

Lost Science? Giving Authors of At-Risk Articles a Second Chance

Integrating research found in questionable venues into the scholarly record

Potentially valuable research is at risk of being lost

- Research that is not indexed is less visible and discoverable.
- Research that is not preserved is at risk of disappearing.

Research that appears in so called “predatory” or “pseudo” publications is neither indexed nor preserved and is therefore **at risk** of being lost.

Scope of the problem

- 2014: 8,000 questionable publications produce over 420,000 articles. (Shen & Björk, 2015)
- 2019: Cabells lists 12,000 questionable publications. (Cabells 2019)

Questionable Peer Review

- No currently agreed-upon standard definition of what constitutes a “predatory” publisher. (Cobey et al, 2018)
- General consensus that “such journals **do not provide the peer review** that is the hallmark of [...] scholarly publishing”. (Laine & Winker in WAME, 2017)
- The limited research done on author perception of peer review in questionable journals seems to contradict this, with the majority believing it had undergone peer review that was substantial, helpful or of similar quality to other outlets. (Cobey et al 2018, Cohen et al 2019, McCutcheon et al 2016)

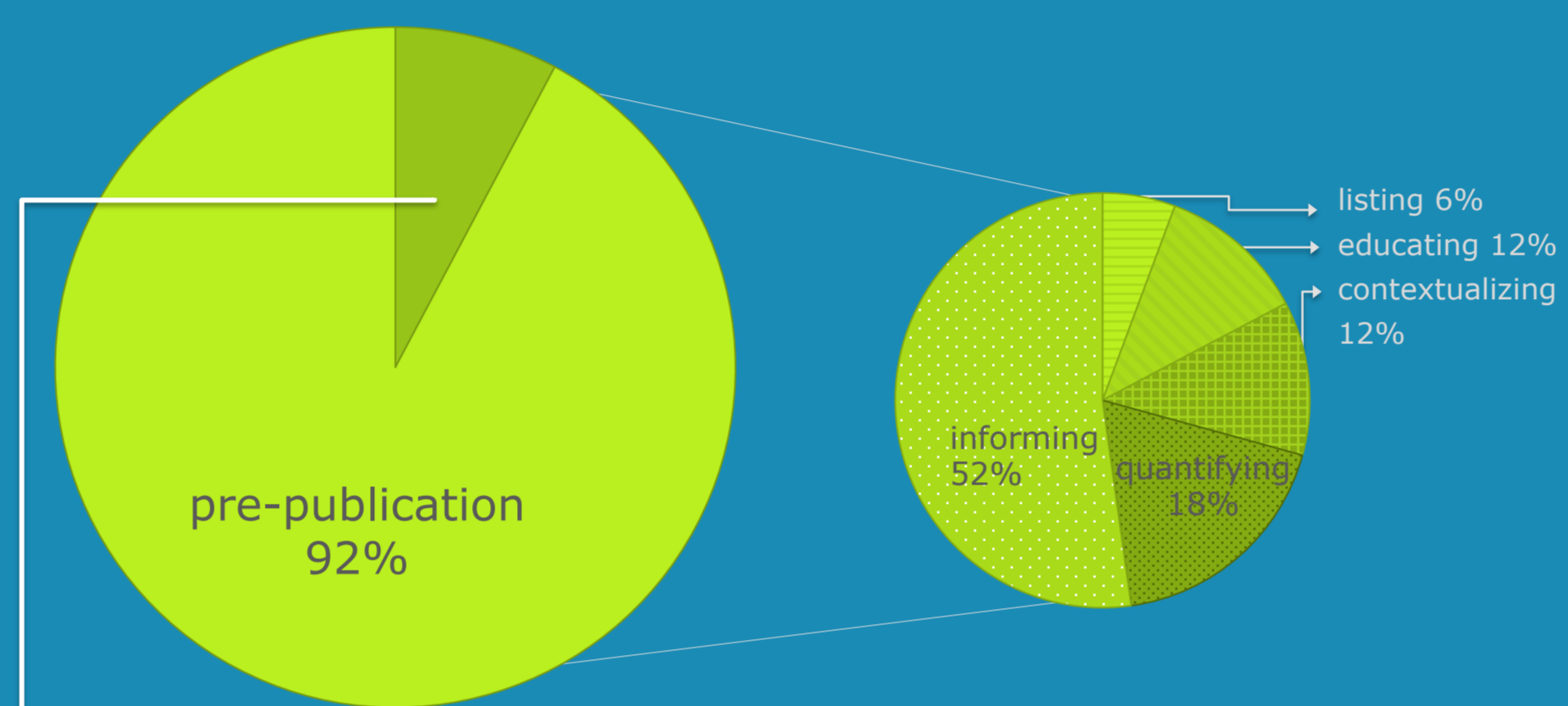
Considering potentially valuable research as **not yet validated**

Despite author perceptions, a large percentage of research in questionable venues has not been peer-reviewed.

There are common reports of authors who see their work “published” without consent, notice, fee payment, nor copyright agreement. (Bowman et al 2018, Chambers 2019, Harris 2018, Memon 2018, Witham & Runcie 2017)

Without the hallmarks of legitimate publishing must it be considered “published” research or can it be reframed as analogous to preprints: not yet validated by the scholarly research community?

The literature does not address what to do with at-risk research



92% (n = 474) can be broadly classified as articles that primarily

- inform or alert (n= 248)
- quantify scope and characteristics (n = 86)
- urge education and training to avoid (n = 55)
- discuss uses and limits of blacklists/whitelists (n = 28)
- contextualize within a broken scholarly publishing system (n = 57)

of 514 articles (2010-2019) on predatory publishing, **only 8% discuss the article post-publication**

Retraction

Consensus that authors should retract or withdraw papers despite a noted difficulty in dealing with the original questionable venue for this course of action. (Balehegen 2017, Dadkhah 2016, Fiala et al 2019, Harvey 2017, Memon 2018)

Submitting to a new journal

Proposed that after retraction, the article could be submitted to a new journal. (Dadkhah 2016, Harris 2018, Kojima 2017, WAME 2017) However, this solution is not universally accepted. (Bowman 2018)

Acknowledging

No consensus as to whether and how these publications should be listed on an academic CV. (Moher et al 2017, da Silva & Tsigaris 2018, Cappell 2015)

Open and/or Post-Publication Peer Review as a Solution

Authors whose legitimate research was not peer-reviewed could post it to an open peer review system with acknowledgement of its previous “publication”

What about copyright?

Most discussions regarding retraction and republication hinge on whether or not a copyright transfer agreement has been signed. (COPE, Kojima 2017) This misses a key feature of open access publication: that the copyright remains with the author.

As long as the article is under a CC-BY license and the place of first “publication” is cited, there is no reason under a copyright framework that this would not be permissible.

What about publication ethics?

WAME, COPE, & ICMJE address duplicate publication under an ethical framework of deception on the part of the author; transparency about the initial “publication” resolves this issue.

WAME guidance suggests that “authors whose legitimate research was published in predatory journals should have a mechanism for submitting [...] to a legitimate peer reviewed journal”. (Laine & Winker, 2017)

No ethical publication guidelines currently exist on posting a retraction and requesting open peer review. WAME, COPE & ICJME should consider this solution.

Next Steps

Investigate open and post-publication peer review venues

- Disciplinary focus and benefit to the community
- Submission policies, cost, and access
- Preservation status and discoverability

Get in touch!

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