

EDITORIAL

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/s0034-759020150301>

SIMILARITY AND PLAGIARISM: NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

Since the installation of a similarity identification system, in February 2015, RAE team has been dedicated to understand and classify the various types of similarities found in the articles submitted for evaluation. Although this new tool facilitates the digital checking of similarity between a very large amount of texts already published, the task of sorting the different cases that we have seen is more complex than it might seem at first.

First, one must understand that the tool installed performs an automatic verification of textual similarity, i.e., it identifies similarities between the text submitted and others texts published. Of course, copying an excerpt of a third party's text and submitting it without mentioning the original as source is a reprehensible attitude which must be condemned. But, this is a case of easy resolution, and, although negative, it does not occur very often. When identified, the author is warned, and a response is expected. It could have been just a distraction, usually in a small and less relevant part of the article, but it must be corrected. If the author's answer is not convincing, the trend is to refuse the publication of that paper, decision that is made by listening to the scientific editor involved.

The case in which a text is identified with a high degree of similarity with other texts by the same author is common. It is the so called self-plagiarism. Here we have different situations that should be treated differently. The difference lies in the type of the source text. If the text submitted is similar to another one published in a conference, we should not worry too much, as, in general, it should be considered just a natural step in the evolution of that paper. If the similarity occurs with a working paper, the case might be more complex, since there are instances where the working paper is treated as a regular publication. In this situation, each particular case must be examined, and the final decision tends to be a little less obvious.

Similarity with articles published in journals is much more complicated. At first, when an article is published in a journal, there is a copyright agreement signed between the author and the publisher, which limits its use, in whole or in part, by another publication. Even if similarity is found in only one paragraph, any editor will feel uncomfortable to publish something that has the potential to create an intellectual property dispute. The recommendation in this case is the total change of the similarity found, and, when applicable, the explicit quotation of the original source must be included.

This is just a small sample of the huge variety of situations that occur when a journal goes under verification of similarity in their editorial processes. In the origin of the text, many other issues are also part of the similarity evaluation. One of them is the amount of similar text. How much would be "acceptable": a sentence, a paragraph, a page, half paper? Moreover, in which part of the text was the similarity found? In the introduction, the theoretical review, the description of the methodology or the conclusions? The combination of all these possibilities generates a good number of situations that not always have an easy solution.

We have to consider also that the similarity verification systems only check the text, and not the content of the ideas explained in the article. Even though there is no similarity with any published text, these new technological tools cannot adequately capture the content similarities that could be disguised by the providential modification of the words used in a new text.

Anyway, even if the practice of producing more than one article from a single search is not reprehended, which is a common situation and certainly increases the risk of similarity between texts, the basic issue is to distinguish more precisely the situations where there is only a mere oversight in the treatment of the scientific text from those really driven by academic opportunism. Even if we, researchers are more interested in the ideas we transmit than in the literary qualities presented in our articles, the editorial practice of detection of similarity being settled will certainly impose new standards (and challenges) for authors and scientific journal editors.

In this issue, we published three articles presented at the 8th Ibero American Academy of Management (IAM), held in December 2013 at FGV-EAESP: "Teoria institucional e modos de entrada de multinacionais de países emergentes", "Internationalization of Brazilian franchise chains: a comparative study" and "Strategies for superior performance in recessions: pro or counter-cyclical?", and other five original articles.

Completing this issue, we have the essay "(Re)apresentando a teoria da gestão comparativa", by Rafael Borim-de-Souza and Andréa Paula Segatto; a book review of "*The idea-driven organization: unlocking the power in bottom-up ideas*", by Alan G. Robinson and Dean M. Schroeder; and recommended readings on the fascination with new technologies and risk management in supply chain.

Have a good reading!

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