
Promoting Libraries as Partners in Scholarly Publishing: A Needs Assessment of Faculty Knowledge & Attitudes Regarding Predatory Journals

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MiALA Annual Conference | May 13, 2019

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Oakland University (OU)

- **Located in Rochester, MI**
- **19,000 students**
- **1,200 faculty**
- **Schools & Colleges**
 - Arts & Sciences
 - Music, Theater & Dance
 - Engineering & Computer Science
 - Health Sciences
 - Nursing
 - Education & Human Services

Oakland University William Beaumont (OUWB) School of Medicine

- **Affiliated with Beaumont Health System**
- **Welcomed charter class in 2011**
 - 2011 - 50 students
 - 2019 - 500 students
- **Faculty:**
 - 40 campus-based faculty
 - 1,500 clinical faculty
- **Received full accreditation in 2015**

Background

Predatory Journals

- **Sole concern is collecting \$\$\$\$\$**
- **A few cautionary signs**
 - Unsolicited emails
 - Promise of rapid publishing
 - No or little peer review
 - No indexing
 - Unprofessional website
- **Skyrocketed in the last decade**
 - Coincided with the push for open access (OA) publishing
 - Stigmatized serious OA journals

Predatory in Perspective

- **Shen & Bjork's 2015 study examined the growth of predatory publishing since 2010**
- **Major findings included:**
 - # of active predatory journals has rapidly increased
 - Fairly linear growth in the # of articles published by these journals
 - Geographic location of publisher and publishing authors seem to favor Asia, Africa, and particularly India

Positive Finding:

Legitimate OA journals have experienced similar growth!

Why is it Important to Discuss?

- **Publish or perish environment**
 - Increase 'impact'
 - Gain recognition in our field
 - Promotion & tenure
- **Article acceptance rates are extremely low → takes years to be 'recognized'**
- **Faculty may publish in predatory journals because:**
 - Lack awareness
 - Lack experience in selecting journals
 - Pressure to publish

OU & OUWB Libraries' Initiatives

Started in Fall 2016

- Faculty Workshops
 - Medical & Graduate Student Curriculum
 - LibGuides
 - One-on-one Consultations
 - Faculty
 - Students
 - Chairs Funding Author Fees
 - OUWB: Citation Analysis Reports for P & T
-

The Research Project

Literature Review: A Gap

- **Current literature is mostly opinion-based**
 - Editorials, comments, news items in a variety of fields & in popular publication outlets
 - Meant to raise awareness of the issue

2016

Clinical & Experimental Ophthalmology

Clinical & Experimental Ophthalmology 

RANZCO  The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Ophthalmologists

Clinical and Experimental Ophthalmology 2016; 44: 666–668 doi: 10.1111/ceo.12836

Editorial

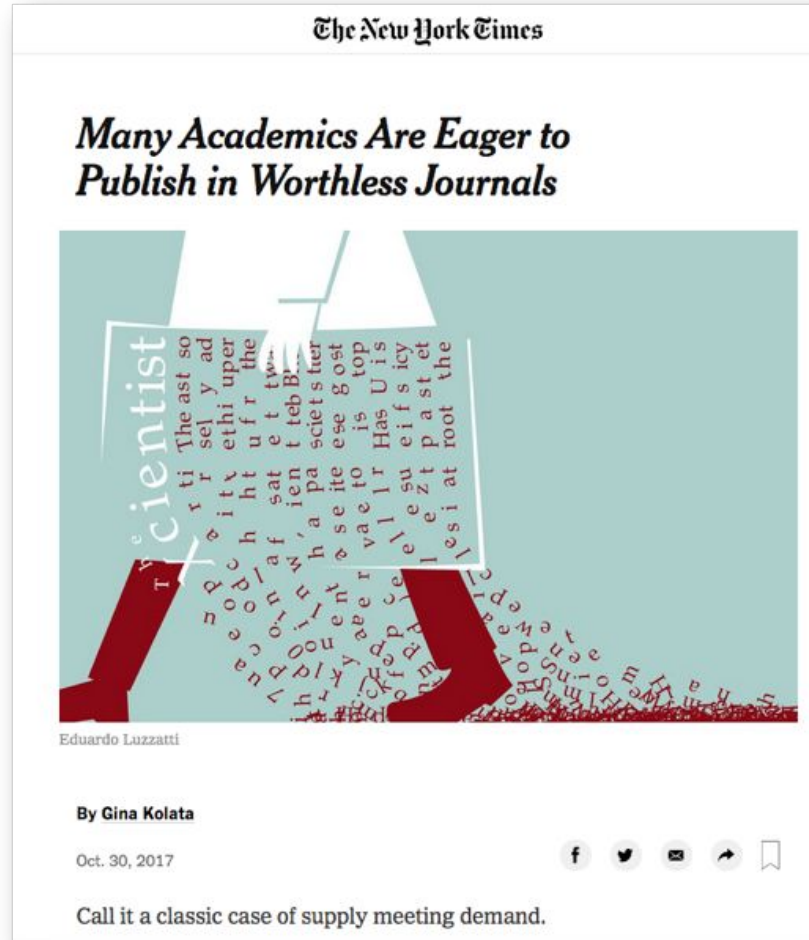
Authors beware! The rise of the predatory publisher

Phishing emails are a mildly irritating, but unavoidable part of our modern communications system. We all use spam filters and have become efficient at deleting the ones that make it through into our inbox. We know that we have not won the ‘Google lottery’, that our bank account will not be deleted unless we click the link and that there are not millions of dollars in the central bank of Nigeria just waiting to be transferred into our own bank account, if only we supply the details.

So how did these practices arise, and what is their aim? We are all aware of the explosion in the numbers of academic journals and published papers since the 1950s.⁴ This is due in part to the reliance of institutions and funding bodies on using publication data to evaluate researchers when making decisions regarding academic appointments and the awarding of research grants. Research evaluation has become a numbers game, with metrics such as numbers of publications, H-factors and Impact

2017

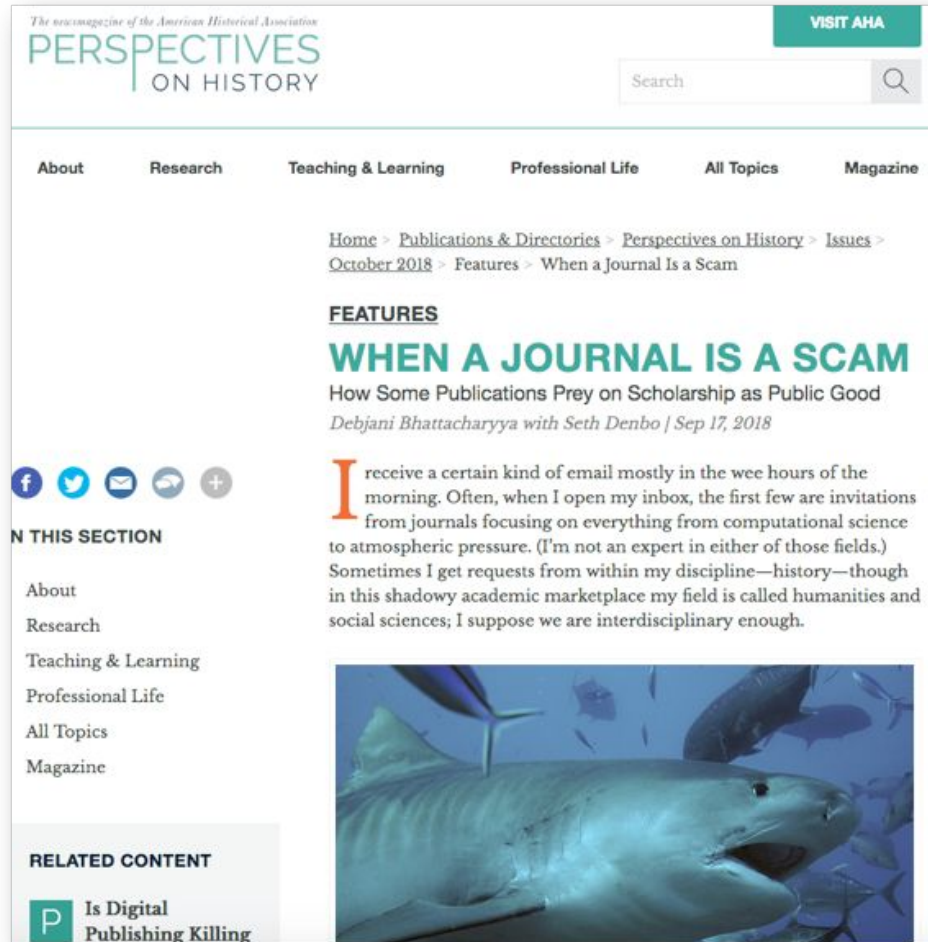
The New York Times



2018

Perspectives on History

News Magazine of
the American
Historical
Association



2019

AAMCNews

News site of the
American
Association of
American Medical
Colleges

Tuesday, April 09, 2019 | by Ken Budd, special to AAMCNews

The problem of predatory journals

The number of illegitimate journals is exploding — and they could hurt your career. Here's how to avoid falling prey.



Roughly 12 times a day, Kurt Albertine, PhD, deletes emails from suspicious journals inviting him to submit articles. The invitations are from predatory journals: Publications that charge authors steep fees for publishing, use deceptive solicitation tactics, and sidestep or shortcut the peer-review process. Some of the emails are obviously bogus — Albertine, editor-in-chief of *The Anatomical Record*, says they occasionally bear the grammatical errors of phishing scams — but others are more convincing. One of



The problem of
predatory journals

April 09, 2019



Managing pain
differently: A look
at alternative
therapies

March 26, 2019



Left to their own
devices

March 22, 2019

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RELATED RESOURCES

- [Open Access Journals: Promise, Perils, and Pitfalls](#) *Academic Medicine*
- ["Predatory" versus trustworthy journals](#) *Elsevier.com*
- [Predatory journals recruit fake editor](#) *Nature*

Literature Review: A Gap

- **Many studies have been conducted on faculty attitudes related to *open access in general*** (Rodriguez 2014; Cusker & Rauh 2014; Rowley et al. 2017; Zhu 2017)
- **Few studies have been conducted on *predatory journals specifically***
 - 2015 - Survey assessing *veterinary & medical author* knowledge of predatory publishing during scientific writing workshops (Christopher & Young 2017)
 - 2018 - Interviews with *international authors* investigating why they publish in predatory journals (Kurt 2018)

Research Questions

1. What do OU and OUWB faculty **know** about predatory journals?
2. To what extent can they **identify** a predatory journal, based on its website?
3. What are their **attitudes** towards these journals?

Developing & Disseminating the Survey

Survey Design

- **20 question Qualtrics survey on:**
 - Knowledge
 - Attitudes
 - Demographics
- **All questions voluntary, except screening questions**
- **Project approved by IRB**
- **Pilot tested by faculty and revised**



Image: Survey Research Books by Jtneill, Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org (public domain)

Disseminating the Survey

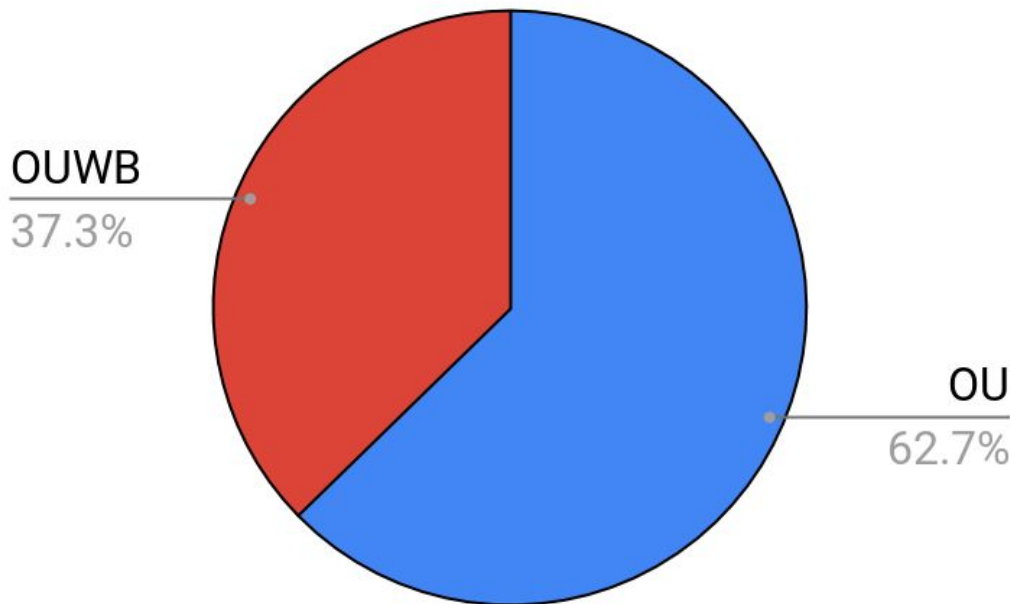
- **Inclusion criteria:** any OU or OUWB faculty member
- **Recruited via email solicitation**
 - Sent to faculty by OU Provost Office & OUWB Office of the Dean
 - Initial invitation: Feb. 2019
 - Reminder: Apr. 2019

Results

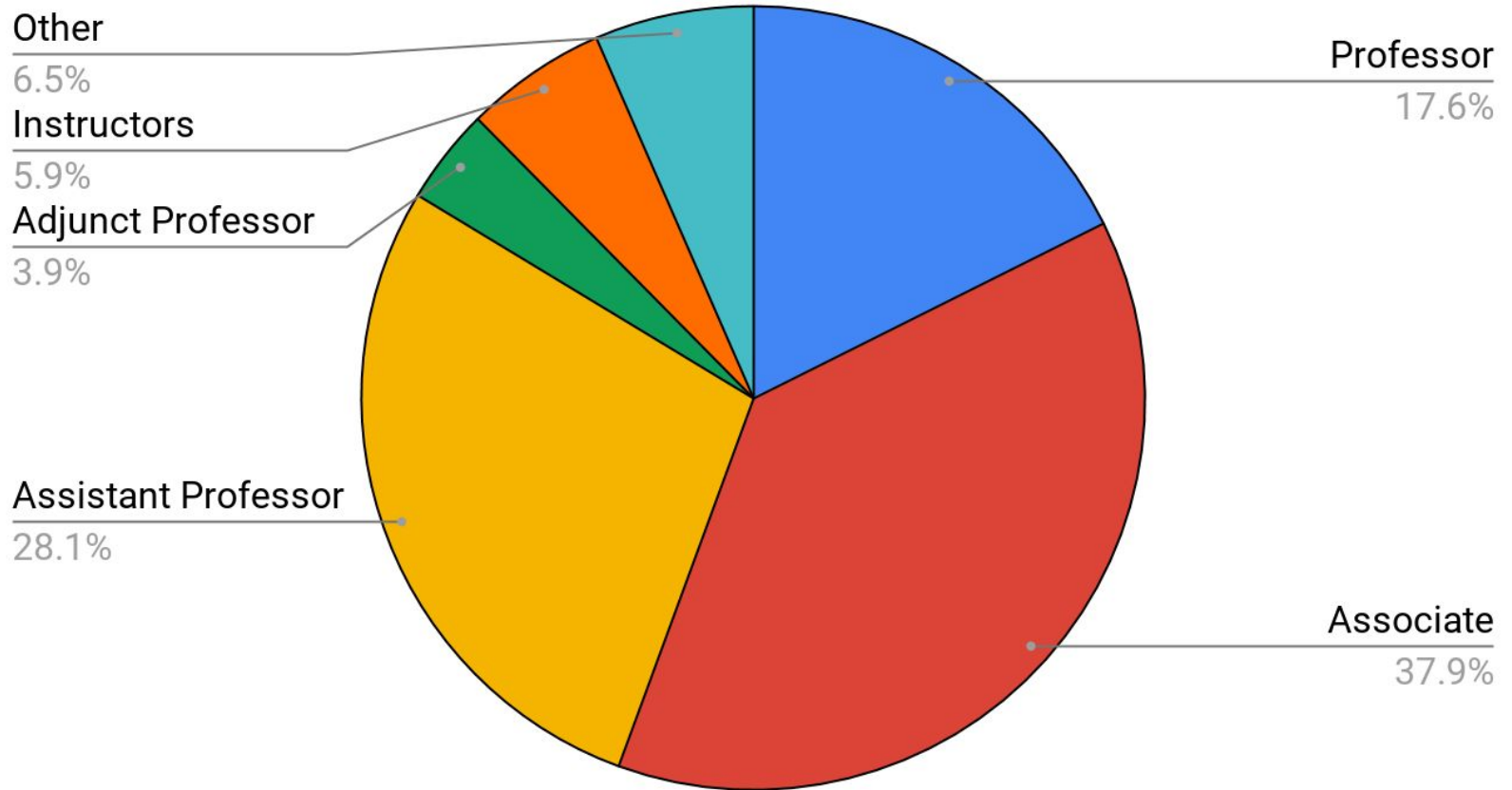
Demographics

- **Total # of responses = 189**
- **3 excluded as non-faculty**

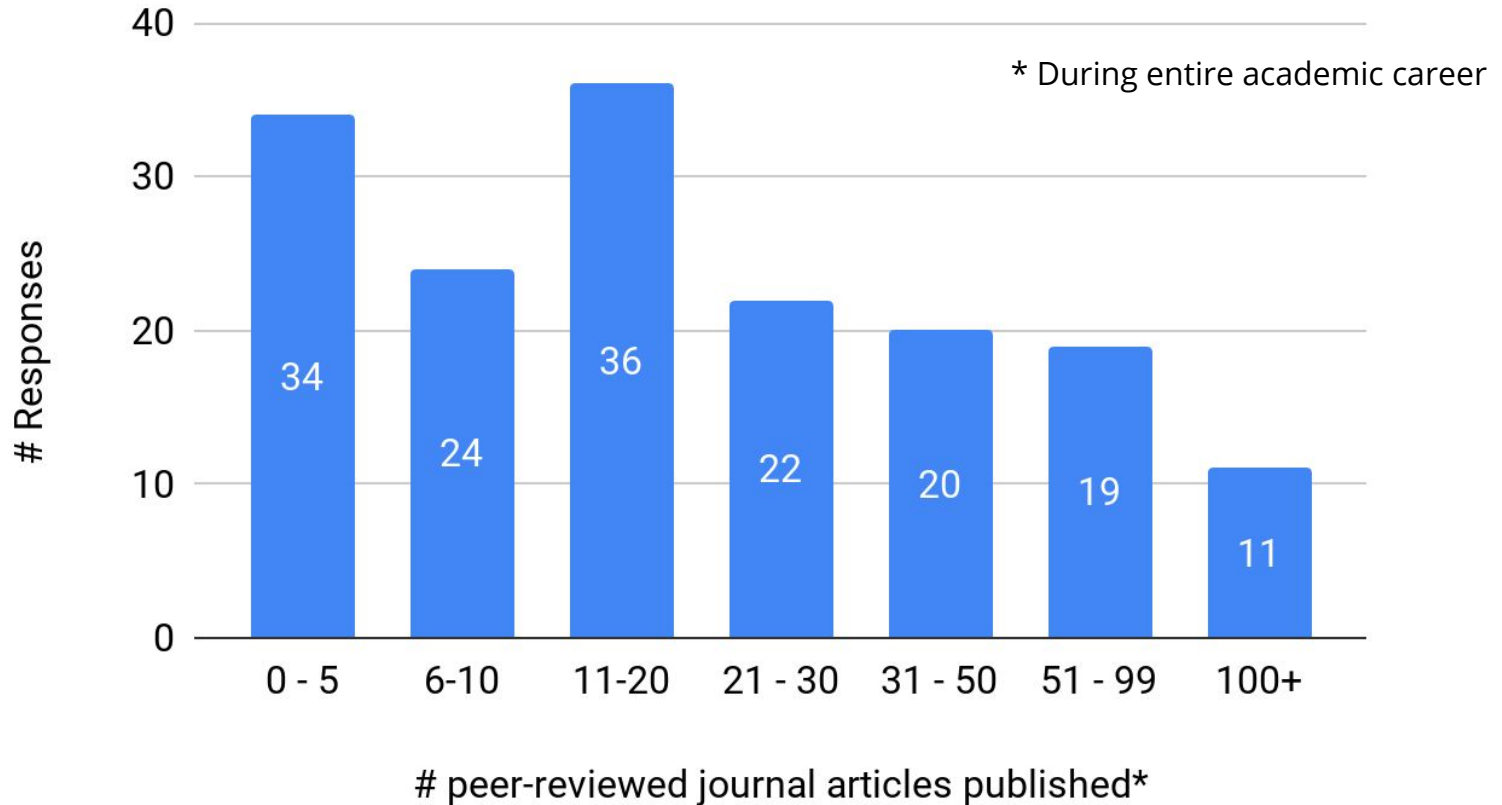
What is your affiliation?



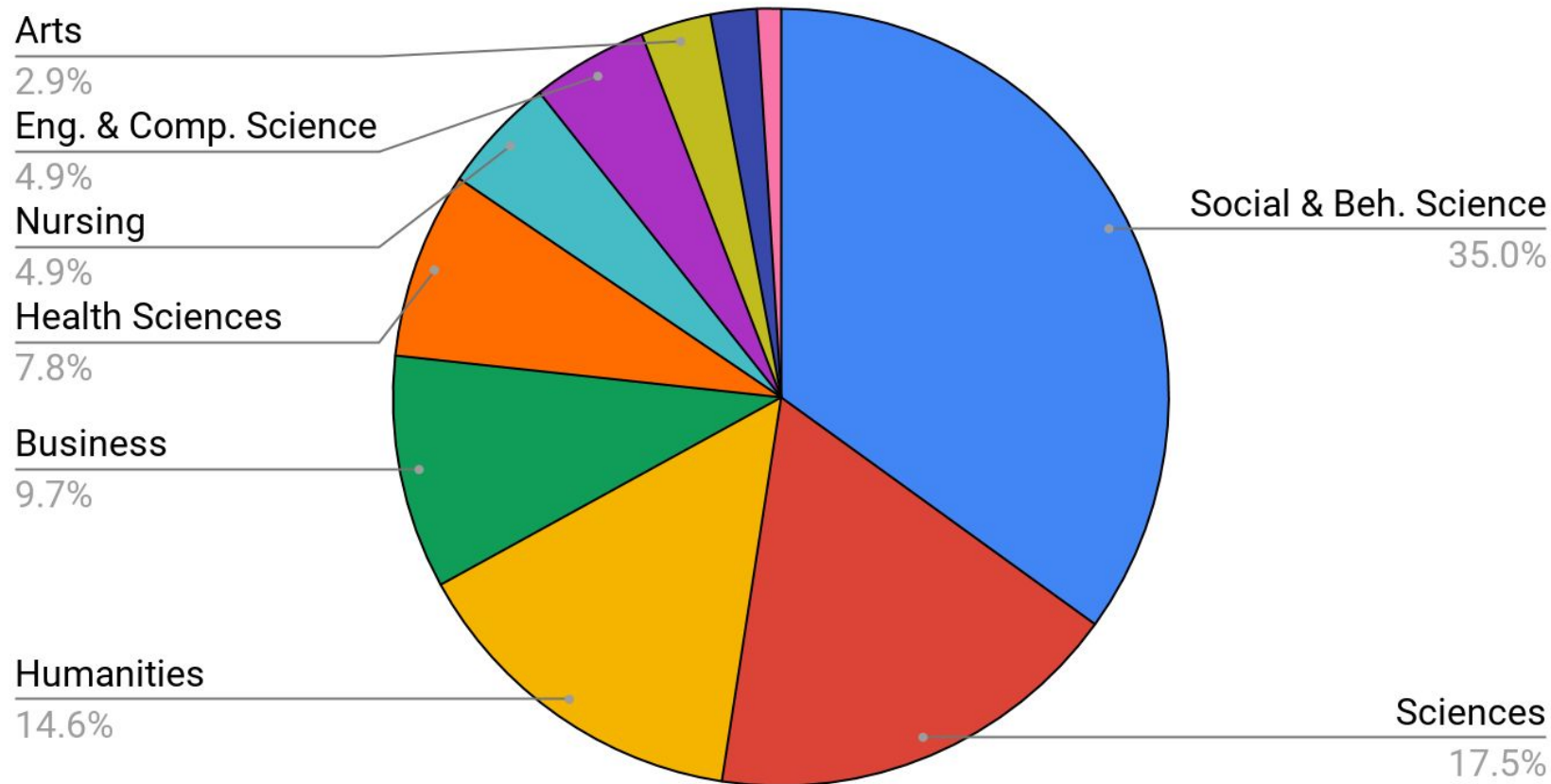
What is your current rank?



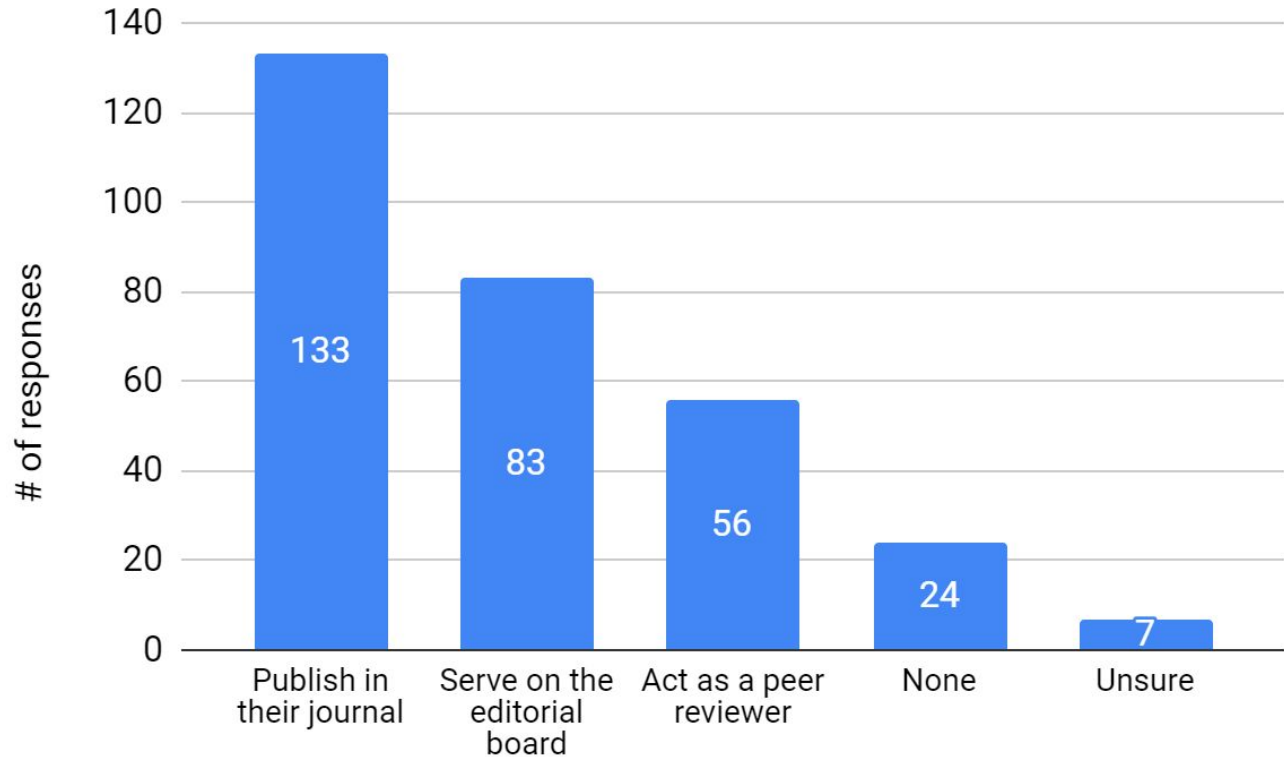
How many peer-reviewed journal articles have you published?



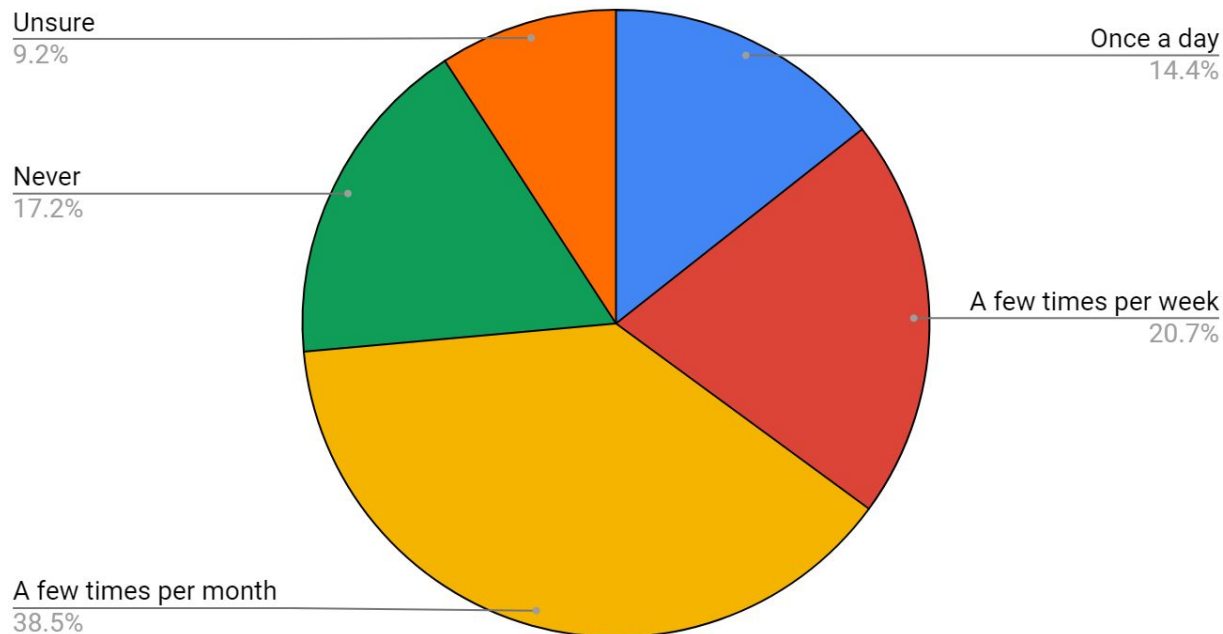
OU Faculty: What is your general area of study?



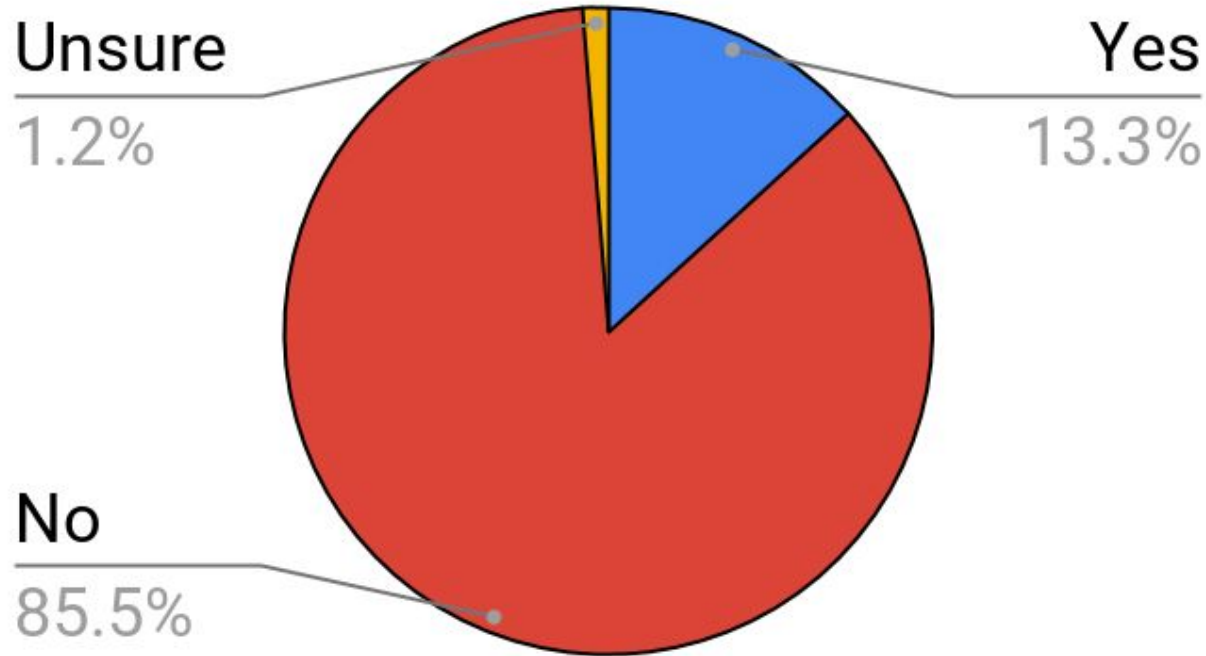
Which of the following roles has a predatory journal approached you about?



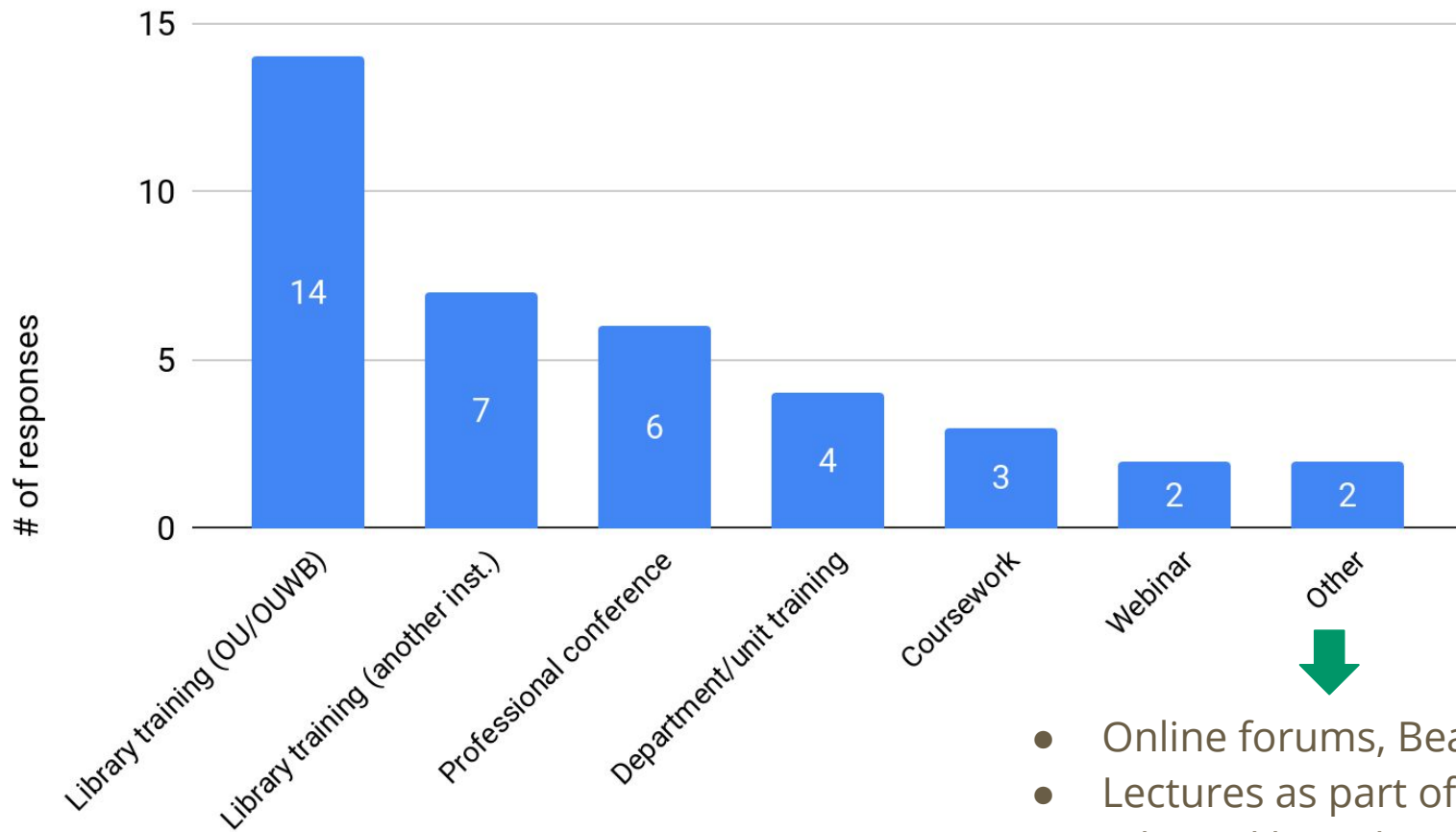
**In the past month,
how often have you
received
solicitations to
submit an article to
a predatory
journal?**



Have you previously received any training on predatory journals?

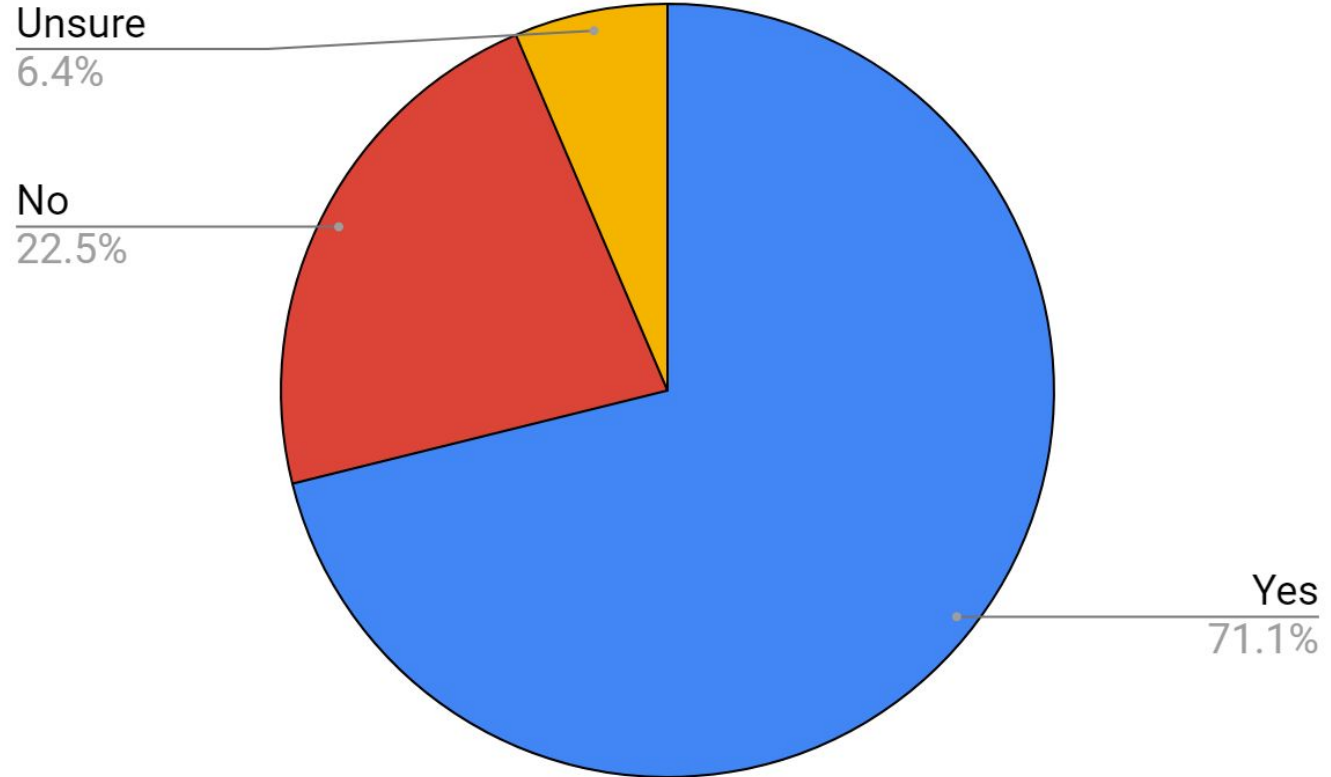


What type(s) of training did you receive? (Select all that apply)

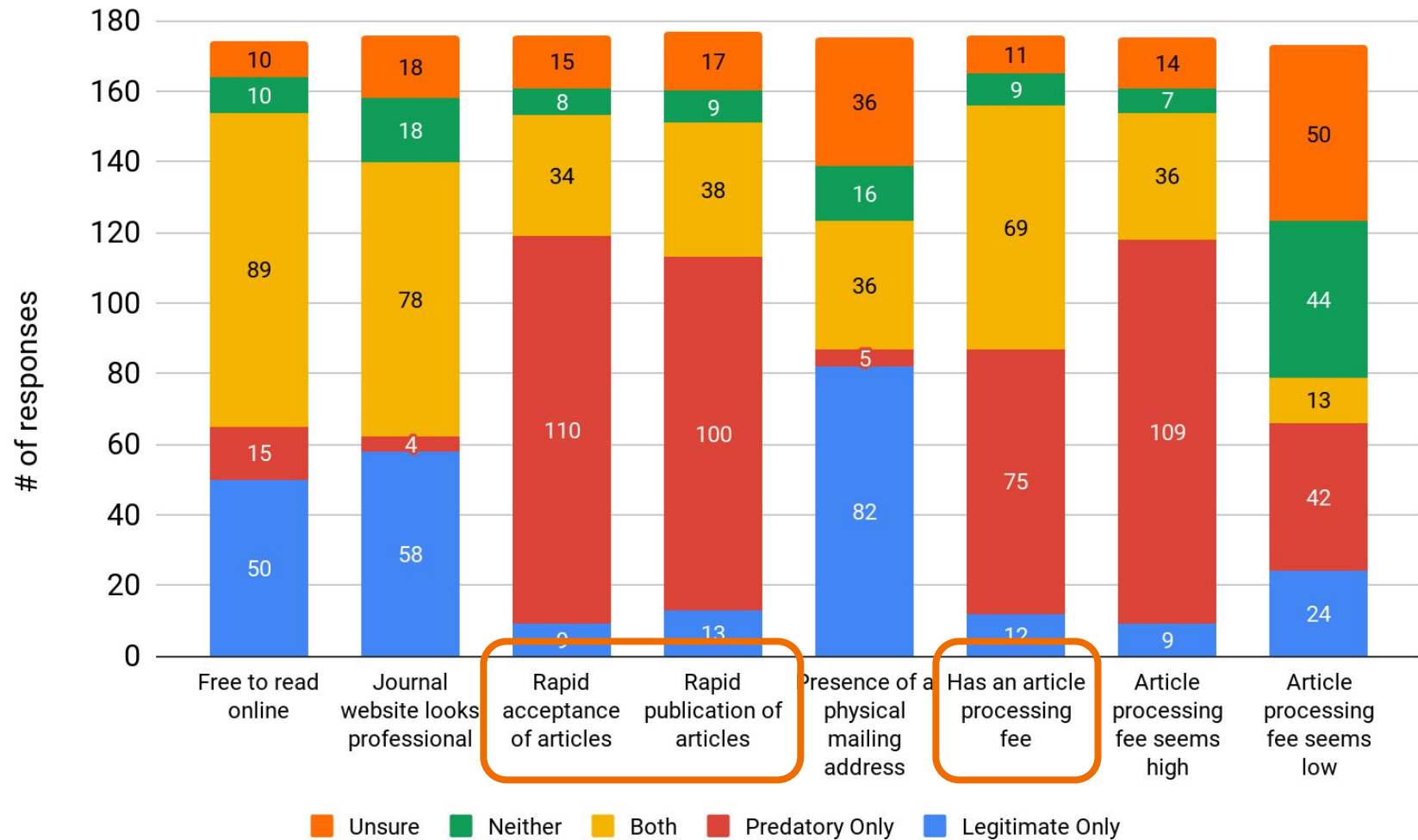


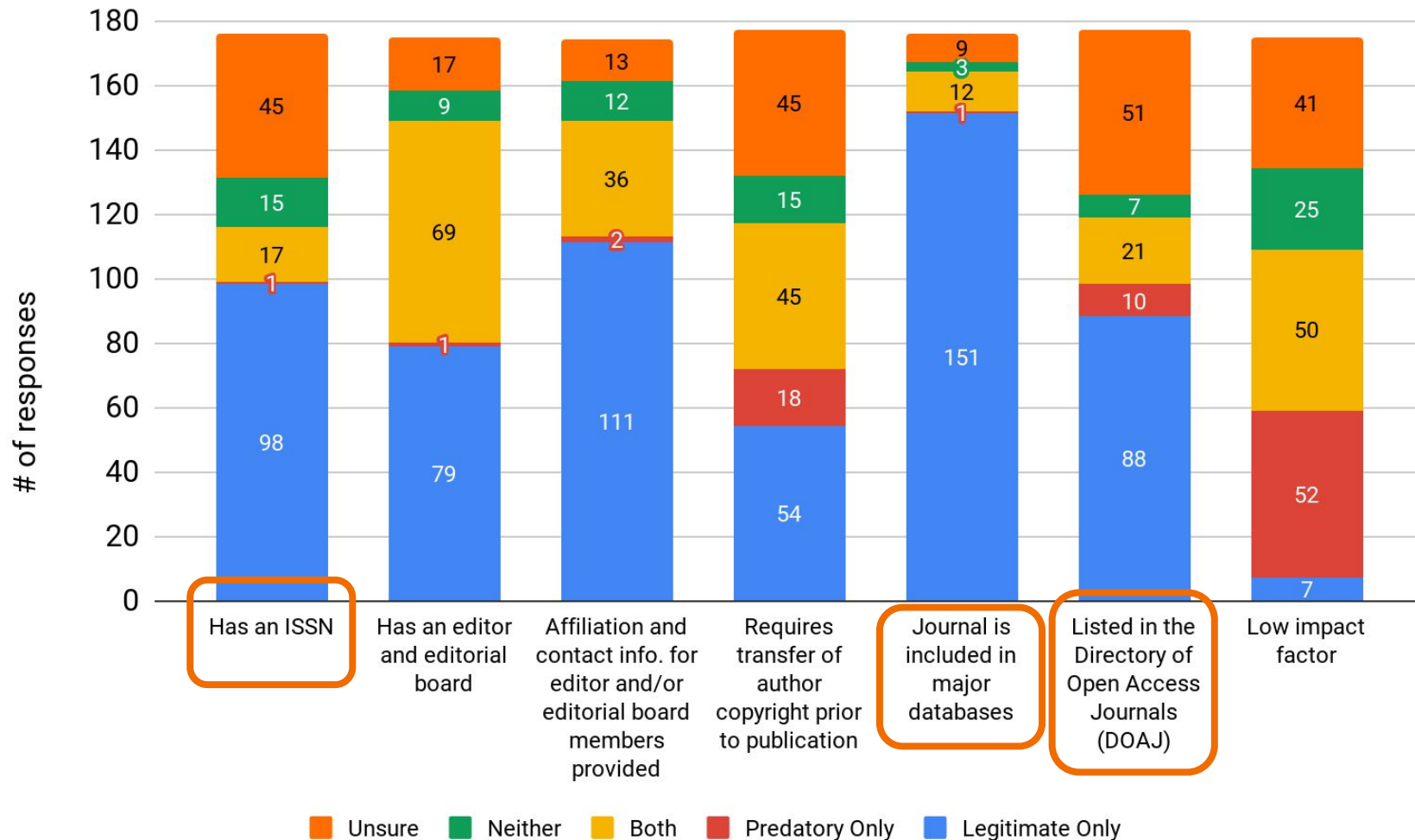
Knowledge of Predatory Journals

Have you previously heard of the term 'predatory journal'?



For each of the following characteristics, indicate whether you would associate it with a *legitimate OA journal*, *predatory OA journal*, *both*, *neither*, or *unsure*.





Choose Your Adventure: Identifying a predatory journal

Select the field of study in which you would feel the most comfortable in assessing the quality of a journal:

Art

Humanities

Medicine & Health Sciences

Sciences

Social Sciences

The screenshot below shows the homepage of the *Science Publishing Group BioMed* journal website. Take a few minutes to review and evaluate the journal website by clicking the following link: <https://spg.ltd/spg/spg-biomed/> You will then be asked to decide if this journal is predatory.



JOURNALS ↓ AUTHOR CENTER ↓ SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT

SPG BioMed

Aims & Scope

SPG BioMed publishes research and reviews in medicine, biology, and public health. The journal focuses on publishing influential research that advances clinical medicine or policy.

Peer-Reviewed: Yes
Frequency: Monthly
Open Access: Yes
Editorial Board: [Link](#)

Recent Articles

Title	Download
Autologous Stem Cell Transplant in the Era of Bortezomib-Based Induction for AL Amyloidosis – A Single Institution 11 Year Experience	PDF
ADDITIONAL MECHANISMS BY WHICH NON-TARGETED GENES COMPENSATE FOR SPECIFIC GENE THERAPY DIRECTED TOWARDS BCL-2 IN A PROSTATE CANCER MODEL A Summary	PDF
Care-seeking patterns for common pediatric illnesses: A mixed methods study in rural Guatemala	PDF
Detecting Frequency from Randomly Sampled Data Implementation of random sampling in BRATUMASS	PDF
Severe multiple injuries caused by gender based violence: a case report	PDF



Science Publishing Group
Auf der Mauer 8
8001 Zurich, Switzerland

About SPG

[About](#)

Resources

[Author Center](#)

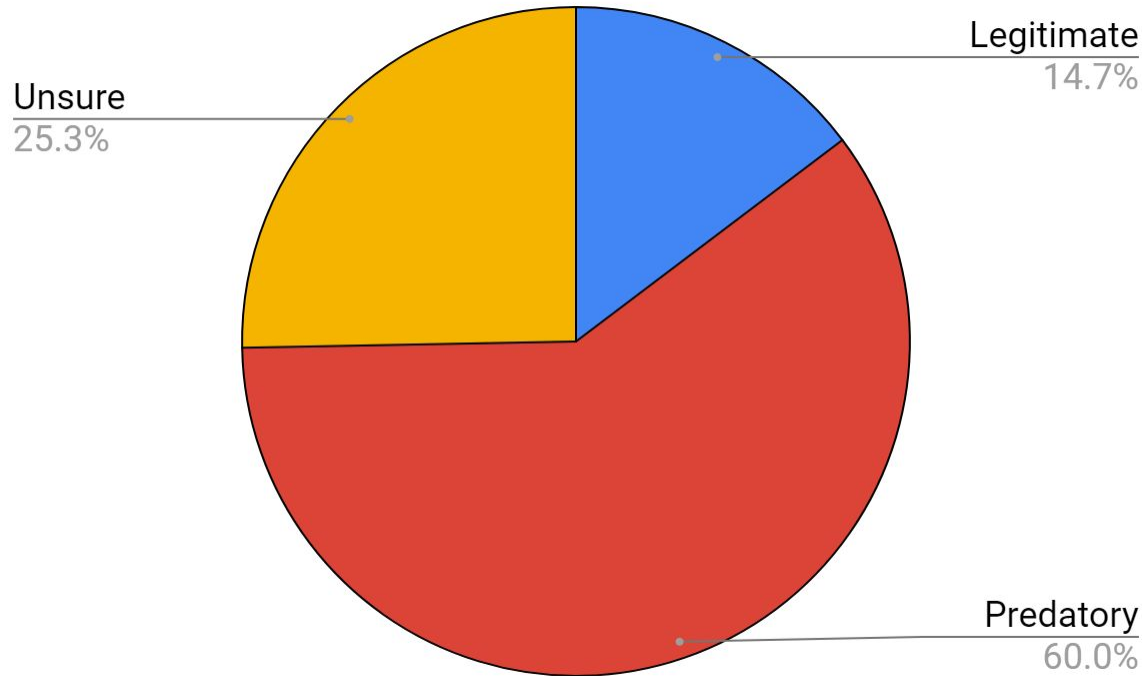
In your opinion, is this open access journal legitimate or predatory?

Legitimate

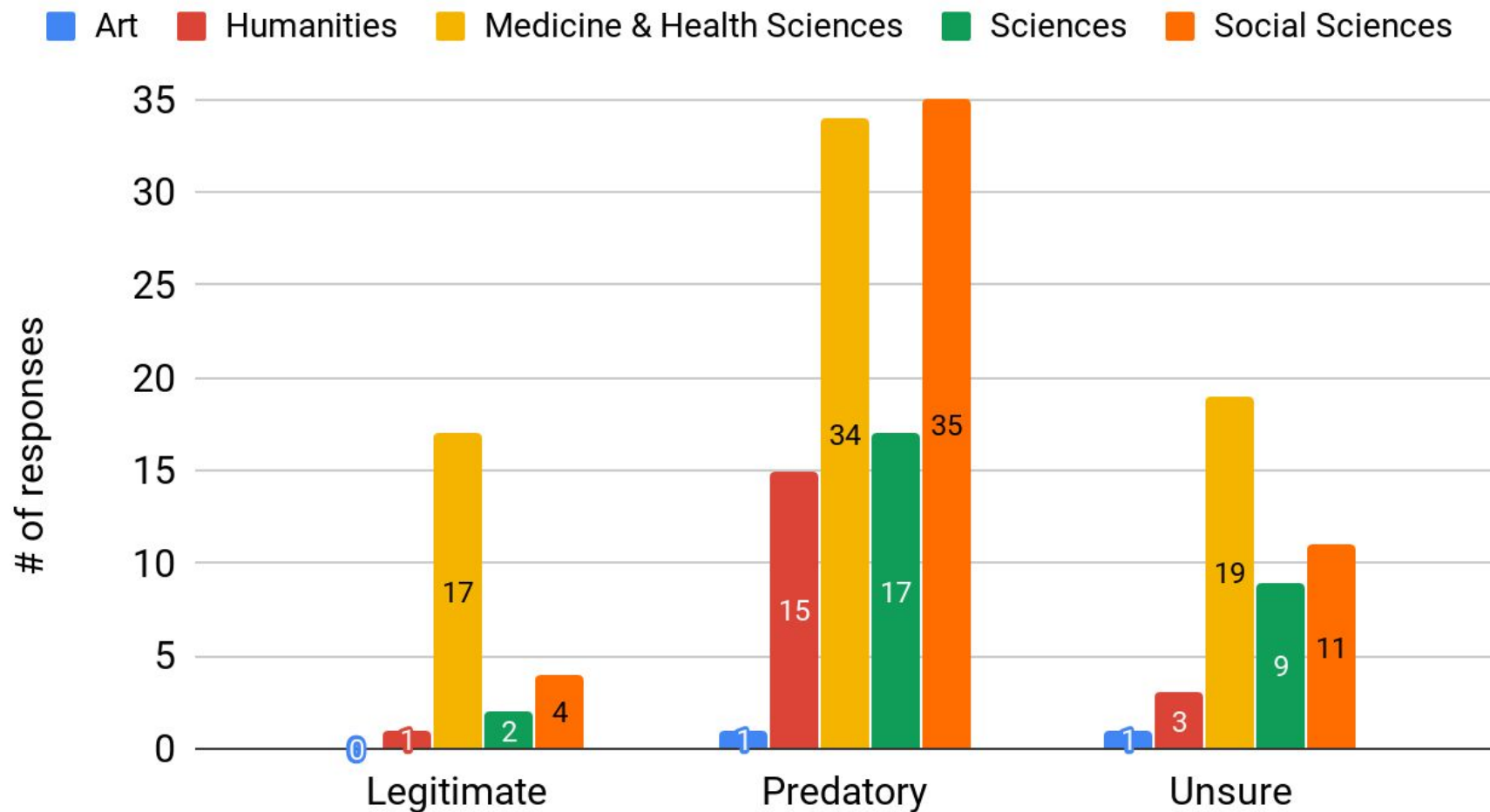
Predatory

Unsure

In your opinion, is this open access journal legitimate or predatory?



However, **83.2%** strongly agree or agree with the statement: **"I feel confident in my ability to assess journal quality."**



Why did you determine that this journal...

..is predatory?

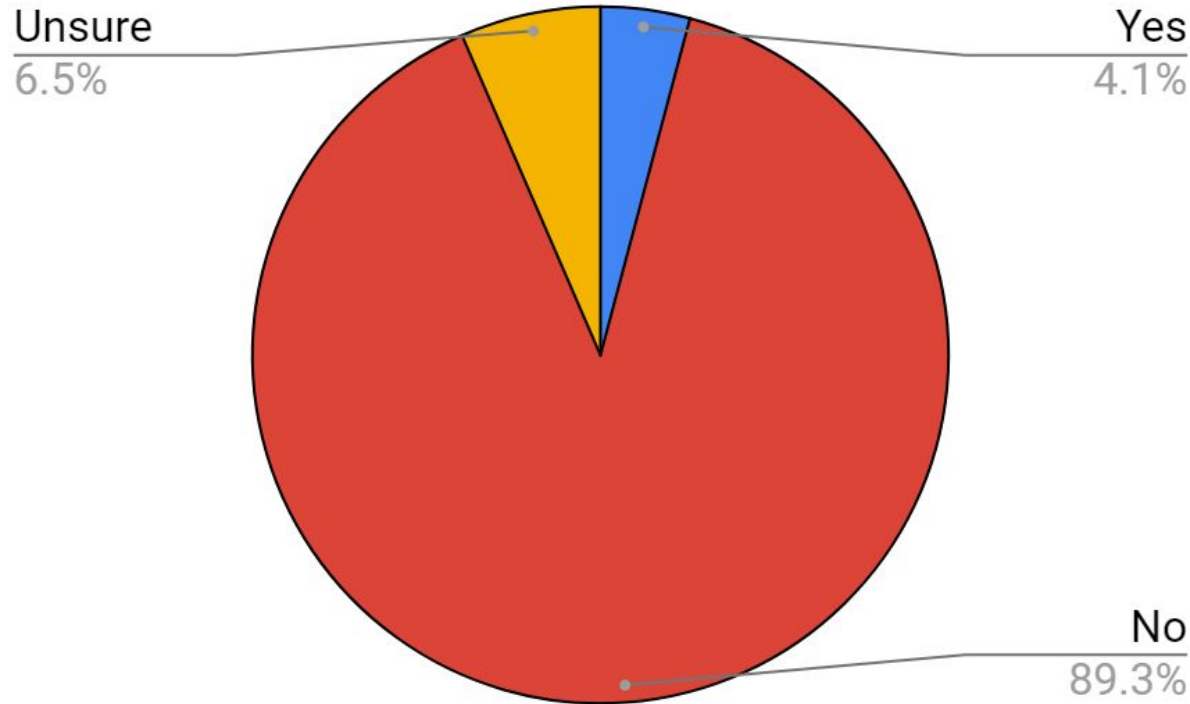
- One journal only accepts **bitcoin as payment**
- Promise of **rapid review & publication**
- **Too broad of a scope**
- **No or missing info** about editorial board
- Mention **social media** platforms

..is legitimate?

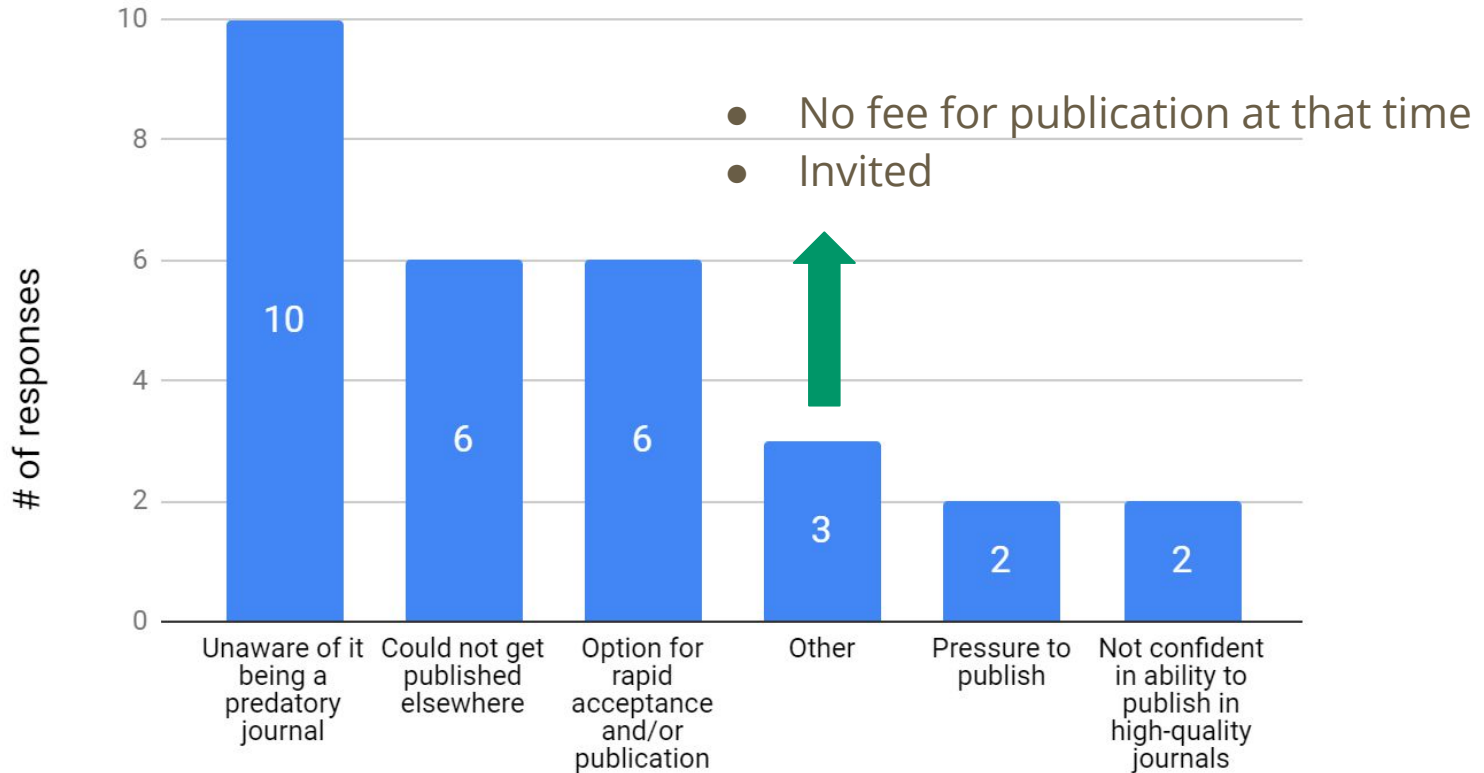
- Has an **ISSN**
- **Peer review process** described
- Articles have **DOIs**
- Has **impact factor**
- **Editor/editorial board** named
- **Website** appears legitimate

Attitude Towards Predatory Journals

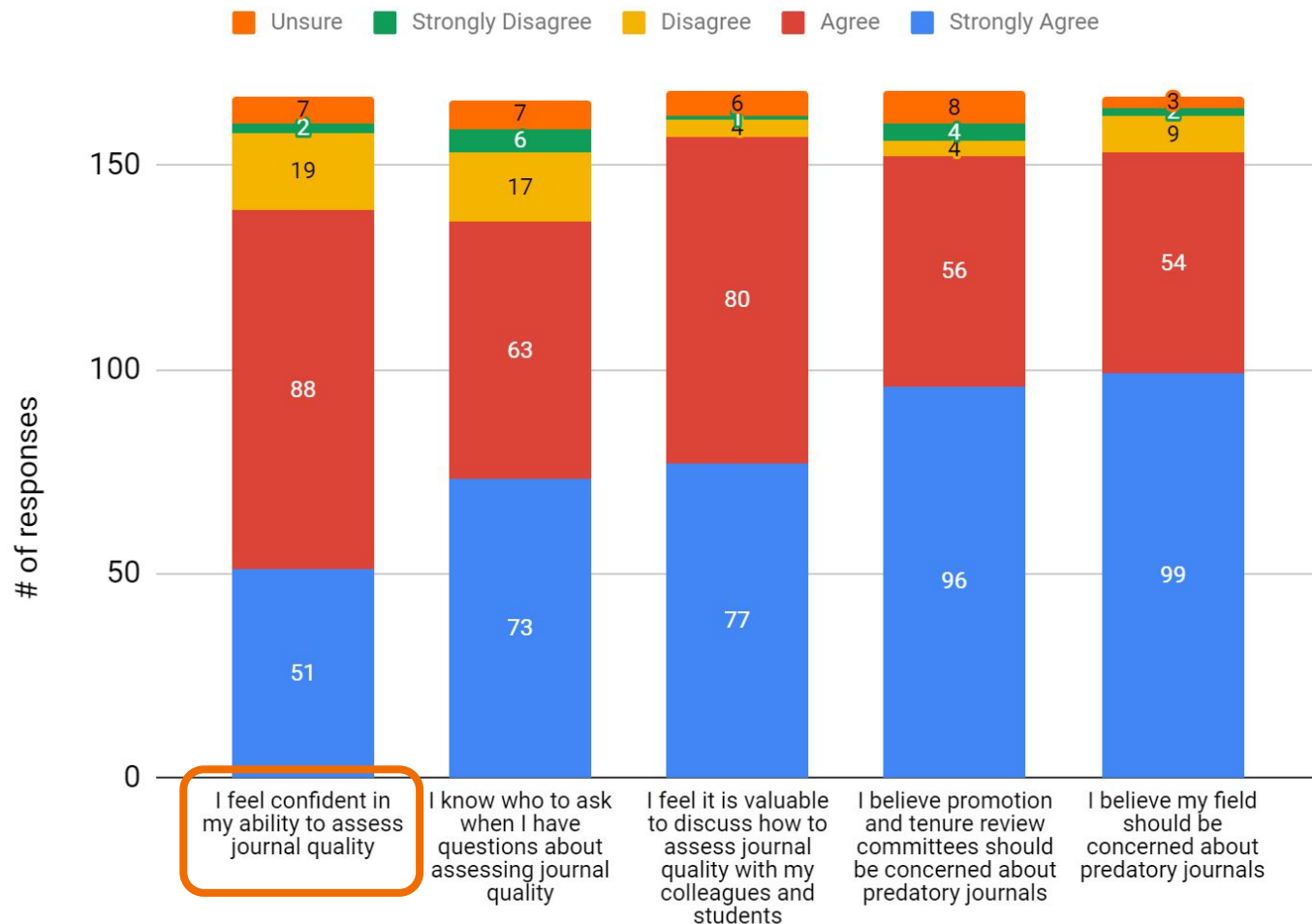
Have you previously published in predatory journal?



Why did you publish in a predatory journal? (Select all that apply)



Rate your agreement with these statements



Confidence in Ability to Assess Journal Quality

Why are you confident?

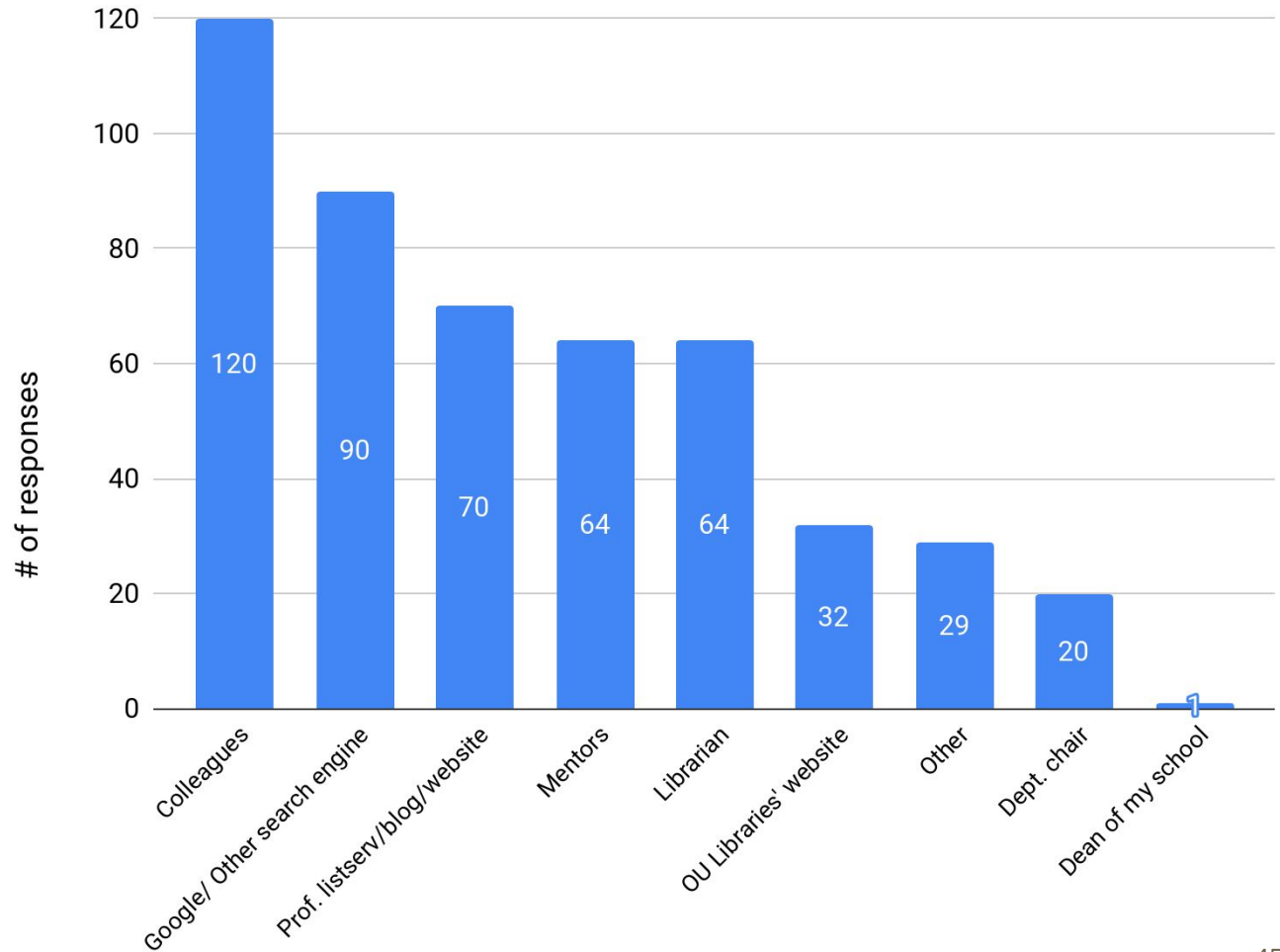
- **Know reputable journals** in my field
- **Experience** - as a researcher, peer reviewer, editor, etc.
- **Know which resources** to use online to assess journals
- **Research a journal** before submitting to it
- **Workshop or consultations** with librarians

Why are you *not* confident?

- Predatory journals are **becoming more sophisticated** or harder to spot
- **Lack of experience or education**
- **Lack of trust** in OA model
- **Proliferation** of journals - both legitimate and predatory

Currently, what resources do you use to assess journal quality?

(Select all that apply)

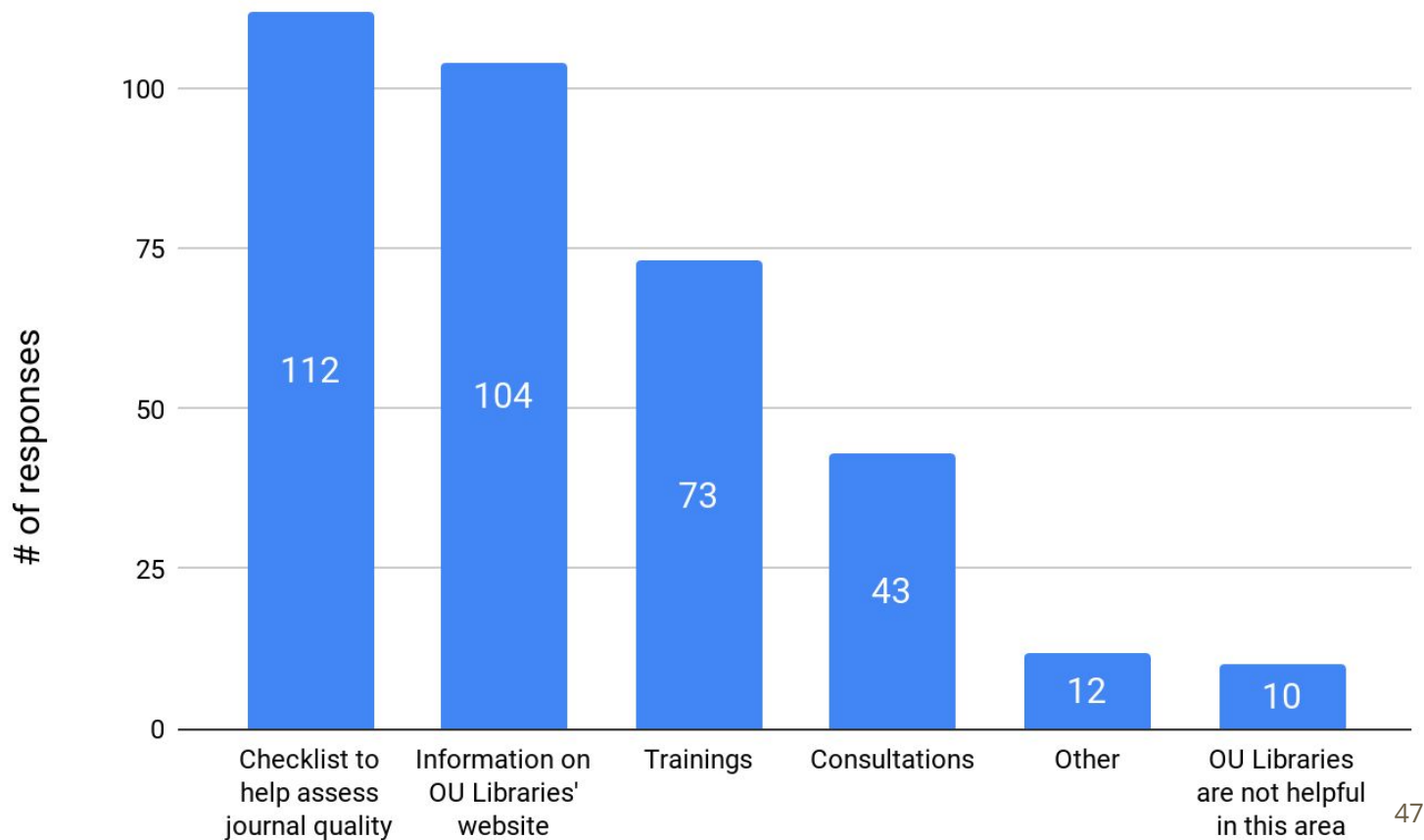


Other resources used

- Scimago Journal Rank (SJR)
- Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)
- Professional orgs
 - Journals published by them
 - Info provided by them
- Scholarly databases
- Journal website
- Beall's List
- Cabell's
- ResearchGate
- Training during graduate school
- Impact factor & other metrics
- Journal/Author Name Estimator (JANE)

How can OU Libraries assist you to assess journal quality?

(Select all that apply)



Other comments

- “I think this is a big issue that frankly **scares me** and has the **potential to undermine our legitimacy as researchers.**”
- “I appreciate knowing that such journals exist and will look closely when **advising my students.**”
- “I have found the **OU librarians invaluable in assessing the legitimacy of online journals.** Training in this area should be part of the curriculum for all medical students, residents, and fellows.”

Other comments

- “I likely **receive 20-30 solicitations per day** from journals requesting my participation as either contributing author or reviewer.”
- “This is an important issue for **academic integrity, merit pay, and promotion & tenure decisions.**”
- “Having a **module to train graduate students** on how to identify predatory journals would be fantastic!”

Other comments

- “I'm happy to see that the university is looking into this. Given the increasing importance of number of publications published for tenure, it becomes more likely that desperate junior faculty will succumb to predatory journals. Frankly, that is becoming **more of an issue across all faculty levels** - especially with the current merit system.”
- “Wow, I had never heard of predatory journals so I am glad that this survey called the issue to my attention... I will **now pay closer attention** to whether colleagues of mine are publishing in these kinds of outlets.”

Takeaways

Future Directions

- **Further analysis of data**
- **Share results widely**
 - Library administration and faculty
 - OUWB administration
 - OU administration
 - OU Research Office
- **Publish article**

Future Directions

- **Survey = educational needs assessment for faculty & promotes librarian expertise in assessing journal quality**
- **Use results as impetus for targeted trainings:**
 - Start conversations with chairs
 - Faculty development workshops
 - Webpage dedicated to predatory publishing
 - Create organized awareness campaign
 - Others?



Image: Hyde County Schools, <https://www.hyde.k12.nc.us/Page/108>, (copyrighted)

Lessons Learned

- **Process of conducting a needs assessment**
 - Who are you trying to reach?
 - Who can you partner with to reach this audience?
 - What policies/procedures do you need to follow to accomplish this?
- **Need IRB approval or not?**
- **Establishing realistic timeline**



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