

Authorship guidelines for Vasishth Lab

Esther Sommerfeld & Rukshin Shaher

Institute for Linguistics

University of Potsdam, Germany

[For comments or suggestions, contact vasishth@acm.org]

1. Decision on authorship and author order

- at the beginning of a project a tentative decision should be made (by everyone involved) on
 - who will be included as an author (listing their expected contributions), i.e. authorship credit
 - what the order of authors will be (according to expected amount of contribution), i.e. authorship order
- this early agreement can be renegotiated if necessary (for example if amount of contribution changes, new people get involved, substantial revision of manuscript becomes necessary before acceptance for publication), but all the authors need to agree on
 - change of author order
 - new additions to author list

Comment:

This agreement could be put down in writing in the first design draft for a study (which is a good thing to have anyway) so that later misunderstandings about what was originally agreed on won't arise.

2. Authorship credit

2.1. What constitutes authorship?

- only someone who made a scientific contribution to the paper can be an author (see 2.4)
- depending on the research project more than one type of scientific contribution might be required to be granted authorship, this will depend on individual agreements for each paper
- getting paid for a job (e.g. as a student assistant) does not exclude authorship if a substantial scientific contribution is made

2.2. What does not constitute authorship?

- non-scientific contributions (see 2.4)
- specifically, assistance as part of a paid job (e.g. as a student assistant) does not automatically qualify for authorship
- honorary authorship is excluded by official University of Potsdam policy (see Amtliche Bekanntmachungen, listed below)

Comment:

Honorary authorship goes against APA guidelines as well as official University of Potsdam policy.

As nice and helpful as it can be to have a „big name“ on the paper it would be unethical in our opinion to include a person as author who has not made a scientific contribution and who does not fulfill his responsibilities as an author (see below). Thus a person listed as an author should (as a minimum) have been involved in a paper by intellectual contribution (e.g. in the form of adding his expertise to the problem at hand). A good guideline is provided by Hall (1997), quoted from Sahu (2000): „A reasonable way to decide whether a contribution is important could be to consider whether, without the putative contributor, the integrity of the work would essentially change.“

2.3. Responsibilities as an author

- besides scientific contribution an author must
 - draft or critically revise article for important intellectual content
 - approve of the final version to be published

Comment:
 Guidelines taken from ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors).
 „Approval of the final version“ means that every author must take full responsibility for the content and scientific integrity of the research reported. Just trusting the others that they have done a good job and sending off an „I approve“ - email without further thought does not constitute „final approval“.

- be able to present the general ideas of the paper

Comment:
 According to Sahu (2000) an author „should be able to defend, without the help from co-authors, the work, the results, and everything else that has been included in the manuscript“.
 We believe this is expecting too much from authors with very different areas of expertise (after all that is why we have multi-authored studies in the first place) but every author should be expected to understand and be able to present and defend the general ideas and findings in the paper.

2.4. Scientific and non-scientific contributions

Scientific contributions	Non-scientific contributions
- design of the study	- writing of stimuli
- decision about / invention of data analysis methods	- statistical analysis (if done according to instructions)
- interpretation of data	
- major modifications of existing model or implementation of new model	- getting predictions of models with only slight (if any) modifications to existing models

- intellectual contribution that substantially alters the content of the paper	
- writing	- proof-reading, commenting on papers
	- technical support (e.g. getting the eye-tracker to run, providing praat scripts)
	- running the experiment
	- obtaining funds for the research
	- providing supervision in a research group
	- literature search
	- providing data

2.5. Acknowledgements

- everyone who makes a contribution that does not qualify for authorship credit should be mentioned in the acknowledgments
- it is advisable that specific contributions be mentioned in the acknowledgments (e.g. help with data acquisition , stimuli design etc.)
- everyone acknowledged should be asked for permission
- data that were acquired by someone else can only be used with permission and should be acknowledged

3. Author order

3.1. General order

- the person who contributed the largest amount of work should be first author

Comment:

In our opinion it is not necessary that the first author does the actual writing if there are specific reasons for this. But we think it would be advisable if they wrote at least a first draft if possible. The reason for this is that the first author will be most strongly connected with the paper by others (through citations under his name etc.) and therefore should have a good understanding of everything in it.

- ~~the other authors should follow in decreasing order according to amount of contribution~~
- to estimate amount of contribution time-consuming non-scientific contributions should also be taken into account
- in addition to time and effort made, the ordering can take scholarly importance of a contribution into account
- last author may be reserved for an „anchor person“ - if he / she wishes this
- students should be first authors on papers based substantially on their dissertation / thesis (for

exceptions see 4)

3.2. Other possible orders / exceptions

- if different people contribute the same amount of work to a publication, ordering can be alphabetical (or according to any other standard the authors agree on), but this should be mentioned in a footnote
- if the same people publish several papers together they might want to agree on taking turns as a first author because papers will generally be cited by the first author

3.3. Corresponding author

- normally the first author, other agreements are of course possible
- is responsible to
 - communicate with the journal the paper is submitted to
 - make sure that all authors listed agree with the final version of the paper to be submitted

4. Special cases

4.1. Students do not write a paper about their thesis topic:

- student and supervisor should agree beforehand on the amount of time given to the student to write up a paper draft
- if he doesn't write it within the agreed time, the supervisor can take over and should in turn be granted first author status
 - but the student needs to agree to publication
 - and the student still receives authorship credit

4.2. Professor provides scientific idea and approach:

- student can still be first author if he provides crucial input to the paper and makes the largest contribution in time and effort to the research (otherwise most students could never be first author on their thesis / dissertation because ideas are often provided by the supervisor)

4.3. Students provide crucially important technical assistance but „not much else“:

- first author status should only be granted if the student meets the requirement in 4.2. and fulfills his responsibilities as an author (see 2.3)
- so the answer to this question crucially depends on the definition of „not much else“

5. When disagreements arise

- if a disagreement about author credit or author order can not be solved within the group the

- concerned parties should find an uninvolved senior faculty member as a mediator
- if the disagreement still can not be solved it might be advisable to involve an ombudsman from the DFG (http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/dfg_ombud/)

Literature

Fine MA, Kurdek LA. Reflections on determining authorship credit and authorship order on faculty-student collaborations. Am Psychol 1993; 48:1141-1147.

Available from: <http://www.apastyle.org/authorship.html>

Sahu DR, Abraham P. Authorship: rules, rights, responsibilities and recommendations. J Postgrad Med 2000; 46:205.

Available from: <http://www.jpgmonline.com/text.asp?2000/46/3/205/276>

Amtliche Bekanntmachung der Universität Potsdam

Rechts- und Verwaltungsvorschriften: Nr. 2 vom 14. April 2002 - 11. Jahrgang

Available from: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/ambek/ambek2002/02/a2002-04-14-v04.htm>

Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. By American Psychologist. 2002 Dec Vol 57(12) 1060-1073.

Available from: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/>

Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice. Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. 1998

Available from:

http://www.dfg.de/aktuelles_presse/reden_stellungnahmen/download/self_regulation_98.pdf

Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Ann Intern Med 1997; 126:36-47.

Available from: <http://www.icmje.org/>

Hall T. Authorship. Without a putative contributor, would the integrity of the work change? BMJ 1997; 315:746-747.

Appendix: Excerpts from published guidelines

Amtliche Bekanntmachung der Universität Potsdam

Rechts- und Verwaltungsvorschriften: Nr. 2 vom 14. April 2002

5. Autorenschaft bei wissenschaftlichen Publikationen

Vorbehaltlich unterschiedlicher Gepflogenheiten, wie sie in verschiedenen Fachdisziplinen Anerkennung gefunden haben, sind für die Gestaltung von wissenschaftlichen Publikationen grundsätzlich folgende Leitlinien zu beachten:

Die Bezeichnung und Bewertung als "Originalarbeit" kann nur der erstmaligen Mitteilung neuer Beobachtungen oder experimenteller Ergebnisse einschließlich der Schlussfolgerungen zukommen. Demzufolge ist die mehrfache Publikation derselben Ergebnisse, abgesehen von vorläufigen Kurzmitteilungen in aktuellen Fällen, nur unter Offenlegung der Vorveröffentlichung vertretbar.

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen einschließlich ihrer Methoden und Ergebnisse müssen nachvollziehbar und reproduzierbar sein.

Befunde, welche die Hypothese des Autors bzw. der Autorin stützen oder sie in Frage stellen, sind gleichermaßen mitzuteilen.

Befunde und Ideen anderer Wissenschaftler sind ebenso wie relevante Publikationen anderer Autoren und Autorinnen in gebotener Weise zu zitieren.

Die Fragmentierung von Untersuchungen mit dem Ziel, die Anzahl eigenständiger Publikationen zu erhöhen, ist unzulässig.

Eine Ehrenautorschaft ist ausgeschlossen.

Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. By American Psychologist. 2002 Dec Vol 57(12) 1060-1073.

8.12 Publication Credit

(a) Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. (See also Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#).)

(b) Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.

(c) Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. (See also Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#).)

Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice. Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. 1998

Recommendation 11

Authors of scientific publications are always jointly responsible for their content. A so-called "honorary authorship" is inadmissible.

Authors of an original scientific publication shall be all those, and only those, who have made significant contributions to the conception of studies or experiments, to the generation, analysis and interpretation of the data, and to preparing the manuscript, and who have consented to its publication, thereby assuming responsibility for it. Some journals demand that this be documented through the signatures of all authors. Others ask for a written statement to this effect by the corresponding author as the person responsible for a manuscript as a whole and in all its details. Where not all authors can assume responsibility for the entire content of a publication, some journals recommend an identification of individual contributions.

With this definition of authorship, other contributions, including significant ones, such as the responsibility for obtaining the funds for the research, the contribution of important materials, the training of co-authors in certain methods, involvement in the collection and assembly of data, directing an institution or working unit in which the publication originates, are not by themselves regarded sufficient to justify authorship.

A so-called "honorary authorship" is in no way acceptable either in the guidelines of the best journals or in the codes of practice of the best American research universities. Adequate mention of contributors who are not authors is recommended e.g. in footnotes or acknowledgements.

To avoid conflicts concerning authorship, journals recommend timely and clear agreements, in particular when there is a large number of contributors to the findings, to serve as guidelines for resolving disputes.

Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. *Ann Intern Med* 1997; 126:36-47.

Authorship credit should be based on 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and 3) final approval of the version to be published. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.