Transferring Manuscripts Between Publications in Editorial Manager

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As organizations look to keep submissions within their own publication ecosystems, the need for a seamless and straightforward transfer of metadata, submission files, and review information across publications has become more and more apparent. In anticipation of rising market demand, Aries Systems Corporation has built numerous pieces of functionality into Editorial Manager (EM) in support of editorial workflows which may result in a submission being transferred from one publication to another. Iterations on transfer functionality through subsequent releases have created a robust and flexible set of options which allow submissions to move seamlessly between publications using EM as well as additional platforms.

Why Transfer?

Transferring a submission has benefits for both authors and publications. Authors have, in transfer, the opportunity to move their submissions to more appropriate publications where their work may be published instead of declined. Meanwhile, publishers can take good science and find a more appropriate home for it within their stable of publications, rather than reject it outright because it doesn't fit into the narrow area of interest for a specific publication. Both parties benefit when previously provided materials and metadata, as well as prior reviews, can be carried over so that time isn't wasted on data re-entry during resubmission.

Flexible Process

When it comes to transfer, no two implementations will be identical. To meet the needs of users EM allows transfers between publications using EM as well as between EM and non-EM destinations. The metadata for these submissions remains portable and there's no restriction (other than an author's patience) on the number of times a submission could be transferred from one publication to another. These configuration options exist at both the system level and the user-role level, allowing diversity within a publication's workflow.

In EM, transfers can occur before or after the peer-review process. This allows the Editorial Office to immediately send new submissions that won't be considered for publication to other journals. When a submission is identified for transfer prior to peer review, transferring publications don't spend time reviewing, and authors aren't made to wait for a rejection. On the other side of peer review, transfers can occur once an editor has made a decision, which allows the time and resources invested by a publication into a submission to carry over to the recipient publication in the form of the collected data and files, as well as existing reviews. How the transfer is handled will depend on the journal's transfer workflow and how related configurations are set by a publication's administrators.

Each publication enabled for a transfer workflow is configured with a selection of approved publications from which the journal sends and receives transfer submissions. Journals making the transfer can choose to give the author the option to accept the transfer, and may even opt to allow the author to choose the destination, either from the entire list of available publications or just a subset (Figure 1). In this scenario, the manuscript will be listed as rejected if the author declines the transfer.

Further administrative options allow the transfer offer made to the author to expire after a customized number of days, enabling publications to keep their queues clear if an author is unresponsive. Publications wishing to conduct transfers

Figure 1. Sample transfer submission screen in EM.

immediately configure the option to transfer a submission without asking for permission from the author. In this case, a staff member or editor at the publication is able to select any of the available destinations and send the submission, along with its files and metadata, instantly. While the publication is free to make this decision and take action, alerting authors to this potential outcome ahead of time through the publication's submission instructions or guidelines is advisable as in most cases it will prevent the author from feeling blindsided by the change in venue.

When the transfer occurs between EM sites, regardless of whether the author or editorial staff has approved and sent the transfer, the system works to ensure a smooth handoff between publications. The transfer process carries over as much data as possible from the source to the destination publication. The system will identify the corresponding author's account in the destination journal, or will create an account if it doesn't already exist. Data from custom fields and questionnaires are matched to corresponding fields in the recipient journal's workflow. Administrators can go so far as to configure custom identifiers to match fields across publications, or otherwise can opt to rely on exact text matches on the custom field's label. When the submission itself arrives, it is available to the editorial staff in a separate "Transferred Submissions" folder within the main menu. The recipient journal's staff can review it before further action is taken. The publication can push the submission right into their workflow, or if required information needed within the recipient journal's unique workflow is missing, send it back to the author to complete before review begins.

This system ensures that individual publications are in control of all transfer submissions that come through their queues. Publications are under no obligation to accept the submission, and are free to transfer them along to another publication.

Transfers occurring outside of EM package the metadata as XML using industry standards, such as Journal Article Tag Suite (JATS), in order to ensure the data will be reliable regardless of where it is sent.

Portable Peer Review

One of the more recent additions to EM's transfer capabilities is portable peer review, which has become more important as more publications begin to offer open peer review, and need to provide access to prior reviews. Transfers in EM can incorporate the reviewer's comments and ratings when configured to do so by a site's administrators.

On an EM site offering portable peer review, reviewers can be prompted with authorization questions within the review form in order to permit the publication to transfer their reviews, and clarify which information is included when reviews are transferred (Figure 2). Reviewers are asked for consent to include their identifying information with the transfer, consent to include the review in the transfer, and consent to publish the review in a pre-publication history, if the destination journal is conducting open peer review.

The transfer process will provide reviewer information from all versions of the submission transferred, but only if the reviewers have agreed to transfer their information and/or reviews to the receiving publication. The transferred information is available from a "View Transferred Information"
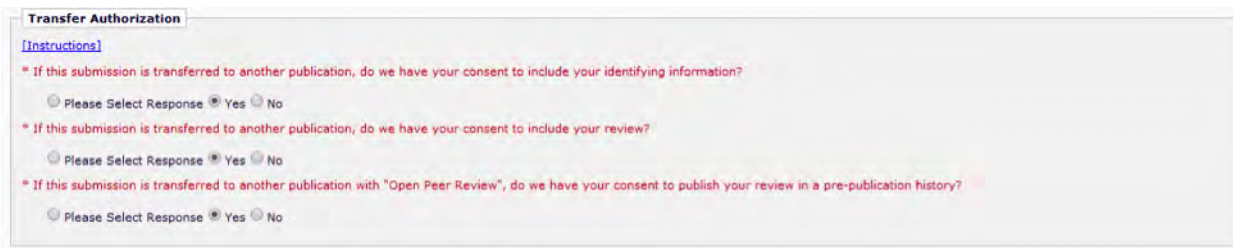
Figure 2. Sample transfer authorization screen in EM.

link, which is available to users when accessing the transferred submission. If a reviewer has agreed to transfer a review, information culled from the original publication's database is made available, including the recommendation term, overall manuscript rating, date reviewer invited, date review completed, reviewer's responses to the transfer authorization questions, custom review questions and responses, manuscript rating questions, reviewer blind comments to author, reviewer confidential comments to editor, and any files attached to the review by the reviewer (Figure 3). In transfer to non-EM sites, this data is included in the XML packaged and exported with source files.

Suggested Practices

With a number of configuration options, deciding on an initial approach can be challenging. If a publisher and/or publication is interested in enabling a transfer workflow, the first step is to discuss the process with partners and agree on workflow particulars before attempting to configure the functionality. Once a decision has been made to proceed, enabling the functionality takes only minutes, allowing use to begin immediately.

In EM, great care was taken during the design and implementation of this functionality to ensure publications have the greatest amount of flexibility to support diverse workflows. At the introduction of a transfer workflow, the ability to transfer and receive transferred submissions may be best left to a limited number of staff or editors, in order to track, process, and identify any issues in the workflow as it is rolled out. Changes to EM configurations can be made on the fly, and if those overseeing the transfers begin to see bottlenecks, adjustment can be made quickly. Once the process is working in a way the staff is happy with,

permissions can be given to additional users to work with transfers if necessary.

Once transfer is enabled, a publication can continue to add transfer partners, should additional publications need to participate. New custom fields will also be incorporated into transfers as they are added to a publication's configurations. Administrators can take care to match these new fields to existing fields in other publications using custom meta identifiers, and are free to move and reuse these identifiers as custom fields are changed or discontinued.

Figure 3. Sample components of a review to be transferred.