Ruth's Rankings 37 Part 2 – Appendix 1: Black lists, white lists and gray lists

(See below for Appendix 2: Responses from suppliers of white, black and gray lists)

EXAMPLE 1: Last week I received an invitation in the mail to publish in a journal that has an ISSN, a DOI and lists many well-known sources where it says it is indexed. I can look at "white lists", "black lists" or what I refer to as "gray lists" to see if I am interested in publishing in this journal. The question is, "Should I Publish in the Journal?"

"WHITE LISTS"

Is it a well-respected "high-impact" scholarly publication? Check CA's JCR, Elsevier's CiteScore, CWTS' SNIP or Scimago SJR for datasets which have editorial teams monitoring the titles.

Clarivate Analytics

WOS has more than twice the number of publications than JCR. A title can be under review by JCR and still active in WOS. To see if a journal is in a CA publication, search the Master Journal list. The list does not indicate if a journal is in JCR. To retrieve lists of publications just in JCR use, there is a version in PDF and a spreadsheet. None of the lists include the publisher or the Journal Impact Factor score.

Clarivate Analytics Title Suppressions list and criteria, current list of suppressed titles and suppressed titles from 2006-2016. Are available to check. Suppression may be temporary, and these lists should not be used as black lists.

See Appendix 2, below, for information from Clarivate including a conversation with the editor-in-chief of WOS.

Elsevier

Scan down this cite for links to both the Scopus Source list and discontinued source list as of April 2018. They list over 37,000 titles of which about 25,000 are actively included in CiteScore. The list of discontinued titles has over 400 titles over half of which are available electronically. The list includes the publisher and the reason for discontinuation, which includes metrics, publication concerns and radar. See this presentation from SCOPUS on how they track for predatory publications: https://conf.neicon.ru/materials/28-Sem0417/170417_0930_Steiginga.pdf

See Appendix 2, below, for detailed information from the Head of Product Management for Content Strategy at Elsevier

Other potential white lists

Many databases are created by international professional societies and are part of subscription databases. The journal lists are free. Just as there are questionable publishers there are of course questionable "professional societies". Examples of scholarly society lists include:

- U.S. National Library of Medicine - PubMed
- American Economic Association journals index in Econlit-
- American Chemical Society publications

Directory of Open Access Journals

Check DOAJ for peer-reviewed, high quality open access journal. It includes Best Practices and Inclusion based on standards from the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, which includes a list of its members.

Even though a journal website says it is in DOAJ does not mean that it is in DOAJ. Some questionable journals may appear on one of more of these lists

BLACK LISTS

The original list was the work of Jeffrey Beall. The controversy about Beall's list was the motive more than the list. Beall was an outspoken opponent of open access journals.

I found at least three archived Beall's lists: I am including the multiple sites since it is unclear how long they will be available.

Beall's list of publishers, standalone journals, hijacked journals and misleading metrics. This includes the original list and updates. The author is anonymous.

Stop Predatory Journals – similar to the above; anonymous authors; also includes publishers, hijacked journals and fake or misleading metrics, that include criteria for the metrics. Many of the misleading metrics on the list no longer exist, especially those using the term "Impact Factor".

Beall's list of predatory publishers from Catherine Voutier, January 2017, Exploring the Evidence Base.

Cabells Blacklist

Cabells is a publisher of publishing opportunities in different disciplines to aid newer authors. Cabell's ceased publishing its directories and now offers online subscriptions to a White list of over 11,000 "quality" journals, using metrics from JCR, Altmetrics and its own metric. They have added *Cabell's Blacklist* which now has over 9,700 journals.

Cabells Blacklist has 60 behavioral criteria. An advantage of Cabell's is that the violations are listed for each publication. Categories include Integrity; Peer review; Website; Publication practices; Indexing and metrics; Fees; Access and copyright; and Business practices. This allows authors to determine the importance of the different violations.

The major disadvantage is that as the only neutral curated site, there is not even an open access list of publishers.

The journal in Example 1 is on the Blacklist with nine violations under the categories of Integrity, Peer Review, Website, Publication Practices and Access and Copyright.

NOTE: A violation under Peer Review ***is including scholars on an editorial board without their knowledge or permission.*** I contacted the listed "Chief Advisor" of the journal who is a prestigious faculty member from a prestigious university. He cannot get his name off the website!

See Appendix 2, below, for some information from Cabells sales representative

GRAY LISTS

Dimensions

Dimension's methodology is to continuously harvest documents at the article level from various sources, including Crossref, PubMed, Europe PubMed Central and biorXiv. That means that there are questionable journals included. Users are given the option of limiting their research to journals covered in the following "white lists". About 25% of the publications are not on any of these lists.

- Australian ERA 2015 (which has been phased out),
- DOAJ.
- PubMed where I did find questionable journals. and
- Norwegian Register lists 0, 1 and 2

Norwegian Register criteria: includes external peer review, an academic editorial board and international or national authors.

From my perspective, Dimensions is a good substitute for Google Scholar. But the user still has to beware. I found that if a journal's citation metrics (FCR and CRC) are zero, it is advisable to check the white and black lists.

See Appendix 2, below, for a discussion with Digital Science CEO Christian Herzog.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar provides no filter for questionable publications. Many authors, even those with access to edited scholarly journal lists, rely on Google Scholar. Google Scholar and its metrics use machine algorithms. Inclusion requirements for Google Scholar focus on technical issues rather than any verification of the authenticity of the journal.

Ulrichs

Ulrichs Periodical Directory, a subscription service has been the go-to source for librarians to identify serial publications for over 50 years. It contains over 240,000 serial titles. Over15,000 are indexed as open access scholarly journals. The Journal in Example 1 is listed in Ulrichs as a peer reviewed publication indexed in ProQuest. I cannot find it in ProQuest's publications.

See Appendix 2, below, for an explanation of Ulrichs' practices from their senior metadata librarian.

Directory of research journals indexing

This open access directory, claiming to be an outlet for newer journals, has all the markings of a questionable source. It is using EBSCO's logo even when EBSCO asked it to cease and desist (as of publication). However, it is very careful to say that its DRJI value is NOT an impact factor. Black list publishers are included. I do not advise using this list or listing a publication in this directory.

EXAMPLE 1: My journal says it is in DOAJ and it is not, it is on one black list and the gray lists. Should I publish in this journal? The Answer is Not Clear.

EXAMPLE 2: A journal suppressed by Scopus last year is still in SNIP and SJR, WOS' ESCI and Dimensions. It is not in DOAJ. Doing my own research, the editor has four articles in WOS, the latest written in 2000. He did better in Scopus with nine publications, the latest a 2013 article in a journal on Cabells Blacklist, *International Journal of Economic Research*. The editor of the journal has a distinguished biography. He is also the CEO of the journal's publisher. The publisher was on all the black lists I checked. Should I publish in that journal? The Answer is No.

THINK – CHECK - SUBMIT

Ruth's Rankings Article 37 Part 2 –Appendix 2: Responses from suppliers of white, black and gray lists

I have included responses with fuller explanations of the products' practices than found in Appendix 1. The pattern is that all of the vendors are struggling with how to maintain quality without being judgmental. They all take different approaches.

Clarivate Analytics

CA just added a title to WOS. The title had just been removed from Scopus and CiteScore. And CA currently suppressed other titles by this publisher. I emailed CA and received the following response: "As an objective and unbiased organization, Clarivate Analytics does not interfere with the editorial management of any journal or the business practices of any publisher. However, should editorial policy or business practices affect the quality of a journal or its role in the surrounding literature of the subject, we will reject any proposal to include the journal in our indexes. We reserve the right to remove titles from coverage at any point, should they fail to maintain a trade standard of quality and ethical practices." (CA Customer Care, 25 Sept 2018).

Being uncomfortable with this response, I was able to have a conversation with CA's Editor-in-Chief for Web of Science, Nandita Quaderi.

She clarified that Web of Science is a different team from Journal Citation Reports. JCR pulls journals from WOS but makes its inclusion and suppression decisions based only on citation behavior. She believes that there is a tricky balance between publishers who are deliberately using the system as a way to make money and small or new publishers who want to have quality journals but do not have the resources.

Quaderi also reminded me that the Journal Impact Factor is misused. It is only meant to evaluate journals. In response to my question about misuse of the JIF, she replied that the legal team does look at misuse of the name but can do nothing about it.

Elsevier

"Scopus has a dedicated re-evaluation program with the aim to curate the journals covered in Scopus and make sure that journals included in Scopus do continue to meet the high-quality standards expected for such publications. More information on the re-evaluation initiative can be found on the Scopus info site: https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus/how-scopus-works/content/content-policy-and-selection. Indeed, there is no single authoritative list of titles that are considered to be predatory. For Scopus we use indicators of outlier publishing behavior and concerns about publication standards we receive from various stakeholder to flag titles for re-evaluation. However, it is the Scopus Content Selection & Advisory Board who reviews all titles and makes the decision about discontinuation or not. Titles that do not meet the quality standards anymore are discontinued for Scopus coverage. A list of titles discontinued from Scopus can be found at the bottom of this page: https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus/how-scopus-works/content.

In general, this is our approach in relation to predatory publishing:

- Despite forming a small portion of all journals published, predatory journals are a threat to the integrity of science and to all A&I databases in particular. This is not just an issue for Scopus.
- Scopus, as the world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, takes this threat very seriously. That's why we have developed a process of continually evaluating all journals in Scopus and have rigorous procedures to immediately remove any journals that are identified as predatory.
- Journals change their policies, so a journal that did not start off as a predatory may become so over time. We have various initiatives and advanced algorithms to flag journals that are under performing, exhibit outlier behaviour or where there are concerns about publication practice. These titles are then re-evaluated and removed if they no longer meet our standards. Scopus has removed more than 300 in the past years as they were pursuing predatory practices.
- In addition, we proactively help to train researchers on how and where to publish, helping them avoid predatory journals. For example this blog post is an example of additional resources that are available for researchers: https://blog.scopus.com/posts/is-a-title-indexed-in-scopus-a-reminder-to-check-before-you-publish

Meester, Wim (ELS-AMS) W.Meester@elsevier.com, Head of Product Management for Content Strategy at Elsevier (3 Sep 2018)

NOTE: Scopus provides the most information about its practices and works with publishers and librarians.

Dimensions

I introduced Dimensions in Ruth's Rankings 37 Part One. I had many emails with Dimensions, since it was new to me. Originally I interacted with customer service and then talked directly with the CEO of Digital Science, Christian Herzog.

As a new entrant into the bibliometrics field, Dimensions relies on newer methods of article gathering, relying on technology rather than human decision making. There are newer publications and metrics that fall outside the scope of CA or Elsevier. Herzog recognizes that the issue is not black or white; and he does not want to decide what should be in the database. Therefore, Dimension's current approach is to present the user with a set of "white lists" as limiters.

Dimensions is still in search of a solution to the questionable publications problem.

Ulrichs

"…With the growth of open access publications, we have no choice but to prioritize which journals we add into Ulrich's. It means that we focus on titles that are in various reference sources, indexes and directories. At the same time, we recognize that much of the A&Is and other indexes have a western bias. To avoid leaving out publications from other regions, our editors, who specialize in different regions, regularly conduct research to look for and to add/update these titles.

There are many reasons why you will find some vanity journals in Ulrich's. As you may have noticed, A&Is and other reference sources often include vanity journals. Some articles in these journals may even earn citation metrics. There are a lot of grey areas in the vanity classification. While there are some blatant and extremely low-quality titles, many fall in the grey area where it is much harder to evaluate without actually participating in the submission/review process.

Finally, after all that, what is Ulrich's doing to filter out predatory publishers?

1. Provide librarians with reference tools to evaluate journals: A&Is, JCR, DOAJ, online full-text databases, etc.
2. Prioritizing which titles are added to Ulrich's. Low quality or vanity journals are pushed further down the queue of titles we add/update.
3. Some titles would be excluded if we cannot verify the publisher information: i.e., fake addresses, articles have not been published for a long period of time, publishers failed to respond, and if the editor listed indicates they are not involved with the publication.
4. For the titles we cannot verify the review process, we do not add the refereed indicator. It is important to note that Ulrich's never states a publication as "Not refereed." It only indicates when a title is refereed. There are peer reviewed publications listed in Ulrich's without the refereed indicator for many reasons, including: We are not able to get the information; the description of the review process is not available, not clear, or incomplete; There are conflicting information; or that our editors exercised editorial discretion to not add the refereed indicator."

As a follow-up I asked if they checked abstract and index sources: “We generally look up 1 or 2 of the A&Is listed. However, if I see the publication listing fake A&Is, I will check every single real A&I they list. Also, we normally work from the A&I lists from the providers.”
From Shawn Chen Shawn.Chen@exlibrisgroup.com, senior metadata librarian at ex Libris, 20/8/2018

Cabells

First, you can see a complete list of the criteria for inclusion on the **Journal Blacklist** here. Please note, these criteria are weighted based upon severity, and as such in most cases more than one criterion needs to be identified to class a journal as predatory and include on the **Journal Blacklist**.

Secondly, with respect to metrics – these are included within Cabells other product, the **Journal Whitelist**. This product works in tandem with the **Journal Blacklist** by identifying the best journals in their respective fields and includes metrics including the Cabells Classification Index (CCI), JCR Impact Factor, and Altmetrics.

Alex Lloyd, Sales Manager (22 Oct 2018)

Anderson, Rick (25 July 2017). Cabell’s New predatory journal Blacklist: A review. Scholarly Kitchen, https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/07/25/cabells-new-predatory-journal-blacklist-review/

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THINK – CHECK - SUBMIT