Transfer Turns Ten: The Future of the Code

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Abstract

Libraries, publishers, and intermediary vendors strive to disseminate the most current information to their patrons and clients through the metadata in their catalogs, services, and software. One significant pinch point in this landscape is the transfer of journals from one publisher to another. The Transfer Code of Practice was created to provide these stakeholders with guidelines to ensure that the transfer process occurs with minimal disruption and that journal content remains accessible to subscribers. The importance of these guidelines has grown since the creation of the Transfer Code in 2008, as the number of online titles, publishers, and intermediaries has grown exponentially. To accommodate this growth, Transfer made two significant changes in 2018. The previous Code of Practice was in its third iteration, which was adopted in 2015; in 2018, the Transfer Committee began revisions for version four. These revisions accommodated changes that occurred in the technology and terminology of the journal publishing market. In conjunction with the revision of the code, the Transfer Alerting Service (TAS) migrated to the ISSN International Centre (France). This new platform replaced the Enhanced Transfer Alerting Service, which was hosted by the University of Manchester (UK). The session presented attendees with an overview of the code, with a specific focus on new and updated content. Presenters also provided a demonstration of the new platform, showcased the new and improved features of the service, and explained the processes that publishers and librarians use to share and access Transfer information.

History and Administration of the Transfer Code of Practice

The presentation was given by Jennifer Bazeley (Miami University Libraries, co-chair of the Transfer Committee) and Gaëlle Béquet (Director of the ISSN International Centre, member of the Transfer Committee).

Libraries, publishers, and intermediary vendors strive to disseminate the most current information to their patrons and clients through the metadata in their catalogs, services, and software. One significant pinch point in this landscape can be the transfer of journals from one publisher to another. The Transfer Code of Practice was created to provide stakeholders in this information supply chain with best practices and guidelines to ensure that the transfer process occurs with minimal disruption and that journal content remains accessible to users throughout the process. These guidelines have become increasingly important since the creation of the Transfer Code, as the number of online titles, publishers, and supply chain intermediaries has grown exponentially. The Transfer Code is a voluntary one for journal publishers that includes best practices for transferring and receiving journals. The code helps publishers to ensure that journal content remains accessible by librarians and readers when there is a transfer

between parties, and ensures that the transfer process occurs with minimum disruption. Publishers who register as Transfer-compliant are asked to endorse the code, and to abide by its principles wherever it is commercially reasonable to do so. Best practices in the code include formalized roles/responsibilities for transferring and receiving publishers, timelines for transfer actions and communications, suggestions for transferring digital content and subscriber lists, guidance on handling identifiers and URLs, use of the Transfer Alerting Service, and advice on existing licensing terms and preservation agreements. To date, the Transfer Code of Practice has more than 60 endorsing publishers, including CUP, Elsevier, NPG, OUP, Springer, T&F, and Wiley.

Transfer is governed by a diverse committee, which currently includes eight publishers, five librarians, and six intermediaries. Publishers include both commercial publishers as well as society publishers, and intermediaries include organizations like Ex Libris and EBSCO Information Services, as well as representatives from the ISSN International Centre and CrossRef. Committee members come from diverse backgrounds and the group's membership in international, lending a variety of perspectives to the work the committee performs. The group is currently led by two co-chairs, one who is a publisher and one who is a librarian, and meets once every

other month. Additionally, subgroups of the committee representing librarians, publishers, and societies work to create targeted outreach and opportunities for the stakeholders within their communities. While the oversight of the Transfer Code is one of the primary functions of the Transfer Committee, the group also oversees the development and maintenance of the Transfer Alerting Service, which can be used through an online database, an RSS feed, and an email listserv. Committee members play active roles in their respective professional communities by presenting at a variety of professional conferences every year, which allows them to communicate with the community about the benefits of Transfer and to gather feedback that facilitates improvements to the code and related services.

The Transfer Committee worked diligently for more than 10 years on everything that Transfer encompasses:

- 2006: Working group formed under UKSG
- 2007: Transfer Code of Practice, version 1.0
- 2008: Transfer Code of Practice, version 2.0
- 2015: Transfer moved under NISO umbrella
- 2015: Transfer Code of Practice, version 3.0
- 2018: Migration of Transfer Alerting Service to ISSN Centre
- 2018: Revision of Transfer Code of Practice, version 3.0
- 2019: Transfer Code of Practice, version 4.0

Since 2006, the committee has revised the code through three iterations and created (and now oversees) the alerting service. Both UKSG and NISO have been instrumental in the success of Transfer; while the group started under the auspices of UKSG in 2006, it transitioned to a NISO recommended practice in 2015. Between 2009 and 2015, the Transfer Committee worked diligently to recruit many of the more than 60 publishers who endorse the Code. 2018 marked the 10-year anniversary of the Transfer Code of Practice, an exciting milestone that brought with it two very significant changes. First, the Code of Practice (previously in its third iteration, adopted in 2015) was revised for the publication of version four. Revisions aimed to accommodate the evolution of the journal publishing market, especially in regard to changes in technology and terminology. In conjunction with the release of version four of the code, the free online Transfer Alerting Service migrated

from the United Kingdom's JISC organization to the ISSN International Centre in Paris, France.

Version Four of the Transfer Code of Practice

Version four of the Transfer Code of Practice seeks to address feedback received since the release of version three in 2015. The intent of the new version is to ensure that the code continues to address current considerations in the scholarly journals community and sets out publisher responsibilities as clearly as possible.

Some specific changes include updates to terminology relating to journal purchasing models, especially in regard to open access publishing, updates to sections referencing technology such as URL redirects, and updates to clauses dealing with "in process" articles to take into account the use of online editorial systems, which are used by almost all publishers. Additionally, committee members crafted more inclusive language to ensure that supplemental content (such as data sets or videos) is also transferred, updated and expanded the glossary, and addressed categories of paid customers (beyond subscribers).

Feedback from the community was solicited through a public comment period during fall 2018; comments submitted during this period were reviewed and discussed by the Transfer Committee for possible final revisions to version four. The Transfer Committee expects NISO to publish version four during the first quarter of 2019.

Transfer Alerting Service (TAS)

The TAS transitioned from its previous host in the United Kingdom (JISC) to the ISSN International Centre in September 2018. The new service is based on two applications, one for the ingestion of information regarding transfers and a second for the dissemination of the same information.

At the input interface, Transfer-compliant publishers are registered in the ISSN Publishers' extranet and receive their login and password. When a transfer is planned, the receiving publishers log in to the extranet and fill in a form for each transfer statement providing data about the preceding publisher, the transfer details such as the URL of the journal, the effective date of transfer, the digital preservation agreements, and the perpetual access policies. Once the transfer request is validated by the ISSN

International Centre, both the receiving and the transferring publisher are informed by e-mail that the transfer is validated. The relevant ISSN record shows the logo «Transfer» on the ISSN Portal and the «receiving publisher» and «the date of transfer» are clearly identified. Subscribers to the ISSN portal have access to this information, which is also available for free on the TAS application.

The TAS application (available in English and French) is the free online dissemination interface where any user can see the latest transfer notifications and subscribe to an RSS feed or an e-mail listserv to receive alerts when a notification is published. Information can be retrieved by searching for a specific transferred title or for titles transferred during a certain period of time and browsing the list of transferred titles and sorting them by date of transfer; all search results can be exported into a TSV file. The display of search results includes hyperlinked ISSNs that link to the corresponding entry or entries in the ISSN portal, where users can find additional information about the title (either as a free user or as a registered one). Additionally, an API is available to automate queries about journal transfers.

The ISSN International Center has also created several new features with the migration to their servers. A new page now lists successive transfers for any title that has had more than one transfer since the inception of the database in 2009. This will aid librarians who wish to trace the platform and publisher history for a particular title. Currently, this page is set up to automatically populate based on ISSNs and is not searchable. A second new feature is the compilation of transfer statistics, such as the number of transfer alerts per month and the number of transfer alerts per receiving and transferring publishers. The ISSN International Center has added a page to the site that compiles statistics in graphical formats detailing the number of transfer alerts per month and number of effective transfers per receiving and transferring publishers. Information in the graphs is hyperlinked; clicking on the name of a publisher opens the search interface and displays transfer entries indicated for that publisher.

Conclusion

The Transfer Code of Practice is a vital tool for our community of publishers, librarians, and information providers. It is gratifying to see that the code is still widely used 11 years after its inception and that the experts sitting on the NISO Transfer Committee are willing to adapt it and make it endure. The public enquiry process for version 4.0 ended in fall 2018 and comments will be addressed rapidly so that the final document can be issued in early 2019. Parallel with this work, the ISSN International Centre has taken leadership to host and develop TAS to provide our community with user-friendly interfaces for transfer notifications as well as enhanced search and display facilities for information sharing. The NISO Transfer Committee will continue to welcome and utilize feedback from the stakeholders to improve services to meet emerging and future needs.

Links

Transfer at NISO (NISO RP-24-2015), https://www.niso.org/standards-committees/transfer

Transfer Notifications, https://www.niso.org/standards-committees/transfer/enhanced-transfer-alerting-service

Transfer-Endorsing Publisher List and Link to TAS Webinar for Publishers (slides via the ISSN IC Slideshare account and webinar recording), https://www.niso.org/standards-committees/transfer/transfer-publishers

ISSN Publishers' Extranet, https://portal.issn.org/welcome/publisher

TAS Applications, https://journaltransfer.issn.org/transfer/search_transfer

ISSN Portal, https://portal.issn.org