Trust and Transparency in Open Access Publishing

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Two Questions
Question Number 1:
How can a researcher or other user know that they can trust a journal?

Question Number 2:
How can publishers assure users that they are acting in trustworthy ways?
Focus on quality
“Quality” is not the same as “Prestige”
A journal can have high quality without needing to be prestigious
“Quality” in
1) Editorial Process
2) Author Services
3) Technical Capability
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<th>EDITORIAL</th>
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<td>Editorial Integrity</td>
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<td>Time from submission to first decision to publication</td>
<td>Ease of making payment (if relevant)</td>
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Procedure

- Initial review by Membership & Communications Manager
- Review confirmed by Membership Committee (3 people)
- OASPA’s President and Board are often involved if the Membership Committee has any doubts
Principles of Transparency

1. **Peer review process**: All of a journal's content, apart from any editorial material that is clearly marked as such, shall be subjected to peer review. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site.

2. **Governing Body**: Journals shall have editorial boards or other governing bodies whose members are recognized experts in the subject areas included within the journal's scope. The full names and affiliations of the journal's editors shall be provided on the journal's Web site.

3. **Editorial team/contact information**: Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal's Web site as well as contact information for the editorial office.

4. **Author fees**: Any fees or charges that are required for manuscript processing and/or publishing materials in the journal shall be clearly stated in a place that is easy for potential authors to find prior to submitting their manuscripts for review or explained to authors before they begin preparing their manuscript for submission.

5. **Copyright**: Copyright and licensing information shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs.

6. **Identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct**: Publishers and editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In no case shall a journal or its editors encourage such misconduct, or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place. In the event that a journal's publisher or editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal – the publisher or editor shall follow COPE’s guidelines (or equivalent) in dealing with allegations.

7. **Ownership and management**: Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's Web site. Publishers shall not use organizational names that would mislead potential authors and editors about the nature of the journal's owner.

8. **Web site**: A journal's Web site, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards.

9. **Name of journal**: The Journal name shall be unique and not be one that is easily confused with another journal or that might mislead potential authors and readers about the Journal's origin or association with other journals.

10. **Conflicts of interest**: A journal shall have clear policies on handling potential conflicts of interest of editors, authors, and reviewers and the policies should be clearly stated.

11. **Access**: The way(s) in which the journal and individual articles are available to readers and whether there are associated subscription or pay per view fees shall be stated.

12. **Revenue sources**: Business models or revenue sources (e.g., author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's Web site.

13. **Advertising**: Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of ads will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting ads and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random.

14. **Publishing schedule**: The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.

15. **Archiving**: A journal's plan for electronic backup and preservation of access to the journal content (for example, access to main articles via CLOCKSS or PubMedCentral) in the event a journal is no longer published shall be clearly indicated.

16. **Direct marketing**: Any direct marketing activities, including solicitation of manuscripts that are conducted on behalf of the journal, shall be appropriate, well targeted, and unobtrusive.

In the event that a member organization is found to have violated these best practices, OASPA/DOAJ/COPE/WAME shall in the first instance try to work with them in order to address any concerns that have been raised. In the event that the member organization is unable or unwilling to address these concerns, their membership in the organization may be suspended or terminated. All of the member organizations have procedures for dealing with concerns raised about member journals.
What we also look for

- Any stray information or items that would confuse readers that this is an OA journal? (e.g. Pay Per View fees listed)
- Are there any claims against this journal/publisher being made in various forums? Do these warrant consideration?
- What indexing or database inclusion does the publisher/journal list and can this be verified?
- Is there a single Editor in Chief listed for many journals?
- Does the publisher make claims that seem unrealistic (e.g. peer review in 2 days)? Are claims supported (e.g. published manuscripts include submission, acceptance and publication dates).

- Are articles available in XML as well as other formats? Lack of an XML file does not imply wrong-doing, but indicates lower quality as articles are not machine readable.

- Does the publisher have a preservation strategy? (e.g. are they a member of LOCKSS, CLOCKS, Portico, etc.?)
Researchers

- Researchers cannot spend hours investigating each journal they would like to submit to
- They may not have access to the information they would need anyways
- Researchers need an easy way to identify high quality journals
- Which is why it’s important for organizations like OASPA and DOAJ to do this on their behalf
Investigating Complaints
Who’s Afraid of Peer Review?

John Bohannon

A spoof paper concocted by Science reveals little or no scrutiny at many open-access journals.

On 4 July, good news arrived in the inbox of Ocorrafoo Cobange, a biologist at the Wassee Institute of Medicine in Asmara. It was the official letter of acceptance for a paper he had submitted 2 months earlier to the Journal of Natural Pharmaceuticals, describing the anticancer properties of a chemical that Cobange had extracted from a lichen.

In fact, it should have been promptly rejected. Any reviewer with more than a high-school knowledge of chemistry and the ability to understand a basic data plot should have spotted the paper’s shortcomings immediately. Its experiments are so hopelessly flawed that the results are meaningless.

I know because I wrote the paper. Ocorrafoo Cobange does not exist, nor does the Wassee Institute of Medicine.
OASPA’s second statement following the article in Science entitled “Who’s Afraid of Peer Review?”

November 11, 2013 by Claire Redhead 4 Comments

Since OASPA released its first response to the Science ‘Sting’ article published in October, the OASPA Board has been looking at the implications of the findings for the organisation and its members.

There has also been much discussion of the Science article, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the exercise and associated data, along with the way that Science has presented this work to the media. In general, we feel that this follow-up has served to emphasise two key points: the data provide useful insight into editorial practices at a number of substandard publishers; no conclusions can be drawn as to whether poor practices are more or less prevalent at subscription-based or open-access journals.

The work at OASPA has been conducted, in consultation with the OASPA board, by the membership subcommittee, comprising Caroline Sutton, Catriona MacCallum, Claire Redhead and Mark Patterson.

We have looked at the data concerning the publishers who were identified in the Science sting as having accepted and rejected the article. Initially four publisher members were indicated as having accepted the article. However one of those, African Journals Online (AJOL), was incorrectly indentified. AJOL is not a publisher, but is a non-profit organisation that provides free online hosting and aggregation services to qualifying African journals. This information has been corrected on the Science website. AJOL has let OASPA know that the African Journal of Biomedical Research, published by Ibadan Biomedical Communications Group, was deemed in compliance with AJOL's inclusion criteria when it applied to AJOL for free hosting but has not sent content for hosting.
SAGE membership of OASPA is reinstated

April 29, 2014 by Claire Redhead Leave a Comment

As was explained in statement on the OASPA blog in October 2013 (http://oaspa.org/oaspa-second-statement-following-the-article-in-science-entitled-whos-afraid-of-peer-review/), OASPA’s Membership Committee made the decision to place SAGE Publication’s membership under review as a result of concerns that were raised regarding the peer review policies of one of its journals. These concerns were raised as part of an investigation that was carried out by OASPA’s Membership Committee in response to an article published in Science (http://www.sciencemag.org/content/342/6154/60.full), which also resulted in the termination of two other publishers’ membership of OASPA.

Given the fact that the editorial process for this journal (Journal of International Medical Research) was unique and handled differently to other SAGE titles, coupled with SAGE’s willingness to share information and work with OASPA to make improvements to its procedures, SAGE’s membership of OASPA was placed under review for 6 months with the hope that at the end of this period the processes would have been strengthened sufficiently to fulfil OASPA membership criteria.

During this review period SAGE have made some key changes to the editorial processes of this journal, including adding an additional stage of peer-review. Under the current system, once manuscripts have been screened by the Consultant Editor they are sent out for external, independent peer-review, a process coordinated by an in-house Managing Editor with an appropriate background, but with the advice of the Consultant Editor when necessary. This Managing Editor is now also clearly identified on the journal’s Editorial Board alongside the Consultant Editor. Manuscripts may be accepted, rejected, or require revisions at this stage. A final technical edit takes place for any papers that pass peer review and can comprise a further 2 or 3 stages.
Chinese Publisher MDPI Added to List of Questionable Publishers
Conclusions from OASPA Membership Committee Investigation into MDPI

April 11, 2014 by Claire Redhead Leave a Comment

It came to our attention last month that the status of MDPI as a genuine open access publisher has recently been questioned. OASPA takes such concerns very seriously and adherence to the membership criteria (http://oaspa.org/membership/membership-criteria/) is essential for all of our members and new applicants.

The OASPA Membership Committee has carried out a detailed investigation into the issues that were raised (http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/02/18/chinese-publishner-mdpi-added-to-list-of-questionable-publishers/).

The review focussed on the following:

- Controversy surrounding a paper published in the journal Life (http://www.mdpi.com/2075-1729/2/1/1)
- Controversy surrounding a paper published in the journal Nutrients (http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/3/4/491)
- Nobel Prize Winners listed on the website
- The role of Editorial Board Members
- The role of Dr. Lin within the company
- The functions of the different office locations

Investigations have encompassed review of internal correspondence at MDPI, detailed information on the handling of peer-review, decision making and reviewer reports, plus external comments, blogs and websites. Based on our findings we feel satisfied that MDPI continue to meet the OASPA criteria.
Mr. Jeffrey Beall is a librarian at the Auraria Library, University of Denver, Colorado and has publicly criticized MDPI twice via his blog “Scholarly Open Access”.

First, in May 2013, Mr. Beall who has no PhD himself, published scholarly comments on a biophysics review paper that was published by a senior Research scientist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA. The paper was published after the usual procedure: it was refereed, revised and approved by both peer-reviewers and an external, academic editor of the journal after major revisions. The paper is somewhat hypothetical and controversial—but it is up to expert scholars in the domain of the paper to judge its merits and to provide critical, scholarly comments and follow-up research.

More recently, Mr. Beall redoubled his attack by publishing an incompetent general critique of MDPI. As someone forwarded an advance copy of Mr. Beall’s post to MDPI, we have asked Mr. Beall to communicate with us before publishing his critique. Mr. Beall did not react. Mr. Beall has become known as the maintainer of a list of questionable open access journals. However, in December 2013 he expressed personal views highly critical of open access in an article published in the open access journal TripleC.

Mr. Beall’s allegations against MDPI include:

- A serious claim that MDPI added Nobelists to its Editorial Board without their approval. We have provided evidence to Mr. Beall that this is not the case. In particular, a news story on eCampus News had reported that Professor Cappechi was not aware of his board membership. After writing to him, the Editor-in-Chief of Biomolecules obtained a written confirmation from Professor Cappechi that he was indeed aware of his membership. eCampus News had already updated its story.

- A bizarre statement criticizing the use of “one-word names” for journal titles. MDPI journals are appropriately named according to the scholarly discipline that they cover and the journals and their websites are easily distinguishable from other journals covering similar domains. All journals are exclusively published on the www.mdpi.com website.
THANK YOU!