

IFLA/IPA Joint Statement on *Retraction or Removal of Journal Articles from the Web

This IFLA/IPA joint statement lays down the consensus on best practices with respect to article retraction or removal from online editorial databases with special reference to learned journals.

1. Observing that it is a general principle of scholarly communication that the Editor of a learned journal is solely and independently responsible for deciding which of the articles submitted to the journal shall be published.
2. Noting that in making this decision the Editor is guided by the policies of the journal's editorial board and constrained by such legal requirements as shall then be in force regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism.
3. Acknowledging the importance of the scholarly archive as a permanent historic record of the transactions of scholarship.
4. Recognizing the role of libraries, in particular legal deposit libraries, as custodians of the published record, even when this record has later been modified.
5. Acknowledging that the means by which articles are retracted or removed and preserved will depend on the technology infrastructure of individual publishers

IFLA and IPA agree on the following principles as best practice:**

Articles that have been published shall remain extant, exact and unaltered as far as is possible.

However, retraction or removal of a published article may occur under exceptional and rare circumstances such as:

6. Infringements of professional ethical codes, such as multiple submission, bogus claims of authorship, plagiarism, fraudulent use of data, or the like.
7. Legal limitations upon the publisher, copyright holder or author(s).
8. The identification of false or inaccurate data that, if acted upon, would pose a serious health risk.

Even in these rare circumstances, retraction is highly preferable to removal.

IFLA and IPA further note that:

In order to preserve the historical record:

9. Libraries may continue to store articles retracted or removed from the published database and provide appropriate access in accordance with best practice.
10. At a minimum, publishers shall retain within the appropriate database the bibliographical citation of retracted or removed articles, the abstract, and the date of and reason for retraction or removal, with a link to the full text in the archive or (at least) to information about how to obtain the full article from the archive.
11. Publishers should make available upon request copies of the retracted or removed material to libraries that wish to keep a record for archival purposes.
12. In all cases the official archive of the publisher should retain all article versions, including retracted or removed articles.

Approved by the IFLA/IPA Steering Committee at its meeting in Montreal on 26 April 2006

*Retracted articles remain electronically accessible, but are clearly labeled as retracted or withdrawn and are linked to a retraction statement. Removed articles are removed from the publicly accessible database and are not electronically accessible, but the citation to the removed article does remain accessible.

**One example of such practices, produced by the U. S. National Library of Medicine can be found at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/errata.html>