

Academic Journals: Evaluation, Selection and Author Rights

Publishing for the first time in an academic journal can seem intimidating. We're here to break down the process of finding, evaluating, and selecting an appropriate journal to which to send your manuscript. We'll also address some of the considerations you might make when signing an author contract and considering your future rights to reuse and archive your work.

Evaluation and Selection

Publishing Tools

Are you unsure which journal or press would be the best place to publish your work? Consulting colleagues or faculty here at Columbia can be a fantastic way to learn the names of leading and trusted journals in your field. Paying attention to publishers who distribute the scholarship that you most often read in your classwork or research and looking out for their calls for submissions are also great ways to identify appropriate venues for your work. There are also a few tools that can help you narrow down your choice:



Image 1: Icon made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

- **JANE** (Journal/Article Name Estimator) and **SJ Finder** will make suggestions based on a title and abstract you provide. They use data from PubMed and MedLine, and are best suited for researchers in scientific fields. Click on the following links to learn more:

JANE: <https://jane.biosemantics.org/>

SJ Finder: <http://www.sjfinder.com/>

- **Ulrich's Global Serials Directory** provides bibliographic and publisher information on more than 300,000 periodicals of all types—academic and scholarly journals, but

also trade publications, magazines, and newspapers, which may be alternative venues in which to publish works for a wider audience. Click on the following link to learn more:

<http://ulrichsweb.serialssolutions.com/login>

- **The Directory of Open Access Journals** is a service that indexes high-quality, peer-reviewed open access research journals, periodicals, and articles. The Directory aims to be comprehensive and cover all open access academic journals that use an appropriate quality control system and is not limited to particular languages, geographical regions, or subject areas. Click on the following link to learn more:

<https://doaj.org/>

Publishers



Image 2: Icon made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

Most publishers don't accept simultaneous submissions, that is, you can just apply to one journal at a time. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help you make a decision about where to send it first. A journal's website is usually the best place to find the answers to these questions.

Where is it indexed (where will people find your work)? A journal that is well-indexed, meaning that it is discoverable through many databases online, as well as through tools like Google Scholar and library catalogs, will mean that other researchers are more likely to find and cite your scholarship.

What is its scope? If the journal has a broad scope it may be more difficult for your work to stand out in a crowd, and the journal will receive many more applicable submissions. Sometimes choosing a journal that focuses more narrowly on your specialization or field of study or a broader one that solicits submissions for a special issue devoted to those topics can improve your chances of acceptance.

The advent of digital publishing has led to a proliferation of online-only academic journals, many of which are similar or even superior in quality to some print publications; however, some others are of **dubious reputation**. Some journals that are not affiliated with reputable scholars and publishing organizations may ask you to pay to have your journal article published but fail to conduct quality peer review and editing, which will lead to poor readership and reception of your work.

If you've been invited to submit to a journal but are unsure about its legitimacy, ask yourself the following questions.

- If the journal is open access, is it registered with the Directory of Open Access Journals - <https://doaj.org/>?
- Does the journal list the names of its editorial and advisory boards?
- Are the journal's peer review and editorial policies openly available?
- Do you recognize the names of current contributors as scholars in your field?
- Do you recognize the publisher of the journal? Is this information easy to find? Is that publisher a member of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics): <https://publicationethics.org/>?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, it's possible (but not guaranteed) that you're dealing with a predatory publisher. Feel free to contact us at publishing@library.columbia.edu if you have questions.

Your Author Rights

It is important to understand that you have rights as an author to make decisions about how your work will be published and what rights you and others have to reuse that work. Without the need to formally register your work, you inherently own the copyright to any piece of intellectual property you produce. When you publish an article with a journal, you will sign a contract giving them the right to publish and reproduce your work. The journal may ask you to transfer your copyright of that work to them, or to license it—grant certain rights, but not full ownership of the article—to them.



Image 3: Icon made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

Some of the questions that are important to consider when you are signing and negotiating your author contract are:

- Is the journal open access, or will its policies allow you to make a version of your work available in a disciplinary or institutional repository (e.g. Academic Commons - <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/> or CORE - <https://hcommons.org/core/>)?
 - If the journal that you publish in is not open access, but allows you to publish a version of your work in an open access repository, you may be able to provide increased access to your work beyond that journal's subscribership.
 - Journals may allow you to place a version of the work that has not been fully reviewed, edited, and typeset (a PREPRINT) or the full (POSTPRINT) version of the article in a repository.
 - Columbia's institutional repository is called Academic Commons (<https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/>). You can make a self-deposit of your work to Academic commons using our online form and receive monthly information on downloads and viewership of your work to track its impact online.

- What rights will you retain (if any) if this journal publishes your work?
 - Having the ability to reuse your work (for instance, to republish a portion of an article as a book chapter if you later expand your research on the topic or complete a dissertation) may be important to you. You can check Sherpa/Romeo (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php>) for this information. Sherpa/Romeo is a database showing the copyright and open access self-archiving policies of more than 22,000 academic journals.

Additional Resources

- **Columbia's Copyright Advisory Services** are housed in the Libraries. This department can answer questions and provide guidance about topics like using media and other copyrighted materials in your research and teaching and your rights as an author. Click on the following links to learn more:
 - Copyright Advisory Services:
<https://copyright.columbia.edu/>
 - Tools like Copyright Basics:
<https://bit.ly/CopyrightBasicsB2B>
 - Information for Students:
<https://bit.ly/CopyrightForStudentsB2B>
 - Drop-in help for copyright questions can be obtained during office hours on Tuesdays 10-12 in Butler Library. You can also email copyright@library.columbia.edu.
 - The **Authors Alliance** is an organization that helps authors who want to serve the public good by sharing their creations broadly. They create resources to help authors understand and enjoy their rights including their guidance on Publication Contracts. Click on the following link to learn more:
<https://www.authorsalliance.org/resources/publication-contracts/>
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