



EDITORIAL

# The challenges of scientometric studies of predatory publishing

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This issue of *Quantitative Science Studies* features the article “Predatory publishing in Scopus: Evidence on cross-country differences,” coauthored by Vít Macháček and Martin Srholec. Based on the Scopus database, this article studies how likely different countries are to publish in so-called predatory journals. Journals suspected to be predatory are identified using the well-known (and controversial) list of potentially predatory publishers and journals compiled by former librarian Jeffrey Beall.

The article by Macháček and Srholec has a special history. Originally published in the journal *Scientometrics* (Macháček & Srholec, 2021), the article was retracted by the Editor-in-Chief following a complaint from the publisher Frontiers and a subsequent postpublication peer-review process (Anonymous, 2022). Two reasons were provided by the Editor-in-Chief of *Scientometrics* for the retraction: lack of a control group and focus on four publication languages (Arabic, English, French, and Spanish). The retraction led to considerable controversy (Oransky, 2021). The authors disagreed with the retraction (Srholec, 2022), and a substantial number of members of the Distinguished Reviewers Board of *Scientometrics* and recipients of the Derek de Solla Price Medal expressed their concerns in a letter (Abramo, Boyack et al., 2022; see also the editorial by Zhang, 2022). We also signed this letter.

Following the retraction by *Scientometrics*, Macháček and Srholec reclaimed the copyright of their article, enabling them to submit their work elsewhere. They decided to submit their article to *Quantitative Science Studies*. As editors of *Quantitative Science Studies*, we requested Macháček and Srholec to address some weaknesses that we identified in their article. In particular, we felt that the limitations of Beall’s list needed to be emphasized more strongly and that there was a need to better explain how suspected predatory journals may end up being indexed in the Scopus database. Macháček and Srholec addressed these issues by making a number of improvements to their article. Based on our editorial assessment, these improvements were sufficient to meet the standards of *Quantitative Science Studies*, and we therefore decided to accept the article for publication in the journal. Although the article published in *Quantitative Science Studies* is different from the article originally published in *Scientometrics*, we emphasize that the changes made do not relate to the reasons provided for retracting the article.

We acknowledge that there are different views on predatory publishing in general, and on Beall’s list in particular. We therefore invite anyone who wishes to comment on the article by Macháček and Srholec to submit their views to *Quantitative Science Studies*. Commentaries should have a length of at most 1500 words. They will be considered for publication in a future issue of the journal.

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