

Against Plagiarism: A Guide for Editors and Authors

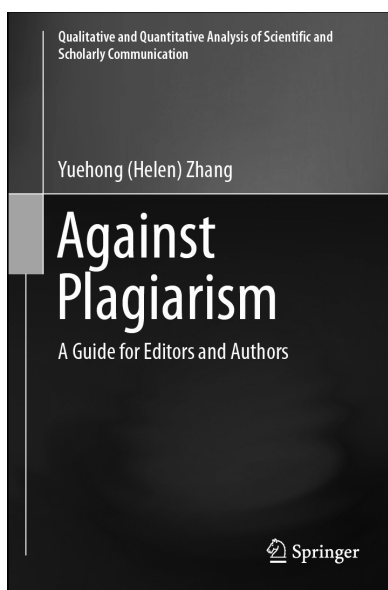
Yuehong (Helen) Zhang, Springer, 2016, ISBN-13: 978-3-319-24158-6

An offer to review a book covering a topic that is of research and personal interest of mine (I used to be a research integrity editor in the *Croatian Medical Journal* and the President of Croatia's national *Committee for ethics in science and higher education*), was, actually, an easy sell. Plus, I received both the hardcover and the electronic versions of the book to ease the review process! This being the first book in the series "Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of Scientific and Scholarly Communication" (<http://www.springer.com/series/13902>) made my inner research integrity radar all tingly with expectation.

Against Plagiarism is a book of 162 pages, divided into 3 parts (General Plagiarism Issues; Discipline-specific Issues; and What to Do About It) and 11 chapters, written by Yuehong (Helen) Zhang, a longtime (chief) editor of the *Journal of Zhejiang University-SCIENCE A/B & FITEE*. The book exists due to a series of events that followed the author's report in *Nature* about how many journal submissions were plagiarised.¹ Those events, as I read them, are universal for the book's author and editors/whistleblowers dealing with scientific misconduct. On one hand they are "believe-it-or-not" stories. On the other hand they are somewhat similar to the 5 steps of grieving:

1. *denial* of a topic's existence by the policy makers before publication;
2. *anger* of the policy makers (usually with the messenger, not the message);
3. *bargaining* – an *uproar* of interest, inquiry, and scrutiny as they try to come to terms with this "staggering" (to use an adjective used by the author to describe the amount of plagiarism detected) fact from the original publication);
4. *depression* – I can only hope of the ones caught plagiarising; and, finally, the best possible post-publication outcome
5. *acceptance*, ie policy change.

The book is not an easy read, partly because it is a combination of the author's narrative (introductions to chapters and her experiences), and republications of several published surveys (on plagiarism detection, differences between journals and fields), case-studies [of how to (not) deal with plagiarism], and conference papers all with their own appendices. There were often times when I had to



use the electronic version of the book to better see the details of graphs and pie-charts on my desktop monitor. Some of these experiences, although from China (and specificities/oddities of the relationship towards plagiarism notwithstanding), are universal. The final part of the book "What to do about it", is especially interesting as it shares the experience of a "top-to-bottom" governmental approach to questions of research integrity and the experience of the usage of CrossCheck at the author's journal.

For guidance on how to deal with (suspected) plagiarism, the author exemplifies the importance of rules of conduct and, rightfully, praises the work of various advisory bodies, such as the

COPE (Committee of Publication Ethics), EASE (European Association of Science Editors), WAME (World Association of Medical Editors), and CSE (Council of Science Editors), as well as reprints two of COPE's and their own journal's decision-making charts. The most interesting portion of the book is the description of the "anti-plagiarism policy of *Journals of Zhejiang University-SCIENCE* as it describes the types of plagiarism they typically encounter and their "remedies".

As I mentioned earlier, this book is not an easy read, but it delivered on its unspoken promise to my peaked interest. Large parts of this success are the practical lessons for authors and editors. How fortunate to find the author shares my own views on the roles of education and sanctions for research misconduct, as well as the journal editors having "a key role in maintaining and ... raising standards of ... research and publication ethics". Our own thoughts sound so self-affirming and credible when written by someone like-minded!

Finally, this book is not an exhaustive resource of all things "Plagiarism", nor does it claim to be, so do not expect to have all aspects of plagiarism covered or all questions answered.

References

- 1 Zhang YH. Correspondence: Chinese journal finds 31% of submissions plagiarized. *Nature* 2010;467(9):153.

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