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# Publish Only Your Original Research

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## Publish Only Your Original Research

I am often asked about *Analytical Chemistry*'s policy on prior publication. While the goal seems obvious—you cannot publish your work twice—many real-world situations are not always so clear, especially with so many electronic forms of knowledge dissemination. So how do we define prior publication? My guiding principle is that material that has been published elsewhere cannot be published again in the journal.

You may ask, does an abstract published in a conference proceeding count as a prior publication? My quick answer is that for *Analytical Chemistry*, abstracts are not usually considered as prior publications, and so you can still submit the work to the journal. However, there are exceptions.

Let me give you a recent example. An author submitted a paper to *Analytical Chemistry* and we discovered that the work had been presented at a conference, including a published five-page extended abstract, complete with all of the data and figures in the submitted manuscript. Also important, the extended abstract had been assigned a digital object identifier (DOI) and was fully available to all. This type of “abstract” counts as a prior publication at *Analytical Chemistry*, even if it was not peer reviewed (and the assigned reviewers deliberated and also considered this a prior publication). The end result was that we were not able to publish the work in *Analytical Chemistry*.

The same guidelines apply to posters. A complete poster that contained all the information in a manuscript that is publically available to everyone would be considered a prior publication by *Analytical Chemistry*, whereas one made available only to a select group would not be. Thus, a poster presented at a meeting such as American Society for Mass Spectrometry, which is only available to conference participants for a limited period of time, would not count as previously published work.

It gets a bit blurry when graduate students post a manuscript preprint to an open Web site or an individual gives a preprint or poster to a company to distribute as a technical note on the company Web site. In principle, both of these are considered prior-published work, even if they were not peer reviewed. I have seen both of these types of submissions to the journal, but these instances are rare.

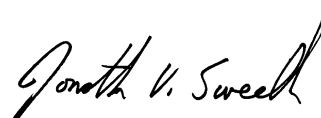
One policy without ambiguity is that after you publish a research article with us, we allow you to include the material in a dissertation. However, the reverse is a different issue. If your work has been made publicly available in another form, such as a review chapter in a book, the general consensus in the analytical chemistry community is that it cannot be published again with *Analytical Chemistry*. Thus, the difficult answer is that without substantive changes, one should not submit to us a manuscript that has already appeared in another published form, including a published dissertation. In many ways, a published (or electronically available) dissertation is no different than other books. If you wish to submit chapters from a dissertation to *Analytical Chemistry*, your best option is to embargo the release of the dissertation until the work has been published in the journal.

Of course, I am only answering these questions as they relate to *Analytical Chemistry*. Some journals such as *Nature* and *Science* have official embargo policies that limit how the work can be publically disclosed, especially to the popular press, before it appears in their journals. I appreciate that it can be hard to determine what was disclosed at a meeting after the fact; however, abstracts or posters that have been posted on a Web site, even one with limited access, could face these types of embargo-related issues.

Even other ACS journals have different policies with respect to prior-publication which attempt to reflect the predominant views of the editors and the scientific community served by each journal. A complete list of policies on prior publication for all ACS journals can be found at <http://pubs.acs.org/page/policy/prior/index.html>. By and large, you may find that because these policies are rooted in common sense, there is quite a great deal of similarity. As a word of caution, it is always advisable to disclose prior publication of your work, as many publishers, including the ACS, now use CrossCheck software as part of the peer-review process. If you have any questions about these policies, I advise you to discuss any potential issues with our editorial staff when you submit your manuscript. Discovering later that a problem exists is always more painful.

The bottom line is that you should consider carefully if you want a preprint of your work made freely available before you submit it to *Analytical Chemistry*, as doing so may jeopardize its publication.

As always, I welcome your original work.



Jonathan V. Sweedler

### ■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

#### Notes

Views expressed in this editorial are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the ACS.

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