



February 11, 2021

On February 8 2021, Nature published the news item [Hundreds of 'predatory' journals indexed on leading scholarly database](#) which included coverage of the article [Predatory publishing in Scopus: evidence on cross-country differences](#) (published on February 7, 2021 in the journal *Scientometrics*) which is a republication of an earlier study published in 2017. Both publications are owned by Springer Nature and have gained attention in the community. Elsevier and Scopus would like to hereby provide our response and clarifications.

Elsevier and Scopus recognize the problem that predatory publishing presents and are committed to uphold the highest quality standards in Scopus indexed journals. Any research that helps shine a light on predatory journals is welcome, however the above cited articles are also misleading for many reasons.

There are several flaws with the *Scientometrics* article. Beall's list is being used as a definition for predatory journals. Beall's list has not been maintained since 2017 and although journals listed in it may be suspicious, it is also controversial and based on the opinion of one person. Beall works with a binary classification in which a journal and publisher is considered either predatory or not. As Beall did not systematically explain his decisions, it is not possible to make a more detailed quantification of "predatoriness". Therefore, just being listed by Beall does not necessarily mean the journal is predatory.

All of Beall's list titles that are covered in Scopus have gone through rigorous re-evaluation, which is done by the same independent Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB) that selects new journals, whereby the majority of the titles from Beall's list have been discontinued in Scopus based on the CSAB's determination.

The title "*Hundreds of 'predatory' journals indexed on leading scholarly database*" is sensationalist and misleading. The research included in the article being discussed, "Predatory publishing in Scopus: evidence on cross-country differences" is largely about the geographical origin of researchers who publish in Beall's listed journals. Scopus is used as the bibliographic source (until the journals were discontinued). There is no valid research methodology applied to determine that these journals are indeed deemed predatory and still covered in Scopus.

The article also does not acknowledge the rigorous evaluation and re-evaluation mechanisms that Scopus has in place to combat predatory publishing. Instead it claims only that journals should fulfil minimum quality requirements based on bibliometrics or relying on what the journal declares about itself. That should be taken with care. Predatory publishing is not well defined and for responsible use of metrics it is always recommended to use multiple metrics in combination with qualitative measures. Many steps have already been taken by Scopus on this already before and since this research came out initially in 2017.

The claim that journals indexed in Scopus need only to fulfil minimum quality requirements based either on bibliometrics or on what the journal declares about itself is untrue. As you may know, Scopus selects journals based on a rigorous process that involves quantitative and qualitative criteria applied by the CSAB. Scopus

does not index predatory journals. What we do see is that journal quality and behavior can change over time. Some journals which meet our criteria at the time of acceptance into Scopus, may at some point change management, and in a minority of cases some may become predatory. The Re-evaluation process is designed to identify and discontinue such journals at the point at which this change takes place.

Of all titles in Scopus that have been flagged for re-evaluation because of publication practice concerns (including those journals listed by Beall), for 65% of them, the decision was made to stop covering them.

When the decision is made to discontinue covering a journal, typically the content that is already in Scopus remains and going forward no new articles are included. The rationale behind this is that the journal met the criteria up until a certain point in time after which it is discontinued. In some cases, the decision to remove certain articles from Scopus can be taken but is an exception. We provide a complete overview of which titles have been discontinued, and the last content indexed on the platform from each, in the [Discontinued Sources List](#) on the [Scopus info site](#).

Determining if a journal is predatory or not is complex and requires detailed review based on various considerations. [This position statement](#) explains how Scopus identifies and re-evaluates predatory journals. For the reasons touched upon in this letter and explained in the position statement, 'Listed by Beall' was never the sole reason for discontinuation on Scopus, which is what this new research is based on.

Scopus is vigilant in identifying and discontinuing journals that are, or have become, predatory. Maintaining the integrity and high quality of content indexed on Scopus is of paramount importance to us.

Sincerely,

Scopus Team