

Retraction Watch

Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process

Why did Beall's List of potential predatory publishers go dark?

[with 50 comments](#)

Jeffrey Beall

Jeffrey Beall, the University of Colorado Denver librarian who has since 2008 chronicled “potential, possible, or probable” predatory publishers, has — at least for now — pulled the plug on his influential, and at times controversial, site.

The decision to take down the site — and Beall's faculty page at the Auraria Library, where he remains a tenured associate professor — was his own, the University of Colorado Denver tells Retraction Watch.

The site, scholarlyoa.com, which just earlier this month included a list of more than 1,000 such publishers, now contains no information. The sudden change was noted Sunday on Twitter, where questions about the move — [catalogued, along with some answers, by Emil Karlsson](#) — swirled for two days. Beall's [faculty page was also taken down](#).

Some of the speculation surrounded Cabell's, a publishing services company that had earlier [announced it would house a publisher blacklist beginning sometime this year](#). Cabell's, however, said it was [not involved in the closure](#), and that [it supported Beall](#). Cabell's tweets also hinted at legal threats, which Beall has [faced in the past](#).

Beall has not responded to a request for comment from Retraction Watch about why he decided to take down the site.

For more on Beall, see this [mini-documentary from the CBC](#), which also includes segments on Retraction Watch and BMJ editor Fiona Godlee.

Update 1/17/17 6:05 p.m. Eastern: We've received a statement from the University of Colorado Denver:

Jeffrey Beall, associate professor and librarian at the University of Colorado Denver, has decided to no longer maintain or publish his research or blog on open access journals and “predatory publishers.” CU Denver supports and recognizes the important work Professor Beall has contributed to the field and to scholars worldwide. CU Denver also understands and respects his decision to take down his website [scholarlyoa.com](#) at this time. Professor Beall remains on the faculty at the university and will be pursuing new areas of research.

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sign up on our [homepage](#) for an email every time there's a new post, or subscribe to our [daily digest](#). Click [here to review our Comments Policy](#). For a sneak peek at what we're working on, [click here](#).

Related

[Predatory journals published 400,000 papers in 2014: Report](#) September 30, 2015 In "biomedcentral"

[Journal pulls paper — entirely \(we can't find it anymore\)](#) July 29, 2016 In "computer science"

[Weekend reads: A course on calling bullshit?; What closure of Beall's list means; More preprint debate](#) January 21, 2017 In "weekend reads"

Written by Ivan Oransky

January 17th, 2017 at 4:24 pm

Comments

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UJ Lee January 17, 2017 at 4:44 pm

Note that the List can still be found using the Internet Archive. The most recent working snapshot including the List is from 01/12.

https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/

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SHRAGS January 17, 2017 at 4:56 pm

Fortunately these pages have been archived – last good snapshot was Dec 30 2016.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20161222020349/https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>
<http://archive.is/T9SuJ>

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Paul A Thompson January 17, 2017 at 6:14 pm

Concerning. Beall has a lot of people who disagree with him, and some of these are quite influential. The publisher of the Frontiers family has set letters to U of Colorado requesting that they force him to stop the “predatory publications” effort. In addition, the anonymous group Scholarly Open-Access is very opposed, to a rather strident degree. I wonder if these varying opponents have had an effect.

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LV January 17, 2017 at 8:02 pm

I am also very concerned. Beall has weathered many, many storms since starting his List.

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W Wright January 18, 2017 at 7:02 am

Whatever the reasons, Beal provided a great service, and has at least taught us how to spot predatory and low quality journals and publishers on our own. I deeply admired his courage as he no doubt made some enemies!

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[Graham Steel \(@McDawg\)](#) January 18, 2017 at 7:16 am

Thanks for obtaining a statement about this. Still curious to know why Beall chose to make this decision.

- [Eva Amsen](#) January 18, 2017 at 8:12 am
It was never a good idea to rely entirely on one list created by one person. This moment was obviously going to come at some point. The only surprising thing is that it happened so suddenly, without prior announcement.
- [Paul A Thompson](#) January 18, 2017 at 8:17 am
As noted by some (Eva Amsen and others), the individual project of Mr. Beall must now be replaced by a group interested in scientific journals and in honest and appropriate science. A group should be set up. It could be called “Scientists Concerned About Monitoring Publishers” or SCAMP.
- [stevelaudig](#) January 18, 2017 at 12:02 pm
Suspicion naturally falls on timid educational bureaucrats should this be something other than an “uninfluenced” decision. I wish Mr. [Dr.?] Beall all the very best and remain interested in what I believe was his pursuit of integrity.
- [TKS](#) January 18, 2017 at 12:31 pm
[UJ Lee](#)
Note that the List can still be found using the Internet Archive. The most recent working snapshot including the List is from 01/12.
https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/

Thank you for the link!
- [Graham Steel \(@McDawg\)](#) January 18, 2017 at 12:43 pm
Trusting one person to single-handedly “police” ca 30,000 STM Journals using their own criteria was never a good idea. Have always been of that opinion.
- [SPJC Keely Barton](#) January 18, 2017 at 12:52 pm
Beals is an unperson.
Disturbing.
Needs investigation with transparency.
Thanks again, RetractionWatch – I. Oransky
- [Brian L. Baker](#) January 18, 2017 at 1:44 pm
It is far superior than no one doing it.
[Graham Steel \(@McDawg\)](#)
Trusting one person to single-handedly “police” ca 30,000 STM Journals using their own criteria was never a good idea. Have always been of that opinion.
- [Daniel](#) January 18, 2017 at 2:16 pm
Another reminder to export interesting websites as PDF ASAP (e.g., via the print function or Plugins like those that come with DEVONthink). Even with the Internet Archive they can be gone in an instant. Question is, who will keep the list up-to-date?
- [anon](#) January 18, 2017 at 2:47 pm
We need MORE Jeffrey Bealls, not fewer!
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Paul A Thompson January 18, 2017 at 3:49 pm

A comment suggested:

“The Coalition for Responsible Publication Resources (CRPR; <http://www.RPRcoalition.org>; @RPRcoalition) was spearheaded a couple of years ago, and forged last year with a centralized purse of startup money,”

I went to this site. The CRPR does not seem highly active at this time. It is a single webpage, which is undated. There is a feedback option, and I did the feedback. Looking at this, I am not greatly comforted by the notion of this group. If you are concerned and interested in the issue of predatory publications, I suggest that you respond to them.

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ICC January 18, 2017 at 7:27 pm

Shocking. Another step back for ethics and integrity in the scientific enterprise.

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John H Noble Jr January 19, 2017 at 2:05 pm

Well, I'm not surprised. “Academic freedom” is more of a myth than a reality when push comes to shove against university administrators when they get heat from influential university donors. Who do you think has more influence . . . the sometimes multi-million dollar donor or the university professor? Almost always in my own academic experience, one can discover the reason for university decisions by following the money. See, e.g., Noble JH Jr. Cherchez l'argent: a contribution to the debate about class size, student-faculty ratios, and use of adjunct faculty. *Journal of Social Work Education* 2000; 36(1):

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Alex Gillis January 19, 2017 at 4:12 pm

My goodness. This is sudden. I just published an investigative feature, in *University Affairs* magazine, that highlighted his brave work: <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/beware-academics-getting-reeled-scam-journals/>

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Veno January 21, 2017 at 1:46 am

This is so sudden and unexpected at this point. I was just preparing for a publishing workshop and wanted to recommend his site/blog to authors that would be attending only to discover the site no longer existed as I tried to navigate it! I wish Dr. Jeffrey Bealls all the best for his decision and future endeavours. There is no doubt that he made many enemies as well as many friends because of his work. The enemies must be laughing now but lets see who will have the last laugh!

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Pietro Ghezzi January 21, 2017 at 7:07 am

Beall has provided a great service. Even if I disagreed on some of his viewpoints (I am an editor in *Frontiers* and, obviously, do not consider it a predatory journal) and think that the list smelled some xenophobia, as it was often biased against non-EU and non-US publishers. However, we receive so much badly written junk mail from junk journals that don't even display the name of an Editor-in-chief that, at some point, someone will need to provide some sort of certification of the peer review process. Maybe the COPE, maybe the NLM, maybe the funding agencies that should refuse their funds to go into those sort of publications, but there need to be something. I personally know otherwise respectable scientists that got into that trap. We need a whitelist, not a blacklist. Cited in pubmed is, so far, the best criterion.

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Duncan Weller January 22, 2017 at 9:37 pm

Beall's service to science and scientists is necessary to the point that it's a job that the science community needs to address by setting up a think tank and watchdog funded by the universities with a legal department to take on the predators. I certainly wish there was self-policing here in Canada with literary publishers. We have a tremendous problem publishers who routinely abuse the people they are supposed to be supporting to the point where our culture in general is suffering on a massive scale. Here is my experience: <http://duncanweller1.blogspot.ca/2015/05/international-con-artist-dimiter-savoff.html>

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Liz Wager January 23, 2017 at 6:51 am

Beall's list was pioneering and very useful but not perfect. While I find its sudden disappearance troubling in terms of freedom of speech, and, like other commenters, wish Jeffrey Beall well (and would like to thank him for his work and dedication to highlighting the problem of predatory publishers), I wonder if we might use the opportunity to create something better.

I propose a site that not only lists journals but shows exactly which (of the many) criteria they fail to meet. My suspicion is that predators aren't all alike and there may be a few on the list who are simply naive or misguided and would like to do a decent job (but maybe I'm being naive here!). If there was a grid showing why each publisher (or journal) was listed this *might* reduce the risk of legal threats (but I may be wrong about this) and would also show what the journal needs to do in order to be regarded as legitimate.

I realise it's not simple, and the criteria (of which there are over 50) do require some judgement, so decisions are subjective, but I'd be interested to know what others think of this idea. I also agree with other commenters that it would be great if this project were taken on by an independent group.

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Derek January 23, 2017 at 1:31 pm

anon

We need MORE Jeffrey Bealls, not fewer!

So true.

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Hank Roberts January 23, 2017 at 2:36 pm

What we need to know is, did somebody shut him up with a threat?

Silence is revealing sometimes.

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Reader January 23, 2017 at 10:33 pm

If anyone is interested, the latest version of the Beall's List is backed up at <http://beallslist.weebly.com>.

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Degu January 24, 2017 at 2:55 pm

I think the list of "predatory" outpaced Beal's ability to list them. It will be easier to list non-predatory journal as most "reputable" journals have started exhibiting predatory behaviors. If you are a paying author, they will find someone to review your paper quickly or they will come back to you only to inform you about their failure to find a reviewer.

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Dr Miri January 25, 2017 at 1:35 am

I personally respect Jeffrey and all his activities in this field. I believe having a "White List" is much more effective than "Black List". A sample of good "White List" can be

found here: https://publons.com/journal/?order_by=reviews

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Graham Steel (@McDawg) January 27, 2017 at 5:10 am

From Mike Taylor's blog – What should we do now Beall's List has gone?

<https://svpow.com/2017/01/26/what-should-we-do-now-bealls-list-has-gone/>

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Patrick Kudjo January 31, 2017 at 9:41 pm

Great work Jeffrey, Wish you all the best.