



Blacklists vs. Whitelists

In the age of open access (OA) it is sometimes hard to distinguish between honest, genuine research journals and fake, predatory journals run by predatory publishers whose only interest is to make money and who are ready to publish anything under the APC (article processing charges) business model.

There exist several blacklists of publishers and journals with such unethical practices. There are well-known cases where the whole editorial board of a prominent journal resigns over an unethical and greedy policy of a publisher and creates another, unblemished journal. It is not uncommon for individual mathematicians and other scientists to boycott certain publishers for the same reason.

Not publishing a paper in a predatory journal is certainly a legitimate choice for any researcher. However, maintaining a public blacklist is more dangerous. It may be challenged in court and may result in heavy penalties for the author of such a list.

We think that the solution lies in whitelists in which learned societies and trustworthy individuals can endorse high-quality OA journals that are free both for readers and authors. In a sense both MathSciNet and zbMATH form such whitelists. To a certain extent even the Web of Knowledge represents a whitelist. A journal that does not appear on these lists is either not a mathematical journal, is too young or has some ethical issues.

Several journals, including ours, declare that they follow the EMS Code of Practice. Unfortunately, no one really checks whether this is indeed the case. The Ethics Committee should look at such journals and confirm their claims when appropriate. This explicit addition to the whitelist would be of great importance for any emerging good journal. It would also serve authors when faced with the problem of choosing a venue for their publication.

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