Who is ACS?

- World’s largest scientific society
- Chartered by Congress in 1876
- Provides educational, science policy, and career programs in chemistry
- Publish 50+ journals as well as symposia-based books
- Editors are active research scientists

Manuscript transfer at ACS

First piloted manuscript transfer in 2015

75% of declined manuscripts were published in non-ACS journals

Establish manuscript transfer cascade program to retain quality manuscripts within the ACS portfolio

- Data based on Rejections of all types by ACS journals in 2015
- Source: Rejected Article Tracker by ImpactVizor, HighWire Press
- Mega journals: PLoS One, RSC Advances, Scientific Reports
Things to consider in optimizing manuscript transfer

- Author choice regarding receiving journal
- Author satisfaction with their peer-review experience
- Editor workloads
- Staff resources
- Technical limitations

We used data-driven solutions to address challenges in our manuscript transfer program.

Our manuscript transfer experience

Phase 1
- Editors preferred authors to choose their target journal
- Concerned about lack of knowledge about other ACS journals and relationships with other ACS editors
- Piloted an “author selects target journal” transfer process in 2015

Author Selects Next Target

[Graph showing data on mss submitted and impact factor]
Editor-guided transfer

- "Editor selects target journal": introduced editor-to-editor consultations in 2016
- Fewer rejected manuscripts at receiving journal
- Many editors weren’t embracing manuscript transfer
- Workload too high, and initial concerns about lack of knowledge of other journal scopes remained

Editor-guided transfer

- Author selects
  - Frequently, sub-optimal journal was selected
  - 85% rejection rate (by editors of receiving journal), on average
- Editor recommends
  - Consultation and transfer processes
  - 45% rejection rate, on average

Major changes to workflow

- Introduced cohort journals in spring 2017: limited the receiving transfer journals by core subject area
- Encouraged communication between cohort journals to clarify scopes and eliminate consultations
- Set journal-specific targets for number of manuscripts transferred and published
- Encouraged editors to use manuscript transfer decisions to reject manuscripts
  Removed the “Reject” option!
Strong pushback from editors
- However, transfer offers increased by 82%
- Additional methods to streamline workflow (eliminating consultations where appropriate), also helped

Transfer offers are up, but authors are not taking them

Strategies to improve author uptake of transfer offers
- Simplify transfer decision letter, include useful information about the destination journal. Include a statement about the value of the submitted work
- Editors at receiving journal may choose to personally reach out to authors soliciting a transferred manuscript
- Increased communication amongst cohort journals to define journal scope
- Changes to ACS Omega
- Renewed Author Selects transfer
Author Selects transfer pilot

- Author selects the destination journal, Part 2
- However, can only select from list of cohort journals
- Editors do not have to recommend a journal or send a consultation
- 3 month pilot for selected titles

Conclusions

- Each phase of manuscript transfer was refined to address the challenges of the previous iteration
- Balancing author satisfaction, editorial preferences, and what the data say
- Data informed our decisions at each stage