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UWM publications in MDPI journals

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UWM publications in MDPI journals

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In August 2020, the UWM Libraries signed an agreement with MDPI's Institutional Open Access Program (<https://www.mdpi.com/ioap>). The program was referred to us by a UWM faculty member inquiring about our membership status and its benefit of a 10% discount on article processing charges. In response to the inquiry, we examined publications by UWM authors in MDPI journals. This report outlines our findings in support of our decision to join the Institutional Open Access Program. The publication numbers were current when this report was written in November 2020.

Founded in 1996 in Basel, Switzerland, MDPI (initially the Molecular Diversity Preservation International) spun off as a publisher (renamed the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute) in 2010. As of November 2020, MDPI published 283 open access journals. It is a member of the leading professional associations of academic publishers such as the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA; <https://oaspa.org/member/mdpi-ag>), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE; <https://publicationethics.org/taxonomy/term/584>), and International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM, <https://www.stm-assoc.org/membership/our-members/#M>). After its investigation into the issues of legitimacy, the OASPA cleared the membership status of MDPI as a genuine open access publisher in 2014 (<https://oaspa.org/conclusions-from-oaspa-membership-committee-investigation-into-mdpi/>).

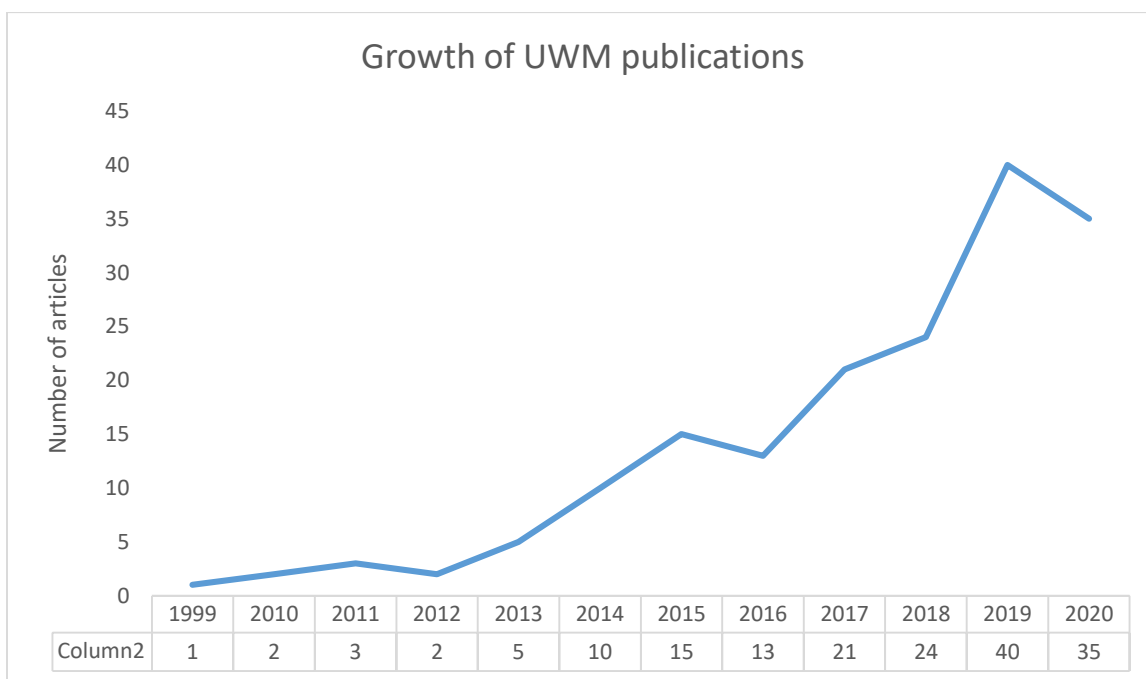
Coincidentally with our evaluation, several recent blog posts were written about the remarkable growth of MDPI and its rank among the top five largest open access journal publishers worldwide [1, 4, 5]. We looked into the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, <https://doaj.org/>), which had the following breakdown by publisher based on the number of journals:

1. Elsevier	366
2. BMC (part of Springer Nature)	321
3. Sciendo (owned by DeGruyter)	302
4. Hindawi Limited	229
5. MDPI AG	211

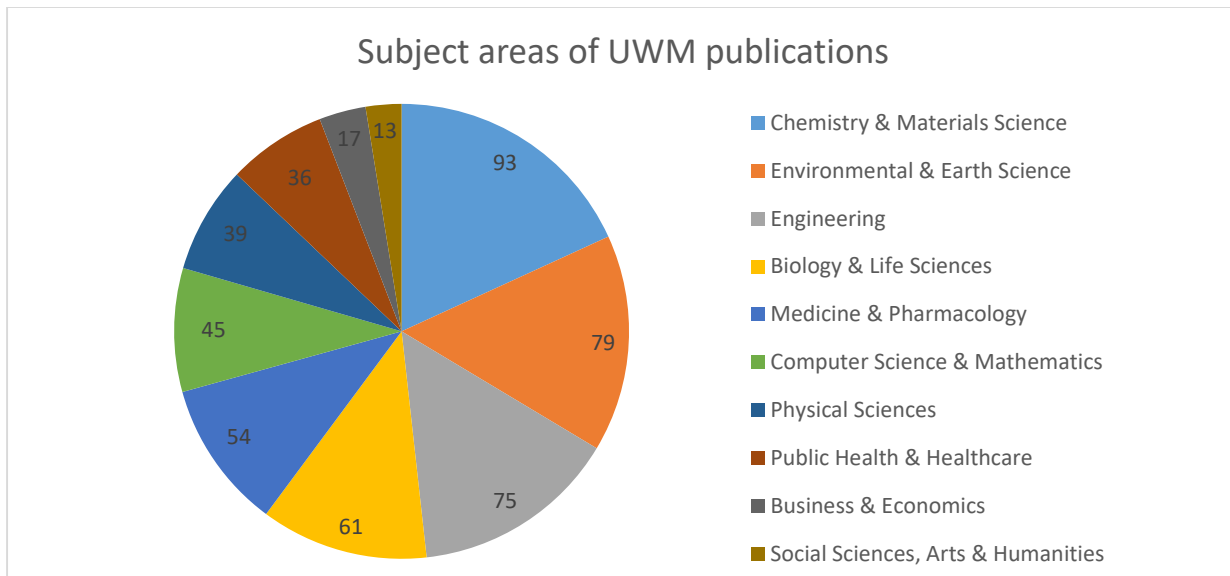
For the 211 MDPI journals indexed in DOAJ, all have a Creative Commons (CC-BY) license, 208 journals indicate they charge article processing fees for publishing, and, most notably, 184 journals (87%) have been awarded the "DOAJ Seal." The Seal marks those publishing venues that "demonstrate best practice in open access publishing" judged by seven criteria in long-term digital preservation (the journal content must be continuously deposited in one of the archives, e.g., PubMed Central), use of permanent article identifiers (e.g., DOI), discoverability (article metadata must be uploaded to

DOAJ regularly), reuse policy (a Creative Commons license must be displayed in all full-text article formats), and authors' rights (authors must retain unrestricted copyright and all publishing rights, and permitted to deposit all versions of their paper in an institutional or subject repository without an embargo). MDPI has achieved a much higher percentage of journals with the Seal (87%) compared to the DOAJ estimation of "around 10% of journals have been awarded the Seal." All UWM articles, except for one article published in the newest journal launched in 2020, *Applied Mechanics*, were published in the MDPI journals with the DOAJ Seal.

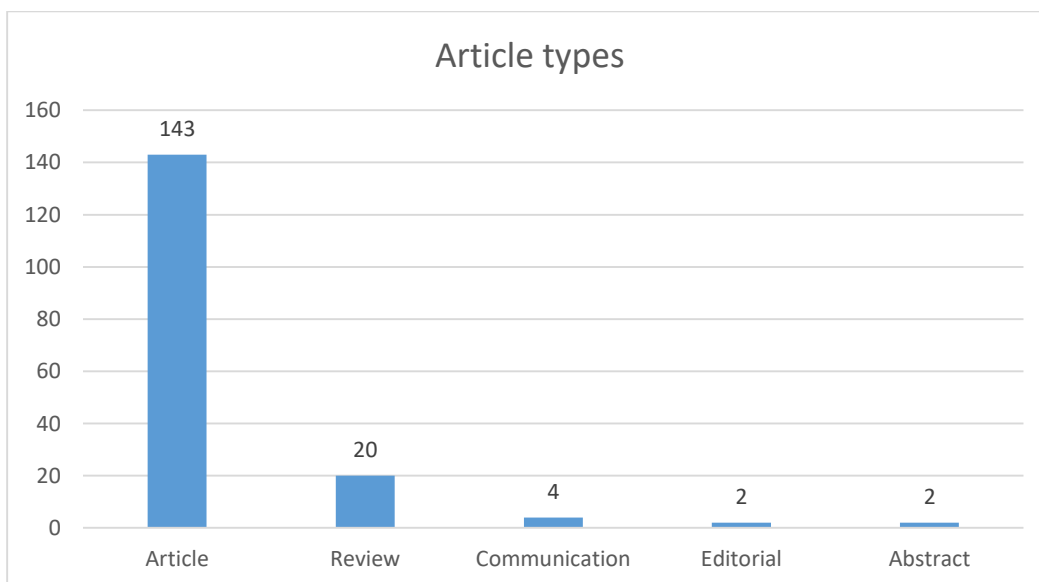
Overall, as of November 21, 2020, UWM authors have published 171 articles in MDPI journals including 35 articles during the current year of 2020. The first article by an author affiliated with UWM was published in *Molecules* in 1999. The following chart depicts the growth of UWM publications over the years.



The majority of articles are published in the physical sciences and engineering disciplines. Since a single article may be assigned to multiple broad subject categories—for example, the Physical Sciences group includes publications by UWM authors affiliated with the Departments of Civil & Environmental Engineering, Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Mathematics, and Psychology—the following chart provides a generalized association of the UWM distribution by subjects.



The majority of UWM publications are full-length scholarly articles. There have been an increasing number of review type articles in the last two years: four reviews in 2019 and six reviews in 2020 so far. The increase of reviews for this year may be due to the pandemic. The two abstracts were from presentations at conferences organized by MDPI. The two editorials were written by Hugo Lopez, UWM Materials Science and Engineering Professor, who has been Editor-in-Chief of *Metals* since the launch of the journal in 2011. He introduced several special issues including one on the *Advances in Solidification Processing* in 2015 (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/metals/editors>).



The fact that UWM faculty not only publish in MDPI journals, but also serve as editors was critical in our evaluation. There are several UWM faculty on MDPI editorial boards, as follows:

Mohsen Bahmani-Oskooee, Distinguished Professor in Economics, serves on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Financial Studies* (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijfs/editors>).

Laodong Guo, Professor in Freshwater Science, is a member of the editorial board of *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering* (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/jmse/editors>), and was the Guest Editor of a special issue of *Water. Recent Progress in River Biogeochemistry Research* (https://www.mdpi.com/journal/water/special_issues/river_biogeochemistry#editors).

J. Rudi Strickler, Shaw Distinguished Professor in Biological Sciences, is the Guest Editor of the special issue of *Fluids: Fluid Mechanics of Plankton* (https://www.mdpi.com/journal/fluids/special_issues/fluid_mechanics_plankton).

Valerica Raicu, Professor in Physics, was the Guest Editor for a special issue of the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* titled *Frontiers of Micro-Spectroscopy in Biological Applications* in 2013 (https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijms/special_issues/micro-spectroscopy).

Michael Nosonovsky, Associate Professor in Mechanical Engineering, served on a conference committee for the *5th International Electronic Conference on Entropy and Its Applications* in 2019 (<https://ecea-5.sciforum.net>).

In the list above, one may notice that several UWM faculty members served as guest editors of a “special issue.” MDPI’s approach of publishing many special issues was noted by Dan Brockington, who examined in his open letter to MDPI Publishing, December 2019 (<https://danbrockington.com/2019/12/04/an-open-letter-to-mdpi-publishing/>) that “Growth has been facilitated by the large number of special issues each journal promotes. These are curated by guest editors. It [is] easier to identify speedy reviewers of special issues as they leverage the networks of the guest editors.” Indeed, many articles by UWM authors were published as part of a special issue, including 23 out of 34 publications (68%) during 2020 so far. In the updated analysis published in July 2020 (<https://danbrockington.com/2020/07/23/mdpi-journals-2015-to-2019/>), Dan Brockington confirmed his previous conclusion that “They [MDPI] have grown because submissions to them have grown. They offer a fast service, relatively cheap, open access publication, and their reputation, as measured in citation data and listings on indices, continues to grow.”

Altogether, UWM authors published in 57 various MDPI journals 28 of those had only one article by UWM author. 33 journals were indexed in Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), 30 in Chemical Abstracts (CAS), 19 in Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), and 8 in Compendex. 137 UWM articles (out of 171 total) received citations. The most cited UWM article published in 2010 (in *Entropy*) received 57

citations. The most viewed UWM article published in 2010 (in *Molecules*) was viewed 10,715 times and was cited 28 times.

The following table lists the titles of journals, the numbers of articles by UWM authors (UWM), the indexing sources, such as the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Chemical Abstracts (CA), Compendex (EV), and the costs of the article processing charges (APC) in Swiss francs.

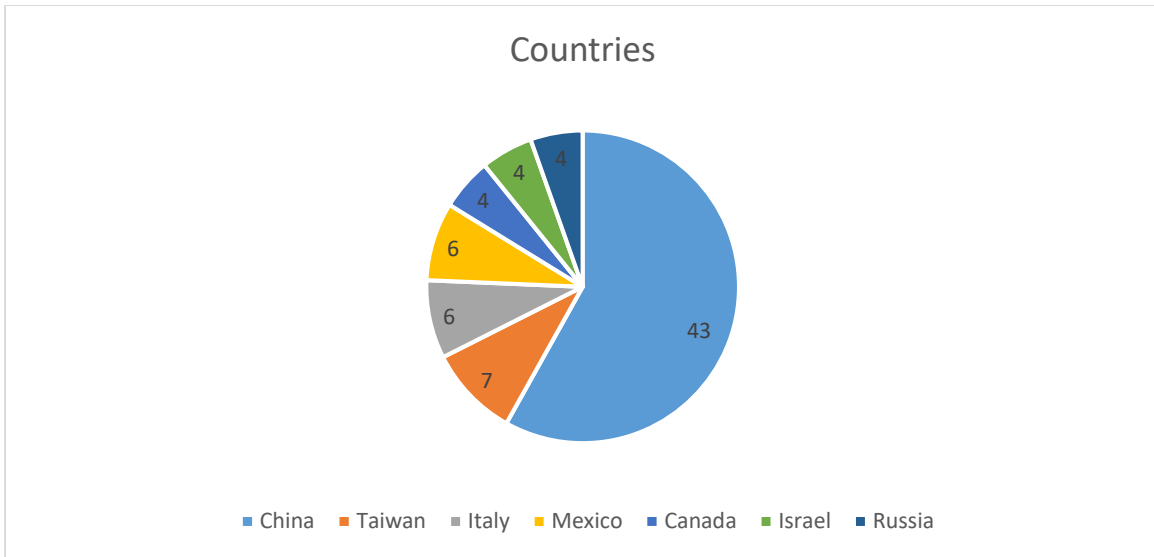
Journal titles with UWM publications

Title	UWM	SCIE	ESCI	CA	EV	APC
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	13	Y		Y		2300
International Journal of Molecular Science	12	Y		Y		2000
Sensors	10	Y		Y	Y	2000
Metals	10	Y		Y		1600
Applied Sciences	9	Y		Y		1800
Energies	9	Y		Y	Y	1800
Entropy	6	Y		Y		1600
Remote Sensing	6	Y				2200
Water	6	Y		Y	Y	1800
Sustainability	5	Y		Y		1800
Symmetry	5	Y		Y		1400
Molecules	4	Y		Y		2000
Cancers	4	Y		Y		2200
Atmosphere	4	Y		Y	Y	1500
Algorithms	3		Y		Y	1000
Materials	4	Y		Y	Y	2000
Crystals	3	Y		Y		1600
Behavioral Sciences	3		Y			1000
International Journal of Geo-Information	3	Y				1000
Antibiotics	3	Y		Y		1600
Risks	3		Y			1000
Brain Sciences	2	Y		Y		1600
Religions	2		Y			1000
Climate	2		Y			1000
Children	2	Y				1000
International Journal of Financial Studies	2		Y			1000
Journal of Risk and Financial Management	2		Y			1000
Journal of Imaging	2		Y			1000
Biomimetics	2		Y	Y		1000
Actuators	1	Y				1000
Agriculture	1	Y		Y		1400
Animals	1	Y				1600
Applied Mechanics [launched in 2020, no Seal]	1					1000
Arts	1		Y			1000
Biology	1	Y		Y		1500
Catalysts	1	Y		Y		1800
Challenges	1					1000
Data	1		Y			1000

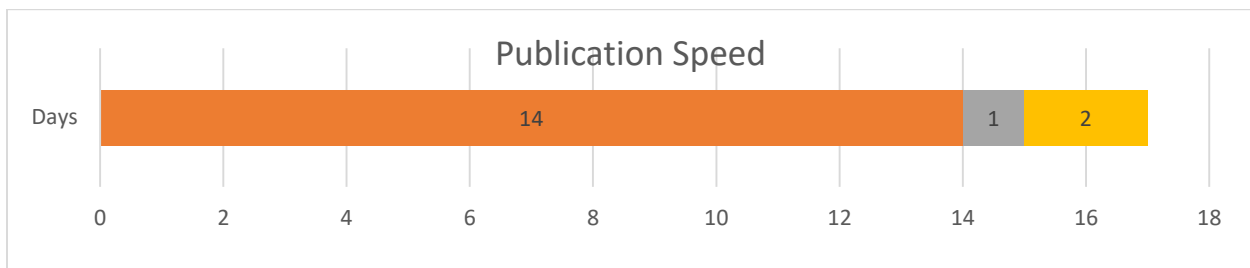
Designs	1					1000
Diagnostics	1	Y		Y		1400
Econometrics	1		Y			1000
Forests	1	Y			Y	1800
Future Internet	1		Y		Y	1000
Hydrology	1		Y			1000
Informatics	1		Y			1000
Inventions	1					1000
Journal of Manufacturing and Materials Processing	1		Y	Y		1000
Lubricants	1		Y	Y		1000
Marine Drugs	1	Y		Y		2000
Nanomaterials	1	Y		Y		2000
Nutrients	1	Y		Y		2000
Pharmaceutics	1	Y		Y		1800
Recycling	1					1000
Safety	1		Y			1000
Sports	1		Y			1000
Toxins	1	Y		Y		1400
Viruses	1	Y		Y		2000

It is notable that six titles published by MDPI, including *Sustainability*, *Sensors*, *Molecules*, *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, *Water*, and *Materials*, are ranked at the top with the highest scores indicating the “quality of service to authors” based on crowd sourced evaluations by authors in Quality Open Access Market (QOAM, <http://www.qoam.eu/journals>). Numerous MDPI journals are also received the highest numbers of verified review reports and endorsements in Publons (https://publons.com/journal/?order_by=reviews).

The last column in the table above lists the article processing charges as indicated on the journal’s webpages. The fees range from 1,000 Swiss francs (\$1,100) to 2,300 Swiss francs (\$2,555). According to the publisher’s webpage for article processing charges (<https://www.mdpi.com/apc>), the breakdown of how the APCs are used includes an allocation for “discounts and waivers” at 19% with the following explanation that “MDPI waives 25-27% of its content every year. ... We offer discounts from 15% (of the total APCs in a journal) in our most established journals up to 100% in our new journals or humanities journals.” Some items such as Editorials are published free of charge. Knowing that our University Open Access Publication Fund has supported only six articles in the MDPI journals since 2012, most likely the article processing charges were covered (partially) by external funding sources or by the publisher itself. About two-thirds of the UWM articles published during the current year were funded by agencies worldwide. The articles affiliated with UWM were published in collaborations with researchers from 22 countries besides the USA. The following chart includes the seven countries with the most collaborations:



The speed of publication research in MDPI journals is remarkably fast. On each journal’s webpage, the speed of publication is indicated in two time intervals such as “a first decision provided to authors after submission,” which is approximately 19 days, and then “acceptance to publication,” which takes about 5-10 days (https://res.mdpi.com/data/2019_web.pdf). For journals used by UWM authors, “a first decision to authors” timeline ranged from 11 to 38 days and “acceptance to publication” ranged from 2 to 10 days. For each article’s record, four dates: **Received, Revised, Accepted, Published**, are indicated. For example, the most recent UWM paper was received on November 5, revised on November 19, accepted on November 19, and published on November 21, 2020. The whole process from submission to publication took 17 days.



There were several comments that reviewers are asked to provide their peer review reports with a 7-day “fastest in the industry” deadline (<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/08/10/guest-post-mdpis-remarkable-growth/?informz=1>). Assuming that peer reviewers perform their evaluations of manuscripts rigorously and ethically, such efficiency in publishing serves the author’s interests. The other benefits of publishing with MDPI are open access (accessibility), indexing by reputable discovery platforms (discoverability), and high review scores and endorsements by authors (reputability). The growing number of UWM publications and faculty affiliations with the editorial boards provided solid evidence for our membership in the MDPI’s Institutional Open Access Program.

As of November 21, 2020, the program reached 715 members including four institutions in Wisconsin:

- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (joined in August 2020)
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Medical College of Wisconsin
- Marquette University.

The standard membership is free for an institution with no fixed term. The program offers access to the MDPI's online submission system where librarians can see article metadata of published papers and papers under processing, article processing charges invoices, editorial board members, and other information. Based on the current practice for uploading articles by authors themselves, our scholarly communication team has decided not to use auto-archiving of papers from MDPI into Digital Commons. As in previous years, the University Open Access Publication Fund (<https://uwm.edu/libraries/scholarly-communication/uoap/>) will continue partially supporting publications in MDPI journals. In addition, UWM authors may enjoy a 10% discount on the article processing charge in any MDPI journal.

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