

An experiment with predatory journals

I am certainly not alone among BAAL members in receiving requests to write articles for academic journals that I have never heard of. Typically, these journals claim to be 'refereed', with an impressively high impact factor; submissions will be 'peer reviewed' (often 'double-blind', whatever that could possibly mean in this context); decisions will be made quickly; publication will follow shortly after acceptance and payment of a fee. Requests of this kind clearly target younger scholars who need to build up their publication portfolios, and who may not be alert to the predatory purpose of the publishers involved (which is simply to extract money from the unwary).

Feeling that it might be amusing to test the quality of the 'peer reviewing', I submitted a totally nonsensical paper to six such publishers who recently approached me. It was rapidly accepted by all six. AI Publications received my submission on a Friday and replied positively, after some impressively swift peering, on the following Tuesday. My paper, I was happy to learn, would be published in the current issue of their International Journal of English Literature and Social Science three days after receipt of the publication fee of \$80. The International Centre for Promoting Knowledge were somewhat more expensive, charging \$200 for publication in their International Journal of Social Policy and Education. They were kind enough to say that the 'presentation of thoughts in this paper is notable', adding that 'The paper makes original contribution; the papers is well organised; author guidelines has been followed properly in preparing the manuscript; literature review is adequate; analysis and findings support objectives of the paper'. (I was glad that they thought the literature review was OK: I'm quite proud of my string of ridiculous invented references.) Publication in SLL Studies in Linguistics and Literature would have cost me \$300, perhaps reflecting their more rigorous criteria for acceptance: 'We use double-blind system for peer-review. The paper will be peer-reviewed by two experts, one is an editorial staff and the other is external reviewer'. One can see why such journals need articles: both kinds, in fact. The working language of these publishers is indeed generally ELF. The 'rigid reviewers' of the Innovative Journal of Language, Education and Technology judged that my submission was 'in new implicate of the literature', while Paripex Indian Journal of Research (who cite a splendid impact factor of 6.941) told me 'We opined that your paper is of utmost standard and will provide value addition to our readers'. Well, you can't say fairer than that. The American Research Institute for Human Development did actually use standard English in accepting my paper for their Journal of Education and Human Development, but then their Editor in Chief, Kathleen M Everling, is shown as holding an academic post at the University of Texas at Tyler.

The 'article' can be seen at

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:1ea9d6a0-2897-4770-a360-6fecd40cb0d2> It consists of two old spoof papers pasted together. These originally appeared in BAAL News as part of a series I once wrote, satirising some of the less perfectly earthed currents of thought that were circulating in our discipline at the time. Colleagues who like that sort of thing, and have nothing better to do, can find some of the other spoofs on my website, mikeswan.net.

Michael Swan