



C O P E

Offensive historical content

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community

Policy &  
perspectives

Journals, books &  
databases

[Home](#) > [Policy & perspectives](#) > [Talent](#) > [Joint commitment for action on inclusion and diversity in publishing](#)



# Joint commitment for action on inclusion and diversity in publishing

Working together is key in driving positive change within scholarly publishing



## DEFINITIONS

### Offensive

- i) causing someone to feel resentful, upset, or annoyed.
- ii) actively aggressive, attacking, hostile.

### Harmful Marginalizing Prejudiced Problematic Discriminatory

causing or likely to cause harm, damaging, dangerous  
treating a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral  
relating to a preconceived opinion or bias that is not based on reason or actual experience  
constituting or presenting a problem  
making or showing an unfair or prejudicial distinction between different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex

### Historical

belonging to the past; concerning history or past events

### Content

published output, eg journal articles



## CHALLENGES

- Scale
- Defining what is offensive or inappropriate
- Identifying what is offensive or inappropriate
- What to do with offensive content when we find it

# BMJ's categories of harmful content

## 1 Offensive language

Content that uses language that was pervasive at the time, but no longer considered appropriate or is considered harmful today e.g racial slurs

## 4 Misused content

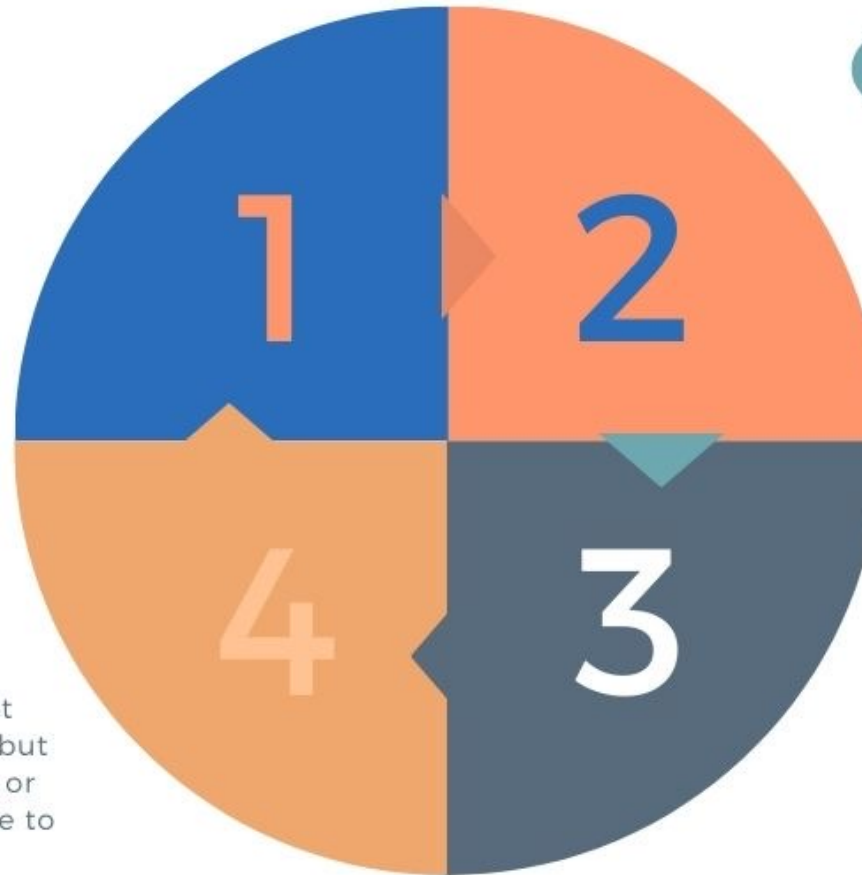
Content that is not offensive in itself, but is misrepresented or misused elsewhere to support a harmful agenda (e.g hate speech)

## 2 Offensive views

Language may not be explicitly derogatory, but the themes or tone of the article are offensive by today's standards, or may perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

## 3 Harmful science

Scientific research that has contributed to harms for certain groups. E.g Gay aversion therapy





**‘Women’s respect is a priority for us’: Journal finally retracts paper claiming women with endometriosis are more attractive**

**Journal calls 2012 paper “deeply offensive to particular minorities”**

**Springer Nature retracts paper that hundreds called “overtly racist”**

**A retraction and a retraction request as Twitter users call out sexism, fat-shaming, and racism**

## Psychological Reports

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## Race, Brain Size, and Intelligence: Another Re

J. P. Rushton

First Published April 1, 1991 | Research Article | [Find in PubMed](#)  
<https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1991.68.2.500>[Article information](#)

## Abstract

Five sets of observations require explanation. Firstly, with positive correlation between IQ and brain size whether of differences in average brain size occur such that Mongolians control for body size. Thirdly, mammals with larger brain tasks than mammals with smaller brains relative to their measures of cognitive performance parallel the differences on numerous other traits parallel the differences scientists to explain these facts.

## Psychological Reports

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5-Year  
Journal

## Retraction notice

First Published December 24, 2020 | Retraction | [Find in PubMed](#) [Check for updates](#)  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294120982774>[Article information](#)Original Article (2): [Race, Brain Size, and Intelligence: A Reply to Cernovsky](#)[View all](#)

The following articles have been retracted from Psychological Reports:

Rushton, J. P. (1990). Race, brain size, and intelligence: A reply to Cernovsky, *Psychological Reports*, 66, 659–666

Rushton, J. P. (1991). Race, brain size, and intelligence: Another reply to Cernovsky, *Psychological Reports*, 68, 500–502.

This retraction is following a review that found that the research was unethical, scientifically flawed, and based on racist ideas and agenda. Specifically, these publications authored by Philippe Rushton on the subject of intelligence and race has been rejected based on the following findings:

## How do we handle a published paper that is flagged as potentially offensive or discriminatory?



"THOSE WHO DO  
NOT LEARN FROM  
HISTORY ARE  
DOOMED TO  
REPEAT IT"

- GEORGE SANTAYANA

**OFFENSIVE**





## AVAILABLE COURSES OF ACTION

**Process** – who decides?

**Checklist:**

- Are the underlying premises or findings of the article based on discriminatory or prejudiced assumptions?
- Is the article potentially an ongoing influence on social attitudes/beliefs that are harmful to any groups or individuals (based on their inherent/immutable characteristics)?
- What are the power dynamics at play?



**RETRACTED**

### Potentially offensive content

Our journal content is part of the scholarly record and may contain concepts which may cause offence. Oxford University Press does not endorse or condone the use of this term. We are actively reviewing our policies on the inclusion of offensive language in historical content.

Please be aware that this article contains a highly offensive racial slur. The Royal Society of Chemistry does not in any way endorse or condone the use of this term. We are actively reviewing our policies on the inclusion of offensive language in historical content.



## LEADERSHIP

## Reckoning with medicine's history of racism

FEB 17, 2021



**James L. Madara, MD**  
CEO and Executive Vice President

It is a difficult and potentially perilous exercise to reckon with the history of racism in medicine. Each right

**Los Angeles Times**

OPINION

### Editorial: An examination of The Times on race, our apology and a path forward

## STATEMENT ON HARMFUL CONTENT IN ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

If you encounter any harmful or offensive language or content in Drexel University archival collections on this website, in our finding aids, or in our digitized collections in iDEA, please contact us at [archives@drexel.edu](mailto:archives@drexel.edu). Please also contact us if you have any questions or suggestions about this statement. It is a work in progress, and we welcome feedback.

Drexel University archivists are taking the following steps to address offensive language and content in our archival collections:

- 1. Updating old collection descriptions.** Drexel University Archives staff strive to use respectful and accurate language to describe all our historical materials. However, we acknowledge that language, conventions, and archival best practices are always changing, and that language that was considered acceptable by archivists in the past is sometimes no longer adequate or appropriate. When we discover unacceptable language in collection descriptions, we will update them to remove any language that could harm researchers or that is offensive to the people being described.
- 2. Flagging historical materials that contain offensive or harmful language or images.** Some materials in collections may contain offensive language or imagery. In the interests of historical integrity, we are not removing these images or words from archival materials, but we will provide a note about these contents in the item's description. This may be a note in the description of a digitized item, or a line in a collection guide that you would read before requesting access to an item in person. We do this so that researchers may decide for themselves if they wish to view an item knowing it has potentially harmful content.
- 3. Retaining harmful language in collection descriptions when it has great historic value.** Sometimes we retain offensive or harmful terms in collection descriptions for historical accuracy or to provide context for the historical significance of the materials.

## Guide to Using Special Collections at Yale University: Statement on Harmful Language in Archival Description

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### Statement on Harmful Language in Archival Description

## Statement on Harmful Language in Archival Description

Yale University aims to create archival description -- including finding aids, catalog records, and other metadata -- that is inclusive, respectful, and does not cause harm to those who interact with our collections. This includes those who create, use, and are represented in the collections we steward. We acknowledge that our existing description may contain language that is racist, sexist, colonialist, homophobic, or that uses other offensive terms that may cause harm. This language may result from archival description that has been created over the years by creators of collection material, previous stewards, or by Yale staff since acquisition.

This is a very intentional embrace of a moment of transformation, one that focuses on building a more just, equitable and resilient system.

- Alison Mudditt, CEO, *PLOS*

I have seen racism in all its ugliness in our time and across centuries. But... I have not lost faith in the beauty of human potential, and the possibilities of a world where life, health, equity, and justice are inalienable human rights. We must believe change is possible in order to bring about change. We must be willing to do the hard research and policy and narrative and advocacy work to bring about change.

- Ibram X. Kendi, Director, *BU Center for Antiracist Research*

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