

Predatory Publishing: Don't Fall Victim!

Handout for Graduates of ABU

Version 1.0

1 What is Predatory Publishing?

By systematically taking advantage of the publish-or-perish phenomenon, predatory publishers are dubious actors that prey on researchers, whether through invitations to submit to disreputable journals, conferences, or other offerings without any legitimate quality assurance processes, in order to profit from the move toward Open Access publishing models. Falling victim to predatory publishing is detrimental in many ways: your work could be stolen or used in ways with which you do not agree, your own reputation could be damaged, and you (unknowingly) support the continued practice of predatory publishing, which stands directly in defiance of the principles of academic integrity.¹

1.1 Predatory Practices

Some of these predatory practices include:

- charging often excessive Article Processing Charges (APCs) or conference fees without providing the promised services, either at all or to a satisfactory degree;
- retaining copyright over your submissions, thus removing your agency and ability to potentially use your own work in the future;
- republishing articles without the author's permission, often locking these behind a separate paywall;
- overpromising the outreach and impact of the journal or conference, even by fabricating statistics, in order to encourage submission.

¹ For more information on academic integrity, see the "Best Practice Guide for Research Integrity and Ethics" by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research: https://oeawi.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-10-20_Praxisleitfaden-fuer-Integritaet-und-Ethik-in-der-Wissenschaft_engl_.pdf.

2 How can you recognize it?

2.1 Red Flags

- being contacted directly to be asked to publish your bachelor's thesis or other works not suited for publication
- being contacted directly to be asked to submit to something not relevant to your field
- being contacted directly to be asked to transfer the rights to your work
- suspicious or incongruent email or web addresses
- too broad of a scope of disciplines covered by the journal or conference
- overly flattering language, especially if it does not correlate to your current experience level, or otherwise unprofessional wording/formatting
- rapid turnaround from submission to publication (< 4 weeks)
- no or a low-quality peer-review process
- guaranteed acceptance (pay-to-publish)

2.2 Characteristics to Check

- Is the ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) real? Confirm via <https://portal.issn.org/>.
- Is the website legitimate, or is it *imitating* the website of a legitimate academic offering? Always confirm that the website linked in an outreach email is the real one! Search the web to see if there are duplicate websites. Check if the given headquarters or publishing location correlates with the real location (and is spelled correctly). Use <https://who.is/> to see if where the domain was registered is plausible in relation to the expected home base.
- Use resources like <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>, <https://beallslit.net/>, and <https://doaj.org/> to check if a journal is reputable. For conferences, check the website <https://thinkcheckattend.org/>.
- Do the given editors or members of the board actually carry out this role? Are they all living and still actively working? Cross compare with information made available by the individuals themselves on other sites.