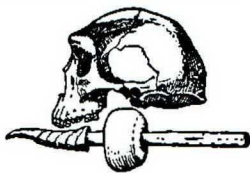


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Editorial

Cleaning the SAAB House: Addressing the Threat of Predatory Journals

Since the current era under my leadership began with the publication of the December 2015 issue of the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* (SAAB), I have been building the SAAB house, putting nails on its roof (December 2016), and assessing the foundation of the SAAB house subsequent to its furnishing (June and December 2017). Furnishing the house within the context of knowledge production is about, in my view, critiquing aspects relating to how we conduct research and how we share it amongst each other and those beyond the discipline. It is within this context that the theme addressed in the guest editorial by the esteemed Prof. Lyn Wadley should be seen. With the discussions around predatory journals and decolonisation of knowledge production becoming significant, the discipline of archaeology in southern Africa must engage on such important topics.

In initiating such a critical analysis of knowledge production and how it is shared, we need to appreciate that humans do not have the ability to be fully honest at all given times. Any response should always be seen within a given context. It is within this context that we should review the production of knowledge, which is not always an innocent act by scholars within a particular discipline. History has many incidences where scholars have gone to extreme lengths to misrepresent findings in order to gain fame and propel a particular idea. Predatory journals, which have become a huge component in the production of knowledge, are fulfilling a human need for such fame and prosperity.

In highlighting the prevalent challenges with predatory journals, Professor Bozzoli questioned the professorial title of the then South African Broadcasting Corporation, Professor Mbulaheni Maguvhe. According to Professor Bozzoli, "The one thing that academics should not do, then, is to publish in places where peer review is inadequate, and the publisher is not reputable". In her view, Professor Maguvhe failed this critical test. When analysing his CV, the University of South Africa academic was found to have published half of his 13 journal articles in predatory journals with one book passing 'academic scrutiny' managed by a dubious publishing house. What I want to highlight here is that predatory journals (and so-called parochial journals) are rife. And the question is what is fuelling their existence? Is it desperation by scholars to 'manufacture' CVs that will propel them to higher academic echelons? Is it their desperation to fit within the world that demands of them to publish or perish? Are scholars successfully targeted by these publishing houses genuinely unaware of their predatory prowess? If funding is a significant stumbling block for archaeologists, how do they fund expensive Article Processing Charges (APCs) 'demanded' by these journals? Or are these

scholars highlighting the difficulty in getting published by established and credible publishing houses? If universities are committed to rooting the negative impact of predatory journals through not recognising outputs published in these platforms, why is this threat becoming even greater? Whatever the reasons may be, predatory journals are becoming a huge threat in the production of knowledge that is approved by scholars in the field. More and more colleagues are falling into the trap and becoming victims.

Some of us receive invitations, almost daily, to submit manuscripts to obscure journals and serve on their Editorial Boards. In most cases, even the name of the journal targeting an archaeologist should be enough to raise an eyebrow. These are often having medical names with no direct link to the archaeology profession. A predator has to be a good hunter, and these journals certainly are because some of them will even make reference to your recently published articles showing that they do their 'homework' on the identified scholars. *We need to note that a quick turnaround time to publish often indicate the questionable status of the publication avenue.*

In our discussion of predatory journals, we should not lose sight of the ongoing debates at academic institutions that ideally, academics should target internationally-based journals to publish their research. While there are highly credible journals based outside Africa, I define this as a tendency to think that what is African is low class and anything beyond the continent is something to aspire towards. The same is evident in archaeological journals, with a number of colleagues preferring to publish in international avenues compared to locally based journals. Desperation to publish internationally is, I would argue, most probably behind the success of predatory journals. Some authors will not want to publish within regional journals, in search for supposedly high accolades 'guaranteed' by largely European-based archaeology journals. Considering debates on the need to decolonise our disciplines, what should be the role of regionally based archaeology journals and authors within the continent? My view is that we should support continent-based publication avenues and let them develop to the same levels as those from beyond the continent in terms of the impact factors and citation indexes.

Predatory journals are becoming a big threat in the production of knowledge. SAAB must take a centre stage in such discussions because the journal does not exist in its own world such that it must not consider ongoing challenges with the prevalence of predatory journals. We must also not lose sight of the fact that production of knowledge is not apolitical (the book by Kuljian reviewed in this SAAB issue is a classic example

of such), which also explains the increasing push to publishing in academic avenues based beyond the continent because of the prestige they supposedly offer to authors.

Other than predatory journals, we need to guard against parochial journals and citation behaviour. As the editorial by Wadley (in this issue) highlights, one Editor-in-Chief had the bravery to publish 41 articles he had authored in the same volume he supposedly 'edited' (see Mouton 2017). While this is not something I have come across in archaeological circles, it is still important to take note of it. I took a decision when I resumed the editorial responsibilities of the SAAB that I should never publish in the same journal I edit because ethical responsibility is important to me. Considering the manuscripts I have authored and co-authored recently, this is a difficult decision in a region where there is a limitation of archaeology journals that I could approach for regionally based publications that do not

have an international appeal. With these difficulties noted, I still feel it is a relevant decision.

Congratulations to Prof. Jan J.C.A. Boeyens for a sterling career he has had thus far. As we have seen with many 'retired' archaeology researchers, such a stage of their professional life does not necessarily constitute the lowering of curtains on their careers. Researchers never retire, they just work more from home. Well done Prof. Boeyens, you have made the discipline of archaeology much richer with the knowledge that you have unearthed thus far.

References

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