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ІНСТИТУТ НІМЕЦЬКОЇ МОВИ (НІМЕЧЧИНА)  
ДЕРЖАВНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ САН-ПАУЛУ (БРАЗИЛІЯ)  
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# **Документно-інформаційні комунікації в умовах глобалізації: стан, проблеми і перспективи**

**МАТЕРІАЛИ  
VI МІЖНАРОДНОЇ НАУКОВО-ПРАКТИЧНОЇ КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ**

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**м. Полтава**

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**Віктор Чернишов**  
**м. Полтава**

## **PREDATORY PUBLISHING: A CRUCIAL ACADEMIC ISSUE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

*Introduction.* For about last thirty years academic landscape have been undergoing crucial changes. An immense grows and development of electronic databases, introduction of new technologies in education (such as *e.g.* e-learning) and other innovations brought overwhelming changes and raised a number of new issues, challenging not only particulars of national educational systems, but the very essence of academic activity as it had been known for centuries.

Among the manifold contemporary academic issues, there is one of so-called *predatory publishing*. Alongside with the problem of academic plagiarism the issue

represents one of the major challenges to efficient academic and scientific development. If one may define plagiarism as the braking of academic rules on the part of an author, then the appearance of predatory publishing is the braking of academic rules on the part of a publisher. The consequences of this rule braking in both cases are far too obvious: it is the waste of resources for unnecessary publications. The publications that do not give increase of any new knowledge, but produce the informational trash, which floods into the information space, causing the data confusion.

**Definition.** The term “predatory publishing”, coined by Jeffrey Beall, was first introduced in 2010 in his *List of Predatory Publishers* (2010-2017). Initially the term defined poor quality open access journals withdrawing the article processing charges (APC). The other – even earlier – names of predatory publishing are *deceptive publishing* [1], and *write-only publishing* [6; 19].

Historical predecessor of this phenomenon was doubtlessly the *vanity publishing* [see e.g. Bernstein]. However, “vanity publishing” (or “a vanity press”) differs from the “predatory publishing” with that respect that in the former the initiative as well as responsibility entirely remains with the author, as in the case of the latter, the author him- or her-self becomes literary a victim, being partially or totally tricked and misled by the publisher.

The predatory publishers are notorious for their aggressive marketing policy: in order to sell their services, attract editorial staff, and new authors, they send a lot of junk mail. As a rule, the email and (very seldom) telephone are the only ways of communication they use.

**Origin.** The creating of predatory publishing was the response to increasing demands of academic community, which in their own turn had been provoked by the new requirements on the part of academic bureaucracy.

The new academic policy (=bureaucratic order), guided by the doctrine “publish or perish”, which had been gradually coming into power since the mid-

twentieth century, was finally and firmly established in the early 2000s [see 15]. The request to publish in order to be recognised as a scholar and member of academic community (together with the academic projects grant funding) generated a big demand for fast and undemanding publishing, which could enable the most vulnerable members of Academia (whose calling was rather to teach than to publish) remain where they had been before. The results were the appearance of the predatory publishing as well as generating of unnecessary amount of bad quality, useless publications. And as a matter of fact, which is too obvious: “Many articles in (...) science and technology journals go unread and uncited, calling into question the value of the research...” [18, p. 252].

*Academic community self-defence* (and its failure). For serious members of Academia, the issue of predatory publishing became obvious during the last years of the first decade of the twentieth century. The major outlets of the resistance against predatory press became a weekly international journal *Nature* (issued since 1869) and the blogs of a number of active members of Academia.

One of the major events became the publication by Jeffrey Beall the *List of Predatory Publishers* (2010-2017). However, seven years later, this initiative had to be shut down and the *List* was removed from the Internet due to a number of lawsuits against the author. Although, as Wadim Strielkowski observes, “it was troublesome and hardly trustworthy when it existed but the situation became even worse after it is gone” [21].

Another initiative to tackle the issue is known as the *Cabell's Blacklist*. It has been issued and edited by an analytics company from Beaumont, Texas, and branded as the «only blacklist of deceptive and predatory academic journals» [20]. The most recent *Cabells Predatory Reports criteria – Cabells Predatory Reports Criteria v 1.1* – went into effect on March 13, 2019 [8]. On July 7, 2021, it was reported that “Cabells adds journals to its Predatory Reports database continuously, with over 10,000 added to the original 4,000 it launched with in 2017” [7].

However, even this tool proves to be not as much efficient as it has been expected. The issue neither was solved nor did it disappear. So, naturally, the question may arise: what shall there be done to solve the issue or at least to minimise its impact upon Academia?

***What shall there be done?*** The major problem with predatory publishing, as I see it, is that they mislead the people, who are either not quite aware of why they should publish or merely follow with the flow, trying to fit the requirements of their employers, who make the publication activity an essential criterion for employed teaching staff under the “publish or perish” policy.

In the first case, all is too simple. One needs publishing as a means of formal communication with his or her fellow-professionals. Thus, in order to communicate with the colleagues one will choose a publisher read by his colleagues, unto whom (s)he addresses his or her message. That is why the number of citations and indexing are so important, as they demonstrate the true impact of the publication and possible feedbacks to it on the part of academic community and fellow-professionals.

On the other hand, in the second case, the problem is much deeper and cannot be easily solved. In order to solve it there must be systemic changes in the established academic game rules, which is, in my opinion, hardly possible in any foreseen future. The burden of necessity to publish just to add a few points to the annual report or to a CV is the most moron reason to get anything to press, but it happens now and again everywhere. Therefore, until the situation remains unchanged we are doomed for predatory publishing that meets the needs of the people who under other conditions would have never got anything to be published. Moreover, when they do, they produce nothing but the trash, good for nothing papers. So that there is nothing to do with them, but to add to an annual report or CV in hope that the bureaucrats who would be checking it are merely unaware of the true ranking of these journals and publishers.

**Conclusion.** All said enables the following conclusion:

*First*, for today the predatory publishing has become as an unalienable part of the academic landscape as metrics or citation indexes, however, in contrast with the latter, it is rather a negative side effect, which originated, so to say, in the reverse of the positive – in general – tools and processes.

*Second*, the only way to minimise the number of predatory publishing – as I can see it – is scholars’ awareness of the necessity to contribute to worthwhile publishing, and (automatically) to avoid the predatory publishing (even in the cases when it can be justified with the need to get additional points for an annual report or a potential employment).

*Third*, a very handy solution – which sounds unfortunately very unrealistic today – might have been to remove completely the requirements to publish for teaching staff – for people who are rather talented teachers than authentic scholars. That would mean to get back to the traditional standards of Academia, which a number of recent reforms have deliberately and irresponsibly broken: the reforms that led rather to less brilliant results than expected.

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