5 Common Myths about Open Access Journals

1. **Open access journals are not peer-reviewed.**
   Across academic publishing, some journals are peer-reviewed and some are not, depending on journal policy. Open access journals are no exception. The Directory of Open Access Journals lists almost 9,000 peer-reviewed open access publications.

2. **Open access publishers are vanity presses.**
   This is the most common open access myth. Yes, some open access journals are “predatory publishers” with no editorial or peer-review process to speak of—but this is also true of traditional journal publishing. In spite of this, there are many well-respected and rigorous open access journals (see #5 below). **Tip:** Before publishing for the first time in an open access journal (or any journal), evaluate its editorial and peer-review processes to ensure they are robust and meet your publishing goals. Your department’s research librarian can provide help with such assessments.

3. **Open access only happens by publishing in open access journals.**
   You can make your research open access even if you publish it in a traditional journal. A common way to do this is to post your final manuscript in an institutional or subject repository (e.g., e-Publications@Marquette or arXiv.org) at the same time you submit it to your publisher. **Tip:** Publishers’ standard copyright-transfer agreements sometimes restrict this, but if you plan ahead, you often can modify such agreements by way of a simple addendum. The library’s Coordinator of Digital Programs offers help with this.

4. **Open access journals always charge publication fees.**
   The practice of charging author fees is the best-known business model for open access journals, but it is by no means the most common. According to the Directory of Open Access Journals, more than two-thirds (67%) of all peer-reviewed open access journals charge no fees.

5. **Open access journals are of low quality.**
   High quality open access journals exist across the disciplines. Within the sciences, Thomson Scientific found as early as 2004 that every field had “at least one open access title that ranked at or near the top of its field” in citation impact. For example, Journal Citation Reports ranked open-access *PLOS Biology* #2 and *BMC Biology* #5 of 86 biology journals in 2015 (with impact factors of 8.668 and 6.967, respectively).

**For further reading**

- Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC): Basic introduction to open access publishing. [sparcopen.org/open-access](http://sparcopen.org/open-access)
- Directory of Open Access Journals: Exhaustive, searchable listing of peer-reviewed open access journals worldwide. [doaj.org](http://doaj.org)
- E-Publications@Marquette: Marquette’s open access institutional repository. [epublications.marquette.edu](http://epublications.marquette.edu)

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