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LECTURE

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Questionable Publishing Practices

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Wednesday
29th of May, 2024
13:00, Zoom

Questionable Publishing Practices

Challenges, Pitfalls and Strategies

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Wednesday, 29.05.2024

Open Access practices

Different ways to publish (and make money)

Open Access **Gold**:

Article (or book) is published in an OA journal and:

- Immediately accessible
- With an open licence (CC)
- Comes with a bill for APCs (Author Processing Charge)

Hybrid Open Access:

- Same as above **but** in a subscription-based journal (R&P)

Open Access **Green**:

Article (or book) is made available in repository


- possibly after an **embargo (check!)**
- possibly as a post-print

Open Access **Diamond**:

- Same as OA gold **but** no costs to reader or author
- Scholar-led, equitable

The rise of the author-pays model

Read & Publish and gold OA publishers

- Big Deal license with legacy publishers that evolved to include subscriptions and funding for Open Access
 - READ: institution has access to a publisher's subscription content. Pricing often based on current subscriptions
 - PUBLISH: APCs for the institution's faculty are waived and built into the contract price
 - New business model brought about the rise of new publishing venues
 - Purely digital, OA Gold alternatives to legacy publishers
 - Examples: BMC, PLoS, PeerJ, eLife, Frontiers, MDPI
-  Parallel rise of predatory publishing

«Predatory» Publishing

The challenge of finding a definition

Building on Jeffrey Beall:

“an exploitative business model in the scholarly publishing market that is devised solely for financial gain’ that ‘has become an epidemic practice over the last two decades.” ([Xia](#), 2021)

Working definition e.g. for ALLEA

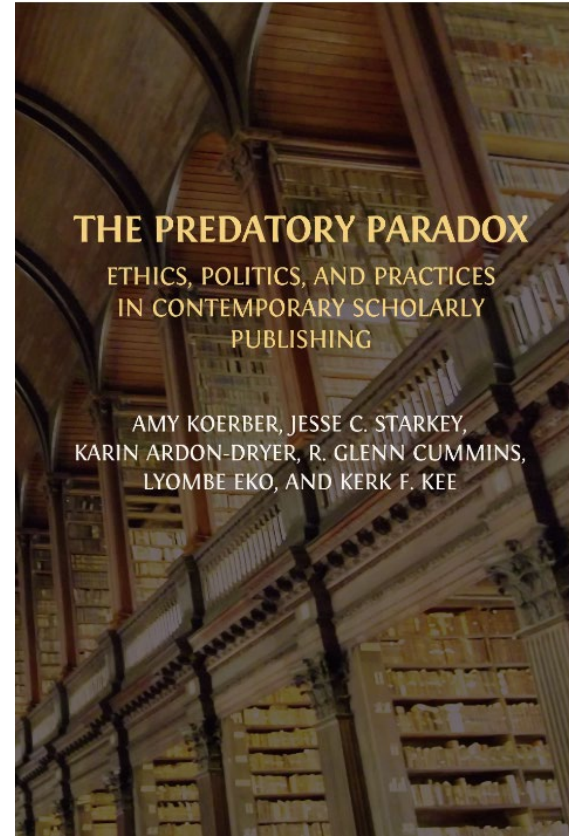
Predatory journals and their publishers are "entities that prioritise self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterised by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.” ([Grudniewicz](#) et al, 2019)

«Predatory» Publishing

Is a definition (still) possible?

Defining "Predatory" is far from a simple task and the term "is the product of a desire to find simple solutions and understandings to what is inherently a complex problem." ([Koerber et al](#), 2023)

➔ "Questionable" less fraught

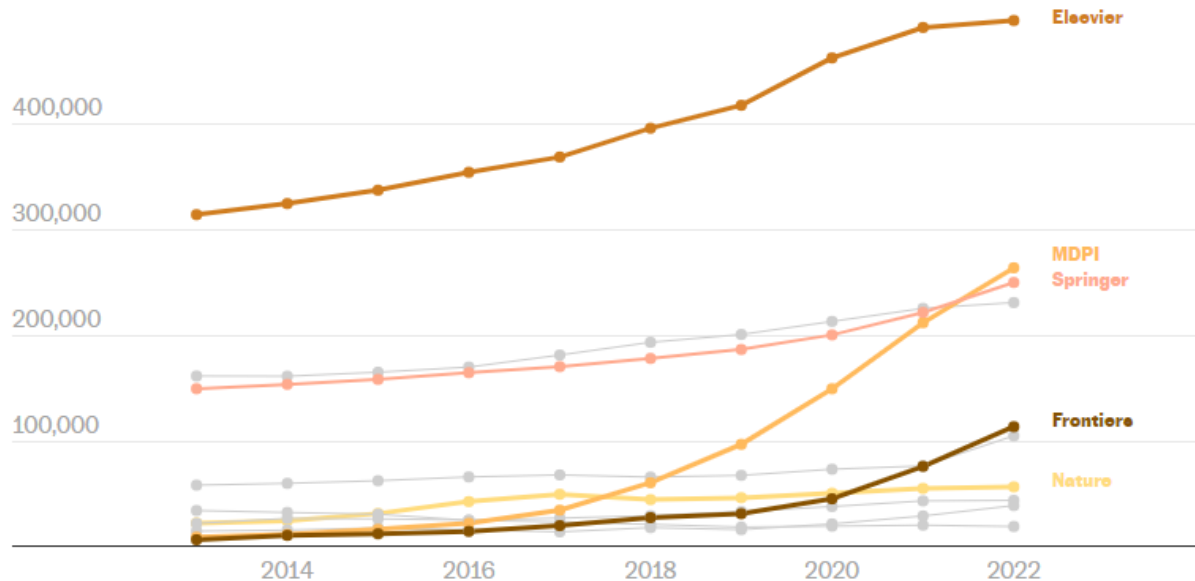


Questionable amounts of publishing

Concerning developments

In 2022, major publishers published 1.6 million articles, more than twice as many as nine years earlier

Annual articles published by each publisher



Questionable pricing of publishing

Concerning developments

Conclusions

The APC business model is used successfully by a minority of fully open access journals, and is more common in particular subject areas, particularly science and medicine. The fact that half the APC charging journals listed in DOAJ in 2011 are no longer listed in DOAJ in 2021 demonstrates that a journal's APC model and/or inclusion in DOAJ are not indicators of stability. Journals from the 2011 dataset that are still publishing showed price increases well beyond inflation rates, suggesting that an APC market could replicate the inelastic market long observed with subscription journals. Impact factor, measured by relative JCR or Scopus ranking, correlates with higher APCs. While the per-journal global average APC has increased at less than the rate of inflation, the per-article global average APC has increased at a rate far beyond inflation, and price band analysis indicates an overall concerning trend of price increases. Meanwhile, more OA journals and articles are published by universities (as distinct from university presses) than any sector, and this sector is associated with a greater tendency not to charge APCs, and when APCs are charged, to charge much lower fees than other sectors. This is a model worthy of further exploration.

More challenges

Avoiding fallacies and paradoxes

Fallacies old and new

- Researchers are helpless prey
- All research published in a predatory outlet is bad
- Predatory publishers come from the global south
- New models by traditional, prestigious publishers are acceptable (e.g. ACS [controversially](#) charging 2.500 USD for OA green without embargo)

Paradox

- In APC-based OA publishing, the author has become the client
 - Publishers cater to this new client by providing optimized services and faster turn-arounds
 - Efficiency should be welcome but is eyed with much suspicion

PROBLEM: How to tell the difference between a good offer and a scam

Current discussions

The case of MDPI

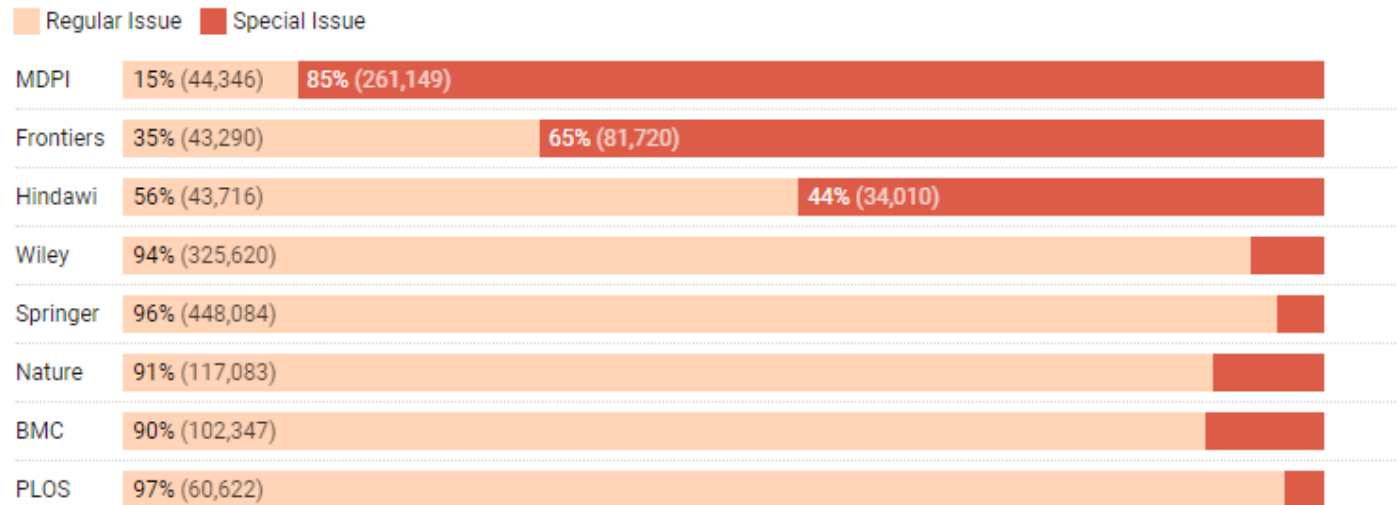
This year, its flagship journals, *The International Journal of Molecular Sciences* and *Sustainability*, will, respectively, host 3,514 and 3,512 special issues with a closing date in 2023, equivalent to more than nine special issues a day. In addition to concerns about how peer review can be conducted effectively at this scale, questions have been raised about the relevance of some special issues to the journal's main theme: one *Sustainability* special issue on “gender issues in sport and leisure,” which closed last year, included papers on doping in sport and how anxiety levels in female Chinese Ph.D. students were affected by “funny running.”

Current discussions

The case of MDPI

Some publishers publish more special issues than regular issues

Data 2016-2022



Current discussions

Quo Vadis Open Science?

Various interest groups

- Researchers
- Publishers
- HEIs
- Funders
- Governments



conflicting goals

What is at stake?

„People with influence have to sit down and have an uncomfortable conversation, to decide the future of scientific publications, because, if this continues, we may lose the most important thing about science, which is scientific rigor. If you lose that, you lose everything.” ([Pablo Gómez Barreiro](#))

Where does that leave researchers?

With hard decisions!

Pro APC-based publishing

- Fast publication
- Possible access to funding
- Uncomplicated submission and review process

Cons

- Concerns about quality
- Questions of affordability and equity
- Concern about reputation and unwanted effects on career



Develop a sound publishing strategy and stick to it



Make sure to be informed **BEFORE** you submit your manuscript

How to recognize a good journal

Some pointers

- **Context:** Is this a new publisher, form („Special Issues“), journal?
- **Appearance:** Professional site?
- **Quality control:** editorial board, authors, peer-review, editing, layout of the journal
- **Business model:** Is it credible?
- **Reputation:** Is the journal known? Where is it indexed? What do colleagues think?

Where to find information

- White lists like [DOAJ](#)
- [SherpaRomeo](#)
- [OS-Team](#)

At Uni Bern:

- [OA-Finder](#)
- [B!SON](#)

Open Access and Open Data resources at Uni Library Bern

OPEN ACCESS



[OA](#)

Here you find an overview of the subject area Open Access.

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Here you find information about the institutional repository of the University of Bern.

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Questions & Discussion

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