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### A Predatory Primer: What Every Librarian Should Know About Problem Publishers

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# A PREDATORY PRIMER

What Every Librarian Should  
Know About Problem Publishers

Nicole Webber | Stephanie Wiegand

ACRL University Libraries Section's Professional Development Committee | May 24, 2021





**NICOLE WEBBER**

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# OUTCOMES

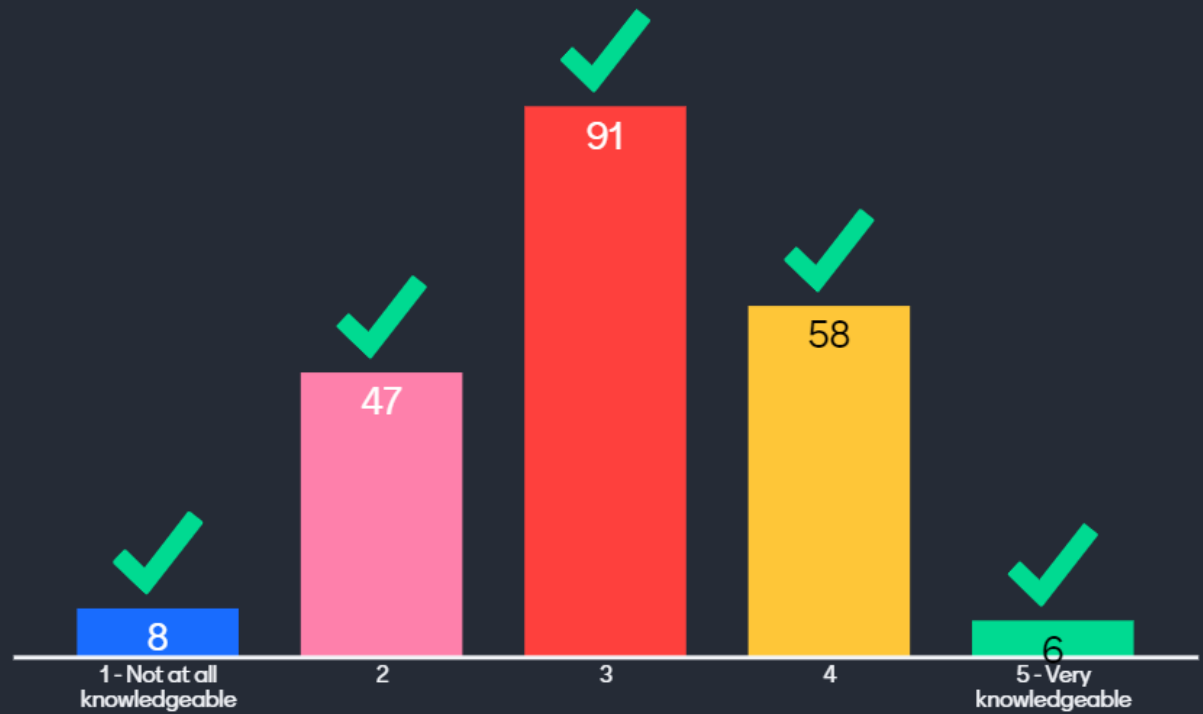
Describe the rise of predatory publishers in the context of the current publishing landscape

Examine the complex issues surrounding academic publishing and the quality of journals

Apply ethical standards of the professional and current library practices to assisting faculty with their publishing needs

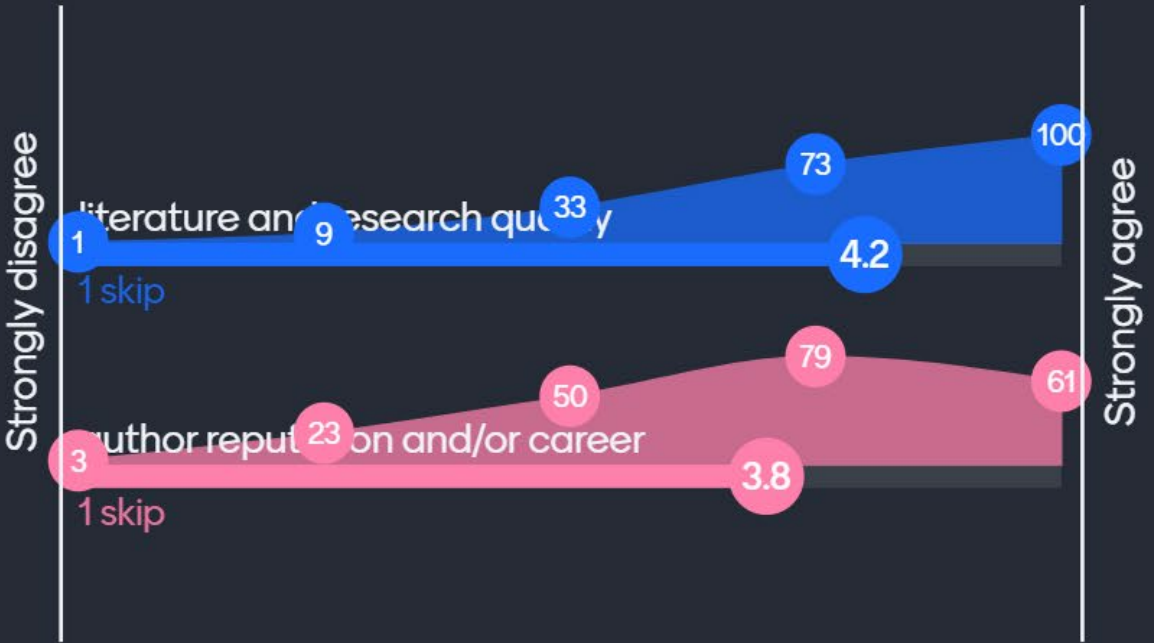


# On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your current knowledge of "predatory publishing"?





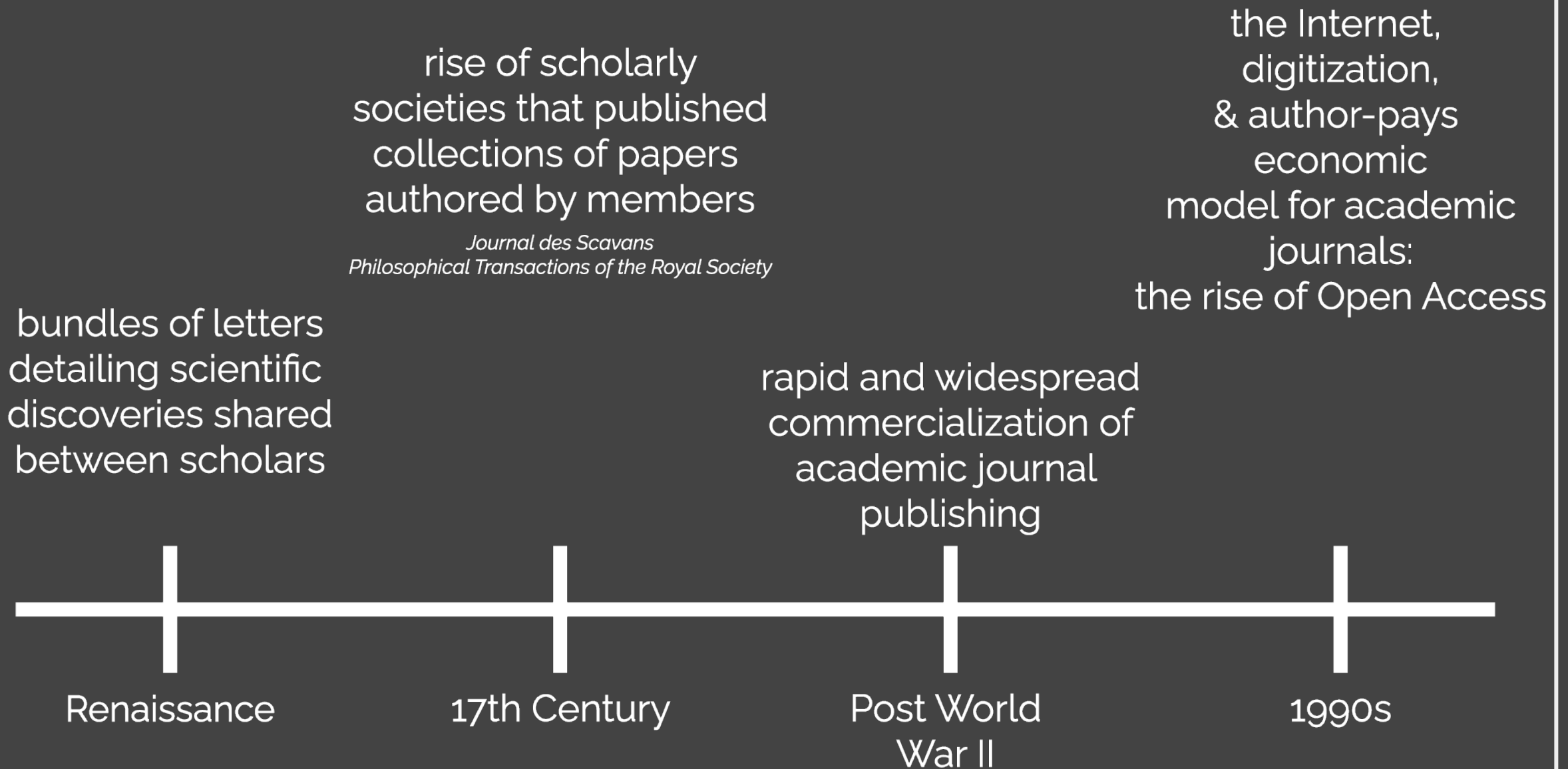
# Predatory publishing negatively impacts:



Press S to show image









open access

≠

predatory

**BROWN'S**  
**IRON**  
**BITTERS** — THE BEST TONIC.

PHYSICIANS AND DRUGGISTS RECOMMEND IT.

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY  
 P  
 PURITY  
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Trade Mark

This medicine, combining Iron with pure vegetable tonics, quickly and completely Cures Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Weakness, Impure Blood, Malaria, Chills and Fevers, and Neuralgia.

It is an unfailing remedy for Diseases of the Kidneys and Liver.

It is invaluable for Diseases peculiar to Women, and all who lead sedentary lives.

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It enriches and purifies the blood, stimulates the appetite, aids the assimilation of food, relieves Heartburn and Belching, and strengthens the muscles and nerves.

For Intermittent Fevers, Lassitude, Lack of Energy, &c., it has no equal.

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**PRICKLY ASH BITTERS**

IT IS A PURELY VEGETABLE PREPARATION

PRICKLY ASH BARK  
 PRICKLY ASH BARK  
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 AND OTHER MEDICALLY PROVEN INGREDIENTS

It has stood the Test of Years, in Curing all Diseases of the BLOOD, LIVER, ACID, HEADACHE, NEURALGIA, &c. Blood, Impure, Cleanses the System.

**DYSPEPSIA, NERVOUS PATION, SICK HEADACHE, AND OTHER DISORDERS DISAPPEAR AT ITS BENEFICIAL EFFECT.**

It is pure as its cat-ties forbid beverage. Sent to the easily taken as advised.

PRICKLY ASH BARK  
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 AND OTHER MEDICALLY PROVEN INGREDIENTS

SOLELY BY  
 ALL DRUGGISTS  
 PRICE 1 DOLLAR

**Steals EATONIC**

FOR YOUR STOMACH'S SAKE


Cures Him — Comes Back



**As Age Advances the Liver Requires occasional slight stimulation.**

**CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS**  
 correct  
**CONSTIPATION**

Genuine bears signature



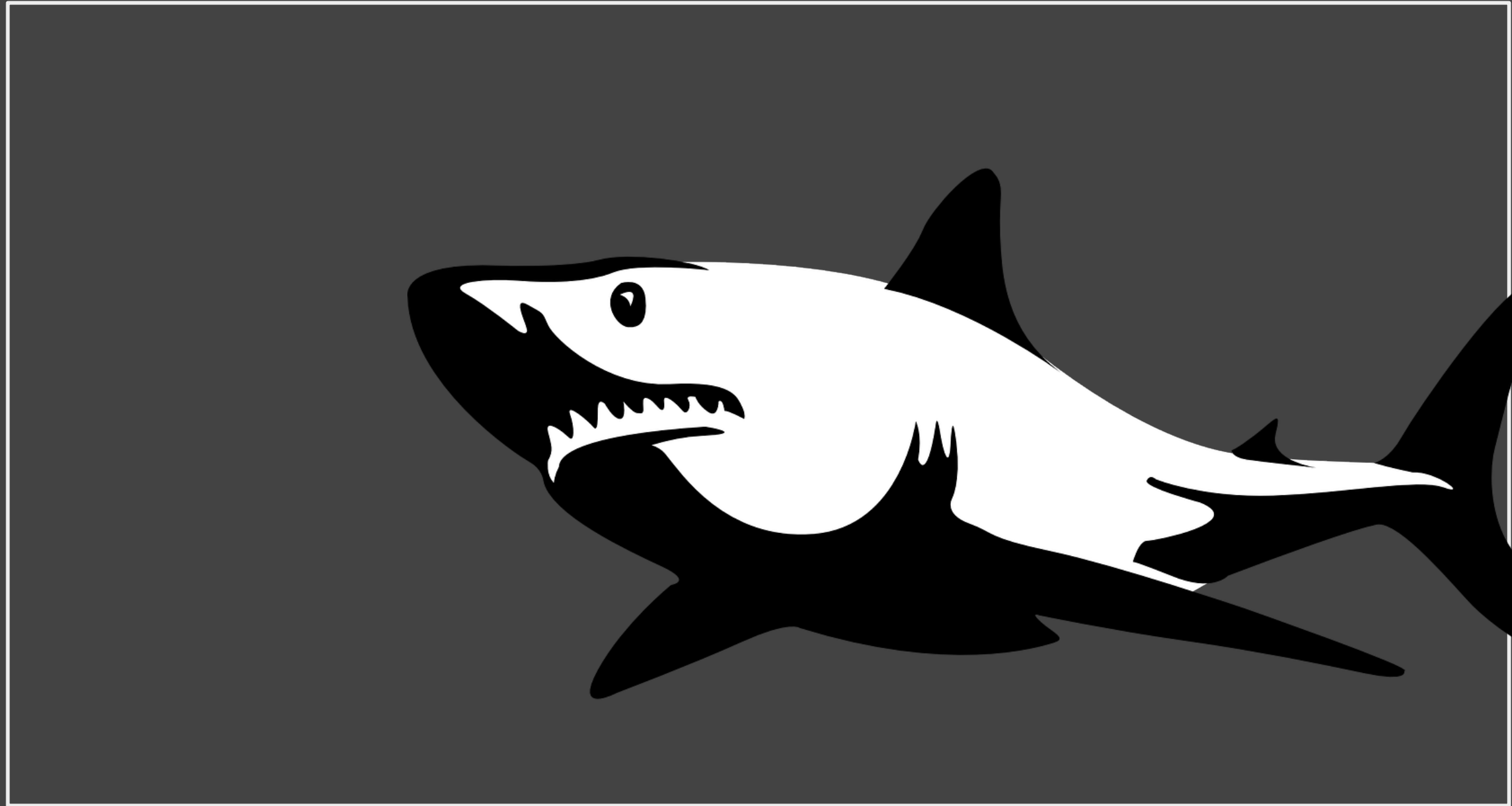
*Brewster*

**Colorless or Pale Faces** usually indicate the absence of Iron in the blood, a condition which will be greatly helped by **Carter's Iron Pills**



## **BAD OPERATORS**

- Little return on investment
- Publisher adds little value
- Demands a lot of money
- Lack of access or preservation





# THE BIASED LANGUAGE OF PREDATORY JOURNALS


“Labels bias our perceptions, thinking, and behavior... We must critically evaluate our labels and stories by their effects.”

Michael J. Cohen  
*Reconnecting with Nature*





*potential · possible · probable*

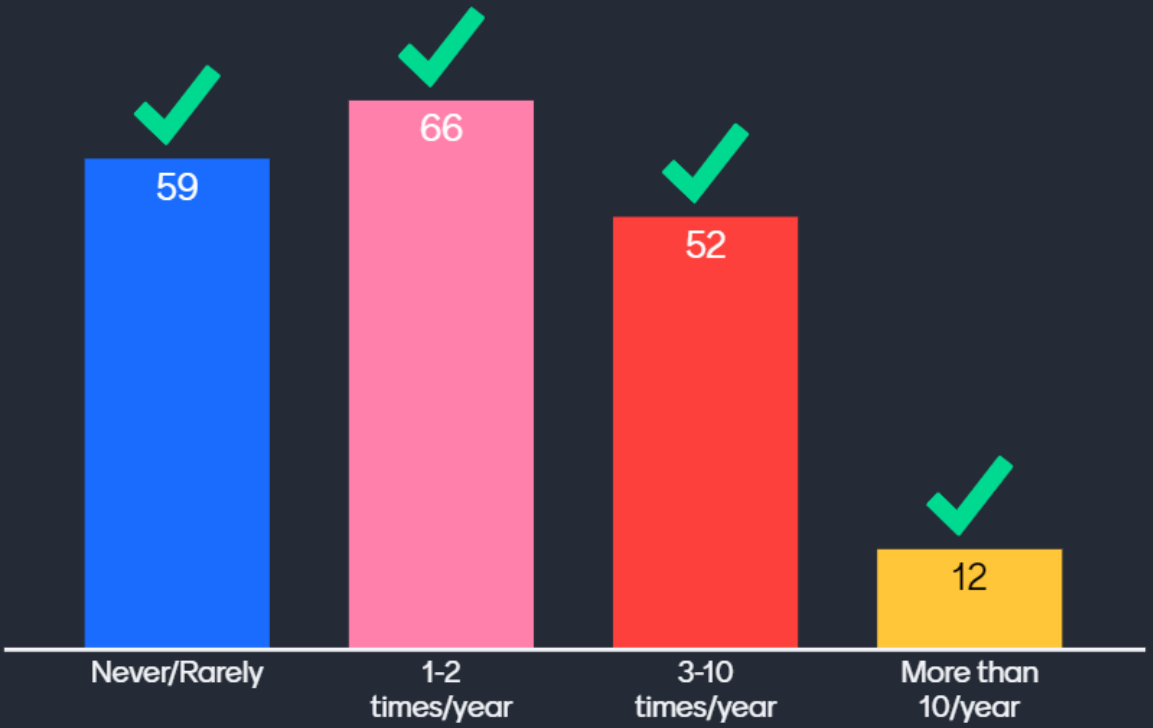


Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.

**(GRUDNIEWICZ ET AL., 2019)**



# How often do you receive questions about predatory publishing?



# COMMON QUESTIONS

Is this a good journal?

Why is this journal included on Beall's list?

Is this email a scam?

I think I published in a predatory journal, now what?

Where should I publish my manuscript?





# FACTORS



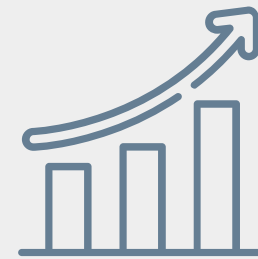
Author  
Needs/Goals



Values



Time



Market

# JOURNAL QUADRANTS

## Quadrant I

- Prestige and sustainability

## Quadrant II

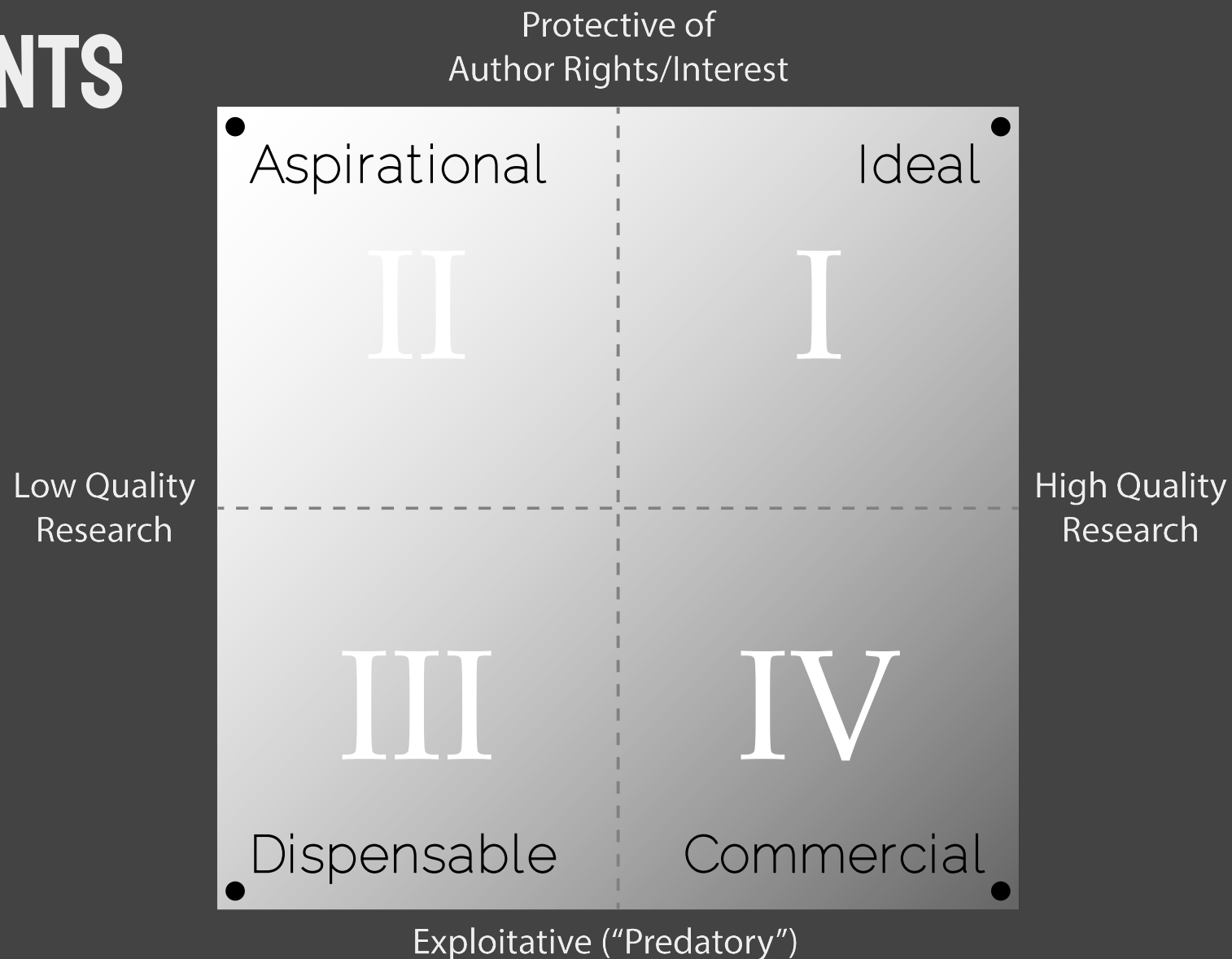
- Support new outlets, OA, author rights

## Quadrant III

- Get published quickly

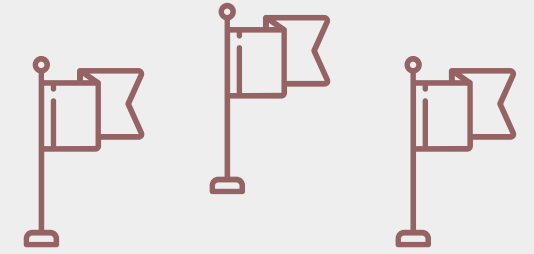
## Quadrant IV

- Building reputation/ research agenda, lack of funding





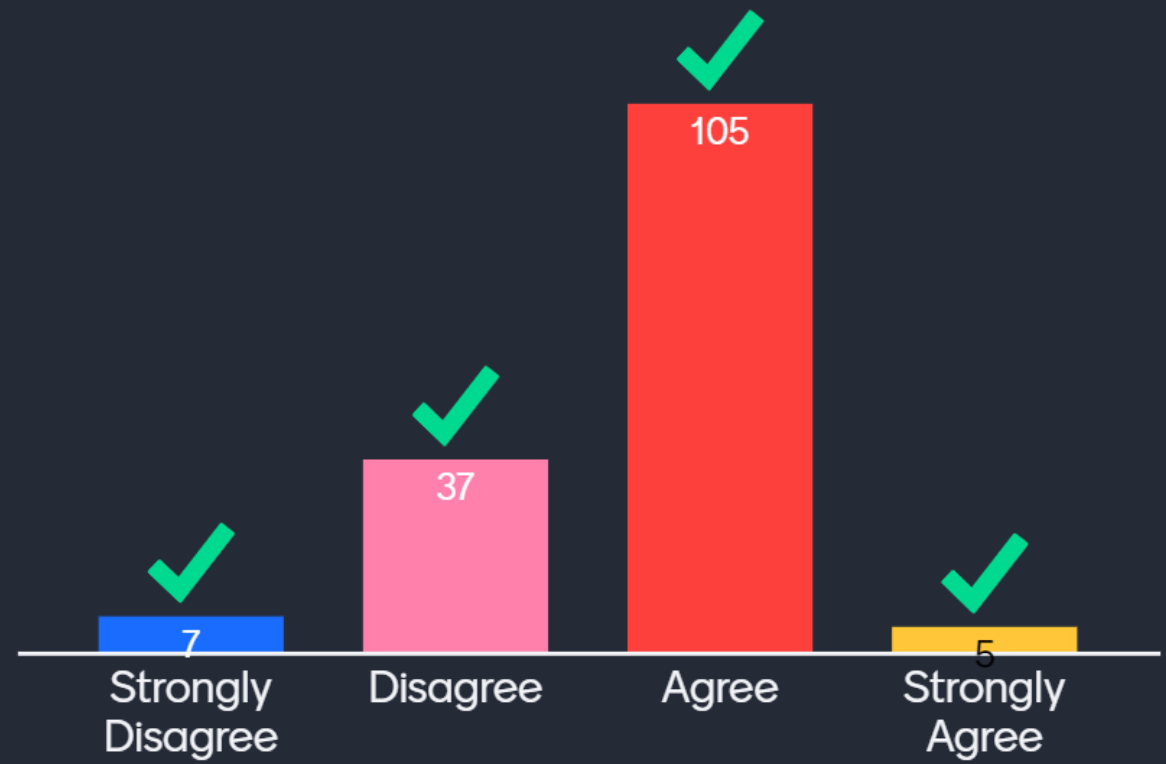
# SELECT RED FLAGS



- The journal purposefully publishes controversial articles in the interest of boosting citation count.<sup>1</sup>
- The number of articles published has increased by 50-74% in the last year.<sup>1</sup>
- The journal uses misleading metrics (i.e., metrics with the words “impact factor” that are not the Clarivate Analytics Impact Factor).<sup>1</sup>
- Inadequate peer review (i.e., a single reader reviews submissions; peer reviewers read papers outside their field of study; etc.).<sup>1</sup>
- The publisher publishes journals that are excessively broad (e.g., Journal of Education) in order to attract more articles and gain more revenue from author fees.<sup>2</sup>
- The publisher has poorly maintained websites, including dead links, prominent misspellings and grammatical errors on the website.<sup>2</sup>
- The publisher creates a publishing operation that demonstrates rapacious entrepreneurial behavior that rises to level of sheer greed.<sup>2</sup>

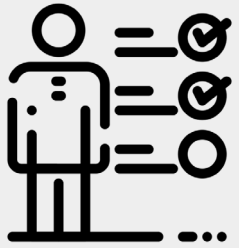


# I should adjust my approach to discussing predatory journals with faculty.





# ACRL STANDARDS FOR LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## PROFESSIONAL VALUES

Intellectual Freedom

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/standardslibraries>





# ACRL STANDARDS FOR LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION



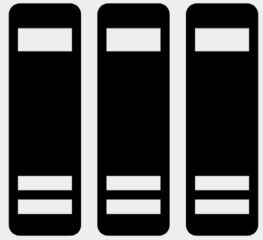
## EDUCATIONAL ROLE

Assist Researchers to Use  
Information Effectively

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/standardslibraries>



# ACRL STANDARDS FOR LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## COLLECTIONS

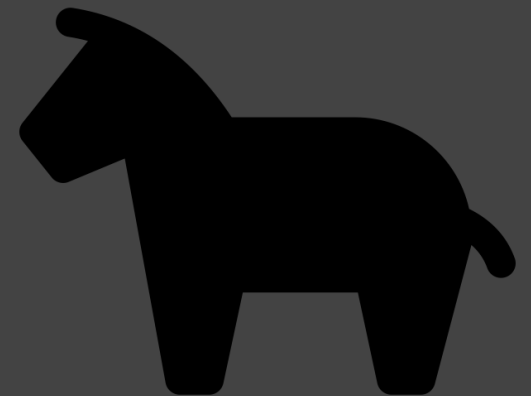
Create Collections with  
Quality, Depth & Diversity

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/standardslibraries>



*preventative measures*

**I. DON'T ASSUME**





*preventative measures*

## **2. DON'T RELY ON LISTS**



*preventative measures*

# 3. HAVE A CONVERSATION





*preventative measures*

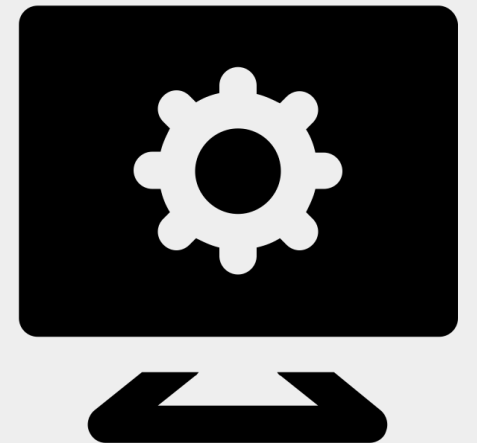
# 4. DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL





*subsequent measures*

# I. ASK FOR SPECIFICS





*subsequent measures*

## **2. INVESTIGATE THE JOURNAL**





*subsequent measures*

# **3. KNOW LOCAL SUPPORT**





# Q & A

# IS THE TERM “COMMERCIAL” APPROPRIATE FOR QUADRANT IV JOURNAL PUBLISHERS?

This idea was brought up in the chat and sparked some important conversation—particularly when it comes to trade publications. While the quadrants were formed with scholarly journals in mind (which have different quality indicators and impact metrics than other source types), we might think about whether this diagram could/should be expanded to fit other source types.

In preparing this presentation, we focused on the following definition of “commercial”:

- prepared, done, or acting with sole or chief emphasis on salability, profit, or success (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/commercial>)

If this term will carry unintended connotations with it that might confuse or bias our patrons (or librarians), we should have discussions about what better terminology would be for our purposes. Suggested terms were “profit-driven” and “profit-oriented.” While these are more direct, they don’t address whether “success” might be measured another way, such as through reputation or prestige.

We encourage these conversations to continue—it’s a work in progress!

# IS INDEXING AN INDICATOR OF QUALITY?

No, indexing is not an indicator of quality. Indexing of a journal in library databases (not Google Scholar) can indicate:

1. That a journal publisher sought indexing for a specific journal. As a general rule, journals must apply to an abstracting and indexing (A&I) service for inclusion.
2. That a journal has reached a specific level of sustainability. It is a common practice for A&I services to only include journals once they have consistently published for three years. It will take research into specific services to determine what their inclusion rules are and the length of sustainability they require.
3. That a journal is not employing deceptive practices (at least to some extent). If the website of a journal states that it is indexed by specific A&I services, checking whether it is actually indexed would confirm whether or not deceptive practices are being employed.

Inclusion of a journal in A&I services may offer further information. For example, many require that the journals assign a DOI to each article published (a cost for the publisher). This may not be an expense a problematic publisher is willing to take on. Likewise, an A&I service may require that the journal have an assigned ISSN (another cost), a diversity of authors and editors (diversity in the sense of geographic location), a specific ratio of research articles to non-research articles, and other requirements.



# FURTHER DISCUSSIONS OF LANGUAGE

## THIRD WORLD - FIRST WORLD · DEVELOPED - DEVELOPING · GLOBAL SOUTH

An attendee mentioned the appropriateness of Stephanie's use of the terms "first world" and "third world". We state emphatically that it was not our intention to be offensive by using this terminology. Below is an explanation of why this language was used.

1. The use of these terms was a reference to Beall's discussions of predatory journals in which he used the language of "third world"; Stephanie was referring to it as *what not to do*.
2. Current terminology is insufficient. Both "first world/third world" and "developed/developing" language have connotations of superiority and inferiority and comparative wealth, which are not appropriate for the conversation regarding journal publication. The term "Global South" is inefficient because it is not inclusive of all geographic locations related to this discussion.

Although we argue that there is no appropriate specific terminology, it would have been far better if Stephanie had simply said, "It is not appropriate to label a journal as predatory or problematic based on the geographic location of the publisher." We apologize for any offense.



# **GREAT QUESTIONS FROM ATTENDEES**

## **WE DON'T HAVE THE ANSWERS, BUT BELIEVE THESE ARE TOPICS OUR PROFESSION SHOULD BE DISCUSSING**

1. How are articles in predatory journals retracted when the research is falsified?
2. Should scholarly societies take back control of producing their journals from commercial publishers?
3. Which disciplines are more likely to address predatory publication in faculty evaluation criteria and documentation?
4. How does or should ACRL address predatory publishing?



# THANKS!

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## FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

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