Avoiding the Predatory Publisher

By Sandy De Groote

An article recently published in Science, examining the quality of peer review in Open Access (OA) journals, has captured the attention of many in the research community. The finding was that many OA publishers accepted a bogus paper with what appears to have been little peer review (Science, 342(6154):60-65). While it is disturbing that this can happen, it has been noted that there was no control group testing traditional publishers’ abilities to also spot a fake. Michael Eisen notes on his blog that he once submitted a fake article to Science, a traditional journal, and that article was also accepted.

While there have been attempts to suggest Open Access journals are a less worthy avenue for publishing, the truth is whether publishing in an Open Access or Traditional journal, it is important to verify the quality and reputation of the journal.

Reputable Open Access Journals should meet the following standards:

- Provide unfettered (freely accessible) access to all peer-reviewed articles.
- Be a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association OR adhere to its Code of Conduct.
- Offer a standard article fee schedule for public view.
- Have a policy to waive fees in cases of economic hardship.
- The journal should be indexed in a major indexing and abstracting service such as Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed and others. You can confirm the locations where a journal is indexed by consulting with Ulrich's Periodicals Directory. Call up your Library Liaison if you aren’t sure how to check these details.
- Check to see if the journal or publisher is listed on Beall’s List of Potential, possible or probable predatory open-access publishers. Inclusion on this list can be a cause for concern.

If a journal you are considering publishing in is sending up red flags by not meeting these standards, it might be better to consider another place to publish your article.

Sandy De Groote, MLIS, AHIP
Scholarly Communications Librarian and Associate Professor
University Library
312-413-9494
sgroote@uic.edu