

Is Innovations a Predatory Journal?

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It has been almost a daily occurrence lately that we have been asked to submit a manuscript to an unfamiliar journal or join their editorial review board. We are sure you receive similar requests. You know, the one where they recite your title and abstract and tell you that based on that work you would be qualified to publish in, or review for, the journal whose content is not even distantly related to your article. On occasion curiosity has gotten the best of us and we've played along. We read the request and look for any signs that this could be a legitimate outlet for our scholarly work. We conduct a search for the editor's name, if one is supplied in the email. We have clicked on the list of reviewers to see if we knew any by name or at least the institution with whom they are associated. Some of these requests may be legitimate, but with the concerns over predatorial journals growing, we are thankful that the field of science education has a wealth of reputable journals. We'd like to believe that the temptation to submit manuscripts or agree to review for questionable journals is lower among science educators than our colleagues in other fields.



It is nice to know that most of the journals we are familiar with are led by an editorial staff with whom we are familiar. Moreover, we are pleased to know the reviewers are also our colleagues and that we can count on seeing them at conferences and other events. Many we know personally, and we rest well knowing that the peer review process for science education rests upon a firm foundation of science educators. Sadly, that must not be true for all disciplines, resulting in the temptation to publish in, and review for, less reputable journals (Van Noorden, 2020).

For a more complete discussion of why defining predatory publishing can be difficult to define and what makes a journal reputable see Grudniewicz et al. (2019). They developed the following definition:

“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.”

Thankfully, the majority of journals we know of in the field are linked to an organization like the ASTE whose primary interest is in its’ members and science educators at large. What is different for *Innovations* and a few other science education journals, is that we are not linked to a publishing company. That has created some benefits and some challenges. When it comes to overseeing the journal, we can’t rely on support from a publishing company and we may come close to being confused with a predatory journal as *Innovations* could be defined as an under-resourced journal (Van Noorden, 2020). Without the funding support generated by a publishing company we rely completely on in-house resources. With the help of our amazing reviewers, it’s us, Ron and Rommel, who receive submissions, screen submissions, assign submissions to reviewers, read and collate reviews, solicit editorial review board members, edit manuscripts for publication, and the list goes on.

The editorial office seeing you
check the submission portal every day



So, when we saw this meme on a popular social media page, we couldn’t help but laugh – not for the intended purpose, but because it could not be further from the reality of *Innovations*. We don’t have submission portal – it is us – we receive every email and inquiry. We read and reply to every email and we try to do so quickly. We can tell you the exact status of your manuscript at any point in time. We don’t laugh when you contact us, but we are concerned when you do. We try our best to have external reviews back in 4-6 weeks and decision letters out to authors soon after we receive the last review. And we have done a great job of doing so to this point. But we continue to need your help. *Innovations* truly is a journal by ASTE for ASTE and we need ASTE members to join the Editorial Review Board to ensure high quality manuscript are published. You, the ASTE member, that is the resource that helps establish *Innovations* as a legitimate, impactful journal for science educators.

We can think of no better way to thwart the proliferation of predatory journals than to ensure that journals like *Innovations* are supported by the community who benefits most from them. With a thriving membership with the willingness to serve as reviewers and editors, we can ensure that authors and reviewers have a positive experience. When quality, innovative manuscripts are submitted, reviewers enjoy reading those manuscripts and providing their insights to make the submissions even stronger. Likewise, authors benefit from quality reviews that enhance their work and when reviews are submitted in a timely fashion, authors can count on having a decision within 2 months of their submission. As we prepare to step down as editors of *Innovations in Science Teacher Education*, we hope ASTE members will consider serving the organization by serving as editorial review board members and apply for the editor position. We are proud of the work we have done to get *Innovations* up and running and to establish the journal as a well-regarded and impactful venue for science educators to share their work. We are not a predatorial journal, but we will borrow from their practices and send out frequent, but targeted requests to serve as ERB members, and soon as editors. Who knows, maybe this tactic so haphazardly used by predatorial journals may actually work and we will be a stronger journal as a result.

References

Grudnieicz A. et al. (2019). Predatory journals: No definition, no defence. *Nature* 576, 210-212. [doi: 10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y)

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