization.

Identifying a list of potential legitimate journals to assess can be challenging, particularly for faculty beginning their scholarship journey. There are, however, some “tricks” to the trade. One option is to scan the references from the completed manuscript. Where were those articles published? Another method is to utilize literature databases. Perform a broad topic search in an appropriate database and examine the resulting articles’ journal titles for suggestions.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, databases contain a link to a list of included publications. These lists are often searchable by subject (e.g. “education” or “ethics”). Tools like online “Journal Finders” can also be helpful, and they are free to use. They all basically work the same way, utilizing a word-matching algorithm. Users enter the title and abstract of their manuscript into a search field, and the Journal Finder produces a list of journals that contain similar articles. Some finders are discipline-specific (e.g. [JANE](#), which searches PubMed), others are [publisher or vendor-specific](#), and others are multi-disciplinary (e.g. [Journal Guide](#)). Vendor/ publisher-specific finders only contain their own journals, so authors might wish to investigate more than one.

Tips and links to the tools mentioned above (along with others) can be found in the [Publishing Tips](#) research guide, or ask your library liaison.