Society Journal Publishing Transfer
Guidelines to Help Achieve a Successful Transition
About JISC Collections

JISC Collections is a membership organisation established by the UK Higher and Further Education funding councils, to support the procurement of digital content for education and research in the UK. It undertakes negotiations with a large number of scholarly and research publishers on behalf of UK universities and colleges – in the area of e-journals, e-books, databases and datasets – achieving best pricing and licensing conditions for its members. (www.jisc-collections.ac.uk). In this respect it has close and ongoing contact with the library community, regularly receiving feedback and information on many aspects of library acquisitions and the provision of access to e-resources.
About JISC Collections

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The purpose of this publication, prepared by JISC Collections, is to draw the attention of those societies involved in journal publishing, to the problems that can occur for libraries and their users when societies move their journals to a new publisher or from in-house publishing, and to offer guidelines that societies may consider adopting, to achieve a more successful transition.

Background: Society publishing

The majority of smaller societies outsource their journal publishing to commercial publishers. A basic driver for this is financial, in that it provides an opportunity for increased income for societies through the specialist skills and economies of scale that a publisher can provide. Additionally, the move to electronic publishing has brought with it technical, licensing and commercial issues that societies’ in-house expertise and resources may not be at a level to address. A commercial publisher may also be better placed to provide strategic publishing advice, for example in respect of pricing models, including Open Access publishing and the different procedures and requirements this involves. The publisher will also be able to advise societies on product development that could lead to increased revenues.

The involvement by the leading commercial publishers in society publishing is extensive. For example, Taylor & Francis publishes journals in association with over 460 societies and institutions. Wiley-Blackwell publishes some 840 titles with societies, whilst Elsevier works with over 500 societies.
The transfer of journals between publishers and the implications for scholars and libraries:

Annually, many journal titles are transferred to different publishers, with the latase they will no longer be publishing. It is estimated that some 3400 scholarly and research titles have transferred between publishers since the beginning of 2009. Very often these follow a decision by a society to switch from one publishing partner to another, or to relinquish its in-house publishing. A brief analysis undertaken recently by JISC Collections of the extent of transfers of society-owned journals for the subscription year 2011, showed that some 43 societies and 81 titles were involved.

Whilst it might be considered a routine publishing procedure, in fact the transfer of titles does present problems for university libraries and their readers, with these occurring particularly at the time of annual renewals. These problems can include:

- Scholars experiencing loss of access (temporary or fairly lengthy) to key society journal content, at the start of the new subscription year.

- Libraries facing new or different pricing models and unexpectedly high subscription price increases.

- Lack of good communications by publishers with their library customers concerning the transfers, that leave librarians unclear about a number of issues (eg the timing of the transfers, access arrangements, archival rights, details of title etc)

- The exclusion of numbers of journal titles from publishers’ Big Deals (see later section on Big Deals)

- Uncertainty amongst librarians about arrangements for access to previous years of journal content, and their rights for perpetual access to years where subscriptions have been cancelled

Further information on the nature of these problems is given in the Appendix below.

JISC Collections has undertaken a survey of those librarians at UK universities who are responsible for managing the acquisition of e-journals and making them accessible to their readers. The purpose of the survey was to assess the extent and nature of the problems arising from journal transfers. Forty seven librarians responded, providing details of their experience in this area. The results showed that in terms of managing their journals collections, as well as ensuring continuing access to journal content by their readers, 36% of the librarians stated that the ‘journals transfer’ problem was ‘very significant’ and 49% that it was ‘fairly significant’.

When asked in which areas most problems occurred as a result of titles being transferred, librarians ranked the top four as:

- Loss of access by users to journal content

- Pricing issues, for example where the new publisher has a different pricing model or different subscription categories, or where there are significant price increases.

- The amount of time needed to amend library systems and records

- Uncertainty about arrangements for librarians’ perpetual access rights to past subscribed content.

A report on the results of the online survey can be seen at JISC Collections website: http://tiny.cc/journaltransfer
The TRANSFER Code of Practice:

In an attempt to reduce the problems resulting from journal transfers, librarians and publishers have worked together in recent years to develop the industry-wide TRANSFER Code of Practice. Publishers have been encouraged to publicly endorse and follow the Code, which is a set of voluntary ‘best practices’ for the industry. The TRANSFER initiative provides ‘guidelines to help publishers to ensure that journal content remains easily accessible by librarians and readers when there is a transfer between parties, and to ensure that the transfer process occurs with minimum disruption.’ (see: www.uksg.org/transfer).

The Code of Practice seeks commitment from both ‘Transferring’ and ‘Receiving’ publishers to undertake a set of procedures that include:

- Making the digital content files and subscription records available to the Receiving publisher within a set period of time.
- Providing continuing access to journal content for current subscribers as well as continuing access where a publisher has granted perpetual access rights to earlier years.
- Transferring individual journal domains to the Receiving publisher.
- Communicating with subscribers and intermediaries (e.g., subscription agents) concerning the transfers.

The Code was issued in September 2008 and by April this year had been adopted by 36 publishers. Details of journal transfers taking place are posted regularly to the UKSG Transfer Notification List at the jiscmail website (www.jiscmail.ac.uk/TRANSFER).

The TRANSFER Working Group is also undertaking its own surveys to wider groups of libraries and publishers, to help with its plans for future development.

ALPSP, The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, makes available to its members a very helpful Advice Note on good practice in journal transfers (‘When a society journal changes publisher: ALPSP guidelines for good practice’). This addresses a number of points including copyright, technical and financial issues, and agreements with third parties. ALPSP plans to review this to ensure it is in line with the TRANSFER Code. This is available at: (URL to be given by Ian Russell)

Similarly, STM, The International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers has produced a position statement on journals transfers (‘Ensuring Quality Customer Access to Online Content when Society Journals Change Publishers.’). This can be seen at: www.stm-assoc.org/2006_07_28_STM_Journal_Transfers.doc

Whilst the TRANSFER initiative has been successful in encouraging take-up of the Code by many publishers, problems still exist for libraries and their users.
Societies can help address the problems arising from journal transfers by considering adopting a set of procedures when negotiating a new publishing partner agreement (either moving from an existing publisher, or from in-house publishing). We have prepared a checklist of key ‘transfer’ themes that could be utilised in discussions with publishers, and which may give you more confidence that relevant issues can be discussed and agreed between you and the selected publisher. This checklist, along with a brief glossary of terms, is given in Appendix 2.
APPENDIX 1  Additional information on problems for scholars and libraries resulting from journal titles transferring between publishers.

Pricing:

The move to a commercial publisher from in-house publishing may often result in significant price increases for subscribers. This could follow a general recommendation to the society by the publisher, or because a society’s prices had been at too low a level to cover costs. Often libraries discover increases only after having agreed their renewals for the new subscription year by which time publishers may not agree to accept cancellations. This also has a direct impact on library budgets that have already been agreed.

The pricing model of the Receiving publisher may differ from that of the Transferring publisher, with the result that a library’s subscriptions may be ‘categorised’ in such a way that a price increase occurs, or access is to a lesser number of back years than was provided by the Transferring publisher.

The titles being transferred may have been accessible to users as part of the Transferring publisher’s ‘Big Deal’, but subsequently not included in the Receiving publisher’s Big Deal (or the Receiving publisher may simply not offer a Big Deal option).

A consortium of libraries may have agreed an overall single price with a publisher covering all its members. If titles are transferred to and from the publisher during a multi-year Big Deal contract, the pricing would need to be adjusted in a way that satisfies both the publisher and all consortium members.

Access:

Loss of access to current and past journal content by readers can occur as a result of delays in journal data files being transferred to the Receiving publisher. Furthermore, older content may take more time to be moved to the Receiving publisher than recent content. Problems of data incompatibility between publishers’ systems may also contribute to a delay.

The Receiving publisher may use an online hosting platform different to that of the Transferring publisher, potentially causing access delays or set-up problems.

The transfer of subscription records from the Transferring publisher to the Receiving publisher may often be delayed, sometimes well into the new subscription year, creating difficulties for subscribing libraries in terms of their access entitlements, ability to make cancellations etc.

The back-file ‘entitlement’ policy of the Receiving publisher may be different to that of the Transferring publisher. For example, the Transferring publisher may have allowed access to 10 years of back files as part of a current subscription, whilst the Receiving publisher may provide access to a shorter period of back files.
Communication with subscribers:

Libraries often comment that communications from publishers in respect of journals transfers can be minimal, stating that they receive little or no information as to when the content will no longer be hosted by the Transferring publisher or accessible from the Receiving publisher. A library may only discover the move of journal content when a user can no longer access it via the original route.

Lack of early communications from publishers can mean that libraries themselves are often forced to undertake frequent contact with both the Transferring and Receiving publishers, involving a considerable amount of staff resources and paperwork.

Additionally, it is not always clear to libraries as to whether subscription agents have been informed of the transfers and of any changes to the pricing for the new subscription year.

Perpetual access rights:

‘Perpetual access’ rights to back files of titles for which a library has cancelled subscriptions, are granted by the majority of publishers. When these titles are moved by a society to a new publisher, librarians may be left with uncertainty as to whether access will continue to be provided by the Transferring publisher or Receiving publisher, and generally whether past publisher agreements will be honoured.

This problem may be confounded in situations where one or both of the publishers are using external ‘archive’ hosting services (for example Portico and LOCKSS).

Library staff time:

The transfer of titles to different publishers brings with it the need for libraries to spend considerable amounts of time amending records in their catalogues, serials management and link resolver systems.

Recording of titles being added to the Receiving publisher’s Big Deal, or withdrawn from the Transferring publisher’s Big Deal, involve time and effort annually by library staff.

Lack of information from publishers can mean constant revisiting by librarians of the publisher’s site to check if any changes have occurred in respect of access to content.
APPENDIX 2:

Additional information on problems for scholars and libraries resulting from journal titles transferring between publishers.

Journal Transfers: Suggested checklist for use when negotiating a change of publishing arrangement. A glossary of terms is given at the end of the checklist.

Timescale:

In terms of the timescale for undertaking a change in journal publishing, where an agreement is already in place with an existing publisher, the contract expiry date and notice period in the agreement, will of course need to be considered. This may, for example, include a notice period of a year.

Having selected a publisher, it is strongly advised that the arrangements to transfer to the new publisher are started as early as possible in the current subscription year. The large bulk of journals subscriptions are on a calendar year basis and all the actions required for a smooth transition need to have been completed well before the end of the current subscription period.

This will include, for example, the transfer of journal content data and subscription records to the Receiving publisher; subscription renewals for the new year will need to be confirmed and sent out to libraries; subscribers, subscription agents and other intermediaries will need to be informed of the timing and general arrangements relating to the transfer; agreement will also be needed on how journal back files will be made accessible etc. With this in mind, commencing the overall process as early as possible is highly recommended.

Request for Proposals:

When issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to a range of publishers, include reference in this to potential problems that might arise journal transfers, requesting bidding publishers to indicate how they would propose handing this aspect of the change of publishing arrangements.

In the detailed discussions with the selected publisher, it is recommended the following be addressed:

TRANSFER Code of Practice:

Confirmation that the publisher has adopted, and complies with, the TRANSFER Code of Practice; and if not already adopted, that the publisher agrees to arrange adoption.

Obtain confirmation that the publisher will submit details to the TRANSFER Notification List of the titles being transferred as a result of the change of publishing arrangement.

Timetable and communications with subscribers:

A commitment from the Receiving publisher to provide you with a detailed timetable of the transfer arrangements, and a programme of communications with subscribers and other intermediaries involved, to ensure continuing access to content at the commencement of the new subscription year.

Perpetual Access Rights:

Agreement should be sought on the arrangements for access by subscribers to past subscribed content following the transfer. This should be agreed between yourself and both the Receiving and Transferring publishers. See the glossary for more information on Perpetual Access Rights.

that subscribers will be provided by the publisher with details of the transferred titles to be included in/excluded from the Big Deal, and reasons for the exclusions. Further information on Big Deals is given in the glossary.
Big Deals:

Where the Receiving publisher offers a Big Deal licensing arrangement, consider and discuss whether your society’s title(s) are to be included in the Big Deal collection, and seek agreement that subscribers will be provided by the publisher with details of the transferred titles to be included in/excluded from the Big Deal, and reasons for the exclusions. Further information on Big Deals is given in the glossary.

Subscription agents:

Subscription agents play a key role in providing a service to academic libraries in the acquisition and management of both print and electronic journals. Both the nature and timing of the Receiving publisher’s communications with agents should be discussed and agreed. This will address issues such as updated pricing information needed to agents and confirmation of subscriptions being renewed by library subscribers for the new subscription year.

Information for Link Resolver knowledge bases:

‘Link resolver’ systems play a key role in the library management of electronic journals. It is important that the Receiving publisher provides journal title data to link resolver suppliers’ knowledge bases as speedily as possible following the signing of an agreement, to ensure uninterrupted access to content at the start of the new year. Further information on link resolvers is given in the glossary.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Archiving services:

Facilities now exist that enable publishers to offer access to archival copies of journal content to libraries via dedicated archiving services. These include organisations and initiatives such as Portico, LOCKSS, CLOCKSS and KB in The Netherlands. They offer different technical and business model approaches and have differing content coverage (although with some overlap). Several publishers are participating in one or more of these services.

Back files access:

The majority of publishers’ years can vary according to each publisher’s pricing policy. Where a title is transferred, the Receiving publisher’s period of accessible years might, for example, be more or less, than that provided by the Transferring publisher, which may cause difficulties for some subscribers.

Big Deals:

Many of the leading scholarly publishers offer ‘Big Deals’ to their library subscribers. These allow for online access to all journal titles of a publisher (or a large proportion of them), in payment of an annual fee additional to the costs of a library’s ‘core’ subscriptions. In Big Deal situations, a library’s core subscriptions (ie those they are paying the full subscription price for) are often described as ‘subscribed’ journals, with the extra titles accessible via the Big Deal termed ‘unsubscribed’ journals. The Big Deal fee is generally relatively small and may be a percentage of the cost of a library’s core subscriptions, a percentage of the total prices of the unsubscribed journal prices, or simply a flat fee.

Many societies are happy to include their titles in publishing partners’ Big Deals, as this provides an additional source of revenue and greater use and visibility of their journals. Others prefer to exclude titles, believing that their inclusion undervalues the journals, limits potential growth in numbers of full priced subscriptions and may lead to a decline in society membership. Many librarians are happy with Big Deals as they provide their users with access to a much greater range of journals. Others are less enthusiastic as commitment to a Big Deal arrangement may restrict their ability to cancel journal subscriptions under the terms of a publisher’s multi-year agreement, and may also mean that significant percentages of their journal budgets are committed to a small number of major publishers.

Big Deal problems can arise for libraries when journals transfers take place. For example, it may be that little or no information has been received by libraries from the Receiving publisher as to whether the transferred titles are included in a Big Deal, or the information is delayed. If a society moves from in-house journal publishing to a commercial publisher operating a Big Deal, libraries’ existing ‘core’ subscriptions to the society’s journals may become non-cancellable; the reason being that some publishers insist that all subscriptions of a library must be renewed annually during the lifetime of a Big Deal agreement that the library has with a publisher. A further example is where a library currently has access to a society’s journals by way of their inclusion in a Big Deal, but following the transfer of the titles to a new publisher not offering a Big Deal, the library is faced with full subscription prices for accessing the journals.
APPENDIX 2 CONT:

COUNTER:

COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the recording and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent, credible and compatible way. Publishers are encouraged to sign up to COUNTER usage statistics codes of practice that cover journals and databases, online books and reference works. Librarians use the usage statistics provided by publishers to assist in the management and evaluation of their e-resources collections. (www.projectcounter.org/)

CrossRef:

CrossRef is an independent association founded by publishers. Its mandate is to connect users to primary research content, by enabling publishers to work collectively. Participation in CrossRef requires that publishers agree to assign CrossRef DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers), which are persistent links, to their current journal content. The initiative provides both the business and technological infrastructure to make reference linking possible among scholarly publishers, to the benefit of researchers. (www.crossref.org)

Digitised back file collections:

Following the digitisation of lengthy back runs of journal collections by a number of the leading publishers, libraries have been able to purchase and perpetually own many of these separately created collections. These collections are usually accessed at the publishers’ websites, unless a collection is acquired by a library for local loading. Where a journal title in such a collection is transferred to a new publisher, The TRANSFER Code of Practice does address the action a publisher should take.

Link resolvers and KBART:

A link resolver is a tool that helps library users connect to their institutions’ electronic resources. The data that drives such a tool is stored in a knowledge base and the quality of a knowledge base depends heavily on data that content providers (publishers, aggregators, etc) send to the knowledge base suppliers. The KBART (Knowledge Bases And Related Tools) Working Group was set up the UK Serials Group and the National Information Standards Organization. The group comprises representatives from publishers, libraries, link resolver and ERM vendors, subscription agents and other parties involved in the creation of, and provision and implementation, of knowledge bases. These key components of the ‘OpenURL’ supply chain play a critical role in the delivery of the appropriate article copy to end-users of content. Publishers that endorse KBART are able to supply metadata that conforms to the recommended practice, KBART: Knowledge Bases and Related Tools (NISO RP-9-2010). (www.uksg.org/kbart).
Post termination access rights:

In situations where a library may cancel its subscriptions to individual online journals, most publishers agree to provide continuing access to the years of the subscriptions that libraries have already paid for. This is often referred to as perpetual access rights, post termination access rights, or simply archival rights. The publishers' systems enable access to be granted by recognising the user as being from a valid institution and recognising the years paid for under a past subscription.

Where journals are moved to a new publisher following a change of a society’s publishing arrangement, the society and both the Receiving and Transferring publishers need to discuss and agree on how post termination access rights will continue to be provided. Access could continue to be provided by the Transferring publisher or the Receiving publisher. This can be a complex area, in that the Transferring publisher may have contractual commitments with libraries to provide continuing access. The TRANSFER Code of Practice provides states: “The Transferring publisher must ensure continued access to its customers where it has granted perpetual access rights, even if the Transferring publisher will cease hosting the online version of the journal after the Effective Transfer Date. Either the Transferring or the Receiving publisher, or both, could fulfil perpetual access obligations”. Issues of costs involved and content format will influence the decision on how access is provided.

It is important that subscribers are informed of the arrangements for perpetual access rights following a journal transfer situation.

TRANSFER Initiative terms:

Effective Transfer Date: the date specified in the legal contract for the transfer to take place and when the Receiving Publisher assumes responsibility from the Transferring Publisher for the journal.

Receiving Publisher: the publisher buying, or receiving publishing rights from a Third Party for the journal.

TRANSFER Compliant: organizations that publicly sign up to the TRANSFER Code of Practice via the procedures outlined on the UKSG TRANSFER website and who then follow the Code in subsequent journal transfers are considered TRANSFER Compliant. The TRANSFER Committee keeps the list of TRANSFER Compliant publishers up-to-date on the TRANSFER website.

Transferring Publisher: the publisher currently owning, or responsible for publishing the journal on behalf of a Third Party.

Companion publication on journal tendering:

A guide for societies on the broader process of journal publishing tendering was published in March this year by the Association for Learning Technology, with support from JISC. This provides a comprehensive set of guidelines to consider when starting the process of seeking a new publishing partner. It includes reference to journals transfers and the TRANSFER initiative. ‘Journal Tendering for Societies: A brief Guide’ can be viewed at: http://repository.alt.ac.uk/887/

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