All Together Now: Multi-Journal Approaches to Submissions Standardization

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The session "All Together Now: Multi-Journal Approaches to Submissions Standardization" provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges and benefits associated with standardizing submission processes across multiple journals.

Synopsis and Key Points

The session commenced with a focus on the significance of standardization in optimizing manuscript submission processes. It was emphasized that while standardization facilitates efficiency and enhances editorial oversight, implementing it across diverse fields of study and journals poses challenges. The primary goals included reducing manual processes, increasing author and peer reviewer satisfaction, elevating the level of editorial oversight to maximize the efficiency of editorial staff, and adhering to industry best practices.

Case Studies and Strategies

Jonathan Schultz discussed the American Heart Association's editorial cascade model and the implementation of a submission portal to streamline the manuscript review process across multiple journals, with a focus on attracting and keeping good manuscripts.

At the point of submission, authors can select multiple journals and order them by preference. Triage editors go into the portal and consider each submission, choosing to pass or reject. Once a journal chooses to review the submission, it is transferred seamlessly into the destination journal for review.

One unexpected downside was most authors only selected one journal—more education is needed to

encourage them to select more than one at point of submission.

Joel Schanke provided insights into Cell Press's approach, focusing on improving author experience, success, and staff efficiency through a pre-pilot initiative, which then led to the integration of a fully functional multi-journal platform.

If an author chooses to submit to multi-journal submission (MJS), they then can choose 2–5 journals from which they would like consideration. The paper is triaged, and the decision of whether these journals wish to review the submission or a transfer offer is sent to the authors for their information. If reviewed at MJS, then the submission is reviewed by one set of independent reviewers, and the handling editor will then send a single decision letter to the author, outlining the decision of each journal that reviewed their paper (e.g., a revision plan or a transfer offer to an individual journal). It's then up to the author to decide how they would like to proceed, therefore determining the journal(s) best suited for their paper.

Questions and Responses

The session included a dynamic Q&A segment, where attendees engaged with the speakers on various aspects of submissions standardization. Some of the key questions and responses included the following:

- **Impact on Acceptance.** Jonathan highlighted that the multi-journal platform could lead to acceptances in journals that authors might not have previously considered, thus broadening the scope of potential acceptance.

- **Efficiency in Journal Selection.** Joel mentioned that the platform facilitates quicker identification of the most suitable journal for submission compared with traditional transfers.

- **Role of Triage Editors.** Both speakers clarified that triage editors, including EICs, play a crucial role in assessing manuscript suitability and guiding the submission process.

- **Author Education.** Jonathan emphasized the need for further education to encourage authors to select multiple journals for submission, thus maximizing their chances of acceptance.

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- **Editorial Collaboration.** Joel and Jonathan addressed concerns about editorial independence and unintentional bias, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and selecting editors with a willingness to work across journals.
- **Standardization.** Joel reiterated the presence of standard questions across journals to ensure consistency in the submission process.

Conclusion

This session provided valuable insights into the complexities and benefits of standardizing submission processes across multiple journals. It highlighted innovative strategies and new system workflows, supporting the vision of attracting and retaining high-quality submissions within a journal portfolio.