A Question of Interpretation

Question
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Solutions
I generally grant permission to any author requesting permission to quote my work. If a fact is wrong or the concept incorrectly quoted, however, I make suggestions for corrections. If these are declined or ignored, as in the scenario described, I would again contact the authors and ask them to change the item. They are free to use the material but must state “Adapted from . . .” rather than “Reproduced from . . .” After this practical attempt to correct the record, I would probably take no further action, because it’s just not collegial to refuse permission, unless the misrepresentation would lead to a scientific error. In that case, I would withdraw permission.

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New Question: A Question of Lead-Author Responsibility
The journal I edit publishes abstracts of the papers to be presented at the annual meeting of the sponsoring organization. Before publication of the abstracts, we received a letter from an individual who claimed exclusion from authorship on a submitted abstract and requested that the abstract (if accepted by the program committee) not be published. On speaking with the claimant, I learned that the disagreement was related to the order of authorship of the disputed abstract, which had led the lead author to leave the claimant off the submission, even though the claimant had been a recognized author up to that point. Does the program committee or journal editor have an obligation to hold publication of the abstract (if accepted) pending resolution of the authorship question? Should the program committee or journal editor contact the lead author and ask for clarification? If the lead author confirms the above scenario, is there an ethical responsibility for the lead author to include the claimant as an author?

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Send your responses to the new question by 15 May 1997 to Della Mundy, Kaiser Foundation Research Institute, Department of Medical Editing, 1800 Harrison Street, 16th Floor, Oakland CA 94612-3429; Telephone 510-987-3573; Fax 510-873-5131; e-mail: Della.Mundy@ncal.kaiperm.org.

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The 1997 CBE Membership Directory (to be published this summer) will be available to members on diskette or in print. Both Macintosh and PC formats of the disk will be available. To access the contents, you need Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free program that may be downloaded from Adobe’s Website. The directory will be printable and searchable, and you may use Acrobat’s features to add your own comments, bookmarks, and modifications.

Look for a form explaining the directory options enclosed with the CBE Annual Meeting Preliminary Program you received in the mail. Members will receive the print version unless they send in the form requesting the diskette. Members who want both the print and electronic versions may order both for $10.