

April 2005

## From the Board of Editors: on Plagiarism

Dear Colleagues:

There has been a significant increase in the number of duplicate submissions and plagiarism cases reported in all major journals, including the journals of the Optical Society of America. Duplicate submissions and plagiarism can take many forms, and all of them are violations of professional ethics, the copyright agreement that an author signs along with the submission of a paper, and OSA's published Author Guidelines. There must be a significant component of new science for a paper to be publishable. The copying of large segments of text from previously published or in-press papers with only minor cosmetic changes is not acceptable and can lead to the rejection of papers.

**Duplicate submission:** Duplicate submission is the most common ethics violation encountered. Duplicate submission is the submission of substantially similar papers to more than one journal. There is a misperception in a small fraction of the scientific community that duplicate submission is acceptable because it sometimes takes a long time to get a paper reviewed and because one of the papers can be withdrawn at any time. This is a clear violation of professional ethics and of the copyright agreement that is signed on submission. Duplicate submission harms the whole community because editors and reviewers waste their time and in the process compound the time it takes to get a paper reviewed for all authors. In cases of duplicate submission, the Editor of the affected OSA journal will consult with the Editor of the other journal involved to determine the proper course of action. Often that action will be the rejection of both papers.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious breach of ethics and is defined as the substantial replication, without attribution, of significant elements of another document already published by the same or other authors. Two types of plagiarism can occur – self-plagiarism and plagiarism from others' works:

**Self-plagiarism** is the publication of substantially similar scientific content of one's own in the same or different journals. Self-plagiarism causes duplicate papers in the scientific literature, violates copyright agreements, and unduly burdens reviewers, editors, and the scientific publishing enterprise.

**Plagiarism from others' works** constitutes the most offensive form of plagiarism. Effectively, it is using someone else's work as if it is your own. Any *text*, *equations*, *ideas*, or *figures* taken from another paper or work must be specifically acknowledged as they occur in that paper or work. Figures, tables, or other images reproduced from another source normally require permission from the publisher. Text or concepts can, for example, be quoted as follows: "As stated by xxx (name of lead author), "text" [reference]."

### Action on Notification of Allegations of Plagiarism:

OSA identifies an act of plagiarism in a published document to be the substantial replication, without appropriate attribution, of significant elements of another document already published by the same or other authors. OSA has implemented a process for dealing with cases of plagiarism. When the Editor-in-Chief of a journal is notified of an instance of either of the two possible forms of plagiarism discussed above, he or she will make a preliminary investigation of the allegations, including a request for the accused authors to explain the situation. If further action is justified, then the Editor-in-Chief will convene a panel consisting of the Editor-in-Chief of the OSA journal involved, the Chair of the Board of Editors, and the Senior Director of Publications. Their unanimous decision confirming that an act of plagiarism has occurred requires the insertion of the following statement in the official OSA electronic record of the plagiarizing article:

“It has come to the attention of the Optical Society of America that this article should not have been submitted owing to its substantial replication, without appropriate attribution, of significant elements found in the following previously published material: [citation data – including the authors, journal title, full citation of the earlier published material.]”

The same statement shall be added to the next available print run of the journal in an appropriate location such as a “Notice to Readers.”

**The OSA Board of Editors**