

UKSG webinar Q&A

‘Predatory Publishing – how to support researchers in identifying trusted journals and publishers for their research’

17 June 2022

Katherine Stephan | Lorraine Estelle

With thanks to Dominic Mitchell, Chair of the Think. Check. Submit committee for his help in answering some of the questions.

Questions that came during the presentation:

“Q: Are some areas of research (e.g. science) more likely to have predatory publishers than others (e.g. arts)?”

- The work done by Björk and Shen shows that there were considerably more predatory journals in the sciences than in the arts and humanities. However, this paper is quite old now, and so the situation may have changed.

“Q: Some journals make claims to be indexed in DOAJ/Scopus/Web of Science or other indexing services. How to confirm these indexing are true?”

- DOAJ, always advise that a user searches for the journal, preferably using the ISSN, in the journal search: <https://doaj.org/search/journals>. A good list to also consult is the list of journals that say that they are indexed in DOAJ but that are not.

“Q: I may have missed this part, but what do you do to make students aware of predatory publishers?”

- **Katherine:** As per my talk, I think for me is advocate, advocate, advocate. Embed making sound publishing choices and what that means about publishing/predatory publishers. It’s all about due diligence. If you are taking the time to decide BEFORE you publish, you will be less likely to end up in places you don’t want to. So, in ALL of my training-from searching for resources to social media to OA publishing, we mention this. And I’m running this training for postgraduate students, too. I think definitely more could be done with undergraduates, just a case for embedding where you have the opportunity.

“Q: Please explain to your US audience about the rights retention policy”

- **Katherine:** Not to just refer you to webpages but Cambridge has an excellent page on RRS: <https://www.openaccess.cam.ac.uk/funder-open-access-policies/rights-retention>

As does Strathclyde:

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/openaccess/rightsretentionstrategy/#:~:text=The%20RRS%20is%20the%20mechanism,and%20under%20a%20Creative%20Commons>

In the UK, some funders require authors to retain their copyright and/or have a particular license on their work. Some publishers do not allow this. By using a rights retention strategy when they submit/approve the final version of their work, it means they can retain the rights to their work and also adhere to funder regulations. This isn't the only reason why this is happening more frequently, but it is a large reason. It can get quite complicated with open access institutional agreements as to where/which publications people can publish in AND adhere to funder rules and having a rights retention strategy helps people balance that.

You may also be interested in looking at the cOAlition S website. The cOAlition S has developed a Rights Retention Strategy to give researchers supported by a cOAlition S Organisation the freedom to submit manuscripts for publication to their journal of choice, including subscription journals, whilst remaining fully compliant with Plan S. Read more at: <https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/>

“Q: Are students/researchers aware of the phrase "predatory publishers"?”

- **Katherine:** I would say some are and some aren't. I'm not as bothered as to what they call them-more so that they understand the implications of publishing in such places.

“Q: What are the top acceptable Journal Indexing tools? Is Google Scholar one of them?”

- **Katherine:** I would move away from 'Top' tools and suggest a variety of tools. In my talk, I mentioned that this is likely to be dependent on the resources available to you. I would always encourage people to avail themselves of all that they can. In my institution, this would be using Scopus, Web of Science, and then also tools like DOAJ, Sherpa Romeo, and if necessary, Google Scholar. But I would never check in one place or determine something is okay JUST because it's indexed somewhere. Again, always about if the journal is the right fit for your work, too.

“Q: Who owns the Think. Check. Submit? How did it start?”

- Think. Check. Submit is a community initiative founded in 2015 and supported by the following organisations:
 - ✓ Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
 - ✓ Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
 - ✓ INASP
 - ✓ ISSN International Centre
 - ✓ Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche – Association of European Research Libraries (LIBER)
 - ✓ OAPEN Foundation
 - ✓ Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA)
 - ✓ International Association of STM Publishers (STM)
 - ✓ UKSG

“Q: What do you advise to researchers who mistakenly published in a predatory journal?”

- **Katherine:** I can only go by my experience in helping people at my university and also by the resources available to you. In my instance, we were able to find a bit of a loophole because they hadn't been upfront with their pricing, so I was able to get help from legal services to draft an email to have them take it down. This won't always be the case. If you can't, I would say, don't refer to it within your publications, perhaps 'hide' it within ORCID. And don't feel shame about it-lots of people do it. It's a case of learning from your mistake and not doing it again.

“Q: Why should I not re-submit my article if a particular publisher has refused to publish it?”

- **Katherine:** I don't recall talking about this in the webinar. We discussed if you'd already submitted with a predatory publisher-they would then own the copyright (possibly) so you might not be able to resubmit elsewhere, as you may be in breach of copyright. If you submit to a journal and they refuse your article, it's within your rights (and copyright!) to submit elsewhere.

“Q: Is there any open list where we can check the journal's legitimacy?”

- **Katherine:** For open access journals, you can use DOAJ: <https://doaj.org/> Most publisher pages have tools to look at their sources or journal finder tools, like [Taylor and Francis](#) (just by way of example-google the publisher and journal finder and

you'll find many more!). [Jane](#) is another useful tool. You could also use [Sherpa Romeo](#)

“Q: Would you advocate the author send out a letter of inquiry?”

- **Katherine:** I'm not entirely sure what you're referring to but entering into a dialogue with a journal editor to determine if your work is a good 'fit' with their journal is always a good idea! You can get a sense if it's a good idea and/or an idea that could be developed for publication.

“Q: How reliable do you find published guidance such as B. Luey Handbook for Academic Authors (6th ed, CUP 2022) which has chapters on selecting publishers?”

- **Katherine:** don't have access to this book so I read their advice. As I said in my talk, there are different 'homes' for your work and there are different reasons for choosing different homes. What works for you as an author might not work for others, or different research output. I wouldn't want to cast a judgment on something I've not read, but often advice is like 'stick to more mainstream or publishers you've heard of' and I don't think I would always follow that advice. Due diligence applies to every place you would like to publish-mainstream or otherwise. But if a publisher suggests only places that they publish, I'm always a bit skeptical!

“Q: Are mirror journals a problem?”

- The term 'mirror journal' was coined by Elsevier in reference to a journal that is an open access sibling to an existing, closed access journal. The open access version uses the same editorial board and has the same aims and scope as the closed access one. This model of publishing is not new, however, and has been used by other publishers. Elsevier announced their mirror journals as a 'pilot program' in 2019, since then several have ceased publishing.

Katherine: I would say they are problematic (not from the predatory point of view) but that they are moneymakers. [Here's](#) a great blog post about them. I think publishers are going ahead with them because they want to make even more money, which confuses researchers. After all, they don't see them as a 'mirror.' I also think this creates an even larger 'scholarly gap' as only those with large funds will be able to make their work open access. But that's a whole other issue!

“Q: What do you think about Cabell's directory effort to create another blacklist/deny list; Predatory Reports?”

- **Katherine:** Entirely own opinion here. I absolutely despise lists, for a variety of reasons. In the main, they whittle down publishing to ‘this is okay’ and ‘this isn’t’ and lists are inherently biased and problematic. Ones that you have to pay for, I despise even more, as there’s a huge cohort of people this isn’t particularly useful for. If everything is a list and you don’t know about it or don’t have access to it-should you publish your work ‘bad’ places? I have issues with curation, inclusion, challenges, decisions, cost, and so much more with lists. It suggests that it’s a one-stop-shop, and publishing isn’t. So, in short: not a fan!

“Q: What is your opinion on using journal finders/manuscript matching resources such as JANE, EndNote Manuscript Matcher, Elsevier, etc when customers ask for advice on where to submit their manuscript?”

- **Katherine:** I see my role as showing people options. Depending on your institution/situation, your options might be different. I show people lots of journal finders, in particular ones that are for publishers we have open access agreements with. But I also show them JANE and others, to give them a wider breadth of choice. And always, of course, point out that publisher finders will only point out their own journals.

“Q: Is Cabell's list a paid service?”

- Yes, this is a paid subscription service.

“Q: What is the difference between probable, possible, and potential Predatory journals?”

- **Katherine:** I think I’ve heard of these phrases but again, I don’t think entirely helpful. I feel uncomfortable saying: this is bad do NOT publish here because this is a ‘probable predatory journal.’ You’ve got to do due diligence and tools like Think. Check. Submit. Move away from lists or terms and move towards: hey, this journal isn’t clear about charges, they don’t index titles and I can’t see who the editors are- this is not a place I would like to publish. I’m guessing that what people mean is that they are all sort of in the ‘maybe’ category of being predatory?

“Q: What to do if a journal is listed in Bell’s list as predatory, listed in as Scopus as well?”

- Beall’s list is now defunct and was taken offline in January 2017. Copies of the list exist online but it cannot be considered to be a reliable source of information.

Scopus does not apply very rigorous quality control checks for predatory publishers and therefore it is not surprising that there is some crossover between the two sources.

The best approach here is to use the TCS journal checklist and, if the journal is open access, check that it is indexed in DOAJ.

Katherine: After my talk, someone got in touch to say that PubMed is also a good place to check for journals. I’ve not used that myself but that’s another option. Again, look beyond-this is here, it MUST be good and check on a variety of different things to determine if that’s a good ‘home’ for your work.

“Q: Doesn't copyright belong to the institution, not to the individual, particularly if they're employees?”

- **Katherine:** This will depend on your institution. At some institutions, it sits with the individual. If you aren’t sure, you need to check with your own institution. This sometimes is located on pages referring to intellectual property. Definitely, not a one size fits all type situation.

“Q: Doesn't the choice of places to publish somewhat depend on how reviewers for promotion and tenure will evaluate your research? Can you speak to the pressure to publish for academics exerts a strong influence on where researchers want to publish?”

- **Katherine:** Definitely! I mentioned at the end of my talk that a lot of this is well outside the scope of me as a librarian. But universities can change the way they promote/reward and how that is tied to certain publications. Things like [DORA](#) are helping to change this aspect of research culture but I also think that it takes both researchers changing and the university changing how they reward and promote. It also means thinking about how we reward and acknowledge different outputs (code, reports, policy, etc.) and openness within research outputs. Certainly, a lot of work to be done in this area! Lots of people are doing plenty of work in this area but someone whose work I respect and admire is [Dr. Elizabeth Gadd](#)

“Q: What are your thoughts on the role of ISSN in identifying predatory journals?”

- **Katherine:** I don't know to what extent knowledge of ISSNs would filter down to researchers and they would use this as a tool. I do think, however, that for librarians this could potentially be useful as another checking tool. Again-I wouldn't have this be the ONLY tool. If I couldn't tell if something was a good 'home' for my work after checking editors/metrics check out/I've not heard of it/anyone else I know has heard of it/no archived back titles/AND the ISSN doesn't check out. I'm just not sure researchers even know what an ISSN is as easy as a librarian would (but I mostly say this as when I've asked researchers for the ISBN of a book, they don't always know what I'm talking about!) So, I think it can be useful but not the end all be all of identifying!

“Q: Do you think the move to universities having rights retention policies will halt the growth of predatory publishing? Should we as librarians use this angle in our cases for it?”

- **Katherine:** I would say not necessarily. You might still end up publishing someplace you don't want your work and you might also have to pay to publish there if you don't do your due diligence. You might still own your copyright, but sometimes the issue with predatory journals is about reputation and you'd still have the issue that you've published somewhere that wasn't really what you thought. I'm not sure I would use this as an angle for this-but would certainly advocate for wanting universities/individuals to retain their copyright as a good angle.

“Q: Is Ulrich's Web a good source to find out information about the Journals?”

- **Katherine:** This is a subscription tool that I do not have access to myself, so can't assess whether it is a good place or not. From the point of view of checking someplace-yes, it could be good. But always with the caveat: just because something isn't listed here, doesn't mean it is 'bad'.

“Q: What can we do about literature databases (like Scopus) that index contents of predatory journals and keep it in the database after uncovering that?”

- **Katherine:** Someone reached out to me after the webinar to point out that Scopus is actively trying to address this and some have been removed. I suppose it would be gaining an understanding of what criteria Scopus use to index journals and on the contrary, what is the criteria for removing a journal. Scopus is a profit-making

business-so what are the reasons that they keep things on there-and applying pressure by asking/complaining and ultimately not subscribing to something (and them!) if you don't like the content is one. But I would also argue to ask - who is deciding that this is predatory and what are the criteria for exclusion/removal from this indexing service.

“Q: There is this journal called Academia which for a year now, has been consistent in asking me to submit articles for publications but I just have no idea of its reputation. Any help or advice?”

- **Katherine:** I did a quick google search (as per my advice in the webinar!) and didn't find much. Did you mean academia.edu? I would say my advice always applies and aligns with the Think.Check.Advice. Guidance. If you've never heard, I would:

Check the author guidelines-what sorts of articles do they want? What are their aims and scope? Are they aligned with what you'd like to write about? Who are the editors-can you reach out to them/can you find their university pages? Look at previous articles and issues-are there good quality journal articles? Have you ever seen this work cited anywhere else?

To me, it's all about the right home for your work. If it's a journal that isn't writing about what you write about, doesn't have articles that are relevant to your work and you can't really tell anything about the journal-why would you put your hard work and effort into a submission.

Find that appropriate home for your work, find out the costs, THEN decide.

“Q: Could you say a bit more about Open Access Journals?”

- There are [over 17880 true open access journals indexed in DOAJ](#) and this is only a fraction of those that exist in the world. There are many more that aren't indexed for a variety of reasons.

Open access journals are still the main output medium for open access articles, although other platforms are growing in popularity, such as preprint servers, institutional repositories, and journal “platforms”.

“Q: Where do you check for journals that do not charge? I didn't understand what you meant about the open access deals you had”

- You can search in DOAJ, and filter for journals without article processing charges (APCs)

Open access deals are transformative agreements negotiated by Jisc, the UK academic consortium. They are contracts that gradually shift the basis of payments from an institution to a publisher from subscription-based reading to OA publishing services in a controlled manner.

Katherine: For my university, we are part of what we call ‘read and publish’ deals aka institutional open access deals. So, our researchers can both read the content from these journals AND publish in some/most of them, depending on the publisher. We also support initiatives like the [Open Library of the Humanities](#), where we pay a fee, and ANYONE (even people outside my university) can publish in their publications. I also show people DOAJ as a great resource to find places you can publish open access AND filter to show no cost. I wish I controlled the budget to support more OA initiatives but alas, I don’t!

“Q: As well as the DOAJ, you mentioned that you suggest some other tools that authors can use to find a home for their work. Are there any of these tools in particular that you would recommend?”

- **Katherine:** Most publishers have journal finders. Usually, if you google the name of publisher+ journal finder, you can find these (for example, Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, Wiley, Emerald, IEEE to name a few!) There’s also Jane-Journal Author Name Estimator: <https://jane.biosemantics.org/> I’m always open to more, though it’s just a case of knowing what’s all out there!

“Q: Do you dissuade authors from acting on emails requesting them to publish?”

- **Katherine:** Not necessarily. There might be legitimate emails out there and I would hate to have someone miss out on an opportunity. I still think you need to do that due diligence around checking out a publication, even if you’re invited-perhaps even more so! Who are they? What do they want? And always, always, know if there is a cost involved. For some, that invitation may be very genuine-but always consider that if there’s a cost involved, it’s likely they would also like your money!

“Q: Do you encourage them to go via traditional routes?”

- **Katherine:** I’m not sure I understand the question. But again, for me, it’s about a ‘home’ for your work. This might sit with more traditional, long-established publishers. But it also might mean you go with a university open journals service journals. I’m about options, and I let people know about all of them that I know about!