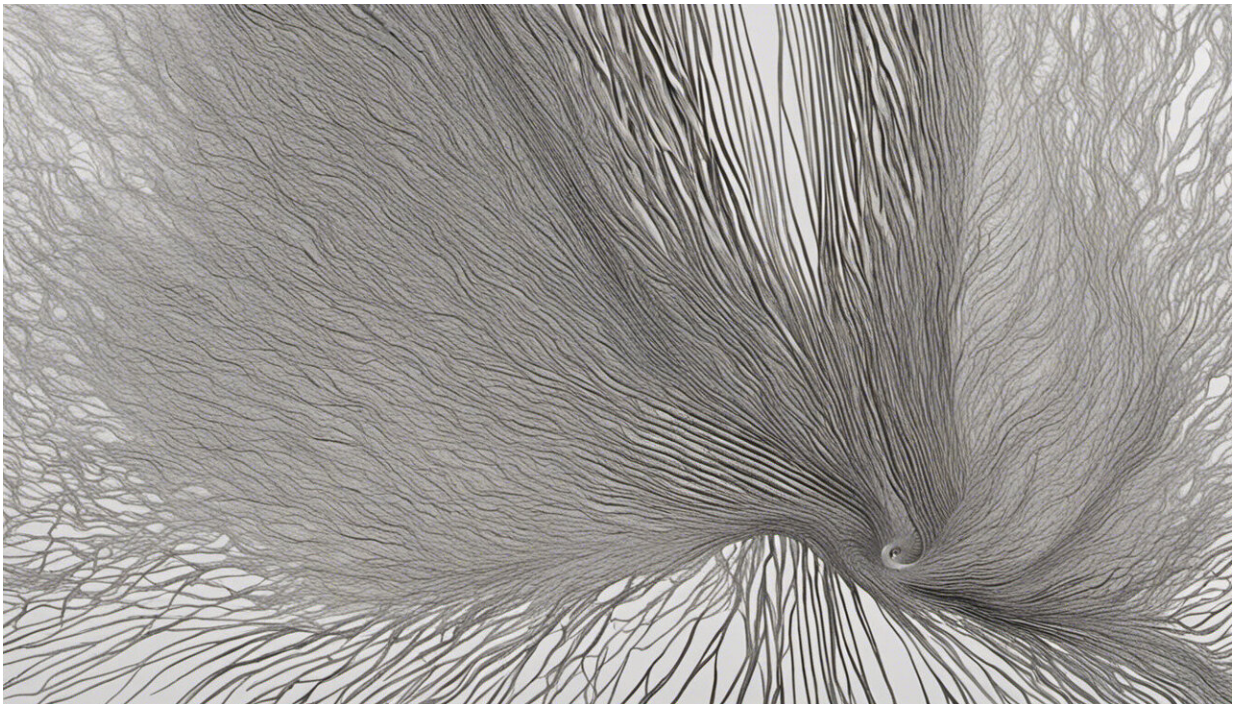


Who will keep predatory science journals at bay now that Jeffrey Beall's blog is gone?

January 20 2017, by Michael J. I. Brown



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

For aficionados of bad science, the [blog](#) of University of Colorado librarian [Jeffrey Beall](#) was essential reading. Beall's blog charted the murky world of predatory and vanity academic publishers, many of which charge excessive fees for publishing papers or have dysfunctional peer review processes.

I've seen rubbish on [chemtrails](#), [alien life](#), [climate](#), [HIV-AIDS](#) and [vaccines](#) appear in these (unintended) parodies of academic publications. Although, to be honest, they can be a guilty pleasure of sorts. Perhaps I'm like a film buff getting a kick out of Ed Wood's "[Plan 9 from Outer space](#)".

But recently all of the content on Beall's blog was [wiped without any warning](#). While much of Beall's blog is [archived](#), it had been charting the evolution of predatory academic publishing, including conferences and the purchasing of existing journals. With Beall's blog gone, it will become harder to keep track of the underbelly of academic publishing.

Changing face of scientific publishing

Traditionally, academic journals have been sustained via subscriptions, particularly those charged to academic libraries. Libraries would pick and choose which journals to subscribe to, in large part based on the requests of academics.

Subscriptions provided some incentive to maintain quality but also limited the readership of academic papers, effectively excluding the broader public (whose taxes often funded the research).

As the internet enabled the easy sharing of information, this is now extending to academic publications too. The "open access" model is increasingly popular, where authors are charged publication fees and the resulting papers are freely available online.

In principle, I like open access, as I believe science should be disseminated to the broadest audience possible. But there are perverse incentives. Will a publisher reject a manuscript that is manifestly rubbish, and forego the fees it would charge the author? In some cases the answer is "no".

Furthermore, the shift from printed journals to online publications has facilitated predatory and vanity academic publishers. Computers and websites have replaced printing presses and bound volumes. One publisher on Beall's list, Zant World Press, is run from a [Melbourne suburban house](#).

Beall's blog charted the explosion of predatory publishers exploiting the open access model. His list grew from just 18 publishers in 2011 to [1,155 publishers in 2017!](#)

I, along with many others, found Beall's list an incredibly useful resource. Suspicious scientific claims could often be traced back to journals associated with publishers on the list.

For example, in 2015 many newspapers printed claims that chocolate helped weight loss, but it was all a hoax, which included publishing a paper in the [International Archives of Medicine](#), which was on [Beall's list](#).

Scholarly Open Access

Critical analysis of scholarly open-access publishing

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LIST OF PUBLISHERS

Beall's List:

Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers

This is a list of questionable, scholarly open-access publishers. We recommend that scholars read the available reviews, assessments and descriptions provided here, and then decide for themselves whether they want to submit articles, serve as editors or on editorial boards. In a few cases, non-open access publishers whose practices match those of predatory publishers have been added to the list as well. The criteria for determining predatory publishers are [here](#).

We hope that tenure and promotion committees can also decide for themselves how importantly or not to rate articles published in these journals in the context of their own institutional standards and/or geocultural locus. We emphasize that journal publishers and journals change in their business and editorial practices over time. This list is kept up-to-date to the best extent possible but may not reflect sudden, unreported, or unknown enhancements.

RECENT POSTS

- o When "Science and Education" Go Bad
- o Standalone Journal is One of the Worst-Ever Open-Access Journals
- o Beall's List of Predatory Publishers 2017
- o Is It Time to Retire ResearcherID?
- o Conference-Organizer WASET Continues Copying Names of Legitimate Conferences

ARCHIVES

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CATEGORIES

- o article processing charges

An archive of Beall's site maintains the most recent list of suspect journals.

I recently became aware of another prank, played at the expense of a predatory publisher. Astronomer [Dominique Eckert](#) submitted the joke paper "Get me off Your Fucking Mailing List" to [IOSR journals](#). The paper consists of "[get me off your fucking mailing list](#)" repeated hundreds of times.

While one cannot fault the paper for clarity of expression, it isn't suitable for an academic journal. But less than a week after Eckert

submitted the paper, it was accepted for publication. The "reviewers comments" were "quality of manuscript is good". Manuscript handling charges were US\$75 (A\$100).

Remarkably, this isn't the first time a predatory publisher has accepted "Get me off Your Fucking Mailing List". [Peter Vamplew](#) played the same prank in 2014.

Beall planned a post on Eckert's prank for Thursday January 12, 2017, but it never happened. By then, all the content was wiped from the blog.

Why this happened isn't yet clear. The University of Colorado says it was Beall's [personal decision](#). However, [Lacey Earle](#), who has been working with Beall, tweeted that Beall "was forced to shut down blog due to threats and politics".

[@CabellsPublish](#) stands behind close personal friend [@Jeffrey_Beall](#) who was forced to shut down blog due to threats & politics [#academicmafia](#)

— Lacey E. Earle (@lacey_earle) [January 17, 2017](#)

Certainly there are many publishers and individuals who are no fan of Beall, and legal threats have been made in the past. Without a doubt, the blog has hurt some publishers' reputations and bottom lines.

Indeed, Beall's work certainly facilitated the US Federal Trade Commission charging [OMICS Group](#) with [deceptive acts or practices](#) in August 2016. [OMICS has responded](#) and described the allegations as "baseless".

Changing times

A few years ago, predatory publishing often consisted of websites with stock images and poor grammar. Sometimes journal "editors" were revealed to be [identities stolen off the web](#).

But, increasingly, predatory publishers are running academic conferences in countries around the globe, including the [US](#) and [Australia](#). Often the conferences do not live up to their hype, as Radio National's Hagar Cohen found when [she attended](#) an OMICS conference in Brisbane in 2015.

Predatory publishers are also [buying existing journals](#) in developed countries. Recently the [Australasian Medical Journal](#)'s contact details shifted from Melbourne to London, and it now shares the postal address of [iMedPub](#), an affiliate of OMICS.

Beall had been reporting this changing landscape of predatory publishing, and I suspect this is where the loss of his blog will have the greatest impact. That said, Beall's archived list will long remain a valuable resource. And perhaps most importantly, he made the community aware of the threat of predatory academic publishing.

This article was originally published on [The Conversation](#). Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Who will keep predatory science journals at bay now that Jeffrey Beall's blog is gone? (2017, January 20) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-01-predatory-science-journals-bay-jeffrey.html>

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