Predator —Predatory Publishing の 1 例—

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In previous articles, we have covered different aspects of publishing ethics. We will explore this further by introducing real and specific cases in publication ethics that were presented to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) ¹⁾ and discussed by its council members, with a full translated version in Japanese to increase understanding.

The topic of this first case is predatory publishing. Predatory publishing refers to open access journals which actively solicit manuscripts and charge publication fees with little or no peer review and editorial services purely for their own profit²⁾. Although this unethical phenomenon has attracted much attention, many researchers are still quite unaware of the problem and are unable to distinguish between a predatory and legitimate journal³⁾, such as in the case presented here to COPE.

Case number: 16–22⁴⁾ Withdrawal of accepted manuscript from predatory journal

Case text (Anonymised)

Our journal has been contacted by an author who would like to submit a review article. The author responded to a request for an invited review from a predatory journal without realizing it was a predatory journal. The author submitted the article only to receive an unexpected invoice and clear evidence of no peer review. The author investigated the journal and then realized the predatory nature of this journal.

To remove the submitted manuscript from this journal, the author communicated via email, phone and certified letter, and also contacted members of the editorial board, but has received no return communication. Periodically, the manuscript has disappeared from the journal's website, only to reappear in a later issue. The author never signed a copyright agreement and never paid the journal to publish the article. The author would like to have the manuscript published in a legitimate journal but does not wish to be guilty of duplicate publication.

As the former editor-in-chief of the journal, the only advice I could offer was to contact the present editor-in-chief of the legitimate journal to which the author wishes to submit the manuscript, explain the situation and see what advice is given. If accepted and published, a statement could be included that this is the only valid version of the paper.

Question(s) for the COPE Forum

What advice can be given to the author about submitting the manuscript to a legitimate journal without the author being guilty of duplicate publication?

Advice:

The Forum agreed with the advice of the former editor-in-chief. As there was no copyright transfer, the paper could be published in the legitimate journal, ideally with an editorial note on the paper explaining what has happened. Otherwise, the author may have to write off this paper to experience and lessons learned.

The Forum noted that this case highlights the importance of the Think.Check.Submit. initiative, which provides tools to help researchers identify trusted journals for their research.

Another suggestion was to threaten legal action—the predatory journal may back down if legal action is threatened.

Follow up:

The editor conveyed the Forum's advice to the author. She sent another letter via certified mail to the predatory journal, but it was returned unopened (as no one was present at the address to accept the letter). She did not threaten legal action because her university's legal counsel would not endorse that approach and she was unable to obtain a response from anyone at the journal via phone, email or certified letter in order to communicate that threat effectively. However, she then sent a message to the publisher of the predatory journal: "Immediately remove my article from your website. If you do not do so immediately, I will take legal action". The publisher responded by asking her for the article title and associated journal. The author provided this information and indicated she would proceed with legal action if the article was not removed from the journal's website by a given date. She will now proceed with submission to a legitimate journal, and the editor of the legitimate journal is comfortable that duplicate publication is no longer a problem.

Resolution: Case Closed **Year:** 2016

[日本語訳]

事例番号: 16-22 アクセプトされた原稿を Predatory Journal から取り下げる

*背景: 某ジャーナルの前編集長から COPE フォーラムへの問い合わせ

事例の内容 (匿名)

レビュー記事の投稿を希望している著者から、我々のジャーナルに連絡があった。著者は predatory journal の依頼だとは知らずに、レビュー記事の執筆を依頼されたと信じ、それに応じた。著者が記事を投稿したところ、予想外の請求書が届き、さらには査読もされていないことが明らかになった。著者は当該ジャーナルについて調べ、それが predatory journal であるとの認識に至った。

著者は、投稿原稿をこの predatory journal から取り下げるため、メールや電話や配達証明郵便経由で連絡し、また編集委員会のメンバーとも連絡を取ろうと試みたが、それらいずれに対しても先方からの返信はなかった。著者が predatory journal に投稿してしまった原稿は定期的にジャーナルのウェブサイトから消えるものの、その後再び掲載された。著者は著作権同意の書類には署名をしておらず、論文の掲載費用の支払いも行わなかった。著者はその原稿を正規の (legitimate) ジャーナルへの掲載を希望しているが、重複出版と疑われてしまうことは避けたい。

ジャーナルの前編集長である私ができる唯一の助言は、著者が投稿を希望している正規のジャーナルの編集長に連絡を取って状況を説明し、どのような助言が受けられるか様子を見ろということであった。もしアクセプトされ、掲載される場合は、その正規のジャーナルの原稿が唯一の正当なものであるとの表明を含めればよいだろう。

COPE フォーラムへの質問

著者が重複出版と疑われずに正規のジャーナルに原稿を投稿・出版することについて、著者にどのような助言ができるだろうか？

COPE からの助言

COPE フォーラムは、前編集長の助言に同意した。著作権委譲がそもそもされていないので、その論文は正規のジャーナルに掲載することは可能だろう。理想的には何が起きたかを説明する編集メモとともに掲載することが望ましい。それが可能でない場合は、著者は経験とよい勉強をしたね、とのことでこの論文をないものとして諦めなければならないかもしれない。COPE フォーラムはこのような事例では、Think.Check.Submit.initiative.というサイトを利用するのが重要だと指摘した。このサイトは、信頼できるジャーナルを見分けるのに役立つツールを提供している。別の提案として、法的措置を取ると脅してはどうか、というものである。Predatory journal は、法的措置を取ると脅せば、撤退する可能性があるからである。

その後の経過

編集者は COPE フォーラムの助言を著者に伝えた。著者は predatory journal 宛にもう一度配達証明で手紙を送ったが、その宛先には受取人が誰もおらず、未開封のまま著者に返送された。法的措置を取るという方法は、著者が所属する大学の法律顧問が是認せず、電話、メール、配達証明郵便のいずれの手段によってもジャーナルからの返答が得られなかったため、見送った。代わりに、著者は predatory journal の出版社宛に「貴社のウェブサイトから私の記事を速やかに削除しない場合、法的手段に訴えます」とのメッセージを送った。それに対し出版社から、ジャーナル名と記事のタイトルの問い合わせがあったため、著者はそれに答え、その記事を指定日までにジャーナルのウェブサイトから削除しない場合には、法的手段を取る手続きをするとほめかした。著者は今、正規のジャー

ナルへの投稿を進めており、そのジャーナルの編集者は、もはや重複出版の問題はないと確信している。

決議：解決済 年：2016 年

The main points we would like to point out from this case are the following: 1) the author responded to a request for an invited review from a predatory journal without realizing it was a predatory journal; 2) the author contacted members of the editorial board, but has received no return communication; and 3) the author wants to remove the submitted manuscript from this journal and submit it to a legitimate journal but does not want to be accused of duplicate publication.

The most efficient way for authors to protect themselves from predatory publishing is to become familiar with the characteristics of those predatory journals⁵⁾. Predatory journals frequently send emails, encouraging authors to submit an article, or invite them to do so³⁾.

As we mentioned in our previous article, authors need to check up on the journal they are submitting to before actually doing so. This can be done by visiting the journal's website. If the journal is legitimate, the website should clearly state the aim and goals of the journal, the journal's peer review policy and process, members of the editorial board, instructions to authors regarding manuscript preparation, copyright transfer agreement, and any additional information such as author fees.

It is important for authors to carefully read each of these areas and look out for things that might sound too good to be true and become familiar with some of the common characteristics of predatory journals. These might include 1) no peer review or peer review in a very short period which is too quick and impossible, 2) almost no detailed guidelines on manuscript preparation, 3) aims and goals of the journal are too vague, 4) members of the editorial board do not give legitimate affiliations or contact information, 5) no explanation of copyright transfer, 6) if the journal requires author fees, the amount is not clearly stated, or too excessive, 7) author fees are not listed on the website but authors are contacted about additional fees after the manuscript is accepted, 8) the journal gives a very high impact factor that is not from a reputable index such as MEDLINE, 9) the journal title is very similar to another prominent journal to confuse the author, 10) none of your colleagues have ever heard of or submitted to the journal²⁾⁶⁾.

Of course, the utmost way for authors to protect themselves from predatory journals would be to not trust emails that are sent to you randomly, and to access directly the website of the journal you are wishing to submit to. It would also be wise before any submission to read through several recent issues of the target journal⁶⁾. This could additionally help authors to determine whether that journal is the most appropriate choice of readership for their manuscript.

Closing Message

Authors should be aware that a predatory journal may exist in name only. For example, in this case, the registered mail was returned unopened to the author because no one was present to sign for the registered mail. This indicates that it is highly possible that the journal did not really exist. Furthermore, despite the fact that the editor-in-chief of the legitimate journal gave permission to accept the submission and confirmed with the author that this would not be considered duplicate publication, there is still the possibility that a non-valid version of the submitted manuscript may exist somewhere. It is unclear as to whether the publisher or the predatory journal actually removed the article as requested by the author. Authors, especially those who have little or no experience in publishing, need to be extremely careful about invitation emails to submit articles.

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