EDITORIAL

ASPB Journals Launch CrossCheck

Plant Physiology and The Plant Cell announce this month that both journals are now offering a valuable new voluntary service to authors of articles submitted to either journal for review.

CrossCheck, a service developed by CrossRef* and powered by iThenticate**, is software that compares an article to a database of previously published articles to detect possible cases of plagiarism or republished research. It flags passages that a submitted journal article shares in common with previously published material. In addition to plagiarism of other people’s works, there is the issue of self-plagiarism, which is a problem for copyright in publishing. The ASPB journals believe that CrossCheck offers corresponding authors an easy way of identifying such problems, which are usually completely unintentional.

Both journals are offering corresponding authors the option to run the CrossCheck analysis on their own, during the submission process, while ensuring the confidentiality of CrossCheck results. ASPB will pay all fees, but neither the editors nor staff will view or have any knowledge of the reports. In choosing to set the system up this way, the journals are reinforcing their long-standing practice of assuming the integrity of authors until it is shown otherwise. ASPB, as publisher of The Plant Cell and Plant Physiology, continues its mission to educate (rather than monitor) the author community, a charge it has taken most seriously since the implementation in 2003 of its Ethics in Publishing series (www.aspb.org/publications/ethics.cfm), which outlines its expectations for authors, editors, referees, and journal staff and its procedures and processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

Here’s how CrossCheck will work:

- An author can choose to run CrossCheck by checking a box during submission of his or her manuscript to Bench-Press, the peer review system used by the ASPB journals. The author will not need a separate CrossCheck user name and password.
- The software will compare the text to the database of previously published articles. In a few minutes, an e-mail will be sent to the author with a link to the results. The results will be color-coded to aid the author’s interpretation of the results, with the highest-overlap document shown first. Manuscripts can be compared side by side with published articles.
- The results will show what text, if any, has been duplicated, but the system is not able to provide a decision on whether the amount or character of the duplication makes it inappropriate. If, for example, directly quoted material is properly referenced, the duplication may be acceptable. The author will need to analyze the results.
- If an author is uncomfortable with the extent of text flagged as duplicative, he or she can withdraw the article and adjust the text such that it no longer represents a direct duplication of other work. Alternatively, an author can opt to proceed with peer review.
- iThenticate will provide customer support to journal authors. ASPB will pay all associated fees.
- No one other than the submitting author will know the results of the CrossCheck analysis.

*CROSSREF connects users to primary research content via a cross-publisher citation linking system based on DOIs (digital object identifiers) that allows a researcher to click on a reference citation on one publisher’s platform and link directly to the cited content on another publisher’s platform (www.crossref.org).

**IThenticate, developed by iParadigms, powers not only CrossCheck, but also TurnItIn, the software that checks student papers for plagiarized material.

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