

# Cascading Workflows and Preprints

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The world of preprints and preprint servers is continuously evolving to meet the needs of researchers, offering new services and pathways tied to traditional journal publishing. Some preprint servers are now utilizing artificial intelligence tools that provide language editing, image manipulation checks, and reference formatting for added quality assurance. With these integrations and the ease of online discovery, preprints are a viable source of new scholarship. Many journals have adopted formalized pathways for authors to transfer their work from a preprint server to a journal submission site. However, it is becoming increasingly common for journals to allow authors to transfer their submitted manuscripts to a preprint server. In this session, three industry professionals discuss models and workflows for preprint transfers.

Tony Alves, Senior Vice President of Product Management at HighWire Press, began by providing an overview of the Manuscript Exchange Common Approach (MECA)<sup>1</sup> and its role in facilitating transfers. MECA, a National Information Standards Organization (NISO)-recommended practice, is a documented methodology describing how a software system should structure, assemble, and transmit files in a package “for transferring research articles from one system to another, so that the different systems don’t have to develop multiple pairwise solutions each and every time a system needs to talk to another system.”

According to Alves, who serves as co-chair of the NISO Standing Committee for MECA, the “primary objective was to alleviate author frustration [as] authors are often frustrated by redundancy of effort” (Figure 1). With that in mind, the NISO MECA Working Group designed a protocol that would transfer the files and minimal data needed to start a submission record, as well as transfer the reviews, which would help to alleviate reviewers’ frustrations over time wasted. The MECA team defined what files and data could be transferred but left it to the journals and authors to determine what was transferred.

MECA currently facilitates transfers between journals, between preprint servers and journals, and between journals

## Time and Effort Wasted



Figure 1.

and third-party production vendors, repositories, and other author-centered services. Still, in recognition of changing demands and technologies, the Standing Committee continues to augment its initiatives and investigations into application programming interface (API) solutions for transfer and peer review data communication protocols.

Allison Leung, Manager of Product Development at the American Chemical Society, next discussed transfers from ChemRxiv, a preprint server that is co-owned and co-managed by five different chemical societies from around the world. Launched in 2017, ChemRxiv has received over 12,000 preprints, which have been viewed or downloaded over 25 million times.<sup>2</sup> Each preprint that is submitted to ChemRxiv is assigned a digital object identifier (DOI) and initially screened by a curator to ensure that it is chemistry related and scholarly in nature.

The direct journal transfer process from ChemRxiv launched in 2018 and has seen exponential growth in use. Leung shared several author benefits of the transfer process, including saving time and simplifying the journal selection process, as well as important journal benefits such as improved author experience and increased exposure. There are currently 150+ journals to which authors can transfer their ChemRxiv preprint, and the list is expanding. To transfer a preprint to a journal, authors simply select their preferred journal, confirm their selection, and then complete the submission upon receipt of an email from the receiving journal. If authors try to transfer their preprint to multiple journals simultaneously, they receive a pop-up warning message. Once the authors have confirmed their journal selection, the files are exported from ChemRxiv and uploaded as a package to the journal’s FTP site, which is then ingested by the receiving journal (Figure 2). The package includes the basic metadata, the manuscript PDF, and the supplemental information, which can be in any format.

While the transfer process is relatively straightforward for the authors, there have been some challenges that

