

# Open Access Publishing: Scholarly or Predatory?

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In recent years, open access publishing has become more than a buzzword and is now a phenomenon in academic publishing that carries with it much confusion and various connotations for authors and readers. Essentially, open access represents a change in the publishing business model that involves a shift from a pay-for-reading to a pay-for-publishing process. Like traditional subscription journals, open access journals are usually run by private companies that charge academic institutions for their services. However, instead of libraries and readers being asked pay for journal subscriptions, research groups and authors are required to pay for having their articles published.

In the hands of reputable publishers, open access has numerous advantages. It offers unrestricted access to findings from important studies that are published. Research results can be rapidly distributed on a much wider basis, which can hasten important changes in practice. Many publishing houses now offer open access options to authors, whereby after a manuscript is peer-reviewed and accepted for publication according to traditional high standards of scholarly excellence, authors are then given the option of paying an additional fee for open access in order to disseminate their results more broadly. Because many research granting bodies have advocated for unrestricted access to study findings, investigators and research teams may actively budget for publishing costs when developing grant proposals.

Although this shift in the publishing business model may seem unimportant, it has come to have far-reaching consequences because it has provided a commercial opportunity to for-profit enterprises that was

largely unanticipated by scholars. Unfortunately, along with the ease of digital publishing, questionable journals and publishers are emerging that are not grounded in high editorial standards and publishing quality and are actively competing for authors and revenue. In extreme cases, such publishers engage in highly unethical and unscrupulous marketing practices to solicit unsuspecting authors in order to maximize their revenue. Such journals may also target senior scholars to enhance the journal's credibility.

At its annual meeting in August 2014, the International Academy of Nurse Editors (INANE) agreed that it was time to raise awareness among readers and stakeholders about the potentially detrimental effects of the pseudo-scholarly practices that may accompany open-access publishing. At that meeting, INANE was fortunate to have as a speaker academic librarian and blogger Jeffrey Beall, who has coined the term "predatory publishers" in his blog *Scholarly Open Access* (<http://scholarlyoa.com/>). At this blog, Beall maintains a list of questionable, scholarly open-access publishers—some of which list bogus titles, editors, and false metrics—with the recommendation that scholars read the available reviews, assessments, and descriptions that are provided and then decide whether they want to submit articles or serve as editors or on editorial boards.

For authors and editors in nursing and health care, another valuable online resource is the Directory of Nursing Journals, a collaborative effort between INANE and the *Nurse, Author & Editor* publication (<http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>). The goal of this site is to maintain a current directory of vetted journals to enable authors to find a suitable and reputable journal in which to publish their work. This work is also based on the *Principles of Transparency and Best Practices in Scholarly Publication*, as posted by the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>).

The INANE community is clear that educators, authors, scholars, and practitioners should be aware of the potential hazards associated with open-access

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publishing. Although open access offers great opportunities for knowledge dissemination and improved practices, as a disruptive force in academic publishing there is also the clear potential for exploitation and the pro-

motion of pseudo-science. It is our responsibility to continue to sustain high standards of academic and health sciences publication that can be readily implemented across all of the various publication modalities.

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