

PHI's Reprint Policy and Why

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About twenty years ago, with anticipation, I opened the inaugural issue of a new tabloid about disability. The front cover was a large plea asking people to subscribe. Much to my dismay, four of the eight pages were articles from our newsletter, *Polio Network News*, with no acknowledgement to our organization. In fact, they had never asked for our permission.

I checked with our legal counsel who asked, "Do we require everyone to get permission to reprint?"

"No, we let support groups reprint without permission."

"If we want to prevent this from happening again, our organization must have a written policy."

We wrote one that reflects standard policy for formally published magazines and, today, PHI's policy is still the same. The articles printed in our newsletters, most of them original, are copyrighted by PHI and it requires written permission to reprint the material. The permission we provide also includes instructions on how to give PHI or IVUN credit.

The process is convenient, fast, and free. Requests of PHI are typically responded to within one work day. However, it is better to give our staff three work days. For details as to what should be in the request, see <http://www.post-polio.org/about/copy.html>.

Giving credit where credit is due is only one reason for our policy. I also learned in the late 1990s when we worked with a medical education company that health professionals pay close attention to the source of information, especially with the glut of information available on the Internet. We were told in a survey that many health professionals look to see who wrote or sponsored the material and based on that knowledge read, skim or pitch without reading.

As editor of the PHI newsletters, I keep a close eye on the requests to reprint, because it is an indicator of what others think is important, and it guides me in developing future content.

Another reason for insisting on prior permission and attribution is to clearly identify what is our material. Sometimes our material appears alongside of other articles that may have a different philosophy about disability or, in some cases, may actually be inaccurate. In the past, PHI has been chastised unfairly for allowing the inaccurate information to be printed. When it is clear what is ours and what is not, there is no misunderstanding.

PHI is a networking organization. As part of our mission, we have always encouraged community-based support groups and have done our best to assist their leaders and newsletter editors, freely offering our articles. The newsletters have gotten better and better, and even though they are shared nationally, the content continues to be focused on local activities and needs, and the individual survivors in the area. The function of support groups connecting on a more personal level with survivors is vital. PHI wants this relationship to continue.

I was told by a consultant after Gini Laurie died that networking organizations "don't really work." Part of the problem, she pointed out, is that people steal your ideas, you don't get credit, you lose control of the message. Some of that has proven to be true. However, PHI chose not to adopt an aggressive "business model," but to continue our networking *modus operandi*. Individuals within the community benefit, because they learn and change by doing. It also has benefited the post-polio community worldwide.

The point was brought home to me at the recent 10th International Conference in Warm Springs. I met new people who were excited about things happening in their groups and wanted to tell me about it. Little did they know that their founder had attended an earlier PHI conference and returned home armed with information and connections and with our encouragement and blessings to take what they learned and "go for it."

We still feel that way. We do not charge for our content. We just ask that you acknowledge PHI when appropriate. It is not only PHI that deserves this courtesy, but also the writers and editors of all post-polio newsletters. When giving credit for articles in other newsletters, if they reprinted the article, it is important that you acknowledge the original author, publisher, and date. Giving proper credit strengthens our partnership and maximizes our power.