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# INFORMS Guidelines for Copyright & Plagiarism

Submitting authors are required to acknowledge that they are aware of the INFORMS' policy on plagiarism and copyright when signing the article's copyright transfer agreement.

The following topics are outlined in the policy below:

- **Plagiarism:** Specific guidelines for when material can and cannot be copied from other work.
- **Copyright:** A summary of policies on copyright and fair use of copyrighted material.
- **Procedures and Penalties:** Procedures INFORMS uses when an instance of plagiarism is suspected and the penalties that can be assessed if plagiarism is found to have occurred.

## Plagiarism

**Plagiarism is the copying of ideas, text, data and other creative work (e.g. tables, figures and graphs) and presenting it as original research without proper citation.** Separate from the issue of plagiarism is the need for authors to obtain permission to reuse previously published work (even if properly cited) from the holder of the copyright (which is typically not the author).

It is essential that editors and reviewers be told by the authors when any portion of a paper is based heavily on previous work, even if this work has been written by one or more of the authors of the paper. It is the responsibility of the author not only to cite the previous work, including their own, but to provide an indication of the extent to which a paper depends on this work.

While following these broad principles, authors should recognize the following guidelines:

**Plagiarism covers the use of ideas that have been presented in prior work, regardless of whether the ideas are expressed using the same words, tables or graphics.**

**Word-for-word copying of the work by others must be clearly identified.** Short segments (a few words to one or two sentences) must be put in quotes or italicized; longer segments (e.g. a paragraph) should be indented or italicized. In both cases, the quoted work has to be followed by a citation, which may be a URL. This does not apply to casual phrases that do not convey original content (e.g. "This paper makes the following contributions"). Extensive copying of the work of others, even if clearly indicated, is generally not allowed.

**More extensive word-for-word copying of one's own work is permitted (with permission from the holder of any copyright), but this must be clearly indicated in the article.** This does not apply to previous documents such as working papers and theses which were written as part of the research. If an entire section is copied from another source (coauthored by at least one author of the submitted paper), it should contain words to the effect "This section is taken from section x.x of Roberts and Smith (1994)" (where Roberts and/or Smith are coauthors of the submitted paper). If the results of a section are based in large part on material presented in another paper (without significant copying), the section should contain words to the effect "This section is based on section x.x of Roberts and Smith (1994)." Alternatively, a paper might include an opening footnote with a statement such as: An earlier version of this paper was presented at the [...] conference on (date). [reference to the original paper in the list of references]. The sections on [...] and [...] originally appeared in the conference paper. This paper adds results [ideas, analysis, improvements, ....] in sections [...].

**Proper attribution of an idea is required even if a journal operates with double-blind review.** Authors should always cite related work even if that work is their own, even if the journal has double blind review. If an author is concerned that such citation would reveal their identity, thereby circumventing the double blind process, they should nevertheless include a "blinded" citation in the manuscript, i.e., a citation that does not include their name, and explain to the journal's editor how, if the paper is accepted for publication, that citation will be changed for the final version.

**The first paper in which a creative contribution occurs (text, ideas, analysis) gets the credit for the contribution, even if it has not yet been accepted for publication. Subsequent papers (by the same or different authors), are expected to cite the first paper (even if it is under review).**

If the first paper is under review:

- It should still be cited in any subsequent use.

- If the material in the first paper is used as the basis for new research, it should be cited, but there is no need to inform the journal handling the original submission.

If the first paper is rejected:

- Authors of the first paper can transfer credit for the contribution to a later paper (even if the first paper is resubmitted elsewhere). The resubmitted first paper should then be modified to reference the later paper that now is credited with the contribution.
- If the original contribution from the first paper is essentially presented again as the main contribution (as opposed to being used as the basis for new research), as might happen in a book chapter or conference proceedings paper, then special care must be taken.
- If the original paper is still under review, the author must notify the editor of the journal reviewing the original submission and follow the policies of that journal. Failure to do so may be construed as parallel publication of a result.

**The use and reuse of empirical data follows the same principles as other types of research, although some issues are unique to the nature of data as opposed to ideas expressed in text and mathematics.** Some general guidelines regarding plagiarism in the reporting of empirical research are:

- Reuse of empirical data to support new analysis must clearly identify the original source of the data and the degree to which the data is being reused or analyzed in a new and innovative way.
- Plagiarism in empirical research includes: i) copying or using any data without citation (and permission), ii) duplicating analysis (on the same data as an earlier paper) without citation which is essentially the same as the earlier paper, iii) copying, or direct reproduction, of charts and graphs that represent data from a previous publication in effectively the same way as an earlier paper, without citation.

**Mathematics: While plagiarism of mathematical ideas is not allowed (credit must be given just as for other contributions), the re-use of notation for consistency is encouraged, including the re-use of variable definitions. If a mathematical idea is copied without attribution, but expressed with different notation, this is still plagiarism.** This does not apply to mathematical models and algorithms that have become common knowledge within the research community. A paper should always indicate whether a mathematical model, algorithm or other result is from the literature, or is an original contribution of the paper. When in doubt, it is always best practice to cite prior contributions.

**The overarching goal of this policy is transparency, so that the editorial staff understands what is new and original, and the degree to which the paper is drawing on the work of others or the authors. If you are not sure how to properly credit work that is presented elsewhere (such as a parallel publication which is also under review or a conference proceeding), the best strategy is to describe the situation in a cover letter to the editor.**

## Copyright

The holder of a copyright owns the right to reproduce published work. A copyright is indicated by “© 2018 <Name of individual or publisher>”. The date (or date range) only indicates when material was created or modified; this is not an expiration date. Copyrighted work can appear in print or on the Internet. Authors need to use care when taking advantage of printed material, images and/or data that is available for download from the Internet. It is the responsibility of the author to ensure that proper permissions are obtained as appropriate, but some use of copyrighted material is permitted without permission under “fair use” doctrine (see below).

When authors sign a copyright transfer agreement with a publisher, ownership of the published work transfers to the publisher (for United States Government employees, to the extent transferable). While it may be a courtesy to request permission to use published material from an author, permission to use previously published data, tables, figures, graphs and substantial reprinting of text must be obtained from whoever holds the copyright (or owns the data). The ability of an author to re-use their own previously copyrighted work depends on the terms of the copyright. For example the INFORMS policy is:

*The author is required to transfer copyright (**Copyright Transfer Forms**) of his or her paper to INFORMS but reserves the right to use all or part of the paper in future works he or she may write or edit, e.g., textbooks, reviews, and lectures, and to obtain a copyright assignment from INFORMS without fee for such purposes.*

Note that even when an author has permission to re-use work of others or their own work, this permission does not absolve the author of the responsibility to cite prior work.

Fair use – Authors are entitled to certain freedoms to take advantage of copyrighted material under the principle of “fair use”. **The Copyright Act of 1976, 17 U.S.C. § 107** defines fair use as follows:

Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 17 U.S.C. **§ 106** and 17 U.S.C. **§ 106A**, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism,

comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include:

1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

The fact that a work is unpublished shall not itself bar a finding of fair use if such finding is made upon consideration of all the above factors.

There are no precise rules governing the distinction between fair use and infringement. If you have questions about material you are using in your paper submitted to an INFORMS journal, even if it involves material drawn from other publications, you may email questions to the INFORMS publications office at [permissions@informs.org](mailto:permissions@informs.org).

## Procedures and Penalties

The assessment of appropriate penalties and notification will follow the guidelines set out in the publications section of INFORMS Policies and Procedures manual as reproduced below (to download the entire section, click here and select "Publications"):

### NUMBER 13.8 PUBLICATION ETHICS

#### NUMBER 13.8.1 PLAGIARISM

**EFFECTIVE May 2009, UPDATED July 2016**

It is a core value of INFORMS publications to disseminate research that clearly, accurately, and honestly represents the work of authors while recognizing the work of others by appropriate attribution. As a consequence, plagiarism is an unacceptable violation of publication ethics.

INFORMS defines plagiarism as "the copying of ideas, text, data and other creative work (e.g. tables, figures and graphs) and presenting it as original research without proper citation." This includes:

- the use of ideas that have been presented in prior work, regardless of whether the ideas are expressed using the same words, tables or graphics;
- word-for-word copying of the work by others; and
- word-for-word copying of one's own work (self-plagiarism).

Unless the information can be considered "common knowledge," <sup>[1]</sup> proper attribution of an idea, algorithm, computational methodology, or experimental design is required even if a journal operates with double-blind review.

The editors-in-chief, and their respective editorial boards, are the primary means of detecting plagiarism in manuscripts submitted to INFORMS journals. An editor-in-chief, after being made aware of a suspicion of plagiarism, shall review all evidence and make a preliminary judgment regarding the claim. As part of the editors-in-chief's deliberation, it is required that the authors be contacted and provided an opportunity to rebut the charge. If the editor-in-chief finds sufficient evidence for justification of a charge of plagiarism, he or she shall forward all materials to the vice president of publications for further review.

If the editor-in-chief does not find sufficient evidence to support the charge of plagiarism, the decision may be appealed by written notification to the vice president of publications.

Upon receipt of materials in support of a charge of plagiarism, or written appeal of the editor-in-chief's preliminary decision to dismiss the charge of plagiarism, the vice president of publications shall appoint an ad hoc committee to make a determination of the charge. The committee shall include, at a minimum, the vice president of publications and at least three other persons. At the discretion of the vice president of publications, other members of the Publications Committee may be appointed to the ad hoc committee, including the editor-in-chief who has presented the charge of plagiarism.

The ad hoc committee shall first contact the author(s) in writing and ask for a response to the charge. The ad hoc committee shall determine whether the charge is to be upheld and, if so, the sanction that is to be enforced against the authors. Sanctions would typically include a ban from submission to INFORMS journals for a period of time. Additionally, it is required that any author found guilty of plagiarism who also holds an editorial office at an INFORMS journal will be dismissed from that office. The ad hoc committee has the sole responsibility and authority to determine the sanction. Sanctions may be applied unevenly in the case of multiple authors.

Once the finding and the sanction are determined, the vice president of publications will communicate the results in writing to the author(s) and make the finding known to all current INFORMS editors-in-chief. If the charge is not upheld, the process ends and no further actions are taken. In particular, the results are only communicated to those persons already involved in the process.

The decision of the committee may be appealed by written notification to the president of INFORMS. In this case, the president will appoint an appeal committee, which will not include any members of the ad hoc committee. The appeal committee will review the charges and make a final determination. The result will be communicated back to the author(s) within 60 days of receipt of the appeal notification.

Given the serious nature of a charge of plagiarism, it is required that confidentiality be maintained throughout the process. The charge of plagiarism, supporting materials, and outcome are only to be made known to those persons who are involved in the review process.

If a determination of plagiarism has been made, and after any appeals are exhausted, the ad hoc committee will determine appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again. For those papers that have not yet appeared in print, these steps may include cancellation of the review process or nullification of the decision to publish had the paper been accepted, notification of the employer(s) of the author(s), and public notification to the readership. If the paper has appeared in print a further sanction may include its retraction.

[1] “**Common knowledge**” is defined by the Oxford Dictionaries as “something known by most people.” In the context of avoiding plagiarism, INFORMS will follow the University of Pennsylvania’s **extended definition** as “any information that the average, educated reader would accept as reliable without having to look it up.”

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