

University of South Florida Faculty Senate
Statement on Evaluation of Open Access Publishers and Journals

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This is a living document and should be updated periodically

The University of South Florida (USF) appoints permanent faculty with the expectation that such faculty will attain promotion and, for tenure line faculty, earn tenure. Often, the criteria for achieving success involves the production and dissemination of high-quality scholarly research. Faculty should look to their departmental leadership, tenure and promotion committees, and beyond for early help in discerning which publication channels are appropriate and legitimate for their scholarship. Department leadership, tenure and promotion committees at all levels, and administrators who play a role in faculty assessment should likewise take reasonable steps to become familiar with which publication channels are appropriate and legitimate for the scholarship of those they assess.

To fulfill these responsibilities, faculty and administration should be knowledgeable of resources that can assist in evaluating the credentials and legitimacy of journals and publishers. With the advent of online avenues for publication, academic publication practices have evolved, and continue to evolve, at an exceptionally high rate of speed. One outcome of this evolution is the emergence of questionable, often called “predatory,” publishers and journals that exploit the academic need to publish but offer little reward for those using their services.

There are no definitive indicators of whether a particular journal or other avenue of publication should be classified as questionable. Moreover, the variation across disciplines of quality publication practices ensures that specific standards cannot be generalized to all fields. Nonetheless, faculty exploring publication channels may consider the following:

What does it mean for a journal to be open access?

Open access is frequently defined as literature that is online, free to readers, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. With subscription barriers removed, publishing your article open access can reach readers from across the globe. However, while open access journals are free to read, they are not free to produce.

Some publishers have article processing charges (APCs) which are billed to the author as a way to fund the production of the journal. This new business model, and the relatively low bar of entry to publish online, has encouraged some questionable publishers to create new open access journals which do not follow accepted scholarly publishing practices, including editorial selection and peer review.

What is a questionable publisher/journal?

Questionable publishers are essentially a byproduct of the open-access movement. In an effort to provide free access to readers, some journals have passed costs onto authors themselves, either fully or in part. The journals charge processing fees that can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. Questionable publishers exploit this open-access business model for profit by charging authors the processing fees but fail to provide the editorial rigor required of legitimate academic publications.

Questionable publishers can be deceptive in various ways. They may misrepresent their country of incorporation. They may use questionable methods or services to develop impact factor ratings. They may also claim submissions go through a rigorous peer review process when no such process exists.

Some questionable journals have even listed prominent academics as members of editorial boards without their knowledge.

Questionable publishers have been known to spam researchers, solicit manuscript submissions without providing clear information about publication fees, and then send invoices to authors after their paper has been accepted and published.

Does this mean that all open access publishing is a scam?

No, open access publishing is generally a reputable avenue for the dissemination of scholarly work, but it is prudent to vet any journal prior to submitting an article or assuming an editorial position.

How can you tell whether an open access publication/journal is questionable?

The University of South Florida Faculty Senate suggest the following criteria for consideration in evaluating open access publications. In addition, the USF Libraries can provide assistance to scholars in their evaluation of potential outlets for their scholarly work.

Criteria for Evaluating the Quality of Open Access Journals:

How do I evaluate an open access journal?

The same indicators of quality for subscription journals are applicable to open access journals. If you are invited to publish in an open access journal, you will want to visit the journal's website and do some searching on the web to determine:

- Whether fees are charged, and if so, clear information on those fees.
- Whether the journal is clear about the specifics of the peer review process used.
- Whether a reasonable time for accomplishing the peer review process is specified.
- Whether you recognize the editorial board members as scholars in the field. If so, do the web pages of the editorial board members list their affiliation with the journal?
- Whether the journal is included in indexes you frequently use.
- Whether the publisher is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) or the Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association (OASPA).

Are there tools or guides to assist with an evaluation of open access journals?

Yes, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) includes only open access journals which have applied to DOAJ and demonstrated that they conform to DOAJ's Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing. There are over 9,000 journals currently included in DOAJ. The tool *Think Check Submit* listed below will walk you through the process of evaluating whether the journal is right for your research.

Is there someone at USF who can assist me?

If you would like assistance evaluating a journal, please feel free to contact your Liaison Librarian via the link below. Also, you can apply to the USF Faculty Senate Publications Council for assistance with article processing charges if no alternative funding is available to you. However, limited funding is available.

Resources

1. Committee on Publication Ethics - <https://publicationethics.org/>
2. Directory of Open Access Journals - <https://doaj.org/>

3. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals - <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>
4. NIH Statement on Article Publication Resulting from NIH Funded Research - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-18-011.html>
5. Open Access Publishing (USF Libraries) - <http://www.lib.usf.edu/scholarly-research-and-communication/open-access-publishing/>
6. Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association - <https://oaspa.org/>
7. Think Check Submit - <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>
8. Overview of Journal Indexes and Aggregators (U Michigan) - [http://wiki.publishing.umich.edu/Overview of Journal Indexes and Aggregators](http://wiki.publishing.umich.edu/Overview_of_Journal_Indexes_and_Aggregators)
9. Stony Brook Guide to Legitimate Journals & Publishers - <http://library.stonybrook.edu/scholarly-communication/know-journal-legitimate/>
10. USF Faculty Senate Publications Council – contact the current chair listed at <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/c.php?g=6216&p=613535>
11. USF Tampa Library Liaison Librarians - <http://www.lib.usf.edu/library-research/library-liaisons/>; Shimberg Library Staff Directory - <http://health.usf.edu/shimberg-library/about-the-library/staff-directory>.
12. USF Library Tools for Promotion and Tenure / Predatory Publishers - <http://guides.lib.usf.edu/c.php?g=5862&p=701690>
13. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals - <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>