

Retraction Watch

Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process

Fallout from Science's publisher sting: Journal closes in Croatia

[with 10 comments](#)



Science's John Bohannon [has recently revealed](#) the extent of poor or non-existent peer review in some journals that call themselves peer-reviewed, as we [reported on here](#).

Now, an open-access publisher based in Rijeka, Croatia, called [InTech](#), has cancelled its journal that was targeted and exposed by Science's investigation. The journal was going to charge 400 euros to publish the paper by Bohannon.

The *International Journal of Integrative Medicine* has been "discontinued", does "not accept submissions" and "is no longer active" states the publisher's website.

The [notice](#), posted just a day after Science published its piece, says:

"We regret to inform you that as of October 4th, 2013, the International Journal of Integrative Medicine is no longer active.

Authors who have paid the Article Processing Charge (APC) when submitting their research paper to this journal, will be refunded in full.

Articles published in the International Journal of Integrative Medicine up-to-date, will remain available online on the journal's webpage.

For any further information regarding the International Journal of Integrative Medicine, please contact us at iim@intechopen.com.

In an e-mail from InTech, which I [already reported](#) in Croatia's Jutarnji List, InTech blames its scientific editors who operate outside the actual firm.

The journal's double blind peer-review system failed in this instance, they say, and the work of scientific editors and peer-reviewers showed itself to "be flawed, inadequate and superficial."

InTech accepts a big mistake made by its outside collaborators who had (it is now clear) too much independence in their work based on professional trust Because of this, we

decided to cease publication of the journal and so protect international scientific community and our collaborators.

InTech called *Science's* sting indicative of an

overarching problem in publishing and the need for stricter supervision of work by outside science editors and peer-reviewers.

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Written by micotatalovic

October 17th, 2013 at 11:12 am

Posted in [croatia](#)

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Comments



• *elaine newman* October 17, 2013 at 11:17 am

Congratulations to John Bohannon and to Retraction Watch. May this be the start of a trend.

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• *Craig Smuda* October 17, 2013 at 11:41 am

Well, this is too bad for those who submitted legit if low-impact work to that journal- one of the scary prospects with these fly-by-night digital publishers going under for any reason is the potential loss of real science or clinical research. Is there a role for the archive.org 'archive team' or similar to catch more vulnerable output before it goes down the memory hole? Worse,

one could argue that well-meaning people who submitted their work have it tainted now- not adequately peer-reviewed, but published and thus not resubmittable without 'self-plagiarism'.

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• *aceil* October 17, 2013 at 11:43 am

If academics push for reform and scrutiny, many journals will not be able to stand the pressure! What justifies the principle of compelling authors to pay to publish although they provide material content and substance ? Don't journals make money when people visit their sites?

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• *STEM researcher* October 17, 2013 at 4:07 pm

I don't buy their explanation of how it happened. InTech's actual business model is largely based on exploiting such "overarching problems in publishing". They send out thousands of "invitations to contribute" to just about anyone who ever published on some subject & is willing to pay. Here is an exchange I had with one of their representatives 3 years ago. (all identifying details removed for legal reasons)

Dear Dr. XXX,

We recently contacted you with a proposal to submit a chapter to the forthcoming book, "ZZZ".

As a global leader in Open Access publishing, InTech's editorial team has helped over 60,000 academic authors publish in excess of 850 books. The success of "ZZZ" will depend upon the contribution of experts like you within your field.

Call for book chapters(For Selected and Invited Authors Only)

ZZZ Edited by: To preserve the integrity of the review process the identity of the editor will be disclosed upon final chapter submission.

.....
By publishing with InTech you will increase your citation rate, enhance your profile within the wider scientific community, retain full copyright of your work, receive a full color hard copy of the book and benefit from having the support of a dedicated Publishing Process Manager who will guide you through the publishing process.

To cover the costs of the publication process, all accepted chapters require the payment of an Article Processing Charge (APC).

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this project.
Kind regards, YYY /Publishing Process Manager/

Dear Ms. YYY,

Please remove me from your list & don't contact me with similar invitations in the future.

Regards,

XXX.

P.S. While I fully support the open access of public to scientific publications, I consider the approach based on APC to be deeply flawed & wasteful. Most highly regarded journals in my field permit all authors to post the postprints of accepted papers on their personal webpages. Anyone can access my publications for free if they are interested. Your model will primarily attract the authors whose work would have difficulties passing the usual peer review in serious journals. As such, it not only wastes the authors' money (& that of their institutions) to enrich your company, but also wastes the attention of readers. In any reputable collection, an invitation like yours would be signed by the editor(s), whose scientific reputation could be at least a partial quality guarantee.

[I'll skip her reply since it is largely contained in my last letter.]

Dear Ms. YYY,

I have decided to respond to your personal email out of respect for the time you spent "addressing" my reservations. [Even though your letter appears to mainly repeat the standard marketing points undoubtedly used by your company on the web and elsewhere.]

Below I briefly respond to your points — just in case you are curious why I find them to be utterly unconvincing.

However, I do not have time or energy to continue this discussion. Please do not expect me to reply in the future.

Regards,

XXX.

> Dear Dr. XXX,

>

> Thank you for your e-mail and for supporting Open Access.

> I would like to reflect on some of the problems you have raised.

>

> You stated that most highly regarded journals permit all authors to post

> the postprints of accepted papers on their personal webpages. Let me

> inform you that we allow the same, since every author keeps all the

> copyrights to his work and can use that work in any manner that he or she

> wishes.

You are (intentionally?) missing the point: those journals have higher prestige/quality control AND don't charge the authors any fees AND advertise just as heavily (not to mention that they don't need much advertising) AND they don't mind my making pre/post-prints available for free AND some of

them even allow the authors to retain the copyright. The reason is simple — most of the better ones are published by scholarly societies (e.g., ...) and are not in this game to make money. In contrast, your company is a business, using open access as an excuse to charge exorbitant fees, attracting primarily those who would not be able to publish their work through the usual channels.

- > It is true that anyone can access your publications for free on your
- > personal web page, but how many of them actually do? Our websites
- > constantly increase traffic and number of downloads, so far we have had
- > more than 3.500.000 chapter downloads from all over the world.

On average, there are between 7 to 20 downloads of papers from my personal web site per month (yes, I do track those statistics). This does not even include the downloads of my pre-prints from arxiv.org
The numbers accurately reflect the level of interest in my work — it's not a cancer cure, but there are enough serious researchers around the world following it. The usual procedure for them is as follows:

- 1) find a paper in a reputable journal, which appears interesting based on an abstract freely available from that journal's website;
- 2) if their university library subscribes to this journal, download the paper from there;
- 3) if not, google the article title to find the author's webpage or the arxiv.org preprint;
- 4) read the paper for free in its entirety.

- > The point is that we advertise, promote and actively attract readers to
- > our web page. Also, more important fact is that, by publishing with us,
- > your work will be distributed to scientific databases, indices and search
- > engines (Mendeley, Google Scholar, Cite Seer, Research Gate and InTech
- > Open).

This point of yours assumes that I am ignorant of how Mendeley, Google Scholar, and Cite Seer work. Any reputable journal or book collection will be included in them. Many disreputable ones will be as well.

- > Professors with stellar reputation and track record have already published
- > with InTech, and they found our business model, author support during the
- > process and final quality of our publications more than satisfactory.
- > To name just a few of our authors with such a reputation:
- > – Dr. XYZ1 (8 chapters published with InTech), Osaka
- > University (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XYZ1>)
- > – Dr. XYZ2 (this year's IEEE Award winner, 6 chapters published
- > with InTech), Tokyo University, Yale University
- > – Dr. XYZ3, University College London Hospital.

I really cannot speak for the motives of others. But I will note that there are a lot of people in academia susceptible to flattery & willing to compromise for the sake of convenience or congeniality. Alternatively, in some branches of science/engineering, having a venue for an extremely rapid publication to stake out one's priority might trump all other

considerations. However, I wonder if the above 3 researchers have paid your usual publication fees for all their chapters. And I don't think that they would be thrilled to learn that you are using them in your promotional literature to enlist more authors. Should I perhaps forward our email exchange to all 3 of them, asking for their opinions?

- > Regarding the quality guaranteed by the editors invitation – our process
- > is structured in the way that all the communication is led through
- > Publishing Process Managers and authors like that because of the personal
- > approach. But the Book Editor is still the person who guarantees the
- > quality of the book.

There is nothing personal about this approach. The name & reputation of the editor could be an important factor for authors to decide whether they want to contribute. Most contacted authors will simply guess that you currently don't have an editor appointed yet or are working with someone, whose credentials would hardly attract other researchers.

- >
- > I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this particular matter.
- >

Now that you do know my thoughts on the subject, I suggest we stop this exchange. I need to get back to work & you surely have many more gullible authors to invite for many more collections.

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• RMS October 18, 2013 at 1:46 am

I like qq's comment: "There are open access journals that publish reviewer/editor names! Submit to those and show the world that another legit scientist staked their name to your paper!"

To compliment, journals that publish the entire peer-review chain (e.g. F1000Research) make it easy to spot how good the review process was, and if some poor paper squeaked through. In this technology age, these approaches should become more universal, both in open and subscription journals.

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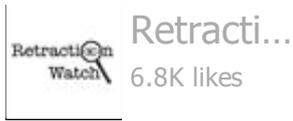
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