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Confidentiality

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Confidentiality promises are widely recognized as an ethical obligation, regardless of the legal duty accompanying them... maintenance of confidentiality promises fall within editorial discretion. Jeffrey A. Richards The author-editor relationship is an alliance founded on the ethical rule of confidentiality. Confidentiality occurs when a person discloses information to another with the understanding that the information will not be divulged to others without permission. In the context of scientific publication, this rule provides primarily for authors' rights to have the information they submit to a journal, whether in manuscript form or in communications to the editorial office, kept confidential and a concomitant

Confidentiality During Editorial Evaluation and Peer Review and After Publication

Annette Flanagin

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Strict confidentiality regarding the review and evaluation of submitted manuscripts and all relevant correspondence and other forms of communication is essential to the integrity of the editorial process (see , Editorial Assessment and Processing, Editorial Assessment). Authors must feel free to submit manuscripts that contain their unique ideas and information that may affect their reputations or careers or that may be proprietary. Thus, editors and reviewers have an ethical duty to keep information about a manuscript confidential, and authors have a right to expect that confidentiality will be maintained. Policies supporting the confidential nature of the peer review and editorial

Confidentiality in Allegations of Scientific Misconduct

Annette Flanagin

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Allegations of scientific misconduct (fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism) must be considered carefully vis-à-vis rules of confidentiality. In cases of credible allegations of such misconduct, an editor may need to disclose specific confidential information in a very controlled and limited manner. For example, after a credible allegation of scientific misconduct, an editor may need to contact an author's or a reviewer's relevant institutional, funding, or governmental authority (eg, an academic president, dean, or ethics/integrity officer) to request a formal investigation. In this situation, the editor will need to identify the person about whom the allegation was made. This is best done

Confidentiality in Legal Petitions and Claims for Privileged Information

Annette Flanagin

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A number of cases in US law have served as the foundation for or have directly supported the confidential nature of the editorial and peer review process. In 1972, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Branzburg v Hayes* that a reporter could be forced to testify if, during the course of news gathering, the reporter became a witness to a crime. However, the court also noted that individual states could create their own standards with regard to a journalistic privilege (ie, a right) to keep sources of information confidential, allowing lower courts in subsequent rulings to support such privilege. With

Confidentiality in Selecting Editors and Editorial Board Members

Annette Flanagin

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When editors or editorial board members are interviewed and evaluated for a prospective position with a journal, all participants in the selection process should be reminded that all discussions should remain confidential. In some cases, a signed statement of confidentiality may be requested of members of search/interview committees. Without assurance of such confidentiality, professional reputations and the journal's relationship with influential academic and political leaders may be jeopardized (see , Editorial Responsibilities, Roles, Procedures, and Policies, Role of the Editorial Board). |