

## Open access scientific publishing: some important criteria

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### Abstract

There is a need for academicians and researchers to publish the work they do. It preserves the scholarly record for the use of future generations, and many a time, can save the time and energy of others from working on the same topic or sometimes, will help others to improve on the existing ideas. While enhancing scientific knowledge by documentation, one immediate benefit for scholars is the academic credits they receive in the form of promotions and financial incentives at work place. It also enhances academicians' standing in scientific community and helps in obtaining research grants. Many of the established journals and societies have acceptable peer review system to maintain the integrity of scholarly record, whereas it is difficult to judge newer open access journals. This opinion article gives few points a researcher may consider, before submitting a paper for such journals.

**Keywords:** Open access publishing; checklists; scientific publishing; quality publishing.

### 1 Introduction

There is an increasing trend and need for publishing more and more research works and data. The traditional journals have certain limitations like the number of pages they can print or publish. Also important implication in traditional publishing model is that they need to sell the journal articles to the reader and therefore, the viability of such publishing will depend on reader's ability and willingness to pay the price. To overcome many of these disadvantages, a new publishing model originated in which the authors contribute to the publishing in the form of article processing charges [1]. In this model the authors bear the cost whereas it is free for the readers. Such a publishing model can give enormous benefits for the advancement of science, technology and dissemination of knowledge as it is publicly made available to read, copy or print. It is likely to gain more citations and other article level matrices over a period of time [2]. One major drawback of this publishing model is the proliferation of open access publishers without proper publishing infrastructure and proper peer review [3,4]. It is very essential to identify such journals and make proper judgment before submitting a paper for publication. We have recently published few open access articles [5-8] and based on our experience, recommend the following points

one can keep in mind. The purpose of this opinion article is to provide a general view and not an exhaustive review. The effort also been made to keep the article short but informative.

### 2 Checklists for identifying a journal

The following points may be useful among many other criteria for identifying proper journals [1]

i) Look whether the journal has editor-in-chief or a list of editors or associate editors with full editorial board: Scientific publishing involves review of the existing literature, design of the experiments, collection of data and its analysis and arriving of proper conclusions. Whenever researchers have many tasks to perform, it is essential that all these processes are carried out in an acceptable manner, without scope for doubt or errors. Widely accepted good publishing practices are taken care of by the editorial board. Therefore, one has to ensure that the open access journal in which we publish should have reasonable editorial board. Many of the journal operators list the editorial board without consent, institutional address or contact e-mails. Whenever you have doubt, try to contact the editor/ editorial board members directly whether they serve in the journals mentioned. Many of the open access journals will fail this first test itself.

ii) Is the title of the journal appropriate? Open access publishing involves conflict of interest between total number of articles published and revenues generated from publication fee charged to authors. It is therefore, a ploy to attract maximum number of article submissions. Journal titles involving the words like 'world', 'global', 'society', 'institute', 'association' are many a time used in a deceptive manner. Do look at the few issues of the journal and try to assess the quality of the articles published.

iii) Whether the journal has reasonable review standards? The reviewing of the submitted papers for publication is an important aspect in scholarly publishing. Reviewers are expected to write an unbiased report about the manuscript under consideration. Many low quality open access journals do not have standard peer review system, or if it exists, it may be substandard. The reviewing is

done as if to accept all papers submitted so that publisher can generate more revenue from author fees. Be cautious from journals which promise very rapid peer reviews and acceptance. One interesting development in peer review process is advanced open peer review system introduced by few journals after an open access article is published. But the efficacy of this model is uncertain as again the publisher has the option to accept or not to accept the comments by the readers.

iv) Whether the journal has been indexed by reputed agencies in the particular subject? In scientific publishing one important factor to consider is the source journal must be indexed in Scopus, Thomson Reuters or other subject specific indexing agencies. Many of the low quality open access publishers provide no information or misleading information about this important data. Authors also have to be careful about this aspect as many spurious journals wrongly claim having an impact factor. It is better, if one checks and verifies in appropriate databases from being misled.

v) Whether the journal follows ethical guidelines in publishing? We strongly believe it is important to state the ethical guidelines in publishing in line with publishing ethics established by COPE. Therefore checking this information might be helpful.

vi) Look for quality of editing services, article layout and style: When an article is published, it must be properly copy-edited which will make article readable and therefore can attract good readership and citations. We feel that article layout and style is an important consideration in the final published version of the article.

vii) Journal archiving policy: We have observed that few of the open access journals stopped publishing after few issues or articles were published and disappeared overnight. Sometimes, if sufficient articles are not received, it may become economically unviable. Therefore proper archiving policy is a must for journals to preserve the articles that are published already.

viii) Disclosure of copyright, plagiarism and article withdrawal policy: This is one of the most important considerations as it deals with the policy of publisher

or journal after an article is accepted for publication or published. There may arise specific cases like authorship disputes, plagiarism, problems with copyright and the disputes of similar nature. It is very important that publishers make their policy clear on such issues.

### 3 Conclusion

The above points are intended to be a general opinion for information purposes and we believe will help authors to make appropriate considerations when submitting an article.

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