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AIS Code of Research Conduct

AIS Research Conduct Committee
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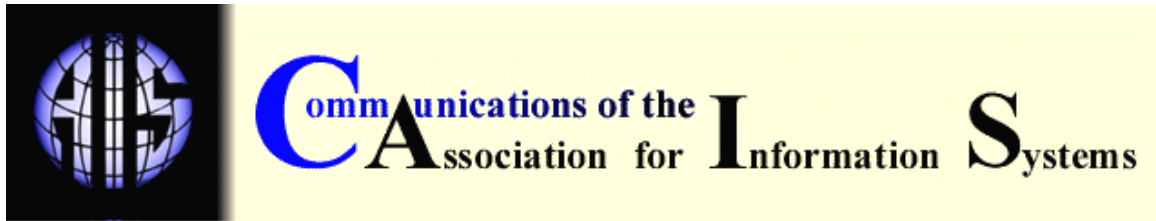
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AIS CODE OF RESEARCH CONDUCT

AIS Research Conduct Committee

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The AIS Code of Research Conduct offers guidance in matters directly related to the research and publication of scholarly works, and particularly those in the journals and conference proceedings of the Association for Information Systems (whether hardcopy or electronic). The Code is not a legal statement (laws vary widely from one legal jurisdiction to another), but instead indicates ethically desirable behavior. The Code does not purport to regulate general conduct (e.g. towards society and the environment) or guide members in areas of professional activity such as teaching, consulting and workplace behavior. Each code item below is linked to an explanation. Explanations do not cover every variation of possible misconduct; they are intended only to provide a basic general understanding of a code item and its underlying principles.

CATEGORY ONE: must ALWAYS be adhered to

1. **Do not take work from another and pass it off as your own, i.e., plagiarize in any manner.**
2. **Do not fabricate or falsify data, research procedures, or data analysis.**

CATEGORY TWO: Codes in this category are "recommended ethical behavior"

3. **Respect the rights of research subjects.**
4. **Do not submit for publication or presentation articles or papers you have already published elsewhere.**
5. **Do not abuse the authority and responsibility you have been given as an editor, reviewer or supervisor.**
6. **Reveal to funding agencies or universities any material conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.**
7. **Do not take or use published data of others without acknowledgement or unpublished data without both permission and acknowledgement.**
8. **Do not submit for publication a manuscript that is currently under review.**

9. **Acknowledge the substantive contributions of all research participants.**
10. **Do not use unpublished writings, information, ideas, concepts or data.**
11. **Use archival material only in accordance with the rules of the archival source.**

GOOD ADVICE: suggestions on how to protect yourself from authorship disputes, mis-steps, mistakes, and even legal action.

1. **Maintain authorship documentation.**
2. **Avoid “self plagiarism”.**
3. **Settle data set ownership issues before data compilation.**
4. **Consult senior colleagues if in doubt.**

CATEGORY ONE

Codes in this category must ALWAYS be adhered to and their disregard constitutes a serious ethical breach. Such acts can result in your expulsion from academic associations, legal action against you, professional sanctions, and major damage to your academic reputation.

1. **Do not take work from another and pass it off as your own, i.e., plagiarize in any manner.**

Plagiarism is a very serious academic and professional offense. Essentially, plagiarism involves using the work of others and claiming that it as your own. Work may consist of text, figures, graphics or any other tangible item. Work may be published in a book, journal, conference proceedings, working or technical paper or website, or it may be unpublished. Conventionally, plagiarism occurs when one author uses another author’s text without credit. Credit usually takes the form of a reference to the original source whether published or unpublished. Ideally, the reference should provide enough detail so that subsequent readers can locate the same material. This implies that merely identifying the name of the author is insufficient. A complete reference should include author, date, title of work, publication location, publication details including volume, issue and page numbers where appropriate and URL if a website. For a thorough discussion of plagiarism, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham /study/plag.html>. If you believe your work has been plagiarized, please see [Guidelines for a Victim: Dealing with Plagiarism](#) [CAIS Research Conduct Committee, 2004], which is also posted at http://www.aisnet.org/conduct/Plagiarism_Guidelines.htm.

2. **Do not fabricate or falsify data, research procedures, or data analysis.**

Like plagiarism, data fabrication or falsification is a very serious offense. Data fabrication and falsification deceives reviewers, editors and readers as to what really occurred in the research, and therefore the significance of the outcomes of the research. Scholars should not doctor, tamper with or edit data, misreport research methods (including adding procedures they did not perform, or omitting procedures they did perform), or tamper with the results of data analysis.

CATEGORY TWO

Codes in this category are “recommended ethical behavior”. Flagrant disregard of these or other kinds of professional etiquette, while less serious, can result in damage to your reputation, editorial sanctions, professional embarrassment, legal action, and the ill will of your colleagues. While individual scholars may disagree about the most appropriate action to take in a particular situation, a broad consensus exists that the issues listed below are problematic and need to be handled carefully.

3. Respect the rights of research subjects, particularly their rights to information privacy, to being informed about the nature of the research and the types of activities in which they will be asked to engage.

Scholars are expected to maintain, uphold and promote the rights of research subjects, especially rights associated with their information privacy. Subjects in academic research routinely volunteer information about their behavior, attitudes, intellect, abilities, experience, health, education, emotions, aspirations, and so on. If you are collecting such data, you have an obligation to respect the confidentiality of your subjects by storing data in a secure place, destroying it after a specified period of time, and never using it for any purpose other than that to which the subjects agreed prior to their participation. In addition, unless an institutionally-approved research protocol allows otherwise, research subjects should be informed in advance of the purpose of any research procedure or activities in which they may be asked to participate. They also have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage. Researchers must respect these rights and not coerce or otherwise force research subjects to participate against their will, or in a manner that is not conducive with their best interests.

4. Do not submit for publication or presentation articles or papers you have already published elsewhere.

Academic journals and conference proceedings are the public record of original scientific achievement. As such, they rarely if ever republish an article which has appeared previously. Thus, you should not submit a manuscript which is identical or very similar to work you have published previously (or which has been accepted elsewhere for publication). Such a manuscript, if detected, would normally be rejected by the editor. See “Avoid self-plagiarism” in **Good Advice** below. There are naturally exceptions to the above guidelines for reprints of an article in an edited collection or book. The highly recommended guideline here applies only to resubmission of previously published work to journals and conferences.”

Presenting a paper at a conference to obtain comment and discussion, and then later revising the paper for submission to a journal is another legitimate exception. However, in such cases, prudence suggests that you alert the editor in your submission letter and in the article draw the reader’s attention to the conference paper, perhaps by a footnote at the bottom of the first page.

5. Do not abuse the authority and responsibility you have been given as an editor, reviewer or supervisor, and take care to ensure that no personal relationship will result in a situation that might interfere with your objective judgment.

Editors, reviewers and supervisors are by definition in a position of authority over others. Under no circumstances should you use your position for personal advantage

(such as by coercion) or to the disadvantage of others. You should also take care that any personal relationship that pre-exists or develops during the course of the editorial or supervisory process does not interfere with your ability to be objective. If such a situation does prevail, then you should voluntarily withdraw from any decision making concerning the individual with whom the relationship exists.

As an editor or reviewer, you also have an ethical obligation to complete your reviews and review-related actions in a timely fashion. Some journals have been known to take a year or more to complete a single round of reviews on a manuscript, which is unacceptable. Editors and reviewers should work together to ensure a prompt review cycle ideally not exceeding three months from the date of receipt of the manuscript to the date a decision has been communicated to the author(s).

6. Reveal to funding agencies or universities any material conflict of interest, financial or otherwise, that might interfere with your ability to be objective and impartial when reviewing grant applications, software, or when undertaking work from outside sources.

Scholars are routinely involved in reviewing submissions for journals, conferences, granting agencies, job applications, cases involving promotion or tenure, book manuscripts, and occasionally product (especially software) assessments. But conflicts of interest can and do arise in a relatively tight academic community. Such conflicts may involve personal, scholarly, financial or other relationships – any relationship which might interfere with your ability to remain objective and impartial. For example, tenure and promotion policies in some universities specifically preclude doctoral supervisors, co-authors, or other research collaborators from serving as external referees due to the potential for a conflict of interest. You must reveal to any relevant parties any conflict of interest prior to agreeing to undertake any review, assessment or critique.

7. Do not take or use published data of others without acknowledgement or unpublished data without both permission and acknowledgement.

Compiling a set of data, whether from the field, lab, or secondary sources, may require a substantial investment of time, energy, and financial resources. Participants in the compilation of a data set are said to be the “owners” (though individuals such as students hired to collect data may not qualify. Just as you should not use someone else’s “real property” without their permission, neither should you use or publish from someone else’s data set, i.e., their “intellectual property”, without their permission. However, data appearing as part of a publication is by definition in the public record and may be used without permission, though not without acknowledgement. An unpublished data set belongs to others and, to avoid ill will at least, should not be used without the permission and acknowledgement of each of the data set owners. See “Settle data ownership issues before data compilation” in the Good Advice section below.

8. Do not submit for publication a manuscript that is currently under review until a publication decision has been received or the submission has been withdrawn.

Editors and reviewers are unpaid: they volunteer and contribute their own scarce resources of time and energy as a service to the academic community. Hence submitting a manuscript which is already under review elsewhere abuses everyone involved (at each of the journals) and squanders valuable resources. It misrepresents

a piece of scholarly work as available for publication whereas the intent of the author may be to withdraw the piece upon receiving acceptance from the most preferred (or first) journal responding. Editors detecting such misrepresentation may choose to withdraw the manuscript from the review process, inform other journals of the matter, and blacklist the author from future submissions to the journal. If you wish to withdraw a manuscript from a review process then you should keep all correspondence associated with the withdrawal process, should you have a future need to verify the withdrawal.

Note that scholars sometimes submit to a journal a manuscript they have submitted (or are also submitting) for presentation at a conference. Provided this is made clear to the journal editor, and the proceedings editor, and neither has any concerns, this practice presents no ethical issues. However the published article should cite any earlier appearance in conference proceedings.

9. Acknowledge the substantive contributions of all research participants, whether colleagues or students, but only according to their intellectual contribution.

Since authorship implies a readiness to take public responsibility for the intellectual activity involved in a publication, only those who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the research should be listed as authors. Submitting a manuscript to which non-participating authors are added, for whatever purpose, is a form of misrepresentation. However, each true participant in the work, whether colleagues, students or other research assistants, should be acknowledged *according to their intellectual contribution to the final product*. Such acknowledgment may occur in the form of author inclusion, authorship order, by footnote, or by mention in the text. Thus, a colleague who provides seminal thought or performs as the intellectual leader of the effort but who may have done little actual writing may qualify as an author. By the same token, a colleague who performs sophisticated data analyses but who may have only peripheral interest in the subject matter may also be included as an author – again according to the intellectual contribution of the analyses performed. By contrast, a research assistant who collects the data set, however substantial, may only qualify for much lesser acknowledgement in the absence of other significant intellectual contribution.

Individuals responsible for major parts of the funding of a project are occasionally given full authorship credit. Practice varies in this regard, but such attribution should be avoided wherever possible since there is no inherent connection between intellectual contribution and financial contribution. The IS community generally interprets an attribution of authorship as a recognition of substantive contribution to the research, not as knowledge of how best to fund a project.

10. Do not use unpublished writings, information, ideas, concepts or data that you may see as a result of processes (such as peer review) without permission of the author.

When you serve as a reviewer or editor, you gain privileged access to documents in the review process. Reviewers and editors must respect this privilege by maintaining the confidentiality of information seen in the review process. If you wish to cite or otherwise use or distribute such unpublished material, you should do so only with prior permission of the author. Editors of all ranks accept this duty of confidentiality and must ensure that reviewers are similarly bound.

Independent of a review process, you may receive unpublished work by way of working papers, visiting scholar research seminars, and even in the recruiting process as candidates present a paper as part of a recruiting visit. Not infrequently, the cover page on such work will indicate “not to be quoted without permission of the author”. But where it does not, the rule still holds – do not use or quote such material without obtaining prior permission of the author. Simply being careful to provide full author acknowledgement (which you must do in any case) is insufficient; until published, the ideas and content of the manuscript are the property of the author. Keep in mind that working papers sometimes remain in circulation long after the paper, or a close version of it, has appeared in print, perhaps even under a different title. The author and you will both prefer that you are quoting a paper which has survived peer review and thus carries the credibility of the journal or conference proceedings in which it appeared. An author may have also decided, for legitimate scholarly reasons, not to publish the paper in any form; quoting without permission would act against the author’s wishes and would frustrate that end.

11. Use archival material only in accordance with the rules of the archival source.

Archived material, often in the form of digital libraries, is made available to subscribing members of professional societies. This archived material is usually subject to rules on dissemination, citation, copying and so on. Such rules may be in place to meet copyright or other legal requirements and must be respected. In some jurisdictions, flagrant disregard of copyright laws can result in very substantial fines.

GOOD ADVICE:

Some suggestions on how to protect yourself from authorship disputes, mis-steps, mistakes, and even legal action.

1. Maintain in a timely fashion documentation and data necessary to validate your original authorship for each scholarly work with which you are connected.

Plagiarism may be the most egregious and damaging form of scholarly misconduct. It is also likely the most traumatic for all involved – those plagiarized, those who plagiarise (and are detected), editors, reviewers, colleagues, department heads, and even deans. But the damage from plagiarism of your work may be much more easily and successfully redressed if you maintain a “paper trail”, i.e., documents (hardcopy or electronic) which establish your true authorship.

Consider the following defensive measure. For each scholarly work with which you are involved, maintain at appropriate levels of currency and detail, all information necessary to establish that you are the original author, should your authorship be disputed. This includes correspondence (whether electronic or paper) with editors, reviewers, and publishers and early versions of the manuscript. Other materials of value include reviewer comments and rejection letters if the manuscript was submitted for publication; and any related working papers, conference proceedings and research grants. Dated materials are particularly important in this situation since they can serve as the strongest evidence of your original authorship. For further advice in dealing with a situation in which you feel your work has been plagiarized, please see **Guidelines for a Victim**. Maintain such files for at least five years, and perhaps as long as ten, though this may depend on the nature of your work.

2. Avoid “self plagiarism”.

As your research program and publications unfold, you will commonly cite and describe your prior work. In fact, reviewing your own research stream may be the only practical way to provide the context necessary for the new work you are discussing. This is especially true if you are pioneering in a niche area. But you should not attempt to build a new article largely from a re-working of your previous publications. Even this advice is subject to exception – as when a scholar re-weaves the threads of previous thought to reveal new patterns, perspectives or insights, or seeks to provide a comprehensive summary or “state of the art” report on a particular research stream.

An ancillary problem with even modest self-citation however is that it can subvert the “blind reviewing” process, a feature that helps to preserve reviewer and editor objectivity. If citing your own work will reveal your authorship of a manuscript, you should consider disguising the citations with a phrase such as “author’s name withheld to retain review blindness”. Even so, this may prove to be cosmetic as a knowledgeable reviewer is often sufficiently familiar with the literature to quickly identify the author of work cited. Still, you should do your best to disguise your authorship.

3. Settle data set ownership issues before data compilation.

Curiously, disputes over data sets are more likely to occur between collaborating researchers than with others. For example, data may be collected and analyzed by a research team, but later a team member separately publishes an article reporting new analyses of the data. Other team members cry “foul” but the author argues that the work in question was not envisaged when the data set was first collected. Furthermore, he argues, as a co-owner of the data set, he should have the right to publish from it without seeking the permission of other co-owners. The foregoing is but a single example of countless possible disputes regarding the use of data sets – disputes for which there may be no clear-cut resolution but which can nonetheless result in severe inter-personal disagreements and recrimination.

To avoid such situations, collaborating scholars should reach an explicit agreement (in writing) on the use of a data set, ideally prior to its compilation; the agreement should include the acknowledgment necessary to satisfy the co-owners, should a publication result. The acknowledgment may be as modest as a footnote, or as significant as co-authorship, depending on the co-owners’ intellectual contribution to the publication. In general, in no case should you risk the ill will of your colleagues or accusations of misbehavior by failing to secure explicit prior permission (in writing) to use a data set, whether or not you are a co-owner.

4. Consult senior colleagues if in doubt.

Learning the finer points of scholarly etiquette is a slow process. Even experienced scholars sometimes disagree on what constitutes acceptable behavior or whether or not a particular act is ethical. But if you have doubts about how to behave or deal with a particular research or publishing situation, we strongly recommend that you consult with a senior colleague. With the benefit of greater experience and exposure to such matters, senior colleagues may be more sensitive than you to the complexities of formal scholarship and in recognizing when an ethical dilemma may be present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Collective Bargaining Model Clause on Fraud and Misconduct in Academic Research and Scholarly Activity
http://www.caut.ca/english/member/bargaining/mc_fraud.asp
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Integrity in Research and Scholarship Policy Statement
<http://www.sshrc.ca/>
- University of Minnesota - Academic Misconduct Procedures
<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/AcademicMisconduct.pdf>
- University of Minnesota - Board of Regents Policy "Code of Conduct"
<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Conduct.html>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The AIS Code of Research Conduct, approved by AIS Council on December 15, 2003, was prepared by the AIS Research Conduct Committee consisting of Robert Davison, City University of Hong Kong, Malcolm Munro, University of Calgary, Research Conduct Committee Chair and AIS Vice President (Meetings & Conferences) and Detmar Straub, Georgia State University, AIS Vice President (Publications).

A web pages version, created and prepared by Mike Chiasson, University of Calgary, can be found at http://www.aisnet.org/conduct/AIS_Code.htm.

Feedback and questions may be directed to the chairperson of the Research Conduct Committee at researchconduct@aisnet.org.

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