BEWARE
Predatory journals in library databases:
How much should we worry?
Background

JEFFREY BEALL
• Invited speaker to talk about predatory publishers as part of our "Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works series" in April 2014.

INSPIRED OUR STUDY
• To explore the problem of aggregators including predatory journals in their metadata packages.
What is a Predatory Journal?

Key identifiers:

• acceptance/publication turnaround time

• article fees after papers are accepted

• listing academics as members of editorial boards without permission

• fake ISSNs

• mimicking name and journal look of more established journals
INSTRUCTION

How many demonstrate the "peer-reviewed" option in databases we subscribe to when teaching?
Questions we wanted to ask:

• How many predatory publishers show up in common library databases and indexes?

• How many were identified as predatory on Beall’s list?

• What were some of the predominant subject areas of coverage for predatory journals?
## Literature Themes

### Open Access
- New approaches to peer review system (Etkin, 2014)
- High quality OA journals will become standard (Totosy, 2014)

### Scholarly Communication
- Peer review process is a mechanism that validates research and ensures quality (Etkin, 2014)
- Part of tenure and promotion considerations (Etkin, 2014)
- Scholarly communication is how researchers communicate through peer-review (Warren/Duckett, 2010)

### Journal Cost & Prestige
- Impact factor important to attract top faculty (Totosy, 2014)
- Large publishers continue to opt out of open access while libraries face 10% annual increases (Totosy, 2014)
- Once perception changes, OA will garner more prestige (Totosy, 2014)
Students/Instruction

- Little integration of scholarly communication and information literacy (Warren/Duckett, 2010)

- Search skills must be accompanied by a greater understanding of how scholarly information is created, debated, vetted, stored, and accessed (Warren/Duckett, 2010).

Predatory Examples

- Elsevier “debacle” publishing 6 fake peer reviewed journals sponsored by pharmaceutical companies (Etkin, 2014)


- Duck Penis Paradox
Best and most recognized comprehensive list of predatory criteria to date.

Critics of Beall
- Eurocentric
- Subjective
- "In bed" with Elsevier
- Anti Open Access
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1:
In each of the databases and DOAJ index, how many publishers were identified as predatory?

RQ2:
How many of the predatory publishers show up in more than one database or index?

RQ3:
In each of the databases and index, how many journal titles available from predatory publishers were in each resource? What were the titles?

RQ4:
What were the predominant subject areas for the predatory journal content that were available in the databases and index?
DATA COLLECTION

- 560 - “Predatory Publishers” May 2014
- 772 - “Predatory Publishers” April 2015

http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/
Beall’s Predatory Criteria:

- Editor/Staff
- Publisher Business Practices
- Integrity

Examined 3 databases and 1 index:

- Gale's Academic OneFile
- Ebsco's Academic Search Complete
- Proquest Central
- DOAJ
DATA MANAGEMENT

• Data collected and managed in lists with Microsoft Excel

• Primary fields collected:
  - Publisher
  - Journal title
  - Alternate title
  - ISSN
  - EISSN
  - Subject area
  - Publisher URL
DATA MANAGEMENT

- Working Lists
- Comparison strategy
  - Variant names, spelling, and punctuation, e.g.
    - Southern Cross Publishing
    - Southern Cross Publisher
    - Southern Cross Journals
  - ISSNs or EISSNs
  - Manual keyword searching
  - Microsoft "Find" feature
- Primary sources for publisher and journal title verification
DATA MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT AREAS

- Arts/Entertainment
- Business
- Communication
- Education
- Government/Politics
- History
- Humanities/Social Science

- Literature/Language
- Medicine/Health
- Multidisciplinary
- Philosophy/Religion
- Science
- Sports/Recreation
- Technology
Results

Database and Index Baseline Characteristics

- **Gale**: 3,758 Publishers, 16,555 Titles, 753 Subjects
- **Ebsco**: 3,801 Publishers, 13,787 Titles, 1715 Subjects
- **Beall**: 560 Publishers, 0 Titles, 0 Subjects
- **DOAJ**: 5,456 Publishers, 9,709 Titles, 252 Subjects
- **ProQuest**: 5,693 Publishers, 21,174 Titles, 512 Subjects
RQ1. In each of the databases and the DOAJ index, how many publishers were identified as predatory?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Number of Publishers</th>
<th>Number of Predatory Publishers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gale</td>
<td>3,758</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebsco</td>
<td>3,801</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOAJ</td>
<td>5,456</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest</td>
<td>5,693</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ2. How many of the predatory publishers show up in more than one database or index?

**Gale**
- Publisher Overlap: 0%
- Publisher Non Overlap: 100%

**Ebsco**
- Publisher Overlap: 33%
- Publisher Non Overlap: 67%

**DOAJ**
- Publisher Overlap: 23%
- Publisher Non Overlap: 77%

**ProQuest**
- Publisher Overlap: 32%
- Publisher Non Overlap: 68%
RQ3. In each of the databases and index, how many journal titles available from predatory publishers were available in each resource? What were the titles?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Predatory Journal Titles</th>
<th>Journal Titles in Database or Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gale</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebsco</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOAJ</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart shows the number of titles and the percentage of predatory journal titles in each database.
RQ4. What were the predominant subject areas for the predatory journal content that were available in the databases and index?

**Gale**
- Science: 50%
- Technology: 17%
- Medicine or Health: 17%
- Education: 16%

**Ebsco**
- Science: 49%
- Technology: 16%
- Medicine or Health: 26%
- Multidisciplinary: 7%
- Humanities or Social Science: 2%
RQ4 (Cont.): What were the predominant subject areas for the predatory journal content that were available in the databases and index?

**ProQuest:**
- Business: 33%
- Science: 24%
- Medicine or Health: 15%
- Literature or Language: 1%
- Technology: 9%
- Education: 7%
- Government or Politics: 2%
- Humanities or Social Science: 6%
- Multidisciplinary: 0%
- Philosophy or Religion: 1%

**DOAJ:**
- Medicine or Health: 24%
- Science: 32%
- Literature or Language: 0%
- Arts or Entertainment: 1%
- Communication: 3%
- Education: 3%
- Government or Politics: 1%
- Humanities or Social Science: 2%
- Philosophy or Religion: 1%
- Multidisciplinary: 3%
RQ4 (Cont.): What were the predominant subject areas for the predatory journal content that were available in the databases and index?

![Pie chart showing subject areas]

- Science: 31%
- Medicine or Health: 22%
- Technology: 20%
- Business: 14%
- Multidisciplinary: 3%
- Humanities or Social Science: 3%
- Education: 4%
- Government or Politics: 1%
- Humanities or Social Science: 3%
- Literature or Language: 0%
- Arts or Entertainment: 0%
- Communication: 1%
- Philosophy or Religion: 1%
**DISCUSSION & TAKEAWAYS**

**INSTRUCTION**

Library instructors need to go beyond checking the peer-reviewed button with these subject areas, as the data suggests.

It is likely some students in larger classes will use predatory journals as sources.

Searching in certain subject areas increases the likelihood of predatory journals.

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**SERIALS LIBRARIANS**

Serials Librarians will need to be more proactive about managing link resolvers and deactivating journal titles that correspond to potential predatory journals.

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**COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

CD librarians need to pressure vendors to ask about their inclusion of potential predatory publishers or ask how they receive publisher information and do they monitor for predatory publishers.
LIMITATIONS & CONCERNS

• Our data shows only a snapshot in time – May 2014.

• Study is based on assumption Beall’s list is fairly accurate. We used his list because at present we felt it was the best available to measure this concern and answer our questions.

• If left unchecked, the relevance of the problem is still significant and the data indicates predatory journals are increasing every year.
QUESTIONS

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!