Author Experience

A Beginner's Guide

August 2024

ChronosHub

Foreword

Authors are at the heart of what we do.

Our primary focus is giving authors the best experience on the ChronosHub platform. Publishers, institutions, and funders can subscribe to our multitenant platform, and they all share one common goal: to make things easier for authors during the publishing process.

Over the last few years, our team has had many discussions with publishers and other stakeholders about the need to look at things from the author's perspective. We have hosted workshops, advisory board meetings, and many webinars on the topic. In December 2023, we launched a publisher survey.

As our experience and understanding of the topic has grown outside of our platform's immediate scope, we have decided that it's time to share what we have learned by pulling it together in this guide. You will hear directly from some of the people we have engaged with, and we have included practical tips, as well as a collection of resources at the end.

We hope you that you enjoy the guide and find inspiration in the pages ahead.

Looking forward to continuing the conversation!

The ChronosHub Team

> *"Author experience is all about the personal touch – it's about making authors feel that you care about them as individuals."*
> **Marianne K. Knudsen, Co-CEO at ChronosHub**

> *"We need to be clearer and more transparent in communications with authors. Authors that know how far they are in the process will feel well informed and will be happier."*
> **Romy Beard, Publisher Relations at ChronosHub**

> *"Give more control to your authors! Provide them with the right tools, at the right time, and let them make the best decision for their manuscript."*
> **Christian Grubak, Founder & Co-CEO at ChronosHub**

YOUR GUIDE
TO AUTHOR EXPERIENCE

1. WHAT IS AUTHOR EXPERIENCE?

Author experience is the experience an author has when engaging with a publisher's brand.

Author experience (AX) covers everything from conversations during events, to calls for papers, author guidelines and other information presented on your website, interactions with systems, and anything in between.

Author experience can include:

Author-facing information on a publisher's website. This includes journal web pages and author guidelines.

A publisher's platforms and/or systems. Author experience works across submission and peer review systems, production sites for proof correction, the payment process, and license signature.

Communication throughout the publishing process. This can include email marketing campaigns, personal emails from editors, decision letters, automated messages generated by systems or platforms, and emails from marketing to help authors promote their work.

Post-publication promotional activities. Author experience doesn't stop after publication! Post-publication interviews and social media interactions for example still contribute towards Author experience.

Why is author experience important?

Authors are individuals. On the one hand, there are many journals for authors to choose from, and on the other hand Open Access and the APC economy have turned the author into a consumer.

> *"Publishers in an OA world that are focused on author experience have been tremendously successful, growing at market rates that I don't think anyone could have anticipated, proving how important focusing on author experience is."*
>
> **Colleen Scollans, Clarke & Esposito**

These changes mean that we are focusing more on the personal experience of the author as an individual. In this way, author experience becomes similar to customer experience.

> *"Author Experience is part of the digital transformation and changes publishers' perspective from "I care most about librarians" to "I care about librarians, and I also care about individual authors." That is a massive shift that can't be underestimated."*
>
> **John Challice, Hum**

Publishers are not just marketing their brand to organizations, but to people with feelings and emotions, needs and wants, and that requires you to plan for a more personal approach. Many authors are digital natives. Current authors are not just authors, they are users of today's tech services. The new digital landscape has changed authors' behavior. Now, authors have the same expectations of the platforms they use during the publishing process as they do with the platforms they use for everyday tasks.

The combination of these elements has made publishers think differently about the experience they provide to authors.

> *"There is a huge drop in submissions and published numbers across most journals in most subject areas for most publishers and that's why author engagement is particularly important at the moment. It takes an effort to attract a new author. You have to make sure you give them a really great author experience, so they keep coming back."*
>
> **Claire Moulton,**
> **The Company of Biologists**

Consistency & coherence

Consistency and coherence are two important components in author experience.

In our webinar on Communicating about Open Access our UX designer, Dr. Yen Trinh spoke about the need to design with both consistency and coherence in mind.

Consistency is what helps the user learn something, retain it and then recognize it after. It is the expression of similar things in similar ways.

Coherence on the other hand is the way in which something complements something else. Coherence is the expression of similar things in complementary ways. In different contexts, the same design, such as a button or a logo, might need to be different.

This is important as it affects user behavior and applies to the wider publishing journey and author experience across the entire workflow.

Consistency in author experience is key, but there needs to be room for coherence, so that author interactions can be adapted to different settings.

2. WHO OWNS AUTHOR EXPERIENCE?

There is no one-size-fits-all.

Your organization has recognized that it's important to rethink the experience provided to your authors. But who should be involved? Who are the key stakeholders? Who owns Author Experience?

You might decide that **a single person** owns author experience at your organization:

> *"We recommend a single stakeholder in the organization is in charge of the roadmap so they can ensure accountability, communication, and forward progress. Someone has to stitch together the threads."*
> **Colleen Scollans, Clarke & Esposito**

Others might prefer a **working group**. In this case, make sure the team is not too big, as it's easier to get alignment and drive change with a smaller group. You might also want to consider leaving technology-focused staff out of the immediate focus group, since they might be constrained by the status quo.

Regardless of the size of the group, it's important that you have a workflow in place to **escalate** and involve other teams, and most importantly, decision makers. You need to keep them in a close loop so there are no bottle-becks. This is even more applicable for larger organizations where it's harder to get everyone onboard to embrace change.

> *"We have an author experience roadmap, which is cross-functional, spanning work across the end-to-end author journey – it's definitely been hard to get all departments aligned around it when they're also focused on their own individual department objectives and initiatives".*
> **Helen Duce, Sage**

For smaller societies that are publishing via commercial publishers and not controlling the entire publishing workflow, the focus will be very different. For example, it might be less focused on systems and platforms, and more on direct outreach and engagement, which will require more input from marketing, and less so from operations.

How do editors fit with author experience?

Editors are crucial to the author experience, as they make key decisions that affect the author. How those decisions and interactions are presented has a huge impact an author's publishing experience.

"Your systems can be best-in-class, but if an author doesn't have a good exchange with a journal editor, that is going to affect author experience far more than jumping between platforms and juggling multiple login credentials."
Charlotte McSharry, Emerald Publishing

We know from conversations with authors that interactions with editors is something they worry about. This is backed by the Editage Survey where 73% of the authors state that they find it difficult to contact editors, and they are worried or concerned about doing so, or they don't know how to get in touch.

Getting alignment between whoever is leading any changes in author experience and editorial, as well as across all editorial roles, is essential to be able to deliver a consistent and coordinated author experience.

You will need to review editorial interactions with authors and, if required, change and align editors' attitudes and how they interact with authors.

"Our greatest opportunity remains how we help editors connect research content to willing experts qualified to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the research - ideally with an eye towards what could be done to improve the final paper. Quality feedback to authors is as important as quality papers."
Kate Horgan, Aries Systems

We discuss editorial engagement with authors more on page 19 in the section about *Improving Manuscript Transfers.*

Overall, determining who should be involved requires some understanding of what your focus is, and what aspects of the author interactions you want to improve.
See section 4: What is a Dream Author Experience on page 14 for more on this!

3. HOW DO YOU KNOW IF IT WORKS?

Ask your authors.

Author engagement and understanding what's important to authors is crucial. However, keeping authors satisfied and giving them what they want is not the same as providing a good author experience.

Author Satisfaction. First, let's look at what authors want: their main goal is to get published in the best possible journal, just like taking a plane to get from A to B. Can I have a bad experience in doing so? Absolutely – there might be delays, missed connections, lost luggage, and annoying passengers.

"We can create something really powerful, but if the users don't understand how to use it or why it is useful for them, then it doesn't work in reality."
**Avi Staiman,
Academic Language Experts**

Similarly, authors that get published can have a bad experience: a lengthy submission process, a suggested transfer to another journal, no oversight over their manuscript status, and so on.

"How come some publishers provide a bad submission experience to authors but still see growth? What is the thing that authors are really paying attention to other than Impact Factor or match of journal to research?"
**David Haber, American
Society for Microbiology**

Conversely, an author that is rejected for publication could have a positive experience by receiving a rejection letter that includes an explanation for the rejection and useful feedback. They might even thank you for it!

"What we have learned is that the lack of a comprehensive explanation as to why a paper is being rejected is what makes it a poor experience. We need to focus on encouraging our editors to inform, educate, and give good feedback to the author if they experience a rejection."
Melissa Patterson, AIP Publishing

What is important to authors?

When choosing a journal, authors look at different criteria including metrics, reach and readership, subject relevance, and what their peers are doing. How can author experience be improved based on these criteria?

Here are some suggestions!

Share relevant metrics on your website, and during the publication process:

- Journal metrics, including the Impact Factor. Yes, authors do care!

- Speed metrics, i.e. time to first decision, time to publication.

- Average ranking of peer reviews, if you grade your peer review. (IOP Publishing, for example, are currently doing this.)

- Spread of a readership.

- Publication options.

- Likely fees, including agreement eligibility for OA publishing.

- Funder compliance.

Sharing these metrics will **ensure visibility and clarity.** Let's take the example of speed metrics: if authors know that they need to wait a minimum of 21 days to get to a first decision, they will feel well informed and less concerned throughout the process.

Share bespoke information.
Think about how today's authors consume information elsewhere, along the lines of movie, song and shopping recommendations.

Why can't we do the same for scholarly publishing? If you know who the author is, provide them with information about where peers from their institution have published, or which journals they have read, if you have this information and can connect it to the publishing journey.

> *"A lot of publishers aren't aware who their readers are. They might know on an institutional level but are not collecting information on an individual level yet. Once we have that information, we can get better at predictive data."*
>
> **Chirag 'Jay' Patel, Cactus Communications**

Provide the best journal match for the research. Consider allowing an abstract or full manuscript upload option that matches with the most relevant journal, which could be expanded to **provide information about likelihood of acceptance**, though this would need to be taken with a pinch of salt, as each manuscript is unique, of course.

> *"As an editor I would be nervous about something telling authors: Don't submit here, because your chances about getting published for this paper are low. Let me decide that! As a publisher, we need to be able to serve you as an individual and that isn't necessarily based on a percentage, it really depends on your paper."*
>
> **Andrea Taroni, Springer Nature**

What do your authors say?

What is most important for authors in general might be different for your authors. If you want to understand how good your current author experience is, you need to ask your authors.

After you have collected feedback from authors, you'll have a starting point and a list of improvements you can work on. In turn this can help determine who within the organization needs to be involved at each stage.

Here are some suggestions of **how to collect** author input:

- We recommend a mix of both qualitative and quantitative feedback.

- NPS metric or quick survey at different steps of the workflow.

- Detailed author surveys or questionnaires.

- In-person or virtual interviews with a group of authors.

- Individual feedback sessions with single authors.

- Looking elsewhere to find out what your authors are saying about you, for example social media channels or blogs.

- One-to-one dialogues with authors during events.

We have also collected some **best practises and tips** from our panel for you:

- Use language that authors will understand.

"Rather than ask, 'How did you find the production process?', we ask: 'Did you find it easy to make corrections to your article proofs?'"
Charlotte McSharry, Emerald Publishing

- If you collect feedback at different steps of the workflow, make sure it is streamlined, so you collect information consistently.

"We realised that so many different departments - editorial, marketing, customer service - were sending surveys and we are trying to align everything that is currently happening so we can propose a simple way of measuring author satisfaction, centrally and systematically, across the workflow."
Helen Duce, Sage

- Don't just focus on the positive but also aim for the negative feedback.

"What you really need to improve is getting the bad feedback. You're going to have to work really hard to get people to tell you what they don't like."
Claire Moulton, The Company of Biologists

- Consider segmenting authors by experience and role. This could be first time author or recurrent author. Make sure to get input from reviewers and editors.

- Get alignment within your organization on how to interpret results and what steps to take:

"Marketing or editorial departments might analyze answers in a different way. You can look at the same data but read different things into it."
Christna Chap, Karger Publishers

What do your authors do?

Another way to assess your current author experience is by analysing the data that you have at hand. You can use this to inform you about how effective a certain initiative is. In short, pay attention not just to what your authors say, but also what they do.

"Keeping people data in synch across your peer review platform and your other publishing platforms is a real challenge." **Ralph Youngen, American Chemical Society**

Analysing your author data allows you to truly get to know your authors. A great author experience is a personal one – where each author is spoken to as an individual.

"Your data holds a lot of clues about what individuals are interested in. If you listen, you can serve them better."
Dustin Smith, Hum

Tracking author activity, for example how quickly an author completes a task in the workflow, can give you a good overview of what needs to be improved. In some cases, speed can be a clear indication of success because it shows that the author understands the task. Delays on the other hand can hint at issues or they can be outliers.

It's important to track across different systems and platforms to connect the dots. One example could be tracking authors from an author recruitment campaign to a journal submission. This could help to assess if your campaign was successful.

"How can we move from measuring outputs to measuring outcomes instead? We would like to collect more point-in-service feedback and data and analysis so that when we make changes to processes and systems we can quickly see if that is having an effect, positive or negative, and will know if we should continue with that."
Caroline Burley, The Royal Society of Chemistry

Analyze your publication data. Do authors submit again, even if they are rejected? Do they publish elsewhere, with a publisher who has similar journals? Do new authors come back, or did they publish with you as a one off?

To answer these questions, look at both corresponding author and contributing author data to get the full picture. Having clean metadata is really important. Check out our underline webinar on OA and Authorship Data for more on this.

"Authorship is inherently complicated. One article can have 60 authors. This can open an entire dataset that sits behind it, and this can be used for a wide breadth of activities, and ultimately, we can use it to transform our business."
Miguel Peralta, Rockefeller University Press

Supplement your own data with tools like Digital Science's Dimensions database, or HighWire's Impact Vizor, which looks at publication patterns and can analyze where manuscripts rejected end up being published.

User testing

At ChronosHub, we focus heavily on **user testing** as part of our platform design. It helps us to find out how authors interact with the platform.

Just asking people questions is not enough.
Often what people say they do is different from what they actually do.

The key is to watch people perform actions rather than asking them what they do.

Key insights from our user testing:

- Users habituate actions quite fast. Users learn quickly and remember things for the next time.

- Users notice large visual elements first.

- Users build confidence by confirmation. For example: if you have "step complete" it means they feel confident to continue.

- Users are led by image before text.

- Users refer to their most relevant conceptual knowledge. They might be constrained by experience and expect to see things in a certain way, and will be confused if something is radically changed, even if for the better.

- Authors that have published less will adapt faster as they have less pre-conceptions.

4. WHAT IS YOUR DREAM AUTHOR EXPERIENCE?

Decide how great you want your author experience to be.

What is your goal? Are you aiming for a passable experience because your authors are loyal anyway and keep coming back? Or do you want to do something amazing?

Here are some starting tips to think about your dream author experience:

Go from end-to-end. While individual touch points can be tweaked or improved, you need to think about the total interactions an author has with your brand and how these impact their perception of your organization.

The big picture matters. In some cases, a culture change is required, and not just a change of processes. This might include rethinking your priorities, and whose viewpoint matters more.

Find what works for you. Some of it depends on your situation and what you wish to improve. Do you want to focus on the workflow across the publishing journey? Or perhaps you're a smaller society that publishes via a commercial publisher and you don't make decisions about all the platforms and systems in use, and instead want to focus on creating a better experience for your authors outside of the immediate publishing process?

Develop a strategy and key focus areas before you undertake any change to ensure you can deliver the desired results. Author experience strategies will vary hugely from one publisher to another. Having a plan of what you want to achieve is crucial.

Consider taking your stakeholders on a away day and do some **blue sky thinking** to see what amazing ideas they can come up with. Have some fun!

How can you supercharge your data?

Technology is crucial in making things easier for authors by customizing workflows and providing the right information at the right time. This can be done by setting up specific business rules, or by making use of your author data. Artificial intelligence (AI) can play a huge role in delivering a bespoke experience for authors; it can generate richer insights about each author by offering the most relevant services to them.

> "A better author experience is one where you use AI to understand the individual. You find the author where they are and bring the experience to them. We need to build user journeys and pathways and put things in front of people rather than rely on them looking for it. That's a true user-centred approach and allows authors' own routines to remain free and unrestricted."
>
> **Dustin Smith, Hum**

The key is to put information in front of authors when they are interacting with your brand. One way of doing this is by collecting and using your data for example by working with a customer data platform that collates personal profiles based on users who have accessed your site. These profiles can provide users with targeted messages based on their behaviour.

Similarly, you can target authors that are covered by a read & publish agreement and encourage them to submit, by checking the IP addresses from where they access the journal pages. If the IP addresses belong to an institution that has an agreement, you can present the author with the relevant information. This can help authors that are familiar with specific journal brands but might not be aware of open access publishing agreements.

> "We need to starting using the technology and the tools and the data to show the right message to the right customers at the right time."
>
> **Colleen Scollans, Clarke & Esposito**

If you're from a society publishing with a larger publisher, ask for your journal data. Publishing partners have a wider reach in terms of global marketing and have access to different tools than societies, so they can be helpful if you work together in the right way. This is something that can be negotiated as part of an agreement.

One thing to be aware of when looking at first party data is author consent. You need to inform users that you will be collecting their data, explain what you will do with it, and have their consent to share data if doing so.

You also need to think about how much and in what way you are contacting authors. Your marketing to authors might be personalized and relevant, but sometimes too much is just too much!

How can you optimize your workflows?

If you control the full publishing workflow, start by looking at the different steps in the workflow, since there is a close relationship between good author experience and article workflow.

Here are our five tips for improving author experience through better workflows:

1. Consider one federated login across all interactions with your authors by leveraging integrations wherever possible. Don't make your authors jump through hoops by requiring separate logins for each journal or for different platforms or systems.

2. Revise manual and automated workflows.
Do you always have the best solution in place? Manual workflows, for example emails, are more personal but harder to standardize and update; they can also be slow and time-consuming to send, leaving your authors less informed.

Automated workflows can be quick and time-efficient but should also be customizable depending on different needs. Good author experience will drive speed. So, review your workflows with the author in mind, and see how it affects them and not just your team!

3. Check that your workflows are logical.
Start by mapping all your author interactions end-to-end, and see if you always provide the right information at the right time. Are some steps repeated? And if so, could some information be passed between systems to avoid asking authors multiple times?

4. Keep it simple!
Take the example of Instagram. Initially launched as Burbn, it only took off once the number of features were heavily reduced. Many similar examples can be found in publishing, where authors are overloaded with unclear information. Try and keep workflows simple and limited to what is required.

5. Adopt a 'we do it for you' attitude.
Are there things that you ask authors to do, that you could help them with? Or use AI to help provide? For example, extract metadata from a manuscript so authors don't need to enter it manually? There are plenty of other examples in the workflow.

> *"For a long time, publishers pushed work back onto authors as they tried to make their publishing operations more efficient, but we can't do that anymore. We need to make authors' lives easier and better with technology; we can no longer say 'we'll just get the author to do that' now."*
> **John Challice, Hum**

Words and images

Users look at visual elements before they read and will shy away from too much text. Therefore, it's important not to overload platforms and systems with too much writing. Nevertheless, words are important, and the choice of words matter. Try and be concise in your wording across all your interactions with authors.

For example, if you have read & publish agreements you might refer to fee-free publishing via an agreement as a "waiver", a "voucher" or even a "token". Make sure you use the same terminology in emails, on websites, and of course on the platforms used by your authors.

In some cases, it might also be worth considering adopting the language used by most publishers to keep consistency for authors. It's good to stand out, but is it always worth it?

Localization is important. The ultimate author experience for non-English speakers is having platforms and emails customized to their local language.
In our webinar on AI for a Better User Experience, Avi Staiman talked about the localization of Uber, and how their growth was built around making the app feel local. Not only was it translated into local languages, but by listing local drivers, who could have been friends or neighbors, inspired a huge amount of trust.

Publishers who don't provide websites, content, or emails in local languages could improve their author experience a lot by doing so. You can't customize everything, but you can start by focusing on the most important parts, which can have a big impact.

5. HOW DO YOU GET IT RIGHT?

Publishers recognize a correlation between good author experience and submissions.

Submitting a manuscript can be a painful experience for an author. We believe submissions are the logical place to look for improvements, since they mark the beginning of the article workflow.

Authors have read your guidelines and have identified your journal as the one to submit to, so you've done something right – don't let them down now! Whether they will come back will have a lot to do with their experience from here onwards. Make sure there are no hurdles that prevent your authors from coming back knocking at your door the next time round.

Here are some examples of how you could improve the submission experience:

One login across all your journals.
Make it easy to login and continue to find ways to make it easy for authors to use your tools.

Simplify submission forms.
Collect what you need to get to first decision, and get the rest later.

> "Instead of having authors do the administrative work upfront, try to tweak the process so you collect that information later."
> **Jennifer Regala, Wolters Kluwer**

Extract metadata from the manuscript and pre-populate the fields so there is less manual work for authors.

Verify all the data! If you start off with clean data, there's less potential for delays and errors further down the line, which leads to unhappy authors.

> "Data quality is more important than ever. We focus on capturing data early on, so our AI can correct and enrich it as much as possible to avoid errors later on, thereby ensuring authors the best possible experience."
> **Christian Grubak, ChronosHub**

Increase transparency.
List all potential charges up front, taking into account the author's membership status and institutional affiliation. That also goes for funder compliance!

How do you improve manuscript transfers?

Making the transfer experience smooth and finding the right home for the manuscript as quickly as possible is crucial, as the opportunity for authors to go elsewhere is very real: they have been rejected, after all.

Here are some suggestions for how to improve the manuscript transfer experience for authors:

Consider more positive decision wording.
Instead of "reject with transfer", consider: "a more suitable journal for your manuscript has been found".

Provide detailed feedback for rejections.
This will make authors feel more positive and consider sticking with you!

Share more about the suggested journals.
Include readership and reach metrics, applicable charges, and, if possible, transfer specific acceptance rates. Be upfront and don't hide the small print so authors can make an informed decision! This will increase their confidence.

Make transfers technically smooth.
Imagine clicking a button, and metadata and peer reviews are transmitted automatically. Authors should retain the option to update their manuscript based on reviewer comments, though.

Give authors a guaranteed review or even a provisional acceptance – this will make them feel more confident about proceeding! For this to work, you need to **ensure cross-editorial engagement:** consider transfer-related KPIs, for example: *how many manuscripts did you suggest for a transfer that ended up getting published.*

"The more we listen and respond to the thoughts and feedback of the editors, the more likely they are to give the author the best experience and direct those papers to the journals where they might find a final publication home."
Melissa Patterson, AIP Publishing

Consider submissions to a portfolio of journals or naming a second or third choice journal in case of a rejection; this will **make the author feel in charge.** If you have a large portfolio, an AI-driven journal recommender can help authors find suitable alternative journals.

"We have a lot of information about what might be a really good home for a paper, but that might not always be what authors have in mind. It is their paper after all, and they have full autonomy."
Catherine Goodman, ACS Publications

Allow transfers across different publishers. See the Manuscript Transfer Network for a successful example. This might involve putting author experience before business needs and would require buy-in from across the organization and a possible culture change.

"A lot of the problems are in the plumbing. Publishers need to prioritise what's best for their authors, and that also includes going to other publishers if that's what the authors want to do."
James Butcher, Journalology

6. HOW DO YOU ENGAGE WITH AUTHORS OUTSIDE OF THE PUBLISHING PROCESS?

Author experience starts before a manuscript is written and long after it has been published.

Authors aren't just authors, they also engage with your brand in different roles, like readers, reviewers, and editors. It's important to think about how you present your brand to authors in all these different roles -including returning authors and potential authors.

> *"I see these groups as all entwined. If you think passionately about one, if benefits the other."*
> **Jennifer Regala, Wolters Kluwer**

Reader engagement.
A potential author's first contact with a publisher occurs when they are reading published articles. This will influence authors' perception of your brand. Is your content openly accessible and easy to access? Or is it behind the paywall and requires authentication? Frustration with accessing content could come into play when researchers are considering where to submit their manuscript.

Event engagement.
Many societies run conferences, which provide a great opportunity to develop a personal relationship. If the publishing team has a booth at the event, that's the place to create a buzz and have conversations with authors and make them feel like they are part of a community. Engagement during events also allows you to nurture potential authors before they are even your authors. As Paul Killoran explained during our webinar on Author Engagement Outside of the Publishing Process, 37% of all conference content ends up in a journal eventually within two years. Engaging with conference participants makes them aware of your brand so that by the time they write a publishable piece of research, they won't even think twice about which journal to submit to.

Year-round online events.
Event engagement doesn't have to be limited to annual in-person events but can take place throughout the year. Consider webinars and journal clubs to stay connected in between the annual conference.

> *"As the guardians of content, publishers should provide content through webinars, journal clubs, big conferences, small conferences, whatever they choose, to engage your audience and bring them in, and put you front and centre as their home for their research."*
> **Paul Killoran, Ex Ordo**

This will help create a sense of community around your journals – something that authors feel a part of, providing them with a place where they belong and can be heard throughout their career.

Promoting published content.
Promoting authors' works after they have been published will go a long way to ensure they will come back to submit again and publish in your journals. You can use published content as a basis for creating a site that drives community spirit and connects authors, providing them with a place to network.

Here's an example from the American Urological Association: the AUANews platform re-uses published article content, includes lay summaries of articles and AI-produced recordings of articles, and includes webinars, thus offering a place for authors to connect.

"As the previous Director of Publications at the American Urological Association, I was very passionate about focusing on our authors and making our journal family a community - not just a place for authors to stick their research and forget about it, but a community where all are welcome, and where we can have year-round conversations."
Jennifer Regala, Wolters Kluwer

The Company of Biologists has similar community sites, such as the Node or FocalPlane, and has also created dedicated social media sites, like the biologists.social mastodon server.

Thinking outside the box. Consider planning other initiatives that have a positive effect on authors and the decisions they make about their manuscript submissions. You might want to consider a completely different approach – something that might not seem directly related to author experience but will have a positive effect on authors.

Have you heard of the Forest of Biologists? This is an innovative initiative from the Company of Biologists where a new tree is planted for every article published, and ancient woodland trees are protected for completed review.

The idea was to create real world impact and make a difference to the world. In doing do, it is made a difference to authors, who responded positively to the initiative, explicitly focusing on future submissions in their feedback, as for example in this tweet:

"You get a tree for every paper you publish? And you get a cute virtual tree in a cute virtual forest? Where can I submit?".

While this might not have been the immediate purpose of the initiative, it has created a positive perception of the publisher's brand, which in turn makes authors want to submit to their journals.

"By engaging authors in meaningful ways outside of the publication process, we establish a sense of community where authors feel valued and connected to our brand. This has led to increased author satisfaction and loyalty".
**Claire Moulton,
The Company of Biologists**

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR GREAT AUTHOR EXPERIENCE

A personal approach for authors.
Be it with personal emails or tech-driven customized workflows that take into account who the author is, where they have come from, and where are they likely to go.

Clarity and transparency for authors.
Allow authors to find what they need, when they need it. Keep them informed about the status of their manuscript.

Give more control to authors.
Putting information at their fingertips allows them to make better and more informed choices for their manuscript.

Put authors first.
Be prepared to put authors before other business needs, or before the priorities of individual journal's stakeholders.

SUMMARY

More and more publishers put their authors first.

As a result, publishers are making changes to their outreach, workflows and policies with the author in mind. Every publisher achieves this in a different way, since scholarly publishers come in all shapes and sizes: big commercial publishers, university presses, medium sized publishers, societies and associations – publishing from a single journal to thousands of journals. Author experience strategy and execution – and what it really means to the organization – looks very different from one publisher to the other.

There are many examples of innovative author experience initiatives driven by publishers. Be inspired by what others are doing, and don't forget to look inwards and brainstorm with your colleagues and decision makers to come up with your own ideas. Reviewing what is happening in different industries might also provide you with some inspiration.

You want to ask yourself: What is the feeling that you want to give authors while they engage with your brand? And how can you achieve this?

Ultimately, only you and your organization know what works for you and can be executed by your team. Depending on the subject areas you cover you may come up with something truly unique!

We hope that you enjoyed reading this collection of thoughts and voices and found some inspiration. We would love to hear your feedback about this guide, so please get in touch and let us know.

We'd also be happy to discuss if the ChronosHub platform can help you jazz up your author experience.

Team ChronosHub

RESOURCES

AUTHOR SURVEYS

Author Insights, Nature Publishing Group, August 2015

Author Perspectives on Academic Publishing, Global Survey Report 2018, Editage by Cactus

Taylor & Francis Researcher Survey, October 2019

Ithaka S&R US Faculty Survey 2021, Ithaka S&R, Melissa Blankstein, July 2022

CHRONOSHUB WEBINARS

Open Access and Authorship Data, with Miguel Peralta, Matthew Covey and Tyler Ruse, June 2022

Author Experience, with Colleen Scollans and John Challice, March 2023

The Author Journey Redefined: Getting today's Article Workflow ready for Tomorrow's Authors, with Michael Casp, Kate Horgan and Nicole Brown, June 2023

AI for a better User Experience, with Christian Grubak, Wes Beard, Avi Staiman and Dustin Smith, November 2023

Improving Manuscript Transfers for Authors, with James Butcher, Melissa Patterson & Catherine Goodman, February 2024

Author Engagement outside of the Publishing Process, with Jennifer Regala, Claire Moulton, Paul Killoran, March 2024.

Finding the Perfect Fit: Factors in Journal Selection and Redirection, with Andrea Taroni, Chirag Jay Patel, and Michael Ladisch, May 2024.

BLOGS & REPORTS

Author Experience (AX): An Essential Framework for Publishers, Colleen Scollans, James Butcher & Michael Clarke, September 2022

How to Advance AX (Author Experience) Maturity: 6 Strategies, Colleen Scollans, March 2023

Put Community at the Center of Your Publishing Process, Hannah Carvalho with Jennifer Regala, January 2024

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