Editorial 33(1): (i) Revisiting the "need to publish ..."; (ii) ChatGPT and academic journal publishing

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Revisiting the "need to publish ..."

IIER Editorial 30(2) mentioned briefly and anonymously the "need to publish the research" perspective that is especially important to aspiring authors [1]:

> It is very important to me to have one article published in your journal. It is requested by the [government ministry and country] for Ph.D. students like me to publish a manuscript out of [my country]. And your journal is a very good match for my research work. Please, give me an opportunity to publish my manuscript in your journal, I will do everything to correct it. [1]

Only three years after the publication of that author's advocacy, or plea, it is timely to revisit the topic, for three important reasons. Firstly, it is a frequently occurring plea (at the back of my mind is an analogy to the "FAQ", or frequently asked/answered question, namely the "FOP"). So, what can the international academic publishing industry do, or do better, to accommodate such pleas? Ignoring is not an option.

Secondly, IIER continues to receive requests "to have one article published in your journal" or similar, that are notable because in general many or even most focus upon *career progression*, in sharp contrast to the more traditional, "Westernised" focus upon publication as a *dissemination of new knowledge*. For example, author X (below) did not mention *new knowledge* in the following plea (though I hasten to add that X's submission did satisfy that criterion). It was about *career progression*:

> ... it is very important to me to publish my paper quickly as it has a great impact on both my future career and life ... please inform me about the status of my submission to your prestigious journal. ...it is taken from my PhD dissertation which took about [x] years. As a research student who has to defend my doctoral thesis soon, I need to publish this article or have an official acceptance letter. Otherwise, I have to pay university fees, which is very difficult for me as a student due to the dire economic situation in [country]. *[this quotation from an email received in an earlier year has been edited by changing or omitting a number of words, to further minimise the risk of identification of the author]*

Thirdly, there is the matter of our endless reviewing of IIER's capacity to accommodate "need[s] to publish the research". Editorial 32(4) commented upon "Peer review in academic publishing: Challenges ..." [2], which included a re-iteration of our circumstances:

> ... IIER is at present "maxed out", but the international academic publishing industry is not, to date, delivering what we would really like to see. This is a good number of emulators of IIER, featuring open access; no article publishing charge ("APC"); high quality mentoring and copy editing support; a commitment to diversity, equity and

inclusion; able to sustain high standards in academic merit; and having strong local or regional societal connections ... [3]

Numerous earlier editorials have commented upon aspects of *capacity to publish* (see http://www.iier.org.au/about/iier-contents-editorials.html for the page "Contents of IIER editorials"). Among other problems, the inability of IIER and similar journals to "scale up" to larger numbers of articles per year leaves openings for much more commercially-oriented journals that rely on "pay to publish". Figure 1 provides an illustrative example of a journal advertisement that was emailed to me on 17 January 2023. Advertisements of this kind are directed towards recruiting authors, especially those whose primary concern is career progression ("Fastest publication service within 24 hrs!)". It contrasts with the kind of journal advertising that seemed to predominate in earlier times, that was directed mainly towards recruiting readers and librarians, and emphasising high selectivity towards the finest presentations of new knowledge.

From: AJER Journal <noreply@productvideobeta.online>
Subject: Dr. JAMES S KORT
Date: 17 January 2023 at 3:42:29 pm AWST
To: "rjatkinson@bigpond.com" <rjatkinson@bigpond.com>
Reply-To: AJER Journal <ajer@editormails.com>

Dear Author

AJER Journal published articles are indexed in GOOGLE SCHOLAR.

Papers are invited for **American Journal of Engineering Research (AJER Journal)**
JANUARY 2023 Issue related to all fields of Engineering etc.

e -ISSN 2320-0847
p-ISSN 2320-0936

Benefit of this indexing:
· Your paper will be searchable and accessible among millions of researchers.
· More authors will refer to your article and it will increase your article citation.
· Your article will be more popularized all around the world.

Impact Factor: 2.501

Google Scholar Citation: 2022

Fastest publication service within 24 hrs! (24x7 WORKING)

Whatsapp no.= **91-9311515042**

Email Id : ajer@editormails.com
Website : **www.ajer.org**

Figure 1: Marketing AJER to authors

The web page https://www.ajer.org/pay_fees_online.html states "Manuscript Handling Charges : 60 USD ... includes all review, publication, indexing charges". A modest fee relative to many other APCs, but it is a case of "pay to publish".

We could speculate that in the previous one or two decades, in very many fields of research, the "need to publish ..." in academic research journals grew faster than "capacity to publish". Is this surmised gap between these two perspectives tending to be filled mainly by a new generation of "pay to publish" journals and services, such as the one illustrated in Figure 1? A significant issue, especially for a small scale, volunteer labour only journal such as IIER, though the indulgence of further discussion has to be postponed, in order to put in the time needed for final checking of the 21 articles in IIER 33(1) prior to the promised publication date, 23 March 2023.

However, further discussion can be promised in IIER Editorial 33(2), which will contain our table of review outcomes for the 645 submissions we received in 2022. Also in Editorial 33(2), we will be very proud to celebrate attaining the one third mark towards 100 years of IIER publication. IIER celebrated its first quarter century in 2015 [4], and hopefully will celebrate its first half century in 2040. But 2040 is a long time to wait, so we plan to reflect upon IIER's first one-third century in 2023 as an item in Editorial 33(2).

ChatGPT and academic journal publishing

Since its release in November 2022, *ChatGPT* [5] has attracted considerable attention in international and national literature, especially in the most recent month, March 2023. A Google search for ChatGPT on 20 March 2023 recorded "About 701,000,000 results", which is "absolutely awesome" (to our EFL/ESL readers and authors, I suggest, respectfully, that you avoid adding that phrase to your English vocabulary). A good example of increased academic attention to ChatGPT has been illustrated well in a report on artificial intelligence (AI) and higher education by *University World News* [6]. Article titles in this report provide a helpful checklist of keywords and issues:

> Rather than ban generative AI, universities must learn from the past - Samuel Saunders
> ChatGPT - A new relationship between humans and machines - Thomas E. Jørgensen
> How to teach students about ethical issues behind new technologies - Rens van der Vorst
> AI in higher education - A tool for better learning? - Jacques Viljoen
> Facing facts: ChatGPT can be a tool for critical thinking - Nathan M. Greenfield
> What ChatGPT means for linguistic diversity and language learning - Yojana Sharma
> Universities cannot resist AI - Rather, they must embrace it - Samon Achani Biaou
> Leading academics believe fears over ChatGPT are misplaced - Edwin Naidu
> Universities on alert over ChatGPT and other AI assisted tools - Mimi Leung and Shuriah Niazi
> Learning to live with ChatGPT - Giselle Byrnes
> Could ChatGPT help to democratise the research process? - Brian Lucey and Michael Dowling [6]

To date, IIER has not received any submissions reporting upon research into ChatGPT or similar AI programs. However, IIER editorial and email correspondence advice to prospective authors concerning AI activities that may help them has contained encouragement to explore and use. This was summarised explicitly in Editorial 32(1) in a section headed "Translated from ... to English", in which we noted that it is:

> ... very rare for authors to provide tangible evidence of their use of a translation service, whether human or an artificial intelligence-style service such as *Google Translate*. However, we hasten to reassure prospective authors that we do not regard use of a translation service as a "negative" against their submission. On the contrary, IIER urges authors to use all scholarly research avenues and tools to improve their submissions [7]

However, the "use all ... avenues" perspective was qualified with cautions noted in the same Editorial, especially advancing our view that "... attaining a high level of familiarity with the scholarly discourse typical of the international literature requires that aspiring authors *undertake much reading and composing in English"*. [7] The same Editorial offered a good number of suggestions about promoting "much reading", including reference to another Editorial that discussed "text-to-speech" services [8]. The perspective suggested was:

> ... that "Listen" could provide a valuable resource for EFL/ESL authors, to help them acquire skills in discerning "when something doesn't sound right" ..., in the context of the culture of educational research. [8]

Whilst it is possible that some authors may find ChatGPT helpful, IIER advice to authors is likely to continue to be focused elsewhere, mainly upon encouraging authors to conduct their own searching of the literature, identifying of key sources and ideas, summarising of findings, and composing of the research questions arising. This is instead of trying to get ChatGPT or other AI-assisted tools to undertake all four of these tasks! The main and often the only illustrations offered to IIER authors and prospective authors are from Google and Google Scholar searches, as outlined in Editorial 31(1) [9]. To make use of a keyword suggested above in the quotations of article titles from *University World News* [6], the Google and Google Scholar searches that we suggest to authors are "AI assisted tools". To illustrate "AI assisted" in this context, a very recent review advice to an author included these sentences.

> To progress the research, you could explore the concepts of teacher [several keywords deleted] teaching. For example, try the following or similar Google Scholar searches (copy and paste into web reader address box):
> https://scholar.google.com.au/scholar?as_q=university+teacher+[keywords deleted] teaching+Africa&as_epq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&as_occt=any&as_sauthors=&as_publicati on=&as_ylo=2017&as_yhi=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5
> About 17,500 results since 2017 - you could scan the first few hundred, looking especially for open access articles and for research methods for studying [several keywords deleted].

This advice relies on Google's algorithms (Google's page ranking algorithms may or may not be viewed as "AI assistance") being good enough to allow us to suggest with confidence that "you could scan the first few hundred", because "17,500 results" is a number too large.

Finally, I do not resile from some ambivalence about AI's influence upon developers of modern software, included in Editorial 32(2) that referred to "... the fuzzy dividing line between artificial intelligence and the natural stupidity of the programmers who create it". Try Googling "overreach", for a (presumably) AI-assisted response!

References

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