Multiple Submission: Professionalism, Ethical Issues, and Copyright Legalities

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The "multiple submission" problem has presented itself at PAMI several times recently. One instance involved submissions to PAMI and to the *Image and Vision Computing Journal*. The submission letters were dated within a week of each other. Neither the PAMI submission nor its cover letter mentioned the other submission. The first three sections of both papers (approximately 40 percent of their length) were identical, including equations and an algorithm description. Some portions of the remaining text were identical, and some were different. The papers presented different, but clearly related technical results. The PAMI submission was rejected administratively, with the request that the author not submit a paper to PAMI for two years.

Another instance involved submissions to PAMI and to the *International Journal of Pattern Recognition and Artificial Intelligence*. The submission letters were dated about one month apart. Neither paper referenced or described the other. The results and order of presentation were the same, but there were minor differences in wording throughout. Again, the PAMI submission was rejected administratively, with the request that the author not submit a paper to PAMI for two years. (Subsequently, it was discovered that the paper had also been submitted to another two journals at the same time.)

All authors should clearly understand both scenarios as being unacceptable. While the scenarios have minor differences, both were handled at PAMI in the standard manner for dual submissions.

Many dual submissions are detected by accident, when both papers are sent to the same reviewer. Others could be detected through the efforts of associate editors and EICs who, on occasion, share information about submissions. While we can compliment the diligence involved in such discoveries, it would be best if EICs, AEs, and reviewers were not put in this position. Submission of papers with a large amount of common content to more than one journal increases an already heavy burden of reviewing—a burden that we all share. In the end, the authors damage their reputations and hurt their chances for future publication. If an author somehow gets away with it and both submissions are accepted, the long-term damage to their reputation is even greater, because the incident is seen by more people in the community.

By submitting a paper to PAMI, the author makes a variety of claims. Claims about the work include the following:

1) The paper presents the original work of the author(s).

2) All listed coauthors have made a technical contribution that merits their coauthor status.

3) No substantial part of the paper is in the review or publication process at any journal, except as explicitly noted in the submission letter and described in the paper.

With respect to the writing, the author claims to be able to supply the needed copyright to all text and figures (or the authorization to reuse them).

Problems of copyright permission can complicate publication even in the absence of dual submission. Consider the case of a journal submission for which an earlier version appears in a conference proceedings. A journal submission should be substantially different from a previous conference publication. At a minimum, the difference might be in the form of additional explanation, experiments, and discussion. If the conference and journal publishers are different, the author may need permission from the conference publisher to reuse text and/or figures. (The details of authors' copyright responsibilities are outlined nicely in the article "Copyrights and Author Responsibilities" by Harold Stone, appearing in the December 1992 issue of *Computer*.)

Some simple rules can help authors avoid problems:

1) Always acknowledge and describe your own related work that is in submission or has appeared elsewhere.

2) Where portions of the work are also described in a conference paper, the author should make this clear in the cover letter for the submission and in the text of the paper itself.

The author should also be sure that the first copyright agreement allows the material to be reused. If it does not, the author should get the required permission. Most publishers routinely grant such permissions. Lastly, any author who feels that a particular situation falls into a gray area can always contact the editor of the journal to request clarification.

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