EVALUATING OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS CHECKLIST

Many of the criteria used to assess the quality of subscription-based journals apply to open access journals as well. When deciding where to publish, or whether to serve as an editor, consider whether or not the journal is:

- Scholarly/Academic with a well-defined scope and audience
- Affiliated with an academic or professional organization
- Peer-reviewed
- Edited by experts in the field
- Has an ISSN number
- Provides DOIs at the article level
- Transparent regarding any publishing fees
- Allows authors to retain some of their rights under the copyright transfer agreement
- Allows authors to post the final, peer-reviewed manuscript version to any repository or web site
- Included in Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory and indexed/abstracted in major databases
- Has an impact factor (JCR) or SCImago Journal Rank Indicator (SJR) [http://www.scimagojr.com/]

Additional quality indicators for open access journals include:

- Publisher is a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) [http://oaspa.org/]
- Journal is included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) [https://doaj.org/] (Note: criteria for inclusion were recently tightened and journals added prior to March 2014 have to reapply to be included)
- Journal and/or publisher is registered with SHERPA/RoMEO [http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/]
- Journal provides free readership rights immediately upon publication (i.e., no embargo)
- Publisher provides information about its digital preservation practices

While publishers with questionable practices are nothing new, there are some things to be wary of when evaluating an open access journal:

- No “about” or contact information on the journal’s web site
- No information about peer-review, copyright, or instructions for authors on the web site
- Excessive solicitation by the publisher, especially if poorly targeted
- Publisher issues a lot of “edited volumes” rather than actual journals
- Journal has a very low article count (fewer than 5/year)
- Other journals in your field by the publisher are of poor quality
- Publisher launched many journals on the same date
- Authors are from the same institution, or there are repeated authors or groups, or one dominant author across a few issues
- Publisher makes false claims about indexing or archiving
- Journal is not listed in DOAJ