Checklist for Evaluating Open Access Journals

Open access journals are online academic publications, made available to readers free of charge. No subscription fees are required for these journals.

When working with open access journal articles, make sure to evaluate them critically by asking the following questions:

Who is the publisher?
- Who publishes the journal?
- Is the journal a member of the OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association)?
- Is the journal published by a non-profit, or a for profit organization?
- What is their open access policy?
- Is the Journal a member of the DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals)?

How long has the journal been in publication?
- Is the journal newly established?
- How often are new issues released?
** Be cautious of new journals with frequent publication schedules.

Is the journal indexed?
- Is the journal indexed in major databases or index services? You can take a look at Ulrich’s International Periodical Directory or Wikipedia if this is not identified on the journal’s website.

What are the submission guidelines, and acceptance standards?
- Does the journal have a subject scope, or is it multidisciplinary? Be cautious of journals without a topical focus.
- Does the article solicit articles, or are there clear submission guidelines in place?
- What is the submission process?
- What are their acceptance timelines?
** All this information can be found on the journal’s website.
What are the peer review guidelines?

- Is the journal peer reviewed?
- Who are the reviewers?
- Who are the editors?
- What is their expertise?
- What kind of peer review process does the journal follow – single/double blind, open, transparent? (See link at the end of this document)

Is the research published in the journal used by others?

- Are researchers referencing articles published in the journal to support their work?
  ** You can find this information by searching Google Scholar to determine whether or not articles published in the journal are cited by others.

What is the citation count on individual papers?

- Is the article cited by others in the field? Keep in mind that a low or non-existent citation count may mean that the article may not have made a significant enough contribution to scholarship in that subject area.
  ** Check out Google Scholar if you need to check the citation count of an article.

Who are the authors and what university or institution are they from?

- Are the authors from the same institution?
- Are there any repeated authors or groups across a few issues, or is there one dominant author?
- Is the author affiliated with an institution or university that is reputable?
- Does the institution have a program or expertise in the field that is being written about?