Redundant Publication—How to Avoid Duplication

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We all know that duplicate publication of an article is considered self-plagiarism and is not allowed in peer-reviewed journals. The Journal of Digital Imaging has a statement in the submission process that a manuscript has not been submitted to any other journals for publication. This is a common statement that peer-reviewed journals often use. Accusations of duplicate publications have wide ranging consequences. For example, such an accusation may bar all the authors on a manuscript from future submissions to a journal, the author's Department Chair or Dean may be informed, an internal investigation may be launched, the local newspaper might report on scientific misconduct by faculty members, and the repercussions may effect a person's promotion, tenure, and reputation.

How can an author get caught in the position of unknowingly submitting a manuscript containing material that could be considered a duplicate publication?

Duplicate publication includes the text in an article, but it also includes figures and data sets previously published. If an author uses a figure in an article published in a blog, an abstract, another journal article, a teaching file, or published lecture notes, that figure may have a copyright associated with it or it at the very least it has been published. This figure could be a graph or drawing produced by the author or a radiology image. Once it has been published, it cannot be included in a future article without acknowledgement and for most peer review journals, the ability to assign the copyright to that figure to the journal

accepting the manuscript for publication. If the author uses a dataset for an article, that dataset has been published. Different parts of the dataset can be used for subsequent articles but not the prior published dataset.

When an author wishes to present research at a scientific meeting, it is common to submit an abstract to the organization holding the meeting and if accepted, that abstract could be published by the organization either in a proceedings format or online. Often, the author assigns the copyright to the organization publishing the abstract. Signing copyright forms is part of the publication process and most of us sign them without much thought about the future consequences. But suppose the author who presented the paper at a scientific meeting went on to produce a manuscript and included figures and text from the original abstract. That is duplicate publication.

Many manuscripts are placed in Open Access Institutional Repositories. There were 65 institutional repositories in the USA reported in August 2015. This list includes 36 major medical centers and 29 colleges and universities and more repositories are planned. Most, possibly all of the authors submitting the JDI are unaware if a repository exists and even if they are aware of the repository, they are not aware of the policies and restrictions. Many institutions allow the authors to maintain the copyright to their work. In this case, authors are allowed to post the article on other open access sites and on their personal website.

Journals should seek out and publish work that has not been previously published in print, web, or other electronic publications. Redundant publication occurs when multiple papers are written without reference in the text, and share the same text, data or results. In order to help identify potential plagiarism of any kind journal editors, including myself, use a tool called iThenticate to search for similarities in any form of publication on the web. Because of the availability of these tools, there is a

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possibility that many authors who published abstracts or draft copies of manuscripts will be accused of self-plagiarism.

A few simple steps can keep you from unknowingly violating the rules of self-plagiarism.

- Keep track of copyrights to all work.
- Discover if your institution has a repository and get the rules and policies.
- How to get an institutional waiver to publish the work.
- How to transfer the copyright to the journal.
- Discover if your institution submits federally funded articles to open source repositories.
- Track the publication or dissemination of your abstracts, teaching files, and lecture notes.
- If you submit an abstract to a meeting for presentation, be sure you do not use the text, figures, or details of the data in a future manuscript—or—if you must, get the copyright released to you and reference the prior work.

- If you have any questions, transparency is your best option, ask the editor of the journal how to handle any potential issues before submitting your manuscript.

I realize that this seems that journal editors are making it more difficult for authors who already have a heavy workload to manage the difficult process of scientific publication. Rapid development in web technologies and electronic publication has led to wide dissemination of material while journals attempt to maintain their position as the source of peer-reviewed, original work. In the coming months and years, editors and publishers will face the difficult task of encouraging quality submissions while helping authors avoid inadvertent violations of the publication code of ethics that could result in embarrassment, academic investigation, time spent by authors and editors resolving issues, and denial of publication of an article.

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