

2018-02-27

## Avoiding Predatory Publishers

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### Repository Citation

Reznik-Zellen R, Palmer LA. (2018). Avoiding Predatory Publishers. Library Publications and Presentations. Retrieved from [https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/lib\\_articles/206](https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/lib_articles/206)

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## AEA365: Avoiding Predatory Publishers

Hello! We are Rebecca Reznik-Zellen and Lisa Palmer, librarians at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's [Lamar Soutter Library](#). Have you ever received a suspicious email from an open access publisher or journal that you are unfamiliar with? Have they invited you to publish with them for a low publication fee or promised fast peer-review and publication timeframes? If so, you may have been solicited by a so-called "predatory" publisher. We want to share some tips for evaluating journals and avoiding "predatory" publishers when you are ready to publish your evaluation research.

### Lessons Learned

In the wake of the [Open Access](#) movement, opportunistic publishers have emerged that charge publication fees without providing editorial and publishing services associated with legitimate journals. Predatory publishers exploit authors who may be inexperienced or who are under pressure to publish; in doing so, they corrupt the scientific record with low-quality science.

It's important to remember that not all open access journals are predatory. In fact, legitimate open access journals (such as the [Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation](#)) conduct peer-review and follow established publishing standards. Some open access journals are very important and influential in their fields. Also, many open access journals don't even charge authors article processing fees. So how do you tell the good from the bad?

### Hot Tips

Predatory publishers engage in questionable practices to solicit and process content, such as aggressively soliciting article submissions; promising rapid publication; eliminating or automating peer review; not following publication standards (such as [COPE](#)); not submitting content to major indexing and abstracting databases (such as MEDLINE or Scopus); not disclosing all fees; and misrepresenting editorial boards.

A [2017 study published in BMC Medicine by Shamseer, et al.](#), identified 13 attributes that distinguish a predatory journal from a legitimate one, including:

- Overly broad scope (includes biomedical *and* non-biomedical subjects)
- Spelling and grammatical errors on website
- Non-professional contact email address (e.g., @gmail.com or @yahoo.com)
- Poor quality images
- Homepage language targets authors
- Questionable journal metrics, such as the Index Copernicus Value, are promoted as quality indicators
- Accepts or requests manuscripts by email
- Lacks information about manuscript handling
- Promises rapid publication
- Unusually low article processing charges (<\$200), and special time-limited offers
- No retraction policy
- No information on whether or how content will be archived
- Journal retains copyright or does not mention copyright

To make sure that you will be publishing with a legitimate journal, open or toll access, always evaluate the publication venue directly prior to submitting your manuscript.

### **Rad Resources**

These resources can help you distinguish an ethical publisher from an unethical one.

- [Think-Check-Submit](#). An OASPA-supported campaign to help researchers identify trusted journals providing a checklist for authors.
- [Open Access Journal Quality Indicators](#). A listing of positive and negative journal quality indicators maintained by Grand Valley State University.
- [Directory of Open Access Journals](#). A searchable and vetted whitelist of open access journals.
- [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association](#) (OASPA). A criteria-based membership association for Open Access publishers with a code of conduct.

You may want to check in with a local librarian for other resources. Good luck with your publishing efforts.