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From the Editors

EXTERNAL ASSESSORS AS "REVIEWERS" FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

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The interdisciplinary journal *Human Technology* has been a venue for scholarly research on the interactions between humans and technology since 2005. The editorial philosophy on publishing has been steeped in, from the start, the value of open access (OA) research. The leadership of the Agora Center at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, as publisher, and founding editor Professor Pertti Saariluoma decided that the journal's OA financing model would be institution-funded in conjunction with the funding of special issues through the journal and the university working as partners on research grants. As a result, no author has been charged an article processing fee (APC) to submit or be published in the online-only journal. For its first 12 years, the journal was published by the interdisciplinary research unit, the Agora Center; with this current issue, the publishing responsibility has been assumed by the Open Science Centre, also at the University of Jyväskylä.

From the start, the publisher and editors of *Human technology* have endeavored to produce a high-quality journal with impeccable ethical standards and a robust peer review process. We established an editorial board with experts from a diversity of fields that research human–technology interaction and continually are expanding the number of disciplines and research focuses represented by members of our board. In virtually every way, the editorial team has embraced the ethical standards for high quality publishing, in line with long-established and well-respected journals.

By some estimates (e.g., Ware & Mabe, 2015, p. 6), as many as 10,000 publishers around the globe are actively publishing academic journals. But questions have arisen from academics across the spectrum regarding the quality of the newer, particularly OA and online, journals (see, e.g., Butler, 2013; Sorokowski, Kulczycki, Sorokowska & Pisanski, 2017). One way to substantiate the quality of a journal is by means of quality assurance undertaken by external organizations, a

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process known as "whitelisting" (see, e.g., Berger & Cirasella, 2015; Butler, 2013; Gasparyan, Yessirkepov, Diyanova, & Kitas, 2015; Shen & Björk, 2015), that is, articulating standards regarding peer review, ethical behavior, adherence to scope, and other measures of excellence through which journal editors and publishers can attain accreditation. In many ways, such organizations serve the role of the "reviewer" of journals, assuring they have academic quality and relevance and abide by accepted scholarly publishing standards that contribute to advancing scientific fields, rather than threatening their integrity (Bartholomew, 2014; Clark & Smith, 2015)

External validation provides important recognition for primarily young, open access, and interdisciplinary journals. *Human Technology* has been indexed by the Directory of Open Access Journals[1] (DOAJ)—a key player in whitelisting OA journals (Berger & Cirasella, 2015)—since 2005, receiving reaccreditation under the directory's revised guidelines in 2016. In February 2017, our journal was accepted by Scopus,[2] Elsevier's bibliographic database, and will be indexed there in the coming months. In the process for being considered for, and then accepted by, these two well-known indexers, we at *Human Technology* had to supply to the indexers' editors a wide variety of materials that supported our claim of quality, of reputable OA practices, and adherence to ethical standards. We are pleased that our consistent emphasis on publishing ethics, attention to quality in accepting papers, and filling an important niche in the vast academic publishing world has been assessed and accepted as equally valuable as those journals published by large, established publishing houses.

Obviously, young, independent OA journals cannot have their quality assured right away; indeed, in the early years, many face several challenges. For instance, predatory journals (see, e.g., Cook, 2017) and low-quality journals (Gasparyan et al., 2015) threaten the reputations of good, ethics-abiding journals in that the unscrupulous and poor scientific behaviors of these journals cast a long shadow over all journals, particularly OA journals that cover their publication costs through APCs (Shen & Björk, 2015). Good, young journals accept that, inevitably, it takes time and ongoing attention to reputable and ethical publishing in order to, eventually, earn the recognition of the academic community and accreditation by the quality assessors.

But, considering the reality that quality journals may not yet have been vetted by external assessors such as DOAJ, Scopus, or Web of Science, a separate but equally important question is, How can authors and researchers know to which journal to submit their work or which OA papers reflect sufficiently peer-reviewed quality for citation? The following points are based in part on the checklist of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association,[3] and Butler (2013), Clark and Smith (2015), and Hansoti, Langendorf and Murphy (2016):

- Examine the reputation of the journal and publisher:
  - Do you or your colleagues know the journal?
  - Is the journal associated with a noted organization, such as a scientific association, university, or research institute?
  - Are there any unpleasant rumors about the journal or publisher on the Internet?
- Carry out an analysis of the information on the journal's Web site:
  - Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?
  - Does the journal articulate (and then follow) basic ethical standards?
  - What are the academic affiliations and credentials of the editors and editorial board members?

- Is the journal clear about the type of peer review process it uses?
- Are there outside experts reviewing papers or are all reviewers associated with the journal (e.g., editorial board members)?
- What is the editorial process like? A reputable journal will need at least several months to assess a paper's quality, get it through review, reassess, and allow time for revisions.
- Does the journal have a peer-review label or some other independent notation of quality assurance?
- How does the journal assess whether any parts of a paper have been plagiarized, knowingly or unknowingly?
- What fees (if any) will be charged? Can you find the publication fee easily identified on the Web site, or is it hidden many pages back with obscure navigation or written in a less-than-clear manner?

▪ Consider the source and approach:

- Are the research articles published through the journal under evaluation available through a reputable indexer or research database? Predatory publishers and journals rarely are accepted by these organizations, even if the articles they publish are readily available on the Internet.
- Are you being solicited for submission and in what manner? Most reputable journals do not need to send emails with enticing lures on quick publication.
- Does the offer seem too good to be true? Chances are, if it does, it is.

Please note that while a lacking in any of the above areas does not necessarily mean a journal is predatory or low quality, the number and/or combination of issues should at least merit caution.

In addition to the assurances provided by external assessors, such as DOAJ, Scopus, and Web of Science, authors and researchers can use one of several organizations as sources aimed at identifying quality journals. For example, national lists of reputable journals often are produced (and/or ranked) in collaboration with public organizations and the academic community. Comprehensive lists have been produced by several Nordic countries. *Human Technology* is included in the Finnish Publication Forum[4] and the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series, and Publishers.[5] Currently, academics in the Nordic countries, in conjunction with their governmental officials and several academic communities, are discussing the potential of creating a joint Nordic List of quality journals and publishers. The organizations involved are collaborating as well with DOAJ in regard to open access journals.[6] Finally, although the list of potential, possible, and probable predatory journals and publishers,[7] compiled by University of Colorado librarian Jeffrey Beall (2012, 2016a, 2016b), is no longer available, many found the list useful and influential (see, e.g., Butler, 2013). However, it also was controversial (see, e.g., Berger & Cirasella, 2015; Butler, 2013; Gasparyan et al., 2015; Straumsheim, 2017). Some academics have called for a more systematic way, and by a wider swath of academic players (e.g., librarians, researchers, accrediting agencies, journal publishers, publisher and editor associations), to identify problematic journals and publishers as a companion to organizations recognizing quality (Berger & Cirasella, 2015; Gasparayan et al., 2015). As the editor in chief and managing editor of a reputable journal that for several years was not yet evaluated by the major indexers, we see value in a formal way of indicating that a

young journal is not disreputable as it develops toward official acknowledgment via the well-known external assessors.

The publisher and editors of *Human Technology* share the long-term goal of producing a journal that will be accepted as well by the Thomson Reuters Web of Science to supplement DOAJ and Scopus in recognizing our journal's continued emphasis on quality and ethical publishing and in contributing to the interdisciplinary field of human–technology interaction. For this we need to maintain our long-standing reputation as a quality journal, good submissions, and the hard work of our reviewers and editors, supported by our distinguished Board of Editors.

An additional support toward the journal's goals is provided by our newly established (2017) internal Publisher's Board, a team of five experts from the University of Jyväskylä with various scientific backgrounds. The Publisher's Board members are Päivi Fadjukoff (adjunct professor, Psychology), Marja Kankaanranta (research professor, Digital Learning Environments), Raine Koskimaa (professor, Digital Culture), Pekka Olsbo (head of the publishing unit, Open Science Centre), and Pasi Tyrväinen (professor, Digital Media). Their multifaceted task involves supporting and adding expertise to the publisher's role in maintaining quality and ethical publishing and in advancing *Human Technology* within the university, in Finland, and internationally. In their advisory role, they facilitate the development of the journal from the publishing perspective, thus serving as an instrumental collaborator with day-to-day editorial leadership (i.e., editor in chief and managing editor) of the journal. In many ways, they are to the publisher what the editorial board is to the journal's editors, although there is considerable overlap in their combined efforts toward the advancement and integrity of the journal.

As technological and global interconnectedness continues to develop in the coming years, and new journals are founded to address niches in the scholarly publishing arena, authors and researchers—and journal publishers, as a community supporting and advocating quality, relevant, and ethical journals—need to remain vigilant against unscrupulous and low-quality journals and publishers. External indexers and accrediting organizations play the essential role of reviewers of ethical and quality publishing practices in journals, particularly young, niche, and OA journals.

ENDNOTES

1. More information on the DOAJ, see https://doaj.org
2. Information on the service that Scopus provides is available at https://blog.scopus.com/posts/is-a-title-indexed-in-scopus-a-reminder-to-check-before-you-publish
3. The Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association (http://thinkchecksubmit.org/check/) provides advice to submitters on assessing reputable open access journals.
4. See https://www.tsv.fi/julkaisufoorumi/haku.php?lang=en for the Finnish Publications Forum.
5. More information on the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series, and Publishers is available at https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/publiseringskanaler/Forside
6. The DOAJ announcement of collaboration with Nordic countries regarding evaluating open access journals can be found at https://doajournals.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/nordic-research-organizations-support-doaj/
7. A copy of Beall's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers currently can still be found on the Internet (e.g., http://beallslist.weebly.com/standalone-journals.html), but it is no longer updated.

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