THE ETHICS OF AUTHORSHIP

A Guide to Ethical Authorship Practices for New Researchers
By Whit Whitley

ABOUT ME - WHIT WHITLEY

- PhD Student in Technical Communication and Rhetoric Program
- Master of Science in Learning Technologies, University of North Texas, 2003
- Bachelor of Arts in English Education, University of Houston, 1993
- Research interest in technical communication studies that intersect Queer Theory, Technofeminist Rhetoric, Science and Technology Studies, New Media (Web 2.0)
- In the process of learning how this all works just like you!
Every journal has a “Guide for Authors” where you can find out what style guides you need to use.

Ethics in publishing

For information on Ethics in publishing and Ethical guidelines for journal publication see:

http://www.elsevier.com/publishingethics
http://www.elsevier.com/journal-authors/ethics
DIMENSIONS OF AUTHORSHIP ETHICS

- Conducting the research
- Writing the article
- Authorship credit

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Conducting research and publishing your work is essential to your professional development and the advancement of your career (http://www.apa.org).
- Authorship confers credit and has important academic, social, and financial implications (http://www.icmje.org).
- Learn new skills
- Network with other researchers in your area of interest
- Contribute new knowledge to the field
- Because of the importance placed on publication, negotiating and determining authorship is an important part of the research process
WHAT IS AUTHORSHIP?

- Authorship practices differ widely across disciplines and even between research groups within a particular discipline.

WHAT APA SAYS

- An author is considered anyone involved with initial research design, data collection and analysis, manuscript drafting, and final approval.
- However, the following do not necessarily qualify for authorship: providing funding or resources, mentorship, or contributing research but not helping with the publication itself.
WHAT ICMJE SAYS

- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:
- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.
- Contributors who meet fewer than all 4 of the above criteria for authorship should not be listed as authors, but they should be acknowledged.

A GUIDE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

- A Graduate Student’s Guide to Determining Authorship Credit and Authorship Order by APA Science Student Council
- Defining Authorship: Thoughts on a Necessary Conversation By Marianne Evola
WHERE TO BEGIN: TALK ABOUT IT

- As a graduate student, you might feel intimidating to discuss the role(s) you would like or expect and your place as a contributing author.
- However, this can be viewed as an excellent learning opportunity that will contribute to your professional identity as a researcher and scholar.
- Most advisors/professors will be happy to talk with you about authorship and consider this a part of the student mentoring relationship.
- When a discussion on research credit is addressed early, there is nothing on the line because not much time or effort will be lost if you do not like the practices of the research group or collaborator.
- As a graduate student, it is especially important to engage in open discussion at the start of the process, particularly due to the default power differential between you and your advisor/professor.

AUTHORSHIP TOOLS

- Research Task Worksheet
- Authorship Determination Worksheet
- Authorship Agreement
RESEARCH TASK WORKSHEET

- Use a research task checklist
- Provides a basic outline of the research tasks and who will be responsible for completing each task.
- Helps facilitate the organization and delegation of various responsibilities
- Provides an initial opportunity to begin a collaborative negotiation of authorship and initial **authorship order** among the individuals involved in the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Item</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Intern___</th>
<th>Under___</th>
<th>Graduate___</th>
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<td>Write abstracts</td>
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<td>Write literature review</td>
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<td>Write DMM or ACCU protocol</td>
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<td>Checklist</td>
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AUTHOR DETERMINATION WORKSHEET

- Quantitative way to help determine authorship credit and order
- Completed collaboratively among all individuals involved in the project
- Provides an easy and clear way to negotiate and determine authorship and to clarify the expected roles of each contributor
- Facilitate an open discussion regarding responsibilities, expectations, and intentions for the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Category</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Method of Assigning Authorship</th>
<th>Contribution %</th>
<th>Initial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualizing and outlining research ideas</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Literature search</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating research design</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrument selection</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrument construction/performative design</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection of statistical analyses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection and preparation of data gathering</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation of statistical analyses</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing manuscripts/proofs</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>First draft</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Final draft</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Score**</td>
<td>**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Q = points assigned on qualitative criteria, T = points assigned based on proportion of total time expended on the task or as proportion of total pages drafted or reviewed, Q/T = points assigned partially on the basis of time spent on the task and partially on qualitative criteria.
AUTHORSHIP AGREEMENT

• Authorship agreements are forms that outline each contributor’s responsibilities, roles, efforts, and publication intent
• Provides more explicit information regarding such things as the order of authors, the ownership of data gathered as part of the project, and expectations for publication
• Facilitate discussion regarding your desire to contribute to the publication and how you envision your role and place in authorship

CHANGES IN AUTHORSHIP

An author may be added for the following common reasons:

• Project has expanded beyond the original purpose or scope
• Possess valuable expertise necessary for the completion of the project
• Needed to address major concerns expressed by a reviewer of the submitted manuscript
• A contributor to the project who originally was intended to be thanked in the acknowledgement section of the manuscript became significantly more involved to the extent that their contributions warranted authorship

Contract Regarding Publication Intent

We hereby enter into an agreement, as outlined below, regarding the publication of the project.

First Author:
Name (print): __________________ Signature: __________________
Present affiliation: __________________ Activity from: (see page 2): □
Brief description of basic responsibilities role on project:

Second Author:
Name (print): __________________ Signature: __________________
Present affiliation: __________________ Activity from: (see page 2): □
Brief description of basic responsibilities role on project:

Third Author:
Name (print): __________________ Signature: __________________
Present affiliation: __________________ Activity from: (see page 2): □
Brief description of basic responsibilities role on project:

Fourth Author:
Name (print): __________________ Signature: __________________
CHANGES IN AUTHORSHIP

An author may be omitted or credit revised for the following reasons:

- Did not contribute to the project as originally expected or agreed upon
- Graduated or relocated before a project could be significantly undertaken
- and the author’s relocation prevented her or him from reasonably or substantially contributing to the proposed project.
- Actual contributions of authors differed significantly from the originally expected contributions at the beginning of the project
- Would like to accept increased responsibility or would like to delegate a portion of her or his responsibility to other author

HOW TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

- Negotiating authorship is in most cases a professional and respectful endeavor
- Misunderstandings, authorship disagreements, and unethical behavior
- Open communication, understanding, and revisiting of expectations
- Discussing authorship at regular intervals or at major developments in the project
- Try to resolve any issues through open discussion
- Talk to faculty members to gain an objective perspective, or to receive feedback and suggestions on how you might best approach the situation
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

- Try using Welfel's (2002) model of ethical decision making to help resolve authorship disagreements. Welfel's model includes:
  - (a) defining the dilemma and alternative actions
  - (b) referencing ethics codes, laws, ethics literature, and ethical principles
  - (c) applying fundamental ethical principles to the current situation
  - (d) consulting, deliberating and deciding
  - (e) informing others of the decision and implementing the decision
  - (f) reflecting on the experience

EXCITEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

- The negotiation of authorship should be an exciting and positive experience when participating individuals demonstrate respect for each other's individual abilities and contributions.
- Authorship is the currency on which an academic career is built.