

Publishing in Open Access Journals

While most open access journals are peer-reviewed and high quality, there are a number of questionable journals, i.e. journals that do not subscribe to most or any of the practices of legitimate, academic journals. There is no single rule or test to indicate whether an open access journal is reputable. But here is what you should look for and what you should be wary of to avoid publishing in a questionable journal:

Look for ...

- Journal scope is well-defined and clearly stated
- Journal is affiliated with or sponsored by an established scholarly society or academic institution
- Editor, editorial board are recognized experts in the field
- Articles are within the scope of the journal and meet the standards of the discipline
- Any publishing fees or charges are easily found on the journal website and clearly explained
- Rights for use and re-use of content at article level (e.g., Creative Commons CCBY licence) are clearly indicated
- Articles have DOIs (Digital Object Identifier, e.g., doi:10.1111/j.1742-9544.2011.00054.x)
- An ISSN (International Standard Serial Number e.g. 1234-5678) has been assigned
- Publisher is a member of Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA)
- Journal is listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- Journal is included in established subject databases and/or indexes (e.g., Academic Search Complete, Medline, etc.)

Be wary of ...

- No journal scope statement or one that is vague
- Website mimics other well-known publishers' site, or links or uses logos of recognisable entities although there is no actual connection
- Journal title is very similar to title of a more established journal
- Poorly maintained Web presence, including dead links, multiple spelling and grammatical mistakes (on website and in articles)
- No editor, editorial board, or editorial staff is listed, or they lack affiliation
- Publisher is also the editor of the journal and/or editorial boards members serve on the board of multiple titles from the same publisher
- Authors have several articles in the same issue
- Publisher uses direct and unsolicited marketing (i.e., spamming) or advertising is obtrusive (to publish articles or serve on editorial board)
- No information is provided about the publisher or location; either information is missing or does not match geographical area covered by the journal (e.g., "American Journal of" but published in Croatia)
- Instructions to authors regarding peer review, copyright and/or fees (APCs), are not listed on website or are unclear
- Publisher promises unusually rapid peer review and publication schedule

- New (but self-proclaimed “leading”) publisher with a large number of journals
- Journal not listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- Claims to be indexed by Google and Google Scholar (or other search engines that crawl the Web)
- Refers to bogus metrics meant to mimic Impact Factor (e.g., Journal Influence Factor, Global Impact Factor, etc.)
- Publisher has a negative reputation (e.g., documented examples in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, list-servs, etc.)
- Journal or publisher appears on Beall’s List of Predatory Journals and Publishers

Tools to find and evaluate open access journals:

- Directory of Open Access Journals: <http://doaj.org/>
Online index of open access, peer-reviewed journals
- Beall’s List of Predatory Journals and Publishers: <http://scholarlyoa.com/>
List of potential, possible or probable questionable scholarly open access publishers and standalone journals
- SHERPA/RoMEO: <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>
Online index of publisher copyright and self-archiving policies

Questions?

Contact IDRC’s Information Services at InformationServices@idrc.ca.

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International Development Research Centre

150 Kent • PO Box 8500 • Ottawa ON Canada K1G 3H9 • Phone: +1 613 236 6163 • idrc.ca