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A Review of the Directory of Open Access Journals

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The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a freely available index of journals that are published using an open access model. The site promotes peer-reviewed open access scholarship from around the world and is of interest to anyone seeking to evaluate or publish in an open access journal.

Content

There are over 18,000 journals indexed in DOAJ across more than 500 subjects using the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) system. The subject area with the largest number of journals is Medicine, with over 4,010 journals indexed, followed by Social Sciences with 3,168. There are 130 countries represented, with material published in 80 languages. While there are many journals published by universities, large commercial publishers such as Elsevier, SAGE, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley also have journals included in the database.

Journal records are organized in a way that prioritizes information that is helpful to prospective authors. Information on article processing charges (APCs) and licenses is found at the top of the page. Noteworthy sections of the journal's website, such as the editorial board members page, instructions for authors, and peer-review policy, are conveniently hyperlinked. These are all crucial areas to investigate when determining the transparency of a journal. There is also an estimation on the amount of time from submission to publication for that journal. All these elements make DOAJ an indispensable tool for authors who are interested in having their work published in an open access journal.

DOAJ also contains over 7 million indexed articles. Article records contain the abstract, author names and affiliations, the URL for the journal's website, and publishing information such as the journal's ISSN and the article's DOI. A handy direct link to the article is prominently featured with a red "Read Online" button.

Titles are included in DOAJ through an application process. To be included, a journal must meet the site's basic inclusion criteria. Journals that follow the basic criteria as well as seven additional best practices criteria are awarded the DOAJ Seal. [1] About 10% of journals in the database have been awarded the DOAJ Seal.

In 2014, DOAJ addressed concerns about questionable or predatory journals by expanding its application and requiring all previously accepted journals to reapply under the new criteria in order to remain on the site. [2] DOAJ was a founding organization and remains a contributor to the *Think. Check. Submit.* campaign to raise awareness of predatory practices. [3]

Once accepted, a journal can still be removed from DOAJ due to publishing inactivity, defunct or out-of-date journal site information, and suspected violations of publishing ethics. DOAJ maintains a Google Sheets file listing thousands of titles that have been removed from the site. [4]

Other indexes such as Clarivate's Journal Citation Reports and Elsevier's Scopus allow users to limit results to display only open access journals, but they lack some key features that can be found in DOAJ. DOAJ does not incorporate citation metric data such as Journal Impact Factors or CiteScores into its database.

Features & Functionality

DOAJ is easy to navigate, and the layout is clean. On the landing page, users may search through entries for journals or articles. Searching from the landing page gives users fewer search fields than the separate search pages for journals and articles.

Searching the journals is simple. Users can search in a specific field or the entire record. Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT), phrase searching with quotation marks, and basic truncation are all available to refine searches. There is not an Advanced Search option that allows simultaneous searching of multiple fields for different terms.

In the Journals search, there are four filters that set DOAJ apart from other journal indexes:

- **Journals With a DOAJ Seal** will limit results only to those journals that demonstrate the site's Best Practices criteria. There were 1,560 results when I enabled this filter without entering a search term.
- **Journals Without Article Processing Charges (APC)**. Article processing charges are fees that some open access journals collect to cover their publishing costs. These fees are often quite expensive, and many institutions do not provide any financial support for authors. There were 12,373 results when I enabled this filter without entering a search term. This number decreased to 404 indexed journals when I enabled both the DOAJ seal filter and the APC filter. DOAJ considers this filter so significant that it is also accessible from the site's landing page.

- **Licenses** allows users to limit results to specific licenses such as Creative Commons, public domain, and the publisher's own. This filter would also be helpful for someone looking to utilize published research in a particular way. More information on specific Creative Commons licenses is available at www.creativecommons.org.
- **Peer Review Types** allows users to limit results to the specific quality control system implemented in journals. The most common peer review types in DOAJ are double blind and blind, with 10,486 and 5,190 journals respectively. Other less common types, such as community review and open peer review, are included as options as well.

From the above list, the Articles search only offers the DOAJ Seal filter.

In addition to the four filters highlighted, Journal search results can also be filtered by more conventional options such as country of publication, language, publisher, subject area, and the date the journal was added to the directory. Multiple filters within a category can be applied simultaneously to retrieve more results (for example, searching for multiple publishers at once). The Articles search only allows filtering by journal name, subject area, and year of publication. Results for both search types can be sorted alphabetically, by date, or by relevance.

When viewing a journal record, it is possible to browse subject areas by clicking on the keywords in the LCC subjects section. This feature appears a little differently on article records, where the LCC subjects are not linked but the clickable keywords are visible under the abstract. Users can go from the article record to the journal record by clicking the journal's title near the top of the page or "About the Journal" in the right column.

Individual user accounts do exist on the site, but they are reserved for DOAJ volunteers and users with journals that are included in the directory. There is no bookshelf feature to bookmark journals, but it is possible to generate a shareable link to Article and Journal searches. Users can also produce JavaScript code to embed a widget featuring their search on other sites.

Business Model

The site is managed by the Infrastructure Services for Open Access C.I.C. (IS4OA). In keeping with its open access mission, DOAJ is freely available and does not offer a paid subscription model. The site is supported by voluntary donations. News about the site is posted at <https://blog.doaj.org>.

Breakthrough

The Directory of Open Access Journals is a valuable resource for anyone investigating the publishing landscape. DOAJ's easy-to-use site provides a window of transparency in an area that can be overwhelming. It is highly recommended that libraries utilize this free tool in

discussions with patrons about journal evaluation and article processing charges. Faculty, staff, and students who use DOAJ will be better informed about which open access journals to pursue.

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