

Library Opportunities for Increasing Engagement: Educating Users About Questionable and Predatory Publishing

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Objective

The rise of open accessing publishing has contributed to an increase of low quality, questionable, and even predatory journals in the scholarly publishing landscape (1). These publishing groups frequently engage in aggressive marketing directly to authors, oftentimes promising fast-track publishing, low or no fees for submission, and positions on journal editorial boards. The Skelton Medical Library's objective was to increase library engagement by educating users of the prevalence of questionable and potentially predatory journals.

Methods

Librarians assembled multiple scholarly publishing resources on a "Research Tools" page on the library website (2). Resources supporting measuring research impact, identifying scholarly publications, and open access publishing were included. MUSM-librarian recorded video tutorials and voiceover PowerPoint slides of relevant resources were also posted to the library site.

In addition to the website resources, librarians also proactively reached out to department chairs and resident directors to highlight the prevalence of predatory and questionable publishing and offered information sessions on the topic. Librarians also went as far as searching potentially predatory journal websites for affiliated faculty members listed as contributing authors or editors.

Results

The predatory and questionable publishing topic generated interest among department chairs and led to the library development and delivery of faculty development sessions, student lunch and learns, and a hospital information session on questionable publishing. When instances of affiliated faculty were discovered on potentially predatory journal websites, librarians reached out to administrators to make them aware of the findings.

The screenshot displays the Skelton Medical Libraries website interface. At the top, the Mercer University School of Medicine logo is on the left, and the Skelton Medical Libraries logo is in the center. On the right, there are links for 'Apps' and '?HELP', along with a search bar. Below the header, a navigation bar contains links for 'Search Everything', 'Databases', 'eBooks/eJournals', 'Catalog', 'PubMed', 'Resources-Map', and 'Consumer Health'. A search bar with a 'Search' button and 'Advanced Search' link is present. Below the search bar, there are radio buttons for 'Keyword', 'Title', and 'Author'. A navigation menu below the search bar includes 'Introduction', 'Predatory Publishers' (highlighted in yellow), 'Journal Impact', 'Author Impact', 'Author IDs and Profiles', 'Protecting Your Intellectual Property', 'Altmetrics', 'Article Impact', and 'Broadening Your Impact'. The main content area features the title 'Measuring Research Impact - Predatory Publishers' and a paragraph of text. To the right of the text is a 'Ask A Medical Librarian!' logo. Below the text is a warning message: 'Publishing with these presses can damage your reputation and/or weaken your portfolio for tenure and promotion. Think twice before agreeing to publish with them or agreeing to be on their editorial board.'

Conclusion

With the number of questionable and predatory journals on the rise, the scientific scholarly publishing landscape is increasingly challenging for authors to navigate. By taking proactive measures and reaching out to institutional administration, the library can make valuable contacts with users to create an open dialogue surrounding biomedical scholarly communication.

References

1. Harvey, H. B., & Weinstein, D. F. (2017). Predatory Publishing. *Academic Medicine*, 92(2), 150-151. doi:10.1097/acm.0000000000001521
2. Mercer University Skelton Medical Libraries (2018). *Measuring Research Impact*. Retrieved September 14, 2018, from <https://med.mercer.edu/lib/measuring-impact.htm>