

Special Issues as Criterion for Journal Quality Evaluation – Letter to Editor

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Predatory publishers are defined as publishers who have financial goals. This definition was introduced for the first time by Jeffrey Beall (2012). In some predatory publishers, we can find some papers that are not related to journal's aim and scope. These journals create special issues in order to publish papers that are not related to journal's aim and scope. Thus, we are faced with a question of how the editor of these journals could evaluate these papers. In some trusted journals, editor invites guest editors for special issues, which are related to journal's aim and scope. On the other hand predatory publishers, publish papers without any external reviewers or guest editors. In addition, some journals that publish irrelevant papers in regular issues are also found. This problem can be seen especially in some biological or life science journals. It seems that these problems pose new challenge for the academic world.

Tricksters or people, who have the business view to academic world, are the main reason of this challenge. Another question that could be discussed is indexing the papers of these journals in scientific databases. For example, *Journal of advanced in environmental biology* is Scopus indexed for agricultural, biological

and environmental science but this journal publishes papers from different domains such as computer science and management science, those papers are found in Scopus database. It means that low quality papers published in predatory journals still could be indexed in scientific databases. Therefore special issue of journals should not be accepted. Special issue is an issue focusing on certain subject and new findings about it. We believe that special issues in journals must be as a criterion to evaluate journals. With this criterion, we could detect high quality journals versus low quality ones. Table 1 shows some journals with questionable special issues in 2014. These journals published regular issues behind special issues.

Table 2 shows key differences between questionable special issues and trusted ones. Authors should focus on these criteria when they decide in which journal to submit their manuscript.

We can find these questionable special issues in fake conferences that are launched by forgers. Authors are advised to use guidelines provided by Dadkhah, et al., 2015a in order to identify these conferences. It is necessary, that authors are informed about hijacked journals (Jalalian, Mahboobi, 2014; Jalalian,

Table 1. Journals with questionable special issues in 2014

Journal Name*	Journal Domain	No of Special issues	No of papers in all Special issues
Case 1	Biological science	10	133
Case 2	Fisher & Biological science	9	176
Case 3	Life Sciences	1	350
Case 4	Natural and Social Sciences	2	124
Case 5	Biological science	10	305

* The full documentation of the experiment is in possession of the authors. The paper does not provide the names of the journals, as it was only to introduce the problem and the dangers it may bring, and not to analyze the publication policies of individual journals.

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Table 2. Key different between questionable special issue and trusted one

Type of Special Issue	Subject	Editor	No of Papers	No of Special Issues in year
Trusted Special Issues	Certain subject	Guest Editor	20-30	1-2
Questionable Special Issues	Multidisciplinary	Editor in Chief	In some case over of 50 papers	More than 3

2014; Dadkhah, et al., 2015b), Social engineering (Dadkhah, Quliyeva, 2014), fake conferences and the above mentioned challenge in the academic world otherwise, they may become victims of hijacked journals or predatory publishers (Lukić, et al., 2014).

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