

Sideshowes and Leftovers

Does *DOAJ* represent the universe of OA journals? Not entirely. There are certainly more than 1,000 OA journals that are *not* in *DOAJ*—and more than 7,000 journal names that aren't represented in *DOAJ*.

OA journals that I encountered but that aren't in *DOAJ* may be missing for one or more of several reasons:

- They're brand-new, and the publisher is waiting until a couple of issues are published before submitting them to *DOAJ*.
- They don't meet *DOAJ* criteria for inclusion—a situation that's much more likely in the future, given tighter criteria for inclusion.
- They're not actual OA journals publishing actual peer-reviewed scholarly articles at all: they're something else, most commonly “journals.” I define “journals” with scare quotes as web pages that purport to identify and describe journals, where there is no operational journal behind the web page.
- The publisher chose not to submit them to *DOAJ*.
- The publishing body isn't aware that *DOAJ* exists.

The title of this chapter suggests two ways to look at non-*DOAJ* gold open-access journals: as side-shows—things that aren't serious OA journals at all—and as leftovers—journals that aren't or aren't yet part of *DOAJ*.

My sense is that there are, at most, a few hundred leftovers, most of which are likely to show up in *DOAJ* unless they disappear. The examples here are some 401 journal names from OASPA members that, as of May 7, 2014, either weren't in *DOAJ* or couldn't be identified as being in *DOAJ*, and 8,000 or more

entities—journals and “journals”—that are either on Jeffrey Beall's list of “predatory” journals or published by one of his long list of “predatory” publishers. I think of the OASPA group as leftovers and of Beall's lists and most of the entities in them as side-shows.

OASPA Leftovers

As of the spring of 2014, OASPA member sites listed 1,531 journals. Of these, all but 401 are in *DOAJ* and are included in the discussion so far. Here's what I found among the other 401:

- **Almost New:** 112 began in 2013, but have had so few articles to date that the publishers may not yet have submitted them to *DOAJ*.
- **Empty:** 69, most of them explicitly ceased.
- **New:** 66 began in 2014 and will probably show up in *DOAJ* later.
- **New or Empty:** 41 journals in a single series of similarly named journals either started in 2014 or are essentially empty (in some cases explicitly ceased).
- **Sparse:** 30 began before 2013 but have never achieved five articles in any year; the publishers may not have submitted them (and they wouldn't be eligible under current criteria).
- **Unworkable:** Nine couldn't be evaluated, one because it yielded 404 errors, eight because the archives appear to be random.
- **Ceased:** Two others have explicitly ceased.

That leaves 73 journals, all of which are in grades *A*, *B*, *DE* (erratic), or *DS* (sparse). Four of those are miscellaneous. Of the others:

- Biomed includes 35 journals (9 percent free) with 3,694 articles in 2013 (1 percent free).
- STEM includes 8 journals (50 percent free) with 557 articles in 2013 (22 percent free).
- HSS includes 26 journals (73 percent free) with 274 articles in 2013 (75 percent free).

Inclusion of these journals would add almost nothing to STEM or HSS and would add only 1.7 percent more journals and 2.9 percent more articles to Biomed. I'd assume most of these will disappear or be added to *DOAJ*. I don't think they'd change the picture very much.

Beall's Lists Sideshow

Before I began looking at the full range of open-access journals, I investigated the 2014 versions of Jeffrey Beall's list of "potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers" and his list of "potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access journals" that aren't from those publishers.

Beall's 2014 lists

<http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/01/02/list-of-predatory-publishers-2014>

The results of that investigation were published as "Journals, 'Journals' and Wannabes: Investigating the List," in the July 2014 issue of *Cites & Insights*. I found that the lists expanded to 9,219 "journals"—but that thousands of these "journals" deserved the scare quotes: more than 2,800 had never published a single article, and more than 500 weren't reachable at all. You'll find more about these journals and "journals" in the October/November 2014 *Cites & Insights*, a follow-up of sorts to the July issue.

Cites & Insights, July 2014

<http://citesandinsights.info/civ14i7.pdf>

Cites & Insights, October/November 2014

<http://citesandinsights.info/civ14i10.pdf>

After reviewing more of Jeffrey Beall's writings on serials and open access, I conclude that Beall's list is not a meaningful resource. It is a subjective sideshow maintained by somebody who's made it clear that he's opposed to open access in general. Rather than link to particular articles, I'll suggest the April 2014 issue of *Cites & Insights*, specifically the first fourteen pages: "Ethics and Access 1: The Sad Case of Jeffrey

Beall." That essay refers and links to Beall's article "The Open-Access Movement Is Not Really about Open Access," and you should also read "Reactionary Rhetoric against Open Access Publishing" by Wayne Bivens-Tatum, a direct response to Beall's article, published in the same journal.

Cites & Insights, April 2014

<http://citesandinsights.info/civ14i4.pdf>

"Reactionary Rhetoric against Open Access Publishing"

<http://triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/617>

Less than 10 percent of the "journals" from Beall's lists were also in *DOAJ* as of mid-2014—and less than 10 percent of *DOAJ* entries were on Beall's set of questionable publishers and journals. I have no doubt there are some good-quality journals and publishers in Beall's set—just as I have no doubt there are questionable journals not only in Beall's set but among subscription journals.

Realistically, your best bet—for authors, readers, and librarians—is to begin with *DOAJ* and assume that *any* OA journal not included there is somewhat questionable, with exceptions noted in chapter 7.

Just Not Much There

Once you eliminate from the Beall subset journals that aren't reachable, journals that have never published anything, journals that aren't open access *at all*, journals that are dying or dead, and the large numbers of journals that are *obviously* questionable to an intelligent author or reader—those with grade C—there's just not much left.

A few key figures:

- Of journals checked in *DOAJ*, 70 percent are plausible prospects (grades A, A\$, and B). Of journals checked in the Beall set that are *not* also in *DOAJ*, 14 percent are plausible prospects.
- Looking at journals with decent grades that have managed to publish 20 or more articles in at least one recent year—not a terribly high bar—you'll find 3,714 such journals in the portion of *DOAJ* I investigated—and 474 in the Beall set. That's a 7.8 to 1 ratio.

Including journals with grades A, A\$, and B but with fewer articles, we arrive at figures for journal count and 2013 article counts (and the percentage of free journals and articles in those journals) shown in table 6.1.

The **Ratio** row shows the result of dividing the *DOAJ* figure by the Beall figure. In other words, there are 4.4 times as many *A*, *A\$*, and *B* journals in the tested subset of *DOAJ* as in the Beall set (excluding overlap)—and 8.6 times as many 2013 articles.

A Few Other Facts and Figures

In my full examination of OA journals, with detailed article counts and including 2011 and the first half of 2014, I visited 6,498 journals and “journals” in Beall’s set that weren’t also in *DOAJ*—skipping more than a thousand that yielded 404s on the first try or were too difficult to retry (mostly because publishers didn’t offer downloadable lists with hyperlinks). Of that 6,498, I found that 11 percent (753) were unreachable; 6 percent (413) didn’t meet my definition of OA; 3 percent (263) were hybrid journals with no apparent OA articles; 30 percent (2,045) were just names with no published articles whatsoever; and 279 were too opaque to analyze. The rest of these notes are based on the remaining 3,275 journals, of which I found 1,206 in *D* subcategories, 916 obviously questionable (*C*), 874 that require further checking (*B*), and 279 that appear to be good (*A* and *A\$*). Table 2.1 and the preceding text offer the closest comparison, but you may also find tables 6.3 and 6.4 later in this chapter useful.

By area, that group includes 1,135 Biomed journals (3 percent free) publishing 22,325 articles in 2013 (1 percent free); 1,489 STEM journals (6 percent free) publishing 38,953 articles in 2013 (3 percent free); and 632 HSS journals (3 percent free) publishing 12,080 articles in 2013 (1 percent free). There were also 19 miscellaneous journals. Compare that with table 1.1 for *DOAJ*.

Looking at peak article volume, 10 journals in the Beall set published 1,000 or more articles in their best recent year (accounting for 11,771 articles in 2013);

Table 6.1. *A*, *A\$*, and *B* journals in *DOAJ* and Beall

Group	Journals	% No-Fee	Articles	% No-Fee
<i>DOAJ</i>	5,123	67%	330,924	37%
Beall	1,153	6%	38,673	2%
Ratio	4.4		8.6	

Table 6.2. Fee ranges by subject areas, Beall set *A*, *A\$*, and *B*

Area	No Fee	Nominal	Low	Medium	High
<i>Biomed</i>	11	98	196	52	
Articles	60	5,165	3,802	933	
<i>STEM</i>	11	98	255	52	
Articles	60	5,165	3,802	933	
<i>HSS</i>	8	115	128	2	
Articles	102	5,030	2,750	156	

49 published 200 to 999 articles (17,318 in 2013); 219 published 60 to 199 articles (17,759 in 2013); 661 published 20 to 59 articles (16,953 in 2013); and 1,336 published fewer than 20 articles (11,952 in 2013). Table 2.4 is comparable.

Table 6.2 can be compared directly to table 3.2 and shows dramatic differences. Beall journals in Biomed and STEM mostly charge low fees (\$201–\$600)—and although the Beall HSS journals number less than one-third of the *DOAJ* group, there are actually more fee-charging HSS journals in the Beall set. (There *are* Beall journals with high APCs—more than 100 of them—but they’re all either grade *C* or in a *D* subgrade with very few articles.)

Just as almost all journals in this set charge fees, most of them appear to be recent parts of the gold rush. Where the number of *DOAJ* journals starting in 2012–2013 is less than half the number for 2010–2011, more than half of *all* journals in the Beall set (grades *A–D*) appear to have started in 2012 and 2013—1,883, nearly three times as many as in 2010–2011.

To the extent that the Beall set includes actual journals, they are mostly APC-charging journals begun during the gold rush with relatively low fees and relatively few articles, and there aren’t that many that sensible authors would *consider* submitting articles to, blacklist or no blacklist.

Comparing Major Areas

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 compare journals and articles with grades *A*, *A\$*, and *B* in the *DOAJ* and Beall sets in each of the broad areas. The */DOAJ* suffix indicates the *DOAJ* numbers; the Beall line follows in each case, with the ratio (*DOAJ* divided by Beall) below that.

Ratios in these two tables show one decimal place because at some APC levels there are actually *more* plausible Beall journals than *DOAJ* journals, even though overall there are several times as many plausible *DOAJ* journals.

There are no cases in which more articles appeared in plausible Beall journals than in *DOAJ* journals—and some of the ratios are fairly astonishing, such as the 727-to-1 ratio for articles in no-fee STEM journals.

Table 6.3. *DOAJ* and Beall A–B journals by area

Area	No Fee	Nominal	Low	Medium	High	Total
<i>Biomed/DOAJ</i>	824	114	140	165	397	1,640
Beall	11	98	196	52		357
Ratio	74.9	1.2	0.7	3.2		4.6
<i>STEM/DOAJ</i>	1,068	242	230	149	40	1,729
Beall	11	98	255	52		416
Ratio	97.1	2.5	0.9	2.9		4.2
<i>HSS/DOAJ</i>	1,482	105	71	26	4	1,688
Beall	8	115	128	2		253
Ratio	185.3	0.9	0.6	13.0		6.7

Table 6.4. *DOAJ* and Beall A–B articles by area

Area	No Fee	Nominal	Low	Medium	High	Total
<i>Biomed/DOAJ</i>	41,224	9,897	8,869	11,962	44,153	116,105
Beall	60	5,165	3,802	933		9,960
Ratio	687.1	1.9	2.3	12.8		11.7
<i>STEM/DOAJ</i>	43,623	26,050	23,020	20,915	11,934	125,542
Beall	60	5,165	3,802	933		9,960
Ratio	727.1	5.0	6.1	22.4		12.6
<i>HSS/DOAJ</i>	34,911	7,065	4,278	1,197	1,155	48,606
Beall	102	5,030	2,750	156		8,038
Ratio	342.3	1.4	1.6	7.7		6.0

Exiting the Sideshow

I don't think the sideshow deserves more attention. To the extent that Beall-set journals are worthy places for authors and readers, they will almost certainly show up in *DOAJ*. Showing up in *DOAJ* is, of course, *not* automatically proof of high quality. *DOAJ* lacks the resources to ensure that each issue of each journal listed actually meets all ethical and editorial standards. It is no more able to provide a reliable whitelist

than one librarian with an admitted disdain for OA in general is able to provide a reliable blacklist.

I've already listed sources for much more thorough coverage of the Beall set—that is, the July and October/November 2014 issues of *Cites & Insights*, with some additional coverage in December 2014 and January 2015. As with the *DOAJ* subset, data (but not publishers, journal names, or notes) for the Beall set is available as an anonymized spreadsheet if you wish to do your own analysis. See chapter 8 for details.