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Our Lives as Editors of a Predatory Journal

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At the 2017 Charleston Conference this past November, we presented with Jonathan Cain (editorial board member), on *Collaborative Librarianship*. Our talk was framed under the title: "Our Lives as Editors of a Predatory Journal: Lessons Learned Publishing a Scholarly Open Access Journal." This deliberately provocative title was intended partly to lure in audience members, and partly to allow us to examine our journal and our experiences through the lens of Jeffrey Beall's evaluation criteria. We presented Beall's criteria as they had been archived in Internet Archive's Wayback Machine and walked through the areas where we felt that our publication efforts and practices could be viewed as substandard and potentially labeled predatory based on these criteria. This walk through the criteria showed how we have fallen short in some ways, while also showing that some of the criteria might be interpreted to make even quite legitimate journals appear to be predatory. We then went on to talk about how we are attempting to address some of those issues and what we saw as best practices to be adopted by our colleagues who may wish to venture into scholarly publishing through their own library portals. While we can't recap the entire presentation here, we do want to highlight what we've come to recognize as some of the best practices for publishing an open access scholarly journal.

First and most importantly, we talked about standards, a vitally important topic that is easy to overlook. It is quite possible to get by publishing a niche journal without employing basic standards that help to make content both more

discoverable and readily available for indexing. In the case of *Collaborative Librarianship*, the main standard we have neglected to use has been the Digital Object Identifier (DOI). Besides making it harder to easily link to the correct version of the article, the lack of DOIs caused *Collaborative Librarianship* to be removed from the *Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)*. The *DOAJ* considers DOIs to be a critical element of their publishing criteria, and no longer indexes journals that do not use this key standard. In addition to this loss, we also discovered that we had been dropped by at least one other indexing source due to our lack of DOI provision. Thanks to the work of Andrea Wirth, another editorial team member, and Laureen Cantwell, our layout editor, we are now well on the way to assigning DOIs for all our journal content so that we can begin the process of re-applying for indexing in *DOAJ* and other sources. As it is rather easy to overlook standards, we recommend that the editorial board for any journal develop and review a checklist of needed standards such as ISSN, DOIs, etc., prior to beginning publication.

Another area where standards are important and where we think librarians engaged in publishing should focus efforts is when changing hosting platforms. When we took over editorial co-leadership, *Collaborative Librarianship* was moving from one platform to another. In the intensive work of migrating content, designing a new site, and employing a new submission system, we neglected to use the Journal Transfer guidelines, which would have made the migra-



tion much smoother. Both of us were quite familiar with the guidelines, yet it didn't occur to us to follow them. NISO hosts the guidelines for this practice here:

<http://www.niso.org/standards-committees/transfer>

As libraries consider new platforms, we encourage anyone considering moving a journal to employ the Journal Transfer practices in order to avoid some of the problems we encountered, such as readers not being able to find and read content, indexing services being interrupted, and loss of readership statistics.

Another area where we want to focus attention and encourage better practices is publication ethics. We have been very fortunate that the current editorial board and group of peer-reviewers caught issues and problems with articles that could cause concern. That said, we can employ techniques and practices developed by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) to help both our reviewers and our editorial processes become better and more ethical overall. Our reviewers have pointed out issues of articles not arriving blind to them (due to errors in how we set up the journal platform) or have declined to review content because of a conflict of interest. It would be a better practice if we could put systems in place to make it clear what sorts of questions any reviewer should be asking to ensure ethical practices. Over the next year, we will be reviewing ways in which we can adopt more ethical practices both in our submission and in our review processes.

One area where we feel we have been tremendously successful is in the development and expansion of our editorial board. We are committed to developing equity, inclusion, and representation as best as possible for our profession. To this end, our editorial board now has a balanced representation of men and women and we have been working hard to identify and recruit new members to expand our inclusion of varying voices within the profession. This attempt is not just through our editorial board but also with the recruitment of content. Through the "What Collaboration Means to Me" column, we attempt to publish voices and perspectives that do not always get heard. We hope that by providing this opportunity, we can stimulate and grow new perspectives in the profession and become an outlet to those who may feel under-represented in the professional literature.

At the end of the day, of course we do not really consider ourselves predatory publishers, but we do readily recognize that we could be doing better. We have both learned that publishing, even micro-publishing a single OA journal, takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. Through *Collaborative Librarianship* we try to provide a more inclusive and representative venue for our colleagues to learn about scholarly publishing and participate in the process. While we strive to do a good job, we recognize that we sometimes fall short. We are committed to employing the best practices we can identify to constantly improve.