

## Questionable publishing practices

The Library is aware that researchers are increasingly being approached by publishers with offers that can be viewed as questionable or of little academic merit. This is sometimes called predatory, unethical or vanity publishing. Accepting these offers can diminish the perceived value of the work, or limit future rights.

Vanity or predatory publishing is broadly defined as the practice where the author of a book or article pays all or most of the costs of its publication, often with no retention of rights to the material. Currently a number of publishers are claiming to support Open Access as a justification for their behaviour.

In the scholarly environment the main concern with vanity publishing is that there are no, or diminished, quality controls in place.

There are many excellent and reputable companies that will charge an author to publish, but do so to defray legitimate editing, publication and peer review costs. This includes both traditional and Open Access publishers, so a request for payment alone should not be seen as an indication of questionable quality.

Unethical or predatory publishers are frequently less than candid about their practices, and have been known to:

- claim to have rigorous peer reviewing and editing processes in place when this is not the case;
- take ownership of the copyright of material (such as theses), which then cannot be republished elsewhere;
- advertise conferences which may not be held;
- offer to promote publications when there is no intention of doing so;
- include researchers in their publicity or on “editorial boards” without approval;
- charge fees after accepting material for publication without advising that this would occur;
- promote themselves with a name that could be mistaken for a more prestigious body or press; and/or
- “hijack” existing titles by setting up duplicate websites or by buying the rights to the title.

Some recent examples of questionable practices include:

- A typical spam attempt to attract articles - <http://distractionwatch.tumblr.com/post/92141855560/we-are-very-interested-in-your-research>
- A change of ownership of *Experimental & Clinical Cardiology* which has led to an apparent abandonment of peer review - <http://ottawacitizen.com/technology/science/respected-medical-journal-turns-to-dark-side>
- A publisher inventing their own impact factor, and then applying it to their titles - <http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/08/19/indian-open-access-publisher-assigns-metrics-to-its-own-journals/>
- The setting up of a duplicate site - <http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/06/10/de-gruyter-journal-hijacked/>

The Library tracks vanity and predatory publishing and can often provide advice about publishers or companies to avoid. For further advice on how to detect potentially problematic publishers the Library recommends:

- [Distraction Watch](#) – a tumblr blog showing suspicious emails or approaches; and
- *Cites & Insights* – the [July 2014 issue](#) has a useful checklist (Conclusions p.23-24)

Researchers, including graduate research students, should be wary of approaches by email or letter from unfamiliar publishers, asking for books, articles or conference papers for publication, or for participation as an editor, editorial board member or conference attendance in the publisher's activities. **Check with a colleague or the Library if uncertain about an approach that has been made.**

Another category of predatory behaviour occurring at present is that of established publishers advising researchers that article fees must be paid in order to comply with NHMRC and ARC open access policies. **This is neither necessary nor recommended.**

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27 August 2014