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Predatory Publishing Practices: Is There Life After Beall's List?

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ABSTRACT

Background. Scholarly communication is an ever-evolving practice. As publishing advanced from the printed format to digital formats, new trends, practices and platforms emerged in academia. As reputable publishers adapted their business models to accommodate open access, many non-reputable publishers have emerged with questionable business models and less-than-favourable or unacceptable publishing services.
Objectives. This paper discusses changing trends in scholarly publishing, the advent of and problems caused by pervasive predatory publishing practices, and possible solutions. The paper also investigates possible alternatives to Beall's list and whether a "one-stop shop" black- or white list would serve as a comprehensive tool for scholarly authors.
Results. The paper concludes that there is no "one-stop shop" or comprehensive resource or guidelines available at this stage for scholarly authors to consult before publishing. It alerts scholars to be cautious and to do research about potential publishers, before submitting manuscripts for publication.
Contributions. It provides recommendations and some useful resources to assist authors before they publish their works.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of scholarly communication is ever-evolving. Ever since the first printed publication there have been variant policies, practices, standards and processes in publishing houses. There have been excellent high or gold standard publishers offering peer-review by expert researchers in their specific disciplines. They also offer impact factors attractive to researchers, reasonable subscription fees and ancillary services. Internationally accepted standards and best practices are discussed in more detail later in this paper.

There have also been many mediocre publishers offering inferior services under attractive subscriptions to institutions, libraries and researchers. Publications in general have been restricted to subscription-based users, either through personal subscription fees or through institutional subscriptions. They have tended to serve a niche audience or specialist readership in particular disciplines. They are behind paywalls, meaning that the content does not reach the wider user community who could also benefit from the knowledge.

Alongside traditional subscription-based journal publications, there have also been publications produced by vanity presses, or copyright-free content sold under deceptive publishing practices, such as poorly-researched or yellow journalism, and advertisements

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formatted to resemble articles (Berger & Cirasella, 2015). There have also been publishers who have poor review processes and publish plagiarised articles. Since the readership was limited to printed works, evidence of plagiarism or sub-standard peer-review was not easily detected.

Since the advent of the Internet and new technologies, scholarly publishing has mushroomed in various formats, including open access journals and books, e-publications, blogs and social media platforms. Publishers constantly find new ways to generate income; hence publishing methods and practices are ever-changing to meet their business objectives.

The cost of journal subscriptions increases considerably each year and has become a burden on many library and institutional budgets in recent years, especially in developing countries. Libraries are faced with having to find funding to cover inflation prices for existing subscriptions and to cover any new purchases (Publishers Communication Group, 2016). In addition, expensive article processing charges (APCs) now bring in a new stream of income to publishers, as do copyright fees that are collected on reprographic reproductions made from subscription-based publications and electronic databases.

Some scholarly experts talk about a publishing crisis in the world today, whilst others see these new methods of publishing as innovative and dynamic. Traditional publishers have recognised the need to "adapt or die" as publishing trends change to meet new technologies and challenges. Many publishers have realised they have no option but to expand their business models to include open access publishing, for example, by offering Gold Open Access options, which are fully open access journals, or hybrid Open Access options, which are closed subscription-based journals that publish some open access articles, generally for an APC, payable by the author. Many publishers have experienced an exponential growth in profits since offering open access options.

In many instances, authors are now being charged APCs before the article can be published on an open access platform. According to Björk and Solomon (2012, p. 1), "the article processing charge (APC) is currently the primary mechanism of funding professional open access (OA) peer-reviewed journals". This is an additional stream of income to publishers, other than conventional subscriptions. There are, however, many peer-reviewed open access journals that do not charge APCs. Publishers can charge a fixed APC for all their suite of journals, or determine individual APCs for each journal. These charges can be levied per article or per page. Prices can vary according to the author's country of origin, and can be levied either for submission or for publication of works. Some publishers also charge additional fees for expedited review, copyediting or other related services (Björk & Solomon, 2012). There are also publishers who charge an institution a subscription fee for the closed journals, then charge authors from the same institution APCs to publish open access articles in those journals. They essentially derive double income from the same source institution. This is termed "double dipping". Research Libraries UK (RLUK) (2014, para. 1) explains that "[d]ouble dipping arises if a publisher seeks an unwarrantable increase in revenues by levying article processing charges (APCs) for publication in a hybrid journal, while not providing a proportionate decrease in subscription costs". This practice is frowned upon in academia.

Since open access publishing has many options and opportunities for publishers, it has also given rise to new and questionable publishing practices by transitory or non-reputable publishers. Their intention is to try to "ride the wave" of open access for exploitative purposes. The ease and low cost of digital technology has helped unscrupulous or dishonest publishers to set up websites or online publishing outlets leading to unprofessional and devious practices. These are generally accompanied with quick money-making business models, such as collection of author's fees and/or handling fees before publishing journal

articles. Strauss (2015, p. 11) describes the spectrum as expanding from "vanity publishers masquerading as legitimate small presses to 'author mills' that seek to turn a profit on enormous author volume and skimpy services …" She describes them as "Venus flytraps" of the writing world waiting to trap, envelop, or subject inexperienced or desperate authors to their unsavoury business practices.

BLACKLIST OF PUBLISHERS

An associate professor and librarian from the University of Colorado-Denver, Jeffrey Beall, first coined the phrase "predatory publishers", to describe the unsavoury and non-traditional publishing practices in open access scholarly communication.

As a strong supporter of traditional publishing and a critic of open access publishing, he compiled a list of questionable publishing practices from 2008 to 15 January 2017. His intention was to expose open access publishing as an inferior or questionable method of publishing. He claimed that the open access movement was a:

> *coalition that aims to bring down the traditional scholarly publishing industry and replace it with voluntarism and server space subsidized by academic libraries and other nonprofits. It is concerned more with the destruction of existing institutions than with the construction of new and better ones.* (Beall, 2015, para. 2).

Beall (2013b, p. 589) described the open access movement as an "anti-corporatist movement that wants to deny the freedom of the press to companies it disagrees with". He asserted that:

> *the open access movement is a negative movement rather than a positive one. It is more a movement against something than it is a movement for something. Some will respond that the movement is not against anything; it is just for open access. But a close analysis of the discourse of the OA advocates reveals that the real goal of the open access movement is to kill off the for-profit publishers and make scholarly publishing a cooperative and socialistic enterprise. It's a negative movement* (Beall, 2013b, p. 590).

Beall (2013a) declared that the gold open access model was flawed and beset by a significant conflict of interest. He claimed that this model was a perfect recipe for corruption as the more papers a publisher accepted for publication, the more income it could earn. He submitted that predatory publishers were bad for science and science communication for a number of reasons. Because predatory journals often publish bogus research or have little or no peer review, he believed their quality to be suspect.

Scientific research builds on previous research, is cumulative, and is perpetuated in future research outputs. Integrity and authenticity are key to excellence in scholarly communication. For scholarly authors, however, it is not always apparent, when citing, that the articles originate from predatory or non-standard journals. Citing articles from predatory journals in legitimate journals "muddies the water" of future science. These citations perpetuate inaccuracies and false data in future research outputs and papers. They become intertwined in research discourse and ultimately the research record becomes attenuated. Validity, accuracy, and truth become diluted or suspect. Scholarly communication is then at risk of being tainted, thus lowering the standard of scholarly publications in general. This also impacts on information management as content from predatory journals could taint the authenticity, veracity, and reliability of collections in libraries and archives and depreciate their scholarly value.

Beall developed a framework to analyse scholarly OA publishers and stand-alone journals to provide guidance to editors, authors, and consumers and to assist them in

evaluating the authenticity of scholarly content. He created various criteria for determining predatory publishing practices (Beall, 2012). In 2015 he penned his third edition of criteria, which provided a long list of publishing practices that he considered predatory (Beall, 2015). Some of these practices were not accepted in publishing, but not all of them were thought to be predatory by other academics and authors. Many reputable publishers have, for instance, adopted article processing charges as their business model for open access publishing. This does not make them predatory publishers.

In his document *Criteria for determining predatory open access publishers* (3rd ed.), Beall (2015a) classified predatory publishers according to various characteristics. These are a few examples:

1. They publish papers previously published in other works, without providing appropriate credits.
2. They claim to be a "leading publisher", when they may only be a start-up or new organisation.
3. They operate in a Western country, mainly to function as a vanity press for scholars in a developing country.
4. They do little or no copyediting.
5. They publish any papers, not just academic papers, e.g. essays by laypeople, or obvious pseudoscience.
6. They have a "contact us" page that only includes a web form, but their location is purposely hidden.

In April 2016, Beall (2016) confirmed his negative approach towards open access in his response to criticism at the end of his blog article entitled *Flawed article in Canadian Library Science Journal*, when he said his blog was one of the few online sites that provided critical thinking about the weaknesses of open access. Beall's Scholarly Open Access blog[1] was created to warn authors seeking publication for career advancement, as well as prolific authors, of the dangers of falling prey to unsolicited but sometimes sophisticated invitations to publish in questionable journals. He warned of predatory journals that hijack or use very similar names to legitimate journals. He cautioned against overly complimentary emails or badly written invitations trying to persuade authors to submit their works for publication in their journals. He alerted authors to dubious practices of questionable journal publications. In addition, he warned that invitations to join editorial boards or speak at conferences should be investigated before falling into the trap of scam or faux conferences. Offers of quick publication within a few weeks should ring warning bells. The danger is that while the feasibility of a turnaround time of several weeks instead of several months may be questioned by experienced authors, novice authors would most likely be happy with a short turnaround time as long as they know the impact factor of the journal (Jalalian & Mahboobi, 2014).

AUTHENTICITY OF BEALL'S LIST

The authenticity of Beall's lists has been questioned over many years. Not everyone agreed with his obvious bias towards Western subscription-based publications. Beall's disparaging approach to open access publishing sought to undermine its benefits for scholarly research, and he became the target of much criticism in the academic world. They believed that he adopted a selective and biased argument towards open access. He claimed that "the low quality of the work often published under the gold and green open-access models provides

[1] https://scholarlyoa.com/

startling evidence of the value of high-quality scholarly publishing" (Beall, 2015, para. 10). He tended to favour subscription-based scholarly publishing over open access publishing, and suggested that many open access publications were of low quality. His critics believed this was short-sighted in view of the high standards required by the majority of open access publishers indexed internationally in Scopus, the Web of Science, the Directory of Open Access Journals and even local platforms, for example, SciELO South Africa, and the list of journals accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training.

Beall (2015b) admitted to having been the target of hundreds of personal attacks by what he refers to as "open-access zealots". He claimed that they questioned his attitude towards open access sustainability. They also questioned the authenticity of his Scholarly Open Access blog, which "shamed" predatory journals and publishers that defrauded honest researchers for their own profit.

A mass international and multi-disciplinary OA survey was conducted by the Study of Open Access Publishing (SOAP) project, coordinated by CERN and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (1st March 2009 to 28th February 2011). It presented a cross-section of previously not-analysed attitudes on OA publishing (Dallmeier-Tiessen et al., 2011). One of the survey questions dealt with the "myths" about open access, addressing the issue of quality too. "On a Likert scale researchers in general tended to disagree with negative statements like 'Open access undermines the system of peer review' and 'Open access publishing leads to an increase in the publication of poor quality research'" (Björk & Solomon, 2012, p. 2). The respondents appeared to have a more positive perception and even experience of the quality and benefits of OA publishing. In contrast to Beall's negative approach to open access, the most relevant findings of this survey showed that about 90% of the tens of thousands of respondents were convinced that open access was beneficial for their research field, and that it had direct and positive consequences for scientific community work (Dallmeier-Tiessen et al., 2011).

Björk and Solomon (2012) used the impact factor or number of citations as a proxy for the scientific quality of thousands of subscription and open-access publications from Web of Science and Scopus. Their conclusions claimed to have debunked Beall's perceptions, and that the number of citations received in health and science open-access journals are comparable to those in subscription journals. In fairness, these journals are generally quality open access publications; for example, the Public Library of Science (PLoS) journal has a high impact factor.

Beall's critics suggest that he "often relies heavily on analysis of publishers' websites rather than detailed discussions with publishers, and this might lead to incorrect or premature conclusions" (Butler, 2013, p. 434). Paul Peters of Hindawi Publishing Corporation based in Cairo, and president of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) in The Hague, states that "One of the major weaknesses of Jeffrey Beall's methodology is that he does not typically engage in direct communication with the journals that he has classified as predatory" (Butler, 2013, p. 434). For example, some Hindawi journals were not predatory but were added to the list because Beall had concerns about Hindawi's editorial policy, but they were later removed (Butler, 2013). Before Beall's website was closed, there was evidence that some of his email communications with publishers were impolite or unprofessional. Other critics at OASPA worried that Beall risked "throwing undue suspicion on start-up publishers," especially those with "poor copy-editing and user-interface design on their website" (Butler, 2013, p. 434). This criticism may be unfair to Beall, as it implies that poor copyediting is acceptable, while in fact it indicates poor quality and sub-standard service.

Eisen (2013) finds Beall's reference to open access as being "anti-corporatist" quite amusing, especially since it was for-profit corporations like PLOS and BioMed Central, now owned by Springer Nature, that were the primary promoters of open access.

Crawford (2014a) refers to an entry on the GOAL/amscirforum mailing list on 9 December 2013, when Stevan Harnad, a strong activist for Green Open Access, makes a rather ambivalent observation with regard to Beall. He commented as follows:

> *This wacky article is going to be fun to review. I still think Jeff Beall is doing something useful with his naming and shaming of junk OA journals, but I now realize that he is driven by some sort of fanciful conspiracy theory! "OA is all an anti-capitalist plot." Even on a quick skim it is evident that Jeff's article is rife with half-truths, errors and downright nonsense. Pity. It will diminish the credibility of his valid exposés, but maybe this is a good thing, if the judgment and motivation behind Beall's list is as kooky as this article!* (p.7)

Crawford (2014b) is quite disparaging of Beall's lists and believes they should be ignored. He states that they "constitute a sideshow full of distorting mirrors, having little or nothing to do with OA as a whole except to serve as a platform for Beall to take potshots at OA" (p. 23).

Beall's approach to non-Western, non-English speaking and developing countries has been subject to scrutiny and disfavour amongst many academics. Many criticised his "culturally charged" reference in 2015 to "favela" when describing the Brazilian Open Access platform, SciELO. Some accused him of being classist, derogatory or even racist (although quite parenthetically) (Jones, 2015). The many non-Western publishers listed as predatory on his annual blacklist have raised concerns in academia. He failed to consider that some non-Western publishers were indeed not predatory. Just because they were new, inexperienced and/or needing some mentorship from more established publishers did not warrant them being placed on Beall's list. Although there may be many questionable non-Western publishers, his list presented the danger of "tarring all non-Western publishers with the same brush".

Shamseer et al. (2017, p. 11) identified the following evidence-based characteristics by which predatory journals in the biomedical field may potentially be distinguished from presumed reputable journals:

1. The scope of interest includes non-biomedical subjects alongside biomedical topics.
2. The website contains spelling and grammatical errors.
3. Images are distorted/fuzzy, intended to look like something they are not, or which are unauthorized.
4. The homepage language targets authors.
5. The Index Copernicus Value is promoted on the website.
6. Description of the manuscript handling process is lacking.
7. Manuscripts are requested to be submitted via email.
8. Speedy publication is promised.
9. There is no retraction policy.
10. Information on whether and how journal content will be digitally preserved is absent.
11. The article processing/publication charge is very low (e.g., less than $150 USD).
12. Journals claiming to be open access either retain copyright of published research or fail to mention copyright.
13. The contact email address is non-professional and non-journal affiliated (e.g., @gmail.com or @yahoo.com).

Shamseer et al. (2017)'s findings are meant to assist scholarly authors when selecting a publisher, but it was not the researchers' intention to compile a blacklist for consultation.

Smith (2017, para. 2) warns that "the use of "predatory" as an umbrella term for all kinds of abuses hides the difference between practices that really are "ruthlessly exploitative" and those that may well grow out of mere inexperience or lack of competence". This has led to conflations of all kinds of practices, and confusion relating to scholarship in general. Smith (2017) believes that this loaded term "predatory" has been used loosely and in an undisciplined manner, rendering Beall's list unhelpful or even questionable.

Many novice publishers in developing countries are endeavouring to get into the highly competitive world of publishing. They may have introduced some practices and processes which may not conform entirely to the standards of well-established Western journals; yet they may not be poor quality journals. Many of them may need professional assistance, editing coaching, and mentoring from more established and successful publishers, rather than being "blacklisted" or discriminated against because of their geographic, linguistic or socio-economic situation (Nicholson, 2016). Notwithstanding this, all publishers should adhere to international standards and best practices. In a collaborative effort, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have identified principles of transparency and best practices that differentiate legitimate journals and publishers from non-legitimate or predatory ones. To become a member of these organisations, journals and publishers have to comply with the standards and conditions applying to the following topics (Redhead, 2013):

1. Peer review process
2. Governing body
3. Editorial team/contact information
4. Author fees
5. Copyright
6. Identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct
7. Ownership and management
8. Web site
9. Name of journal
10. Conflicts of interest
11. Access
12. Revenue sources
13. Advertising
14. Publishing schedule
15. Archiving
16. Direct marketing.

According to Crawford (2016), Beall did not meet minimum scholarly standards of consistency and validation, and only gave the reason "trust me" for many of the titles on his lists. In his study on Beall's lists, Crawford (2016, para. 6) found that "… [in] Seven cases out of eight: 87.5%. 1,604 journals and publishers of the 1,834 (excluding duplicates) on the 2016 versions have no more than an unstated 'Trust me' as the reason for avoiding them". He believed this to be inexcusable and a strong reason why Beall's lists should not be considered significant or trustworthy in academia. He also believed that research based on the assumption that Beall's lists were meaningful, was flawed. Crawford (2016, para. 22) described Beall's lists as "mostly the worst possible kind of blacklist: one where there's no stated reason for

things to be included. If you're comfortable using 'trust me' as the basis for a tool, that's your business". This allegation is not entirely true as there were many emails and responses from Beall on his website when it was accessible, responding to queries about publishers or journals being on his blacklist.

Many publishers have objected to their works being targeted by Beall; but it has been almost impossible for them to convince Beall to remove them from his predatory lists. In 2015, critics objected strongly to Beall's blacklisting of Frontiers Publishers. They maintained that this publisher was reputable and legitimate and should not have been added to his list (Bloudoff-Indelicato, 2015). Daniël Lakens, an experimental psychologist at the Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands and an associate editor at Frontiers in Cognition, tweeted: "Frontiers being added to Beall's list reveals the big weakness of Beall's list: It's not based on solid data, but on Beall's intuition" (Bloudoff-Indelicato, 2015, p. 613).

Another publisher, Kamla Raj Enterprises (KRE) from India was listed as a predatory publisher in Beall's 2016 list, yet one of its titles, the *International Journal of Educational Sciences* was listed on ProQuest's IBSS up until December 2016. Rob Newman of ProQuest (personal communication to author on 18 May 2017), confirmed that this title was removed from IBSS list in 2017, stating "… we have removed KRE journals as they do not meet our editorial policy and have been identified elsewhere as potentially problematic. Once they are co-publishing with Taylor & Francis and if they get these titles into DOAJ then we could look again". In this regard, Jane Buffham of Taylor & Francis (personal communication to the author on 20 April 2017), confirmed that:

> *T&F entered into a partnership with KRE in 2017 after many months of careful research and engagement. We have full confidence in integrity of this publisher and are delighted to be working with them to support their portfolio of titles. We certainly would not enter any partnership with any publisher we deem to be "predatory" or who did not share our commitment to upholding the highest standards of publishing ethics.*
>
> *We are aware of the KRE inclusion on the Beall's list, but having raised this directly with the site, we found the reasoning for the inclusion of KRE to be insubstantial and unmerited. Suffice to say we wholeheartedly disavow the decision to include KRE here.*
>
> *Beall's list has, as you say, ceased to exist. Further pursuit of expunging KRE from a site that no longer exists is unfortunately an impossibility. I'm aware that archives are still available unofficially, but since these are not curated or maintained or have any recourse to amendment, they cannot be seen as reliable; it would be unfair to use these against KRE in our opinion.*

Jones (2015) believed that the discourse at the time and Beall's approach relating to emerging markets and developing countries needed to mature significantly and that a more careful and nuanced approach needed to be adopted. He raised concerns that the tone in the discussion of predatory publishing practices could lead to guilt by association of all non-English speaking or non-Western publishers. He argued this would be totally unfair and damaging to the public good.

Alonso and Lopez (2016) questioned the authenticity and authority of Beall's blacklist and the criteria he applied to publishers. In their view, he had "no affiliation to any governing body or organization accredited to scholarly publishing" (para.1), implying that he lacked authority or expertise in this field. They stressed that this was an important key element that authors needed to consider when analysing Beall's blog or using his list. They also raised scathing questions about Beall's personal scholarly publishing record and his expertise in the

field. They believed that even though he claimed non-affiliation with the University of Colorado, he traded on the University's good name to support and justify his claims on his predatory blog.

Alonso and Lopez (2016, para. 17) further claimed he did not "attempt to verify his statements for accuracy, nor operate a methodological approach to his appraisals". They stated that Beall also denied the right to defence to those that he attacked. They concluded that Beall's judgments were therefore to be considered as "unreliable, unmethodical and his personal opinions" (para. 16), and that "Beall's academic fraud and activities must end and everyone must now be more vigilant about these activities" (para. 17).

A group called "Friends of Open Access" set up a website called "Scholarly Open Access – Critical Analysis of Jeffrey Beall's Blog" with the intention of discrediting Beall and trying to prove that he was a fraud. They went so far as calling Beall an "academic terrorist", "a predatory blogger", "an academic joker" and a "Colorado clown" (Scholarly Open Access, n.d.). The title of Kristen Wilson's (2013) article *Librarian vs. (open access) predator: An interview with Jeffrey Beall* is self-explanatory.

Swauger (2017), Beall's director supervisor at the University of Colorado-Denver, disagrees with Beall as to the gravity of the problem of predatory publishing. She claims there is a larger problem than Beall's simplistic definition of "predatory" publishers (i.e. the systematic abuse of the Gold OA model). She refers to other unacceptable or deceptive practices such as the sale of public domain content, preferential or exclusionary pricing models and closed-access vanity publishing.

FILLING THE HIATUS

Silver (2017, para 7) states that Beall "thinks blacklists are still useful as a timesaving tool for authors who are deciding where to publish". Researchers can just check one list which exposes low-quality journals and publishers. New bogus journals can be added immediately to the blacklist. His list was the most popular blacklist in academic circles. However, its sudden closure in January 2017, has created an uncomfortable hiatus for those who depended on it. Scholarly authors and others who used Beall's list extensively will no doubt seek other resources to satisfy their needs. Other parties are also likely to attempt to fill this hiatus by creating new lists either for altruistic or self-serving purposes. Angelo (2013, para. 1) claims that "Jeffrey Beall has essentially discredited himself. The time has come to take his important work in identifying predatory publishers from him, and run another list, one that can be trusted".

Although international nurses consulted Beall's list, their other source has been Thomas Lawrence Long's blog *NursingWriting.com*[2], which provides compilations of reports on predatory journals and scholarly conference scams to assist nurses when publishing their works. A new website entitled *Stop Predatory Journals*[3] has emerged, to seemingly continue Beall's lists. It calls on visitors to the website to contribute by adding to the blacklist of predatory publishers, which opens the site to bias and contention. It is unclear who the owners of the website are or who will moderate and update the site, and whether there is any takedown option for publishers. The website does claim though, that a small group of scholars and information professionals have decided to anonymously rebuild and resurrect Beall's lists. The criteria that the site uses are those formerly adopted by Beall (Stop Predatory

[2] https://nursingwriting.wordpress.com/about-thomas-lawrence-long/
[3] https://predatoryjournals.com/

Journals, 2017). It is apparent that it is a carbon copy of Beall's list. It does not offer anything new or more objective than Beall's list.

Neylon (2017) believes that blacklists are "technically infeasible", "practically unreliable" and "inherently unethical". They are never complete and are subjective and discriminatory. Blacklisted items are always in the process of being identified and assessed, so there will always be titles that do not appear on the list at any stage. Some publishers or titles are likely to be omitted or "fall through the cracks" depending on the criteria applied to them. Neylon (2017, p. 2) posits that "whitelists by contrast are by definition always complete". Journals and/or publishers require certification or accreditation before being added to a whitelist, giving authors clarity as to which journals or publishers are reputable.

Cabell's International publishes a pay-to-view "whitelist" of trustworthy journals, to which about 800 institutions subscribe. They have now compiled a pay-for-view blacklist which may fill the hiatus left by the closure of Beall's list. Information about bad business practices conducted by journal publishers will be included in Cabell's blacklist.

Smith (2017) notes the irony and opportunism of Cabell's International in selling subscription access to a whitelist of approved journals. He warns against favouring whitelists over blacklists, as they are not fool-proof either. He suggests that blacklists are subjective, only as good as the criteria they use, and always in need of regular updating. These problems are also encountered by the more positively framed whitelists.

As of 26 May 2017, the Cabell's blacklist contained about 3,900 journals. The number will increase as predatory publishers are added (Silver, 2017). Cabell's criteria are accessible on their website.[4] They will also provide an annual mechanism for publishers or journals to appeal their status (Silver, 2017). Natalia Zinovyeva, an economist at Aalto University in Helsinki is studying the editorial processes of some of the journals that Beall once tracked. She believes that "Cabell's list will be 'extremely valuable' to funding or hiring committees without a wide level of expertise, who could use it as a tool to help evaluate researcher CVs" (Silver, 2017, p. 10). The drawback of Cabell's list is that it is generally too expensive for libraries and institutions in developing countries. They probably are in greater need of guidance related to predatory publishing practices than their counterparts in developed countries.

In his review of Cabell's blacklist, Anderson (2017) provided positive comments about its general management, criteria, etc., but conceded there was room for improvement. He also made the following observation:

> *It's worth noting that on the scale of predatory or deceptive practices, many of these violations of scholarly-communication norms are, while troubling and perhaps annoying, not especially egregious. This is precisely why a blacklist needs to be transparent about the reasons for a journal or publisher's inclusion — so that the reader can decide for him- or herself how worrisome the journal's behavior really is. This transparency is one of the most important positive aspects of the Cabell's product.* (Anderson, 2017, p. 5)

Blacklists tend to express negativity, personal bias and discrimination against regions, countries, nationalities or foreign languages. Beall's list is an example of this. This list was compiled because of his bias towards North American publishers and his negative attitude towards open access publishing. It afforded no leniency, consideration or guidelines to new publishers or "yet to be established" publishers in developing countries. He failed to consider

[4] https://cabells.com/blacklist-criteria

any socio-economic factors or lack of experience on the part of such publishers. Even though they might not be engaging in predatory practices, he tended to categorise them as predatory because of their origin. Alonso and Lopez (2016) believed that Beall had a bias against publishers and journals from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Swauger (2017) was of the opinion that Beall's list was a valuable resource and contribution to research across disciplines, but that it lacked sustainability and was not an ideal solution to the problem. "Blacklists and whitelists share the same problem in that they attempt to externalize an evaluation process that is best internal, contextual, and iterative" (Swauger, 2017, para. 8).

WHITELIST—A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE?

Lars Bjørnshauge, managing director of DOAJ, raised the concern that a "non-suspect" journal could inadvertently be included in a blacklist, causing harm to the publisher's reputation. Some publishers would argue that many have already been incorrectly added to Beall's list. He suggested, at least in theory, that it would be "more feasible to objectively evaluate journals based on what they do, rather than what they do not" (Vence, 2017, para. 3). For this reason, he advocated a whitelist over a blacklist.

Until it closed in January 2017, Beall's list served a purpose because no single, credible whitelist had yet been compiled by the scholarly community. With scepticism, Beall claimed that whitelists have always had a "few bad apples". He mentioned Scopus, which includes tens of thousands of journals, and states that "in the context of whitelists, these bad apples—very easy acceptance journals—become the sought-after prize for too many scholarly authors" (Beall, 2015, para. 9). He criticised the *Thomson Reuters Web of Science Master Journal List* (now Clarivate Analytics), stating that "it is not a journal whitelist and should not be used as one" (Beall, 2016, para. 3). He claimed that the barrier for entry into some of the Thomson Reuters indices is very low, and that the list includes many predatory journals that should not be included in a quality scholarly index (Beall, 2016).

Unfortunately, some "whitelists" have proved to be questionable themselves. In India, for instance, the University Grants Commission's (UGC) approved list of journals or whitelist has proved to be more grey than white. In mid-2017, the UGC released a revised list of 33,112 approved journals where academics and students were advised to publish papers. It turned out that the list contained 111 potentially predatory or fraudulent journals. In September 2017, The Hindu publication reported that the revised list contained 84 predatory journals listed on Beall's list. This brought the total of potentially, possibly or probably predatory journals on the revised list to 195 (Ramani & Prasad, 2017).

Currently, there is not one comprehensive "whitelist" that can address or resolve all issues around predatory publishers. Some short-term attempts have been made to create whitelists and blacklists. Vence (2017) provided the example of Mark Langdorf (University of California, Irvine) who worked with Bhakti Hansoti (Johns Hopkins University) and Irvine librarian, Linda Murphy, to compile a blacklist and a whitelist in the field of emergency medicine, both of which were published in *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine* in September 2016. The team updated the lists some months later, making one transfer from the blacklist to the whitelist, because it was brand-new and legitimate, but had not yet been indexed anywhere. Langdorf told *The Scientist*, however, that they had no plans to update the lists again. The problem of updating black- or whitelists on a regular basis is time-consuming and unsustainable, as they can never be up-to-date, leaving gaps and uncertainty.

There are some resources, however, that can be useful to scholarly authors. Most quality open access publishers have strict criteria in line with internationally accepted standards. There are guidelines, standards or best practices adopted by many reputable organisations or scholarly entities, and can be consulted:

- COPE Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors[5]
- COPE Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing[6]
- Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association[7]
- Directory of Open Access Journals[8]
- Dept. of Higher Education and Training, South Africa accredited list[9]
- SCIELO SA[10].

The following organisations or websites are not official or comprehensive "whitelists" but provide professional services to assist researchers, publishers, librarians and academics. The descriptions of these entities or tools have been transcribed from their websites:

- *Cabell's International*[11]—a resource that specialises in linking researchers, publishers, librarians, and academics to the journal titles they need. They claim that their research specialists have evaluated all journals listed on their "whitelist", and their selection criteria have been met.
- *JournalGuide*[12]—a free tool that helps researchers to evaluate scholarly journals. Through their various search options, authors can discover journals that have already published articles on similar topics.
- *Publons*[13]—it works with the world's top publishers so that peer review contributions can be effortlessly tracked, verified and showcased across the world's journals.
- *World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)*[14]—a global association of editors of peer-reviewed medical journals who seek to foster cooperation and communication among editors, and to improve editorial standards, promote professionalism in medical editing through education, self-criticism, and self-regulation, and to encourage research on the principles and practice of medical editing.
- *International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)*[15]—a small working group of general medical journal editors whose participants meet annually and fund their own work on the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals[16].
- *Think. Check. Submit*[17]—a campaign to help researchers identify trusted journals for their research. It is a simple checklist or tool that researchers can use to assess the credentials of a journal or publisher.
- *Quality Open Access Market (QOAM)*[18] —a market place for scientific and scholarly journals which publish articles in open access. Quality scoring of the journals in

[5] http://publicationethics.org/files/u2/Best_Practice.pdf
[6] http://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishingv2.pdf
[7] http://oaspa.org/
[8] http://www.doaj.org
[9] http://libguides.wits.ac.za/ld.php?content_id=5267803
[10] http://www.scielo.org
[11] https://www.cabells.com
[12] https://www.journalguide.com/faq
[13] https://publons.com/home
[14] http://www.wame.org
[15] http://icmje.org/about-icmje
[16] http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf
[17] http://thinkchecksubmit.org/about/
[18] https://www.qoam.eu/about

QOAM is based on academic crowd sourcing and price information includes institutional licensed pricing.

- *Web of Science* claims to be:

  [y]our ideal single research destination to explore the citation universe across subjects and around the world. Web of Science provides you access to the most reliable, integrated, multidisciplinary research connected through linked content citation metrics from multiple sources within a single interface. And since Web of Science adheres to a strict evaluation process, you can be assured only the most influential, relevant, and credible information is included — allowing you to uncover your next big idea faster (Clarivate Analytics, 2017a, para. 1).

- *Web of Science Core Collection index* is used internationally as a "whitelist" of quality journals. It claims that it is:

  indisputably the largest citation database available, with over 1 billion cited reference connections indexed from high quality peer reviewed journals, books and proceedings. Each cited reference is meticulously indexed to ensure that it is searchable and attributes credit to the appropriate publication. No other resource captures and indexes cited references for all records from 1900 to the present, or lets you accurately and precisely search the reference content (Clarivate Analytics, 2017b, p. 2).

Deaner (2013) suggested that a crowdsourced, "author reviewed" journal-evaluation website be established to enable authors from various disciplines to share their positive and negative experiences with particular journals. As reviews accumulated, authors would have a better idea of where to submit their work or not. Ideally, this website could allow journal searches by many criteria, including impact factor, publication fees, disciplines, open access options, database indexing, publisher, review process (e.g. blind or not), etc. Deaner's assumption was that all researchers want quality peer review and reputable publishing standards, but this is not always the case. Due to the "publish or perish" syndrome, many scholarly authors do not care about standards. They just want to list as many publications as they can on their curriculum vitae. "Easy ride" journals, or quick or inferior peer review processes serve this purpose.

Crowdsourced peer review is problematic in that anyone who wants to make comments or review a paper is free to do so. There are no set guidelines or criteria for reviewers to adhere to at this stage. This means that anyone may decide to review a paper, even if they have very little knowledge about the topic. Unless reviews are conducted by experts or specialists in that particular field, and who adhere to internationally accepted standards, reviews could be mediocre and/or offer no significant advice for improvement, where necessary, to the authors. An inexperienced or unqualified reviewer could fail to identify grammatical errors, missing or false information or data, scientific flaws, low quality research, plagiarism or other academic dishonesty. Full online disclosure of authors' identities versus anonymity of peer-reviewers can also be problematic. Some authors may, for various reasons, not want their names made public online. If the author is known to the reviewer, this could also be subjective, leading to negativity, prejudice, political or unfair bias, or favouritism.

Although the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) used Beall's list as a useful resource, it strongly recommended a "white list" of journals such as the Directory of Nursing Journals, that have been reviewed and vetted by the nursing community (INANE, 2014). This Directory is a collaborative effort between INANE and the publication, Nurse

Author & Editor. Potential authors are encouraged to consult this Directory when seeking a journal to publish in. They are also warned about the hallmarks of predatory practices and advised to check Thomas Long's blog *NursingWriting.com*, which provides reports on predatory open access journals and scam conferences (INANE, 2014). The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a third resource INANE provides to their authors.

The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a non-profit organisation that was launched in 2003 at Lund University, Sweden. It hosts approximately 10,000 open access journals in various disciplines. In 2014, the DOAJ commenced a rigorous review process to upgrade its standards and criteria for acceptance of journals in the Directory. Its aim was to "raise the bar of quality for the journals it lists and filters out publications that are tarnishing the image of Open Access" (Adams, 2015, para. 2). The practice of self-cleaning or delisting journals is relatively new in scholarly publishing but has increased in the era of open access. It can be considered a necessary correction measure to protect scholarly authors and to eradicate questionable or illegitimate publishing practices (Gasparyan et al., 2015). DOAJ has since removed 2851 journals in its review process (and not 3300 as was originally anticipated) (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2016). This exercise was to ensure their new criteria are met. All is not lost though for journals that do not meet these new criteria. Lars Bjørnshauge, Managing Director of the DOAJ, confirms that if a journal does not meet their criteria, assistance will be provided to address those issues, to enable reapplication (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2016). The aim and purpose of the DOAJ is to:

> *increase the visibility and ease of use of open access scientific and scholarly journals, thereby promoting their increased usage and impact. The DOAJ aims to be comprehensive and cover all open access scientific and scholarly journals that use a quality control system to guarantee the content. In short, the DOAJ aims to be the one-stop shop for users of open access journals.* (Directory of Open Access Journals, 2016, para. 5).

By setting up a one-stop shop, DOAJ has the ambitious goal of creating the largest "whitelist" of legitimate open access publications, helping funding agencies, researchers and libraries choose better scholarly targets (Van Noorden, 2014). Paul Peters, a member of the DOAJ's Advisory Board, stresses that in view of the expansion of Open Access publishing over the past several years, "it has become increasingly important for the scholarly community to be able to judge whether a particular journal is being run in a professional, ethical, and transparent fashion" (Adams, 2015, para. 11).

CONCLUSION

New publications emerge all the time, with different standards, services and business models. No reputable "one-stop shop" has emerged to date to assist authors when publishing their works. Many users of Beall's list have asked when a new list will replace his list, as it at least provided some guidelines to potential authors. There may be individuals or organisations that pursue this mission in the future. There are others who are likely to oppose a new blacklist, as they believe such lists are biased, unreliable, and do not provide a solution to predatory publishing practices. There are some who believe that authors need to take more responsibility for their decisions when selecting a publisher, and should not depend on blacklists.

Neylon (2017) reminded scholars that they should be capable of making their own decisions as to whether a publisher is legitimate or predatory. If they are not able to make

wise decisions in this regard, then they do not deserve the label "scholar". Neylon (2015) warned that we need to move beyond the point of seeing researchers as "hapless victims" who are "hoodwinked" by unscrupulous publishers. In many instances, they are complicit in these predatory practices by providing peer-review, editorial or other services, or publishing in these non-reputable or deceptive publications. Here Neylon was referring to experienced scholars, but neglected to mention that young, inexperienced researchers (new doctoral candidates, perhaps) who may not always have experienced mentors, or who work in isolation, could inadvertently fall into the "predatory trap". Anxious to build their curriculum vitae and secure suitable academic positions, these researchers unwittingly fall prey to these predatory journals. Flattering letters of invitation provide them with the first step up the ladder. At this stage they are generally only too happy that their works will be published and do not think to research the publishers or seek advice from supervisors or fellow students. Many of them do not understand the full implications of publishing in predatory journals, as their desire to get their work published as quickly as possible blinds them to the negative effects this might have on their future careers. It is therefore crucial that higher educational institutions and research institutes provide ongoing education to their postgraduate students and academic staff, on publishing issues and how to avoid predatory journals.

In their research at the CREST (Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology) at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, Mouton and Valentine (2017) indicated the extent predatory publishing had permeated the South African academic landscape. They argued that senior academics and supervisors need to take specific responsibility to be alert to the scourge of predatory publishing. In addition to them providing information on research ethics and conformance with good practice in research integrity, senior academics and supervisors must now assume the additional responsibility of providing guidance on publication strategies and choices to younger colleagues and postgraduates. They recommended the "Think Check Submit" tool to young scholars to assist them when deciding where to publish their works.

Although the "publish or perish" syndrome may tempt scholarly authors, especially novices, to publish in less acceptable or inferior journals, publishing in predatory journals is likely to have negative consequences for their careers. They need to take heed of this. Listing such publications in their curriculum vitae or publications list could negatively affect academics when seeking new positions, transfers, career advancement, or research rankings by domestic or international accreditation or funding organisations. Citing from predatory journals can also negatively affect the authenticity, veracity, reliability, and value of content in library and archival collections. Swauger (2017, para. 8) states "It's unsurprising that researchers and librarians relied so heavily upon Beall's list, as it alleviated the burden of having to learn how to evaluate whether a publisher or journal was predatory".

To avoid falling into the trap of predatory journals, it is wise for scholarly authors to research publishers carefully before submitting their manuscripts for publication. It is recommended that they always check available whitelists and tools, their own reputable institutional journal collections and electronic databases, internationally accepted journals indices, as well as best practice guidelines produced by reputable international publishers. Although a whitelist or blacklist may be useful to some, predatory practices will not disappear until researchers decisively reject these practices and take responsibility for maintaining the aforementioned internationally accepted academic standards.

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