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Where Should I Publish? How to Select the Right Journal

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Where Should I Publish?

How to select the right journal



Mary Ann Jones, Associate Professor
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What is the most important aspect of creating scholarship?

- Who sees it
- Where do they see it
- How often do they see it
- Do they cite it
- Does it make a difference



Dissemination

What do we mean by dissemination?

- Who sees it
- Where do they see it
- How often do they see it
- Do they cite it
- Does it make a difference

The most recognized form of dissemination is through publishing journal articles. Of course, there are many other forms, but today we're concentrating on journal articles and how to choose the best journal for your research.

Today I will walk through some steps to help you decide which journal is right for you – **with the stipulation that every researcher should be familiar with their discipline's portfolio of journals.**



Reputation

First, reputation is the most important factor to consider when you're considering submitting your work.

What is the reputation of the journal?

There are many ways to determine the reputation of journals.

Do your peers recognize the title? Does your mentor recommend the journal? Have your instructors used the journal for class material?

All of the steps I'll talk about today link back to reputation.

The reputation of a journal carries a lot of weight, sometimes more than it should, especially in the promotion and tenure process.

CAVEAT: you should not take any one of the steps I'll present today as the **ONLY** factor.



Website

Most of what I will talk about today will be found by looking at a journal's web presence. All reputable journals will have an up-to-date website with the information you need to determine the legitimacy of the journal.

Look at the website, what do you notice? Is the web presence professional or do you see a lot of colored text and flashing words? The look and feel of a website can say a lot about the professionalism of the journal.

Is the website a piece of a larger web presence such as a publisher, a university press, a content provider, i.e., JSTOR? Or is this a single journal page that's not linked to any others?

Do you see the information you need as an author? Is there a page that gives you a list of author guidelines? Can you see the author agreement up front? You should be able to find all the information you need to submit a manuscript.

The website will help you with many of the steps to follow.



Indexing services

One of the ways to determine if a journal is reputable is to look at the databases that index the journal's content.

When I say indexing, I'm talking about the service that research database providers offer to journals where they include the individual articles and their respective abstracts in their database. This sometimes includes full text access, but not always.

Reputable journals are typically indexed in many databases and by a variety of database providers. Think EBSCO, ProQuest, Elsevier, etc. As a scholar, you should recognize many of the indexing services.

Look for a link or a list of indexing services on the journal's website. If the journal doesn't list any indexing services or you don't recognize the indexing services, it's a red flag.



Peer Review

Every peer reviewed journal should provide information about their peer review process. Is the peer review blind, double blind, open, etc. There are different types of peer review, so make sure the journal you are considering is using a “normal” peer review process. Normal does not necessarily mean traditional; so, look at the peer review process with an open mind.



Publication History

Does the journal have a publication history? Look at the previously published articles. Do you recognize any of the studies or articles? Can you see gaps in the publication history? If there are large gaps in the history, this could be a red flag. Gaps could indicate a journal getting so far behind that they quite publishing until they caught up on a backlog. Other gaps can be the consequence of societies that have folded and/or sold the journal to another publisher.

If this is a new or relatively new journal, you should do extra due diligence. With the open access movement, article processing charges, and other fees, there are plenty of illegitimate journals and publishers. We'll talk a little more about "predatory" journals later.

The number of new journals is growing, many of which are legitimate, but the atmosphere of publish or perish will continue to drive those who seek to make a quick buck to do so at your expense, literally and figuratively.



Editorial / Review Board

Before you publish in any journal, you should look at the list of editorial or review board members. If you're publishing in a reputable journal in your field, you should recognize some of those people.

Editorial boards are typically made up of known experts in the discipline.

If you don't recognize or your mentor does not recognize anyone on the board, you should dig further. Look them up, look at their CVs, look at their websites. If someone is on an editorial board, it will be listed on their CV and/or their website.

If you personally or professionally know someone on the board, reach out with a quick email and get their opinion on your research being the right fit for the journal. Don't send them your manuscript, just give them a brief overview and ask for their opinion.

Editorial boards are there for a reason, they ensure the integrity of their journal, they should be pleased that you're asking questions.



Recognizable Authors

I talked about content earlier, but recognizable authors are just as important. Do you recognize articles written by your peers? Do you know their reputation in the field? Have you seen them present at conferences.

The longer you're in your field, you should begin to easily and quickly recognize if the articles published in a journal are written by legitimate researchers in your discipline. If you're new to your field, ask a colleague or a mentor or do some additional research on a few authors.



Contact information

This may seem like a given, but you'd be surprised at how difficult it is to find contact information on some journal websites. Hidden or buried contact information should be a red flag.

Editors of legitimate journals should want you to easily find their contact information and their information should be complete; a name and phone number isn't much nowadays. Look for name, affiliation, email address, CV, website, etc.



Impact indicators

Reputable academic journals are proud of their recognition with impact indicators.

Don't get confused by all the different impact indicators out there; there are many.

You've probably heard "impact factor" – you need to know this is a registered trademark and can only be used by Clarivate Analytics, aka Web of Science.

Other impact factors are just as legitimate and should be seen on a level playing ground (SCImago, Google Scholar, Scopus, Altmetric, Plum Analytics, etc.). You may run into people in your academic career that see the Web of Science "impact factor" as the only legitimate measure, but that is old school thinking.

Look for other impact measures listed on journal websites or use a search engine to look for other impact websites where the journal is listed.

Just because a journal does not have an "impact factor" or another metric, does not delegitimize the journal. It's just one of the steps and should be seen as such.

Avoiding predatory journals

- DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals)
- OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association)
- Recognizable society or university press

Now, lets go back to predatory journals.

First – the term “predatory” is not a fully accurate description. Predatory implies that they seek you out, but that is not always the case.

Use all the steps we’ve just talked about; these steps should be used for all journals, not just pay walled journals, but open journals as well.

The three points on this slide are extra steps to determine if an open access journal is legit. Check the DOAJ for the title, if it’s listed on DOAJ, it’s gone through a rigorous screening process and can, in my opinion, be trusted along with following all the other steps.

You can also check the OASPA list to see if the journal publisher is listed. Also, you can generally trust those open journals from recognizable societies or university presses.

You should still do your due diligence on all journals for which you are considering submission of a manuscript.

Moving Forward

- Evaluate on a case-by-case basis
- If something looks fishy, proceed with caution!
- Where you publish is a personal preference and a career investment.
- Do not rely on a list – do your research

Always evaluate journals on a case-by-case basis. There isn't a one-size fits all, except the big names like Science, PNAS, and Nature. Once you get to know a journal or a publisher, you can start to feel comfortable publishing with them multiple times.

If something doesn't look or feel right, follow your instincts and proceed with caution. Where you publish will follow you throughout your career, don't be hasty or in a hurry and make a mistake that will last a lifetime.

Yes, it's your personal preference, but also remember where you publish is an investment in your career. Again, these decisions will follow you and they can either help you or hurt you, so be vigilant.

Do not rely on a list – always do your own research and make your own judgment call. Yes, lists like DOAJ are helpful, but should not be the only factor you consider.



Questions?

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