

EDITORIAL

Ethical Responsibilities for Authors in *The Journal of Physical Chemistry*

I recently took the step of retracting from the scientific record a letter published in *The Journal of Physical Chemistry C*, an action that I feel merits comment for the readers of our journal, as it is emblematic of a type of author misconduct that we as research professionals must seek to avoid if we are to uphold the integrity of the scientific literature. The letter in question was a publication by Fang et al., *J. Phys. Chem. C* **2007**, *111*, 1065–1070. After publication of the letter, it was brought to our attention that the paper by Fang et al., as submitted and subsequently published by the journal after peer review, included a number of figures that duplicated those contained within previously published papers by other authors and that were used without proper attribution or explicit permission from the copyright holders of record. In particular, material was used from papers by Yu et al., *J. Phys. Chem. B* **2006**, *110*, 21667–21671, and from Park et al., *Nat. Mater.* **2004**, *3*, 891–895, without appropriate citation or acknowledgement by the authors, with the result that our readers could be misled as to the origin of the data and the originality of the work as presented in this journal. I judged such misconduct by the authors to constitute a serious instance of plagiarism.

Given the severity of this violation by the authors, and in light of the American Chemical Society's *Ethical Guidelines to Publication of Chemical Research* (<http://pubs.acs.org/ethics>), I took the unusual step of requesting an editorial retraction. This entailed the following actions: (1) the full text of the letter was removed from the *J. Phys. Chem. C* web site at the ACS and (2) an Addition and Correction notice was published in the journal (in both the print and online editions) and linked to the bibliographic record of the retracted text, in order to notify our readership that the letter was retracted and should therefore not be relied upon or cited further in the scientific literature.

Let me point out that the responsibilities of authors on matters of plagiarism are delineated clearly in the aforementioned ACS Ethical Guidelines. In particular, item B.9 states that "An author should identify the source of all information quoted or offered". I regard violations of this guideline as extremely serious and decisive action, including appropriate editorial sanctions, will be taken when such infractions are identified. To do anything less would betray the trust of the many authors, reviewers, and readers within the scientific community who work so diligently to uphold the integrity of the peer-reviewed scholarship that *The Journal of Physical Chemistry* seeks to disseminate and archive.

George C. Schatz
Editor-in-Chief