

UGC's approved journal list has 111 more predatory journals

Directory of Open Access Journals flags them "for suspected editorial misconduct"

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The University Grants Commission's (UGC) approved list of journals or white list appears more grey than white.

In June this year, the UGC released a revised list of 33,112 approved journals in which university/college faculty and students may publish papers. It has now come to light that UGC's revised list contains 111 potential predatory or fraudulent journals.

Last week, *The Hindu* reported that the revised list contains 84 predatory journals that are found in librarian Jeffrey Beall's (University of Colorado, Denver) list of "potential, possible, or probable" predatory journals, bringing the total to 195.

The journals from the UGC white list (45,925, including inactive journals at ugc.ac.in) were "web-

scraped" and individually "string-matched" with the list of journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) flagged as "suspected editorial misconduct by publisher".

Earlier, the same list was compared with Mr. Beall's list. An exact string match between the names of journals in the lists was taken as the criteria to flag the journal as predatory.

Of the 586 journals that the DOAJ had recently removed from its directory on grounds of "suspected editorial misconduct by publisher", the UGC list contains 114. Three of the 114 journals have an overlap with Mr. Beall's list.

By all accounts, the probability of the revised list containing more predatory journals cannot be ruled out. For instance, the UGC list has included some journals, which have all the tell-tale signs of predatory journals.

They are neither found in Mr. Beall's list nor are they among the DOAJ's rejected journals.

Malpractices aplenty

A few of the predatory journals that have been removed from the DOAJ database want the authors to assign copyright to the journals, which goes against the grain of open access, while a few others offer an e-certificate to authors of published papers and a hard copy of the certificate for a fee.

One journal also offers authors a unique payment option – by paying a registration fee of ₹3,000, authors will be allowed to publish multiple articles without paying any article processing charge. Most journals have fake impact factors (an indicator of importance of the journal in the field).

In a sting operation in late 2012, a "mundane paper with grave errors" was sent

to 167 journals included in the DOAJ database and 121 from Mr. Beall's list. While 82% publishers in Mr. Beall's list accepted the questionable paper, nearly 45% of DOAJ publishers did not reject the paper.

About six months after the results of the sting operation were published in October 2013 in the journal *Science*, the DOAJ began its mammoth exercise of removing the bad apples. The DOAJ has cleaned up its database by removing nearly 3,800 journals.

Following the introduction of new criteria for listing in March 2014, DOAJ has received 1,600 applications from Open Access journal publishers in India, which is the "highest number" in the world.

But of the 1,600, only 4% (74) were from genuine journal publishers and accepted for inclusion in the DOAJ directory.