



Predatory Publishers and Journals: Guidelines on how to avoid them

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About ICARDA

A treaty-based international organization established in 1975, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is an autonomous non-profit, international institute governed by a Board of Trustees. Under the auspices of the CGIAR System, and in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, ICARDA focusses on delivering innovative solutions for sustainable agricultural development in the non-tropical dry areas of the developing world. ICARDA provides innovative, science-based solutions to improve the livelihoods and resilience of resource-poor smallholder farmers. The organization develops these solutions through strategic partnerships; linking research to development and capacity development; and by taking into account gender equality and the role of youth in transforming non-tropical dry areas.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is multi-centre and multi-CGIAR Research Programme online platform for integrated management, monitoring, and reporting of projects, from planning to budgeting, risks' assessment, knowledge sharing and more. MEL creates synergy between research and development partners, bridging competences in a results-oriented platform. MEL allows saving resources and time, reducing paperwork, facilitating administrative steps, quickening project-related communications and enabling near real-time data collection to inform decision-making.

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Revision history

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Introduction:

Many of you may have received quite a good number of emails from publishers offering their services and promising to publish your work with a fee, and to provide open access to your report with a renewed award. However, this may have a bad effect on your academic career because most of these publishers happen to be 'predatory publishers'.

This guide has been committed by the Deputy Director General for Research to the MEL team to provide guidance on how to avoid falling into predatory publishers' traps. The guide provides the process performed on journal publishers by the MEL team and other CGIAR centres².

Predatory publishers (PP):

The term 'predatory publishers' first appeared in PubMed in 2012, from a note published in the Nature journal by Professor Jeffrey Beall (<https://www.nature.com/news/predatory-publishers-are-corrupting-open-access-1.11385>). **Predatory publisher**, so-called PPs, sometimes called [write-only publishing](#) or [deceptive publishing](#) as per The Office of Scholarly Communication [are](#) "a growing phenomenon in the world of academic publishing. There is no standard definition of what constitutes a PP but generally, they are those publishers who charge a fee for the publication of material without providing the publication services an author would expect, such as peer review and editing" (University of Cambridge 2020). , " According to [Center for Open Science](#): "Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices."

Missing out on these important steps can undermine the final product, perpetuates bad research in general, and exploits the Open Access publishing model: [University of Cambridge, Scholarly communication](#).

Negative implications of PP:

The [scholarly community has recognized serious negative implications of PP](#). The existence of PP leads to a distortion of the published scientific literature, allowing the online existence of scientific papers that did not pass a rigorous process of peer review to warrant adequate scientific qualities. Without an adequate peer review process and limited editorial oversight, there are no mechanisms to verify the quality of the articles. There is also no process to avoid publishing findings that can be potentially misleading to readers, including researchers, developers and policy decision-makers. At a minimum, PP are undermining the credibility of scientific literature as they can promote the propagation of errors³. Researchers might cite papers that have been published in PP and discuss invalid findings in their articles submitted to reputable journals/publishers. The problem will be more serious if the unqualified publications are used as a knowledge base for guiding the practices of agricultural developers or policy makers. Since PP materials are often available for free online, they have an unknown but surely detrimental effect on education, as well as citizen knowledge.

² Each CGIAR centre has created its own process. This guideline is a synthesis of process used by IFPRI, IWMI, WF and MEL.

³ Forero, D.A., et al., 2018. Negative Effects of "Predatory" Journals on Global Health Research. *Annals of Global Health*, 84(4), pp.584–589. DOI: 10.29024/aogh.2389

For individual researchers, publishing their work in a PP means that they contribute unintentionally to the above adverse impacts of PP, negatively impacting their academic profile and reputation.

How can you avoid submitting your hard work to a PP?

You should have the following double checked BEFORE submitting your work to a publisher or a journal:

- (A) Make sure that your target publishers/journals are NOT in common lists of PP and journals, AND
- (B) Make sure your target publishers/journals are IN recognized academic directories.

(A) Resources to check that your target publishers/journals are NOT in common lists of PP and journals

Several online resources are available to guide you in how to avoid falling into the trap of PP. These resources vary from general resources to university libraries. Some are listed here:

General resources

- <https://predatoryjournals.com/journals/>
- <https://beallslist.net/>
- <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

Resources from university libraries

- <https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/predatory>
- <https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=296124&p=1973764>
- <https://libguides.rutgers.edu/predatory>
- <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/publish/predatory>
- <https://libguides.usc.edu/c.php?g=741391&p=5367265>
- <https://libguides.library.noaa.gov/c.php?g=818639&p=5842619>
- <https://libguides.library.arizona.edu/predatory-publishers>

(B) Make sure your target publishers/journals are IN recognized academic directories.

Some recommended data directories are:

- Entry in the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) – journals must meet strict criteria to qualify.
- Journal Publisher's membership of [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association](#) – members are bound by a code of conduct based on standard publishing practices and transparency.
- Publisher's membership of the [Committee on Publication Ethics](#) – membership demonstrates commitment to widely accepted publishing practices.
- Publisher's membership of the [International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers](#) – membership demonstrates commitment to widely accepted publishing practices
- Journal is indexed in [Web of Science](#).

- National Library of Medicine
journaldirectory <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/journals>
- [SHERPA/RoMEO](#)
- [SHERPA/JULIET](#)
- [Scimago Journal & Country Rank](#)

Publisher and journal websites

- Named editor and editorial board – recognized experts in their field who include their editorial commitment on their own research profiles (e.g. ResearchGate and LinkedIn).
- Editorial board claims prominent university affiliation.
 - Check if those same universities have them listed as staff
 - Check the Open Researcher and Contributor Identification Number of the board member if available
- Named authors are well known and have recently published articles.
- Publishers' full contact details are provided (email, postal address, working telephone number).
- Publisher address is a real location. Uses address in prominent city.
 - Look at Google Maps to see what the building looks like for the address
 - If Google Street View shows a construction site or a residential building, it's suspicious
- Journal title sounds respectable.
 - Check known titles from Web of Science and ISSN
- Visibility of costs associated with publishing. Lures you in with a very good sounding offer.
 - Compare to offers from established publishers
 - Look for grammatical errors or other problems with language
- The DOI for the journal issue is live.
- Impact factor (Clarivates Journal Citation Reports 2019/2020 listing).
- Journal archive section is up to date on their website.
- [Journal Evaluation tool](#)

Other

- https://publicationethics.org/files/cope_dd_a4_pred_publishing_nov19_screenaw.pdf

Some hints

Good to know

Citation rates for PP articles are very low, according to a *Nature* study (Nature News January 13, 2020 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00031-6>). The study examined hundreds of articles in predatory titles and showed that 60% have never been cited. This also suggests that there is a very limited attention paid to these predatory journals on science and very little reason for CGIAR authors to publish in them.

A suggestion to publish a scientific finding whilst you wait for your work to be published in refereed publishers (e.g. an Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) journal)

A common issue for researchers is that the acceptance rates of submitted manuscripts within ISI journals are low and the review period usually takes time. This is an issue for research projects that require annual scientific publication. One option is to present your draft (or in-preparation) manuscript in the form of a working/discussion paper (WP) that can be internally reviewed by your respective research organization. This is much better than submitting your hard work to a PP/journal.

Respective researchers should handle the WP writing and the related journal manuscript in a way that helps to avoid the problem of plagiarism. One suggestion is that researchers have a much longer WP with more detailed content than a paper manuscript for a journal. Long and detailed WPs help the researchers (i) avoid plagiarism with the related journal manuscript when publishing subsequent articles on the same , and (ii) the published WP is worth being cited and read because it provides details that cannot be given in a journal paper (unless as supplementary material). Furthermore, when writing a manuscript for a journal based on a published WP, researchers should detect duplications and revise as necessary to obtain a plagiarism-free manuscript. The detection of plagiarism can be done rapidly by relevant plagiarism-checking software. Most plagiarism detector programmes apply a fee, however there are some recommended free ones, such as [Dupli checker](#), [Copyleaks](#), [PaperRater](#) etc. (eLearning industry, [Top 10 Free Plagiarism Detection Tools For eLearning Professionals \(2020 Update\)](#)) . It would be worthwhile for the researchers to consult their science advisers during this process.