

Stolen Journals:

Safeguarding the Integrity of Academic Publishing in Occupied Territories

Background

Since **2014**, and especially following the full-scale invasion in **2022**, **Ukrainian** academic institutions from the temporarily occupied territories have faced systematic violations of their intellectual property rights. Over **50 academic journals** originally issued by Ukrainian universities have been appropriated or misused by occupation authorities. While the displaced Ukrainian institutions continue to publish these journals from government-controlled areas, illegal entities have unjustifiably claimed legal succession, often along with the entire historical archives – some spanning over a century.

- **Misuse of ISSNs:** in some cases, original ISSNs were falsely used; in others, new ISSNs were obtained under false pretenses for stolen journals.

- **Unauthorized use and re-registration of journal titles** under Russian law or by unrecognized occupation regimes

- **Parallel publication:** the same journal title appears under different authorities, creating confusion, distorting citation records, and eroding trust in academic metadata systems.

Problem

Multiple threats to the integrity of scholarly communication:

- **Loss of authorship integrity and copyright violations:** scholars, unaware of such misuse, risk being associated with compromised publications.

Methods

To document the issue:

- We collected detailed records of the affected journals, including original and current ISSN assignments, registration metadata, website analysis, and copyright/ownership information.
- We compared archival data from before and after the occupation, highlighting cases of parallel or false publishing.
- Focus was on appropriation patterns and legal bans on cooperating with these occupying entities.



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Solution

The International ISSN Centre has responded by introducing new rules for assigning ISSNs to journals from occupied territories. These rules include:

- An explicit note in the ISSN record detailing the origin and occupation-related status of the title.
- A distinction between legitimate and illegitimate continuations of the same title.

Results

- Many journals are no longer published by their rightful institutions, while occupation authorities falsely claim editorial and legal continuity.
- In some cases, archives were repurposed, erasing or rewriting historical publishing records.
- ISSNs were manipulated – some hijacked journals continue under the same ISSN; others acquired groundless new identifiers.
- This has led to disinformation in academic indexing systems, undermining the work of genuine editorial teams and deceiving readers and researchers.

This is not just a **Ukrainian** issue – it is a test for global academic publishing standards, calling for solidarity, vigilance, and institutional transparency.

Conclusion

The global scholarly community must be informed about these violations:

- To support legal publishers – the Ukrainian displaced universities
- To protect authors and researchers from being misled
- To preserve the integrity of the academic record and identifiers
- To emphasize the inadmissibility of collaboration with entities established in the temporarily occupied territories

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