
Academics must list all publications on their CV

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Abstract

The issue of “predatory” publishing continues in the post-Jeffrey Beall era, especially among open access (OA) journals and publishers. Even though the Beall blog was shut down in mid-January of 2017, there are members of academia and avid Beall fans who wish to see the continuation or resurrection of Beall’s black lists. Although some argue that in this day and age of fake academia, there is a need for clearly vetted blacklists to better guide authors of potentially “predatory” journals or publishers, it can be stated that Beall’s lists are not a solution, nor are the copy-cat sites that have cloned his lists. Others argue that blacklists should not be used at all for assessing the work of scholars. The post-Beall era has left a deep mark of stigmatization, i.e., those who have published in “predatory” OA journals or publishers, as determined by Beall, and now by others, and those who have not. One of the most prominent, well-funded and influential groups at the Center for Journalology at The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, in Canada, led by David Moher, a highly cited researcher, has called for academics to clear their *curriculum vitae* (CV) of “predatory” papers if they have such publications. The Moher group advocates for academics to declare that their CV is free of such “predatory publications”, i.e., papers published in OA journals or publishers blacklisted by Beall, while Mitchell S. Cappell argues in *The BMJ* that “predatory” papers should be included in a CV but in a separate category. We argue that the advice by both these factions is problematic and encourage academics to list all published work on their CVs, not to be boastful of numbers, but simply to make their CVs accurate and transparent.

Keywords: blacklists; open access; predatory behavior; unscholarly publishing

Jeffrey Beall has instilled a culture of stigmatization and division in academia

Whether academics like it or not, Jeffrey Beall continues to exert influence on global academia as a direct result of the creation of his blacklists of “predatory” open access (OA) journals or publishers, even though those lists were shut down in mid-January 2017, and

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even though they are outdated, erroneous, illegitimate and misleading (Teixeira da Silva, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b). Beall's blacklists suffer from a large type I error (Olivarez et al., 2018). A type I error is to include in the lists, OA publishers and journals that are not deceiving or "predatory". Olivarez et al., using an independent panel of experts in the field of library and information science, applied Beall's updated criteria and found that out of 81 well-regarded academic journals in these fields, OA and non-OA, that 45 would be classified as "predatory".

Furthermore, another troubling consequence of Beall's blacklists is how they have been used to discriminate "good" from "bad" academics, i.e., those who have published in so-called "predatory" OA journals or publishers, i.e., academics that have "predatory" papers, and those that have not. For example, Pyne (2017) claimed falsely that researchers at a small business school in Canada¹ were financially rewarded for their "predatory" publications (i.e., on Beall's unreliable lists of "predatory" OA journals or publishers), relative to those that did not have such publications. Pyne's results were presented in such a deceiving way that most academics and media bought blindly into this act of research spin (Chiu et al., 2017; Turrentine, 2017), naively accepting Pyne's results as factually true. Pyne, using manipulative language, managed to spin inconclusive findings by claiming that evidence of financial rewards exists when in fact his results related to the influence of "predatory" publications on salary were highly statistically insignificant. Moreover, one of the most important variables, predatory and unranked, was dropped from his preferred salary regression model.² That false claim may have caused reputational damage to the Canadian researchers who were negatively stigmatized by Pyne based on the venue where they published, rather than an appreciation or criticism of the work that they published.³ We believe that Pyne should not remove this publication from his CV, despite its spin, or even place it in a separate category. As academics, we should be able to read and critique that manuscript which was published in the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*.

The Pyne case is not unique. In March 2018, a fierce battle raged between two competing academics in Uganda's Makerere University, with one researcher accusing the other of having "predatory" papers (classification based on Beall's erroneous blacklists) on his *curriculum vitae* (CV), giving him an unfair advantage based on "bad" research.⁴ However, that case also highlights how Beall's blacklists continue to mislead academics and cause damage due to their erroneous use. Another case involves a public accusation in late 2017 that Dr. Alice Němcová Tejkalová at Charles University in the Czech Republic published four "fraudulent" papers (i.e., in Beall-listed "predatory" OA journals) in a bid to prevent the employment of Tejkalová as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences⁵, an accusation and claim that was rejected by the Rector, Prof. Tomáš Zima.⁶

¹ The name of the school and university where the sample was drawn from was intentionally revealed by Pyne post publication raising ethical and privacy concerns for the human subjects used in the study.

² Pyne stated in the abstract: "In terms of financial compensation, these publications [i.e., in predatory journals] produce greater rewards than many non-predatory journal publications" (p. 137). Manipulative language also appears in the title of the paper and elsewhere in the manuscript as well as in (social) media post publication.

³ It is worth mentioning that Pyne acknowledged Jeffrey Beall for feedback on the manuscript. Beall either noticed the spin and did nothing to advise Pyne not to engage in such potential research misconduct or was ignorant of what is academic spin. However, Beall must have agreed with the findings given that he tweeted Pyne's interview with NYT. See: https://twitter.com/Jeffrey_Beall/status/925096120795066368

⁴ <http://observer.ug/news/headlines/57268-makerere-dons-in-promotion-fight.html> (although Beall or his blacklists were not implicitly mentioned, it can be safely assumed that the duel involves journals or publishers on Beall's lists).

⁵ <https://reputationindanger.com/arguments-argumenty/>

⁶ <https://www.cuni.cz/UKEN-379.html?news=5087&locale=en>

Should “predatory” papers be listed on a CV?

The issue of whether “predatory” papers should be listed on a CV has been debated in one paper (Moher et al., 2017) and in one letter to the editor (Cappell, 2015). Moher et al. (2017) suggested that researchers should declare that their CVs are free of “predatory” publications: “When seeking promotion or funding, researchers should include a declaration that their CV is free of predatory publications” (p. 25). If scholars should declare that their CV is free of “predatory” publications, then by induction, researchers ought to also declare that the CV is free of “predatory” conferences (Teixeira da Silva et al., 2017). Beall (2013) was the first to use the term “predatory meetings” to describe such conferences when he critiqued OMICS for organizing conference meetings. Two years later, Beall (2015) stated in his blog: “There’s a lot of money to be made in the scholarly-conference organizing business in Asia these days. These are not conferences organized by scholarly societies. Instead, they are conferences organized by revenue-seeking companies that want to exploit researchers’ *need to build their vitas with conference presentations* and papers in the published proceedings or affiliated journals” (*italics added for emphasis*).

There are many issues with declaring that a CV is free of “predatory” publications and/or “predatory” conferences. First, declaring that a CV is free of “predatory” publishers and journals is impossible as there are no verifiable, accurate, complete, updated and public blacklists of “predatory” journals, publishers (OA and non-OA) and conferences to base such declarations. Beall’s two now-defunct and inaccurate blacklists are useless because Beall classed them widely as “potential, possible, or probable predatory” OA publishers and journals. Beall was clearly aware of his lists suffering from a large type I error in that many OA journals of publishers may have been wrongly accused of “predatory” behavior, but ignored this fact. The presence of a large type I error exists because Beall’s criteria and their application were opaque (Olivarez et al., 2018).

Regarding “predatory” conferences, there are no conference-based whitelists or blacklists available for international conferences except to make inappropriate inductions by linking these to Beall’s blacklists, as has been done by some individuals. For example, Cobey et al. (2017) classified conferences as “predatory” based on email invitations as well as if the publisher was a “predatory” OA publisher that had been listed by Beall. In the conclusion, they stated: “Future research is needed to determine whether conferences associated with e-mails that we classified as being predatory, or similar invitations received by other scholars, actually relate to conferences that do take place” (p. 413).⁷ This “fake” Beall reference, namely the website used by Cobey et al., is incorrect. This list was not created by Beall but by some anonymous person or group who archived a version of Beall’s list and is claiming to be updating that list⁸ without possibly knowing the precise criteria that were applied to each of the OA journals and publishers that were listed by Beall as “predatory”. Since CVs are usually written similar to reference lists in journal articles, requiring truth, honesty and transparency, Cobey et al. as well as Moher et al. and others are not providing a good example of how to record accurate and transparent reference lists in CVs.

Second, if researchers are to declare CVs of being free of “predatory” publications and conferences, then why stop there? In such a case, as advised by Cobey et al. as well as Moher et al. and others, surely researchers should also declare – to hold high and standardized criteria – that their published work in so-called “legitimate” journals are free of publications of any journal where the author knowingly fabricated and falsified data and results such as

⁷ In the Cobey et al. (2017) paper, this statement is linked to the following reference in their reference list: “Beall J: Beall’s List: Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open access publishers. <http://beallslist.weebly.com/>.” See criticisms of Beall copy-cat sites such as this in Teixeira da Silva (2018b).

⁸ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-02921-2>

spin, *p*-hacking, and HARKing, free of illusory truth effects, free of biases, free of ghost co-authors, fake emails, and other weaknesses or flaws, as identified by Ioannidis (2005), and reviewed by Wicherts (2017). These declarations cannot be made by academics for obvious reasons.⁹ Thus, it is best to report all publications in a CV and then let experts in each field of study decide on the merit of each publication.

Third, many papers published in Beall-listed OA journals are not invalid or unscholarly as has been suggested by Moher et al., Pyne, and others. For example, Brembs (2018) published a valid and important scholarly work on the quality and reliability of prestigious science journals. Brembs' evidence suggests that "methodological" quality may decline as the rank of journal increases. That paper was published by Frontiers, a Beall-listed OA publisher. What right would Moher et al. have to suggest to Brembs and many other scholars, including the authors of this manuscript, that they should clear their CVs from important contributions to their field of science simply because they appeared in journals or by publishers on Beall's defunct blacklists?

It is odd that Moher et al. would make such a suggestion without considering its actual or potential implications. What signal do such declarations send to the receiver of the information that is in the CV? Simply because a CV is free of "predatory" publications or other misconduct does not imply that the researcher does not have such publications or research that is flawed. Moher et al. want academics to signal such information to receivers of CVs, but such a signal is not only meaningless, its validity would need to be independently verified. Academics should report all their achievements in a CV and let the experts in their field do the checking and verification of the validity and importance of the research being conducted, including reproducibility. Academics should also include on their CV papers that have been retracted. A retraction is not disputable while a publication in Beall's blacklists is.

In contrast to Moher et al. (2017), Cappell (2015) suggested the inclusion of "predatory" journal publications in a CV. However, according to Cappell, academics should segregate journal publications into a separate list, and place Beall-listed "predatory" publications separate from what he calls "genuine journals". Cappell wanted genuine publications not to be tainted and was very worried that his 240+ PubMed-indexed and peer-reviewed publications would be devalued and contaminated.¹⁰ In fact, Cappell declared that his CV is completely free of "predatory" papers, i.e., the Moher et al. (2017) suggestion in action. Cappell was so troubled by "predatory" papers that he even believed that these publications by "pseudo-academics" (a term he assigned to scholars who have papers published in Beall-listed "predatory" OA journals) could hamper the progression of his own academic career. Furthermore, Cappell thought that his solution would allow promotion committees to heavily discount such publications by claiming that "the phenomenon may disappear, just like containment defeats pestilence." Cappell concluded that academics must "unite to defeat the enemy." However, if Cappell wished to be truly thorough, why then stop with only these two discriminatory Beall blacklists? Surely, Cappell would not agree to have also a separate section in a CV that lists articles that have spin (interactive bias), publication selection bias or any of the other weaknesses we list above? Would Cappell then consider listing his own opinion piece in *The BMJ*, a very high impact factor journal with a 2016 JIF of 20.785, as a case of "publication selection bias"?

⁹ For example, if Pyne (2017) were to declare that his CV is free of research spin, he would surely then have to retract his journal publication and all the editorials and media attention it received otherwise the declaration is a falsification. Hence, rationality and self-interest is for him not to make such a declaration. The same applies to all academics who engaged in research misconduct while publishing in non-"predatory" (Beall-listed) journals.

¹⁰ See also discussion in PubPeer: <https://pubpeer.com/publications/BCD633B9ED1E8D276332197843B3F9>

Conclusions

The influence by Beall lives on through his erroneous blacklists that continue to be used in a discriminatory and unscholarly manner. Moher et al. (2017) suggested that academics declare that their CV is free of “predatory” papers using Beall’s now-defunct “potential, possible, or probable” blacklists to “clean” their CV. This suggestion is questionable for reasons we list above and thus we disagree with the suggestion by Moher et al., which has also been promoted in Canadian media.¹¹ Instead, researchers should declare all published work on their CVs. This would allow other academics to independently verify if that work is scientifically sound or not, just like Moher et al. detected issues with the papers they examined post publication. An academic CV needs to reflect verifiable, accurate, complete and updated information. It is these issues that are perhaps purposefully ignored by entities such as Harvey and Weinstein (2017) who prefer to continue to refer to and rely on Beall’s blacklists to guide academics then to appreciate that the fundamental basis of the abuse of the academic record by academics wishing to pad their CVs lies way beyond the issue of “predatory” publishing.

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