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EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER UNIVERSITY

Author: Carolin Zapke ; Title: Predatory Publishing

PREDATORY PUBLISHING

Carolin Zapke M.A.

University Library Chemnitz

Germany

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# HOW TO RECOGNISE & PREVENT PREDATORY PUBLISHING

A practical guide

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CONTENT

1. What is predatory publishing?

2. How to recognise predatory behaviour

3. How to prevent predatory publishing at different levels

4. How to develop a publishing strategy

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1. WHAT IS PREDATORY PUBLISHING?

No agreed upon definition, huge grey area

Dubious providers on the scientific publication market:

- promise fast high-quality publications, conferences or services (no transparency)

- collect fees that are not matched by performance

- offer no quality features or they are inadequate, invented or faked (mimicking)

QUALITY IN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

How to measure quality?

- determination of minimum quality in terms of the underlying research processes, compliance with standards and formal requirements (quality assurance)

- evaluation of content (quality assessment)

- reputation: often tied to where a publication is published, bibliometrics = indicators like JIF (Journal Impact Factor) and journal rankings, based on citations

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DOCUMENT TYPES

Quality measures for different outputs

JOURNAL ARTICLE

generally subject to a peer review process to examine the content of the work (quality assessment), but also covers formal aspects (quality assurance);

after publication: through citations, publisher, journal impact factor (though not a good measure for quality)

BOOK

content quality evaluated before publication, e.g. editing by publishers or peer review board & afterwards in the form of reviews, citations and inclusion in subsequent discussion processes

CONFERENCE PAPER

selected on the basis of abstracts as well as entire paper; often peer review process before publication

after publication: through citations, publisher, conference reputation

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OPEN ACCESS

Development in Germany
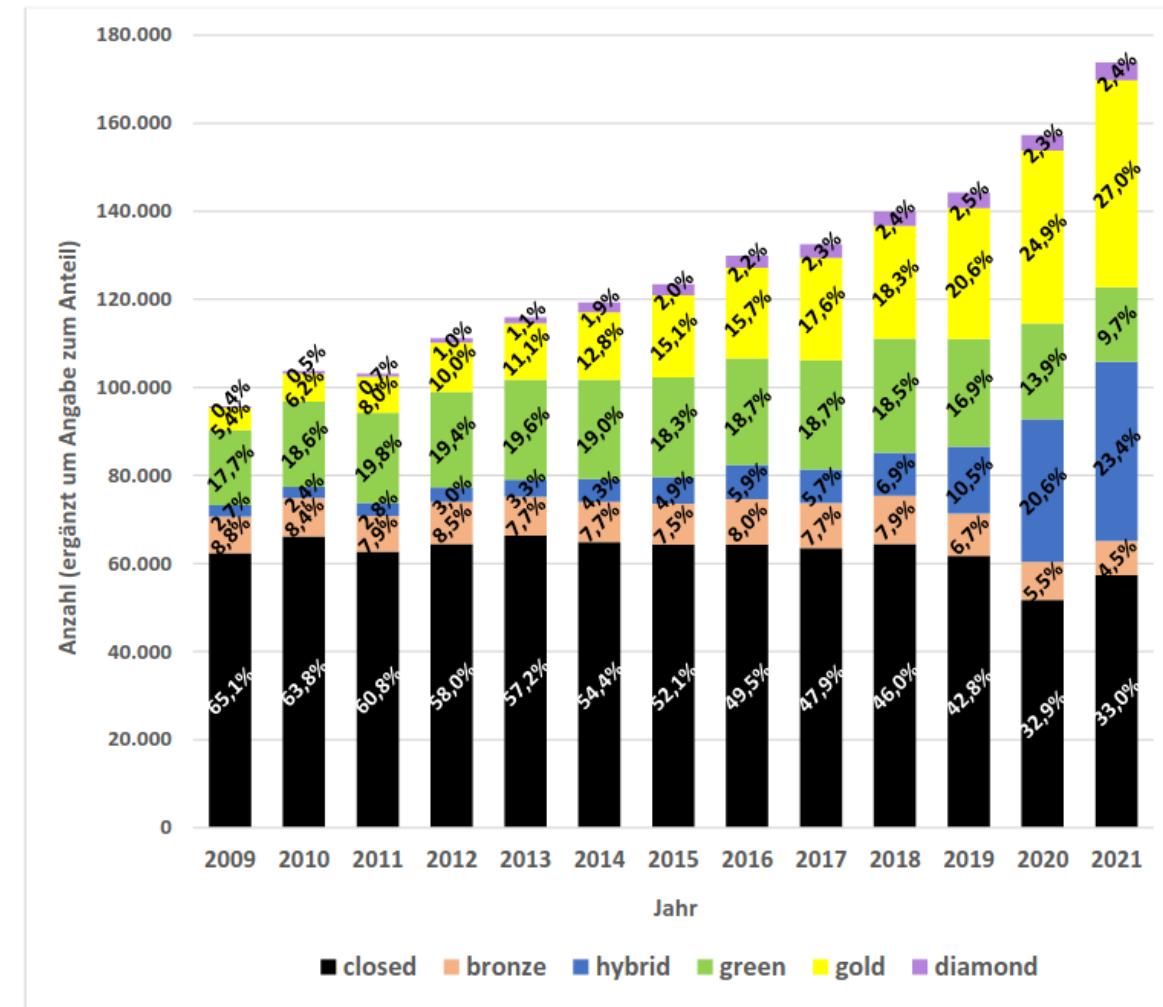
PUBLISHING OPEN ACCESS

Predatory publishing – an open access phenomenon?

- allegations largely due to Beall's list of predatory journals – strongly associated them with OA

- characterised by many providers that are still in the process of establishing themselves

- wide range in terms of level of awareness and credibility of the type of publication

→ predatory publishers exploit this lack of clarity

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THOUGHTS FROM THE GERMAN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Dubious publishers profit from a high output-oriented competitive pressure in the scientific community.

(Sometimes) very high costs of reputable open access publications that cannot be met by everyone and everywhere; not all publications in dubious journals are automatically fraudulent or of low-quality.

There is a fear that the rise of questionable publications will increase the exclusivity of reputable providers and make them even less accessible to parts of the global scientific community

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PREDATORY JOURNALS

Hijacked journals

- mimic existing journal with good credentials;

- adopt their title, ISSN and other metadata;

- use their web presence by hijacking links, even change links <u>in databases like Scopus</u>

- used as cover to ask authors for submissions (see <u>https://retractionwatch.com/the-retraction-watch-hijacked-journal-checker/</u>)

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ARTICLES IN PREDATORY JOURNALS

Different types

ARTICLES BY DECEIVED AUTHORS

legitimate research

damage to the reputation of the author

possible legal consequences in the case of cumulative dissertations → requirements for peer-reviewed journals not fulfilled

ARTICLES PUBLISHED KNOWINGLY

publication pressure

quick & easy publication; expansion of own publication list

term "predatory publishers" controversial → implies prey or victim

ARTICLES FALSIFYING SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

unscientific work

studies which (falsely) claim proven effects of products

personal agendas, studies commissioned by companies

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FAKE ARTICLES

Fake publications & paper mills

- placed in publications with the best possible reputation

- organized networks of ghost writers

- whole articles written by AI

- data provided by "clients" of the company

- guaranteed publication bought

→ to meet unreasonable expectations of academic system?

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2. HOW TO RECOGNISE PREDATORY BEHAVIOUR

PUBLISHER BEHAVIOUR

– lack of transparency about article submission, processing, and withdrawal charges

– no or poor-quality peer review, promises of short acceptance/publication times (unscientific = thorough peer review often takes a long time)

– no archiving of journal content, managing potential conflicts of interest, enabling corrections, and responding to author queries in a timely manner

– Mass emails to scientists with a request for submission; often does not match the subject area of the person contacted

– Mails to scientists with invitation to join the editorial board; often does not match the subject area or academic status

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HOW TO IDENTIFY

Fake journals & predatory publishers

FALSIFIED DATA

— journal name: similar to existing & well-established journal, very general titles (easy to confuse), misleading (American Journal of … - when journal is from Asia)

— pretending to be members of or follow the recommendations of respected organisations

— fake indexing and citation metrics; either metrics are invented / or real metrics are faked

— fake list of editorial board members (individuals never agreed)

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CRITERIA

Checklists & more

→ thinkchecksubmit.org

+ be suspicious!

+ check journal content, identifiers and publisher (verify ISSN – https://portal.issn.org/ -
  and check contact information from imprint)

+ is it indexed in databases? See whitelists

+ COPE = Committee on Publication Ethics; overview on criteria

+ how to not recognise predatory journals - AI tools can mislead scientists

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CRITERIA OVERVIEW

What to look for

PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY AND BEST PRACTICE IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING – OVERVIEW

JOURNAL CONTENT

A journal's name is unique

The website protects users and has high professional standards

The publishing schedule is clear and kept to in practice

Preservation of the journal content is clearly indicated

Copyright terms for published content are clear

Licensing information is in the policy and on published articles

JOURNAL PRACTICES

Publication ethics policies are available

The peer review policy is clear

Charges or registration required for access to articles are clear to readers

ORGANISATION

Journals clearly state ownership and management

Editorial board members are experts in the journal's subject area

Journals provide contact information and full editor details

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Any charges relating to manuscripts are clear to authors

Journals clearly state all revenue sources

Journals have a transparent advertising policy

Marketing to authors is appropriate, targeted, and unobtrusive

COPE Principles of transparency 2022
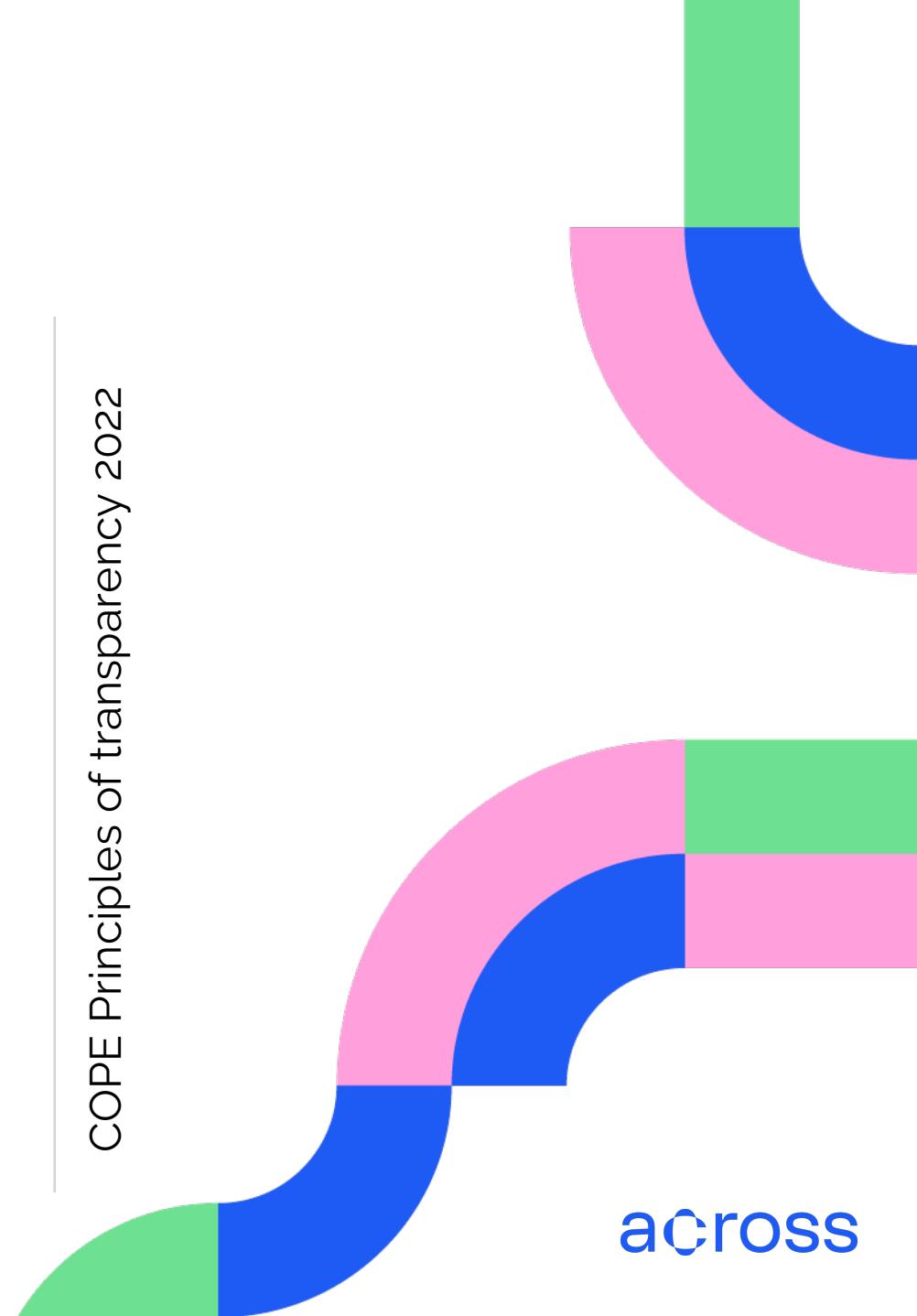
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Journal Practices & Organisation

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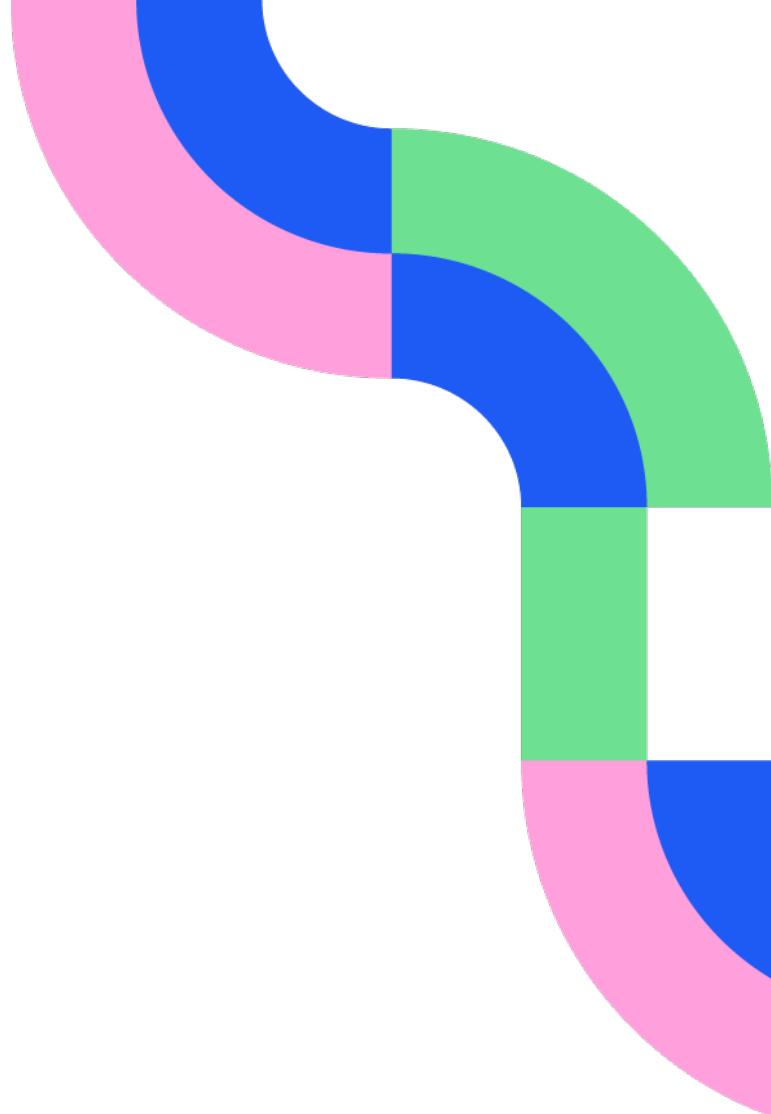
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Business Practices

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BLACKLISTS

Treat with care

+ Beall's List of Predatory Journals 2008 - 2017 = not recommended, lack of transparency, unclear methodology and criteria, no differentiation between predatory and low-quality journals; is continued anonymously https://beallslist.net/

+ Cabell's Predatory Reports = only commercial product, paywall

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WHITELISTS

Indexing – not without faults

+ ideally use transparent criteria

+ DOAJ = Directory of Open Access Journals

+ OASPA = Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association

+ in a broader sense: indexing in databases like Scopus; Web of Science; PubMed

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OVERLAP

Journals identified by both types of lists

SEE THIS ARTICLE

Venn diagram of journal overlap between Beall's List, Cabell's Black- und Whitelist and DOAJ

as of December 2018; DOAJ is monitored regularly and removes journals that are proven(!) to be predatory or fake
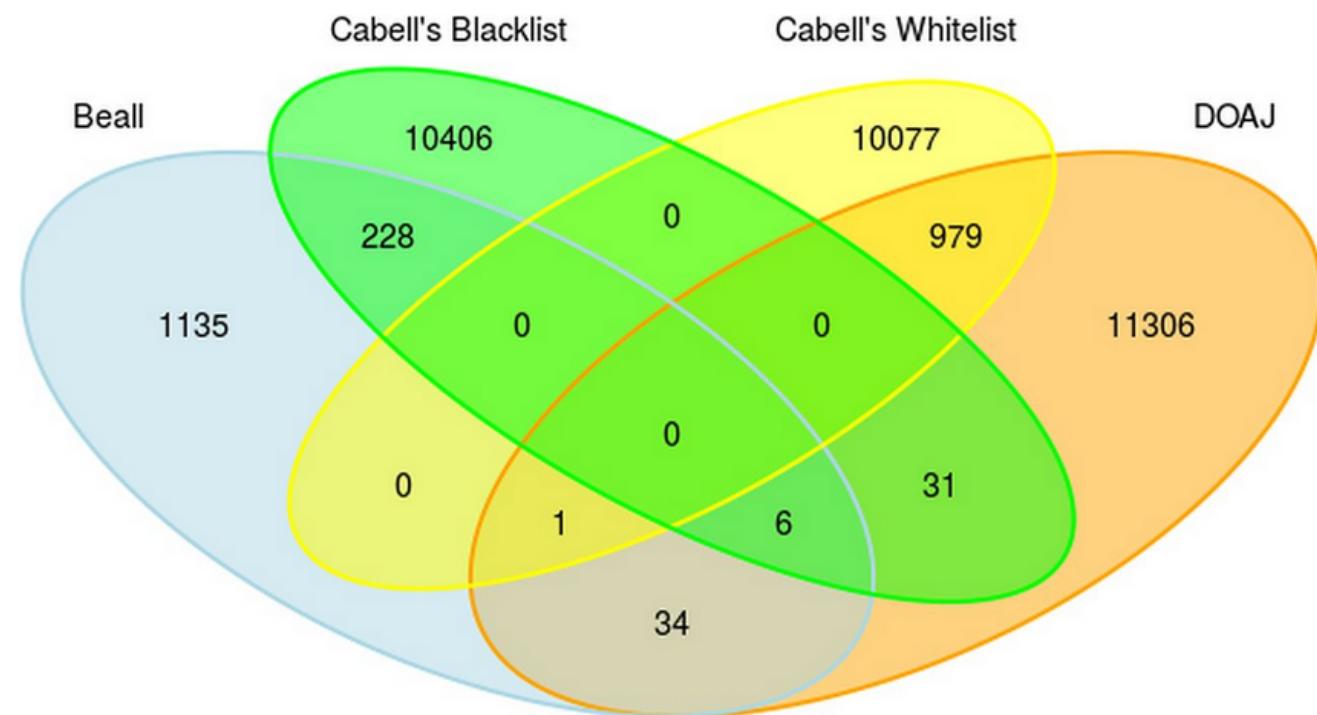
NO FINAL CERTAINTY

Blacklists and whitelists can only give orientation, no absolute certainty: they can differ in their assessment, not every publisher is included and they must be monitored constantly

→ there is a broad grey area between clearly reputable and clearly fraudulent publishers

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EXAMPLE 1

Fake journals / conferences

SEE THIS <u>ARTICLE</u>

In 2019, the US publisher OMICS, which publishes more than 700 journals and over 3,000 conference formats, was fined 50 million US$ for unfair business practices

publisher still exists but output dropped 40% - reputation is important

nature

View all journals | Search | Log in

Explore content ∨ | About the journal ∨ | Publish with us ∨ | Subscribe | Sign up for alerts ⌂ | RSS feed

nature > comment > article

COMMENT | 26 October 2021

Predatory publishers' latest scam: bootlegged and rebranded papers

To thwart publishing rackets that undermine scholars and scholarly publishing, legitimate journals should show their workings.

By Kyle Siler ✉, Philippe Vincent-Lamarre, Cassidy R. Sugimoto & Vincent Larivière

Illustration by David Parkins

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EXAMPLE 2

Fake publications

SEE THIS ARTICLE

Journal of Cellular
Biochemistry published an
extra volume with
retractions because of
extremely high number of
fake publications (Koo, 2024)

Legend:
- TUMOR BIOLOGY
- JOURNAL OF CELLULAR BIOCHEMISTRY
- JOURNAL OF BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY
- RSC ADVANCES
- EUROPEAN REVIEW FOR MEDICAL AND PHARMACOLOGICAL SCIENCES
- PLOS ONE
- MOLECULAR MEDICINE REPORTS
- ONCOLOGY REPORTS
- CLUSTER COMPUTING
- JOURNAL OF CLINICAL ANESTHESIA
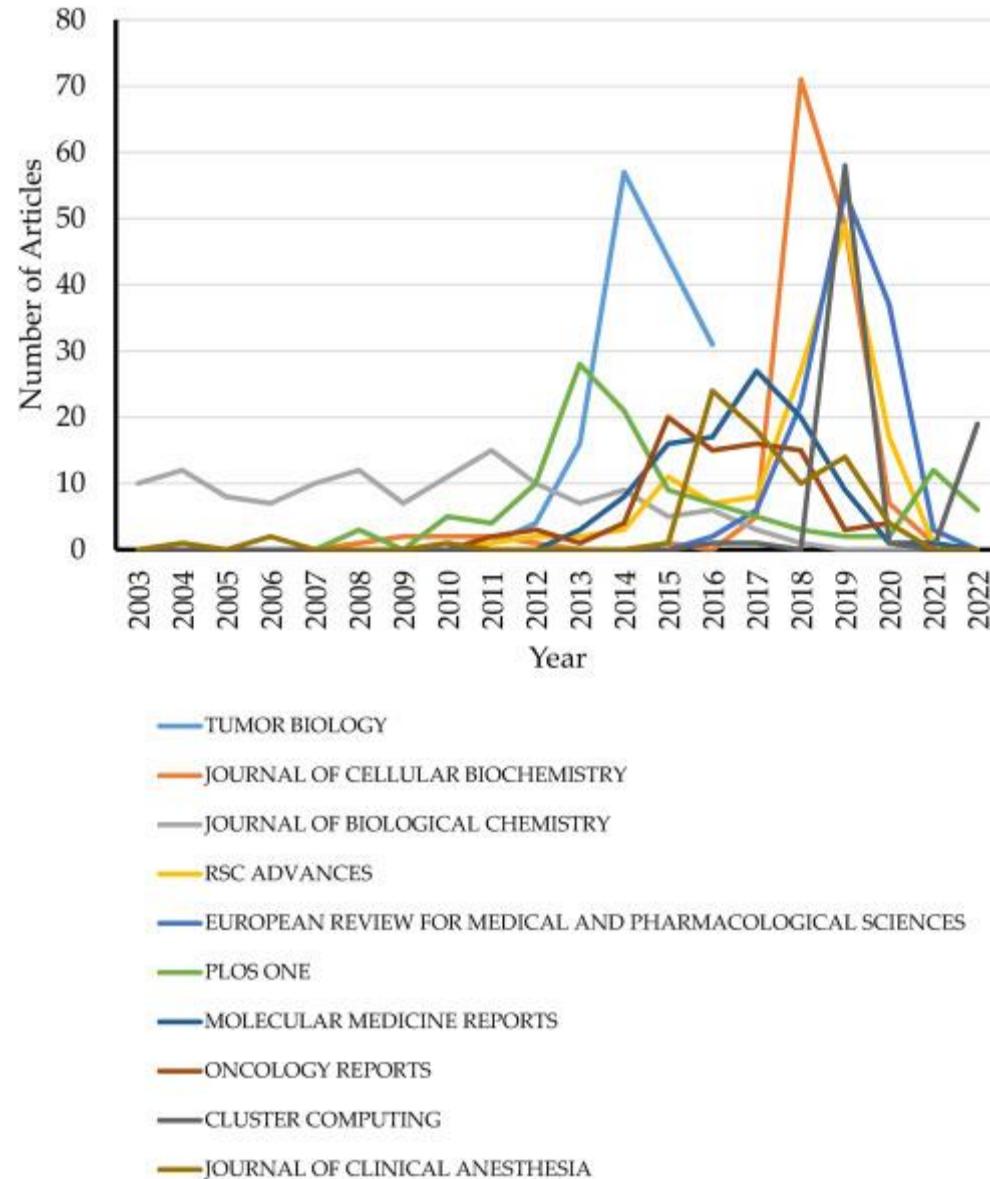
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EXAMPLE 3

Hijacked journal

SEE THIS ARTICLE

faked website for an existing
Scandinavian journal, that
added the whole journal
archive – and some new
articles - to their website


Legitimate *SJIS* website

Fraudulent *SJIS* website

EXAMPLE 4

Challenge of identifying predatory journals

SEE THIS **BLOGPOST**

co-occurrence network of violations on the Cabell's blacklist, variety of combinations of violations

variety and complexity in the degrees of predatory publishing makes drawing lines between legitimate and illegitimate publishing a significant challenge
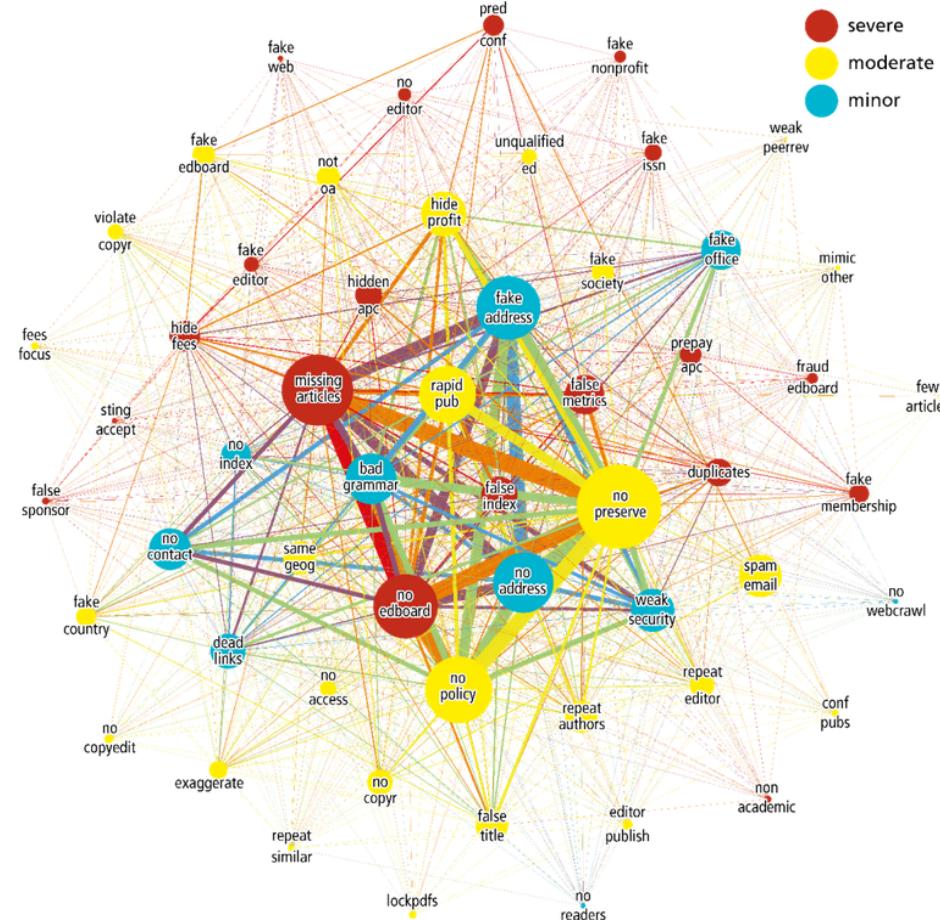
3. HOW TO PREVENT PREDATORY PUBLISHING

On the individual researcher's level

- awareness
- assistance of experienced mentors, colleagues, and librarians
- careful checking of e-mail address and URLs included in communication to see if they match those of a legitimate entity
- use whitelists (with care)
- contact journal yourself if unsure
- keep informed about new developments

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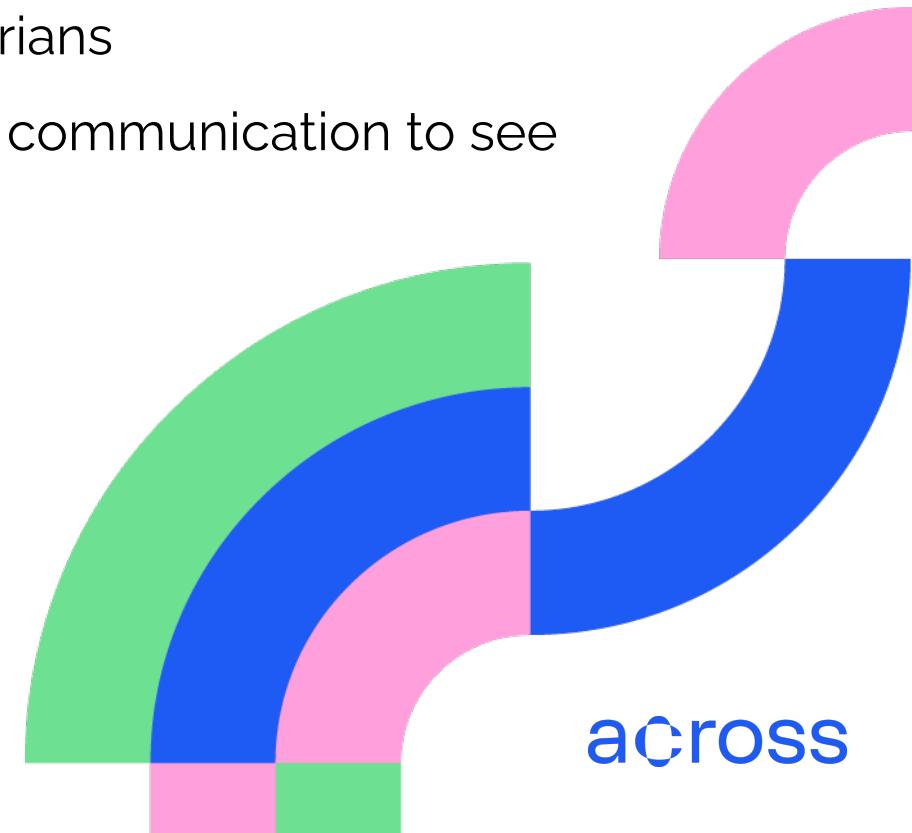
PREVENTION

On an institutional and community level

- institutions and funders must change evaluation strategy from quantity to quality of publications and journals

- universities should offer training and consultation on predatory publishing

- citation metrics need to be more transparent and always cited with context – should never be used (alone) to measure quality

- constant monitoring to identify fake journals

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4. HOW TO DEVELOP A PUBLISHING STRATEGY

General advice

- do not dismiss open access – there are many high quality oa journals that boost your visibility

- find important journals in your field or talk to more experienced colleagues and librarians

- read regularly – articles from relevant journals

- check each journal carefully before you submit an article

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STRATEGY

Different suggestions

Menu *nature* masterclasses
How to build an effective publishing strategy

Pathways to Publishing
Developing a publication strategy

AU Library

https://masterclasses.nature.com/build-an-effective-publishing-strategy/50328902

https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=46171

https://library.au.dk/en/researchers/publishing/publishing-strategy

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CHOOSE A JOURNAL

Shortlist

+   Look at the journals that often publish research related to your work - which journals are you frequently reading from?

+   Put keywords related to your research into databases such as PubMed and Web of Science, to identify indexed journals that publish research similar to yours

+   Use free online journal selection tools such as the BISON Journal Recommender, which identify journals based on keyword and reference matching

https://av.tib.eu/media/62604

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EVALUATE YOUR SHORTLIST

Check for:

+ aims and scope

+ similar articles

+ indexing

+ publication model & speed

+ selectivity

three or four potential journals should be left; determine with co-authors order in which you want to submit to each journal

read author guidelines for each journal and write your manuscript so it's a good fit for them all - as far as possible (reduce reformatting time)

check that your chosen journals are trustworthy (ThinkCheckSubmit)

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WHAT ELSE?

Consider publishing rights for secondary publication
https://openpolicyfinder.jisc.ac.uk/
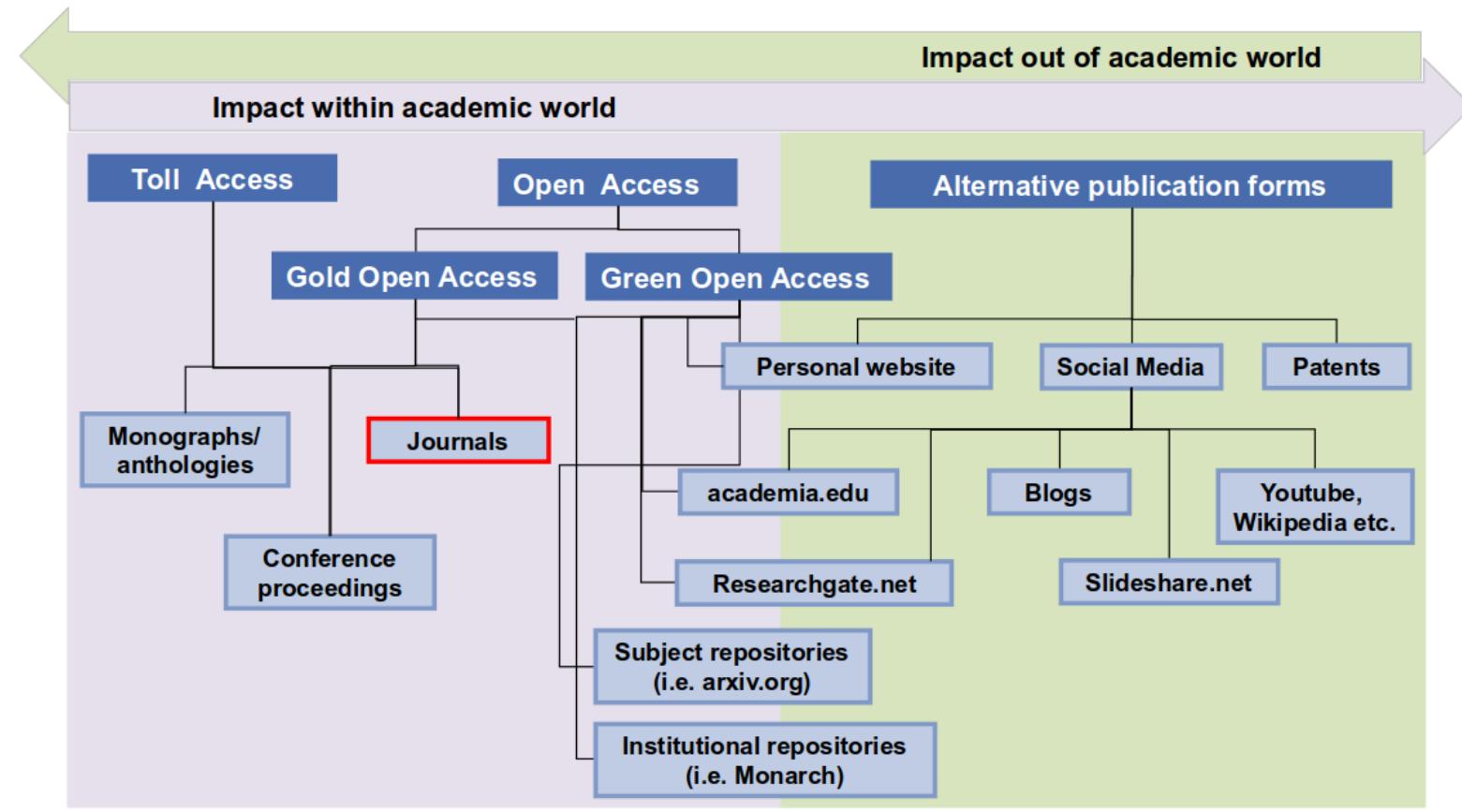
PROMOTE YOUR RESEARCH

On an institutional and community level

- sharing your research (preprint, open access, document server)

- use academic networks

- be aware of bibliometric indicators and use them to your advantage

- be consistent in using name variants; check official guidelines for your institution;
  use ORCID to manage your publication list

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QUESTIONS?

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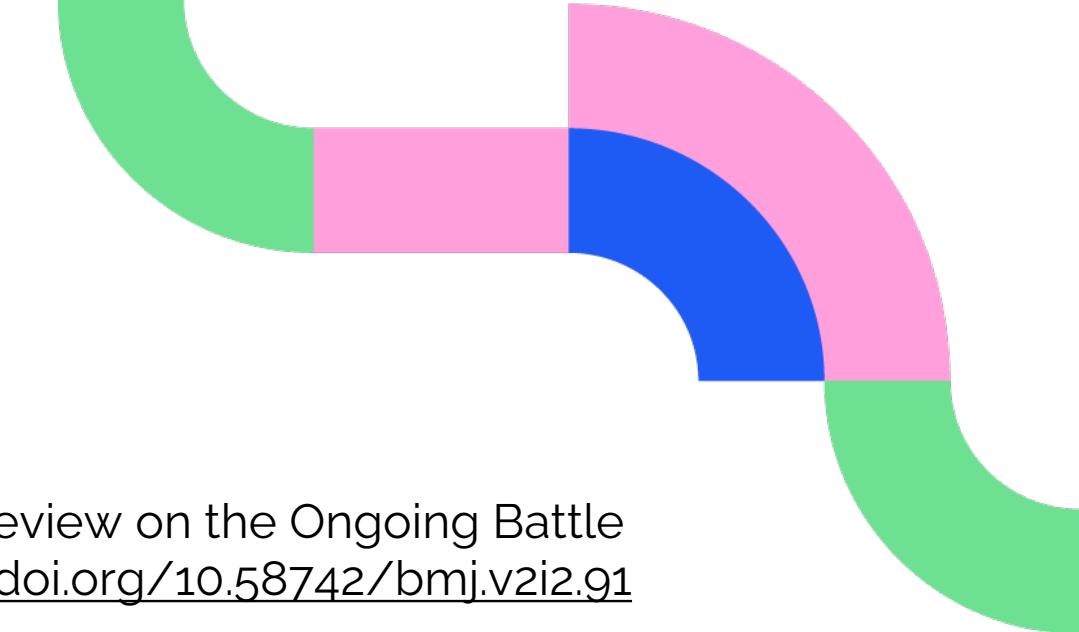
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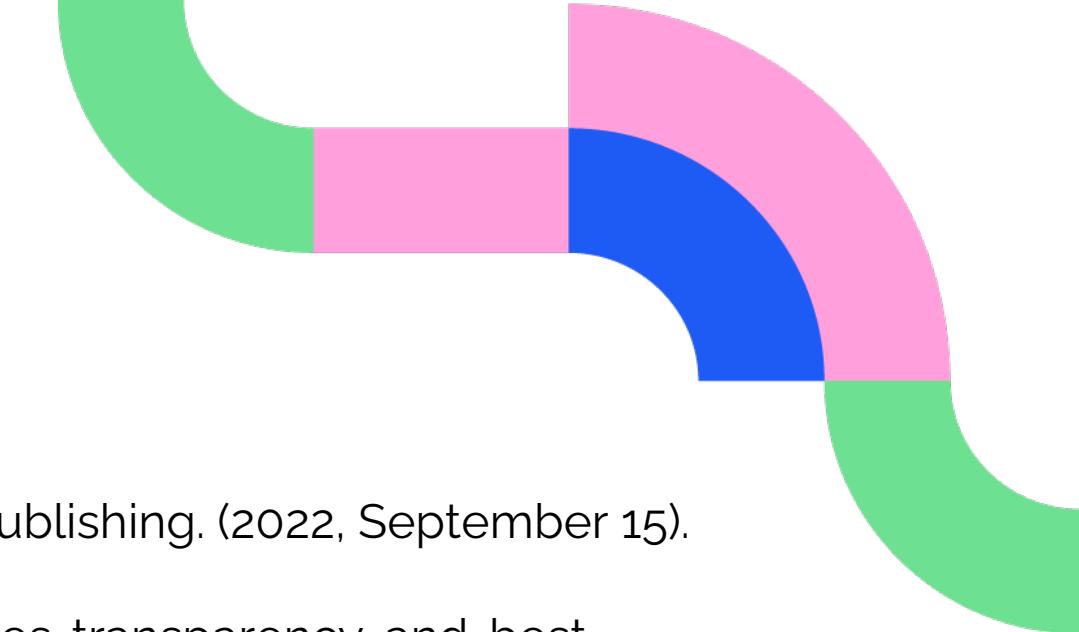
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THANK YOU!

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