EDITORIAL

Theory and practice of journal editorship: on editorial ethics

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This issue of Research in Engineering Design is a special issue on Design Theory. For any discipline, theory and practice play complementary roles. We study practice, trying to understand it by forming theories, in order to improve practice. Or, we form theories, try to implement them in practice, and following such implementations/experimentations, we revise our theories. Irrespective where you start the loop, it is productive if done well.

The purpose of this editorial is not to discuss this issue or the subject of design theory that is introduced meticulously in the guest editorial followed by six high-quality papers. The purpose of this editorial is to briefly discuss the theory and practice of journal editorship using these concepts rather loosely. The "theory" consists of the journal's review procedure outlined in a previous editorial (V21, no. 2). While there is constant effort to approach the targets set in the review procedure, we are not there yet as seen in the statistics of the process. In the professional engineering world, such a gap would not be acceptable. The journal review process—a contract between the editor, editorial board, and the authors—must be kept. However, in the academic world, where all parties volunteer, the situation transforms from a legal to a social contract governed by an ethos.

Of course there are familiar issues of ethics related to authors such as no plagiarism, no redundant publications, etc. Journals often make sure to ask authors to declare that they have not breached these rules. In contrast, journals do not usually declare the opposite side—the ethics of editors, which is therefore the subject of this editorial. This ethics is critical due to the blindness of review processes, making, the relationship between editors and authors asymmetric and prone to mistakes as well as misconduct. Only the ethical codes followed by the community ensure that the process is honest and is executed well. Editorial ethics is not a redundant topic; there have been editors of journals who did not handle papers submitted for review for years, compromising the careers of their peers; there have been editors who wrote letters to the editor using a fraudulent name to offend a colleague; others accepted papers to gain personal benefits. What then should we expect of the editor and what measures do authors have to defend their interests?

Here are some rules an editor must follow[1]:

1. Avoid conflict of interest/prejudice, e.g., do not accept papers or reject in return for some personal benefit or based on personal biases.
2. Maintain confidentiality of the editorial process: reviewers' identities should be kept private and work submitted for review remains the sole property of the authors until publication. No part of any submitted paper should be used by the reviewers or editors.
3. Exercise fairness towards submissions in the review process.
4. Exercise fairness towards readers by accepting only papers that advance the state-of-the-art.
5. Avoid demanding that authors blindly cite papers from the journal as a condition for publication.
6. Adhere to published procedures.

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[1] With little changing of words, these rules should equally apply to other situations such as reviewers or program managers that handle proposals or committees in charge of promotions.

What can authors do if they have a problem? If authors feel they have a valid complaint, here are some options they could exercise:

1. An author's first step is to approach the editor to complain about anything related to the process.
2. Authors may approach the publisher to complain about the editor if necessary.
3. Authors could also approach a body such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and describe the situation and ask for help. Research in Engineering Design is a member of that committee and so is the Editor-in-Chief.
4. Letters could be sent to the editor to discuss papers after their publication or raise other topics of interest to journal readers. Such letters will pass through a screening mechanism to ensure relevance and value to the community.

There are issues that do not appear above and have to be addressed. They will be developed into a new code of ethics for the journal that will be posted on the journal website. If you have input to that process, you are invited to participate. As I declared in the past, a journal is a product designed, developed, and maintained by the community. As a stakeholder, you have a say!

It is hoped that the presentation of this subject will prevent us from needing to deal with any of the above issues in the future and that all our efforts will be devoted to ensure that Research in Engineering Design thrives and continues to be a leading journal in design. With that, it is time to thank all the reviewers, outside the editorial board, who actually maintain and improve the high quality of the journal by contributing their precious time to review papers and provide valuable comments to authors. The following are the reviewers who contributed their reviews in 2012:

Akin	Omer
Ali	Ahad
Alonso	Sergio
Antani	Kavit
Avigad	Gideon
Ballard	Glenn
Barthes	Jean-Paul
Ben-Arieh	David
Bettig	Bernhard
Bonnardel	Nathalie
Botta	David
Busby	Jerry
Campbell	Matthew
Cantamessa	Marco
Cardoso	Carlos
Cascini	Gaetano
Cavallucci	Denis
Chen	Wei
Chulvi	Vicente
Clarkson	John P.
Culley	Steve
D'Amelio	Valentina
Davidson	Joe
De Guio	Roland
Deb	Kalyanmoy
Dekoninck	Elies
Deng	Xiaoguang
Dong	Andy
Duan	Gui-jiang
Dym	Clive
Elsayed	Elsayed
Eris	Ozgur
Esterman	Marcos
Franssen	Maarten
Gayton	Nicolas
Grogan	Paul
Hendriks	Lex
Herder	Paulien
Heymann	Matthias
Hicks	Ben
Honda	Tomonori
Howard	Thomas
Indurkhya	Bipin
Jagtap	Santosh
Jiangxin	Jiao
Joglekar	Nitin
Katsikopoulos	Konstantinos
Kazakçi	Akin
Kerley	Warren
Kim	Harrison
Kim	Sang-Gook
Kremer	Gül
Kroll	Ehud
Le Masson	Pascal
Lee	Carman
Lee	Yu-Cheng
Legardeur	Jeremy
Lewis	Kemper
Linsey	Julie
Liu	Ying-Chieh
Lopez-Mesa	Belinda
Luo	Xinggang
Magee	Christopher
Maher	Mary Lou

Malmqvist	Johan
Marle	Franck
Matthews	Peter
Maurer	Maik
McAdams	Daniel
McAloone	Tim
Mocko	Greg
Montagna	Francesca
Nakhla	Michel
Oehmen	Josef
Olewnik	Andrew
Ostrosi	Egon
Oxman	Rivka
Paredis	Chris
Pecht	Michael
Pun	Kit Fai
Ramani	Karthik
Ramos	Ana
Rangan	Ravi
Renardel de Lavalette	Gerard
Ritzen	Sofia
Sacks	Rafael
Sarkar	Prabir
Schleidt	Bettina
Schmid	Anne-Françoise
Schmidt	Linda
Scott	Michael
Seepersad	Carolyn
Siddique	Zahed
Smulders	Frido
Sriram	Ram
Stetter	Ralf
Stone	Robert
Tang	Dunbing
Tate	Derrick
Taura	Toshiharu
Terpenny	Janis
Thompson	Graham
Tucker	Conrad
Tumer	Irem
Ullman	David
Umeda	Yasushi
van der Weth	Ruediger
van Langen	Pieter
Vargas Hernandez	Noe
Wang	G.
Weil	Benoit
Wyatt	David
Wynn	David
Yang	Maria
Yannou	Bernard
Yassine	Ali
Zanker	Winfried
Zeng	Yong
Zhang	Chris
Zhang	Linda (Lianfeng)