

How to Write Errata, Corrigenda, and Retractions

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Errata, Corrigenda, and Retractions

Test Your Knowledge

Tips on Placement of Expressions of Time

Quiz: True or False?

1. Papers written by non-native speakers are more often retracted than those written by native speakers

Quiz: True or False?

2. Papers of authors from developing countries are more likely to be retracted than those from the world's top ranking universities

Quiz: True or False?

3. Articles that are retracted tend to be highly cited before the retraction.

Quiz: True or False?

4. After an article is retracted, the number of citations of that article decreases dramatically.

Q: What did we learn from the quiz?

Q: What did we learn from the quiz?

A: Any author can make errors.
We should scrutinize all papers that we publish.

Definitions

Errata

Errata

“ . . . significant errors in the text, abstract, or descriptive part of an article.”

Kotzin S, Schuyler PL. NLM's practices for handling errata and retractions. Bull Med Libr Assoc. 1989 October; 77(4): p. 337-342.

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National Library of Medicine (NLM)

Errata = Corrigenda

Many Journals' Definition

Errata = ?

Corrigenda = ?

Many Journals' Definition

Errata =

Errors made
during the
publication
process

Corrigenda =

Errors made by
the author

Should we differentiate between
errata and corrigenda?

Yes!

Should we differentiate between
errata and corrigenda?

Yes! They are slightly different genres.

Should we differentiate between
errata and corrigenda?

Yes! They are slightly different genres.
(They have different content and structure.)

Retraction

“ . . . the ‘removal’ from the literature of a paper determined to be sufficiently fraudulent, falsified, mistaken or not reproducible that the authors or editors act to acknowledge its invalidity in the public record.”

Furman JL, Jensen K, Murray F. Governing knowledge in the scientific community: Exploring the role of retractions in biomedicine. *Research Policy*, Vol. 41, No. 2. (March 2012), pp. 276-290.

Q: So, what's the difference
between errata and retractions?

Q: So, what's the difference between errata and retractions?

A: Retractions are much more serious for the author and the journal.

Errata vs. Retractions

“Whereas ‘errata,’ ‘corrections,’ or ‘comments,’ identify isolated inaccuracies in a paper, retractions are reserved for circumstances in which significant portions of an article are incorrect or cannot be substantiated.”

Furman JL, Jensen K, Murray F. Governing knowledge in the scientific community: Exploring the role of retractions in biomedicine. *Research Policy*, Vol. 41, No. 2. (March 2012), pp. 276-290.

Retractions are so important that people blog about them.

retractionwatch.wordpress.com

Retraction Watch

Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process

Authors retract Digestion paper for “unacceptably high number of errors”

with 4 comments

A group of South Korean researchers has decided to withdraw a paper they recently published in the journal *Digestion* because it was filled with mistakes.

The paper, “Endoscopy-Based Decision Is Sufficient for Predicting Completeness in Lateral Resection Margin in Colon Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection,” was published earlier this year (and online in late 2011) by a group in Seoul. But according to the [retraction notice](#):



We wish to withdraw our article ‘Endoscopy-Based Decision Is Sufficient for Predicting Completeness in Lateral Resection Margin in Colon Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection’ published in *Digestion* [2012;85:33–39] because it appears to contain an unacceptably high number of errors. The thematic focus continues to be relevant but the authors feel that greater caution and better judgment should have been exercised before submitting this particular article. As a consequence, all of the authors have decided to withdraw it from publication.

We're not sure what “thematic focus” refers to.



Pages

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Page

[About](#)

[About](#)

[The](#)

[The](#)

[The](#)

[Trans](#)

[Upc](#)

[Wat](#)

[Wha](#)

[Retr](#)

[RSS](#)

[RSS](#)

[Em](#)

Does the NLM distinguish
between retractions and errata?

Yes!

Does the NLM distinguish
between retractions and errata?

Yes! They are considered
completely different, as they
should be.

Another distinction

Full Retraction = Partial Retraction =

▪

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Another distinction

Full Retraction =

The whole article
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Partial Retraction =

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Examples of partial retractions

- A single graph
- A single table
- A single statement
- The conclusions from the data (but not the data)

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Review

Q: So, what's the difference
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More Info

www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/errata.html

Now Let's Think about the Big
Picture

Now Let's Think about the Big
Picture

Errors in Academic Journals

Now Let's Think about the Big Picture

Errors in Academic Publishing

Compare to Other Parts of Life

Furman JL, Jensen K, Murray F. Governing knowledge in the scientific community: Exploring the role of retractions in biomedicine. *Research Policy*, Vol. 41, No. 2. (March 2012), pp. 276-290.

Compare Journals to Factories

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Compare Journals to Factories

- Factories make things (chairs, computers, toys, etc.)
- A factory has a “defect rate”
- The industry has methods and policies to deal with defects.
- Factory managers try to minimize defects, but they don’t expect to eliminate them.

Compare Retractions to Crime

When retraction rates go up, it may be that errors have actually increased . . .

Compare Retractions to Crime

When retraction rates go up, it may be that errors have actually increased, or it may be that we are just identifying more errors.

Compare Publishing to Computer Programming

Computer programmers have to protect their code from malicious attacks and accidental bugs.

Compare Publishing to Computer Programming

Computer programmers have to protect their code from malicious attacks and accidental bugs. Likewise, researchers must test published data for accuracy and watch for errors.

In factories and computer programming, methods and policies for minimizing errors are well-established.

Summary

In factories and computer programming, methods and policies for minimizing errors are well-established.

In academic research, they are newly established and still developing.

General Guidelines

Compare the example texts after
the workshop handout

Grammar Review

Singular	Plural
Erratum	Errata
Corrigendum	Corrigenda
Retraction	Retractions

General Guidelines

- Label the notice with the correct word from the chart

General Guidelines

- Be sure that the erratum or retraction is on a numbered page of the journal so that it can be properly cited and included in databases.

General Guidelines

- If the journal includes a print edition, the erratum or retraction should be printed in a subsequent issue, not just included on the website.

General Guidelines

- When an author finds the article electronically, the fact that the erratum or other notice exists should be clear in every location on the website: table of contents, abstract, full text, etc.

General Guidelines

- In the electronic form, links should be available BOTH from the article to the erratum or retraction AND from the erratum or retraction back to the article.

General Guidelines

- Even if the journal is not open access, the erratum or retraction should be freely accessible to the public.

General Guidelines

- If the consequences of the error may cause serious harm (such as errors in drug dosages), the editor can contact the major databases to speed the process of correcting the database records.

The Effect of Retraction Takes One Year

- Some authors download the article before retraction.
- Some authors use the PDF file instead of the XML format.
- Some journals put the retraction notice behind the paywall!

The Effect of Retraction Takes One Year

How to learn about retractions behind the
paywall (in biomedical science)

The Effect of Retraction Takes One Year

How to learn about retractions behind the
paywall (in biomedical science)

“Finding of Scientific Misconduct” in the *NIH
Guide for Grants and Contracts*

Special Note for Manuscript Editors

Special Note for Manuscript Editors

When reviewing the accuracy of the reference list, any cited article that has a retraction notice should be referred to the journal editor.

Author Guidelines

1. Authors must check every paper in their reference list to determine whether it has been retracted.

Sox HC, Rennie D. Research misconduct, retraction, and cleansing the medical literature: lessons from the Poehlman case. *Ann Intern Med*. 2006 Apr 18; 144(8): p. 609-13.

As cited in

Neale AV, Northrup J, Dailey R, Marks E, Abrams J. Correction and use of biomedical literature affected by scientific misconduct. *Sci Eng Ethics*. 2007 Mar; 13(1): p. 5-24.

Author Guidelines

2. Authors who discover that their previously published article cited a study that was later retracted must submit a correction to the journal in which they published.

Sox HC, Rennie D. Research misconduct, retraction, and cleansing the medical literature: lessons from the Poehlman case. *Ann Intern Med*. 2006 Apr 18; 144(8): p. 609-13.

As cited in

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How Retractions, Errata, and Corrigenda Are Denoted in Databases

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Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) keywords



How Retractions, Errata, and Corrigenda Are Denoted in Databases

Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) keywords

- RETRACTION OF PUBLICATION: Added to the retraction notice.
- RETRACTED PUBLICATION: Added to the paper that was retracted.

How is this useful?

- Search the PubMed database to view examples of retraction notices and retracted articles
- Notify readers that a paper has been retracted

How to Write Errata and Corrigenda

Erratum parts

- The complete bibliographic information for the corrected article
- An explanation of the error and the correction of the error

Corrigendum parts

- The complete bibliographic information for the corrected article
- An explanation of the error and the correction of the error

Corrigendum parts

- The complete bibliographic information for the corrected article
- An explanation of the error and the correction of the error

AND . . .

More corrigendum parts

- Acknowledgement of the person who helped find the error(s)
- Citation of any articles related to the correction, along with a standard reference list

Still more corrigendum parts

- Explanation of the correction, whether brief or extensive
 - Brief errors can be mentioned along with the corrected form
 - In the correction of an entire figure or table, only the erroneous parts need to be listed, along with a complete revised figure or table

How to Write Retractions

Editors' retraction errors

1. prefer not to issue retractions without author permission
2. fail to properly investigate or defend allegations of misconduct due to lack of resources

Editors' retraction errors

3. routinely issue ambiguous retraction notices (or none at all)
4. adhere poorly to established ethical guidelines for retractions

Editors' fears

- 1. Accidentally retract a paper without real errors
- 2. Get sued (lawsuits in court)
- 3. Waste time

Solution?

Some journals have a “halfway” category

Good paper



“Questionable” paper



Retraction

Solution?

No!

Good paper



“Questionable” paper



Retraction

Solution?

No!

Why?

Solution?

No!

Why?

There are only three options in MEDLINE:

1.retraction

2.partial retraction

3.regular paper

What happens to a
“questionable” paper?

What happens to a
“questionable” paper?

Nothing. It appears to be a normal,
valid paper in MEDLINE.

Solution?

Let the university or government agency or funder discipline the authors.

Solution?

Let the university or government agency or funder discipline the authors.

No.

Solution?

Let the university or government agency or funder discipline the authors.

No. The paper will not be retracted in MEDLINE and other databases unless the author or journal editor-in-chief retracts the paper.

Why are retractions important, despite the risks?

1. Protect patients
2. Save researchers' time and money
3. Keep the public trust

Furman JL, Jensen K, Murray F. Governing knowledge in the scientific community: Exploring the role of retractions in biomedicine. *Research Policy*, Vol. 41, No. 2. (March 2012), pp. 276-290.

How to protect journals and academic societies from legal problems

COPE guidelines on retractions

Included at the end of the workshop handout

How to Write Retractions

Retraction parts

- Bibliographic information for the retracted paper and how to cite the retraction notice.
- Mention of whether the author consented to the retraction and agreed with the reason for the retraction.

Retraction parts

- Description of the nature of the error or fraud.
- Description of any content that is still considered valid.

Retraction parts

- Which authors claim responsibility for the error and which authors do not.
- Mention of one or more papers that are to be retracted. If multiple papers are included, they should be closely related, such as papers on the same general subject by the same research group.
- Extensive discussion of a retraction can be described in an editorial essay.

Questions?

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