

# The Good, the Bad and the Inbetween

## Predatory publishing and the many facets of quality in scholarly communication

RWTH Publishing Forum (#3) 25.7.2024

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# Some Housekeeping

- this session is *not* recorded
- slides will be available on the website of the RWTH University Library (→ Research → Scholarly Publishing → Publishing Forum) and in RWTH Publications
- **Save-the-date: next Publishing Forum**

  **September, 19th, 1:00 p.m. (Zoom)**
  **Topic: RWTH Open Access Journals -**
  **A cooperation project by RWTH Aachen University and hbz NRW**

- Ideas for further topics?
  ⇒ Let us know! rtp@ub.rwth-aachen.de

# More Housekeeping

## Feedback welcome!

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# And now: „The Good, the Bad and the Inbetween ….“

## Agenda

Part 1 Predatory Publishing
- What is Predatory Publishing?
- Why does it exist?
- Why is it a problem?
- How to recognize it?

Part 2: Quality in Scholary Communication
- What kind of quality (criteria) are we talking about?
- What is the problem?
- What about Mass Open Access Publishers?
- Where to find orientation?

# AT2OA2 – Subproject 4 *Predatory Publishing*

**Project Partners**

24 Institutions

20+ Working groups

80+ Co-workers




**Main Goals**

- Fostering the transformation to Open Access.
- Enabling scientists to publish Open Access and Funder-compliant at no cost.
- Outreach & international networking: participation in conferences, publications etc.

**5 Subprojects:**

1) More transformative Agreements
2) Austrian Datahub for Open Access Negotiations and Monitoring
3) Analysis of Publication Costs
4) Predatory Publishing
5) Visibility of OA publications

# Definition „Predatory Publishing“

“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.”

(Grudniewicz, A. et al. (2019). Predatory journals: no definition, no defence, Nature 576, 210-212. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y)

# *Predatory Publishing* - How did we get there?

Much has changed and continues to change: the system of scientific communication as well as scientific publishing does not stand on its own. It is networked with other systems and is influenced by various factors and developments:

- Digitalization & Internet
- Open Access & Open Science
- New Ways of Scholarly Communication including New Publication Formats
- Journal Impact Factor & Funding Organizations
- Research evaluation

All these developments lead to changes, challenges ……

# Open Access – A (underestimated) Transforming Force

“By 'open access' to the literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself.“ (**Berlin Declaration**)

**Open access (OA) means free access to information and unrestricted use of electronic resources for everyone. (UNESCO)**

**Open Access led to a (subtle) market reform**:

- Past: payment mainly for access to scientific literature
- Now: the prevalent open access model is payment for publishing of articles (APCs)!

More Content ➡ More Profit

**This changes the logic of the market:**

- Past: licensors also cast a vote on relevance and quality of a journal
- Now: low publication turnaround times and easy administration for authors are an additional aspect

# Predatory publishing – a fraudulent business model

**First of all: Predatory Publishing is a fraudulent business model!**

- Predatory publishing utilizes the prevalent open access cost model, Articles Processes Charges (APCs)
- Fraudulence exists in any business and market
- Fraudulence means that the services offered are not delivered
  - Peer Review
  - Availability of content
  - Long term archiving

  …
- False claims about legitimacy of a journal
  - Provision of peer review
  - Indexing
  - Editorial board

**! It is a sham!**

# Predatory publishing – a symptom of biases and deficiencies in the scholarly ecosystem

**There is a market for predatory publishing**

- Predatory publishing fills a demand
  - Quick publication of articles
  - Cheaper open access publishing
  - Publishing venues that are open to all
  - …

- A demand created by systemic problems in the scholarly ecosystem
  - More authors publish ever more articles – Competition for scarce resources
  - Publish or perish culture – Incentivized acceleration
  - Inequities – Global South
  - Commodification of science – Production of scientific output
  - …

**! Combatting predatory practices per se will not suffice and is too short-sighted!**

# The Impact of Predatory Publishing & Why it is a problem:

- **For Autors**:
  - Loss of research results, not visible/findable/no longer accessible
  - Results are not trusted as they are published alongside incorrect/false results
  - Waste of time and money
  - Damage to reputation and career
- **For Institutions:**
  - Influence on reputation
  - Reduced attractiveness for students and as an employer
- **For Science in general:**
  - Good scientific practice is being undermined
  - Contributions to science are lost
- **For Society:**
  - Science scepticism - As science is a pillar of society and democracy it has to be of quality
  - People need to trust that the foundation is sound and solid

**"That is the problem with the predatory publishers in the end: eroding trust in science. A slowly creeping poison. Something might look like a study, but is not worth the paper where it is written on."**

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/aug/10/predatory-publishers-the-journals-who-churn-out-fake-science

# How to detect and to avoid Predatory Publishers

Sometimes it‘s easy but publishers adapt and improve their invitations and their web presence.

**Typical indicators on websites or in e-mails are:**

- Spelling or grammatical mistakes
- Similarities with names or websites of well-known, legitimate journals
- Aggressive solicitation practices
- Fake - Editorial boards (people who do not exist, or are not experts in the journal topic, or “stolen” identities of real people are used, etc.)
- Unrealistic time line for publication
- Journal Impact Factor or other citation metric on the website that is incorrect or cannot be verified
- ……..

Elmore, S. A., & Weston, E. H. (2020). Predatory journals: what they are and how to avoid them. *Toxicologic pathology*, *48*(4), 607-610.

# Example: Invitation

[redacted]

Submit Your Paper

Dear Author,

We are pleased to inform you that [redacted] is going to launch its next issue(January 2022).
We would like to invite you to contribute your Research Paper for publication in [redacted]
International Journal that provides rapid publication (within a month) of articles in all areas of business and management and its applications.

The journal welcomes publications of high quality papers on theoretical developments and practical applications in business and management.

Original research papers, state-of-the-art reviews, and high quality technical notes are invited for publications.

Impact Factor: 3.52

Publication frequency: 12 issue per year
[redacted] follows the rapid publication process

Indexing: Crossref, NASA ads, DOAJ, Index Copernicus, Open-J Gate etc.

e ISSN No. [redacted]

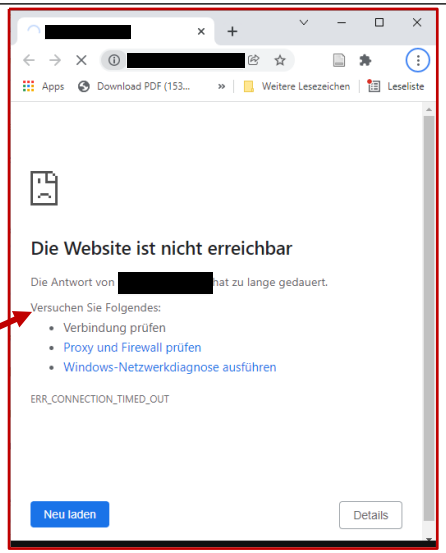
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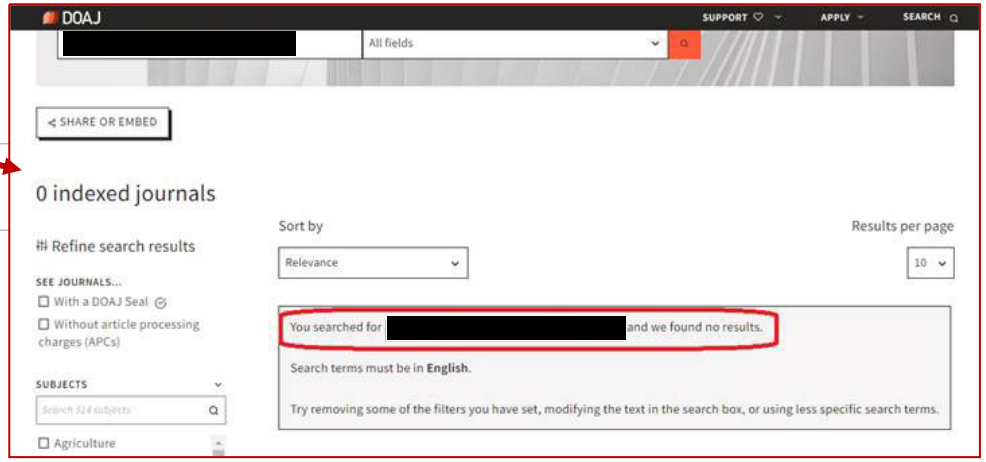
Call For Paper

[redacted] Journals Publishes within 48 hours.

Contact Details
Website:
Email Id: [redacted]

Regards
Director General






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# Examples

__all journal scopus__paper research publish_____%%%%%%%%%%%%%__

LÖSCHEN ANTWORTEN ALLEN ANTWORTEN WEITERLEITEN

Als ungelesen markieren

[redacted]

Do 14.05.2020 08:05

[redacted]

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[redacted]journal provides a wide range of journals in broad fields of research like engineering, medical, science, technology, management, health science, environment and much more. Our aim is to provide the best platform for the researchers to publish their work with transparency and integrity with the open-access model.

[redacted]**ournal provides a list of following journals-**

[redacted]

[redacted]

The **scopes** of the journal include, but are not limited to, the following fields: Accounting, Advertising Management, Business & Economics, Business Ethics, Business Intelligence, Business Law, Business Performance Management, Business Statistics, Change Management, Communications Management, Comparative Economic Systems, Corporate Finance and Governance, Development Planning and Policy, Organizational Communication, Business Fluctuations, and Cycles, Product Management, Production and Organizations, Production/Operations Management,Time Management, Total Quality Management, Travel/Transportation/Tourism, Welfare Economics

**Current Impact Factor: 2.785**

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16,387 | | 2,222 | |
| 10,370 | | 2,098 | |
| 5,673 | | 1,775 | |
| 4,530 | | 1,626 | |
| 3,091 | | 1,557 | |

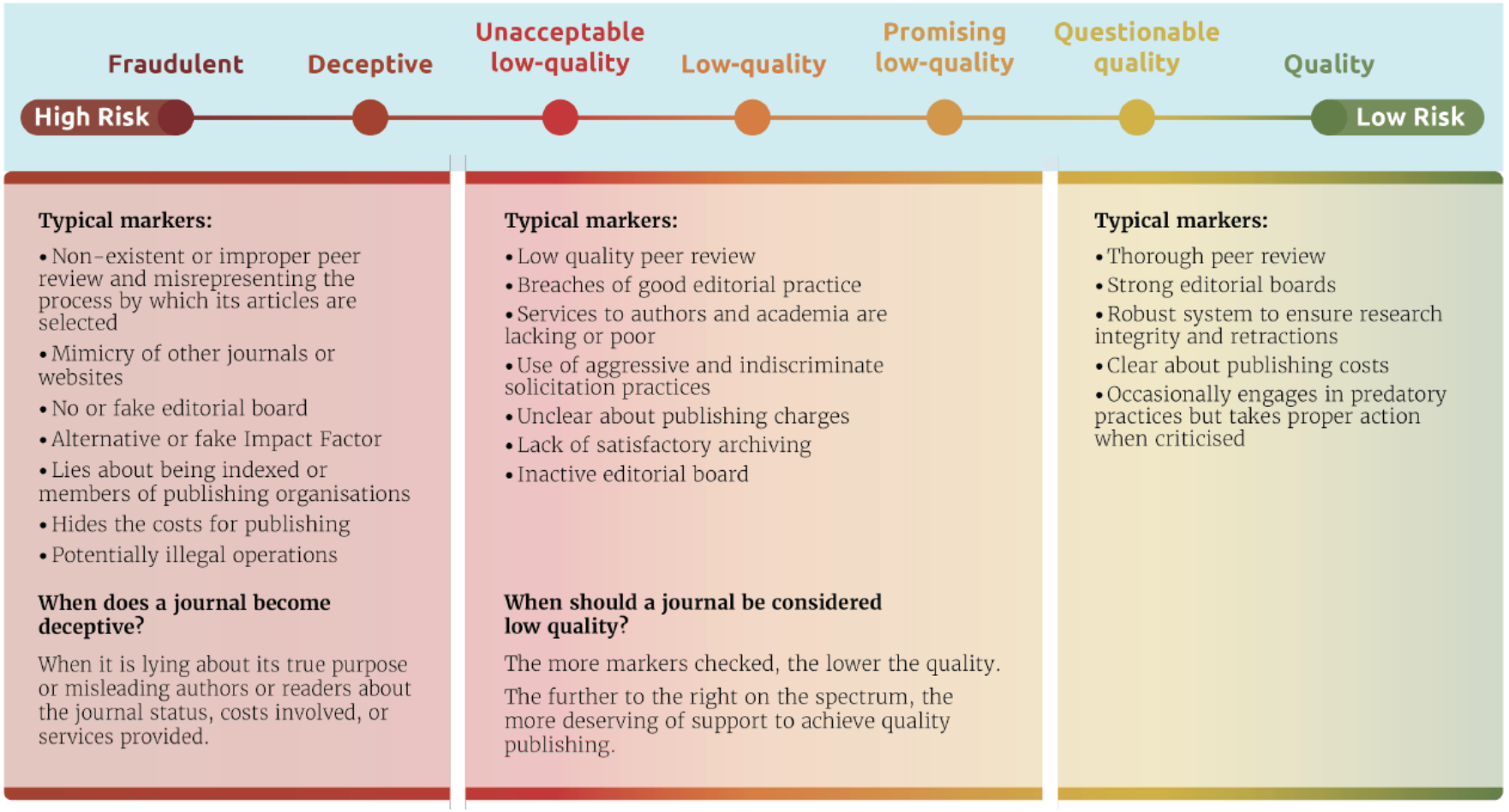
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Open Access

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# The many shades of quality in scholarly communication



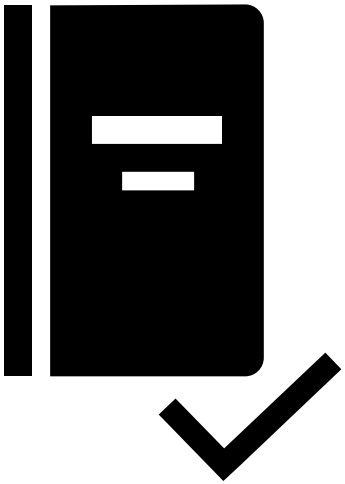

IAP (2022), Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences. https://www.interacademies.org/project/predatorypublishing

# What kind of quality are we talking about?

When talking about the quality of academic journals, we can distinguish between

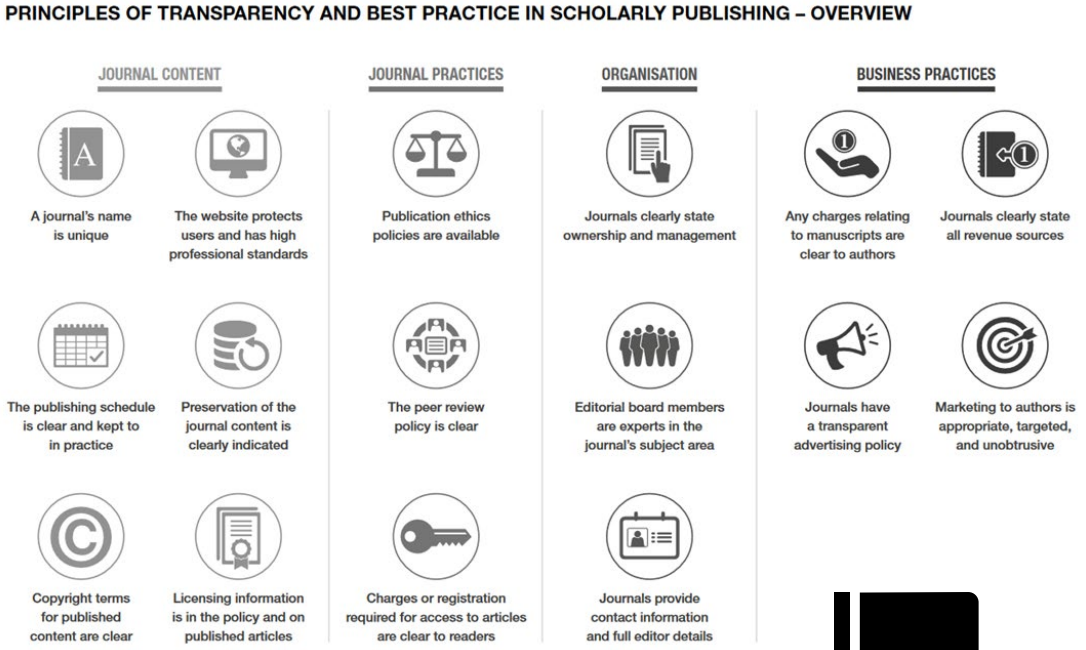
quality of the content vs. quality of the container

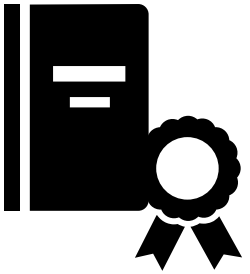




# What is the formal quality of a journal and why is it important?

- Certain form, norms and standards have been established and best practices defined, which serve as template and guide for journals about:
  - information and transparency
  - technical and legal standards
  - processes of quality assurance
  - services to readers and authors
- These are adjusted over time due to developments in scholarly communication or technology
  - special issues
  - AI
- They serve and help to
  - ensure, that the content reaches a satisfactory level of quality
  - meet expectations of the readers and authors
  - establish trust in the publishing venue
- They are used and required by
  - Database providers, Indexing services
  - Libraries
  - Funding bodies



COPE, DOAJ, OASPA, WAME "The Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing" https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/principles-transparency-best-practice-scholarly-publishing.pdf

# So: Where‘s the list?

Problem!

- Predatory journals are not that obvious anymore.
- They are getting better and adjust their practices.
- Difficult to distinguish between low quality journals and predatory journals.
- It takes time to analyze a journal.

Solution?
Blacklists like Beall‘s List, Cabells, Stop Predatory Journals, etc

Problem!

- List can never be complete
- Difficult to keep up to date
- Criteria for inclusion not always transparent
- People behind them may be anonymous
- Hidden agenda or motive behind it
- Not every list is the same (https://doi.org/10.1128/mbio.00411-19)
- Once on the list, journals can never get rid of bad reputation – internet never forgets

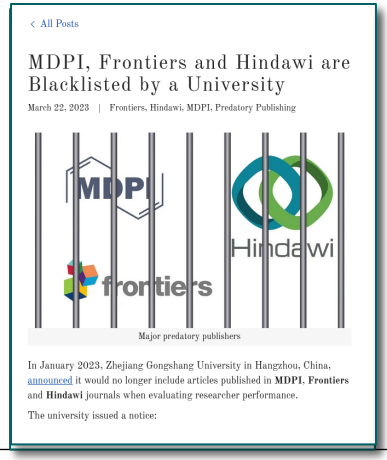
# What‘s in a name?

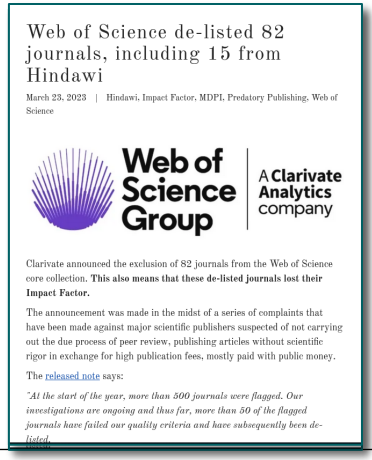
*“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.”*

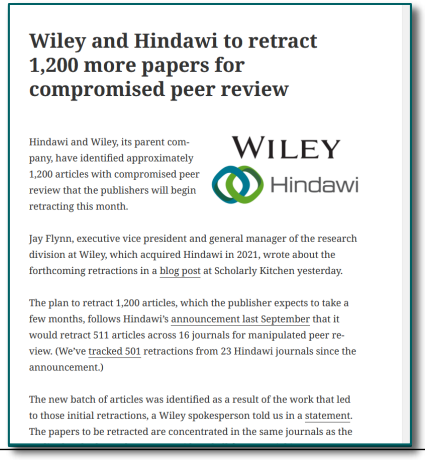
(Grudniewicz, A. et al. (2019). Predatory journals: no definition, no defence, Nature 576, 210-212. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-019-03759-y)

- Definition leaves a lot of room for interpretation
- If you go looking for faults and/or deviations from best practices, you will find them!

→ The term „predatory“ is used for many „grey“ areas









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# Mass Open Access Publishes – Are they or aren‘t they?

They cater to the authors, as they meet their needs:
- Quick turnaround and low rejection rate
- Well established workflows
- A journal for nearly every subject
- Meet funder requirements
- High impact factors at times
- Often available funding at universities

They show certain markers on the spectrum that remind of predatory journals
- Quick turnaround
- Aggressive emails
- Very broad and general titles/spectrums

They are not Predatory publishers, as they do not actively deceive and defraud
- Do not invent impact factors
- Real editorial boards
- Peer review
- Publishing standards
- Some high quality, established journals

→ **Somewhere between orange and green – depends on the journal – weigh the risks!**

# Take aways

**Don‘t trust blindly – do your due dilligence!**

- Form your own opinion about a journal
- Find the best home, not the easy way out
- Assessing the risk – not only to yourself but the whole ecosystem

**Starving predatory publishers off – Do not lend them credibility!**

- through Publications
- through Citations
- through Editorialship (hint: google yourself!)

**Foster quality – Contribute to sustaining the scholarly common!**

- Publications in quality journals
- Peer Review for quality journals
- Editorialship of quality journals
- …

# Help & Information

**STAY CRITICAL!**

- Check trustworthy journal directories (Whitelists):
  - Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
  - Scopus Source Titel Liste
  - Web of Science Master Journal List

- Other Resources / Tools:
  - THINK CHECK SUBMIT




  - THINK CHECK ATTEND




- Exchange notes with your colleagues and peers and publish in journals used and recommended by them.

- **When in doubt – ask your library!**

# Information and publishing services at RWTH Aachen

## Contact:

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- Blog: Scholarly Communications in Transition
  https://in-transition.at/

- Project-Website
  https://at2oa.at/



# Many thanks! Questions? Comments?

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