Evaluating Open Access Journals

Presented below is a list of factors to take into consideration when deciding to publish in an Open Access journal. This list is offered as a guide only. If you need any assistance please contact your Faculty Librarian, or the Manager, Scholarly Publications & Copyright.

The Publisher

Is the publisher a member of OASPA?

OASPA is committed to setting standards and promoting open access publishing. These Open Access publishers share information and are more likely to have higher standards than non-members.

Did the publisher solicit your article or chapter?

Direct e-mail solicitations are a sign of a publisher that should be investigated further. Offering to publish your work for a fee is not a common practice used by reputable OA and traditional publishers.

What are some other warning signs of a predatory publisher?

- Lack of a rigorous peer-review process
  - Some journals don’t even mention ‘peer review, they promote a very short ‘decision making’ time frame, e.g. 1-2 weeks
- The journal publishes an unusually large number of articles in each issue
- The publication fee (Article Processing Charge) is unusually low, e.g. US $150
- No single individual is identified as the journal editor, but there is a long list of editors named on the website
- The publisher of the journal is not stated on the website
- The journal/publisher website includes spelling and grammatical errors
- The journal is not listed in standard periodical directories (e.g. Ulrichs) and not indexed by the major indexes (e.g. ProQuest, EBSCO, Scopus, or Web of Science)

What is their profit model?

A bonafide non-profit organisation may have more humanitarian motives for OA publishing than a for-profit organisation.

The Journal

Are they members of DOAJ?

DOAJ is an Open Access Directory that reviews the quality of the journals it accepts and adds to its listings. Journals accepted into DOAJ tend to be more reputable.
What peer review standards are used?

Check if the peer review guidelines are openly posted by the journal. If not contact the journal to ask for details about their peer review process. Does the journal use a blind or open review process?

Identify who is on the Editorial Board and review their credentials.

What is their acceptance procedure?

Check the submission procedure. Is the review process very fast? (e.g. 2 weeks) How long is the time between acceptance of the paper and publication? Too quick acceptance of a paper and a timeline that would not allow enough time for quality peer review may be cause for more investigation.

Is the journal indexed?

Is the journal indexed in major databases or index services? Check Ulrich’s International Periodical Directory, Scopus, or Web of Knowledge via the Library’s Electronic Resources.

What are the journal metrics?

Check if the journal has an impact factor. How high is the impact factor? For some newer open access journals the impact factor may not be available.

Check the citation counts of several articles in the journal. Are these articles being cited by others in that field? A low or non-existent citation count for an article that has been published for a while may mean that an article has not made a significant enough contribution to scholarship in the area.

What is the journal’s publication history?

Does the journal have a regular publication schedule? Look for how many issues are published per year, and for how many years.

What is the quality of the articles in the journal?

Read a few articles. Are they well-written, and/or provide data and a sound scientific method?

What university was the research affiliated with?

Following the above action, check the authors’ affiliations. Are the affiliated universities or institutions reputable?

Would you want to affiliate yourself with the journal?

Apply your own personal and professional qualitative checks to the journal.