CHANGING THE CONVERSATION
From Avoiding Predatory Journals To Finding and Evaluating the Right Journal

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Hi, I am Terri Gotschall and we are talking about changing the conversation from avoiding predatory journals to finding and evaluating the right journal.

Open Access and Predatory Publishing

- Open access can be thought of as a philosophy on the dissemination of knowledge **and** a business model for publishing companies.

- A predatory journal exploits the open access model for financial gain, undermining the scientific community and negatively impacting research dissemination.

To start our conversation today I want to define two important terms so we are all on the same page. You are probably familiar with them. The first is open access, which can be thought of as a philosophy on the dissemination of knowledge and a business model for publishing companies. I know this is a simplistic definition for a complex issue but we are going to be focusing on the business model aspect. Sometimes when we talk about open access we forget the business model part of the definition.

The second term is predatory journal, a predatory journal exploits the open access business model for financial gain, undermining the scientific community and negatively impacting research dissemination, researchers and readers.

The "buzz" around predatory journals

Library Literature & Information Science Full Text database

Search: predatory journal OR predatory publisher

Result: 70

Titles such as:

Publisher Package and Open Access Journals: Are Any of Them Predatory?

Predatory journals and the breakdown of research cultures.

Predatory Publishing: How Not To Fall Prey.

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In today's environment we have two things happening at the same time. First, there is a lot of pressure in academia to publish, to have that work cited, to find research collaborators, to be funded and to prove their value or be let go. Open access publishing allows researchers to disseminate the results of their work to a larger audience, hopefully promoting their research to potential collaborators, funders and other authors who might cite their work.

Second, the conversation around the benefits of open access publishing is continuing to spread and there are more open access options than ever. According to the directory of open access journals there are over 12,000 open access journals. There is a lot of conversations, especially in European countries to encourage publishers toward the open access model especially for publicly funded research. If you want to know more about that conversation look up Plan S.

But in this environment there is also the opportunity for predatory journals to thrive.

Right now there is a lot of buzz about predatory journals. Do a quick search for predatory journal or predatory publisher in the Library Literature & Information Science Full Text database and you will find 70 articles written on the subject. Do a search in Google Scholar and you will find 615 results.

You will find titles such as:

Publisher Package and Open Access Journals: Are Any of Them Predatory?
Predatory journals and the breakdown of research cultures.
Predatory Publishing: How Not To Fall Prey.

Recommendations to identify credible journals

To help protect the credibility of papers arising from its research investment, NIH encourages its stakeholders, including grantees, contractors, intramural researchers, and librarians, to help authors:

- Adhere to the principles of research integrity and publication ethics;
- Identify journals that follow best practices promoted by professional scholarly publishing organizations; and
- Avoid publishing in journals that do not have a clearly stated and rigorous peer review process.

Existing resources can assist in this process. Guidance for researchers include:
Think Check Submit, a publishing industry resource; and
"Academics and scientists: Beware of predatory journal publishers," information from the Federal Trade Commission.

The National Library of Medicine, the NIH entity that maintains PubMed and PubMed Central, encourages publishers to follow established industry best practices including:

- Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals [PDF] from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE); and
- Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, the joint statement by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME).

Notice Number: NOT-OD-18-011. 2017. https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-18-011.html
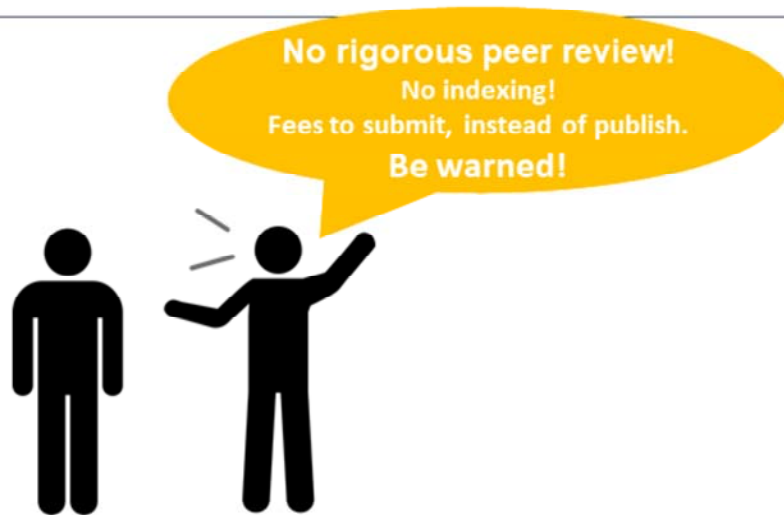
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Funders like the NIH are also participating in the conversation. This is their notice from November 2017, recommending researchers to publish in credible open access journals and warning researchers to steer clear of predatory publishers. They advise authors to use Think Check Submit as a resource to determine if a journal is predatory. They are not just focused on researchers but they also encourage publishers to follow industry best practices.
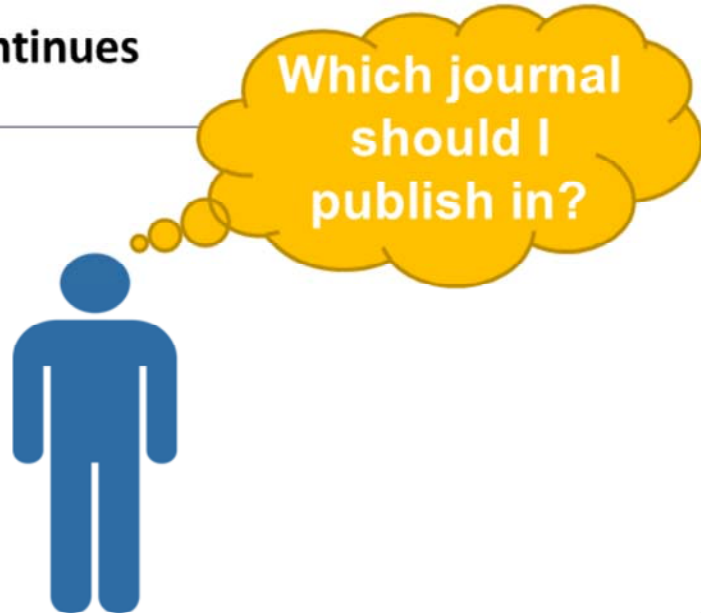
And librarians needed to respond to this issue as well, we created list of predatory journals, such as Bealle's list, we have created list of legitimate journals, power points have been made and cautionary tales have been told at department and staff meetings.

Industry has also responded by creating the think check submit website to help authors identify predatory journals and steer clear.

However, all of this talk of predatory journals and how to avoid them doesn't really answer the question...

Which journal should I publish in?

The information our authors are really looking for is not where shouldn't I publish but where should I publish. They need to know which journal is going to meet their publishing needs.

So authors who are aware of the benefits of open access, yet, who don't yet have the skills to properly evaluate journals are falling victim to predatory journals. Out of curiosity, if you have published an article please raise your hand. Leave your hand up if it was a challenging or time consuming experience.

My congratulations to all of you, publishing is not an easy feat. It takes a lot of time and commitment. So when a researcher gets a solicitation to publish in a journal, or they find a journal that promises a fast turn around time this can be very alluring. Making it easy for a researcher to get snared by a predatory journal.

We can imagine what their internal conversations might be like:
They receive an email inviting them to submit their work to a journal.
"Invite looks great on my CV."
They find a journal that promises a fast publishing time.
"My annual review is coming up and I haven't published yet this year."
Congratulations on your 5th work anniversary
"I need to get published before I get fired."

Now that we have gotten to the heart of what our author's information need really is, it is time to change the conversation from avoiding predatory journals to finding the right journal.

The conversation I wanted to be having with my researchers focuses on what are their goals for publishing, what criteria will help them meet those goals and where do they find journals they want to submit to. Knowing these things first helps clarify which journals are going to be right for their manuscript. Once they have created a list of journals they want to consider they can evaluate each one to determine if it is the right fit for them.

If researchers know how to conduct a thorough evaluation of a journal, in my opinion, they will by the nature of the evaluation avoid predatory journals.

So, we began to change the conversation, we put away our presentation on predatory journals and created a workshop called From Idea to Submission that focuses on how to find and evaluate the right journal.

Finding and Evaluating a Journal Workshop

Participants were taught:

- where to look for journals
- how to determine their goals and criteria for publishing
- how to compare their article to the aim and scope of a journal
- how to make a determination on whether or not the journal was the right fit for them

As participants answered the questions on the worksheet they built a list of criteria for selecting the right journal for their article.

An Observation from the Workshop

The workshop was attended by faculty and students who were just getting ready to publish.

Timing is everything.

We were going to need to do a lot of workshops if we wanted to catch people when they were ready to publish OR we were going to need a point of need service.

One of the observations from the workshop was participants who attended were ready to publish, they were working on manuscripts. The workshop was perfectly timed for them. Meaning we did not reach most of our faculty because our workshop was not relevant to their immediate need.

We were going to need to do a lot of workshops if we wanted to catch people when they were ready to publish OR we were going to need a point of need service.

Finding and Evaluating a Journal Self Learning Modules

Point-of-need self learning module.

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So, the workshop was turned into two interactive self learning modules that are embedded into a LibGuide. The first is Finding the Right Journal and the second is Evaluating a Journal. They include two worksheets that allow participants to jot down their thoughts and track their evaluation. The goal is to help authors find the right journal for their manuscript on their own.

The guide is available anytime, anywhere, on any device, providing that point-of-need service.

Promoting the Self Learning Modules on the LibGuide

Monthly Department meetings:

- Elevator speeches

- 5-minute topic talk on open access, ends with a call to action to use the LibGuide to find the right journal.

Finding and Evaluating Journals

To find the right journal for your article use the Getting Published Guide available on the library's website at
http://guides.med.ucf.edu/gettingpublished/p1

Though I wish, "if you build it they will come" applied to our LibGuides, that is not the case so we have begun promoting the modules.

We did that at first by giving quick elevator speeches at department meetings in September. And we are following that up in November and December with a 5 minute topic talk on "Is Open Access Right for You and Your Audience" which concludes with a call to action to use the LibGuide to find the right journal.

We wanted to keep the lines of communication open between our users and ourselves. So, to keep the conversation going, we included a two question LibGuide survey to get feedback on the self learning module. The self learning modules were launched in September so I don't have any real data yet on their usage but I am happy to report that one person did fill out our survey letting us know the information was helpful.

Questions?

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I hope I have given you some things to think about and that you will continue the conversation at your own institutions. I also want to encourage you to attend one of the final two MLA InSight Summits next year. The Summits provide an opportunity for publishers, librarians and users to all gather around the same table for guided discussion and are the perfect place to engage in meaningful conversation.

I believe that right now is the right time to change the conversation to finding the right journal.

If you want to continue the conversation with Shalu and I please feel free to contact us, we would love to hear from you.