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HOW TO IDENTIFY **FAKE JOURNALS**



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Introduction

The accepted procedure of dissemination and validation of research outcomes is the publication through peer reviewed journals or presentations through well recognized conferences. With the development of information and communication technology, 'Online Journals' are becoming more convenient and effective in dissemination of knowledge.

However, this has created an avenue for online 'Fake or Predatory Journals', which are not following standard reviewing processes. Some Sri Lankan researchers, knowingly or unknowingly, have published research findings in such journals.

The NSF Working Committee on Basic Sciences held a discussion on this matter with the Heads of relevant Research Institutes and Universities in Sri Lanka with the objective of making the Sri Lankan researchers aware of these Journals and the harm they cause to research and development. Another objective was to formulate a mechanism to educate young researchers in Sri Lanka on this issue and to take precautionary actions to protect them in their career advancement. The discussion was successfully held with the participation of 35 Senior Scientists/Academics, including Vice Chancellors or their nominees, Heads of Research Institutes or their nominees, Chairpersons and Committee members of NSF Working Committees.

Prof. W G D Dharmaratne, Chairman, Working Committee on Basic Sciences, initiated the discussion by introducing the topic and explaining the objectives of the Seminar. Thereafter, Prof. L.P. Jayatissa, Department of Botany, University of Ruhuna, Prof. Jayantha Wijeyaratne, Chairman, NSF Research Advisory Board and Prof. Vijay Kumar, Chairman, National Institute of Fundamental Studies made three interesting presentations while sharing their experience and knowledge, followed by an open discussion. Most of the invitees commented and appreciated that it was a very informative seminar on a very timely topic and gave very useful suggestions. Finally it was decided to prepare a document based on the points discussed at this seminar and to circulate among all Universities and Research Institutes to make Sri Lankan Scientists aware of this crisis. During the presentations and discussions, it was also discussed about fake conferences.

Following sections summarize the outcome of the discussion.

1. Key features of fake journals

- a) Editors cannot be clearly identified. Publishers pretend that they are in developed countries, however, bank details and IP addresses are from developing countries.
- b) The publisher uses email addresses that end in gmail.com, yahoo .com or other common emails.
- c) Publishers do not use standard identifiers such as ISSN or DoI.
- d) Maintain attractive websites, attractive names but with false information. Websites are poorly maintained with prominent misspellings and grammatical errors.
- e) The name of the journal does not adequately reflect its origin.
- f) The journal title combines two or more fields which are not normally treated together.
- g) Names of renowned scientists are included in the Editorial Board without their permission.
- h) Within a short period after the submission of an article, a tabulated review (where the comments are mostly same for everyone) or an editorial oversight (with 2 or 3 sentences) will be received.
- i) As soon as the revised version is submitted it is published online, after that a publication fee is requested,
 - if you cannot pay, it is possible to bargain and reduce the amount.
 - if you keep silent emails will be sent continuously asking about the fee.
- j) Publication fee is paid to an individual not to an organization.
- k) Same author can publish dozens of papers within a month.
- l) Authors must pay more, if a published article is subsequently withdrawn.
- m) It is possible to back date and publish papers.
- n) Authorships can be purchased.
- o) Advertise high impact factors assigned by fake impact factor services.
- p) The number of volumes and issues per year are not consistent and no policies for digital preservation

2. Key Features of Fake conferences

- a) Same organizers conduct several conferences on diverse topics, covering a wide scope.
- b) Not linked to a professional body or recognized academic organization or institute.
- c) Held at frequent intervals, eg: once a month.
- d) Abstracts are reviewed rapidly.
- e) Less emphasis on scientific program and more emphasis on social program or tourism.
- f) Papers in absentia are also accepted

3. Comments

- a) It was noted that the University Grants Commission and some Universities have already taking some actions regarding this issue.
- b) It was reported that University Grants Commission is in the course of preparing a document changing the scheme of appointment of academics and promotion to Professorship considering the quality of publications and plagiarism.
- c) Further, it has been discussed giving authority to Selection Committees to alter marks with a proper justification, which is currently prohibited.
- d) Some Universities are taking actions to educate all junior staff by preparing a list of credible journals and taking this as a continuous agenda item at Faculty Boards. In addition, these Universities have taken actions by the Senate to appoint a Committee to make recommendations to the University.
- e) It was discussed that Journals listed under 'Sri Lanka Journals Online' are credible journals.
- f) To produce the outcome of this seminar as a publication/leaflet.

4. Suggestions

- (a) To establish a list of credible journals:
It is not practical to prepare a list of Fake Journals. Therefore, it was suggested to prepare a list of credible journals covering all possible research areas. It is advisable to get the information on acceptable journals from Departments, Faculties and approved at the Senate Level in Universities. Similar procedure could be followed in other institutes. The list could be periodically updated.
- (b) Inform all Research Institutes, Senior Scientists and Academics to take proactive measures to avoid publishing in fake journals.
- (c) Request University Grants Commission to make necessary changes in the scheme of appointment of academics and promotion to Professorship considering the quality of publications avoiding accepting low quality publications in fake journal. Similar actions shall be taken by other institutes.
- (d) To have a separate body to pass the applications for new appointments or promotions after checking the quality of publications (to be suggested to UGC to implement a suitable method in the criteria for Professor appointments)
- (e) Suggest UGC to give authority again to Selection Committees to alter marks with a proper justification, which is currently not possible, to avoid giving marks for unacceptable journal/conference publications.
- (f) To inform Universities to maintain a list of credible journals/publishers, and to have a body to check the quality of publications before sending the thesis for evaluations, if publications are listed in the thesis.
- (g) Consider the quality of publications in making awards for researchers, including the research allowances.
- (h) Educate researchers sending papers for internationally recognized conferences. Financial assistance to attend conferences shall be awarded only for well recognized conferences.
- (i) Suggest NSF to give publicity to this document and educate researchers and establish a database of quality journals at NSF.

- (j) Encourage Universities and Research Institutes to give publicity to this document and take necessary arrangements to educate all their staff on this issue.
- (k) NSF Working Committee on Basic Sciences can recommend a resource person to make a presentation on this issue at any institution, if interested.

