Description

The most important job of a journal editor is to ensure that there is a steady flow of high-quality papers. A journal without great content, cannot survive. In order to make sure that there is a constant flow of good quality papers, it takes a bit of work, but once good papers come in this leads to more readers, which leads to more papers. These days, readers mostly find articles through online searches, and thus, online journals are becoming the mainstay in academic publishing. This change has forced journals to figure out ways to improve the submission process from the initial submission, to the review, revision, and finally the publication.

For journals, a big part of the submission process involves using editorial management softwares in order to track an article from submission to its publication. Authors are beginning to expect more from this process. They are experiencing streamlined processes in many aspects of their research, and thus, are now expecting this to be the case when they publish their research. For authors, if this process is cumbersome and not very user-friendly then they may resort to seeking out another journal that is more straightforward. This puts pressure on journals to update their submission process so that they do not loose potential high-quality submissions to another journal.

Introduction of Aperta

Public Library of Science (PLOS) is a nonprofit, open access, scientific publisher that aims to make scientific and medical literature freely accessible to scientists, clinicians, and the general public all over the world. PLOS Biology, one of its science journals, now uses a new manuscript submission system called Aperta™. Aperta offers authors an interface for manuscript submission that boasts a refreshing look and feel, with a unique and clean user experience. The initial focus for the use of Aperta was on the authors' journey. With Aperta, PLOS Biology offers a brand new process for author submission where the authors first submit only minimal information together with their manuscript, figures, and cover letter. This minimal information is used to determine whether the manuscript meets the criteria for peer review. If it does, then, the journal would request the authors to provide additional information, including things such as the conflict of interest, ethics statements, and author contributions. The hope is that by using this streamlined process the initial consideration of manuscripts will be more straightforward and rapid.

The submission prompts on Aperta are quick and easy to complete. In fact, the initial article

submission only takes about ten minutes to complete. While submitting, the authors can complete the tasks in any order and stop at any point, which makes Aperta flexible. This means that the reviewers and editors can work more efficiently in order to put exciting research online faster.

Using Preprints

As another strategy to increase the access of scientific discovery worldwide, PLOS is examining the use of preprints. These are early postings of articles before a formal peer review. The idea behind making preprints available to the public is that they can contribute to the advancement of science, making access faster, more open, and with broader participation. Preprints enable researchers to make their findings immediately available to the scientific community before they are peer-reviewed. During this phase, the authors can also receive feedback on drafts of manuscripts before they are submitted to journals. The benefit of the preprint is that the early work is openly and freely available either before or while it is under submission at the journal. In addition, the preprint gives the researchers a stake to any of the intellectual claim to methods, results, and ideas present in the article. Overall, preprints contribute to the advancement of scientific discovery and enhance the efficiency of research.

PLOS has teamed up with bioRxiv, a preprint server for biology, and through Aperta, authors can directly transfer their manuscript to bioRxiv as a preprint for instant access to the scientific community. After the manuscript is accepted for publication in the journal, the authors can be associated with the preprints through CrossRef. Using this system, authors can make their research available immediately, leaving it open for feedback through the preprint, and then, once it is published in a journal it can be validated for quality through a rigorous peer review.

Moving into the Future

Aperta was designed to be a work in progress that will be continuously improved. PLOS is open to its users and asks authors what they think as they continue to add new features and functionalities to Aperta. Right now, only PLOS Biology is currently using Aperta, but in the future, all PLOS publications will use it. In addition, PLOS has made a commitment to share Aperta with the scientific publishing community in order to advance Open Access and Open Science.

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Submitting Manuscripts

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