

# Plagiarism and inclusivity highlighted in new study into arts, humanities and social sciences

September 3 2019, by Simon Wesson

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A new study looking at the issues arising in publication ethics that journal editors face within the arts, humanities and social sciences has highlighted that detecting plagiarism in papers submitted to a journal is the most serious issue they tackle, something which over half of editors reported encountering.

The findings of this new research also reveal that remaining inclusive whilst addressing issues around language and writing quality barriers is the most prevalent issue they experience, as global research output continues to grow.

The report has been carried out by COPE (the Committee on Publication Ethics), which provides leadership on publication ethics and offers a range of resources to support [journal editors](#) and publishers on all aspects of ethical issues in research publishing. The study was commissioned to address perceptions within COPE that Arts, Humanities, and Social Science members may not consider COPE to be as relevant to them as to Science, Technology, Medicine members.

This primary research project was the first COPE has carried out exclusively focused on arts, humanities and social sciences disciplines. The organization is looking to explore how it should extend its guidance to journal [editors](#); something which it is encouraging is used further by journal editors in the arts, humanities and social sciences following these results.

Completed by more than 650 journal editors (not solely COPE

members), the study showed the following key findings:

- 64% of respondents encountered issues addressing language and writing quality barriers while seeking to remain inclusive.
- 58% reported detecting plagiarism as the most serious issue they dealt with, followed by fraudulent submissions (44%) and data or image fabrication (31%).
- Recognising and dealing with bias in peer reviewer comments was an issue encountered by 55% of journal editors.
- Journal editors felt least confident in dealing with data and/or image fabrication issues (24%), fraudulent submissions (23%), and intellectual property and copyright issues (21%).

There were no significant differences in the concerns reported by journal editors from different subject areas, or regionally, suggesting that many of the issues are experienced across multiple disciplines within the arts, humanities and social sciences. However, there was some evidence that Business, Finance and Economics journal editors were more likely to encounter or hear about publication ethics issues than other fields of study.

Following the result of the study, COPE urged the importance of working alongside journal editors to develop existing, or create new, publication ethics guidance. The organization is encouraging journal editors to make the most of COPE's resources available to them.

Commenting on the project, Deborah Poff, COPE Chair, added: "This research is part of a renewed commitment by COPE to increase the diversity of our services for all disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields.

"These findings provide important information about the specific resource needs of our editors and publishers in numerous arts, humanities, and social sciences fields.

"The study is consistent with the focus of topics at our North American seminar held earlier this year. In the coming months, we will continue to roll out discussion material and resources specifically focused on issues in these fields."

The research was devised in collaboration with and support from Routledge, part of the Taylor & Francis Group.

Tracy Roberts, Publishing Director for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Taylor & Francis, said: "As the world's largest publisher of arts, humanities and social sciences journals, we understand the publication ethics challenges faced by journal editors in these fields and work alongside editors and editorial boards, providing support on individual cases in line with existing COPE guidance.

"However, we know that some of the challenges faced by those in the arts, humanities and social sciences does differ to STM fields.

"It is because of these differences that we believe it is incredibly valuable to support COPE in this study. Its findings offer a unique opportunity to gather an evidence-base for the development of further publication ethics guidance specifically for these disciplines, whilst also providing the foundation for more research into this crucial area."

**More information:** Exploring publication ethics in the arts, humanities, and social sciences: A COPE study 2019.

[doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.4.1](https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.4.1)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

Citation: Plagiarism and inclusivity highlighted in new study into arts, humanities and social

sciences (2019, September 3) retrieved 25 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2019-09-plagiarism-inclusivity-highlighted-arts-humanities.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.