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Speeding up the Review Process Towards the Final Decision: an Ethical Pathway

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In the almost dictatorial academic scenario of “publish or perish”, the time elapsed between submission and final decision has become one of the biggest concerns of authors and their institutions. Although expectations about a new submission are usually high, publication of peer-reviewed articles demands its own time, so that only those which really bring new contributions to the subject area are selected. In fact, this selection is part of an ethical responsibility assumed by everyone involved in scientific publishing, including authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers.

JATM, as an ethically committed Journal, makes use of a review process which pursues novelty in literature, primarily by inviting renowned researchers for double-blind peer review, and by keeping editors from different aspects of aerospace technology and management in the editorial board. In spite of that, some of the ethical issues regarding new submissions are revealed right at the early steps of the review process.

Submission of a manuscript to JATM is followed by a preliminary evaluation which takes place within a couple of weeks, mainly with the aim to verify the adherence to the journal’s scope and to the author’s guidelines, not forgetting to search for possible similarities with other previous published articles, which is verified by iThenticate. Although it is not common to receive manuscripts that do not match JATM’s areas of interest, a quite expressive number of submissions are made without a careful look at the author’s instructions. Although this cannot be considered unethical behavior, it is certainly a small step from it, by revealing some contempt to Journal’s rules and causing avoidable delays in the review process. Plagiarism is, however, a much more serious deviation from ethical behavior and a significant cause of resubmission or even rejection of manuscripts.

Cases of plagiarism are serious misconduct that leads a manuscript to depart from the originality and novelty. One of the most common types of this malpractice is called plagiarism of text (Roig 2015), that is, the use of a text without properly giving the credit to the original source. Nonetheless, this kind of plagiarism can sometimes be attributed to “innocent authors” (Wager 2007) who do not realize that their behavior is not acceptable.

Some of the innocent misconducts may be related to self-plagiarism, defined as the use of phrases of your own which have already been published in Journals or Conference proceedings protected by copyright laws. Authors should be aware that, if they have transferred the ownership of an article to a publisher, they no longer can use any part of that material without getting a written permission (Biros 2012). In fact, in his guide to ethical writing, Roig (2015) has advised authors to get some basic knowledge about copyright law in order to avoid problems arising from its infringement. Other innocent misconducts commonly found rely on poor paraphrasing and improper citation or quotation, which can be easily avoided by looking at case studies available in the literature (Roig 2015; Wager 2007).

The whole process of writing a scientific article is surrounded by a simple question: what is the reason of publishing this article? If the answer falls on reasons somehow related only to personal achievements, rather than scientific progress, the motivation to

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publish that work is compromised. Slade and Tamber (2007) shared their quite provocative ideas about petty crimes perpetrated by academia, and they strongly pointed out that an article must add true value to the body of knowledge. With this in mind, articles that contribute with new pieces of information to the established knowledge and follow the ethical pathway should not perish, as they will certainly be published, with the advantage of speeding up the review process, by avoiding misconducts related to plagiarism of text and in compliance to author's guidelines. This behavior will certainly reduce the time between submission and a final decision by JATM, which nowadays takes two hundred days on average.

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