

CLOSEOUT FOR M93120063

This case was brought to the attention of OIG by Dr. [REDACTED], a program director in the Division of [REDACTED] of the Directorate [REDACTED] on December [REDACTED], 1993. Dr. [REDACTED], a faculty member at [REDACTED] and reviewer of an NSF proposal, informed the program officer that one of the proposal's figures had been reproduced from a published article by another scientist; however, the figure was not cited to the source document. The proposal [REDACTED] entitled, "[REDACTED]" was submitted by Dr. [REDACTED], the subject. The subject is a faculty member at [REDACTED].

The subject's proposal contained 12 figures and one table. A comparison of the figures in the proposal to the other scientist's published paper suggested that two of the proposal's figures had been copied from that paper. Although neither figure legend contained a citation to the source document, the proposal text preceding the introduction of one of these figures included a citation to the other scientist's article. All of the proposal figures and the table were in a different font from the proposal text and the appearance of one figure was remarkably similar to that seen in published textbooks. None of the figures was accompanied by a citation to any source documents. One of these figures appeared to come from a publication by the subject.

In response to OIG's inquiry into the allegation of plagiarism, the subject acknowledged that two of the figures in his proposal had been taken from the other scientist's paper. He said that he had failed to provide a citation in each figure legend, but a citation to that article had appeared in the proposal bibliography. He also said that a third figure had been "adapted" from a textbook. A citation to that source document had not been included in the bibliography. He said that these three figures did not contain new information, but rather contained information that was common knowledge. He said one of the remaining figures and the table had been derived from his own prior publications. He explained that the remainder were also his own work but they looked different than the proposal text because he had created them in a computer graphics package and then incorporated them into the proposal text. OIG concluded that this last explanation was reasonable because these latter figures were simple [REDACTED] reactions illustrative of specific remarks in the proposal text.

OIG told the subject that figures copied from a source document must be accompanied by a citation to that document. Irrespective of the information the figures contain, the original author must be credited for the material. At OIG's suggestion the subject modified the relevant figure legends for his proposal to include citations to the source documents and modified the

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proposal bibliography to include a citation to the textbook. OIG reviewed and approved the corrections. To correct the proposal jacket the subject then submitted the correct pages to the program. The program officer incorporated the corrected pages into the proposal jacket, replacing the original pages that contained these figures and the bibliography.

OIG concluded that the subject's citations for three of the twelve figures in his proposal were insufficient and that his practices in this regard were sloppy and careless. Authors who find uncited material by them in another scientist's written work generally do not express the opinion that this action is acceptable if the copied material contains common knowledge, such as that found in a review articles. Such an action is even less acceptable when the copied material contains novel research data or ideas. Authors expect that a citation will accompany any copied material. OIG believes the subject has a better understanding of good citation practices and that his effort to correct the proposal was the appropriate educational experience and remedial action in this case.

OIG closed this case without further action.

cc: Staff Scientist, Deputy AIG-Oversight, IG