

RECONFIGURING THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SUPPORTING THE SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING ECOSYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: With all the big changes going on in the world of scientific publishing right now, academic libraries are becoming more and more important in supporting editorial processes and spreading knowledge. This article looks at the Republic of Moldova through real research done in projects called “Trends in the Development of the Scientific Publishing System in the Republic of Moldova through the Lens of Science Policies” and “The Phenomenon of Predatory Pseudoscientific Publishing in the Academic Community of the Republic of Moldova”. These studies included surveys of scientists (539 people answered) and journal editors (57 people answered), as well as checks of how well bibliographic references and citations met the rules. The results show that there are still problems with making sure that citations are accurate and follow international standards. There is also a growing need for support from universities to improve academic integrity and make their work more visible around the world.

Survey results show how important libraries are becoming. While only a few researchers said librarians were their main source of info on dodgy publications, more than half said they'd check with librarians to see if a journal was legit. Editors also said they were slowly getting used to international standards for citations, and said these were important for indexing and being more visible around the world.

Actions such as updating journal profiles in bibliometric databases and rigorously applying international editorial standards are viewed as priorities.

The conclusions highlight the convergence between the educational role of libraries and editorial efforts toward professionalization, suggesting that academic libraries can play a decisive role in consolidating a sustainable and competitive publishing ecosystem, both regionally and internationally.

Keywords: Academic libraries, scientific publishing, citation standards, predatory journals, international visibility

JEL Classification: E24, I23, J80

1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, the field of scientific publishing has undergone significant transformations driven by digitization, the globalization of research efforts, and the proliferation of open access models. In this dynamic environment, academic libraries have evolved beyond their traditional role as providers of information resources to assume more complex functions, including supporting editorial processes, promoting the visibility of publications, and strengthening academic integrity (Tzanova, 2020; Qu and Huang, 2022).

The open science model has created significant opportunities for the democratization of knowledge; however, it has also introduced challenges related to financial sustainability and the maintenance of editorial standards (Redkina, 2022; Lo, 2025). In this context, libraries have become active participants in this new ecosystem by investing in digital infrastructure, developing publishing services, and establishing support mechanisms for peer review (Schlosser, 2018; Duffy, 2024).

But there are two other things that are making things more complicated. First, there are more and more publishers who are only interested in making money, and secondly, there's the pressure

to publish quickly. These two things have made it hard to know whether the research in new academic areas is any good (Shen and Björk, 2015; Frandsen *et al.*, 2022). Libraries, working with the scientific community, need to develop tools and policies to stop these bad practices and make the academic system stronger (Hansson and Johannesson, 2013; Hosier and Cantwell-Jurkovic, 2025).

In the Republic of Moldova, these global changes are happening in a country that is not strong, with limited money and technology, not much internet, and rules that keep changing. Even though there has been a lot of progress in the rules and classification of publications, there are still a lot of challenges. It is hard for journals to be well-known around the world for a number of reasons. These include limited access to international databases, different universities and research organisations not always supporting the development of journals, and difficulties in keeping the same editors for a long time (Cuciureanu and Vrabie, 2022; Cojocaru *et al.*, 2022; Cuciureanu, 2024; Țurcan, 2025).

This research looks at how academic libraries in the Republic of Moldova are changing the way they support the scientific publishing ecosystem. It does this by looking at the problems and possibilities that come up when moving to open models, the pressures of internationalisation, and the need to strengthen academic integrity.

2 Literature review

New research shows that changing what academic libraries do goes hand in hand with the major changes that scientific communication has seen in the last 20 years. The way knowledge circulates and is validated is changing because digitisation is speeding up, open access is being adopted everywhere, and new ways of checking information are emerging. (Tzanova, 2020; Lo, 2025). This issue extends beyond merely augmenting technical infrastructures; it involves institutional repositioning. Libraries are no longer simply providers of collections; rather, they are evolving into co-producers of scientific communication. These institutions assume a dual role, encompassing editorial functions – including methodological support and publishing services – and normative functions, such as education related to ethics, quality, and transparency (Tzanova, 2020; Hansson and Johannesson, 2013). Simultaneously, the global publishing landscape, once dominated by subscription models, is transitioning toward hybrid models in which processing fees, algorithms, and attention metrics create new dependencies and redistribute costs among authors, institutions, and commercial publishers (Lo, 2025).

From a conceptual perspective, the transition to Open Science encompasses more than just open access to articles. It includes various practices such as data and code sharing and open evaluation, which require libraries to possess integrated advisory, training, and standardization capabilities (Qu and Huang, 2022). These capabilities serve as interfaces between the circuits of scientific production and discovery, linking infrastructures, public policies, and evaluation mechanisms (Qu and Huang, 2022). Furthermore, Redkina (2022) emphasizes that the effectiveness of an open science ecosystem depends on coherence among platforms, metadata, persistent identifiers, and institutional policies. Therefore, library support must be both technological and organizational, aiming to achieve interoperability and long-term sustainability.

At the operational level, the literature describes a pragmatic repositioning, evident in the enhancement of the academic environment's publishing capacity and the development of library publishing services as alternatives to, or supplements for, commercial channels (Schlosser, 2018). The author demonstrates how initiatives centered around the Library Publishing Coalition have produced organizational models, tools, and best practices that lower barriers to entry for institutional journals and university publishing series. Duffy (2024) notes a similar trend in Ireland, where library-managed publishing services are facilitating the transformation of scientific communication through inter-institutional collaboration, standardization, and the professionalization of the editorial process. In this context, the library becomes a provider of

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infrastructure – such as platforms, metadata, and archiving – and a guarantor of quality through procedures, guidelines, and editorial training. Perceptions of librarians confirm this transition to hybrid roles, where publishing and evaluation skills are added to traditional ones (Hansson and Johannesson, 2013).

Alongside these opportunities, recent research also highlights systemic risks that require intervention from libraries, institutions, and policymakers. Shen and Björk (2015) documented a steady increase in articles published in outlets with questionable editorial practices, a phenomenon driven by performance pressures and fee-based models. One empirically tested solution is to adjust promotion criteria to discourage publication in questionable journals, with libraries acting as policy brokers and compliance advisors for the academic community (Frandsen *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the integration of artificial intelligence into editorial workflows introduces new challenges. Hosier and Cantwell-Jurkovic (2025) demonstrate that artificial intelligence (AI) is already being utilized for technical checks and language support; however, they emphasize the necessity of an ethical framework and human oversight. At a macro level, Lo (2025) discusses a “new economic paradigm” emerging from the combination of AI and open access, which has mixed effects on the sustainability and fairness of access.

The diversification of knowledge production also places additional demands on libraries. A study by Kaier *et al.* (2019) in Austria shows that researchers are increasingly focusing on non-traditional outputs such as datasets, replications, and software. This trend necessitates the expansion of institutional archiving and support infrastructures. Similarly, Scotti *et al.* (2025) emphasize that American libraries' involvement in Open Science requires the development of policies, infrastructures, and training programs. These examples could serve as points of comparison for countries such as the Republic of Moldova.

Reporting on these trends in the context of the Republic of Moldova reveals several vulnerabilities and gaps. Local empirical studies indicate that exposure to predatory publications is higher in environments characterized by pressure to publish quickly, a lack of culture surrounding channel evaluation, and financial constraints, which often push authors toward risky choices (Cojocararu *et al.*, 2022). Regarding visibility and procedural compliance, there is a discrepancy between the existing scientific publishing policies and the reality of indexing in international databases. This discrepancy reflects the absence of a coherent framework for the professionalization of journals and the management of editorial resources (Turcan, 2025b). Collectively, these findings paint an uncomfortable picture: the editorial infrastructure remains fragmented; human resources for editing and reviewing are limited; and working procedures often rely on informal practices. These areas can be addressed by libraries in partnership with publishers through the development of clear routines, workflows, and quality assurance mechanisms (Schlosser, 2018; Duffy, 2024).

Overall, studies suggest that the reconfiguration of academic libraries – from providers of collections to co-architects of the publishing ecosystem – is not only a response to global transformations but also a prerequisite for the sustainable professionalization of institutional channels, particularly in resource-limited systems. This is especially evident in contexts with more pronounced constraints, where the involvement of libraries can yield significant benefits through the development of academic publishing services, systematic publishing education programs, and the consistent application of integrity policies.

3 Methods and Materials

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining content analysis with quantitative, questionnaire-based tools.

In the first stage, two documentary analyses were conducted on national scientific journals. The first study, carried out in February 2025, examined 71 journals (42 accredited and 29 additional ones identified using the National Bibliometric Instrument) to assess the clarity of

citation rules, the use of unique identifiers, and alignment with international standards (ISO 690:2022). The second study, conducted between March 26 and 28, 2025, compared the stated instructions with editorial practices. It analyzed 57 accredited scientific journals to evaluate the consistency between official requirements and actual reference formatting.

The quantitative component consisted of two surveys conducted between January and March 2025. The first survey, sent to a sample of 539 researchers, academics, and doctoral students, examined their experiences with the editorial process, their perceptions of the quality of national journals, and their awareness of pseudoscientific publishing. The second questionnaire, completed by 57 editors, focused on the challenges associated with editorial activities, the level of professionalization, and the relationships with authors and institutions.

Combining these methods enabled us to capture both editorial practices and their perception by the scientific community and publishers. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the academic context in the Republic of Moldova.

4 Findings and Discussion

The results of the survey conducted among the scientific community (n = 539; 524 valid responses to this question) indicate that information about predatory journals and conferences primarily circulates through informal channels, such as professional networks, colleagues, or media sources. This predominance of non-institutional communication suggests that the phenomenon is perceived more as a topic of discussion among researchers than as a component of structured training programs.

Conversely, the data highlight the marginal role of librarians in this process. Only 8.21% of respondents identified libraries as a source of relevant recommendations (Figure 1), indicating a significant discrepancy between these institutions' professional capacity to provide educational and editorial support and the extent to which this support is recognized or utilized by the academic community. Libraries already have the expertise to evaluate sources and identify publications with questionable editorial practices. These results highlight the importance of redefining their role to include ethical and informed research beyond traditional boundaries.

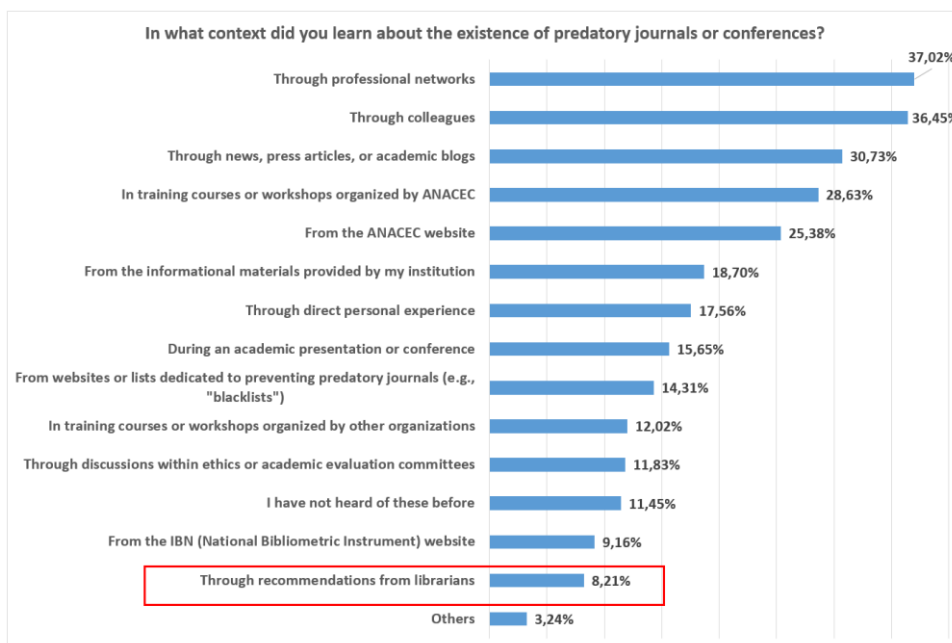


Figure 1. Information sources about predatory journals and conferences

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of a survey (n = 524)

It is interesting that only a few respondents (9.16%) mentioned IBN, while a medium number (25.38%) said the website of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) was a good source of information. This suggests that the current institutional mechanisms are not being used to their full potential in preventing the phenomenon under analysis. Academic libraries can help with this by acting as a bridge between the rules and the people who use them. It is important to provide clear information and make publication evaluation tools easier to access. This will help to create a stronger culture of quality within the local scientific community.

The results show that more and more people are aware of this, but this awareness is spread out and relies too much on people's personal experiences and informal networks. Making academic libraries more important could help change this process into a lasting way of teaching people and protecting them against bad publishing practices.

The survey results show that most respondents like to check the credibility of a journal or conference by looking at national and international databases (56.18%; n = 582) and lists of suspicious publications (48.41%; n = 243). Many participants also cited sources such as the Internet, particularly warnings from authors who have previously been affected (43.43%; n = 218). Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents report participating in training courses and workshops organized by ANACEC (39.84%; n = 200). These findings suggest an increased reliance on external institutional sources, which are perceived as stable reference points in the publishing landscape.

The survey results indicate that, when determining whether a journal or conference is predatory, researchers primarily rely on well-established external sources (Figure 2). The most frequently cited sources are national and international databases (average rating 3.55), blacklists of suspicious publications (average rating 3.43), and online information, including warnings from other authors (average rating 3.34). In contrast, internal institutional structures and collegial support are referenced less frequently.

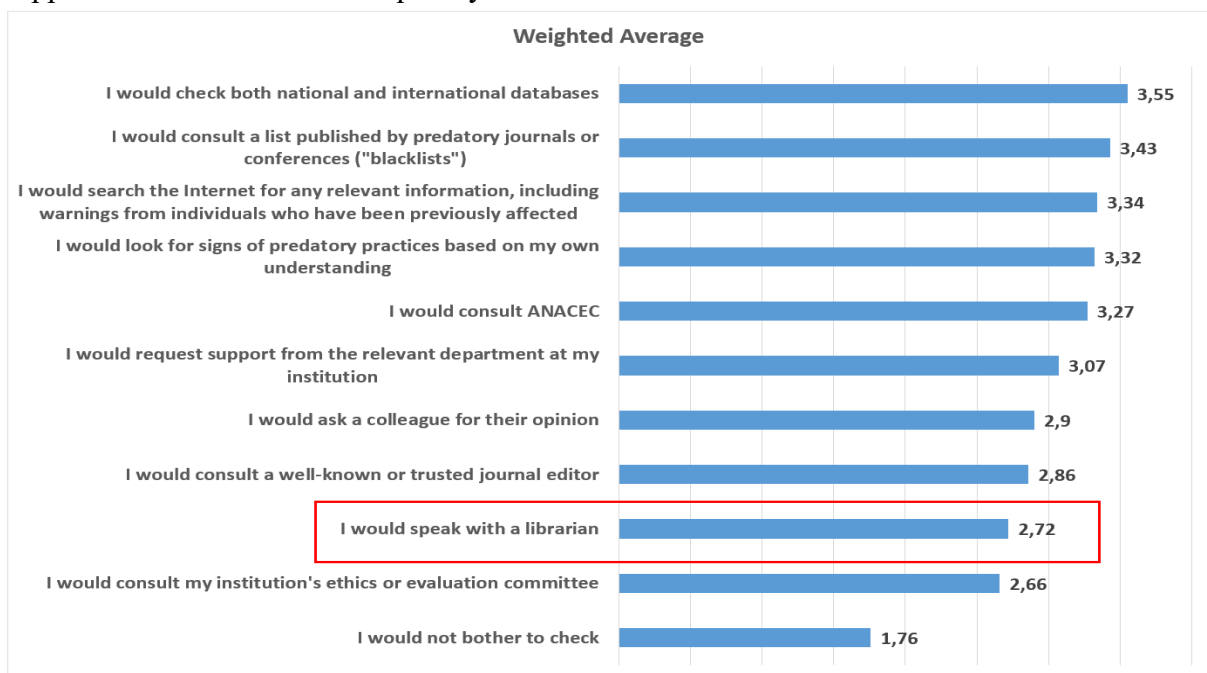


Figure 2. Strategies for identifying predatory publications

Source: Own elaboration based on the survey results (on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree) (n = 502)

In this equation, librarians occupy an intermediate position (mean = 2.72), suggesting that seeking their expertise is neither a common practice nor a marginal one. However, their contribution is only modestly recognized, with just 15.54% (n = 78) of respondents explicitly mentioning this option as a way to verify the predatory nature of a publication. A detailed analysis of the response would talk to a librarian reveals that more than half of the participants either agree or strongly agree with this option. Data from Figure 3 completes the picture, indicating that although few firmly affirm this practice, 36.25% (n = 182) say they would consult a librarian, and 17.3% (n = 89) do not rule out this option. At the same time, almost 30% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, confirming that libraries are still not widely perceived as sources of specialized support in evaluating publications.

These results present an ambivalent picture. On one hand, there is a foundation of trust in librarians' expertise; on the other, this resource remains underutilized. Enhancing their visibility in editorial policies and strengthening their educational role could transform libraries from mere resource providers into active partners in promoting scientific integrity.

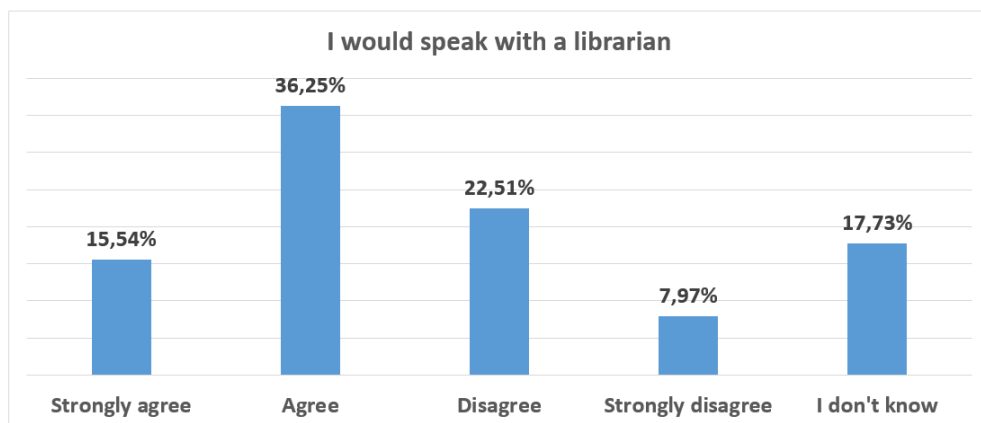


Figure 3. Respondents' perceptions of the role of librarians in identifying predatory publications

Source: Own elaboration based on the survey results (n = 502)

The observed discrepancy suggests that the potential of libraries remains only partially utilized. Although librarians possess the necessary expertise to help the academic community identify predatory publishing channels, their role is often perceived as less important than that of external sources. These findings reinforce the idea that librarians need to increase their visibility to be recognized as active partners in promoting a responsible publishing culture by providing training, best practice guides, and advisory services tailored to researchers' needs. In the Republic of Moldova, pseudo-scientific publications continue to pose a problem, and libraries could support research integrity processes and strengthen trust in publishing practices by becoming more actively involved.

To complement the survey of the scientific community, a second questionnaire was sent to journal editors, 57 of whom responded, to identify strategies for increasing international visibility (Mincină and Țurcan, 2025). Figure 4 shows that publishers emphasize indexing in the National Bibliometric Instrument (IBN), mentioned by 51 respondents; promoting ORCID identifiers for authors (49 responses); and implementing DOIs for articles (47 responses). All of these measures require knowledge of and adherence to international standards – an area in which librarians are well positioned to provide methodological assistance and specialized technical support.

The consistent application of international citation standards, as referenced by 45 publishers, highlights the necessity for bibliographic expertise. In this area, librarians have demonstrated

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proficiency and can facilitate the alignment of author guidelines with established standards, such as SM ISO 690. In contrast, fewer respondents reported indexing in major international databases (41 responses) or maintaining active profiles on bibliometric platforms like Google Scholar or ResearchGate (34 responses). These discrepancies suggest that the integration of digital tools and the monitoring of scientific impact are not yet fully established. Consequently, academic libraries can play an active role by providing support in the indexing process, data management, and enhancing international visibility.

Consequently, the findings suggest that publishers recognize the importance of global standards and infrastructures; however, fully implementing these remains a significant challenge. Librarians are uniquely positioned to help translate these intentions into sustainable practices through various means, including counseling, training, and direct involvement in editorial and academic visibility processes.

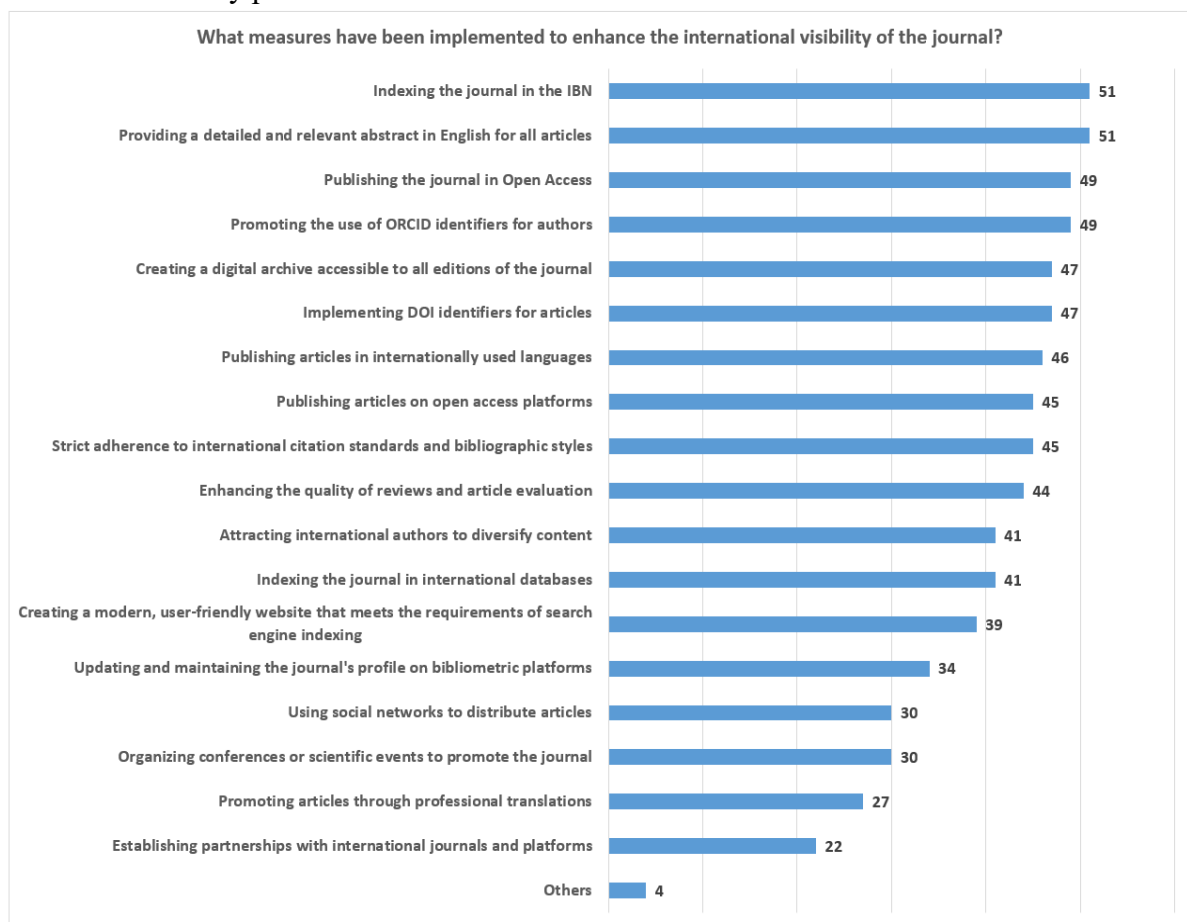


Figure. 4. Measures adopted by publishers to enhance the international visibility of journals
 Source: Own elaboration based on the survey results (n = 56)

The survey results also demonstrate that the majority of international requirements are perceived as accessible and useful for enhancing the journal's prestige. The most highly regarded measures were the introduction of persistent ORCID identifiers for authors (45 responses) and the assignment of a DOI to each article (43 responses), followed by the assignment of a DOI to the journal itself (37 responses). These findings support the commitment to global best practices for identifying and validating scientific output. However, requirements related to the completeness and accuracy of bibliographic references (31 responses) and ensuring digital archiving (31 responses) are considered beneficial but present practical challenges for some publishers. Four respondents described these as a “major challenge”.

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Within the category of “difficult to implement but necessary” aspects, the most frequently mentioned option is the use of Open Journal Systems (OJS) platforms, cited by 24 respondents. This choice highlights the lack of sufficient technical and infrastructural resources.

The results of this study provide a relatively clear picture, indicating that publishers are generally receptive to the adoption of international standards. However, challenges arise when these standards require the use of digital resources, technical expertise, and a deep understanding of bibliographic norms. Librarians can address these challenges in several practical ways, including training publishers and authors in the use of ORCID and DOI integration, offering methodological support to verify the accuracy of references, providing technical assistance for adopting OJS platforms, and developing guidelines or workshops to professionalize publishing activities.

Consequently, university libraries can play a pivotal role in the process of international journal indexing, thereby reducing the gap between global standards and locally available resources.

Another aspect examined in the survey was the presence of explicit provisions concerning editorial policies. The majority of editors (53 out of 57 respondents) confirmed the existence of regulations related to citation styles and the accurate preparation of bibliographies in the journals they manage. This finding suggests that, at a declarative level, citation standardization is considered a crucial element of the editorial process and a prerequisite for attaining international visibility. However, content analyses and compliance assessments reported in previous studies reveal frequent discrepancies between the stated rules and their actual implementation in published articles.

This lack of uniformity presents an opportunity for librarians' expertise to become truly relevant. Given their familiarity with citation standards such as APA, Harvard, and ISO 690, librarians can play a pivotal role in aligning author guidelines with international norms. They can also verify and ensure consistency in the application of these standards throughout the editing and publishing process.

The findings reaffirm the importance of adhering to bibliographic standards in shaping editorial policies and highlight the promising role that academic libraries can play in the professionalization of editorial processes and in enhancing the quality of scientific publications in the Republic of Moldova.

The analyses reveal a common trend: persistent difficulties in standardizing citation practices in domestic journals. An evaluation of 57 accredited journals shows a clear imbalance – only 21 (36.8%) explicitly reference an international citation style or recognized standard, while the remaining 63.2% provide no clear guidance in this regard (Țurcan and Minciună, 2025a). The practical application of these rules presents several challenges. First, only 20 journals consistently adhere to the citation rules they declare. Second, 25 journals apply these rules only partially, and in 12 cases, there is no genuine compliance.

These findings are supported by the analysis of a larger sample of 71 journals, of which only 24 provide a clear reference to an established citation style (Țurcan and Minciună, 2025b). It has been demonstrated that alternative citation formats are frequently used in ways that are both ambiguous and inconsistent. This has been shown to cause editorial inconsistencies, thereby reducing the likelihood of publications being included in international databases.

Furthermore, a case study in the field of educational sciences highlights a concrete consequence of this lack of standardization, revealing that only 10.02% of the 369 references analyzed fully complied with the formal requirements (Țurcan, 2025a). This low accuracy rate indicates that, in the absence of clear standards and a coherent editorial verification mechanism, errors are not only frequent but also nearly unavoidable. The impact is significant; the visibility, reputation, and potential inclusion of journals in international databases are all adversely affected.

Consequently, the three investigations are complementary and converge on the same conclusion: the lack of standardization and rigorous editorial oversight constitutes one of the most significant vulnerabilities in the domestic publishing system. In this context, university libraries could intervene effectively in two ways. First, they could train authors and editors in the proper use of citation standards. Second, they could develop monitoring and correction tools. These measures would substantially reduce the number of errors and significantly enhance the scientific community's confidence in national publications.

5 Conclusions

The study indicates that academic libraries in the Republic of Moldova are undergoing a transition, gradually shifting from their traditional role as providers of information resources to active partners in the publishing ecosystem. Survey data suggest that, despite possessing the necessary skills to support the identification of predatory publications and the application of international standards, librarians utilize this potential only to a limited extent. A considerable number of researchers continue to view libraries as significant sources of editorial support, highlighting the need for a strategic repositioning of the services offered.

A comprehensive qualitative analysis of the compliance and accuracy of bibliographic references has revealed significant deficiencies in standardization. Only a third of journals follow international rules for citations, and a study in education sciences found that less than 10% of references are completely accurate. These findings show that it is very important to involve libraries as methodological contributors, as they can support verification and training processes.

But publishers have said that international standards and using identifiers that never change are important. But they have also seen the problems that come with putting this into practice, mostly because they don't have the right digital systems or the technical skills they need. At this point, librarians can help by offering technical support, training programmes and ongoing guidance.

All of these findings suggest that it is no longer a good idea to think about changing the role of libraries. It is now necessary to change the role of libraries. If the editorial and advisory teams get bigger, the way the articles are put together can become more professional. This can stop problems that happen when people are too quick to publish things that are not good enough. It can also make research more visible to people in other countries.

Academic libraries have the potential to become real bastions of academic integrity. But for this change to work, the company has to recognise their expertise and make sure they're involved in decision-making and editorial processes.

Acknowledgment: *This work was supported by grants from the National Agency for Research and Development of the Republic of Moldova: 24.80012.0807.14SE “The phenomenon of predatory pseudoscientific publishing in the academic community of the Republic of Moldova” (PSEUDO-MD) and 24.80012.0807.17SE “Trends in the development of the scientific publishing system in the Republic of Moldova through the lens of science policies” (POLISCI-MD).*

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