

The ethics at the *Notes académiques de l'Agriculture de France - Academic Notes from the French Academy of Agriculture (N3AF)*

Date: 25 January 2023

The purpose of this document is to provide all those involved in scientific publishing (authors, editors, reviewers, readers, societies, librarians, research institutions, universities, funders, publishers, journalists) with a summary of good practices in research integrity and publishing ethics from leading organizations around the world.

We recognize that practices vary from discipline to discipline and that one practice does not necessarily fit all. Where the guidelines are particularly applicable to a discipline or group of disciplines, we have endeavored to make this clear in the text.

Peer reviewing of manuscripts submitted to journals is essential for the proper functioning of knowledge communities. It guarantees the quality of published articles, which in turn affects the reputation of the authors, their institutions and the publication itself.

Better still, since it is based on a shared idea of the scientific method, it contributes to the dissemination of its criteria, at least implicitly.

Its functioning needs to be clarified, but to this end, many institutions have proposed reference texts, notably within the framework of COPE (<https://publicationethics.org/>).

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and other resources: COPE is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting integrity in research and research publication. COPE has defined a set of good practices that apply to all those who contribute to scholarly publications: authors, editors, reviewers, editorial boards, editorial secretariats, and academic or research institutions.

In the present document, we refer as much as possible to the COPE recommendations and to its forum. We supplement these with those of the European Federation of Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS) (Ethical Guidelines for Publications in Journals and Reviews) and the US Office of Research Integrity (Managing Allegations of Scientific Misconduct: A Guidance Document for Editors).

Management of Ethics in N3AF

The N3AF Editorial Committee and the Board of the French Academy of Agriculture are responsible for examining all ethical issues relating to the operation of N3AF.

As a general rule, it is the Editorial Board that approves all changes to published articles (retractions, withdrawals, expressions of concern), advises on ethical issues of the publication, establishes and implements ethical policies, and manages possible investigations of ethical issues affecting N3AF.

Signature of articles

The signature on an article :

- Acknowledges that the work presented has been done by the author,

- confers moral and legal rights (copyright),
- plays an important role in defining academic careers.

However, authorship issues remain a common concern for N3AFs. COPE discusses these authorship issues, explores them in detail, and provides practical advice.

To submit a manuscript is to acknowledge that the authors having signed the document meet the requirements for authorship. An ORCID (Open Researcher Contributor ID) may be indicated (an ORCID is a permanent numerical identifier that distinguishes individuals from those with similar names and links them to the results of their research see <https://orcid.org/>).

Only those who have made significant contributions to the design, execution of the experiments, analysis of the data, and interpretation of the results should be listed as authors of the articles.

Contributions should be clear, and signatories should state their contribution explicitly.

There is no universal definition of authorship, and practices vary across disciplines and communities, particularly when individuals collaborate in multiple fields. Different disciplines adopt their own criteria, e.g., ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors) guidelines are commonly followed in biomedical fields, EuChemS (European Chemical Society) guidelines are adopted in chemistry, while in the humanities and sciences of society, single-author publications are more common. However, regardless of the discipline, the minimum recognized requirements for authorship are to make a substantial contribution to the research and to be responsible for the work undertaken (COPE Discussion document: authorship).

Upon receipt of a submission letter, N3AF will reply to all authors (whose email addresses must be provided) that the journal has received a submission to which they are contributing, ensuring that the emails are not invalid. In case of returned messages, the journal questions the first author to collect a valid email address.

Authors are asked to complete "author contribution statements" that indicate how each author contributed to a work. This approach has recently been extended by CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy), a standard that allows for a standardized description of each author's contribution to a manuscript.

A person who does not meet the authorship criteria for a specific work, but who has contributed in some capacity, should be acknowledged, with their approval.

Minors who have participated in a research work (e.g., children using technology) are usually acknowledged, as they may not be fully responsible for all aspects of the research.

Deceased Authors: When a manuscript is submitted with a deceased author, or when an author dies while the manuscript is under peer reviewing, a clear indication is added to the published article to indicate this.

A co-author must vouch for the deceased author's contribution and any conflicts of interest. If the deceased author was a corresponding author, another co-author must be named. Permission for publication must be given by an heir of the author.

Authorship disputes: To manage authorship disputes, N3AFs implement the COPE flowcharts and their "How to Spot Authorship Issues" guidelines. Authorship disputes will often have to be referred to institutions if they cannot resolve them themselves.

Case of authors who are members of the Editorial Board: Members of the Editorial Board should not be involved in editorial decisions concerning their own scientific work. This is made possible by the double anonymity of the evaluations, but also by the fact that the secretarial editors transmit anonymized manuscripts to the editors in charge.

The authors of the texts, under these conditions, do not participate in the publication decisions.

Originality and plagiarism: Authors must guarantee that they have made an original article, describing new results, and if the authors have used the work or texts of others, they must cite them properly.

Access to data: authors may be required to provide the raw results of their studies when submitting an article describing their studies, so they should be prepared to provide these data publicly.

Uniqueness of publication: authors should not, with some exceptions (e.g., syntheses), publish the same results more than once, in the same primary journal or in several such journals. However, results that have only been summarized or presented as part of a thesis are not considered to have been published.

Citations of sources

Citation and reference to appropriate and relevant literature is an essential part of scientific publishing and a responsibility shared by all involved (authors, editors, reviewers).

In manuscripts, sources must be properly cited, i.e., any results presented must be either referenced or experimentally established and validated.

For source citations, the reference should be to the first work that established the fact, introduced (and validated) a method.

Authors should not engage in excessive self-citation of their own work.

Editors and peer reviewers should not ask authors to add citations to their articles if there is no sound scientific justification for doing so.

The issue of inappropriate citations (including citation stacking and citation cartels) was discussed by COPE, which produced a discussion paper on citation handling with good practice recommendations.

Patient Consent: Use of Personal Information of Patients or Individuals

Appropriate consents, permissions and releases must be obtained when authors wish to include case details or other personal information or images of patients and any other persons in an N3AF article.

Consent requirements: Appropriate consents, authorizations and releases must be obtained when authors wish to include case details or other personal information or images of patients and others in an N3AF article.

Authors must comply with all applicable laws and regulations regarding the privacy and security of personal information, including, but not limited to, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA"), the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and member states' implementing legislation, Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, India's Information Technology Act, and related privacy rules.

N3AF does not provide authors with a standard form, as requirements vary by jurisdiction and institution. Authors must ensure that:

- each individual, or his or her legal guardian or other person with legal authority to act on the individual's behalf, who appears in a video, recording, photograph, image, illustration, or case report (or in any other identifiable form) is informed in advance: that such photographs are being taken or that such video, recording, photograph, image, illustration, or report is being made, and of any purposes for which they may be used; individuals should also be aware that individual images of such work or products may be discoverable by search engines.

- that person, his or her legal guardian, or the person with legal authority must give explicit, written, and fully informed consent.

If such consent is subject to conditions (e.g., the adoption of measures to prevent personal identification of the individual), N3AFs must be informed in writing of all such conditions. Individuals must be informed that this consent cannot be revoked once the material has been published. Written consents must be retained by the author and copies of the consents or evidence that such consents have been obtained must be provided to N3AF on request.

The form of consent must comply with all applicable data protection and privacy laws. Particular care should be taken to ensure that fully informed and non-coercive consent is obtained where children are involved, where a person has cognitive or intellectual disabilities, where a person's head or face appears, where reference is made to a person's name or other personal details, or with other vulnerable groups or individuals.

In the case of a child, if parents or guardians disagree about the use of images of that child, consent should be deemed not to have been given and those images should not be used. It is also important to ensure that only images of children in appropriate attire are used to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of images.

Even if consent has been obtained, care must be taken to ensure that the portrayal of the person concerned, as well as the comments in the images, are respectful and cannot be seen as denigrating that person.

Care should also be taken to ensure that the person concerned is properly informed in advance of the potential extent of the publicity and can make an informed decision about participating, where there is a possibility of extensive media coverage of a particular case report.

Special considerations: names, initials, hospital or social security numbers, dates of birth, or other personal or identifying information of patients and research subjects should not be used.

Images of patients or research subjects must not be used unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and explicit permission has been given as part of the consent. Even when consent has been given, identifying details should be omitted if they are not essential.

If identifying characteristics are altered to protect anonymity, authors must provide assurance that such alterations will not distort the information.

Non-identifiable images: Consent is not required for the use of completely anonymous images from which the individual cannot be identified - for example, x-rays, ultrasound images, pathology slides, or laparoscopic images, provided that they do not contain identifying marks and are not accompanied by text that could identify the individual concerned. Although formal consents are not required, it is good practice and courtesy for the author to inform the patient that his or her images will be used in a scientific publication. Obviously, this clause does not apply to case reports, where informed consent is always required, whether or not the images are anonymized.

For case presentations, although details that could identify a patient, or that could allow a patient to identify themselves, must be removed, complete anonymity cannot always be guaranteed and informed consent must therefore be obtained for all case reports. This also applies to case reports of deceased persons, for which consent must be obtained from the designated representative(s) if it has not been provided by the person concerned. If consent has not been obtained, it is generally not sufficient to anonymize a photograph by simply using blindfolds or blurring the face of the data subject.

Funding

This must be explicitly stated.

Conflicts of interest

When submitting a manuscript, all signatories must declare possible conflicts of interest related to the points raised in the manuscript.

Errors in published work

When an author detects a significant error in a previously published work, he or she should notify the publication as soon as possible, and should cooperate with the journal in correcting or retracting the article.

Presentation Standards

Authors of research notes must present the materials and methods used in sufficient detail that the work can be reproduced.

Interpretations may not go beyond the scope of the study, except to cite other published work on the subject.

Hazards and use of human or animal subjects

Specific hazards must be reported when they exceed those reported by the safety databases; the use of human and animal subjects must be within the legal framework, after approval by the ad hoc committees.

Use of images of people or medical records

Studies involving patients must have been approved by the appropriate ethics committees. Patients must have signed an agreement to allow the use of their data.

The work of the editors

Publication of articles by N3AF is a team effort. Issues of research integrity and publication ethics are addressed by the Editorial Board. These issues may also give rise to or involve legal problems. In the event of an ethical issue, the Secretarial Editors will convene a meeting with the entire Editorial Board, and possibly the editors in charge, or even the rapporteurs if the Editorial Board so decides. Discussions by this group should take place before any further action is taken, including seeking legal advice, especially when the issues involve potential libel, breach of contract, invasion of privacy, or copyright infringement.

Initial discussions may indicate the need for further investigation or expanded discussions to:

- involve relevant institutions, employers, or funders (who are the appropriate bodies to conduct most investigations of author conflicts and alleged misconduct) ;
- consult with other journal editors who are involved (where coordinated efforts may be useful, taking into account confidentiality sensitivities);
- Seek advice from other sources, for example, through the COPE forum.

Scientific Discussions

N3AF strives to facilitate academic debate after publication, either through letters to the editor or through comments, followed by responses from the authors.

These reactions and discussions may lead to corrections, revisions and retractions of articles after publication.

Correspondence and criticism of work that the journal publishes should be constructive.

When a correspondent discusses a specific article, the journal invites the authors of the work discussed to respond before the correspondence is published. Whenever possible, the correspondence and the authors' response are published at the same time. Authors may choose not to respond to the invitation. They do not have the right to veto comments on their work that the editor deems constructive; however, they may inform the editors of unconstructive comments, and the journal may ask the authors of the correspondence to correct their comments before publication.

Appeal of editorial decisions

N3AF aims to always publish manuscripts, but only on the condition that the requests of the reviewers and editors in charge are met.

Of course, authors of reviewed manuscripts may challenge certain comments or decisions about their manuscript, but these reactions must be well-founded, and argued.

The editors in charge, or the secretarial editors, reserve the right to accept or reject critical comments made by the reviewers, particularly in view of additional factual data provided by the authors, revisions, modifications or additions to the manuscript, or additional information about conflicts of interest.

The Editorial Board mediates conflicts in all exchanges between authors and peer reviewers during the peer review process. Additional expert assessments are sometimes required for decision-making, particularly in the case of conflicting comments between two reviewers.

The decision of the Editorial Board, in case of discussions, is final.

Corrections, retractions, deletion of articles

The N3AF stresses the importance of the integrity and completeness of scientific archives for researchers and librarians and attaches the highest importance to maintaining confidence in the authority of its electronic archives.

The Editorial Board of N3AF is ultimately responsible for the decision to publish articles submitted to the journal. In making a decision to publish, the Editorial Board of the journal applies the legal requirements regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism. This principle implies the importance of the scientific archive as a historical and permanent record of scientific transactions. In other words, articles that have been published should not be changed, but it may happen that a published article is subject to a later "erratum". Or an article may need to be retracted or even deleted. Such actions should not be undertaken lightly and should only occur in exceptional circumstances. In any case, the official N3AF archives, on the website of the French Academy of Agriculture, but also at the French National Library, keep all versions of articles, including retracted or deleted articles.

This policy is in line with the best practice rules of the scientific communities and, in particular, of the library communities. As standards evolve, N3AF will review this issue and welcomes input from the research and library communities. We believe that these issues require international standards and will actively lobby various information organizations to establish international standards and best practices that the publishing and information industries can adopt. See also the

National Library of Medicine's policy on retractions and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommendations regarding corrections and retractions.

Article Removal

This can only be done for articles in press that represent early versions of articles and sometimes contain errors, or may have been accidentally submitted twice. Occasionally, articles may be removed if they violate professional codes of ethics (multiple submissions, theft of work, plagiarism, misuse of data, etc.).

Articles in press (articles that have been accepted for publication but have not yet been officially published and for which full volume, issue, and page information is not yet available) that contain errors, or that are accidental duplicates of other previously published articles, or that are considered by the editors to violate our journal's publication ethics guidelines, may be removed.

Withdrawn means that the content of the article (in HTML and PDF format) is removed and replaced with an HTML and PDF page simply stating that the article has been withdrawn in accordance with the N3AF policy on withdrawing articles from the press, with a link to the current policy document.

The retraction of an article by its authors or by the editor, on the advice of members of the scientific community, is a long-standing - and exceptional - practice in the research community. Standards for handling retractions have been developed by a number of libraries and scholarly organizations, and this best practice is adopted by N3AF for article retractions:

- a retraction note entitled "Retraction: [title of article]" signed by the authors or editor is published in the paginated portion of a subsequent issue of the journal and is listed in the contents list;
- in the electronic version, a link is established to the original article;
- the online article is preceded by a screen containing the retraction note. It is on this screen that the link is resolved; the reader can then go to the article itself;
- the original article is kept unchanged, except for a watermark on the .pdf file indicating on each page that it is "retracted";
- the HTML version of the document is deleted.

Deleting an article: legal limits

In an extremely limited number of cases, it may be necessary to delete an article from the online database. This will only happen if the article is defamatory, infringes on the legal rights of others, is the subject of a court order or if we have good reason to believe that it will be, or if the article, if used, may pose a serious health risk. In these circumstances, the metadata (title and authors) will be retained, but the text will be replaced by a sign indicating that it has been removed.

Copyright: rights for publication and dissemination of research

In order for N3AF to publish and disseminate research articles, the journal requires certain publication rights from authors, which are determined by a publication agreement between the author and N3AF.

Since the articles are published on an open access basis, authors who publish in N3AF give up the exclusive rights to their article by the very fact of publishing. However, they may freely distribute the unmodified .pdf file of their article.

N3AF is committed to protecting and defending the authors' work and reputation. We take allegations of forgery, plagiarism, ethical disputes and fraud very seriously.

Authors who publish in N3AF:

- retain patent and trademark rights;
- retain the right to freely use their research data without restriction;
- receive appropriate attribution and credit for their published work;
- may reuse their own material in new works without permission or payment (with full acknowledgement of the original article): in books that expand on the articles, in compilation articles, in articles (for portions of the text, citations, figures, or tables);
- may use and share their work for knowledge purposes (with full citation of the original article): in their own teaching (electronic and physical distribution of copies is permitted), when the author is speaking at a conference (they may present the article and distribute copies to participants), in email exchanges, to their students and fellow researchers they know for personal use;
- may include the publication in a thesis or dissertation (as long as it is not a commercial publication);
- may share copies of their article privately or publicly;
- may share the accepted manuscript publicly on non-commercial sites;
- retain copyright.

More generally, N3AF encourages dissemination of the article in pdf or link to the N3AF page where this .pdf is accessible with citation.

Rights of the author's institution

The institution of the authors of articles published in N3AF has the right to use the articles for internal education and training.

For U.S. government employees, works created in the course of their employment are considered to be in the public domain, and N3AF publication contracts do not require the transfer or licensing of rights in these works.

In the UK and some Commonwealth countries, a work created by a government employee may be protected by copyright, but the government may own the work.

Dissemination of articles, use of articles

The sharing and promotion of articles is essential in the international scientific community because it contributes to scientific progress. However, rules must be followed to share articles responsibly and promote them widely.

Sharing an article: only the final version of the article, with full references given at the end of the text, can be shared with a reference to the N3AF.

Responsible sharing in accordance with copyright law enables publishers to maintain high quality journals. N3AF supports responsible sharing, and responsible sharing platforms such as the STM Association, whose website www.howcanishareit.com explains how authors and users can share articles published in academic journals (it includes the Can I Share It search tool that allows authors to easily check where a journal article can be shared in accordance with the access and use rights of the document).

Sharing options for different contexts:

- at a conference: publication of a result in N3AF does not preclude presentation of work at a conference, either as an oral presentation or a poster ;

- for teaching purposes: authors may use their article for teaching and for internal training at their institution (including use in course packs and didactic programs);
- for grant applications: authors may include their article in funding applications;
- with colleagues: authors may share their article with colleagues (and others) in private communications, such as email;
- on a personal blog or website: N3AFs allow their published articles (.pdf format) to be posted on personal websites or blogs, but the cit-
- on institutional repository sites: authors can immediately publish their accepted author manuscript on an institutional repository and make it available to the public after the expiration of an embargo period. They can also deposit the published article ;
- on a thematic repository (or other non-commercial repository): deposit is allowed;
- on Scholarly Collaboration Networks (SCNs): services such as SCNs allow authors to present their work, providing quick and efficient ways to collaborate and disseminate research;
- on social media, such as Mastodon, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter: authors are encouraged to link to the N3AF page where the article can be downloaded.

Research Data: Rules and Principles

Sharing data allows others to reuse experimental results, which in turn promotes new work based on previous discoveries. In this way, data sharing promotes the advancement of science.

Furthermore, data sharing promotes transparency and reproducibility, which increases trust in science. The N3AFs are obviously in favor of data sharing.

While many research data are disseminated as part of journal articles, a multitude of other data are not present in published articles. The precise notion of what constitutes research data differs from one field of research to another, but in general, it is the result of observations or experiments that validate the research findings and are not already published as part of an article. Research data can be: raw data, processed data, programs, algorithms, protocols, methods, materials.

The N3AF considers that:

- research data should be made freely available to all researchers, to the extent possible, with minimal restrictions on reuse;
- Researchers should retain control over how their research data is accessed and used, and should be recognized and valued for the investment they make in creating and making their research data available;
- expectations and practices for research data vary across disciplines, and discipline-specific requirements must be addressed;
- Enabling effective reuse of research data is a common goal in science, and all stakeholders should work together to pursue it collectively, to advance science and avoid unnecessary duplication of research;
- curation platforms, publications, tools, and services can add value to research data by improving its accessibility, use, reuse, and citation (see for example <https://ist.inrae.fr/le-libre-acces-a-inrae/data-inrae/>);
- Where others add value or incur significant expense to enhance research data to enable its reuse, these contributions should be recognized and valued.

Consistent with the above principles, the N3AFs :

- Encourage researchers to share research data where appropriate, for example by improving submission processes to facilitate this;
- Align their operations with respect to author data where possible to make it easier for authors to understand how and where they can store and share their data, thereby facilitating access and reuse of that data;

- Facilitate researchers' compliance with data management requirements, for example by supporting data availability statements to improve transparency;
- Ensure that researchers can be credited - and credit others - for sharing research data, by encouraging and supporting appropriate data citation practices;
- Work with scientific institutions (universities, research institutions, etc.) to establish data review practices to ensure that published research data are valid, properly documented, and can be reused;
- Support the publication of research data as a distinct, peer-reviewed output to encourage reuse and provide authors with additional ways to be recognized for their work.

Publication Costs

N3AFs are on the diamond model: neither authors nor readers pay (<https://anr.fr/fr/actualites-de-lanr/details/news/publication-dun-plan-daction-en-faveur-du-modele-dedition-scientifique-en-acces-ouvert-diamant-d/>)