

From the Editor-in-Chief

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Crime Does Not Pay



Dr. Lance Kaplan, EIC

In this day and age, we have an incredible wealth of knowledge available at our fingertips. This is also increasing the rate of new discoveries. The amount of content in our knowledge repositories such as in IEEE Xplore is growing exponentially. While the easy access to knowledge is helping to drive this growth, there are other less wondrous forces that are at play. In fact, the amount of knowledge within Xplore might be growing far less than the content, and IEEE is very concerned that many duplicative papers are in the archives. This may have a detrimental effect on the enthusiasm for subscriptions that IEEE can expect from libraries, and it is libraries that provide the critical financial support of IEEE's scholarly operations. Furthermore, duplicative content means that the precious time of valuable volunteer editors and reviewers is being wasted.

IEEE wants to fix the problem, but it is an uphill battle. The pressures to publish seem to be ever increasing. It is easier to count papers than it is to understand and assess the technical acumen that these papers represent. Unfortunately, many rely too much on bibliometrics and create a culture that actually encourages researchers to "game the system" by getting as much mileage (i.e., the greatest number of papers) from a single idea. It is acceptable to develop a framework that leads to multiple papers as long as each paper provides something of value to the reader relative to the prior literature (including the authors' own works). However, many researchers fail to meet any reasonable threshold of novelty in the papers they submit. Of course, many times, the authors are not being malicious. We are all probably guilty of excessive promotion of our accomplishments. However, when the

authors fail to disclose their earlier work, then there is a problem. This behavior is leading to a large fraction of the duplicative papers, and it must be stopped.

To be clear, a journal version of an earlier conference paper is not a duplicative paper. At least this is the case when the journal paper properly cites the earlier conference paper, and the reviewers can identify the new contributions of the journal paper relative to the earlier work. These contributions could be in expanded theory, extensions to the methods, and/or expanded experimentation that provides new and important insight for the reader. If the paper never cites the earlier work and the authors fail to expand the earlier conference paper, then it might pass through the peer review process and become a duplicative paper, which is a problem. When authors submit a paper that is a small tweak of uncited earlier journal papers, or virtually the same paper in parallel to multiple journals, the problem is even worse.

We have tools to identify such unsavory behaviors. All submissions are scanned by iThenticate, a plagiarism detection tool. In addition, our editors and reviewers have caught many duplicative papers. When authors are caught trying to beat the system, we are not very happy. Authors guilty of serious malfeasance can find themselves very unwelcome at our Transactions; and they can also find themselves on IEEE's "Prohibited Author List," which triggers all kinds of unhappiness for themselves and their institutions.

It is crucial that all authors properly attribute their earlier work when they submit a paper. Anyone who plans to submit a paper to T-AES should read the Information for Authors. Because we live in a time when collaborations are becoming more and more necessary, it is crucial to work with your collaborators to make sure they understand these policies. People come from different research cultures, and one must be careful that they do not get caught in a mess due to the mistake of a coauthor.

I would like to end on a more positive note. We have great editors and reviewers, and most of our authors contribute excellent work. As a result, our impact factor has gone up significantly this year from 1.394 to 1.757. I guess I am guilty of counting bibliometrics myself. Nevertheless, I believe the "technical acumen" of our Transactions brings pride to the IEEE AESS.

Lance Kaplan