



Richard Holdaway <turnagra@gmail.com>

Re: Enquiry: Breach of embargo on thesis referenced in Rawlence et al 2016

1 message

Claude Hillaire-Marcel <hillaire-marcel.claude@uqam.ca>

25 August 2016 at 04:12

To: Richard Holdaway <turnagra@gmail.com>

Cc: "Lovegrove, Daniel (ELS-OXF)" <D.Lovegrove@elsevier.com>, "Barrett, Debbie (ELS-EXE)"

<d.barrett@elsevier.com>, Claude Hillaire-Marcel <chm@uqam.ca>, Travis Horton <travis.horton@canterbury.ac.nz>, David Hawke <David.Hawke@ara.ac.nz>

Dear Dr. Holdaway,

The publishing editor of QSR (Dan Lovegrove in cc above) and I went through all documents concerning the above paper. It our intention to launch a formal investigation for potential research results misappropriation in this study. Of course, we will keep you informed of its outcome.

I should mention that this paper was a re-submission of an earlier one, submitted February 12, which was declined with option to resubmit, a decision made in accordance with the reviewers' recommendations. The earlier version did not cite Johnston's MSc memoir. We are thus led to infer that any use of data from this memoir has been made in the second, published version. Also worth of mention is the fact that the same reviewers also reviewed this version.

With my best regards,

Claude Hillaire-Marcel
Editor in chief, QSR

> On Aug 21, 2016, at 14:15, Richard Holdaway <turnagra@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Dear Sir

>

> Thank you for you very prompt response. It is much appreciated.

>

> Since I sent the email it has become apparent to my colleagues and I that my first concerns were only part of the problem. If you read the paper carefully, it is clear that it is based fundamentally on our stable isotopic data set measured on the fossil leaves from Pyramid Valley. Those values are the key reference point for their re-interpretation.

>

> The ONLY such samples ever measured for their isotopic ratios were collected by myself and my team at an excavation at the site in 2008. There had been no excavation at that site since 1965 before the general application of stable isotopic analyses, and none has been allowed since. The site is covenanted and excavation is by permit and no such permit other exists, nor have the owners granted access to anyone on the paper's authorship.

>

> There is no other source for the key isotopic data than the MSc thesis obtained across the embargo. There are 9 citations of this embargoed thesis in the paper but none refers to the source of the stable isotopic data on the fossil leaves. Those are our data, used clearly by these authors without our permission or indeed knowledge.

>

> That use therefore goes beyond ethical considerations and into the realm of data misappropriation.

>

> The haste in publication, via your Opinions category supports our interpretation of events: the thesis was acquired in March; the manuscript prepared based on its data was submitted to your journal on 10 April, and the paper was published on 16 May. Could you please tell me if those five weeks are near the average time between submission and publication for a research paper? As it is the paper is presented in the format of a research paper and a reader could be forgiven for believing that it is such.

>

> And most importantly, they would conclude without question that the data at the heart of the revision of their ideas, were generated by one or more of the authors as there is no reference to its source as having been - as it must have been - from the Johnston thesis.

>

> Therefore, even if the thesis had been obtained legitimately, they have presented the data it contained - our data - as their own.

>

> Surely this amounts to a very serious breach of both ethics and scientific standards, in short it reaches beyond plagiarism to misappropriation.

>

> To summarise, and the message is very simple, the authors have presented our data as their own. We hope that your journal will uphold the normal standards of scientific decency on such matters and take the appropriate steps in that regard, as I am sure you will.

>

> Regards

>

>

> Richard N Holdaway

>

> On 22 August 2016 at 01:51, Claude Hillaire-Marcel <hillaire-marcel.claude@uqam.ca> wrote:

> Dear Dr. Holdaway,

>

> An administrative inquiry about the above case has been launched. Based on your message below, I am not sure any legal approach might be formally considered, but some ethical aspects do deserve some attention from the Journal, as far as I can judge.

>

> With my best regards,

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> Claude Hillaire-Marcel

> Editor in chief, QSR

>

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> >>

> >>> From: <turnagra@gmail.com>

> >>> Date: 20 August 2016 20:53:05 BST

> >>> Subject: Enquiry: Breach of embargo on thesis referenced in Rawlence et al 2016

> >>>

> >>> The following enquiry was sent via the Elsevier Journal website:

> >>>

> >>> -- Sender --

> >>> First Name: Richard

> >>> Last Name: Holdaway

> >>> Email: turnagra@gmail.com

> >>>

> >>> -- Message --

> >>> I would like to bring to your attention the citation of Olivia Johnston's thesis (Johnston, O.R. 2014) in Rawlence et al's paper on moa diet published recently in QSR, despite the thesis being embargoed in the University of Canterbury library until 31 August 2016.

> >>>

> >>> The submission date for the MS is 10 April 2016: the thesis was embargoed in the University of Canterbury library until 31 July 2016. Neither I nor my colleague David Hawke, who were co-supervisors on this thesis were aware that it had been made available to a competing laboratory until we saw the reference list in the published paper.

> >>>

> >>> The thesis contains data which are confidential to our research group and which are fundamental to MSS that we are preparing for submission to major journals.

> >>>

> >>> How our competitors learned of the existence of the thesis we do not know, but the release of those data to a rival group is, as you will be aware, a most serious breach of scientific ethics. The fact that the paper contains a reference to the thesis in an MS prepared 5 months before the embargo ended suggests that the authors

concerned also have little regard for norms of behaviour in such matters.

> >>>

> >>> Their paper is based to a significant extent on published information derived from our work, and now they have crucial additional information from the thesis which could well compromise our ability to publish our own research results in the manner we were intending.

> >>>

> >>> I understand completely that it is beyond a journal's ability to check the reference list for such matters but in submitting the MS for publication in your journal, the authors are surely obliged to certify that all of the data presented (and we are not saying that) and its supporting material (which is what is involved here) have been obtained legally and ethically.

> >>>

> >>> Thank you for your attention.

> >>>

> >>> Dr Richard N Holdaway

> >>>

> >>> Palaecol Research Ltd

> >>> and

> >>> Adjunct Professor, School of Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

> >>>

> >>>

> >>> --

> >>> This email was sent to you by Richard Holdaway (turnagra@gmail.com) via the Elsevier Journal Editor contact form at <http://www.journals.elsevier.com:80/quaternary-science-reviews/editorial-board/n-glasser>

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