

For Researchers who are:

Considering submitting a paper to a journal

Being asked to perform a peer review

Supervising graduate or postdoctoral students

Beware of Predatory Journals

What They Are and How to Avoid Them



Involvement in predatory journals can damage your academic credibility and reputation as a researcher.

What are predatory journals?

Predatory journals are low-quality academic journals that do not conduct proper peer reviews and publish papers with the sole purpose of obtaining submission fees from authors. They exist solely to make money. In recent years, **the tactics of such journals have become increasingly sophisticated, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify them.**

Journals that will publish any article for a fee can be very convenient and appealing to researchers seeking to rapidly advance their careers, but please consider the risks entailed in such an approach.

To protect the academic careers of yourself and your students, it is vital that you and the students that you supervise do not become involved with predatory journals in any way: as authors, reviewers, or supervisors.

Experiences

The Actual Risks of Predatory Journals

The Kyoto University Library Network has received a number of reports from KU researchers regarding predatory journals. Here are some of their actual experiences.

As a Author

I submitted a paper and it was accepted **without any editing**.

I was requested to write a paper **under the name of a prominent researcher**, but **it was fake**.

I accidentally submitted a paper to a predatory journal, and when I asked them to retract it, **they did not respond**.

I realized **my co-author had submitted our paper to a predatory journal** after it was published.

After contacting the journal once, I was subjected to **persistent solicitation emails**.

The period of the peer review was too short (10 days), and I felt that **they did not really review my paper**.

I rejected a low quality paper, but **the editor ignored my review and published it without revision**.

When I accepted a guest editorship, I was given the email addresses of numerous researchers, and **was asked to send them solicitation emails**.

As a Supervisor

I heard that someone at another university submitted a paper to a known predatory journal, and it **caused problems with the award of their degree**.

As a Reviewer

The Way of Deception are More Sophisticated

No Perfect List

There is a list of “suspicious journals” that is commonly used as a way of identifying predatory journals. In contrast, there are lists of “safe journals.” There are also checklist tools to verify whether a journal is trustworthy or not. It is common for journals to be considered less dangerous if they are included in the famous databases.

Unfortunately, such lists, tools, and databases cannot be completely trusted. In recent years, predatory publishers have increasingly sophisticated in the way of deceptions. They have formalized their editorial and peer-review policies to ensure that their journals are included in “safe” lists. There are the case that the contributors being asked to cite the journals to which they contribute in order to give the appearance of a high citation count and boost the journal's reputation.

There is no perfect list to identify predatory journals.

It is important to make a comprehensively-informed decision about which journal to submit to, without relying too much on lists, and by gathering information yourself from wide range of sources.

Journal Spoofing

There are fake journal websites that falsely use the names and ISSNs (international standard serial numbers) of existing journals. The sites impersonate the existing journals to fraudulently receive article processing charge from authors. The journals of small publishers and academic societies are the most common targets.

Once you have confirmed the official name and ISSN of the journal to which you are submitting, search the journal's official website using a search engine, not via a link posted in an information email.

Predatory Conferences

In addition to predatory journals, please beware of predatory conferences only for obtaining participation fees.

Such conferences do not provide participants with useful information. Presentations may not have been subject to the proper checks. And, there may be no active discussions. In the worst cases, they may be suddenly cancelled with no refund of the participation fee.

With an increasing number of online conferences, online predatory conferences have also been reported.

column How Long Does a Peer Review Take?

A proper peer review takes a considerable amount of time. Before submission, check the official website of the journal to confirm the period of peer review. Is it too short compared to other journals in the same field? This table shows the average peer review periods for different fields.

The website called SciRev* enables users to check the total peer review times for individual journals. It can be used to get an overall impression of current peer review times.

*SciRev <https://scirev.org>

	Total	First response time
All	17 weeks	13 weeks
Natural Sciences	14 weeks	11 weeks
Humanities	22 weeks	16 weeks

Huisman, J., Smits, J. Duration and quality of the peer review process: the author's perspective. *Scientometrics* 113, 633–650 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-017-2310-5>

Processed Table 1 and 2.

Check Before Submission & Peer Review

POINT

1

✓ Ask Other Researchers

Ask researchers in the same or similar fields about the journal's reputation and whether involvement with the journal would be beneficial to your research career.

Are there any comments about the journal's quality on social networking sites?

POINT

2

✓ See the Official Website

Google the journal's official website yourself and check it. Do NOT use a link in invitation email.

Is the period of the peer review too short? Is there anything suspicious about the website logo, such as poor image resolution or a distorted layout?

POINT

3

✓ Read Previous Articles

Read previous articles published in the journal.

Do they match the scope of coverage stated on the official website?

Does the quality of the articles indicate a journal worthy of publishing your own research?

POINT

4

✓ Check the Editor's Profile

Are the editors listed on the official website researchers that you have heard of, or researchers in the field that you want to contribute to?

Does the editor's own official website (e.g. the website of their university) clearly state that he/she is an editor of the journal?

If you have any doubts at all, it is not appropriate to submit.
If you have difficulty to make a decision, please contact the Library Network.

The Library welcomes questions from KU members and provides information about predatory journals.

If you have anything suspicious, or a case to discuss, contact us from the form below.

Predatory Journal Inquiry Form

<https://www.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/form/1380548?lang=en>

