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When Other Authors Plagiarize Your Work, Will the Journal Stand with You?*

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Commentary

Most honest researchers devoted to scientific truth and research integrity in support of trustworthy published literature assume that publishers will retract publications with plagiarism when reported to them. This belief rests on the shared understanding of the scientific community as a reputation economy in which cheating with plagiarism and/or assisting plagiarists by publishing their theft of intellectual property leads to a loss of credibility for the journal. Some believe that it is only less reputable journals which delay, disregard, or deny complaints even in the presence of clear evidence proving the plagiarism. Others believe that the publishers of more reputable journals, especially where the original work was published, will influence the plagiarists' publisher to adhere to publishing ethics that require retraction of the plagiarizing work. Such a code of conduct would seem sensible, as the siphoning of citations away from the victim's publication to the perpetrator's publication, also harms the impact factor of the journal in which the original work appeared. However, in practice, plagiarists can publish their thievery even in presumably reputable journals, as colleagues at Brain Health Alliance (BHA) working on the PORTAL-DOORS Project (PDP) have observed over the past decade while seeking to correct and retract the plagiarism of their work published in the scientific literature.

In 2007, *IEEE Transactions on Information Technology in Biomedicine* published C. Taswell (2007), which described the growing need for better data and metadata management in science, a set of design principles to guide such management, and a data interoperability, exchange and messaging protocol that supported those principles. In 2010, *MDPI Future Internet* published C. Taswell (2010), which reported further refinements of the design of the software infrastructure, including the hierarchically distributed mobile metadata (HDMM) architectural style, which balanced the need for data integrity and the value of distributing data across multiple servers in a networked cyberinfrastructure system. Since then, BHA has continued to develop and improve the free and open source Nexus-PORTAL-DOORS-Scribe (NPDS) cyberinfrastructure (Craig, Bae, et al. 2016; Choksi and C. Taswell 2020; Athreya et al. 2023) available at PDP-DREAM Software.

In 2016 unfairly in violation of publishing ethics, *Nature Scientific Data* published "The FAIR Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management and Stewardship" by Wilkinson *et al.* which presented a paraphrased version of a subset of the collection of PDP, HDMM, and NPDS principles previously published by Taswell almost a decade earlier. The Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarism was published without citation of any of the original literature published by Taswell, without discussion of a plan to support the principles with software, and without disclosure of the conflicts of interest between authors and editors involved in the matter. Springer-Nature published this plagiarism by Wilkinson *et al.* in violation of publishing ethics and its own advertised policies that prohibit plagiarism, that require disclosure of conflicts of interest, and that require *due diligence* for discussion and citation of original sources from previously published literature. In Craig, Ambati, et al. (2019), a team of diligent scholars analyzed and detailed the concept mappings with the equivalent paraphrases for all of the so-called FAIR-branded principles that were plagiarized by Wilkinson *et al.* from the original collection of PDP, HDMM, and NPDS principles published by Taswell (see itemized listings in Tables III to VI) and concluded that Wilkinson *et al.* failed to innovate in any way or introduce any new concept other than rebranding Taswell's collection of principles with the new acronym *FAIR* for their so-called "FAIR Principles".

The Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarists cannot feign ignorance of Taswell's previously published work because 6 of the 53 co-authors, including Michel Dumontier who continues to claim to be the "co-founder of the FAIR Principles", attended the 2009 W3C HCLS Face-to-Face Meeting where Taswell spoke with them in person when he gave a featured presentation based on the data management cyberinfrastructure system from the PORTAL-DOORS Project. Honest scientists and ethical researchers devoted to truth, integrity and stopping the current plague of plagiarism and misconduct in science, (ie, those who have taken the time to read the historical record of published literature related to this matter of the Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarism case), have not yet reported any comprehensive collection of principles published prior to the collection, analysis and discussion by C. Taswell (2007) and C. Taswell (2010). If and when such a *hidden gem* can be found in the scientific literature, then Taswell and colleagues will cite and discuss that work published in 2006 or earlier.

Moreover, as part of the Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarism case report published by IEEE, Craig, Ambati, et al. (2019) extended Taswell's original collection of PDP, HDMM, and NPDS principles with the addition of the *equivalent entities* principle as a novel principle necessary for data and metadata management to prevent plagiarism. Craig, Ambati, et al. (2019) called the new consolidated collection of principles the DREAM principles for the phrase *Discoverable Data with Reproducible Results for Equivalent Entities with Accessible Attributes and Manageable Metadata*. The omission of an equivalent entities principle by Wilkinson *et al.* in their FAIR-branded principles remains a fundamental flaw in

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their collection that enabled them to plagiarize with *willful disregard* of the historical record of published literature, and thus, to contradict both fairness in the sense of citational justice (C. Taswell 2022) and also FAIRness in the sense of their own interpretation of the acronym FAIR. Simply stated, the Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarists, including Michel Dumontier, do not practice what they preach.

Craig, Athreya, et al. (2023) applied their FAIR Metrics, with the recursive acronym FAIR now appropriately and *fairly* representing the phrases *Fair Attribution to Indexed Reports* and *Fair Acknowledgment of Information Records*, to evaluation of the plagiarism by Wilkinson *et al.* in order to quantitatively count and compare the numbers of plagiarized claims, novel claims, claims properly attributed to previously published work, and claims misattributed incorrectly to prior work. Carl Taswell, author of C. Taswell (2007) and C. Taswell (2010), contacted the authors of the Wilkinson *et al.* FAIR-branded collection of principles asking them to publish a correction for their omission of citation. When they failed to respond appropriately (see discussion of *mis-information, dis-information, anti-information and caco-information* by S. K. Taswell, Athreya, et al. (2021)), Taswell sought redress from their academic institutions and the publishers of both the plagiarizing pieces at *Nature Scientific Data* and the original articles at *IEEE Transactions on Information Technology in Biomedicine* and *MDPI Future Internet*. But none of the universities or publishers have addressed the matter (C. Taswell 2024; C. Taswell 2025a; C. Taswell 2025b) with any expressions of concern for citational justice (C. Taswell 2022), about the dispute (C. Taswell 2023), or for open public scientific debate of the historical record of published literature on data management and knowledge engineering. All of these non-responses to date can be grouped into one of four categories descriptively named the *silent treatment, pass-the-buck treatment, sham investigation, or kangaroo court investigation* (C. Taswell 2024). As a consequence, this case of idea-laundering plagiarism by authors has been subjected to idea-bleaching censorship by complicit editors and 'integrity offices' (S. K. Taswell, Triggle, et al. 2020) that practice the opposite of integrity. This plagiarism case has been effectively ghosted at major publishers and professional organizations as if the original body of work with numerous published reports never existed even though they have always been available freely open access online since 2007 at the PORTAL-DOORS Project.

Falsifying the historical record of published literature does not serve science, scientists, nor the public. These concerns do not represent merely a question of interactional ethics in a moral society, but result in practical real-world consequences with harm to the victims of plagiarism and to all scientists and the public because it pollutes the historical record of published literature that can no longer be considered trustworthy. Many of the Wilkinson *et al.* plagiarists and those collaborating with them by propagating the plagiarism and ghosting the original sources have received significant amounts of research funding for the express purpose of promoting the principles that they plagiarized (C. Taswell 2025b). The Frontiers FAIR^2 initiative further illustrates the non-objective, biased, and inappropriate scientific misconduct with which a for-profit publisher has adopted the plagiarists' choice of branding while seeking to charge CHF 5500 for each FAIR-branded data article. Publishers cannot have it both ways at the same time. It is not possible to claim fairness or FAIRness with any interpretation of FAIR for data, metadata or any kind of research while also abandoning respect for publishing ethics, refusing to support open public scientific debate, and failing to provide authentic fairness to the victims of the plagiarism and the history of published literature about metadata and data management that preceded the Wilkinson *et al.* FAIR-branded principles. This tolerance for and acceptance of plagiarism by major publishers (whether Springer-Nature, MDPI, or Frontiers) demonstrates the rewards that plagiarists can now reap in a broken system that has abandoned the requirement for legal and scientific *due diligence*, that has failed to maintain the past prohibition against plagiarism, and instead, that now prioritizes cartel-insider affiliation, grant-funding power, and/or corporate profits over scientific truth and research integrity.

Institutions that seek to sponsor innovation rather than imitation must require authors to search the publication history of a scientific field with proper legal and scientific *due diligence*, instead of wrongly engaging in a ghosting review (Craig and C. Taswell 2025) or incorrectly arguing a dismissive review (Phelps 2010) claiming that a research study, proposal, or opinion is the first of its kind when it is not. Honest authors must take a hard look at a publisher's history of standing with either the plagiarists or the original creators of novel contributions to the published literature. When you as an author choose a journal to publish your innovative ideas and research for which you want the recognition and credit that it deserves, will the publishers and editors of that journal stand with you if your research is victimized by plagiarism, ghosting and/or other misconduct including reverse plagiarism by competing investigators in the same field of scientific inquiry?

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