

FW: CDIO Papers in Question

Morteza Shirkhanzadeh

Sent: September 23, 2013 1:20 PM

To: zuber@mit.edu

Cc: Doris R Brodeur [dbrodeur@MIT.EDU]

Dear Vice-President Zuber,

I am forwarding to you my recent communications with Dr. Brodeur concerning plagiarized materials and the academic integrity of the CDIO website. Dr. Brodeur was presented with extensive examples of blatant plagiarism in at least three published papers that were accepted through the CDIO conference in 2006 and 2007. Unfortunately, she has failed to adequately address these concerns. I think it would be more appropriate if a committee without conflict of interest and familiar with MIT publication ethics conducted an objective and thorough evaluation of all relevant information.

I bring my allegations to you in good faith and I believe that it is the publisher's responsibility to adhere to the accepted ethical standards. It is the publisher's responsibility to correct the misleading materials for the readers and acknowledge the authorship of real authors.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mort Shirkhanzadeh

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From: Morteza Shirkhanzadeh

Sent: September 8, 2013 5:06 PM

To: Doris R Brodeur

Cc: Johan Malmqvist; hugo@ucalgary.ca; svante@isy.liu.se; Edward F Crawley; zenon.pudlowski@wiete.com.au; jgaywood@liv.ac.uk

Subject: RE: CDIO Papers in Question

Dear Dr. Brodeur,

Thank you for your note.

As you have pointed out, these papers were reviewed by the CDIO Conference Committees in 2006 and 2007 and met the 'criteria' for inclusion in the conference. However, at the time there were no established ethical guidelines or specific instructions for the reviewers to reject papers that violated publication ethics. And now, 6 months after I made you aware of the extensive examples of blatant plagiarism and data fabrication, you are essentially informing me that once papers have been accepted by the CDIO Conference Committees, you don't have a separate review process to remove the papers. This is unacceptable. You could have informed me 6 months ago that you did not have a separate mechanism for reviewing and removing such misleading papers.

It is alarming that though you were provided with numerous glaring examples of cut-and-paste plagiarism in multiple publications, you failed in your note to give any expression of concern about the violation of ethical expectations, as if you are unaware of the basic ethical standards for publishers.

There should be a separate process for reviewing these publications because they were accepted without sufficient attention having been paid to their misleading contents. There is a need for a proper review to correct the misleading records for the readers. I think it would be more appropriate if a committee without conflict of interest and familiar with MIT publication ethics conducted a thorough evaluation of all relevant information.

Below are my specific comments:

My concerns are mischaracterized. The main concern is about plagiarism and data fabrication. Large sections in these papers have been lifted from various sources, including an article by Brian Kates in the Boston Globe, Fred Erisman's essay, and many others. The materials lifted have been then cosmetically altered and repackaged in the CDIO papers as new ideas without attribution and quotation.

It is utterly untrue that the author included all the relevant sources in one or two 'global citations'. Materials lifted are extensive and have been used in the CDIO papers without attribution at all times. There is no mention of real authors anywhere in the papers in any form. What global citations!? It is not accidental that the author has consistently altered the text in multiple publications and simultaneously eliminated the real authors. The intent is abundantly clear. A careful reader can detect pieces of original text sticking out of these articles. Others rushing to include papers in a CDIO conference without proper instructions will not, and that is how reviewers were misled multiple times in 2006, 2007, and now in 2008 as well.

There is a reckless disregard for preserving the integrity of the original literary work. You will note, for example, that the author has lifted large pieces of the Fred Erisman's essay (Weber-Contemporary West, Vol. 11.2, 1994) by destroying and mutilating the original literary work simply in order to prepare one more paper for the CDIO conference. Plagiarism is not a victimless crime. Vandalism and mutilation of an original literary work and then literally moving the mutilated parts to the CDIO website for the purpose of gaining prestige and reward is by any standards unethical. So, yes the academic integrity of your website will be questioned if there is no expression of concern. The CDIO papers should be corrected and the authorship of the real authors should be acknowledged.

There is another CDIO paper from the same author with similar problems. I have sent my comments to Janet Gaywood, University of Liverpool, UK, and there may be more:

"The Art of Engineering-Its Place in Engineering Education", 4th International CDIO Conference - Active Engineering Education, University College Ghent (Hogeschool Gent) Belgium, June 16-19, 2008, 18 pages.

It would therefore appear that there has been a pattern of abuse of the publishing system that so far has not been taken seriously. Given this consistent pattern, one would expect that a credible committee would review all the CDIO papers written by this author, not only four of them. One may even argue that a thorough investigation should be conducted to look into all the author's publications in order to appreciate the scale of the problem.

2. Figures taken from online sources in many cases have copyrights. The sources are not

acknowledged and copyrights are violated. The author has constructed Figure 2 of the second article by taking information from the website of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)) without giving any reference to the original source. In addition, data are made up to construct the last part of the flight profile. The author claims that time was "measured" in seconds. In reality, the author did not do the measurement and there is no recorded data from NTSB to construct the last part of the flight profile. According to NTSB report, "FDR and CVR stopped recording at 0150:36.64 and 0150:38.47, respectively." I fully agree with you that the main point of the CDIO Conference is to give the intended audience some ideas of how to incorporate historical events into engineering courses. But historical events should not be distorted by making up data that were not measured. What are the "specific learning outcomes" of incorporating distorted historical events using fanciful data and analyses? Misleading information should be corrected for the readers.

3. I don't agree with the view that "the papers are closer to lecture notes than research publications." These papers are clearly publications. We can argue about their quality but we should not diminish the seriousness of the issue by calling the published papers anything else. The author, the institution and the funding agencies, all considered these papers to be publications. They are listed as publications. It is also important to note that the last paper in your list is published in the World Transactions on Engineering and Technology Education (WIETE), Volume 5, Number 2, pp. 345-348. I have written to Zenon Pudlowski, director of WIETE and he thinks that the issue appears to be "a very serious matter".

4. It is true that the CDIO conferences have a "specific audience". But the misleading papers are published on your website and are widely available to many readers with interest in education. Therefore, it is the publisher's responsibility to correct the records for the readers and for the potential buyers of the proceedings on CDs.

Sincerely,

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