

Coauthorship Hitchhiking: Indicators and Effects in Scientific Development in Mongolia

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Abstract

This paper discusses about a phenomenon newly called as the “coauthorship hitchhiking,” a term we coined to denote the inclusion of coauthors in peer-reviewed publications without significant intellectual input from these coauthors to the published works. We feel that this phenomenon has become fairly common due to increasing international research interest in Mongolia as international authors include Mongolian researchers as coauthor(s) in their publications. Collaborative work is important and indeed required to advance knowledge frontier, but it needs significant input from all coauthors to be a truly collaborative research output, namely a scientific publication. Although the coauthorship hitchhiking is beneficial to career of individual researchers, it is detrimental to overall improvement of scientific thinking in the country. The authorship should be limited to those who have substantially contributed to the work and who have a shared responsibility for the results.

Key words: author, irresponsible coauthorship, collaboration, substantial contribution

Introduction

Science aims at producing new knowledge, always questioning available knowledge in the light of new data and new theories. In science, the prestige of a given researcher is usually measured by the number of articles published in the peer-reviewed journals of a high standing and how many citations these papers receive. The latter index measures the impact factor on the scientific community (Garfield, 1971). These data can easily be obtained from online international indexes, such as the Journal Citation Report, Science Citation Index, Social Sciences Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index.

The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), established in 1960 and presently a part of the Thomson Reuters Corporation maintains the largest current database on international publications from all fields of science, which can be accessed from the Internet (<http://apps.isiknowledge.com>;

http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science). It contains almost forty million international scientific publications dating back to 1945, and once every week, somewhere between twenty and seventy thousand new references are added (Christoffersen *et al.*, 2009).

Mongolia is considered by the Third World Academy of Sciences as one of the 80 science and technology-lagging countries in the world (<http://twas.org>). Although organized infrastructures for modern science were established in the country with the foundation of the National University of Mongolia in 1942 and the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in 1961, it appears that Mongolia was not adequately prepared to delve into the unprecedented venture of modern science. This can be readily seen from the general lack of knowledge, even among scientists, on how scientific research should be done and how quality of scientific output is judged. Data compiled several years ago on the worldwide scientific publishing activity indicate that the number of publications (per million people) by Mongolian researchers was one of the fewest in the period of 1996-2001, and trend was not positive (showing negative trend) compared

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