Guidelines of the Optical Society of America Concerning Ethical Practices in the Publication of Research*

PREAMBLE

One of the ways the Optical Society of America serves the optics profession is by publishing journals which present the results of scientific and engineering research. The Society, through its editors as well as the membership at large, has the responsibility of establishing and maintaining guidelines for selecting and accepting papers submitted to the journals. In the main, the guidelines derive from the Society's definition of the journal scopes and from the optics community's perception of standards of quality for research and its presentation. Emphasis is given to the ethical practices expected of persons engaged in the publication of research in Optical Society journals, specifically, of editors, authors, and manuscript reviewers. Publication of these guidelines reflects the conviction that the observance of high standards is so vital to the whole scientific enterprise that a definition of these standards should be brought to the attention of all concerned.

It is a basic policy of the Optical Society that all those involved in the publication process should give unbiased consideration to all manuscripts offered for publication, judging each on its merit as a contribution to research without regard to race, gender, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, political philosophy, institutional affiliation and position of the author(s).

GUIDELINES

The guidelines concern original research papers although many aspects are also pertinent for tutorial and review papers.

Obligations of Journal Editors

1. An editor should process manuscripts promptly.
2. The editor or topical editor to whom a manuscript is assigned has responsibility for acceptance or rejection of a manuscript. Responsible and prudent exercise of this duty normally requires that the editor seek advice from reviewers, chosen for their expertise and good judgment, as to the quality, reliability, and appropriateness of manuscripts submitted for publication.
3. An editor should respect the intellectual independence of authors.
4. Editors should avoid situations involving real or perceived conflicts of interest. Specifically:
    a. Editorial responsibility and authority for any manuscript authored by an editor and submitted to the editor's journal should be delegated to some other qualified person, such as another editor of that journal.
    b. Unpublished information, arguments, or interpretations disclosed in a submitted manuscript should not be used in an editor's own research except with the consent of the author.
    c. When a manuscript is too closely related to the research of an editor, the editor should arrange for some other qualified person to take editorial responsibility for that manuscript.
5. The editor and the editorial staff should not disclose information about a manuscript under consideration to any one other than those from whom professional advice sought.
6. An editor should not reveal the name of a reviewer to someone who is not an Optical Society editor. However after consultation with the editor, a reviewer may reveal her or his name.
7. If an editor is presented with convincing evidence that main substance or conclusions of a report published in editor's journal are erroneous, the editor should facilitate publication of an appropriate report pointing out the error and, if possible, correcting it. Preferably, this report should be an author-generated Erratum; if this is not possible, a Comment should be published.

Obligations of Authors

1. An author's central obligation is to present a concise, accurate account of original research performed as well an objective discussion of its significance.
2. A research paper should contain sufficient detail and reference to public sources of information to permit the author's peers to repeat the work. Adequate information should be provided with numerical data to allow comparison with other research. Specifically, data should include sources and magnitudes of uncertainties, and graphs representing numerical data should display error bars where appropriate.
3. An author should cite those publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work and that will guide the reader quickly to earlier work essential for understanding the present investigation. An author should also identify the source of all significant information quoted or offered, except that which is common knowledge. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not used or reported in the author's work without explicit permission from the investigator with whom the information originated. Information obtained in the course of confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, should be treated similarly.

4. Any unusual hazards inherent in the materials, equipment, or procedures used in an investigation should be clearly identified in the manuscript reporting the work.
5. Fragmentation of research reports should be avoided; brief reports in letters journals of incremental progress should particularly be avoided. Authors who have done extensive work in an area should organize publication so that each report gives a well-rounded account of a particular aspect of the general research.
6. The manuscript must contain significant new content not previously published or submitted elsewhere for simultaneous consideration. If related manuscripts are being submitted concurrently, the author should inform the editor of the relationship between the manuscripts.
7. Criticism, even severe criticism of the published work of another researcher may sometimes be justified in a manuscript. When appropriate, such criticism may be made in a research paper provided it does not comprise a substantial fraction of the paper. Manuscripts that are predominantly criticism should be published as Comments with the opportunity for simultaneous publication of an appropriate rebuttal. Both the Comment and the rebuttal should be reviewed. In no case is subjective personalized criticism considered to be appropriate.
8. The co-authors of a paper should be all persons who have made significant scientific contributions to the work reported. Other contributions should be indicated in a footnote or an Acknowledgments section. An administrative relationship to the investigation does not of itself qualify a person for co-authorship. Deceased persons who meet the criterion for inclusion as co-authors should be included, with a footnote reporting date of death. No fictitious person should be listed as an author or co-author. The author who submits a manuscript for publication should accept the responsibility of having included as co-authors all persons appropriate and none inappropriate. The submitting author should attest to the fact that any others named as authors have seen the final version and agreed to its submission for publication.
9. Authors should submit responses to reviews and requests from editors promptly. In their response, authors should avoid unsupported assertions and subjective comments.
10. It is an author's responsibility to submit an erratum for publication when a significant error is discovered in one of her or his published reports.

Obligations of Reviewers of Manuscripts

1. Inasmuch as the reviewing of manuscripts is an essential step in the publication process, scientists have an obligation to do a fair share of reviewing.
2. A reviewer should act promptly, submitting a report in a timely manner. Should a reviewer receive a manuscript at a time when circumstances preclude prompt attention to it, the unreviewed manuscript should be discarded immediately or returned to the editorial office.
3. A chosen reviewer who feels inadequately qualified to judge the research reported in a manuscript should also discard it promptly or return it to the editorial office.
4. A reviewer should recognize that a manuscript sent for review is a confidential document. Reviewers should not use or disseminate unpublished information, arguments, or interpretations contained in an unpublished manuscript, except with the consent of the author. During review, the manuscript should neither be shown to nor discussed with others except, in special cases, to persons from whom specific advice may be sought. In that event, the reviewer maintains responsibility for ensuring confidentiality. The reviewer should inform the editor of others who make significant contributions to a review.
5. A reviewer of a manuscript should judge the quality of the manuscript objectively and respect the intellectual independence of the authors. A review should be as constructive and helpful as possible; in no case is subjective personalized criticism appropriate in a review.
6. Reviewers should explain and support their judgment adequately so that editors and authors may understand the basis of their comments. Unsupported assertions by reviewers are of little value and should be avoided.
7. A reviewer should be alert to failure on the authors part to cite relevant work by other scientists. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument has been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation.
8. A reviewer should call to the editor's attention any substantial similarity between the manuscript under consideration and any paper submitted to or published in a journal or other widely accessible form of publication. The editor's attention should also be directed by the reviewer to perceived fragmentation of publication by the author(s).
9. A reviewer should be sensitive to the appearance of conflict of interest when the manuscript under review is closely related to the reviewer's work in progress or published. If in doubt, the reviewer should return the manuscript promptly without review, advising the editor of the possible conflict of interest. Further, if the relationship between the reviewer and an author would bias judgment of a manuscript, then the reviewer should return the manuscript promptly without review.
10. After consulting with the editor, a reviewer may voluntarily reveal his or her identity to the author.

** These guidelines are based to a great extent on the "Ethical Guidelines to Publication of Chemical Research" of the American Chemical Society and "Guidelines to Publication of Geophysical Research" of the American Geophysical Union, which in turn, is based on the American Chemical Society guidelines. The Optical Society of America appreciates the permission of the American Chemical Society and American Geophysical Union to quote extensively from these documents.*