Manuscript Transfer Process: Then and Now

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Background
• Self-published scientific society
• 8 journals
  • Separate Editorial Boards for each journal
  • Submissions range from ~200-5,000 per year
  • Impact Factors range from ~4.0-20

Why Offer Transfers?
• Member/author benefit
• Keep content within the “family”
• Encourage submissions to smaller, newer journals
Original Manuscript Transfer Process (I)

- Transfers to Journal A from another journal in the family
  - Suggested by EIC or SE from another journal as potentially appropriate for Journal A
  - May or may not have undergone review process
  - Associate Editor evaluates and sends recommendation to the EIC who makes a final decision as to whether or not the ms should be transferred
  - If the paper was already peer reviewed by the first journal, the EIC of Journal A must decide whether or not to consider the comments and allow the authors to respond or if the transferred submissions will be subject to a new review process
  - If Journal A agrees to the transfer, the other journal then makes the transfer offer to the author in the decision letter

Original Manuscript Transfer Process (II)

- Transfers from Journal A to other journals in the family
  - As the EIC or the Senior Editors review incoming mss, those which are scientifically sound but are a better fit for another family journal may be recommended for transfer (some mss may be referred for transfer after peer review, but this is rare)
  - To flag a ms for transfer, Editor makes a note in the corresponding comments box of the decision form
  - The staff then consults with the EIC of the other journal to inquire as to whether they wish to review the paper
  - If the second journal agrees, an invitation to transfer is made to the author in the decision letter

What could possibly go wrong?
Stumbling Blocks

- Editor resistance to receiving previously rejected submissions
- Protracted turnaround times for transfer decision; only about 30% of requests received a response from EICs
- Manual process; no real way to track transfer requests in submission system

Back to (Not Quite) Square One

- Rethought the process with an eye towards
  - Automation
  - Putting the authors in charge
  - Less work for EICs
  - Transparency to authors about the process
What Changed?

- Engaged with society's Publications Committee
  - Presented transfer request/transferred manuscript statistics
  - Publications Committee communicated with EICs
- Better automation
  - Worked with submission system vendor to include a link in decision letters to let authors know they can transfer to another journal; letting the authors “drive” the process
- Increased transparency about the process
  - Updated author instructions
  - Promoted via e-mail and social media