

# **The Ethics of Republishing: A Case Study of Emerald/MCB University Press Journals**

Final manuscript published in:

*Library Resources & Technical Services*, v49 n2 (April 2005) pp.72-78.

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## **Abstract**

It is unethical to republish a journal article without citing the original source. Simple keyword searching of Emerald (formerly known as MCB University Press) online journals from the publisher's web site has identified 409 examples of articles from sixty-seven journals that were republished without such notification from 1989 through 2003. Many of these articles were published simultaneously in journals within the same or similar subject disciplines. Five examples of triple publication were identified. In several cases, neither the editor nor editorial board members reported knowledge of this practice. This article will review the conditions of acceptable republishing plus document and provide examples of republication. It will discuss implications on the publication of record, and question whether this is a case of "let the buyer beware".

## **Introduction**

Redundant publication has been described as “self-serving, wasteful, abuses the volunteer time of peer reviewers, and can be profoundly misleading.”[1] It is especially disapproved of when done covertly.

Search engines have made it much easier to locate information – they have also made it easier to locate instances of unethical publishing behavior. A full-text search of a colleague’s name in Emerald’s database provided the first example of an article that was published without explicit notification in two separate journals. Simple keyword title searching has led the author to over 400 examples of this behavior, in 67 of the publisher’s journals taking place over a period of at least fifteen years. The publisher has claimed that it has ceased the practice of article duplication.

Libraries spend considerable sums of money to purchase academic journals. Skyrocketing journal inflation coupled with stagnant acquisitions budgets have resulted in massive cancellation in our libraries. The results of this research suggest that we may have collectively spent vast sums of money on duplicated materials from Emerald and didn’t know it. Furthermore, the presence of undocumented duplicated articles in the literature poses the problem of identifying the original publication of record. These articles cannot simply be unpublished or deleted from the academic literature – they are part of the permanent record of scholarship.

The goal of this paper is to document one publisher’s republishing practice and to use this example as a means of educating the publishing industry about unacceptable publishing practices. We should use this opportunity to review what connotes ethical republishing in order to avoid future occurrences of this kind

## **Literature Review – the ethics of republishing**

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) defines redundant publication when “two or more papers, without full cross reference, share the same hypothesis, data, discussion points, or conclusions.” [2] Exact duplication – the focus of this paper – is a specific and rare type of redundant publication. Only a small percentage of duplicates found in the medical literature were found to be exact copies [3].

In his article, “Multiple Publication Reconsidered”, [4] Joseph Fulda argues that limited use of multiple publication is acceptable given that the following conditions are met:

- 1) Article republication only takes place in journals representing different subject fields
- 2) The editor of the second journal knows of its prior publication
- 3) Prior publication must be acknowledged in the second publication
- 4) That duplicate articles are not published simultaneously
- 5) The two journals must not have overlapping readership

COPE recommends that, “published studies do not need to be repeated unless further confirmation is required.” When republication is necessary, COPE requires “full and prominent disclosure of the original source.” [5] The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, of which Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. is a member, relies on COPE guidelines [6].

The medical community appears to be very organized and consistent regarding redundant publishing. Most medical journals follow some version of the Ingelfinger Rule – a rule formed by Franz Ingelfinger in 1969, then the editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine* – to protect the journal against publishing material that had already been published and to discourage the practice of redundant publishing [7].

The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) has established comprehensive guidelines on ethical publishing behavior. Specifically, they state:

Journals should generally seek original work that has not been previously published ... [and] Republication of a paper in another language, or simultaneously in multiple journals with different audiences, may be acceptable, *provided that there is full and prominent disclosure of its original source at the time of submission of the manuscript* [8]. [italics added by author]

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has a similar policy:

Readers of primary source periodicals, whether print or electronic, deserve to be able to trust that what they are reading is original *unless there is a clear statement that the article is being republished by the choice of the author and editor*. The bases of this position are international copyright laws, ethical conduct, and cost-effective use of resources [9]. [italics added by author]

Many publishers have policies to prevent multiple submissions by the author and Emerald is no exception. Emerald's submission policy assumes that the content is original and that ownership of the content is transferred from the author to the publisher.

Articles submitted to the journal should be original contributions and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time. Authors submitting articles for publication warrant that the work is not an infringement of any existing copyright and will indemnify the publisher against any breach of such warranty. For ease of dissemination and to ensure proper policing of use, papers and contributions become the legal copyright of the publisher unless otherwise agreed. Submissions should be sent to...the Editor [10]

In addition, the copyright policy of Emerald is designed to:

Protect authors' moral rights and their work from plagiarism, unlawful copying and any other infringement of copyright. [11]

Note that the publisher's policies are set to protect the company against unethical and illegal acts performed by the author such as multiple submissions. They do not state guidelines for what is acceptable behavior once copyright permissions are transferred to the publisher.

## **Publisher Policies Regarding Republication**

Several commercial publishers of social science material have either corporate-wide policies or rigorous standards for republishing. For Elsevier, original publication is practiced by its primary journals; and for its professional journals, Elsevier will not “republish material except where explicitly indicated.” [12] Sage Publications, “require[s] permission, acknowledgement, and, depending on the circumstances (i.e., for commercial use or resale), a permissions fee.” [13] According to Haworth Press, “we always explicitly state when material has already been published, and in fact, there is a note in all of our books that material is original unless we state otherwise.” [14] Blackwell and Taylor & Francis rely on journal-level policies and will occasionally republish articles with explicit notice.

## **Examples of Republishing in the Literature**

The published literature includes many examples of republished papers. The landmark article by Watson and Crick describing the structure of DNA was originally published in *Nature* in 1953 [15], but has been republished at least four times since its original release. Reprinted by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1993 [16], this article is forwarded by an editorial statement which reads, “In recognition of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA, we reprint the following landmark articles by Drs. Watson and Crick, which originally appeared in *Nature* in 1953.” The full citation of the original article then follows.

There also exist examples of article republishing in library and information science literature. *Library Resources & Technical Services* recently republished an award-winning article that first appeared in 1992 [17,18]. The republished article not only carried a full citation of the original source, but was preceded by a reflections article by the author and an editorial note explaining why the article was republished [19].

While most journal articles cannot expect to be republished, it is not uncommon to see articles on a particular topic gathered together and published as a book. *Genomic Medicine: Articles from the New England Journal of Medicine* [20], and *Silver: Environmental Transport, Fate, Effects, and Models: Papers from Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, 1983 to 2002* [21] are both examples of republishing previously released articles. The titles of these books are designed to clearly state that their contents are not original, but a collection of previously published articles. Haworth Press regularly republishes articles simultaneously as monographs yet each article contains an explicit statement to this nature [22]. Haworth book catalogs also include unambiguous statements if their books contained previously published articles and provide full references.

A search of the literature indicated that redundant publication has focused almost entirely on documenting unethical behaviors of authors such as multiple submissions, translations of the same article, or republishing data without cross-referencing the original article. Reports of publishers duplicating articles in its own journals without explicit notification could not be verified in the literature. Correspondence with several experienced librarians and publishers could not identify undocumented cases. It is believed that the practices described below of Emerald/MCB UP were henceforth unknown to the wider library and academic community.

## Methodology

Based on anecdotal evidence that some degree of duplication was performed by this publisher, simple title keyword searches were used to identify examples. The author was chiefly interested in identifying the extent of duplication. Was duplication limited to only a few journals, or did it appear widespread among Emerald/MCB UP journals? How frequent was article duplication in particular journals? When did it start and has it stopped? For particular journals that illustrated a pattern of republication, entire issues or volumes were investigated in detail and each article title was searched.

The first and last pages of duplicate articles were printed and examined to find publisher notes regarding republication. Print copies of selected journals were retrieved from the stacks or by interlibrary loan to verify if republishing notes appeared elsewhere in the journal (cover page, verso, notes for submission, etc.)

Searches of library catalogs were performed to determine whether libraries subscribed to journals that contained duplicate content. Selected authors were contacted to see if they had knowledge that their articles were republished. Lastly, various editors and editorial board members of journals that exhibited significant article duplication were contacted to determine if they had knowledge of their journal's practice.

## Research Results

Simple keyword searching of Emerald online journals from the publisher's web site [23] has identified 409 examples of articles from sixty-seven journals that were republished without explicit notification from 1989 through 2003. Because the Emerald online holdings do not predate the late 1980s, earlier examples of multiple publication could not be identified. The publisher has confirmed article duplication is no longer practiced. In June 2001, the company officially changed its name from MCB University Press to Emerald.

Most articles were discovered to be published in two journals simultaneously (figure 1), or after a significant delay (figure 2). Three examples of articles republished in the same journal were discovered (figure 3). Five cases of triple publication were identified (figure 4). Some republished articles contained slight title modifications (figure 5). In all cases, the republished article was reformatted so that it fit in with the look of the second journal (figure 6). In other cases where the formatting of the journal was identical, only the footer (bibliographic information) was changed (figure 7).

No notes were discovered on either the article or elsewhere in the journal indicating that duplicated articles were previously published. Print copies of selected journals also verified a lack of notification.

Examples of redundant publication were identified between journals within similar subject scope (i.e. within library science, management or medicine), or between related categories such as library management with personnel management, or library science with computer science. A list of sixty-seven journals with some duplication of content is provided in Appendix A.

[Insert Figures 1-7 here]

## **Patterns of Republication**

Some journals contained infrequent instances of republished articles: others contained considerable republished content. An entire issue of ten articles was discovered to be published in two journals (*Library Management* 16 no.5 (1995); and *Management Decision* 33 no.5 (1995)). An entire issue (five articles) was discovered to be published in both *Managerial Auditing Journal* (5 no.2 (1990)) and *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* (11 no.3 (1990)).

All twenty-two articles published in volume 6, 1997 of *Asian Libraries* were discovered in other library publications. Nearly three-quarters (twenty-seven out of forty) of articles published in *OCLC Systems & Services* from 1997 through 1999 were duplicated in other journals. Nearly half (seventeen out of thirty-six) of articles published in *Internet Research* in 1996 were duplicated in other journals. All 46 articles published in the *Clinical Performance in Quality Healthcare* over two years (7 no.3-4 (1999) and 8 no.1-4 (2000)) were also published in the *British Journal of Clinical Governance* (4 no.2 & 4 (1999) and 5 no.1-4 (2000)) during the same period.

Lists of all examples are provided in Appendix B (alphabetical) and in Appendix C (by journal) can be found at the author's web site [24].

## **Overlapping subscriptions discovered in libraries**

A search of the RLG Union Catalog, which lists the holdings of library member collections in the US, Canada and UK, yielded several examples where a library subscribed to at least two journals in which article duplication was present. For example, the University of Pennsylvania Library subscribed to both *Clinical Performance and Quality Health Care* and the *British Journal of Clinical Governance* during the two years when full duplication of content was practiced. Several libraries subscribed to both *Library Management* and *Management Decision* in 1995 when an entire issue was jointly published.

## **Response from Authors**

Several authors responded to the author's request questioning if they had knowledge of their articles being republished. Some responded that they had been contacted by the publisher for permission, others could not recall. One author who was not aware joked that it meant another citation to put on his resume.

## **Response from Editors and Editorial Board Members**

Several editors and editorial board members of Emerald/MCB journals were contacted to discover if they knew about articles being republished in their journals. A few editors responded that they were not functioning as the editor prior to 2004 when republication occurred, yet it was not the current policy of their journals. Other editors did not return the author's inquires. The managing editor of *Clinical Governance*, (which succeeded the two journals listed below), provided the following rationale for multiple publication:

There are two reasons why the articles have been duplicated. Firstly we acquired the US-based journal, *Clinical Performance and Quality Health Care*, mid volume in 1999 and the journal was finally merged with the *British Journal of Clinical Governance* in 2000. This meant that we continued to publish both journals to satisfy subscribers to each volume. Secondly, when most subscriptions were paper based and to individual paper journals, some articles that were considered to be of particular merit were occasionally published in more than one Emerald journal. This helped to disseminate the research to a broader audience. Although, Emerald now sells mostly database subscriptions and because of this users have access to a much greater number of Emerald articles - so we don't do this anymore [25].

The management of Emerald/MCB UP journals is facilitated by one or more academic editors plus an editorial team with the assistance of a managing editor from the publisher. The managing editor is responsible for a suite of journals within a particular subject discipline. The author was unable to verify whether the academic editors and their editorial team had knowledge of the redundant publication practices. One editor of a management journal responded to the author's investigation that instances of duplicate publication must have been an error caused by multiple author submissions. Another editor of a management journal responded on the condition of anonymity, "I can categorically state that when I was the editor I was not aware of any such practice, and would neither condone nor practice such republication." Several librarians serving on the editorial board of *OCLC Systems and Services* during the period of widespread article duplication who could be contacted reported no knowledge of this practice. Several inquiries to the publisher on whether the same managing editor was responsible for coordinating duplicate publishing went unanswered.

## Discussion

Returning to the five criteria established by Fulda [26] on acceptable, or "ethical" republishing, the case of Emerald/MCB UP article republishing appears to fail on all five criteria:

- 1) Articles were published in journals representing same or similar subject fields
- 2) The editor and editorial board (at least in some cases) did not know of prior publication
- 3) Prior publication was not acknowledged in subsequent publications
- 4) Articles were published simultaneously
- 5) Journals had overlapping subscribership and overlapping readership.

Performing an unethical act does not necessarily mean performing an illegal act. Many publishers require authors to relinquish copyright of the article, meaning that the publisher takes ownership of the material. Republishing in this light may not be illegal in the sense that the publisher has not violated the rights of the author, and there is no law stating that one cannot republish information. But what about the rights of the customer or subscriber?

In many business transactions, the buyer alone is responsible for discerning if the product is free from defects. This is known as *caveat emptor*, Latin for "let the buyer beware". However the rule does not apply when the purchaser is unable to examine the goods. For journal subscriptions, payment is made in advance for future receipt of content. While not expressly stated, the content purchased from academic publishers is generally assumed to be original in nature unless explicitly declared otherwise. The author of this report could not find any information in the

republished articles indicating that they were not original. Library subscribers would have no way of knowing that they were purchasing duplicate content.

## **Publication of Record**

When two exact articles are published at or around the same time, discerning which is the publication of record is difficult. Discerning when an article has been republished after a significant period of delay is easier, yet this puts the onus on the researcher to track down the first publication when there is no indication that the article has been republished. If the researcher found the first article by searching an index, a duplicate copy may be discovered if the articles were published in the same field (i.e. both within library science). Discovering the duplicate article may be impossible if it was published in management or computer science (as noted in the examples). A follow-up study will investigate how authors cited duplicated articles.

## **Conclusion**

Over 400 examples of article duplication were discovered in sixty-seven journals published by Emerald/MCB University Press from 1989 to 2003. The degree of duplication ranged from occasional to complete. In all cases duplication appeared covert, meaning that the reader and subscriber had no indication that the content was not original. This author believes that the practices of Emerald/MCB UP were henceforth unknown to the wider library and academic community.

This report was based on simple keyword searching of Emerald's collections. Because searching was not systematic, the full degree of duplication is unknown. The author recommends that the publisher conduct a full search of its collections and make publicly available a complete list of republished articles.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Suzanne Cohen for her help reviewing this article, Chuck Hamaker and Stanley Wilder for their moral support of this research.

[Insert Appendix A – List of Journals here]



## Figures

Full citations and abstracts can be retrieved from:

<<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/rpsv/cgi-bin/emeraldbr>> or by connecting to the publisher website <<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/T>> and clicking on the Emerald Journals icon. Full article access is limited to subscribers or their subscribing institutions.

### Figure 1. Simultaneous Publication

Hazel Woodward, Fytton Rowland, Cliff McKnight, Jact Meadows, and Carolyn Pritchett, "Electronic Journals: Myths and Realities," *Library Management* 18 no.3 (1997): 155-162

———, "Electronic Journals: Myths and Realities," *OCLC Systems and Services* 13 no.4 (1997): 144-151

### Figure 2. Delayed Republication in Different Journal

John O. Burdett, "Death of a Salesman," *Empowerment in Organisations* 6 no.8 (1998): 210-220

———, "Death of a Salesman," *Career Development International* 6 no.3 (2001): 176-182

### Figure 3. Delayed Republication in Same Journal

A.R. Denman, E.P. Harris, M.R. Hermann, and P. Phillips, "Auditing the cost-effectiveness of radon mitigation in the workplace," *Managerial Auditing Journal* 14 no.9 (1999): 461-467

———, "Auditing the cost-effectiveness of radon mitigation in the workplace," *Managerial Auditing Journal* 15 no.4 (2000): 153-159

### Figure 4. Triple Publication

Jan Wren, and Barrie Craven, "A Cost-effectiveness Study of Changing Medical Practise in Early Pregnancy," *Journal of Management in Medicine* 11 no.6 (1997): 372-381

———, "A Cost-effectiveness Study of Changing Medical Practise in Early Pregnancy," *Clinical Performance in Quality Healthcare* 7 no.4 (1999): 172-177

———, "A Cost-effectiveness Study of Changing Medical Practise in Early Pregnancy," *British Journal of Clinical Governance* 4 no.4 (1999): 148-154

### **Figure 5. Republication with Slight Title Modification**

Nick Forster, "A Case Study of Women Academics' Views on Equal Opportunities, Career Prospects and Work-family Conflicts in a British University," *Women in Management Review* 15 no.7 (2000): 316-330

———, "A Case Study of Women Academics' Views on Equal Opportunities, Career Prospects and Work-family Conflicts in a UK University," *Career Development International* 6 no.1 (2001): 28-38

(note "British university" in first citation and "UK university" in second)

### **Figure 6. Reformatted Articles**

Bob Usherwood, Richard Proctor, Gordon Bower, Tony Stevens, and Carol Coe, "Recruitment and Retention in the Public Library - A Baseline Study," *Library Management* 21 no.2 (2000): 62-80

———, "Recruitment and Retention in the Public Library - A Baseline Study," *Career Development International* 5 no.6 (2000): 301-317

### **Figure 7. Articles That Share Formatting, only Bibliographic Information Changed**

Bernie Sloan, "Allocating Costs in a Consortial Environment: A Methodology for Library Consortia," *The Bottom Line* 11 no.2 (1998): 45-52

———, "Allocating Costs in a Consortial Environment: A Methodology for Library Consortia," *OCLC Systems and Services* 15 no.1 (1999): 65-71

## **Appendix A. List of Journals Discovered With Multiple Publication**

Asian Libraries  
British Food Journal  
British Journal of Clinical Governance  
Campus-Wide Information Systems  
Career Development International  
Clinical Performance in Quality Healthcare  
Collection Building  
Disaster Prevention and Management  
Education and Training  
Employee Relations  
Empowerment in Organisations  
Equal Opportunities International  
European Journal of Innovation Management  
European Journal of Marketing  
Executive Development  
Facilities  
Health Manpower Management  
Industrial and Commercial Training  
Industrial Management and Data Systems  
Information Management and Computer Security  
Information Technology and People  
Interlending and Document Supply  
International Journal of Bank Marketing  
International Journal of Career Management  
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management  
International Journal of Educational Management  
International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance  
International Journal of Manpower  
International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management  
International Journal of Public Sector Management  
International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management  
International Journal of Service Industry Management  
International Marketing Review  
Internet Research  
Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing  
Journal of Educational Administration  
Journal of Management in Medicine  
Journal of Marketing Practice  
Journal of Product and Brand Management  
Journal of Service Marketing  
Journal of Workplace Learning  
Leadership and Organizational Development Journal  
Librarian Career Development  
Library Consortium Management  
Library Management  
Library Review  
Logistics Information Management  
Management Decision  
Management Development Review

Managerial Auditing Journal  
Marketing Intelligence and Planning  
New Library World  
Nutrition and Food Science  
OCLC Systems and Services  
Online Information Review  
Personnel Review  
Quality Assurance in Education  
Reference Reviews  
Supply Chain Management  
Team Performance Management  
The Bottom Line : Managing Library Finances  
The Electronic Library  
The Learning Organization : An International Journal  
Training for Quality  
Women in Management Review  
World Transport Policy and Practice

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