

The Importance of Permissions in Field Research

Leigh W. Cellucci, East Carolina University

Cara Peters, Winthrop University

Introduction

As editors, our goal is to facilitate the publishing of interesting and relevant cases that allow for students to evaluate real-world events and experiences. To this end, we provide the structure and process for authors, reviewers, and readers. Specifically, we publish the timeline for the review and publication process, communicate with authors and reviewers, assign qualified reviewers, ensure that permissions are submitted, and follow up when appropriate. We succeed when the authors' case study is complete and the teaching note is thorough, and the authors and reviewers have determined that this case is ready for publication; that this case promotes excellence.

There is not anything 'flashy' to our role as editors. Frankly, at times, we come across as boring, mundane, and staid. We have been called, "Not flexible enough." We accept that feedback and reevaluate our process continuously, making changes when necessary. Nonetheless, we stay the course to achieve our goal regarding the publishing of cases. We try to meet our responsibility through our performance.

An important part of our work is to make certain that an author submits the organization's permission to publish for field-researched cases. Without the permission, the case study will not be published because, as the current editors of the journal, we humbly recognize that our role is one of responsibility to all stakeholders of the journal.

We work to ensure that stakeholders are treated ethically and with professionalism throughout the review and publication process. We are accountable to

- the authors who submit their case for publication consideration;
- the reviewers who take the time and make the effort to evaluate the authors' efforts;
- the students who study the published work;
- the organizations, persons, and places that served as the focus of the case study; and
- the Society for Case Research (SCR) members who have placed their trust in our ability.

Defining a Release/Permission to Publish a Case

The release to publish a case or permission notice to publish is a document that states clearly that a representative who has the authority to speak for the organization has read the case and authorizes the case to be published. In conducting research for a case study, an author may

communicate with someone in the organization. If any communication has been made with someone involved, the case is considered to be field researched and thus, the author needs to obtain this release/permission.

According to the SCR Manuscript Guidelines, permissions are as follows:

By submitting a case or critical incident to SCR for publication, the author is verifying that a release granting permission to publish the case or critical incident has been obtained by the author from appropriate individuals or organization representatives and that this release is being retained in the author's files. An SCR editor may ask for a copy of the release prior to publication. This requirement applies to all cases and critical incidents, including those containing disguised information, where individuals from the organization contributed to the case. ([http://sfcrcs.org/docs/SCR Manuscript Guidelines for Authors.pdf](http://sfcrcs.org/docs/SCR%20Manuscript%20Guidelines%20for%20Authors.pdf).)

Two examples of releases are also posted on the SCR website (www.sfcrcs.org). The release may be straightforward and succinct, as indicated by the following Example One:

<p><i>Example One: Author Generated</i></p> <p>On behalf of (insert name of company, individual, or organization), I have reviewed and hereby authorize (insert name(s) of author(s)) to publish for academic use the case (insert "title of case").</p> <p>_____Signature_____</p> <p>Company or Organization Name</p> <p>Name and Title of Person Granting Permission</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>

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Releases may also be generated by the organization under study, as indicated by the following Example Two, edited from the SCR website (www.sfcrcs.org).

Example Two: Company, Individual, or Organization Generated Release to Publish Case

To: Editor, Journal of Case Studies

I have read the case entitled, insert “name of case”

Written by, insert name(s) of author(s)

This case is released:

without change with correction

If corrections are noted, I understand that a copy of the final version will be returned to me.

Name

Address

Signature

Edited from <http://www.sfcrcjs.org/docs/SAMPLE%20RELEASE%20FORMS.pdf>.

Why the Permission is Important

Simply put, the permission is important because it is the right thing to do. Cook, Goulet, Leonard (2006) stated that an author should get permission to publish a case because of ethics and professionalism. A release form/permission allows the organizational representative to review the facts. Did the author understand the information conveyed? Is the case an accurate portrayal of the firm? Is there information in the case that the organization does not want published?

We are referring to the concept of professionalism as it relates to our individual attributes and behaviors, operating in the context of appropriate research behavior. Keith Benson, Professor of Health Administration at Winthrop University and Board Member of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration, created the Personal and Professional Professionalism Model to characterize relationships between our behavior and our profession (Benson and Hummer, 2014, 80). This Model is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal and Professional Professionalism

<i>Personal Professionalism</i>	
Internal	External
Being honest	Demonstrating integrity
Striving to be reliable and dependable	Being on time, meeting deadlines, keeping promises
Caring about others	Treating all people with respect
Respecting oneself	Dressing appropriately for the dress code
<i>Professional Professionalism</i>	
Respecting others	Dealing with sensitive issues privately
Being an active learner	Accepting criticism in a positive manner
Maintaining integrity	Ensuring honesty and accuracy in communications and other administrative tasks, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest
Aiming for self-control	Engaging in respectful and considerate communications
Doing your job to the best of your ability	Demonstrating that you value the privilege of caring for patients and respect others who engage in this role as well

(Benson and Hummer 2014, 80) Copyright 2014 by Jones & Bartlett, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

While Benson’s model pertains to health administrators, the concepts and examples apply to case researchers as well. To elaborate, the internal perspective of professionalism relates to private behaviors such as “being honest.” This behavior is external (public) by our demonstrating integrity. Simply put, one doesn’t see us being honest until we exhibit honest behaviors such as integrity in the public arena. In field research, honesty is demonstrated by having the appropriate person from the organization give written permission for the case allowing for him or her to read the case and confirm that facts are true, accurate portrayals have been made.

Professional Professionalism refers to our behaviors at the workplace, or in this case, our behaviors as we are engaged in the particular case study research. To elaborate, maintaining integrity is the private behavior that is demonstrated by our ensuring honesty and accuracy in our communications. Case study authors are to ensure to subjects/participants that they do indeed maintain integrity by communicating the need and importance of permission and following up to ensure that permissions are secured.

On a timing note, we as editors, encourage case study authors to secure permissions as early in the case study process as possible. There is simply no need to engage in the time and effort to conduct field research only to be told, “No” regarding the permission after the work is done. Certainly, securing the permission with the caveat that the person who granted the permission may review the case illustrates the researchers’ maintenance of integrity. It is important also to

note that the Teaching Note need not be reviewed by the permission grantor. The Teaching Note is the researchers' views, based on their professional judgment. These views do not have to be endorsed by the permission grantor; they belong solely to the researchers. Moreover, the Teaching Note is not published.

Example Releases/Permissions in This Issue

Garahan, Foust, and Harmel's case, *Kitty vs Goliath*, was based on interview data and they followed the traditional format suggested by SCR. Their permission states that the protagonist in the case authorizes the researchers to publish the case for "academic use." The release includes a signature, title, and date. This was a traditional release that is used by many authors at the *Journal of Case Studies*.

The release for Joyner, Franz, and Maguire's case, *Flash Flood*, was interesting because it appeared to be one that was from a university's protocols for informed consent. Their consent form talks about the procedures for the study, risks of taking part, benefits, alternatives to taking part, confidentiality, costs/compensation, contacts for questions, voluntary nature of the study, and then requires a signature from both parties (researcher and participant for the study) for consent. Joyner, Franz and Maguire's permission raises that idea that a researcher can obtain releases from a variety of places, including the SCR website, university resources (like one's university internal review board/IRB), even from other case writers.

Tokle and Tokle's release for the case on the ISU credit union was different in that it explicitly states that the author has permission to use the name of the organization and its employees in the case and that the case can be published for educational use. Another benefit of Tokle and Tokle's permission was that they were able to retain the release from the President/CEO of the organization, insuring that they have obtained permission from the person within the organization that has authority to grant the release.

The permission utilized by Jaffke and Schultz for the *Java for You* case was unique because it clearly stated that the owner of the company agreed to release the case in disguised form. In addition, the release included a separate sentence that stated after the final set of reviews, but prior to publication, the authors would give the business owner a copy of the case and teaching note. It should be noted that, even though Jaffke and Schultz agreed to give a copy of the teaching note to the participant, the case is what needs the release, as that is what is publicly available. As mentioned earlier, teaching notes do not need a release.

In contrast to Jaffke and Schultz, the permission used by Bolinger, Tocher, and Stratton (*I Seem To Be Going From Bad To Worse*) stated that the protagonist in the case was giving his release based on the understanding that "minor additional changes may be made to the case based on

reviewer comments prior to its final publication.” Thus, these authors were not necessarily required to provide a final copy for approval to the protagonist prior to final publication.

Finally, Lloyd and Papiernik's release for *Facing Strategic Growth* was innovative because it listed a set of possible uses for their case that were much more specific, when compared to a release for publication or for educational use. Their permission stated that the researchers are authorized to use the materials in various ways: by the university, by other universities, by other educational or training organizations, in printed journals or textbooks, and in electronic formats. Their release also had a place for the participant to mark whether the case was released "without changes" or "with corrections indicated." Giving the participant a place to mark approval with or without changes builds another level of complexity into the release and gives more flexibility to the participant.

The Exception: When Permissions are not Necessary

According to the SCR Manuscript Guidelines, permissions are not needed according to the following situation.

If a case or critical incident is written entirely from publicly available secondary sources, with no direct communication with anyone involved in the case, the author is not required to obtain a release for publication. ([http://sfcrc.org/docs/SCR Manuscript Guidelines for Authors.pdf](http://sfcrc.org/docs/SCR_Manuscript_Guidelines_for_Authors.pdf).)

Three cases in this issue were written entirely from publicly available secondary sources, with no direct communication with anyone involved in the case. For example, Davis et al in *Tiger Woods Now Wears Rolex* presents a descriptive case that requires students to analyze Rolex Group's decision to endorse Tiger Woods following his scandal in November, 2009. The information presented in the case allows students to assess sponsorship opportunities by analyzing the rationale behind Rolex Corporation's decision. This information was from publicly accessible secondary sources. No interviews, conversations, or any type of field research occurred, and the names of the company and individuals are not disguised.

Similarly, Cox et al in *The Atlantic Coast Conference and Florida State University: The Economics of College Athletics* also relies on secondary research. Students are asked to recommend a course of action to the 2012 ACC commissioner based upon information the authors presented from public secondary sources. This information describes the ACC challenges and issues when Florida State University considered leaving it for another conference. As with Davis et al, there was no attempt to disguise the names of individuals or the facts of the case.

Last, Thomas presents a situation in which a television watcher learns about the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). The students are asked to consider what factors matter when one is deciding to donate to a charity and evaluate whether or not HSUS is worthy of a donation. While the name of the decision maker (the television watcher) has been disguised, information about HSUS was obtained from the secondary sources cited.

Conclusion

We encourage you to consider the research methods employed as you read the cases in this issue. The use of field research presents us with opportunities to integrate real-world events and experiences in our classroom that are personalized. That is, the personal anecdotes, perspectives, and perhaps reflections on the situation highlighted in the case may be included in the writings. The use of cases written entirely from publicly available secondary sources provides us with information that is indeed public. While not necessary to meet the learning objectives of a particular case, we could peruse other public documents and learn more about the case or discover an update regarding the facts.

Regardless of the research method selected, we expect authors for the journal to have conducted their research ethically and professionally, and we expect the same of ourselves. Hence, obtaining permissions is important for field-researched cases and key for case excellence. And, by the way, get the permission early in the research process.

References

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