

# Response to “Beyond Beall’s List”

Jeffrey Beall, reply by Monica Berger and Jill Cirasella

*Ed. note: The following is Jeffrey Beall’s letter to the editor regarding “Beyond Beall’s List: Better Understanding Predatory Publishers,” by Monica Berger and Jill Cirasella, from the March 2015 issue of C&RL News. Berger and Cirasella follow with a reply to Beall.*

Because predatory publishers are damaging research cultures and hurting individual researchers, I was happy to see coverage of them in *C&RL News*. However, I was disappointed that the article was unbalanced and aimed to discredit me personally.

For example, I found Berger and Cirasella’s use of selective citation unsound, especially given ACRL’s recent work on information literacy. They extensively cited an author who writes and self-publishes his own non-peer-reviewed journal, a publication that includes several articles that attack me and leave me feeling bullied.

They skipped over the many positive descriptions of my work in peer-reviewed journals, including a recent editorial in the *British Medical Journal* that says, “Beall’s list is helpful. . . .”<sup>1</sup> Also, a nursing editors group issued a joint statement entitled “Predatory Publishers: What the Nursing Community Needs to Know” that says, “We encourage nursing authors to use Beall’s list of predatory publishers at Scholarly Open Access . . . as a reliable resource.”<sup>2</sup>

Attacking or criticizing me will not make the problem of predatory publishers go away, nor will pretending that predatory journals don’t exist, a common strategy among academic librarians. Medical ethicist Arthur L. Caplan warns, “If the medical and scientific communities continue to remain in publica-

tion pollution denial, the trustworthiness, utility, and value of science and medicine will be irreparably damaged.”<sup>3</sup>

When predatory publishers and other critics of my work want to discredit me, they generally collect and repeat some of the criticisms they find online, criticisms sometimes penned by publishers seeking to discredit me for listing their journals. Here, Berger and Cirasella did the same, merely collecting and parroting hearsay from those who seek to silence me.

Further, I was happy that the authors mentioned the serials crisis and my assertion that big deals have largely resolved it, as confirmed by one prominent economist, who stated last year that “Publishers, through the oft-reviled Big Deal packages, are providing much greater and more egalitarian access to the journal literature, an approximation to true Open Access.”<sup>4</sup>

Academic librarians unfairly place exclusive blame for increased library expenditures on scholarly publishers, ignoring the true etiology, namely the expansion of science into many new fields (spawning new journals) and the increase in the number of researchers needing to certify themselves through publication, greatly increasing the number of articles published. Why do academic librarian open access advocates give a pass to OCLC? It profits in a way similar to subscription publishers, aggregating taxpayer-funded metadata and then selling it back to libraries.

Gold open access journals threaten to silence researchers in low- and middle-income countries, where grants, funding, and fee waivers are rare. Payments from authors are now the norm, but not all authors can afford

them. This open access-inspired cultural change will have far-reaching implications and will favor authors with funds.

I am not perfect and have made mistakes. I welcome criticism but ask that it be balanced and better referenced. Selective citation does not serve *C&RL News* readers well.

## Notes

1. Jocalyn Clark and Richard Smith, "Firm Action Needed on Predatory Journals," *BMJ* 350:h210 (2015), [www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h210](http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h210).

## Monica Berger and Jill Cirasella reply

As we acknowledged in our column, Beall's list is a useful resource. However, it is not the final word on predatory publishers. Our article informed readers of the debate surrounding Beall's list and presented them with additional tools for identifying and avoiding predators. We also encouraged readers to look beyond blacklists and whitelists and perform their own critical evaluations of journals.

We now encourage readers to critically evaluate one of the articles we cited, Jeffrey Beall's "The Open-Access Movement Is Not Really about Open Access."<sup>1</sup> In this article, he expresses scorn for the open access (OA)

2. INANE "Predatory Publishing Practices" Collaborative, "Predatory Publishers: What the Nursing Community Needs to Know," *Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nursing*, 30, no. 2 (2015): 87-90.

3. Arthur L. Caplan, "The Problem of Publication-Pollution Denialism," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, in press (2015).

4. Andrew M. Odlyzko, "Open Access, Library and Publisher Competition, and the Evolution of General Commerce," *Evaluation Review* 39, no. 1 (2015): 130-163.

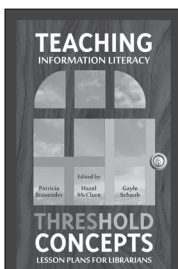
movement, calling it "an anti-corporatist movement that wants to deny the freedom of the press to companies it disagrees with." With such statements, he reveals his lack of objectivity on the topic of OA and demonstrates exactly why it's important to look beyond Beall's list when evaluating OA journals.

## Note

1. Jeffrey Beall, "The Open-Access Movement Is Not Really about Open Access," *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 11, no. 2 (2013): 589-97, <http://triplec.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/525/514>. *zz*



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