

# Editorial

SCIENCE is, despite its reputation, an imperfect field. We learn through experiments both successful and failed, through hypotheses confirmed and refuted. What makes science such a powerful way of knowing is that it is inherently self-correcting; errors and mistakes inevitably are uncovered and properly accounted for.

Not all mistakes are technical mistakes: there are also lapses of ethics and judgment. In the desire to publish and gain recognition (or even simply to pass a tenure review) the standards of research are an occasional casualty. Sometimes the result is merely questionable: the division of research into “least publishable units.” Sometimes, alas, the result is more serious: publication of one’s own work in multiple venues without citation, or worse yet, publication of someone else’s work as one’s own: plagiarism.

Plagiarism cuts at the heart of the scientific enterprise because it calls into question the body of literature upon which all subsequent work is based. But science is self-correcting, and it is self-correcting with respect to plagiarism as well: if you plagiarize, you will, inevitably, be discovered, even if it takes years to uncover the deed.

And that is what has happened here. The accompanying letter of apology resulted from an investigation into a ten-year-old paper that was plagiarized from an article in the IEEE JOURNAL OF QUANTUM ELECTRONICS. As the investigating committee eventually determined, nearly 90% of the infringing paper [1] was copied verbatim from a single source [2], in the form of a student term paper by Russell Pillers. The paper in question was

then selected by the course teacher, Professor Banmali Rawat, for publication, who added his name and submitted the paper to another journal.

Professor Rawat chose to add his name to the paper and to submit it to a journal without making any substantial contribution, let alone checking the validity and/or originality of the scientific work in any way. By making himself the senior and corresponding author of the submitted paper, he took on responsibility for the content of the paper, and he therefore bears responsibility with Dr. Pillers for the act of plagiarism. While Pillers did not originally intend the paper for publication, he had ample opportunity to prevent publication, and should have been aware that the level of verbatim usage qualified as plagiarism under any definition. Therefore he, along with Prof. Rawat, bears responsibility for the act of plagiarism.

The investigating committee recommended that Russell B. Pillers and Banmali S. Rawat be banned from publication in all IEEE publications for a period of four years. Prof. Rawat was also required to submit a formal apology to the original authors and to the editor of the JOURNAL and that it be published in the JOURNAL. This apology is reproduced on the following page.

ROBERT J. LANG, *Editor-in-Chief*

## REFERENCES

- [1] R. B. Pillers and B. S. Rawat, “Analysis of laser source nonlinearity due to longitudinal mode-hopping,” *Int. J. Infr. Millim. Waves*, vol. 17, no. 11, pp. 1809–1820, 1996.
- [2] M. R. Alalusi and R. B. Darling, “Effects of nonlinear gain on mode-hopping in semiconductor laser diodes,” *IEEE J. Quantum Electron.*, vol. 31, no. 7, pp. 1181–1192, Jul. 1995.

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