

How Elsevier's Article Transfer Service can reduce the burden on reviewers

The new initiative aims to make the best use of reviewer reports

By Dr. Jelena Petrovic Posted on 1 March 2014

Share story:

Elsevier's Article Transfer Service (ATS) was launched in May 2011 with an initial pilot of around 15 physics and materials science journals. Simultaneously pilots were also launched in pharmacology and immunology. The idea behind ATS was to introduce the concept of a big family of related journals, rather than the traditional set up as separate entities. Within these families, it was hoped that ATS would increase efficiency, by reducing editorial times and making the best use of reviewer reports. Charon Duermeijer, Publishing Director for Physics explains:

"At Elsevier, we feel that ATS is a significant step towards reducing the ever increasing burden on referees. At the same time, it will provide authors with a quicker and more successful route to the publication of their papers in appropriate journals".

How does ATS work?

ATS gives authors the option of transferring their article to a more appropriate journal within the cluster when they have been unsuccessful in their original submission due to their article being out of scope. Reviewer reports are also transferred along with the article, when available and the reviewer has given permission. In this process, the author is not required to resubmit or reformat their article. Due to the success of these initial pilots ATS has now been rolled out to 370 journals, in 86 journal clusters, over a wide range of disciplines, including; physics, materials science, engineering, pharmaceutical sciences and immunology.



ATS is now an automated process in Elsevier's Editorial System (EES)

As ATS was rolled out to increasing numbers of journals there was a need to automate the process within EES. Now editors are able to propose transfers to authors by simply selecting a transfer decision term in EES and identifying appropriate receiving journals. Authors can then choose to 'accept' or 'decline' this transfer offer via a clickable link. If an offer is accepted, authors choose a journal from the list proposed by the editor and their article, along with any available reviewer reports, is then transferred to the selected journal. As part of the process, authors are given the possibility of improving or revising their manuscript based on suggestions in any transferred reviewer reports, before the submission is finalized in the receiver journal.

Within EES, editors of the feeder journals are able to see if an author has accepted or declined their transfer offer

and if accepted, which journal the article has been transferred to. Whilst, editors of the receiver journals are able to identify which articles have been transferred from another journal via specific ATS flags, and are also able to view an article's history. If available, reviewer reports are always transferred along with an article unless a reviewer has specifically indicated that they don't wish this to happen. The benefit of this system is that transferred manuscripts that arrived with original reviewer reports can be handled very quickly by editors and the burden on the reviewer community is lessened as the number of reviewer requests sent out is reduced.

Including 'Results in' journals in ATS

Launched in May 2011, Elsevier's 'Results in' journals form a new series of community specific, online only, [open access](#) journals. 'Results in' journals are also open to accepting peer-reviewed articles transferred via ATS.



Other peer review pilots / initiatives

Elsevier is continually looking for ways to improve and enhance the peer review process. Another recent initiative is a peer review pilot for 6 Elsevier soil science titles which has implemented ATS in a slightly different way, giving authors more control over where they resubmit their article. Read more about this pilot in another article published in this issue titled "[How we can better support and recognize reviewers](#)"

If you have ideas or suggestions for peer review initiatives, please do [contact us](#).

Author biography

Jelena Petrovic is currently a Managing Editor within Elsevier's Physics Journals Department and is in charge of the following journals; *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals*, *Physics Letters A* and *Results in Physics*. She was also a managing editor for the Article Transfer Service. Jelena holds a PhD in astrophysics and was previously a researcher at Universities in Utrecht, Nijmegen and Brussels and the Nikhef Institute in Amsterdam.

