

PUBLISHING QUALITY OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

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Abstract

The publication of scholarly journals and proceedings is an area of academic publishing with specific quality criteria. These publications are evaluated in accordance with the principles of academic ethics, research results, reviewing processes, dissemination and other things. Nowadays, with increasing emphasis on the need for open science and open access in scholarly communication, publishers face new challenges in publishing, and scientists must be able to select the right journals for the articles. It is important for scholars and institutions to include scientific articles and journals in international databases. The databases also apply their own criteria when assessing journals. In view of these topical issues of scholarly communication, the main criteria of publishing quality were investigated. With these criteria, publishers can improve the quality of scholarly journals, and researchers choose the best journals for their articles.

Keywords: scholarly communication, scholarly journals, proceedings, publishing quality criteria

The scientific articles is an important part of scholarly communication, representing the value of research results, the prestige of scientists and research institutions, return on investment, opportunities for cooperation, and so on. Scholarly journals and articles published in them are public proof of scientific achievements; therefore, the formal presentation of these evidence in published scholarly journals and proceedings is very important. Researchers and academic communities in their professional activities and scientific researches are analyzing the general quality criteria for scholarly journals (Jawaid & Jawaid, 2017), as well as criteria related to the peer review process and other content quality requirements (Gasparyan & Kitas, 2012), citation and evaluation of journals (Saxena, Thawani, Chakrabarty & Gharpure, 2013; Bracke, Weiner, Nixon & Deatherage, 2012), ethical principles (Ingham et al., 2011).

These criteria are needed not only to improve the quality of publishing because of higher evaluation in academic communities, but also to identify

them as real scholarly journals. With the advent of open access journals, publishing of predatory journals (pseudo-journals) began to emerge. Simulating the publication of a scholarly journal, the websites of such journals contain similar information as in scholarly journals, and scientists are invited to submit articles to them for a certain fee. These journals do not apply the peer review and other quality requirements; publish articles very quickly (Craft, 2016). Finally, it turns out that these articles are not valuable to the academic community. The recognition of these journals also requires the criteria that were attempted by J. Beall (Laine and Winker, 2017). Because of the launch of new journals and predatory journals, some aspects of the assessment may be similar; the suitability of the criteria presented by J. Beall is also debated (Olivarez, Bales, Sare & vanDuinkerken, 2018). But precisely because of such criteria, representatives of academic communities can make decisions on scholarly journals for the publication of articles or their evaluation.

This paper analyzes the formal qualitative criteria for scientific journals and proceedings. A scientific analysis of the quality of publishing of scholarly publications in the scientific literature was carried out. Based on these criteria, a case study of the 10 scholarly journals and proceedings published by Kauno kolegija have been carried out.

Quality criteria for the publication of scholarly journals and proceedings

According to academic publishing professionals, successful publishing requires at least minimum requirements: good quality manuscripts, transparent and active editorial activity, financial stability, good quality of peer reviews, journal visibility and indexation in well-known international databases, open access, user friendly website (Jawaid & Jawaid, 2017). In the opinion of these authors, when starting with publishing it is necessary to decide on the periodicity of the publication, the peer review and implementation of other publishing processes, the distribution of the publication and the need for individual ISSNs for the printed and digital publication, the use of DOI, timely editorial communication with authors and reviewers, the provision of detailed and clear information to authors and the academic community, the use of ethical principles in the work of the editorial board, the choice of the plagiarism detection tool, and proofreading and editing of the articles.

Open access publishers and active communities encourage the dissemination and application of best practice. Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) have long been using stringent logging criteria. DOAJ is an open access journal register since 2003 supported by the international academic community. Currently, more than 10 thousand peer-reviewed scholarly jour-

nals from various countries are registered. Among them are only 35 scholarly journals in Lithuania, although the number of such publications in Lithuania is four times higher. In early 2018 DOAJ with partners (*Committee on Publication Ethics, Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, World Association of Medical Editors*) published the principles of good practice and transparency in the publishing of scholarly journals (*Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, 2018*).

The introduction of good practice in the publishing of scholarly journals in Lithuania is encouraged by evaluating scientific results and providing state support. In the procedure for the selection of periodical scholarly publications approved by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (*Lietuvos mokslų akademija, 2015*), the quality evaluation criteria of publications are published according to the scholarly works published in them: scientific level, originality, internationality, interdisciplinary, significance to the scientific field. It is also indicated that support may be awarded to a periodical scholarly publication that meets certain publishing requirements.

To better understand the quality criteria of scholarly journals, Beall's criteria for identifying predatory scholarly journals can be analyzed (*Laine, Winker, 2017*). These criteria help authors choose not to publish articles for inappropriate publications and show publishers and editors whether they have provided good information about their journal.

Taking into account the analysis of the above-mentioned sources, it is possible to formulate the quality criteria for the scholarly journals and proceedings proposed by the academic and publishing communities (Table 1).

Table 1. Quality criteria for the publication of scholarly journals and proceedings

Publishing area	Good publishing experience and practice based on publishing quality criteria	Predatory or poor publishing practice
Publisher	The owner and publisher of the journal must be posted on the site, with specific contact details. The publication is published by a well-known science and study institution or a professional association of researchers.	The publisher is not specified or the same publisher is associated with a dozen similar journals. No contact information.

Publishing area	Good publishing experience and practice based on publishing quality criteria	Predatory or poor publishing practice
Editorial Board	Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors as well as contact information for the editorial office, including a full address. Proceedings are referred to the scientific committee if the articles are reviewed. Otherwise, only the Organizing Committee.	There is no specified editorial board or its members specified as scientists without real links to the publication. No publisher and editorial contacts. The only back-link is available only on email.
Journal title and subject	The name of the journal should be unique, not confused with the names of other journals. The publication is clearly defined and publicly available on the subject (s) of the topic.	The name of the journal is too abstract, inaccurate or the same as another scholarly journal. The topics of published articles are not specified.
Peer review process	Manuscript review process must be selected and described on the website. Members of the journal editorial board should not be reviewers. Articles are evaluated by at least two reviewers appointed by the editorial board. Correspondence and reviews are kept for at least two years.	There is a lack of transparency in publishing and peer review processes; there is no information about peer review processes. The editorial board asks the author to have one review and does not perform reviewer authentication.
Frequency	Journal numbers must appear according to the scheduled periodicity. The scholarly journal should be published at least twice a year. The proceedings must be published before or immediately after the conference. Importance of continuity of the publication, stability of publishing.	The publication is unclear periodicity or the articles are published on the website without having to issue numbers. Proceedings are issued after half a year or more after the conference.

Publishing area	Good publishing experience and practice based on publishing quality criteria	Predatory or poor publishing practice
Structure of the journal	Scientific articles must be distinguished from other parts (ads, reviews, etc.) and make up at least three quarters of the volume of each publication.	Published not only scientific, but also pseudo-science articles without review and editing.
Articles and author information	The article should indicate the authors of the articles, e-mail. Addresses, the article's metric contains the title of the publication, number (volume), pages, year of issue, DOI number.	No information about the author of articles, no personal contact information. The authors may be fictitious or recorded the names of unrelated scholars.
Publication information	It is recommended that OJS be used and professionally customized. The publication or website must contain complete and real information about the publication, requirements for articles, transparency peer reviews and other processes, and other documents. Professional editing and layout processes are required. Provides reliable information on referencing the journal in the databases and its impact factor. It should be sought to refer the publication to well-known international databases.	The publication website is based on standard templates, no requirements for articles and other documents. False information about impact factor logging and referrals in databases may be provided. The website or publication contains grammatical errors and broken links.

Publishing area	Good publishing experience and practice based on publishing quality criteria	Predatory or poor publishing practice
Integrity	Copyright policy, plagiarism verification processes must be posted on the journal website. Authors must complete publishing licenses or authors' warrants by declaring the authorship and originality of the article.	No copyright information available. Plagiarism verification procedures are not performed. Articles in PDF format are locked for plagiarism checking. There may be re-published articles without having the authors' permission.
Publishing model and marketing	Publishing fees or exemptions should be known to the author before submitting the manuscript. The journal business model and sources of revenue must be made public. The direct marketing should be appropriate and inordinate.	There is no information on publishing fees, lack of transparency in publishing processes. Sending spam to scientists by inviting them to publish articles.
Ethics of Publishing	The process of recognizing and managing failures in the science publishing process should be based on COPE recommendations. The publication ethics rules must be published.	Publishers copy the instructions to authors and other documents from other publishers or do not provide them.
Archiving and open access	Long-term digital preservation of the journal must be ensured, also in cases where journal publishing is discontinued. Open access conditions for journal articles must be defined and known to readers.	There is no archiving practice and strategy. Difficulty with indexing the search engine's website.

Case study

In 2018, following the research of 10 scholarly journals and proceedings according to the analyzed good practice criteria for publishing, non-conformities were found for each edition of Kauno kolegija. All journals and proceedings lack important information about the journal, editorial ethics principles and archiving practice descriptions, editing of the list of references in accordance with the rules published by the editorial board. Nine publications do not publish copyright terms and licenses. Three publications are available in print and electronic format, but only one of them provides detailed log information, two journals do not have an eISSN number. There is a lack of information about the journal or proceedings in the metrics of the five publications. Publications are allowed once a year, but publishing numbers takes too long. The subject matter of the two publications is too extensive; therefore, these publications are not identified by having their own subject matter and are not indexed in databases. The public image of other publications does not make it possible to identify them as solid scholarly publications. Due to missing or misleading information, articles in some publications are rated worse than they should. Detailed results of the case study analysis and specific recommendations are provided to the editorial boards of the journals and proceedings.

Conclusions

- Scholarly journals and proceedings represent the value of research results, the prestige of scientists and institutions, the return on investment, and so on. The quality of the publishing of these publications is directly linked to their proper identification and evaluation.
- Following the analysis of scientific literature and good practice, the formal quality criteria for the scholarly journals and proceedings were published. These criteria were grouped into 12 key areas and made it possible to apply the principles of good publishing practice in publishing activities and identify predatory journals.
- An analysis of the case studies showed that the publishers and editors pays too little attention to the quality of publishing, and discrepancies in the distribution of information, peer review or organization of publishing processes and transparency have been found in each publication.

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