

5-2018

Cabells Scholarly Analytics: A Go-To Source on Journal Quality (Review)

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Blobaum, Paul, "Cabells Scholarly Analytics: A Go-To Source on Journal Quality (Review)" (2018). *Faculty Research and Creative Activity*. 35.
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Cabells Scholarly Analytics

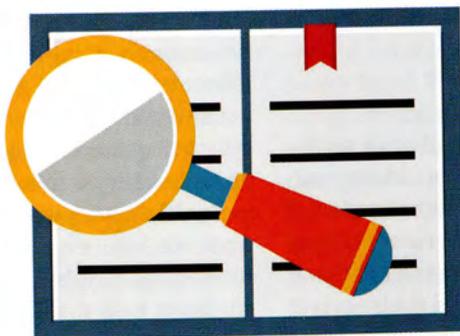


A Go-To Authority on Journal Quality

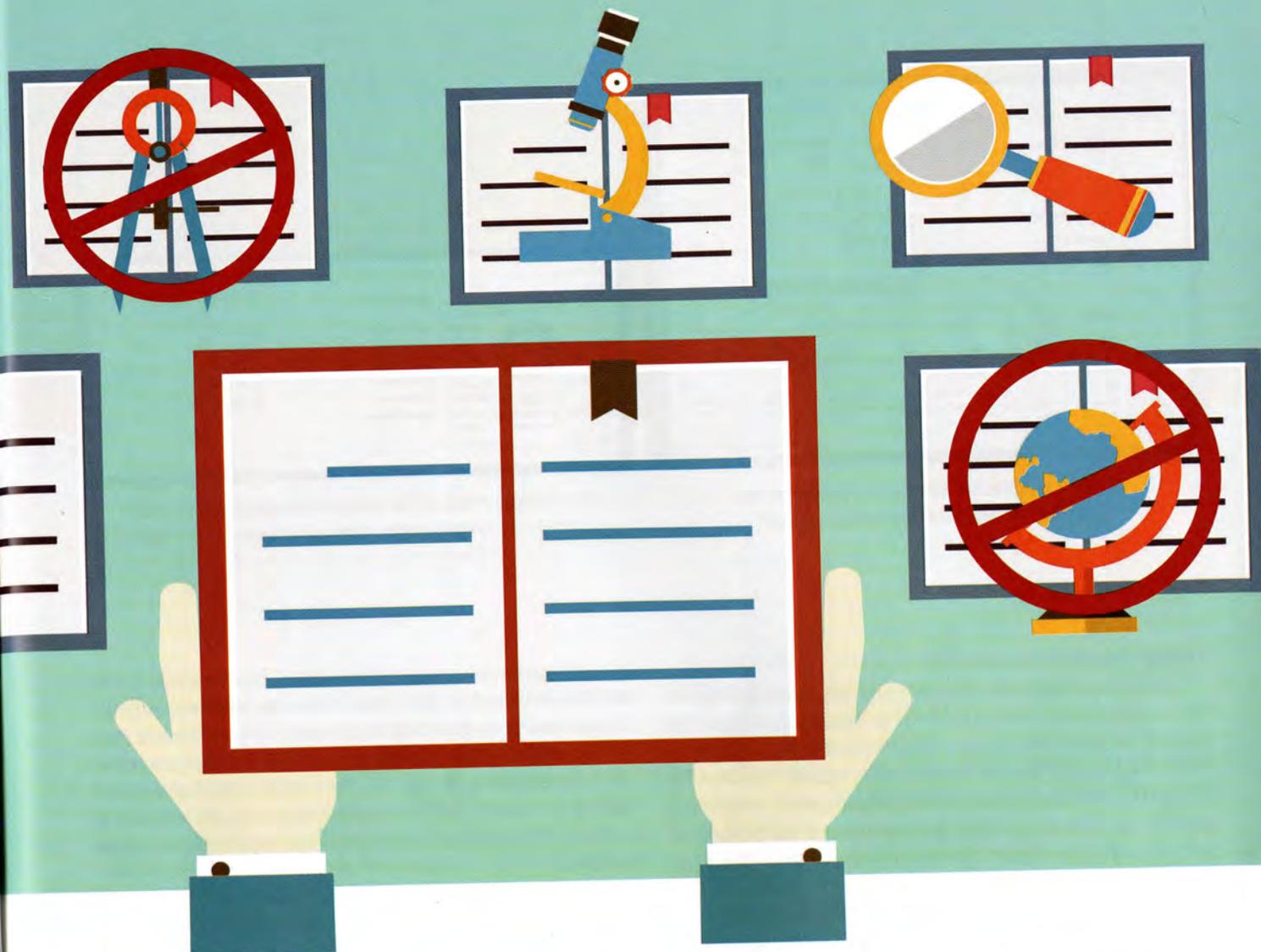
Cabells International (pronounced “Caw-bulls,” so it sounds closer to “cowbells” than “cables”) is a recognized authority on publishing opportunities

(cabells.com). It offers scholars a highly selective list of vetted journals and contains resources to identify publishing scams. Cabell’s Scholarly Analytics is based on 40 years of experience in publishing Cabell’s Directories of

Publishing Opportunities, its former name. (In case you are wondering if I don’t know how to use punctuation correctly, the apostrophe was dropped in 2015 in favor of Cabells for branding purposes.)



By Paul Blobaum



Cabells has long had a Whitelist and added a multidisciplinary Blacklist of journals to avoid in 2017. Cabells Whitelist covers 18 academic disciplines: Accounting, Astronomy, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Computer Science and Business Information Systems, Economics and Finance, Educational Curriculum and Methods, Educational Psychology and Administration, Educational Technology and Library Science, Geology, Health Administration, Management, Marketing, Mathematics, Nursing, Oceanography, Physics, and Psychology and Psychiatry. Author services from the publishing services company Editage are offered and are available upon demand on a pay-as-you go basis. Because Editage is a third-party partner, I focus only on Cabells' products for this review.

CABELLS BACKGROUND

Cabells' success and authoritative reputation can be attributed to the company's deep understanding of the needs and the practices of academia. The company demonstrates a keen understanding of scholarly communication imperatives (such as publishing in reputable journals) and the pitfalls that can damage professional reputations and ruin careers. Originating as a class project for David W. E. Cabell's management

class in 1978, Cabells developed products needed in the academic marketplace BC (before computers) and continues to add value to them with analytics and author services. Cabells is an essential time-saving and career-saving source for scholars—at my university, publishing in Cabells-approved journals weighs heavily in faculty retention, tenure, and promotion decisions.

Cabells' genius is its selection criteria (cabells.com/selection-policy2) and publishing its ranking scorecards and directory information on "journal card" entries. (See Figure 1 on page 22.) The journal card reports publisher names, launch date, ISSN numbers, audience, discipline, frequency of publication, acceptance rates, open access (OA) status and type (traditional OA, green, gold, hybrid), number of invited articles, links to manuscript preparation guidelines, what publication style is used (Vancouver, APA, etc.), type of review (blind, double-blind, etc.), time it takes for review, the number and type of reviewers, and time from submission to publication. The availability of reviewers' comments and whether a plagiarism detection tool is utilized by the journal is indicated. Cabells reports the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) impact factors, if available, and links to the publisher's website.

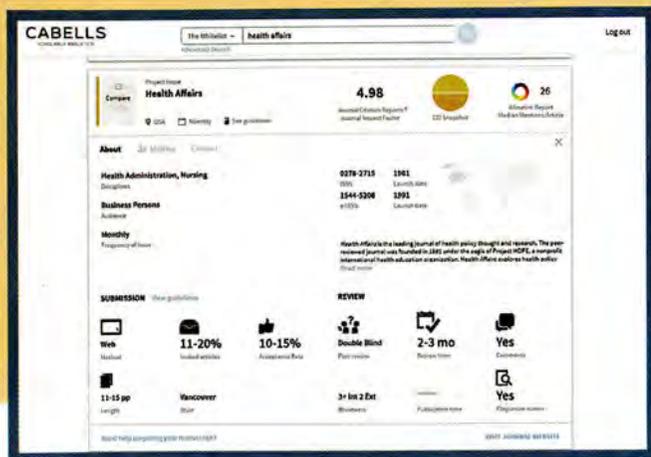


Figure 1: Cabells publishes its ranking scorecards and directory information on “journal card” entries.



Figure 2: Cabells has averaged Altmetric reported article mentions to the journal level.

THREE UNIQUE INDICATORS

Three unique indicators developed by Cabells are also reported when available; these indicators are related to position of the journal in Cabells disciplines. These are fully displayed in the Metrics tab on the journal card. The first, Cabells Classification Index (CCI), is a normalized ranking within Cabells subject categories, calculated on Scopus impact factors from the most recent 3 years. (See Figure 2 above.) For the journal *Health Affairs*, for example, the journal’s significance is very high for the subject of Nursing, with 98% influence, meaning only 2% of journals in the Nursing category in Cabells have a greater impact. *Health Affairs* also has a very high level of influence in the category of Health Administration, in the 97% ranking, meaning only 3% of Health Administration journals had greater influence. The CCI is calculated only when a Scopus impact factor is available, and Scopus is selective in what journals it covers. Like JCR, not all scholarly journals meet inclusion criteria. All journals included on the Whitelist are high quality, but CCI and impact factors from JCR are additional quality indicators.

Cabells developed a second metric, called Difficulty of Acceptance, that it claims is based on evidence of acceptance rather than self-reported acceptance rates. This figure is calculated using an objective measurement, called the Institutional Publishing Activity Measurement. It uses the institutional affiliation of authors and measures how frequently manuscripts are accepted from certain highly productive institutions, with the theory that journals that tend to publish articles from high-performing institutions (high publication rates) also tend to be more difficult to publish in. For *Health Affairs*, the Difficulty of Acceptance is 22% in each of the categories of Nursing and Health Administration, indicating it’s harder to be published in 78% of the journals in those categories.

The third indicator developed by Cabells is based on the median frequency of mention of articles from a particular journal

in social media as reported by Altmetric (altmetric.com). Called the Altmetric Report, this figure shows the expected number of mentions of articles from this journal in social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, based on evidence from past mentions. (See Figure 3 on page 23.) For *Health Affairs*, an article is likely to be mentioned 26 times. Altmetric reports article level metrics, but Cabells has averaged these mentions to the journal level.

All of these indicators—and more—can be set as search filters under Advanced Search for Cabells Whitelist journals. Journals can be searched by keywords or title, or by Cabells disciplinary areas. Currently, the Cabells disciplines are not keyword-searchable, so the researcher has to scroll down the list and highlight the desired disciplinary areas.

THE BLACKLIST

Following the January 2017 demise of Jeffrey Beall’s Scholarly Open Access blog (often referred to as Beall’s List of Predatory Publishers or just Beall’s List), Cabells Blacklist was born. Cabell’s developed indicators for deceptive, fraudulent, and predatory practices. (See Figure 4 on page 23.) Where Beall was concerned with both publishers and journals, Cabells focuses on the practices of individual journals. The Blacklist, which currently lists 8,200 journals, is based on some 60 “behavior indicators” (cabells.com/blacklist-criteria) related to Integrity (Is the journal truthful? Is the information real?), Peer Review (Is the editorial board real or fake? Are there policies for peer review?), Website (Do the links work? Is the spelling and grammar correct?), Publication Practices (Are there false claims about indexing or fast turnaround time?), Metrics (Do they report untrue impact factors?), Fees, Access and Copyright, and Business Practices (Do they send predatory emails?).

The Blacklist is a different animal than Beall’s List, but journals on Beall’s List are in the process of being reviewed. The

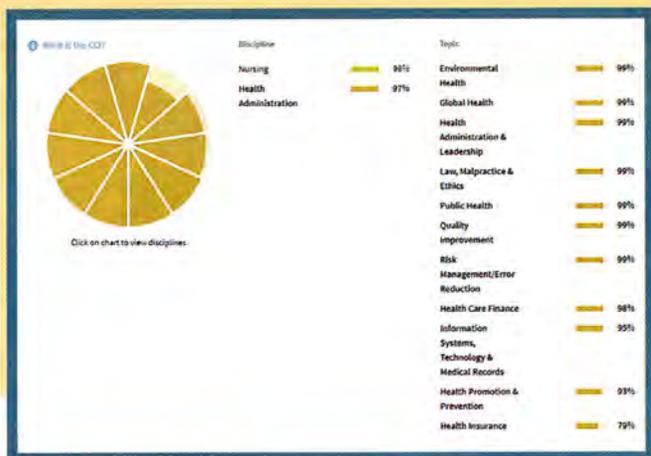


Figure 3: Cabells Classification Index (CCI) is a normalized ranking within Cabells subject categories, calculated on Scopus impact factors from the most recent 3 years.

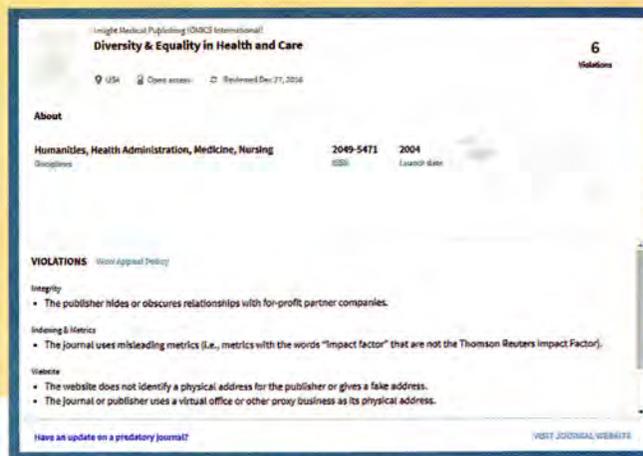


Figure 4: Cabells Blacklist Journal Card gives indicators for deceptive, fraudulent, and predatory practices.

Blacklist Advanced Search options are limited to keyword, publisher, country of origin, and ISSN. The journal information in the Blacklist is minimal at this time; only the title, publisher, country of origin, ISSN number, and violations of Cabells criteria are noted. Some disciplinary areas were noted that do not seem to be limited to Cabells disciplines. For example, upon searching the keyword *n u r s i n g*, several journals that are retrieved have Medicine listed as the discipline, even though Medicine is not a Cabells topic area.

Unlike Beall's List, Cabells requires a subscription. Its subscription fees are quoted on a sliding scale based on institutional factors such as account size, complexity, and usage. There is no individual subscription plan.

USABILITY

The information on Cabells' website is difficult to navigate at times, largely due to the constant need to scroll and to open pop-up windows for more information. The Blacklist review criteria are prominently linked on the description page of the Blacklist. Links to Whitelist criteria are buried on the FAQ page. There is limited information on exactly how Cabells analytics are calculated, although this is understandable from an intellectual property viewpoint. But it would be helpful to have time frames for the age of the citations and social media mentions. Are they all-time or last 5 years? Transparency seems to be a good option.

Oddly, some of the information on Cabells metrics is out of date or inaccurate. At the bottom of Cabells' webpage is a link to cabells.com/metrics and the IPA metric (Institutional Publishing Activity) is explained along with Cabells CCI and Difficulty of Acceptance. The IPA is a measure of each university's influence in scholarly communications, but the IPA for institutions is nowhere to be found. The instructions for searching IPA do not reflect what is on the webpage.

Cabells offers customized training via webinars for subscribers. Look at the 2017 webinar on the Blacklist and Whitelist archived on BrightTALK for a more complete overview of Cabells features (brighttalk.com/channel/15775/cabells). Also, subscriptions to the Cabells newsletter *The Source* can be entered on the homepage. No archives of past issues seem to be available.

SUMMARY

Despite a few irksome issues, Cabells Scholarly Analytics is a valuable resource for directory information and quality indicators, providing academic writers and tenure committees with an authoritative list of high-quality academic journals in 18 disciplines, along with information on predatory journals and publishing scams. Cabells Scholarly Analytics is a cost-effective solution for any campus. Comparable research tools included in other products such as Web of Science (published by Thomson Reuters) and Elsevier's Scopus are known to have pricing models that are out of reach for many institutions.

A partnership with Editage offers authors a full suite of discounted editorial services to help get manuscripts published in high-quality journals, extending author services that may (or may not) be available locally. Cabells will work with institutions to customize a subscription based on local needs. Though the disciplinary coverage may not be relevant to health sciences universities or those in which humanities are emphasized, Cabells Scholarly Analytics is highly recommended for consideration for contributing to scholarly communications and research activities at any college or university.

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