Journals' instructions to authors in 2017: a cross sectional study across all disciplines

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Project: Fostering Transparent and Responsible Conduct of Research: What can journals do?

Steps 1,2
- **Systematic review of studies analysing ItAs- Analysis of 2017 ItAs across all scientific fields**

Step 3,4
- MeetingSphere sessions on current practices
- Large scale surveys of editors, authors and reviewers

Step 5,6
- MeetingSphere sessions on future of publishing
- Recommendations on what can journals do

https://www.nrin.nl/ri-collection/ri-enterprises/research-consortia/fostering-transparent-rcr-what-can-journals-do/

Background – publishing has changed

- structured format
- no of authors and joint authorship
- open access
- impact factor, altmetrics
- study registration
- reporting guidelines
- data sharing
- pre-prints
- replication studies

AIM – to see where are we now

- Explore difference between scientific fields in the instructions given to authors

- Explore association with publishers' or journal's impact factor (SNIP) on the content of the instructions to authors

METHODS – cross-sectional study

- Stratified random sample of journals indexed in Scopus

- 6 categories of journals: *Arts and Humanities, Life, Social, Physical, Health, and Multidisciplinary sciences*

- Journals in each category divided into tertiles based on *Source Normalized Impact Factor*

SNIP tertile	Journals belonging to					
	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Physical Sciences	Health Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Multi-disciplinary journals*
Low	47	51	54	51	44	26
Mid	47	51	54	51	44	33
High	47	51	54	51	44	35
Total	141	153	162	153	132	94
Grand Total - 835						

Publisher	No of journals	Percentage
Single journal	370	44
Taylor & Francis	72	9
Elsevier	72	9
Springer Nature	66	8
Wiley-Blackwell	66	8

Country	No of journals	Percentage
United States	210	25
United Kingdom	186	22
Netherlands	67	8
Germany	49	6
India	31	4
Brazil	21	3

Data Extraction

- accessed journals' websites 14 - 31 December 2017
- copied the ItA and scopes as .txt or .pdf

 to convert .pdf to .txt

 for regular expression matching

"When I'm on Windows, I use Strawberry Perl"
-- Larry Wall

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS DURING EXTRACTION

- 4 journals ceased publishing in 2017, 1 merged

- 45 ItAs not available

- *Of 125 journals we contacted by e-mail 38 (30%) replied*

- *795 (95%) had editors name on the website*

- *357 (43%) had editors' contact info*

Substituted above with new randomly selected 22-23 January 2018

EXAMPLE REGEX

- cross.?check|cross.?ref|detection software|detection tool|detection service|iThenticate|Chimpsky|CitePlag|CopyTracker|eTBLAST|Plagium|SeeSources|Turnitin|PlagScan|VeriGuide|URKUND|Ephorus|plagiarism

Result

Sentence: Note this journal uses iThenticate's CrossCheck software to detect instances of overlapping and similar text in submitted manuscripts.

Match: iThenticate

Peer Review

565 (68%) ItAs   413   155   79   **234 (29%) Scopes**
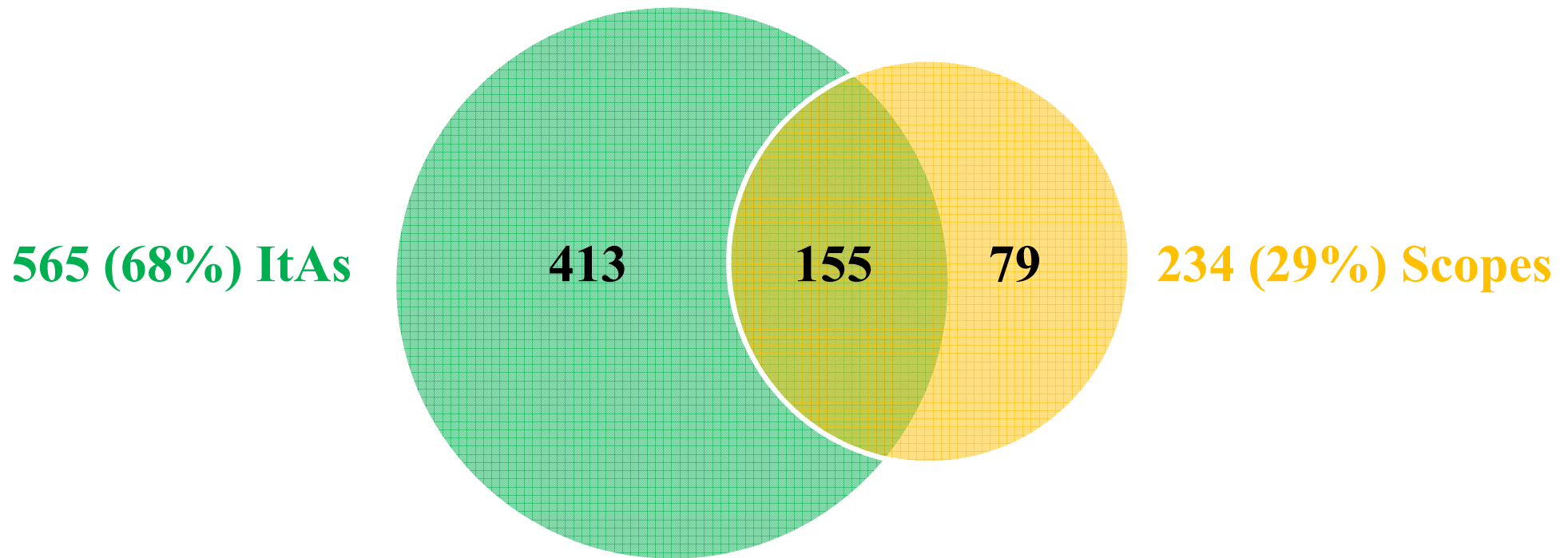
*Total **644 (77%)***

SNIP	Peer Review %					
	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Physical Sciences	Health Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Multi-disciplinary journals
Low	77	78	72	78	61	54
Mid	89	84	76	76	75	64
High	79	88	78	88	80	71
Total	115/141	128/153	122/162	124/153	95 / 132	60/94
Grand Total – 644, 77%						

Peer Review

297 (46%) did not specify the type of peer review

174 (27%) Double Blind

157 (24%) Single Blind

5 (1%) Single Blind with the option to disclose name of the reviewer

3 (1%) Open

2 (1%) Triple Blind

2 (1%) Double Blind with the option to disclose name of the reviewer

2 (1%) Authors can choose Single or Double Blind

Personal favourites

Peer review improves science. - IEEE Internet Computing

The aim of the peer review process is to establish the technical soundness of a submission, and uses a template approach. - Scientific Reports

Peer reviewers usually reject articles written in poor English. - Journal of Jesuit Studies

*We strongly encourage authors to have their papers **thoroughly reviewed** by colleagues **before submitting to the Journal**. - Journal of the World Aquaculture Society and Academy of Management Journal*

If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. - History of Photography

*Withdrawal of manuscript: If you withdraw your manuscript after it has been type set (but not published) or passed through the peer review process, you will be charge for the **peer review and typesetting cost of US$50.00.** - Annals of Tropical Medicine and Public Health*

Additional peer review results

Publons – 3 journals *Journal of Strain Analysis for Engineering Design, Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, Clinical Rehabilitation*

Most common adjectives: **rigorous**, *rigorous but sympathetic, stringent, strict and thorough, streamlined but thorough, fast, rapid, timely, constructive, complete/full and objective evaluation, ethical, transparent and fair, smooth, unbiased, independent, critical*

Criteria:

- *to ensure articles are balanced, objective and relevant*

- *methodologically and conceptually sound and make an original contribution to the field*

- *novelty and relevance*

- *scientific importance, originality, quality and length*

- *scholarly quality, not ideological or political perspectives*

- *significance, novelty and usefulness to the readership*

- *original insights, theoretical and empirical, and on the potential to communicate these effectively to international debates*

SNIP	Plagiarism %					
	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Physical Sciences	Health Sciences	**Arts and Humanities**	Multi-disciplinary journals
Low	16	17	16	14	5	5
Mid	22	23	23	17	6	13
High	23	24	31	21	9	11
Total	**61/141**	**64/153**	**70/162**	**52/153**	**20 / 132**	**29/94**
Grand Total – 296, 32%						

Plagiarism

89 – use Crosscheck iThenticate

124 – may be used

1 – Urkund - European Accounting Review

1 – Plagscan - Open Veterinary Journal

1 – Author checklist: I cross-checked the manuscript with the latest Plagiarism Software Tool and less than 10% plagiarism found in the manuscript. - Defence Science Journal

SNIP	Image Manipulation %					
	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Physical Sciences	Health Sciences	Arts and Humanities	Multi-disciplinary journals
Low	3	1	3	2	0	1
Mid	12	3	7	3	0	4
High	13	6	8	5	2	6
Total	28/141	10/153	18/162	10/153	2/132	11/94
Grand Total – 79, 9%						

Results summary

Topic	2017/2018 %	Literature range % (no of studies)
Peer Review	77	30-89 (12)
Research Integrity	2	4-25 (2)
Plagiarism	32	1-40 (2)
Image Manipulation	9	3 (1)
Statistics	29	6-40 (7)
Null or negative results	2	/
Ethics opinion	19	3-85 (30)
Replication	21	3 (1)

POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS

- Non-English language instructions were replaced

- Use of Regex

- Policies that journals implement are not always written in instructions, nor are those written always upheld.

DISCUSSION

Our preliminary results show less than a third of scientific journals mention specific research integrity issues

We found no differences based on SNIP

Arts and Humanities

Thank you!

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