

# Predatory Journals

## What are they?

Predatory or rogue journals are open access publications which publish scholarly work without engaging in proper scholarly publishing practices. Researchers must avoid publishing in these journals.

The NRF has issued a statement on predatory journals to ensure that researchers and students adhere to the principles of research integrity and are aware of predatory journals and deceptive publishers. The NRF warns its stakeholder communities to avoid publishing in journals that do not have a rigorous peer review system or scholarly publishing practices.

## So, how do you identify predatory journals?

Beall's list of potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access journals, which provided a source of possible predatory journals and publishers, was removed from the internet earlier this year but an [archive version](#) is available. The [Stop Predatory Journals website](#) has rebuilt and resurrected the work of Beall's list and offers it as a crowd sourced initiative. The website provides lists of predatory journals and deceptive publishers. It also offers these ten characteristics of predatory journals and deceptive publishers which will help you to identify them:

1. Charging exorbitant rates for publication of articles in conjunction with a lack of peer-review or editorial oversight.
2. Notifying authors of fees only after acceptance.
3. Targeting scholars through mass-email spamming in attempts to get them to publish or serve on editorial boards.
4. Quick acceptance of low-quality papers.
5. Listing scholars as members of editorial boards without their permission or not allowing them to resign.
6. Listing fake scholars as members of editorial boards or authors.
7. Copying the visual design and language of legitimate, established journals
8. Fraudulent or improper use of ISSNs.
9. Giving false information about the location of the publishing operation.
10. Fake, non-existent, or misrepresented impact factors.

The MIAR (Information Matrix for the Analysis of Journals) recently issued its 2017 version. This resource gathers key data for identification and analysis of journals which can assist researchers in determining the credentials of scholarly journals. MIAR is freely available and searchable online at <http://miar.ub.edu>.

This helpful comparison of good scholarly publishing practices and predatory publishing was recently published in the South African Journal of Science (Mouton & Vale 2017).

**Table 1:** Comparing the characteristics of good practice in scholarly publishing with those of predatory publishing

Category	Standard publishing practice	Predatory publishing
Business model	Legitimate scholarly journals do not exist solely for profit	Predatory journals are open-access journals that exist for the sole purpose of making a profit
Origin of papers	Authors usually submit manuscripts to journals of their own accord	Predatory journals typically solicit manuscripts by spamming researchers (especially using their Yahoo and Gmail accounts)
Journal titles	Legitimate journals usually have field- and discipline-appropriate titles	Predatory journals often have bizarrely broad titles (e.g. the <i>Global Journal of Advanced Research</i> ) or titles with disjointed scopes (e.g. the <i>Journal of Economics and Engineering</i> )
Time to publication	Publication lag time is often correlated with the status of the journal (with the best journals taking more time to get to production because of high demand)	These journals boast extremely rapid (and unrealistic) response (review) and publication times. They often also publish extremely high numbers of papers per year. This is arguably one of the best indicators of whether a journal is predatory or not as it speaks to the capacity of any editor to handle literally hundreds of submissions per year through proper peer review.
Journal metrics	Journals indexed in Web of Science and Elsevier Scopus have well-defined and transparent impact factor values	These journals boast extraordinary and often fake journal impact factors as well as false claims about where the journal is indexed
Peer review (stature of editorial board)	Legitimate journals have editorial procedures and editorial boards that properly oversee the process of peer review	Predatory journals very often have fake editorial boards or – at best – editorial boards that consist of a small number of individuals from the same organisation or country. They often enlist members of editorial boards who are not experts in the field. They also often include scholars on an editorial board without their knowledge or permission.
Contact information	Legitimate journals provide accurate and appropriate contact information about their journal and editorial board	Predatory journals often list false or insufficient contact information, including contact information that does not clearly state the headquarters location or misrepresents the headquarters location (e.g. through the use of addresses that are actually mail drops)