MECA: Simplify Your Manuscript Resubmission

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Every scientist knows the pain caused by journal rejection. To ensure compliance, researchers need to modify manuscripts based on the referee suggestions. In certain cases, resubmission to a new journal could be the only viable option. This can be painful. Each journal also has its own style and rules. Moreover, reformatting the entire manuscript for a new journal can consume a lot of time. This is where the Manuscript Exchange Common Approach (MECA) comes in. MECA is expected to facilitate the rapid transfer of peer review data. MECA was introduced at the Society for Scholarly Publishing meeting. and details of how MECA would work were recently presented at the ISTME meeting

What Is MECA?

MECA is one way of simplifying the transfer of manuscripts and peer review data between publishers. At the moment, a manuscript transfer can be quite difficult. The MECA team is focused on finding the best way to make the transfer easy.

The MECA team also has members from Clarivate Analytics, Aries Systems, eJournal Press, HighWire, and PLOS. The team is working on creating a standard vocabulary. It will be important to create a simple, flexible procedure for gathering files and sharing them across systems. The MECA team is also working out a strategy for sharing peer review information between journals. The transfer process will also need a unique identity for each paper.

Changing Times

Researchers waste about 15 million hours every year by repeating reviews. This could be fixed by simply transferring the peer review data of a rejected article to its new journal. Manuscripts are already being transferred within publishing groups. The challenge is to make it easier to transfer manuscript files between publishers. There also needs to be a way to transfer data between preprint servers and publishers.

The MECA team hopes to make this possible by designing a common approach. They will recommend best practices. This data will be open access. The team hopes that their recommendations will be widely used. MECA would make it easier to transfer files between submission systems. MECA could be used to submit papers from a preprint server to a publisher. Researchers could use MECA to transfer their paper from an authoring tool to a publisher. Papers could be transferred from a submission system to production services.

Language is important. The MECA team is working on creating a common vocabulary with a standard meaning. This will make it possible for different publishing systems to cross-talk with more clarity. The MECA team also has suggestions about what should be included during manuscript submission. The final submission would include a zipped folder. The individual files would be in the .xml format. These files would include the peer review, the article, and all the related files containing contact and security information.

Every article would be assigned with a unique identifier. These would include keywords, authors, the manuscript number, and the DOI. The MECA system may use a universally unique identifier (UUID). The UUID would include the date, time, MAC address, and a random number. This way, there would be no confusion with the identifier between publishers. The latest revision of the rejected article would be used in the manuscript transfer process. The peer review data could exclude the reviewers' names. All of the reviewers' comments would be included in the transfer.

The Timeline

The MECA team has been sharing its ideas with the research community. They have done a panel presentation at the Society for Scholarly Publishers meeting. In addition, they have also been accepting feedback and would also like to include more members. This will help them to come up with better ideas.

The [next step](#) would be to host webinars. This will help people understand how MECA would work. Later this year, the MECA team will build a pilot system. This will be tested and refined. Ideally, MECA would be ready for use in 2018.

MECA would be useful to researchers who need to re-submit a paper. If there is a way to send the files to a new publisher, it would save time. If the re-submission included peer review data, it would save the research community 15 million hours every year. The MECA project may create new tools that would be very useful.

Sharing reviews may not always be what authors want. If a manuscript is transferred, the journal editor will know that they were not your first choice. We also don't know how a small publisher might feel about sharing all the peer review information with a larger competitor. A scientist may not want to transfer peer review data if they perceived the review to be unfair. Resubmitting just the article may, in fact, provide an opportunity to get a better review.

The MECA team is working on a way to simplify manuscript resubmissions. This would usually happen after a scientist receives a journal rejection notice. Being able to transfer data between systems would make publishing easier for scientists. With MECA, the peer review data would be transferred across systems. This would make the review process easier for editors as well. MECA could, thus, make resubmission much more efficient.

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