

When Citation Becomes Weaponized: Propaganda Triggers and the Crisis of Integrity in Scholarly Publishing

Ganna Kharlamova [Taras Shevchenko National Univ of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine]

Andriy Stavytskyi [Taras Shevchenko National Univ of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine]

Mariia Naumova [Taras Shevchenko National Univ of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine]

Carl Taswell [Brain Health Alliance Virtual Institute Ladera Ranch, California, USA]

[view presentation](#) | [more info](#)

ABSTRACT

Scholarly publishing faces a growing crisis that extends beyond individual academic misconduct to include the deliberate weaponization of citations, the erosion of research integrity, and the spread of propaganda-like dynamics within peer-reviewed literature. To investigate these systemic threats, this study applies a triangular analytical framework. We systematically examine: (1) alternative models for intellectual credit, (2) conditions for preserving publishing integrity, and (3) the identification of structural propaganda triggers within scientific communication ecosystems.

The primary objective of this research is to determine how predatory citational practices operate, why current commercial publishing models fail to prevent them, and what practical infrastructure can safeguard vulnerable scholarly communities.

We first analyse community-based attribution alternatives – such as transparent provenance chains, version-controlled lineage tools, and open peer commentary – designed to mitigate metric manipulation, including citation cartels and strategic ghosting (the deliberate omission of prior work). These alternatives align with responsible research assessment frameworks like the DREAM Principles and FAIR Metrics.

However, a rigorous open science approach requires acknowledging the structural barriers to these alternatives. Transitioning to non-profit, fee-free, community-based models (such as Diamond Open Access) introduces significant operational obstacles:

- An intensified, unsustainable strain on voluntary peer-reviewers;
- Strong resistance from traditional institutional evaluation regimes that remain dependent on classic impact factors;
- Profound vulnerabilities regarding long-term financial and organisational sustainability without commercial backing.

Furthermore, structural power asymmetries often persist, meaning that without explicit protections, marginalised or non-dominant scholarly voices remain excluded from mainstream citation networks and editorial boards.

Our analysis models how propaganda triggers operate when high-profile venues consolidate biased narratives. This dynamic occurs when a dominant publication marginalises prior work through strategic omission rather than empirical refutation. Institutional inertia then blocks corrections, while editorial gatekeeping and citation exclusion effectively deny platforms to dissenting researchers.

The Ukrainian scholarly publishing ecosystem serves as a rapid, paradigmatic case example of these vulnerabilities. Drawing on ongoing research at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Project No. 26GF013-02), our review of local publishing practices reveals that integrity deficits are often structural outcomes of systemic resource scarcity. Operating under wartime duress, constrained state funding, and an evaluative framework that pressures authors toward commercial journals, Ukrainian university presses demonstrate that technical harmonisation (such as DOI or DOAJ indexing) is insufficient. True integration into the European Research Area requires a deeper renegotiation of who governs knowledge attribution and how the scholarly record is protected under political and financial pressures.

Ultimately, this talk presents a practical operational architecture for community-based governance. To safeguard regional publishing ecosystems from external capture and citation distortion, we recommend:

- Reforming institutional credit mechanisms to reduce the monopoly of traditional citation metrics.
- Embedding automated integrity-protective protocols into daily editorial workflows.
- Deploying community-governed, decentralised repository networks and open peer-review workflows managed by non-profit academic coalitions to ensure long-term ecosystem resilience.

KEYWORDS

attribution; citation practices; open science governance; propaganda dynamics; scholarly integrity

REFERENCES

Bedyukh, O., Hartman, Y., Danylchenko-Cherniak, O., Dunayevska, O., Zhenchenko, M., Izarova, I., Naumova, M., Rohozha, M., Stavytskyi, A., & Kharlamova, H. (2025). Ecosystem of Ukrainian scientific publications: Harmonisation of editorial practices with international standards. Organisational, legal and economic challenges for publications in scholarly publishing ecosystem. Kyiv University Publishing and Printing Centre.

Committee on Publication Ethics. (2025). Systematic manipulation of the publication process. COPE. <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/flowchart/systematic-manipulation-publication-process>

Craig, A., Ambati, A., Dutta, S., Kowshik, P., Nori, S., Taswell, S. K., Wu, Q., & Taswell, C. (2019). DREAM Principles and FAIR Metrics from the PORTAL-DOORS Project for the Semantic Web. In Proceedings of the 11th Annual IEEE International Conference on Electronics, Computers and Artificial Intelligence (ECAI) (pp. 1-6). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ECAI46879.2019.9042003>

Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520(7548), 429–431. <https://doi.org/10.1038/520429a>

Taswell, C. (2024). Unfairness by the FAIR Principles Promoters: A case study on the absence of accountability for integrity in research publishing. In T. A. Oliveira & M. T. Hebebcı (Eds.), *Current scholarly studies in technology and education 2024* (pp. 298–325). ISRES Publishing.

Taswell, C. (2025). Unfairness by the FAIR Principles Promoters: Falsifying the historical record of scientific reports in knowledge engineering versus maintaining standards for objective truth in publicly funded research. In *Proceedings of the ISRES/ARSTE International Conference on Advances in Technology, Education and Science (ICATES)*. ISRES Publishing.

Teixeira da Silva, J. A., Vickers, N., & Nazarovets, S. (2024). From citation metrics to citation ethics: Critical examination of a highly-cited 2017 moth pheromone paper. *Scientometrics*, 129, 233–245. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-023-04855-7>

Tennant, J. P., Crane, H., Crick, T., Davila, J., Enkhbayar, A., Havemann, J., Kramer, B., Martin, R., Masuzzo, P., Nobes, A., Rice, C., Rivera-López, B., Ross-Hellauer, T., Sattler, S., Thacker, P., & Vanholsbeeck, M. (2019). Ten hot topics around scholarly publishing. *Publications*, 7(2), Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications7020034>