Transferred Journals 2.0:
Further Adaptations of a Library Workflow

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Our presentation titled Transferred Journals 2.0: Further Adaptations of a Library Workflow, is about Rowan University Library's workflow to manage transferred journals and changes we made to it to address challenges we confronted over the years. It is based on a presentation we gave at the 2018 Charleston Conference.

Today we will spend time defining the process, discussing the resources and services relating to the process, and the challenges of managing transferred journals. We will do this through the lens of why one should even care about transferred journals in the first place as well as through the lens of Rowan University's own processes.

Rowan University Background

- Founded in 1923
- Newly Designated Research Institution – Carnegie R2
- Rapidly Growing Enrollment 18,000+ Students
- 176 new tenure track faculty hired in 5 years
- Many New PhD Programs
- Merged with 2 Medical Schools - Allopathic & Osteopathic
- From Teaching to STEM Emphasis
- Library holdings over 90% electronic

Rowan University, located in Glassboro, New Jersey about 25 minutes east of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is a rapidly growing R2 Carnegie classification institution. It began in 1923 as a Normal school and really transformed in 1992 when Henry Rowan donated $100 million to the university, the largest personal gift to a university at that time. The university's expansion really launched in 2012 & 2013 when the two disparate medical schools were added. Rowan has both an allopathic medical school – Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, and osteopathic medical school, Rowan Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine.

Rowan was recently named the third-fastest growing public research university in the United States by the Chronicle of Higher Education. Additionally, Rowan will be adding the first ever Veterinary School to the state of New Jersey with its first class matriculating in fall of 2025. There is always something new around the corner.

Definitions

- **Transferring Journal** - journal changing publisher

- **Transferring Publisher** - old or outgoing publisher

- **Receiving Publisher** - new or incoming publisher

- **Perpetual Access** - subscriber keeps access to digital content after the contractual term for current access has ended
- **Open Access** - digital content is free AND user rights and copyright terms are defined

NISO Transfer Code of Practice

DOAJ Blog

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Just so that all of us are on the same page: A transferring journal is a journal changing publisher. A transferring publisher is the old or outgoing publisher therefore a receiving publisher is the new or incoming publisher. Perpetual access is when the subscriber is allowed to keep access to digital content after the contractual term for current access has ended. And finally, Open Access is where digital content is free and user rights and copyright terms are defined.

Resources & Services for Transfer Journals
- Transfer Alerting Service
- NISO Transfer Code of Practice
- Transfer Endorsing Publishers

Transfer Alerting Service Website
Transfer Alerting Service Notification
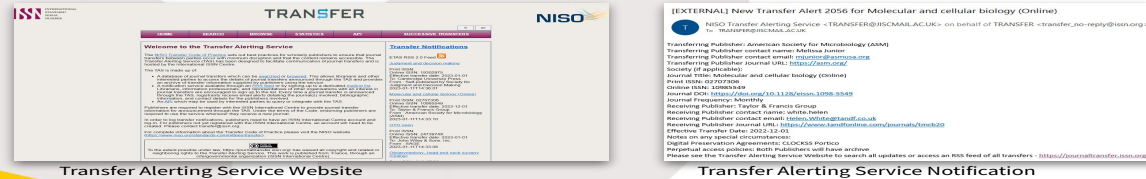
In addition to several organizations that notify interested parties about transferring journals periodically, such as subscription agents, content providers and publishers, there is the
Transfer Alerting Service. It is hosted by the ISSN center. Its purpose is to communicate about journal transfers through a searchable database, a listserv you can sign up for and get emails regarding transferred journals , and an RSS feed.

Each transfer journal notification email lists
- Transferring and receiving publisher information
- Transferring journal information
- Effective transfer date
- Perpetual access policies
- Digital preservation agreements in effect and
- Open access status if the journal is transitioning to OA

The transfer alerting service is the front facing service that reflects journal transfers from publishers that endorse NISO's
Transfer code of practice which is composed of guidelines and best practices for transferring and receiving publishers to standardize the journal transfer process.
The transfer code is a result of the the ongoing work of NISO's Transfer Standing committee (consisting of publishers, societies, content providers, aggregators, and librarians) and which revises and improves the Code based on input from the

public. The committee also recruits journal publishers to endorse the code of practice.
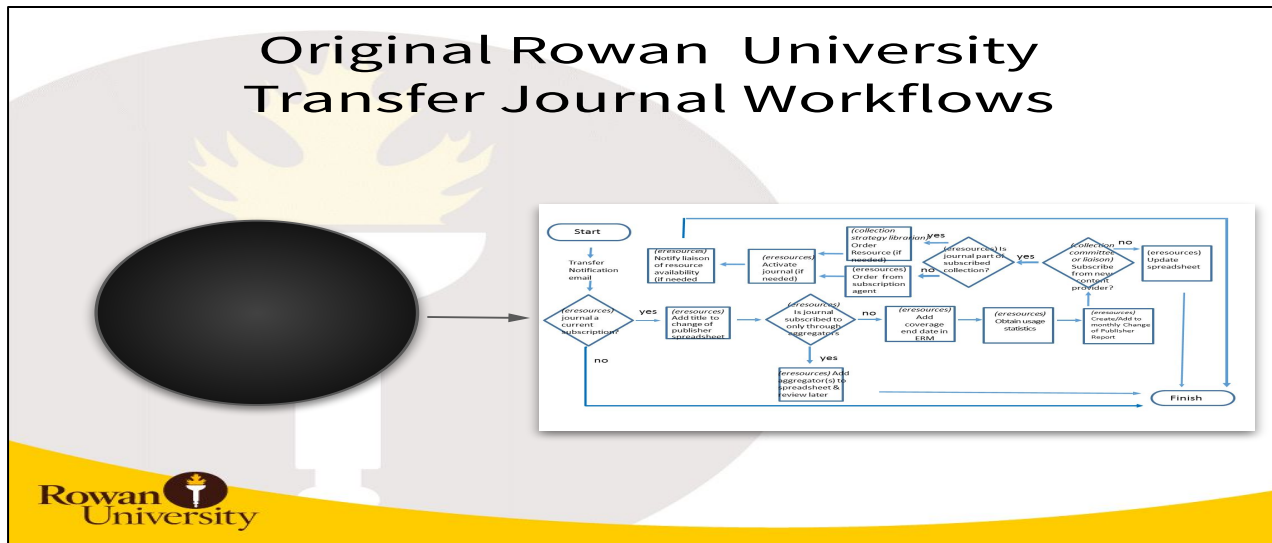
When Christine first started working at Rowan University over 8 years ago, Christine quickly realized that many of the access-related technical support problems or dead links I was troubleshooting were the result of journals that had been transferred, and we hadn't updated our records or holdings in our ERM or Library Services Platform to reflect this or follow up and subscribe from the new publisher. Not keeping track of and documenting these changes and updating our holdings, wasted a lot of my and my colleagues' time, and inconvenienced, if not aggravated our patrons. In order to provide a better user experience, and possibly continuity of service, Christine thought that it would be more efficient to proactively deal with this problem once for each transferred journal and avoid dead links, rather than reactively troubleshoot every time such a problem was reported.

At first, Christine assumed that all she had to do was track transferring journals we subscribed to in a spreadsheet, and list the old and new publishers, the date of the transfer, and my boss at the time, the director of technical services would subscribe to the transferring journal from the new or receiving publisher. But there were so many transferred journals, that it soon became evident that we could use journal transfers to purposefully review renewing transferring titles. Our institution was in the middle of an extended growth spurt and had not been scrutinizing subscriptions for renewal. The workflow became more sophisticated over time and included many moving parts and rules. Eventually, an eresources colleague started monitoring emails from the transfer alerting service, or vendor updates and subscription agent updates for our subscriptions. We only

reviewed our subscribed journals that we did not get exclusively from aggregators. Our colleague would obtain usage statistics and include them in a report that was submitted to the collection development committee when it met monthly. The report would subsequently be shared with subject librarians to get their input regarding renewing transferring journals in their subject areas..

Establishing this transferred journal workflow eventually resulted in more stable holdings and fewer support issues. The benefits of implementing our transferred journal workflow were that it

- Improved the user experience
- Ensured continuity of service or access to journals or explained why there wasn't continued service, and
- It showed that decision making was transparent and collaborative
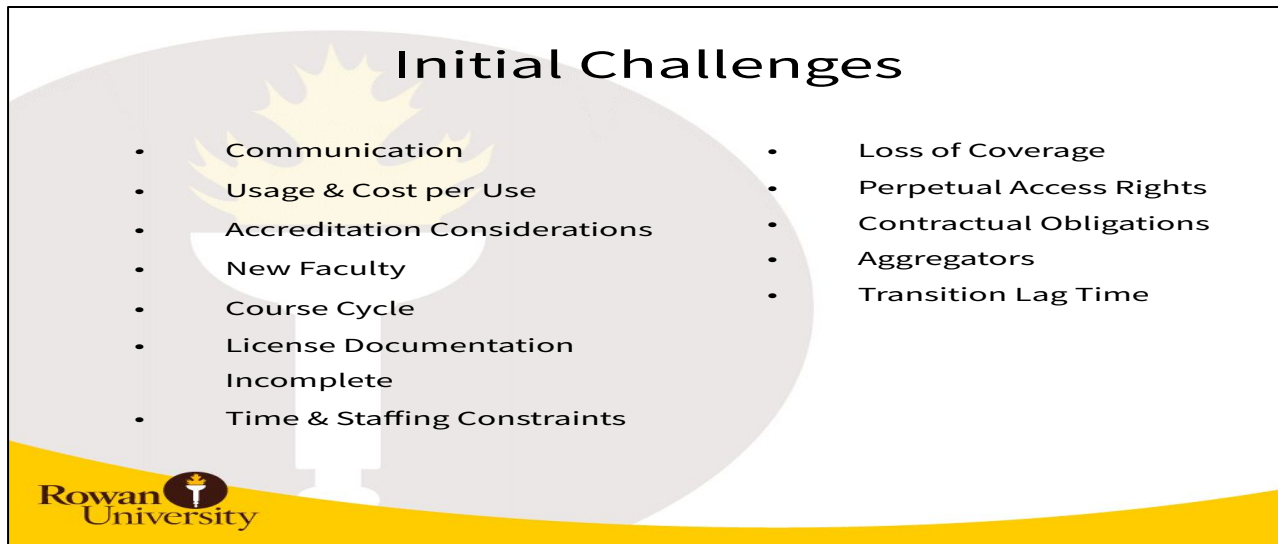
But there were also many challenges. Some of these had to do with librarians acclimating to our new workflow, and others had to do with how academic serials publishing worked or didn't work. Of course some of these overlap. **Communication** - Within the library, some individuals tasked with decision making for renewals did not always follow up promptly or at all. This made it so that I would have to follow up repeatedly with them to get an answer. Since we were chronically understaffed, things slipped through the cracks.

- **Usage & cost per use** - As you know, usage statistics are not the same across fields. For this reason, we could not use cost per use to justify renewing or not. Also, some journals did not have itemized pricing since they were part of a package.

- **Accreditation Considerations** - We only keep discontinued transferring journals with low usage if they were required for a program to be accredited.

- **New Faculty** - Some journals had low usage because they were requested by **new faculty** who were hired for newly launched programs.

- **Course cycle** - To account for the course cycle, we evaluate recently acquired journals using 2 years of usage statistics.

- **License Documentation incomplete** - Our licenses were old and incomplete so a project is in the works to update.

- **Time & Staffing Constraints** - We are chronically understaffed making project completion difficult.

- **Loss of Coverage & Perpetual Access Rights**- Because our licenses were out of date we couldn't verify our perpetual rights access
.

- **Perpetual Access Rights (covered above under loss of coverage & perpetual access rights)**

- **Contractual Obligations** - Also known as *mandatory add*s, we have to take these due to our obligations.

- **Aggregators** - We don't evaluate aggregators because they are part of packages.

- **Transition lag time** - Sometimes their is a lag between transfer and addition due to the publisher.

  Also, Keep in mind that not all publishers have signed up for the code of practice.
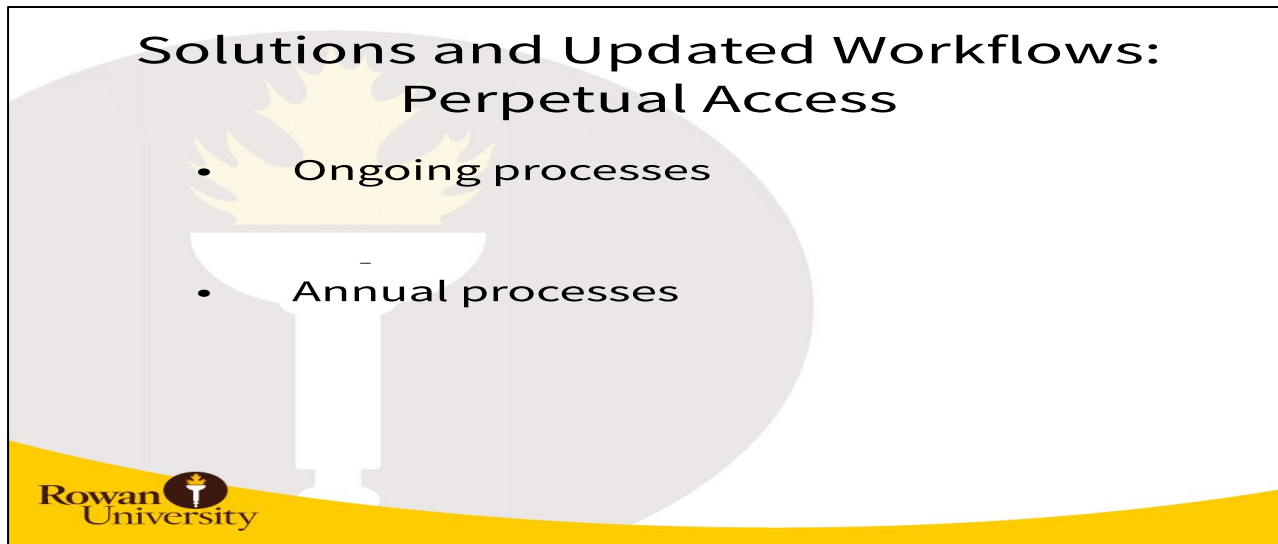
Over time, some challenges persisted and others emerged or became more prominent.

- **Perpetual Access**

- **Open Access**

- **Budget**

- **Changes in Library Services Platform**

- **Time & Staffing Constraints**

Solutions and Updated Workflows:
Perpetual Access

- Ongoing processes

- Annual processes

To ensure that we have perpetual access when we are entitled to it, whether or not we continued a subscription with the receiving publisher, our workflow includes some procedures we now follow throughout the year and others that we perform just once a year.

After we added a perpetual access column In our transfer journal tracking spreadsheet, we performed the following processes throughout the year :

- In the transfer tracking sheet, for each transfer journal notice we received, we designated whether the journal offered post-cancellation rights or perpetual access. This was based on the presence of the perpetual access designation on the transfer notice email itself.
- If this designation was absent, we checked our license terms residing in our Library Services Platform's record for the license. If the term was missing, we looked in the the license itself and added whether we are entitled to perpetual access or not in the license record in the Library Services Platform and in the tracking spreadsheet.
- For each new license record we added or updated in our Library Services Platform corresponding to newly acquired, or renewed resources, we explicitly document post cancellation or perpetual access rights.

On an annual basis, after the journal transfer had taken place, if the title had perpetual access, we did the following:

- Test coverage from transferring publisher

- If we subscribed from the receiving publisher, we would test coverage dates there also
- If there was a coverage problem, we would report it to the receiving publisher. Either the transferring or receiving publisher can be responsible for correcting a coverage problem, and agree on this between themselves in advance, but my understanding is that the receiving publisher is usually responsible for ensuring access for subscribers.

Independent of monitoring journal transfers, we also periodically test access to perpetually owned titles.

Ideally, all our licenses should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Solutions and Updated Workflows: Open Access

- Consistent with OA Collection Development Policy
- Ongoing processes
- Annual processes

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We assume that we want to continue accessing transferring journals that are transitioning to open access.

- Our open access workflow for transfering journals is consistent with with our collection development policy for Open Access Journals. We already subscribe to, or have enabled access through our Library Services Platform to all Open Access journal collections of reputable content providers whose paid journals we already subscribe to, as well as to the DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals). If a journal is transferred to one of these content providers, after the transfer date, the journal should automatically appear in their open access collections that we have already enabled in our Library Services Platform.

- While we don't subscribe to OA journals that are not from our current OA content providers, we do retain access to already subscribed journals transferring to such content providers.

- Since the Transfer Alerting Service notifications now indicate whether a transferring journal is transitioning to open access, we have added an OA column in our tracking spreadsheet that we fill in as we review transfer notifications throughout the year. At the same time, we add a coverage end date to the transferring provider's journal record In our Library Service Platform.

- At the beginning of a new calendar year or after the transfer date, if the journal was to transfer to an OA collection we subscribe to, we verify that the journal is listed in the collection, that it is accessible and Open Access. It is possible that OA access starts effective the transfer date, or all content could have been made open access, and this may factor into whether we retain access from the old content provider for earlier coverage dates.

Not unlike many institutions, budget is a challenge for many. Rowan University had many years until the pandemic where it was able to stave off these concerns for a while, but reality crashed in and a flat budget was implemented. This meant that when things like the costs of a transferring journal came along it was no longer just a simple "ok, go for it" as the general costs of the title moving from one publisher to another had to actually be considered. This was a bit of a culture shock for the library administration.

Library administration was aware of the varying costs of journals between a humanities journal versus a medical journal but did not truly take it into account until the budgets got tighter and tighter during the pandemic. As such, they started to really began to understand that a journal that would be nice to have but cost $6K with only a handful of use probably needs to be reconsidered. Therefore, a rule was implemented that in order to add a journal one had to be removed. Naturally, this is easier said than done since many of our journals are part of a package and have to be switched out rather than dropped. This has been very difficult to get the administration to understand completely. The administration also had trouble understanding obligatory transfers from one publisher to another so there has been quite the learning curve in the last two years.

With these transfers, library administration does not understand that there may be a cost increase from the previous journal and that Christine and I will not be informed about that cost until *after* the transfer has been completed. We also do not obtain cost information for non-obligatory transfers until after librarians/administration express interest in

continuing to subscribe to the transferred journal as it would often be chasing down too much unnecessary information that would be wasted effort otherwise.

However, the biggest surprise for administration has been when a title has transferred from one publisher to another and the access model changes with that transfer. For instance, we had one journal move from an unlimited access model to a 3 user model with a 17% cost increase. While the new publisher may have felt that this was a cost containment measure it was also potentially costly for the institution. Unfortunately, this particular title was needed for medical accreditation and we were obligated to take the transfer title due to agreements, but if more titles followed this model it would certainly be quite cost prohibitive.

Solutions and Updated Workflows:
Change in Library Services Platform

- Automatically Managed Collections
- Controlled Journal Availability

In 2019, our library migrated from a Voyager catalog, Intota ERM and Summon discovery System to an Alma/Primo integrated Library Services Platform. And we have benefitted from certain Alma features that Intota did not have at the time we transitioned.

Through Automatically Managed Collections or Auto Holdings, Alma enables institutions to automatically update electronic holdings from several journal content providers.
 This means that we do not have to activate or deactivate new, cancelled , discontinued journals from these content providers. The benefit of this is that it reduces manual work.

The way this impacts our transfer journals workflow is that we need to be aware of the vendors who do have auto holdings. And if we opt to subscribe to a journal from an auto-holding receiving provider, the journal will automatically be added to our autoholdings collection. We have to monitor whether the journal has been added, rather than activating the title ourselves and contact the vendor if the new title has not been added. We now only test access for such titles rather than activate them as we do other titles we decide to get from receiving publishers. We have to check whether when automatically managed titles are transferred, access continues through transferring publisher for the coverage period or whether the record from the old publisher is removed, and what happens when we are supposed to retain perpetual access.

It is possible to activate a journal in Alma but not turn on access until you want to, by setting the journal record's available unavailable toggle, and turning on access when you have confirmed that the title is available to your institution.

There is also now or will soon be a feature to *Automatically Deactivate/Activate journals on a Specified date.* These features would give you more flexibility and control over when these tasks are performed,
But as you are aware, just because the settings can be switched on on a previously scheduled date doesn't mean that a resource will necessarily be available as scheduled, and of course testing is required.

Solutions and Updated Workflows: Time & Staffing Constraints

- Chronic understaffing
- Got worse
- Adjusted procedures to adapt to lack of staffing

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- You can probably relate to the fact that the **lack of adequate staffing** has been a perpetual problem for us. Our academic programs and enrollment have grown, yet our eresources staff of 4 has at best stayed the same.
- This has been compounded by the fact that in the last 3 years, we have often been working at less than capacity due to the pandemic and the triple-demic, not to mention life life events.
- A 2014 article Iisted in our reference page, titled Tracking Perptual Access: A survey of librarian Practices, by Chris Bulock of Southern Illinois University, concluded that a large proportion of librarians who acquire perpetual access resources were not systematically tracking that access, And that a commitment to securing perpetual access rights from vendors is high but the dedication to maintaining that access is less certain.
- As Bulock states, dedication requires commitment and to minimize disruption, we have made it a priority to document all the information we have obtained about transferring titles in our tracking spreadsheet, so that we can refer to it as a starting point when work on certain processes resumes.

Looking back at the very beginning of tracking transferred journals at Rowan University through the present, we have observed that the process evolved over time as new problems to address were identified. No sooner had we reached the point where the workflows were well-established than we realized that they were inadequate and needed to be improved. For example, we were initially happy to not have dead links and to have coverage of content that transferring and receiving publishers provided, but we realized that we had to follow up and verify perpetual access entitlements. The benefit of the workflows evolving is that they have become more refined and there are now fewer surprises.

One difference between our earlier processes which were developed to remedy a quality control problem, and our current ones is that they have become more collaborative, and integrated with contracting and licenses that Jennifer is responsible for. The eresources team used to work in isolation, identifying transferring journals, gathering and sharing tracking information and usage statistics and would be notified about the result at the very end of the process, just in time to activate journals. The library then opted to continue to subscribe to active journals in the next subscription cycle.

Tracking transferred journals has now been incorporated into ongoing collection and resource management processes.

Despite staffing and budget constraints, we view transferred journals workflow as a success, since we have iteratively identified and addressed a number of problems and continue to refine process.

Our main takeaway is that even though tracking transferring journals is a lot of work that is always changing and has a lot of moving parts, the time and effort we expend on it is worthwhile for the following reasons:

- Users have a better experience accessing contentI due to the continually improving transfer code of practice that endorsing publishers adhere to and that our library has benefitted from.
- There is Transparency in Decision making about subscriptions
- And there is a demonstrated effort to be accountable to administrators at our university regarding cost, and possible savings.

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Thanks!

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