



Apocalyptica – Ethical Guidelines

1. Preamble

Apocalyptica is committed to high ethical standards that must be adhered to by all parties involved in the publication process: authors, editors, reviewers and publishers.

Our statement of ethical guidelines is based on the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Best Practice Guidelines for Scientific Journal Editors.

2. Obligations of the editors

2.1 Manuscript acceptance and editorial independence

The editors of *Apocalyptica* decide independently which submitted articles will be published. They are responsible for the entire content of the journal, as well as for the timing of publication. They act in consultation with their respective institutes or societies. The importance and relevance of the submitted articles are paramount. The editors review submissions solely for their academic merit (importance, originality, validity, clarity) and relevance to the journal, regardless of the origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, ethnicity, citizenship or political persuasion of the authors. The editors ensure that all those involved in the publication process are fully aware of the requirements placed on them.

2.2 Peer Review

The editors ensure that the peer review process is fair, unbiased, and is concluded within the agreed timeframe. Scientific articles are evaluated by at least two external and independent reviewers. If necessary, the editors will seek one or more additional opinions. They select reviewers who have appropriate expertise in the field. They use established best practices to ensure that unsound peer reviewers are not selected.

The editors check all recommendations made by the reviewers for potential conflicts of interest, including suggestions for self-citation.

2.3 Confidentiality

Apocalyptica is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal meaning that both the reviewer and author identities are concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa. The editors will only pass on information about submitted contributions to the authors of the contribution and their potential reviewers.

Unpublished material will not be used by the editors for their own research unless the authors have given explicit written permission. Confidential information or ideas generated through peer review will be kept confidential and will not be used for personal gain.

2.4 Conflict of interest declaration & transparency

Members of the journal's editorial board who are asked to evaluate a contribution by authors, companies or institutions to which they are not neutral due to an existing cooperation or a competitive relationship, will decline the evaluation and assign it to another member of the editorial board in order to prevent conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is defined according to the Guidelines of the DFG (https://www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201/10_201_en.pdf).

The editors will not ask authors to refer to other contributions to the journal unless scientific reasons make this necessary. Authors will not be compelled to refer to contributions or offers of the editors, in which the editors have a vested interest.

2.5 Plagiarism check

Plagiarism can take many forms, from submitting someone else's work as the author's own, to copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of someone else's work (without reference), to appropriating and presenting someone else's research as one's own work. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical behaviour and is unacceptable.

For the publication of monographs, the editors use professional plagiarism software (Turnitin) that compares the original text with source texts from an extensive database. In addition, text passages that deviate conspicuously from the author's own style are checked. Editors who are confronted with valid evidence of misconduct should contact the author and coordinate with Heidelberg University Publishing as soon as possible, to initiate further checks and to agree on the publication of a correction, a retraction, or an appropriate correction.

3. Obligations of the reviewers

3.1 Participation in editorial decisions

Peer review is an important contribution to quality assurance. The evaluations of the reviewers help the editors to correctly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the article and to decide whether to accept or reject it. Authors benefit from professional criticism, which they can respond to and thus improve their contribution. Criticism should, however, always remain professional; while personal criticism is not appropriate. As a general rule, reviewers should treat authors and their work as they themselves would like to be treated.

The reviewer should decline to participate in the peer review process if it is impossible for them to conduct a rapid review. All of the following provisions also apply to reviewers who decline an evaluation.

3.2 Confidentiality

Every manuscript received for review must be treated as a confidential document. It may not be forwarded to, or discussed with, people outside the process, unless the editors have explicitly agreed upon this beforehand. Reviewers may not contact authors directly without the explicit permission of the editors.

Reviewers may not use the material under review in their own research unless they have the express written consent of the respective authors. Confidential information or ideas generated by the peer review must be kept confidential and may not be used for personal gain.

3.3 Awareness of scientific misconduct

Reviewers should look for indications that the article violates the rules of good scientific practice and report this to the editors (refer to <https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/Englisch/service/plagiat.html>). This includes, for example, if there is a clear similarity or overlap between the reviewed manuscript and another published article. Each reference must be substantiated with a corresponding reference.

3.4 Conflicts of interest

Reviews should be carried out objectively. Reviewers shall express their opinions clearly and provide appropriate arguments. Selected reviewers who do not feel qualified to review the research presented, who feel personally biased, or have a conflict of interest must inform the editors. A conflict of interest is defined according to the Guidelines of the DFG (https://www.dfg.de/formulare/10_201/10_201_en.pdf).

If a reviewer suggests to the author that references be made to the work of the reviewer (or fellow collaborators), this must be done for scientific reasons only and not with the intention of increasing the number of citations or the visibility of the work of the reviewer or fellow collaborators.

4. Obligations of the authors

4.1 Reporting standards

Authors should present their innovative research carefully and discuss its scientific significance objectively. Underlying data should be fully and accurately cited in the paper. The paper should contain enough references to enable others to cross-reference

the work. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate representations constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable.

If work and/or wording by others is used, it must be appropriately labelled or cited and permission must be obtained where required. Publications that have influenced the submitted paper must be cited and contextualised in the scientific context.

Information obtained privately, for example in conversations, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, may not be used without the explicit, written permission of the source.

The same research should not be published more than once. Exceptions, such as lectures or translations, must be agreed upon with the editors. The original publication must always be cited in the subsequent publication.

4.2 Access to and storage of data

Authors may be asked to provide their research data related to the article for editorial review. If necessary, they should make the data publicly available and keep it for an appropriate period of years after publication. For this purpose, Heidelberg University Publishing provides its authors and journal editors with the following repositories: heiDATA (research data), heiICON (research media), and heiARCHIVE (long-term archiving) which meet the storage requirements.

4.3 Authorship of the contribution

Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the concept, design, implementation or interpretation of the reported study. They take public responsibility for the content. All those who have made substantial contributions should be listed as co-authors. No unauthorised co-authors should be listed. If there are others who have contributed to certain aspects of the content of the paper (e.g. language editing or technical writing), they should not be listed as authors, but should be mentioned in a separate section, for example in the acknowledgements. All co-authors must have seen and approved the final version of the paper and agreed to its submission for publication.

4.5 Conflicts of interest

Authors should inform the editors of potential conflicts of interest as early as possible (see 2.4. "Conflict of interest declaration & transparency"). In their manuscript, authors should disclose any financial or personal relationships with other individuals or organisations, such as sponsors, that could make their work appear biased or influenced. In particular, any sources of financial support for the conduct of the research and/or preparation of the article, as well as personal or professional relationships, should be disclosed.

4.6 Fundamental errors in a published paper

If an author finds significant errors or inaccuracies in their own work, they are obliged to notify the editors or the publisher immediately. The editors will, if necessary, withdraw or correct the contribution (in the form of an erratum).

The author is also obliged to cooperate with the editors if the editor or publisher is informed by a third party of errors in a work that has already been published. This also includes the provision of proofs if these are requested.

4.7 Integrity of the images used

It is not permitted to enhance, obscure, move, remove or insert any particular feature in an image; unless this manipulation is part of the scientific argument and is labelled accordingly. Adjustments to brightness, contrast or colour balance, including to improve clarity, are acceptable if and as long as they do not obscure or remove any information contained in the original.

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