What's new at the ORP?
The ORP has grown, again! We have added three new staff members. Please join us in welcoming them!
Sarah Trentacoste, RA10/COI Assistant - providing compliance support for research misconduct and institutional COI matters.
Susan Bowser, COI coordinator – Working with both individual and institutional conflicts of interest.
Danielle Fasick, Functional Analyst – Assisting with the CATS project.

Food for Thought
“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
-George Bernard Shaw

ORP is happy to announce that CATS, Penn State’s new Centralized Application Tracking System, is in development! CATS will replace PRAMS, the database currently used by researchers to submit research protocols involving human subjects, animals, or biohazards. The CATS project is being managed by a team of functional and technical analysts, who will launch the new system in phases, with total replacement by 2015. The IRB module is in development now, and is expected to be ready for use by December 2013.

The new CATS system will bring transformational change in protocol review, streamline processes for researchers and administrators, and eliminate redundancies in the application process. Researchers interested in being a part of the development process and assisting with testing should contact Laura Young at lfs105@psu.edu.

Focus on: Academic and Scholarly Communication
How well do you communicate? In academia, we excel in communicating with our colleagues, our students, and (through specialized publications) others in our field. Frequently, however, we need to communicate clearly with the public, with research participants, and/or with potential funders or collaborators whose expertise may be in a different discipline. This can be challenging, as it may be our habit to use specialized language or technical terminology – jargon — that can leave listeners or readers confused, exasperated, or even offended.

Helen Sword’s 2012 book Stylish Academic Writing (excerpted in The Chronicle Review) discusses the use of jargon by academics. While jargon may serve as “a highly efficient form of disciplinary shorthand” in appropriate contexts, it may also represent “the demon of academic hubris.” Sword offers concrete suggestions for identifying and curing cases of “jargonitis,” and explains that good writers “deploy specialized language gracefully, cautiously, and meticulously, taking care to keep their readers on board.”

At ORP, we think about communication a lot: we review the language of consent forms for human participant studies; through our Survival Skills workshops, we provide educational opportunities to graduate students that help produce clearer writing and more engaging presentations; and at our brownbag workshops, presenters often address communication challenges encountered in their research. A highlight this semester will be Dr. Richard Alley’s April 2nd presentation, “Get rid of gravity! Adventures of a climate communicator.” Hope to see you there!


To report concerns about research or scholarship at Penn State: Contact the Office for Research Protections (814) 865-1775; fax (814) 863-8699; email: ORP Protections@psu.edu; or call the Penn State Ethics and Compliance Hotline at 1-800-560-1637.
March’s Scoundrel

Obfuscation in academic writing can be found everywhere, even in retraction. Gordon Muller-Seitz of the Free University in Berlin recently retracted a paper because it was very similar to a paper published by Muller-Seitz in a different journal. The retraction notice explaining the duplicate publication states, “The authors recognize the need for a clear and distinctive conceptual framework to avoid overlapping arguments in their [two] papers.” They further note that cross-citations between the two papers were missing “due to the parallel processing of both papers.”

Source: www.retractionwatch.wordpress.com

Institutional Review Board News

If you have received approval or an exemption determination from Penn State’s IRB or ORP to conduct research involving data from student education records, please note that these records are protected by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Access to these records requires compliance to the provisions of the regulation. For more information, please visit: www.registrar.psu.edu/confidentiality/guidelines_researchers.cfm

Reminder: 2013 financial disclosures and updates are due in COINS on or before April 30, 2013. Please see our website, www.research.psu.edu/orp/coi/annual-financial-disclosure-process for more information. Click on the Frequently Asked Questions tab for in-depth answers to common questions.

Contact the Office for Research Protections

814-865-1775 www.research.psu.edu/orp

Candy Yekel, Director Sharon Shriver, aegis editor cay3@psu.edu sps10@psu.edu

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. U.Ed. RES 13-11. *Aegis definition from Thesaurus.com

Upcoming Workshops
www.research.psu.edu/training

Scholarship and Research Ethics Brownbag Series

“Get rid of gravity! Adventures of a climate communicator”
Richard Alley, Professor of Geosciences
Tuesday, April 2 12 PM – 1 PM
The Bennett Pierce Living Center (110 Henderson)

IRB 101 Brownbag Series

“Datasets and statistical privacy”
Daniel Kifer, Assistant Professor of Computer Science and Engineering
Wednesday, April 10 12 PM – 1 PM
102 Kern Graduate Building

“Boyfriends, babies, and bloodsuckers: Stories from research on HIV and reproductive health in a rural African community”
Jenny Trinitapoli, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Demography and Religious Studies
Wednesday, April 24 12 PM – 1 PM
102 Kern Graduate Building

“Using behavioral and brain imaging methods to study the psychological factors that contribute to smoking”
Steve Wilson, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Thursday, April 25 12PM – 1 PM
102 Kern Graduate Building

Research in Focus Series*

*Pre-registration required at www.research.psu.edu/training

“In my own words: Self-plagiarism and the Jonah Lehrer case”
Sharon Shriver, Office for Research Protections
Thursday, April 18 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
The Bennett Pierce Living Center (110 Henderson)

DECIPHERING ACADEMENIC

“...the best of the author's knowledge...” = "We were too lazy to do a real literature search."

"Results were found through direct experimentation." = "We played around with it until it worked."

"The data agreed quite well with the predicted model." = "If you turn the page upside down and squint, it doesn't look too different."

"It should be noted that..." = "Ok, so my experiments weren't perfect, are you happy now?"

"If we take a huge leap in reasoning, we can get more mileage out of our data..." = "Future work will focus on..."

"...remains an open question." = "We have no clue either."

www.phdcomics.com

Recommended browsing: Communication

Create your own jargon-ridden sentences at the University of Chicago’s comic jargon generator site, “The Virtual Academic”: writing-program.uchicago.edu/toys/randomsentence/write-sentence.htm

For an entertaining look at communication in the lab, check out “S**t Scientists Say”:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mnN61GpIvU