

New web services are helping authors make data-driven decisions when choosing which journal to submit to



*With more than 34,000 active scholarly peer-reviewed journals, how do authors choose which one to submit to? **Amy Forrester**, **Bo-Christer Björk** and **Carol Tenopir** liken this process to a long-term investment decision, with access to critical information on a variety of factors being imperative. A new generation of web tools and services can help authors to find data on journals and publishers and so make informed selection decisions; assessing information on impact and prestige, service quality, and publication cost and policy. Ultimately, of course, the onus remains on the authors to weigh these multiple factors against their own unique publication and career needs.*

Authors seek to publish the results of their research in the best journal possible, one that most closely fits their topic and is likely to have the biggest impact. But of the [34,000+](#) active scholarly peer-reviewed journals, how do authors go about choosing a specific one to submit to? Many studies have examined this submission decision process and the [complex collection of competing criteria](#) (see, for example, [Tenopir et al. \(2011\)](#) or [Mabe and Mulligan \(2011\)](#)). Decisions depend on factors that can be summarised as relating to the impact and prestige of the journal and/or publisher; service quality of the peer review and/or publishing process; and publication costs and policies, including open access and article processing fees. These are the parameters authors must weigh against their personal publication and career needs and that, together with the perceived likelihood of acceptance, drive the choice of journal for submission.

We liken this process to a long-term investment decision. As such, authors need critical information about multiple characteristics of journals and publishers. Most commonly, authors gather information by exploring a journal's website or by word of mouth from colleagues. There are several mainstream services that aggregate data on journals and publishers (e.g. Ulrichsweb, DOAJ) that authors might use to guide their decision in choosing a journal for submission. However, while some information is readily available, such as journal impact factor or open access policies and fees, other data is more elusive and can be tricky to obtain, like the acceptance rate or quality of the peer-review process. But there are tools and services being developed to help capture this hard-to-find information.

In a [recent article](#), we explored the next generation of author-oriented web tools and services being developed to address this problem; helping authors to find data on journals and publishers and facilitating data-driven journal selection decisions. We identified eight mainly open-access services that function similarly to a typical search engine. These allow users to find the best-matching journal against their input of key pieces of article information (e.g. title, keywords). The user can then assess the results and consider additional data provided to guide the journal selection decision.

We compared and contrasted each service's searchable database, along with the range and completeness of information it collects and provides. In doing so, we identified key functions of the services, such as journal matching (i.e. is the journal the right fit?) and decision-making (i.e. is the journal credible?). The number of journal titles maintained in the databases ranges from 95 (Cofactor Journal Selector) to over 46,000 (Research Square's JournalGuide). Some have an aggregated index with a specific focus, such as biomedical (e.g. JANE, or Journal/Author Name Estimator) or technology (IEEE Publication Recommender™), while several provided by publishers are limited only to searches of their own proprietary list of publications (e.g. Elsevier Journal Finder). We examined each service against the data collected with respect to the criteria an author uses in the decision-making process. This includes impact and prestige, service quality, and publication cost and policy.

Service	Impact & Prestige					Service Quality				Publication Cost & Policy		
	Impact Factor	SNIP	SJR	JCR	Article Influence	Editorial info	Acceptance rate	Publication speed	Embargo time	Publishing model	Publishing charges	License
Cofactor Journal Selector				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Edanz Journal Selector		✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓
Elsevier Journal Finder				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EndNote Match				✓								
IEEE Publication Recommender™	✓				✓			✓		✓		
JANE (Journal/Author Name Estimator)					✓					✓		
Research Square's JournalGuide		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Springer Journal Suggester				✓		✓	✓			✓		

Table 1: Metrics to help evaluate/select a journal. This is an earlier version of a table that appears in Forrester, Björk, & Tenopir (2017) “[New web services that help authors choose journals](#)”, *Learned Publishing*. Data field descriptions: Editorial info: peer review type, responsiveness (review time); Publication speed: accepted article production time; Publishing model: open access, subscription; Publishing charges: APCs, manuscript handling fees, OA fees, submission fees (does not include subscription fees); License: Creative Commons, copyright. APC= article processing charges; OA=open access.

Additionally, we considered three services (JournalReviewer, SciRev, and Quality Open Access Market) that apply crowdsourcing data to provide information that can otherwise be difficult to obtain (i.e. factors listed under service quality, such as peer-review time). These services provide user feedback on a journal's review and manuscript-handling process. While this user-generated information can help authors evaluate journals, these services also aim to increase the transparency and accountability of academic publishing.

These author-oriented web-based manuscript submission decision tools are relatively new, and not all will survive the test of time. Although they help with an author's complex decision process, each tool has limitations that reduce its usefulness. Ultimately, of course, the burden is on the author to be knowledgeable, as the final journal selection will be based on varying multiple factors, with the weighting of each being unique to the individual author.

*This blog post is based on the authors' article, “[New web services that help authors choose journals](#)”, published in *Learned Publishing* (DOI: 10.1002/leap.1112).*

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