

So Your Article Appeared in a Predatory Journal?

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At the UPOU, I'm a member of two committees at the university level: Committee on Professor Emeriti and Committee on the UP Science Productivity System, both requiring stringent criteria that have something to do with scientific output largely in the form of scientific publications in books or academic journals. The Committee on Professor Emeriti is responsible for the evaluation and nomination of retiring faculty members with the rank of Professor 12 to the title of Professor Emeritus. The Professor Emeritus title is for life, and, at UP, it's no longer automatically awarded to retiring Professors. It has become highly competitive.

The other committee that I'm a member of is responsible for the evaluation of faculty members to determine if they're qualified to be nominated for the Award UP Scientist I, UP Scientist II, or UP Scientist III; or UP Artist I, UP Artist II, or UP Artist III.

In evaluating the scientific or artistic outputs of the faculty members being considered for the Scientific Productivity Award, the UP Artist Award, and the Professor Emeritus Award, we look carefully at the scientific/artistic publication outputs. In other words, we take a look at books, book chapters, or journal articles published in reputable journals by the faculty member concerned. This has become a problematic matter beginning this year because the UP System has suddenly excluded articles published in what they have labeled predatory journals. Why has this become a problem?

Predatory publication refers to a system of publishing scientific papers subject to various characteristics like weak review process, guarantees that an article would be published quickly, the author paying a publication fee, and things like these. We used to think of predatory journals as only those that charge publication fees, but there are more issues involved. For example, the criteria that would identify a journal as predatory journal, or a publishing house as predatory publisher, include the following characteristics:

1. Peer review procedure is weak or even non-existent.
2. Board of Editors is comprised of unknown names in the field, or include names of known individuals without their permission, much less agree to become members of the editorial boards.
3. The journal doesn't have authentic address.
4. The journal has an over-active promotion program, practically forcing individuals, researchers, or authors to submit articles to the journal.
5. The journal is usually not listed or even mentioned in the Journal Citation Report, which is usually through the Library.
6. The journal has a high manuscript acceptance rate.
7. The journal may be short-lived, hence without ISSN.
8. The journal has an over-flattering characteristic such as high impact factor, high citation indices of individual articles.

9. The journal charges publication fee, which is frequently exorbitant.
10. Little or no attention paid to digital preservation.

There are other characteristics but those mentioned are the common ones. Perhaps the most common among these is that authors are asked to pay publication fee after the publication of the article, which makes it impossible to object. Very many journals do this, including non-open access journals, and this practice has even been bolstered by the proliferation of open access journals. This phenomenon of open access started big time in 2002. It is estimated that today, the number of open access journals has surpassed the 10,000 mark. The number is probably much larger now. There are three models for publication fee charges, also known as article processing charges (APC) for open access publications (journals).

1. **Gold Model**, which provides that the author pays for the publication of his article.
2. **Green Model**, which means that the author shall self-archive all his previous articles published in open access repositories, and possibly make them available on request. In other words, the journal has nothing to do with archiving the article it publishes.
3. **Platinum Model**, which means that the publication is free for both author and readers, and is funded by an organization, institution, or other individual/s.

To the issue of whether or not the University of the Philippines should exclude any publication from predatory journals in its evaluation of scientific productivity of individual faculty members is really an internal matter. My suggestion, however, is that the policy to exclude articles published in predatory journals from the evaluation of scientific outputs of the individual faculty member being considered for promotion or award should not be applied now or retroactively. Maybe it could be applied next year, or in the next call for promotions. By then, the UP System would have completed its list of journals it considers predatory and any article published in such journals the UP shall not credit under its promotion or scientific productivity programs. It is necessary that the UP has its own criteria for determining whether or not a journal is predatory. Otherwise, it can use the list provided by legitimate societies or associations such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) or the Open Access Scholarly Publications Association (OASPA). The list, regularly updated and published by Jeffrey Beall of Colorado State University, is controversial although used by many universities. One of the criticisms against Beall is that it is apparent he has a bias against open access publications. Beall’s list is commonly referred to as “black list” of journals, while those from DOAJ or OASPA is “white list,” which means they’re not predatory journals.

Just how serious is this problem in the academe? Here are data from Jeffrey Beall.

Year	No. of Predatory Publishers
2011	18
2012	23
2013	225
2014	477
2015	693

If, in fact, there are more than a million journals today, then this figure is a miniscule 0.0690/o of all journals. The problem is that those suspected to be predatory journals are those being published mostly in developing countries in Africa and Asia. There are usually coming out of Africa, India, Pakistan and other countries. This is not to say that there are no predatory journals coming

out of the Americas, Europe, and smaller developing countries. In fact, years back, Elsevier was seriously criticized for publishing a predatory journal, which was discontinued.

The number of questionable stand alone journals:

Year	No.
2013	126
2014	303
2015	507

If anything, the number of predatory publishers as well as predatory open access journals has been increasing rapidly on a yearly basis, but the increase is largest in 2013. In the case of stand alone journals (those that are not part of any organization or institution) Beall also reported that while in 2013 only 126 journals were questionable, this number increased to 507 in 2015.

If James Martin is right, that journals grow by a factor of ten every 50 years, then we have the following figures:

1750	10
1800	100
1850	1,000
1900	10,000
1950	100,000
2000	1,000,000
2015	3,000,000 ?
2050	10,000,000

This, of course, is a moving target because journals are sprouting all over the globe. Had there been a journal counter, there would be endless clicks rather quickly in succession. This simply means that the problem is probably expanding geometrically and our solutions are simply by singular count.

Now, let's focus on the University of the Philippines System. There's one point that needs to be discussed by all concerned individuals and campuses. Simply because an article was published in a "predatory" journal doesn't necessarily mean the article per se is not of high quality. Of course, the circumstances under which the article may have been published could be questionable. But there may be one issue that neutralizes all others, and this could be the utter lack of benefit of the doubt that we ought to be giving our colleagues. The academe could be viewed as an arena for back-stabbing. Over-all, we do have too much of a sense of individualism and lack of consideration.

Unfortunately, predatory publishing, which is also called vanity publishing, will not stop unless academics stop submitting their articles to these journals. How about, "just leave them?" Well, that's much easier said than done.