EVALUATION OF ONLINE-ONLY JOURNAL QUALITY FROM ANALYSIS OF EMAIL SOLICITATIONS

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"I'm very worried about the fact that there appears to have arisen a huge disjuncture in perceptions on open access to scientific research."

October 12, 2015

"Among many faculty researchers such as yourself (Burggren), (Open Access) seems increasingly to mean "there's a lot of junk publishers out there, and many of them are open access, and that probably means open for anyone to publish in, so it's a terrible thing to be avoided at all costs".

"This disjuncture in understanding and perspectives is leading to a slow motion train wreck in academia..... "

Dean Martin Halbert
1) About me

2) Some literature

3) The Hypotheses

4) "In the trenches"
   - Frequency
   - Relevance
   - Quality

5) Conclusions
What I am, what I am not!

I am not an information scientist or library scientist.

I am a research scientist (biologist) of >40 years, and a journal Editor-in-Chief for 8 years.

CO-AUTHORS
Dilip Madasu
Kevin S. Hawkins
Jesse Hamner
Martin Halbert
Mostly, I’m a here as
A GUINEA PIG!!
A view “from the trenches” as a scientist-consumer….

I publish mostly in ~8 “Legacy” Journals. All are on-line, but not all strictly so, and didn’t start that way.
I LOVE seeing this in my PubMed search engine!!
Dear Dr. Burggren,

We have recently sent you a request for final proof-reading of biology-125287. You can now connect your ORCID to the paper here:

http://susy.mdpi.com/author/orcid/confirm/8f2faf7e5819bf339d4349b748de8140

ORCID is an open, non-profit, community-based effort to provide a registry of unique researcher identifiers and a transparent method of linking research activities and outputs to these identifiers. ORCID is unique in its ability to reach across disciplines, publishers, research sectors, and national boundaries and its cooperation with other identifier systems.

Best regards,

Fengyan Wang
Assistant Editor
Email: fonda.wang@mdpi.com
Predatory Journals?? Not Exactly News……
‘Predatory’ open access: a longitudinal study of article volumes and market characteristics

Cenyu Shen and Bo-Christer Björk


Received: 30 April 2015  Accepted: 1 September 2015  Published: 1 October 2015

Open Peer Review reports

Abstract

Background

A negative consequence of the rapid growth of scholarly open access publishing funded by article processing charges is the emergence of publishers and journals with highly questionable marketing and peer review practices. These so-called predatory publishers are causing unfounded negative publicity for open access publishing in general. Reports about this branch of e-business have so far mainly concentrated on exposing lacking peer review and scandals involving publishers and journals. There is a lack of comprehensive studies about several aspects of this phenomenon, including extent and regional distribution.

Methods

After an initial scan of all predatory publishers and journals included in the so-called Beall’s list, a sample of 613 journals
Data collection from 101 journals, Country of authors

First Stage Sampling - stratify 966

100+ Journal Publishers (N=20)
- Sampled in full (n=20 publishers)
- Observation weight=1

10-99 Journal Publishers (N=230)
- Random sample (n=96 publishers)
- Observation weight=3.486

2-9 Journal Publishers (N=285)
- Random sample (n=77 publishers)
- Observation weight=3.404

Single Journal Publishers (N=447)
- Random sample (n=127 publishers)
- Observation weight=3.520

Second Stage Sampling - take a random sample of journals from each publisher stratum

Journals from Stratum 1 (N=4217)
- Random sample (n=200 journals)
- Observation weight=21.065

Journals from Stratum 2 (N=1465)
- Random sample (n=132 journals)
- Observation weight=12.614

Journals from Stratum 3 (N=378)
- Random sample (n=154 journals)
- Observation weight=2.455

Journals from Stratum 4 (N=127)
- Random sample (n=127 journals)
- Observation weight=1

\[ SE = \left( \frac{1}{N} \right) \times \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{L} \left( \frac{N_i^2}{n_i} \times \left( 1 - \frac{n_i}{N_i} \right) \times \left( \frac{s_i^2}{n_i} \right) \right)} \]

\[ \hat{\gamma}_{st} = \sum_{i=1}^{L} \sum_{j=1}^{n_i} W_{ij} \times y_{ij} \]

Data collection on the journal level

Data collection on the article level

Third Stage Sampling – take 5 random articles each from 47 journals that have available data

Author affiliation
Publishing time
Proliferation of OLJs and # articles published, especially by larger Houses
OLJs from single publisher have “meatier” issues.
Shen and Bjorck’s (2015) Conclusions

- Problems caused by predatory journals are rather limited and regional.

- Open access publishing is rapidly gaining momentum…. This should create better opportunities for researchers from countries where predatory publishing is currently popular, to get published in journals of higher quality.

The world is flat, at least electronically!!!
Shen and Björck’s (2015) Conclusions

• Problems caused by predatory journals are rather limited and regional

• Open access publishing is rapidly gaining momentum…. This should create better opportunities for researchers from countries where predatory publishing is currently popular, to get published in journals of higher quality.

Study ignores CONSUMER CHOICE and CONSUMER ATTITUDE!!
What’s Our Research Focus??

- Open Access Issues
- Predatory Journals
- Solicitation Emails
HYPOTHESIS #1:
Solicitation emails from predatory journals are DEVALUING an otherwise highly legitimate venue for information distribution.

HYPOTHESIS #2:
Solicitation emails are increasingly counterproductive by virtue of their increasing numbers, impersonal approach and “email noise” they produce.
Testing the Hypotheses.....

Warren Burggren
Dilip Madasu
Kevin S. Hawkins
Jesse Hamner
Martin Halbert

Questions

Objective
Subjective

Data??

Data
Analysis

Qualitative
Quantitative
From January 11th, 2015.....

...every email soliciting manuscripts sent to burggren.unt.edu filed in a folder in Microsoft Outlook.

January 11th 2015 to May 20th, 2016 = 970 solicitation emails!!
100 events produced by one person, or one event observed by 100 people is not 100 events observed by 100 people!!
Are Solicitation Emails Resent/Duplicated?

Dear Dr. Burggren,

I am writing to inquire whether you have received our earlier email regarding the annual Special Issue titled "Animal Models of Human Pathology 2016," which will be published in the Pathology subject area of...

Some Repeat Senders
Is there a “Seasonality” to Solicitation Emails?

![Graph showing the number of email solicitations by month for 2015 and 2016.](image)

**Month**
- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

**Number of Email Solicitations**
- 2015, n = 547
- 2016, n = 278
Are Solicitation Emails ramping up?
Are Solicitation Emails ramping up?

2016 = ~2.9X 2015!!

*Estimated
How many journals are new, vs ongoing?

Only 43/272 or 15.8% are “new”

Dear Dr. W.W. Burggren,

Warm Greetings from [Redacted]

We take this opportunity to introduce ourselves as an open access publishers with a motto to serve the scientific community. We publish peer-reviewed articles related to different aspects.

We are planning to release Inaugural Issue under the esteem guidance of our Editorial board members. We welcome you to submit your manuscripts and extend our invitation to your colleagues and subject experts in the field of Cardiology.

Articles on Cardiology can be of Research, Reviews, Case Reports, Opinion articles, Short communications, etc.

Kindly submit your manuscript on or before 7th March 2016 to cardiology@mathewsopenaccess.net


….suggests that existing OLJs are ramping up their solicitations
Dear Dr. Warren W. Burggren, I hope to find you well.

I would like to inform you that, based on your publishing history, you are invited to contribute a new open access book project under the editorship of Dr. [redacted]. The current working title of the book is "Hypoxia".

To learn more about the project (suggested topics, deadlines and the publishing process) and to register your participation, please visit:

http://www.intechopen.com/welcome/331b1aa8d399bc404988a8bc5e431582/burggren@unt.edu

The book will be an open access publication and all chapters will be available online for free, unlimited download, increasing their visibility and scientific impact. Please note that if your chapter gets accepted for publication, a payment of an Article Processing Charge will be required.

We hope that you will be able to join this project and I will be happy to help with any questions you might have.

Cordially,

Maja Bozicevic
Publishing Process Manager

“Processing fee” or “Processing charge” = 176/910 or 19.3%

“Publication fee” or “Publication charge” = 228/910 or 23.1%
What else are the publishers doing to win manuscripts?

“Discount” = 59/910 or 5.5%
“Waiver”/“Waived” = 75/910 or 10.4%

Dear Dr. Warren W Burggren:

Journal of New Developments in __[1]__
2377-2549

We are glad to let you know that JNDC is providing a waiver of extra 25% on already waived author publication charges [2] (according to country wise classification of World Bank) for authors submitting manuscripts on or before 30 May, 2016. Rapid review is assured and publication will be done within the same week of acceptance provided your response for proofs is quick as well. The papers submitted within this deadline will be published on or before 30 July, 2016.

Please submit your manuscript online [3] or through email at info@oap-journals.org

To know more about us visit our journal home page [1] and the journal editorial board page [4]. For aims and scope you can check here [5]. Instructions for authors [6] are to be...
What else are the publishers doing to win manuscripts?

Become the Life Member and Publish One Paper for Free

For encouraging international scholarly communication, now we recruit Life Members with a view to expand our Member Team, advance the knowledge of science and technology and foster the interchange of ideas and information among investigators.

Privilege for Life Member

From Mar. 20 to Sep. 30, 2016, you faithful scholars and researchers can apply to be our Life Members and get the chance to publish one paper for free in any of our journals immediately. Besides, you'll enjoy 50% discount to publish papers in our journals within the next three years.

After being published in our journal, most articles can be indexed by Google Scholar within the next 3-6 weeks. Hope that Google Scholar Indexing can give you the motivation and inspiration to do more research and reach more achievements.

Our Life Members will be invited to participate in our coordinately organized activities or conferences to share their research achievements with other researchers in some countries.
So, I know I get a lot of email solicitations:

• How good are the journals?

• How relevant are the journals?
Objective Criteria: How Good are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

The journal impact factor is a good predictor of the quality of journals as measured by citations to primary research articles. It is, however, a poor indicator of citations to specific papers or of the future performance of individual researchers.
Objective Criteria: How Good are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

Only 10/274 or 3.6% even had an impact factor!

86/274 or 31.4% had a DOAJ listing.

2/274 or 0.7% had a Index Medicus listing.

84/274 or 30.7% had a PubMed listing.
Subjective Criteria: How *Good* are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

Premise: If a journal wants my “business”, then:
• legitimate biologists run the journal, and
• legitimate publishers produce the journal.

Dear [Name],

I trust you are doing fine!

Doctors, let me welcome you into a large Open Access Scientific Community of... [rest of the text is not visible].

You were notified that peer review is major time line process in an Open Access publication, now we are taking a place to reduce the time frame in review process with your support.

To support the Open Access, please send us your Review Board confirmation and requested information as below:

1. Name:
2. Affiliation:
3. Contact Information:
4. Research Interest:
5. Designation:
6. Telephone/Fax:

You are requested to refer Revisors from your Friends, Colleagues, and University members. We are expecting your confirmation about Review Board in the next E-mail.

Best regards,
Subjective Criteria: How *Good* are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

This is not a spam message, and has been sent to you because of your relevance in the field.
Subjective Criteria: How *Good* are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

What is the degree of “Professionalism” of the solicitation?

Among many possible criteria were:
- Opening salutation (errors, mailsort, misspelling, etc.)
- Spelling and grammar
- Casual greeting
- Overly obsequious approach
- Direct invitation to join with no evidence of vetting
- Faux background research on investigator (me)
Shouldn’t truly professional journals be aware of cultural biases of their target audiences?
Subjective Criteria: How Good are the OLJ’s soliciting my manuscripts?

What is the degree of “Professionalism” of the solicitation?

Among many possible criteria were:
- **Opening salutation** (errors, mailsort, misspelling, etc.)
- **Spelling and grammar**
- Casual greeting
- Obsequious and fawning approach
- Direct invitation to join with no evidence of vetting
- Faux background research on investigator (me)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Salutation – “Dear” or “Dr.”</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Burggren”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Warren Burggren”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Warren W. Burggren”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Burggren, Warren”</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>“Burggren W”</td>
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<td>“Burggren Warren W”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dr. Warren”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misspelled versions – e.g. “Bergen”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra initial - e.g. “W.W.W. Burggren”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Professor”</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Colleague”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Researcher”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any other completely impersonal opening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salutation Score

Number of Occurrences

$n=314$ non-duplicated, 2015
Number of Occurrences

Grammar/Spelling Score

$n=314$ non-duplicated, 2015
Are Solicitation Emails From Relevant Journals?

$n=314$ non-duplicated, 2015

Number of Occurrences

Relevance Score

Nine (9!)
All Online Journals Soliciting Manuscripts

Relevant Online Journals Soliciting Manuscripts

Relevant Online Journals Not Soliciting Manuscripts

“The good journals don’t have to advertise”!
Kent Chapman, UNT Professor
Call for Data in Brief Papers

Make your research data count

Is your Genetics, Genomics and Molecular Biology research data receiving the attention it deserves? Get credit for this important part of your research and publish a dataset description in Data in Brief.

Data in Brief provides a way for researchers to easily share and reuse each other's datasets. This open access, peer-reviewed journal welcomes submissions that describe data from all research areas.

Dear Dr Burggren,

Thank you for publishing in Respiratory Physiology & Neurobiology. If you generated additional data during your research project that hasn't yet been published, we invite you to publish a brief dataset description in Data in Brief.

Why? Your research data will then benefit from:

- **Discoverability**: Make your data, which is often buried in supplementary material, easier to find. In addition to being published open access on ScienceDirect, Data in Brief papers are also available via PubMed Central.
- **Reproducibility**: By thoroughly describing your data, you will be facilitating replication.
- **Visibility**: Increase traffic towards associated research articles and data, leading to greater citations.

Over 700 dataset descriptions have already been published in Data in Brief including the following recently published paper:

**Dataset on protein composition of a human plasma sub-proteome able to modulate the Dengue 2 virus infection in Huh 7.5 cells**

Vivian Huerta, et al.

Interested in making your data count? Find out more by reading this "How to write a good Data in Brief article" guide, before visiting the journal’s Guide for Authors and submitting your dataset description here.

Not sure where to deposit your data? You can upload your files to Mendeley Data which has a limit of 10GB per dataset. Mendeley Data, with which Data in Brief is collaborating, is free for the journal’s authors.
Potentially legitimate invitations missed?

All but a favored few Online Journals viewed with some suspicion?
Consequences of Current Landscape

And then there is academic youth and ego......
Consequences of Current Landscape

Trainees....
Consequences of Current Landscape

......need training!!!
Consequences of Current Landscape

Caveat Emptor!!

Dial up the Skepticism......
Some Conclusions

Journal Reputation

“The good (bad?) ol’ days” – the reputation did all the work!

Publication only if:

Good Methods + Good Results + Good Interpretation

(notwithstanding the “bizarre filtering process” referred to at 10:15 this AM)

Reader didn’t used to have to work very hard at quality assurance!!!!
Some Conclusions

With access to everything, increasing need to separate scientific wheat from chaff.....
Good methods, good results, bad interpretation

Burden increasingly on Investigator....

.... and on Library Scientists to help with skills training
Some Conclusions

Open Access Issues

Predatory Journals

Predatory Journals are everyone’s problem
The Future……..

**Known knowns:** ~50,000,000 journal articles published to date. (1/2 are now in PubMed!) Jinha, A.E., Article 50 million: an estimate of the number of scholarly articles in existence. Learned Publishing, 2010. 23(3): p. 258-263.

Access to published journal articles never better, will grow exponentially (especially back in time in some fields).

**Known unknowns:** Will lack of quality control lead to an “industry” restructuring, if not collapse? (What’s with Physics???)

**Unknown unknowns:** Disruptive technology for dissemination of what we currently call “journal articles”? (A new desktop publishing?)
The purpose of this letter is to welcome you to be a speaker at the upcoming 3rd International Conference on Aquaculture & Fisheries during Sept 29-01 Oct, 2016 London, UK. A leading forum for Aquaculture Experts, Aqua feed Professionals, Fish Nutritionist, Aquaculture Engineers, researchers, Farmers, industrial professionals and students provides the ideal environment to disseminate and gain current knowledge in the area of Aquaculture & Fisheries.

The main theme of the conference is “Innovations in Controlled Environment Aquaculture” which covers a wide range of critically important scientific sessions from basic research to innovations in the field of Aquaculture & Fisheries. Based on your eminence in the field, we would like to invite you for Aquaculture 2016 Conference.

Conference Highlights:
• Aquatic Farming Methods: Hatchery, Nutrition and Feed


MEET WORLD LEADING SCIENTISTS FROM 50 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES & 5 CONTINENTS
Thanks!!!

Questions/Comments?