

Challenges facing institutions in liaising with journals on research integrity cases



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Publishers, journals and editors are effectively preventing institutions from taking steps to improve the integrity of the research record.

“It’s OK, we checked with the author”

- Research team in dispute with young member of team who published results without listing her collaborators
- Researchers contact journal who advise that they checked with the young author and she said everything was fine...

Editors, especially, are too conflicted to be involved in negotiation, consideration or investigation of complaints about research integrity.

‘Contact the journals lawyers’

- This is advice we have given often, and used ourselves to resolve complaints. This is true for journals that are members of COPE
- An example...
 - Journal article contains plagiarised material. Editor contacted. Article was peer reviewed in 24 hours. Editor and first author are married
 - Author of plagiarised material says that it is plagiarised, but contains mistakes so it is not a problem. Editor agrees. No action taken.
 - Contact lawyers. Paper retracted. Apology issued.

How can this work better?

- Clear processes and contacts, communication
- Understanding the sometimes misaligned priorities of institutions (protecting their reputation, finding someone guilty or not) and journals (protecting their reputation, knowing if the research can be trusted)
- Recognise that that we are dealing with researchers with different, overlapping and not completely removable hats
 - researchers-as-authors
 - researchers-as-editors
 - researchers-as-institutions

Thank you

