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Research submission: Some technicalities and vital links

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ABSTRACT

Publishing allows the author to share with the world his original findings, reasoning, important breakthroughs and it also creates the avenue for mandates of promotion and career upliftment. In an endeavour to publish an article, the first vital technicality that the authors face is selection of an appropriate journal. There has been steady increase in the number of predatory publishers and journals. Knowledge of the different publication models, websites to check valid open access journals and reliance on certain reputable publishing houses may actually guide the authors in selecting legitimate journals. Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID ID) or Researcher ID is required during submission of articles. ResearchGate, Mendeley or Scholar Universe are useful sites to collaborate and disseminate research publication in an effective manner. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is another vital technicality that needs to be adopted by the authors before submission of the research work for publication to ensure higher visibility of the published research article in the academic community and increase citations. Thorough understanding of the publication process, following simple technicalities of manuscript submission and establishing vital links in the post publication phase is some of the useful guidelines for shaping up the success story of the research.

Introduction

Research dissemination is an integral component of every research process, of which publication in a scientific peer reviewed journal is a vital method. Publishing allows the author to share with the world his original findings, reasoning, important breakthroughs and it also creates the avenue for mandates of promotion and career upliftment.

In an endeavour to publish an article, the first vital technicality that the authors face is selection of an appropriate

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journal. One may easily get lured by e-mails about call for papers from journals with the glamorous word 'International' in the journal's name, promising fast publication within 10–15 days and having both online and print version as well as claims of being indexed in an extensive list of agencies including the ones designated in the essential criteria for Medical Council of India (MCI) approval.

Importance of journal selection

Appropriate and genuine journal selection in the milieu of authentic and predatory journals for publication purpose is really a gigantic task as there is no single one stop solution to distinguish open access journals of questionable quality i.e. predatory publishers from legitimate ones. Predatory publication tends to threaten the credibility of science as appropriately pointed out by Jeffrey Beall, a scholarly librarian at Auraria Library and associate professor at the University of Colorado Denver, USA, who first coined the terms ''predatory journal'' and ''predatory publisher'' which implies those journals that exploit the open access model for monetary gains at the cost of scientific integrity.[1,2] Moreover such journals do not provide the peer review which is the hallmark of traditional scholarly publishing. From only 18 predatory publishers in the year 2011, the number stood at 1155 predatory publishers and 1294 predatory journals on January 3, 2017.[3] This trend is worrisome for the scientific academic community. But most unfortunately, at the peak of its popularity, this list abruptly vanished around mid-January 2017.[2] Nevertheless, Beall's list has been an eye opener and has served as an authentic guide to the scientific community regarding selection of journals to communicate one's research findings, but it had some inherent limitations like absence of specific criteria to black list a given journal as predatory.[3] Among few of his criteria were ''journals having little or no geographic diversity on their editorial boards'' and ''not being listed in standard periodical directories or library databases'',[4] which are quite common problems faced by some legitimate journals and publishers, particularly those from low and middle income countries (LMICs).[5]

Different publication models

At this juncture, it is imperative to provide an insight into different publication models, the familiarity of which may help the authors during journal selection. The advent of internet in the mid 1990s brought about revolutionary transition from the traditional 'reader pays' subscription model to 'open access' publication model where publications are freely available online to all at no cost to readers and with limited restrictions with regards to reuse. This type of research dissemination is especially important for authors (increased scope of article citation), readers (easy accessibility to full text/abstract of the articles) and funders (enhanced scope of research findings to reach a wider audience).[6]

Traditionally open access (OA) models can be of two types i.e. Gold and Green open access. In journals having Gold OA business model, publications are available directly from the publisher and the copyright of the article is retained by the author, whereas in Green OA models, the article can be accessed either from author's institutional website, or from a repository e.g. PubMed Central, a practice commonly referred to as ''self-archiving''. Unlike Gold OA, in Green OA journals, the publisher or the society affiliated with the journal has the copyright for articles, with specific user restrictions i.e. which article version may be used and when the article can be made openly accessible in the repository (embargo period). Hybrid OA journals are subscription-based journals that offer Gold OA option only for those articles for which their authors/funders pay a specific fee for publication, often referred to as 'Article Processing Fee' (APC). APCs can be charged from the authors/institution conducting the research ('author pays' model) or funding body ('funder pays' model). The predatory journals are utilizing this open access popularity and luring the authors with the promise of quick publication by paying APCs, which is their principal business motive and are thus having a field day at the cost of compromised scientificity. Serious authors thus need to be more careful while submitting in the open access journal.[6,7]

Sites where one can check valid open access journals

However, resources for identifying legitimate journals are Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and the standard guidelines advocated by organizations such as the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA).[8] DOAJ which was launched at Lund University, Sweden in 2003 is a list of high quality open access journal titles across all disciplines and as of January 5, 2017, DOAJ included 9456 journals from 128 countries which had conformed according to their publishing standards.[9] However, even DOAJ does not provide a comprehensive list of all legitimate open access journals and a journal that is not listed should not be assumed to be illegitimate or predatory. Some journals, though being authentic, may not find place in the list, on the circumstance, that they have either not sought inclusion on the DOAJ or in the waiting period for indexing with DOAJ which is around 6 months. Thus the dilemma remains, and there is no simple answer or a full proof checklist to guide the researchers.

Nevertheless, journals from reputable publishing house (e.g., Springer, Wiley, Elsevier, Nature Publishing Group, Wolters Kluwer/Medknow etc.), availing peer review in selection of manuscripts, and indexed in familiar online databases (e.g., PubMed, Science Citation Index, SCOPUS, etc.) may act as a guide for journal selection.

Furthermore, if any journal quotes its international status in its name, it is judicious to check whether the editorial board of the concerned journal has international representation. This can be crosschecked by reviewing the names of the editorial board and ascertaining if they are from established universities worldwide. But sometimes the editorial board members of fake journals are themselves not aware of the fact

that their names have been put on the editorial board of a predatory journal. As a safeguard, the authors should search for the institutional affiliation of the editorial board members and may go one step further by trying to personally communicate with some of them chosen at random to confirm the journal's authenticity before submission of research work. One should also get suspicious if the affiliations of the editorial board members are not mentioned in the journal site.

Most reputable journals are regular and adhere to their predetermined publishing interval (i.e., quarterly, monthly, etc.). This attribute may also be checked by visiting the journal home page and reviewing the frequency of publishing the past issues.

Vital links

Regarding vital links, some journals require ORCID ID or Researcher ID during submission of articles which are actually unique research identifiers. Some journals, both at national and international level, have made it mandatory for the authors to quote the ID at the time of article submission with the objective of avoiding name ambiguity, since a researcher may share the same last name and single initial with other authors which can result in publications being incorrectly attributed to a contributor with the same name. ORCID stands for Open Researcher and Contributor ID.[10] It is a 16 digit digital identifier that is uniquely ascribed to a researcher and by checking this ID one can easily identify the researcher background, academic qualification, affiliations and research activities including publications, patents etc. Registration in this site is very easy and free, takes only few minutes to do (www.orcid.org). Similar services for name identifier are provided by Scopus author identifier and Researcher ID. To get Researcher ID, one has to register in www.researcherid.com.[11] If one has ORCID, then she/he can transfer the information into Researcher ID, and vice versa. These sites integrate with each other, which allow to showcase one's research work through one single account. In addition, by using these accounts one can collaborate with potential global collaborators and thus the common problem of author misidentification can be avoided.

Nevertheless, the technicality does not stop after publication of the research. Sharing one's research helps to make a greater impact in the scientific community, leading to better collaboration, generation of new ideas and potential innovations. For this, linking the published article to a range of websites would attract more readers and thus it will appear higher in the search engine results. One such useful site is ResearchGate, where one can register freely with www.researchgate.net.[12] Here also one's research publication and identity can be showcased and additionally, it provides how many times a published article has been cited by other researchers i.e. citation count as well as h-index, which relates to one's entire publication career based on output and citation impact. For example, an h-index of 9 indicates that 9 of a researcher's articles have each received at least 9 citations. ResearchGate users can also request full text articles in this platform to the corresponding authors, since most of the researchers throughout the globe including 56 Nobel laureates have their own account in this ResearchGate. The final version of an open access article can immediately be found in ResearchGate, but final version of a subscription only article cannot be found because of the copyright issues and readers pay model, but a draft version of an article may be found. Similar services such as Scholarly Collaboration Network (SCNs) e.g. Mendeley or Scholar Universe also enable authors to collaborate and disseminate research publication in an effective manner.[13,14]

Finally, to ensure higher visibility of the published research article in the academic community and increase citations, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is another vital technicality that needs to be adopted by the authors before submission of the research work for publication. This strategy includes using keywords in the title and abstract, adding captions with keywords to all images, graphs and tables as well as adding the keywords in the different subheadings of the article. SEO by the above mentioned technique will further warrant more probability of the article appearing higher in the results returned by search engines.[13]

As scholars, we strive to do high-quality research, but the herculean effort undertaken by the researchers remain incomplete till the theoretical and practical implications of the work is shared with the wider academic community. Thorough understanding of the publication process, following simple technicalities of manuscript submission and establishing vital links in the post publication phase are some of the useful guidelines for shaping up the success story of the research.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have none to declare.

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