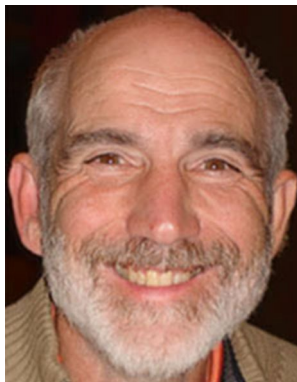


DEAR READERS

Dear Readers

Bob Kleinmann¹

Published online: 3 November 2017
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany 2017



After receiving an inquiry from one of our readers, I want to discuss plagiarism and how our journal maintains its integrity. Strictly speaking, plagiarism is the taking of someone else's work and passing it off as your own, which we all know is unethical. However, some authors may not realize that self-plagiarism (reusing your own published work in a new submission without proper citation) is also considered unethical.

As you may know, there is powerful software that compares all submitted manuscripts to all internationally published literature and detects duplication. Authors can use this software to make sure that they or their co-authors have adequately rewritten cited text or are appropriately quoting the published materials that they are citing and giving credit to the source material. Simply citing a source does not give an author permission to copy published material. It must be rewritten, unless quotation marks surround the copied text, even if it is the author's own text.

✉ Bob Kleinmann
robert.kleinmann@gmail.com

¹ Heidelberg, Germany

Like our colleagues at other journals, we use this software to detect duplication and to keep ourselves and our authors from intentionally or accidentally committing plagiarism. However, in the technical literature, there are additional opportunities for our efforts to go awry, as occurred recently with one of our published papers. The problem is that plagiarism software only compares documents with others written in the same language. However, in this instance, the authors translated and reused substantial portions of a paper that they had published in their native language, without citing the previous publication. Of course, there are ways to reuse material that has already been published, but the authors did not realize their problem, since the material that they were reusing was their own and because it had been published in the proceedings for a regional conference, in another language. It was this duplication that was detected by one of our alert readers who was familiar with the previously published version of the paper and brought it to my attention. I immediately contacted the authors who were unaware of the error and who immediately apologized; they have since taken action to educate their colleagues about this aspect of plagiarism. I encourage all of you to do the same.

Had the authors asked us before submitting the manuscript, we would have told them how and when it is appropriate to do what they wished to do, so I am now providing these instructions to all of you to hopefully prevent embarrassments in the future. The Springer Nature guidelines are these: First, they require written permission from the original publisher to reuse any exact copy, such as a table or figure. Second, any material that is being reused should cite the previous publication, along with the phrase, "published with permission from ..." followed by the citation. If the material has been modified (e.g. updated), then written permission is not required but the original source should

still be cited, along with the phrase, “modified from ...” and then the citation.

Please feel free to ask for specific guidance before preparing and submitting a paper under such circumstances. My guidance comes after I ask some basic questions: How likely is it that much of our readership has already had the opportunity to read the previously used material? For example, was it presented at a small conference or published in the conference proceedings in another discipline? Is there a good reason to republish it in this journal? For example, has your continued research in this area provided new insights? Are you reusing tables or figures, and if so, does the previous publisher own the copyright, or do you retain it? If the previous publisher owns it, will they provide written permission to reuse the material? Do you know how to properly cite the previous publication?

Now, my permission to prepare and submit the manuscript does not guarantee that it will be published by our journal. Our reviewers may decide that it is not of sufficient international interest or may decide to reject it for some other reason, but asking these questions before preparing and submitting the manuscript can avoid an immediate rejection by the editorial staff, before the paper even gets sent out for review. In the case of the paper in question, I would have advised the authors that the subject certainly seemed relevant to our journal’s readership and would have asked more about the conference. If I felt that it was appropriate to reuse the material, I would then have advised them to get written permission from the publisher unless they retained the copyright (which is not that unusual for conference proceedings, but has to be verified), and explained how to properly cite the previous publication. In this instance, the authors apparently retained the copyright; the problem was that the authors had not properly cited the previous publication. As a result, it came across as self-plagiarism and potentially caused them some embarrassment. Anyone who has questions or needs clarification on this issue should contact me. I look forward to the discussion.

Now, on to happier topics! First, I want to recognize Anne Weber who joined our editorial staff in June as an Editor’s Assistant; she has taken over assigning papers to the associate editors and seeing to it that they do not sit in anyone’s

queue for too long. I also want to thank all of the associate editors who graciously helped out for part or all of 2017: Rob Howell, Charlotte (Charlie) Braungardt, Gareth Diggles La Touche, Braden Hanna, Houcyne El Idrysy, Rodrigo Embile Jr., Massimo Gasparon, Ashley Jones, Győző Jordán, Ann Maest, Steven Meyerhoff, Kim Morton, Len Murray, Benoît Plante, James Pope, Dyllon Randall, Pierre Rousseau, Gideon Steyl, Christie Terrell, Keith Thompson, Teresa Valente, Qiang Wu, Kendra Zamzow, and Wanfang Zhou—our success this past year would not have been possible without them. Note that this list does not include anyone who joined our group in the latter half of 2017 because we give our new volunteers a few months to find out if they enjoy doing it.

I would like to thank our volunteer translators: Changshen Wang translated all of our published papers’ abstracts into Chinese, Edgardo Donati did the same for Spanish, and Friedrich-Carl Benthous, Jörn Geletneky, Helmuth Landsmann, Joscha Opitz, Michael Paul, Walter Pohl, Martin Schultze, Christian Tomsu, Wilfried Uhlman, and Kai-Uwe Ulrich took turns translating our abstracts into German. I also want to thank Josepha Zielke, who is now managing abstract translation. The translated abstracts appear along with the on-line version of the papers.

I also thank the Springer Nature staff, especially Divya Ananthanarayanan, who has helped me and the other editors, our authors, and our reviewers, and Srikanth Reddy and his staff who oversee all of the electronic and hardcopy printing of our papers. As our workload has increased, so has theirs. Finally, I thank Christian Wolkersdorfer, who in addition to serving as IMWA’s President, serves as this journal’s Managing Editor—which means that he worries about the non-textual aspects of the journal, such as how figures should be formatted, and manages our interactions with our publisher, Springer Nature.

On behalf of the entire Editorial Staff, I wish you all a happy holiday season and a fantastic new year!

Regards,



Bob Kleinmann, Editor-in-Chief.