



## Publication Cloning and Dissection

The proliferation of journals and the importance of publications to scientists' and engineers' career advancement and recognition have led to substantial recent increases in ethical or legal misconduct in the publishing process. Such transgressions take numerous forms, perhaps the most serious of which is plagiarism, the use or claim of another individual's ideas or results without citation or permission. However, there is less egregious misconduct that is also of great concern and requires concerted and dedicated efforts to thwart.

The number of manuscript submissions to many journals has increased tremendously; *Electrochemical and Solid-State Letters* (ESL) has seen an increase of ~30% in 2005 relative to 2004. Increases of this magnitude put significant pressure on editorial office resources and reviewer time and energy. We greatly appreciate the diligent efforts of our reviewers who spend countless hours evaluating manuscripts. However, when virtual clones of a publication are submitted to multiple journals or when a piece of work is dissected into parts to increase the number of publications and thus the advertisement of the authors' results to the research community, disregard for the peer-review system and the labors of reviewers are evident. Such acts do not benefit the research community; rather, they demonstrate impertinence for the entire community. Publication of clone manuscripts in or submission to multiple journals is unethical and illegal, because this practice violates copyright laws. This action is often referred to as self-plagiarism. Both our Instructions to Authors and our Transfer of Copyright Agreement ask the authors to confirm that the submitted manuscript has not been published elsewhere, nor will it be without the written consent of The Electrochemical Society. Despite these statements and warnings, we continue to uncover instances of double, triple, and even tenfold publishing! The Internet has made detection of these violations easier, although even electronic investigation of this type of misconduct often requires considerable effort. As we uncover these cases, we demand written apologies and publicly disclose such actions in ESL.

Certainly, marginal situations of publication cloning exist. A rule of thumb typically invoked by the scientific community is that no more than ~20% of the content of a previous publication should be reproduced in an alternate journal. In any case, when previously published content is included in a submitted article, the previous publication should be cited in the new manuscript and the duplicate information noted in the cover letter to the editorial office. This will alert the editor and publications staff to the situation so that an informed judgment can be made prior to proceeding with the review process.

Dissection, or incremental publication of research results is a more difficult scenario to assess. Again, when previous closely related publications by the authors are not cited, this constitutes unethical conduct. In addition, this wastes valuable reviewer, editorial office, and reader time. Where possible, closely related information should be combined to "paint" a more complete picture for the reader and thereby allow additional insight into the field to be gleaned from a single publication. Ultimately, this benefits the scientific community through more efficient and effective use of journal space.

We hope that the above comments remind the authors of their responsibilities to the technical community when they submit manuscripts for publication. We are indebted to the dedicated reviewers and readers, and continue to seek their assistance in evaluating the suitability and importance of manuscripts submitted to and published in ESL. It is primarily through their efforts that we can mitigate the clone and dissected manuscripts and improve the quality of scientific publications.



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