

Academic Publishing Waiver Raises Concerns

Author

Enago Academy

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[Academic publishing](#) in the United States is being compromised by a publishing waiver that authors are required to sign when writing for scholarly journals such as Scientific American, Nature, and others. Authors writing for Nature, for example, are required to sign a waiver that not only gives away any economic rights to their work but also any moral rights. These moral rights include [proper credit for the article](#) as well as protecting the work against any future alterations.

In the field of scholarly publishing, university faculty who publish their work in scholarly journals seek nothing more than proper credit for their research and protection of their reputation. An author's name should always be associated with his or her work, and said work should not be able to be altered in a way that would damage the author's reputation in academic circles. The signing of the publishing agreement with Nature goes completely against these two principles.

Nature requires all authors to sign its agreement, which includes the waiver of moral rights. The academic journal defends itself and its publishing agreement stating that the reason authors are required to sign it is so that the journal is free to publish any future corrections or retractions. If the scientific record is questioned, says Nature, the journal wants to be able to make the appropriate modifications. The journal also states that it works with authors to seek consensus before any corrections or retractions are published. Still, the signing away of moral rights could be seen as an attack on academic publishing.

Scholarly publishing is a big part of a professor's career these days. Scholars produce an enormous amount of work that is published in journals around the world. Academic publishing has great value to society as well. [Published research](#) can help to inform policy changes and even save lives. Research and the articles produced should always be attributed to the correct author and should not be altered without the permission of the creator.

The waiver has created quite a stir at Duke University where the director of the Office of Copyright and Scholarly Communication, [Kevin Smith](#), questioned the publishing agreement of Nature Publishing Group. Smith believes the waiving of moral rights is a

severe threat to the core of traditional academic values. Many countries around the world do not permit such a waiver, but in the U.S. moral rights are not formally recognized in copyright law. They are protected by other laws. Smith and surely others wonder why, then, Nature Publishing Group would require such a waiver.

University faculties publish in Nature to [strengthen their reputations](#) because of the brand recognition that the journal offers. If Nature has the ability to remove an author's name from his or her work or alter it in any fashion, the brand recognition is lost. There would be no reason for scholars to publish in any journal where waiving moral rights is a requirement. Such waivers will clearly have an effect on the future of academic publishing.

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