



**ENSURING QUALITY CUSTOMER ACCESS TO ONLINE CONTENT WHEN
SOCIETY JOURNALS CHANGE PUBLISHERS
An STM Position**

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STM first issued its position on the process of transferring journals between publishers in 2006, when it endorsed the relevant advice note issued by ALPSP (Association of Learned Professional & Scholarly Publishers) “When a society journal changes publisher”. At the time, the Transfer Working Group, consisting of representatives from publishers, libraries and other stakeholders, were, with the support of the United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG), working on an initiative to provide guidance for publishers on journal transfers, which became the Transfer Code of Practice.

With effect from 2015, the Transfer Code of Practice is supported and maintained by the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) as a Recommended Practice. NISO’s home page for journal transfers is at <http://www.niso.org/workrooms/transfer/>. The Transfer Code of Practice (Version 3.0) is, from 2015, accessible at http://www.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/14411/rp-24-2015_Transfer.pdf.

The Transfer Code of Practice is a voluntary code. Publishers who have endorsed it are expected to use commercially reasonable efforts to ensure that any journal transfers in which they are involved are consistent with the Code. The list of endorsing publishers can be found at http://www.niso.org/workrooms/transfer/transfer_publishers/.

STM Position

STM supports voluntary compliance with principles and approaches which are intended to promote continuity of access to journal content. There are issues that potentially impact library customer access to subscribed content that may arise when a society journal changes publishers or when a society elects to begin or reinstate its own direct publishing activities. By addressing issues relating to continuity of access in their agreements, societies will be able to put their publishing needs out for competitive tender, with less concern that switching to a new publisher, or deciding to bring the publishing activities back within the society, will interfere with continuous access by customers to electronic content. Observance of such principles and approaches is therefore pro-competitive, as it will reduce the total costs of switching publishers and has other pro-customer benefits.

One of the key issues that has arisen in the context of the transition from print to online delivery of STM journals is the question of the library customer’s own “archive” of subscribed content. In the print environment, such an archive was an automatic feature - print issues were delivered and retained by the customers in their physical collection. While most database and software licenses do not provide for “post-termination” use or access, many library customers indicated that unless e-journal

licensing initiatives did provide for post-termination access, they would be reluctant to accept such initiatives. The customer demand was essentially to have an electronic form of the print collection archive. Many STM members provide for just such access in their licenses for electronic journal content.

Librarians also stress the desirability of continuing to access the content they subscribe to through the same system, and under the same business terms, that they originally accepted (through the publisher license), or at least without significant re-negotiation and re-learning.

These are significant concerns expressed by the library customer community, and these Guidelines are intended to respond pro-actively to these concerns.

The following principles are suggested by STM to deal with the question of online access for customers when journals change publishers:

1. Publishers of society journals should always ensure that their customer licenses do not exceed the scope of the license granted to them by the owner societies.
2. The prior publisher should be able to continue to offer access (on a non-exclusive basis) to previously licensed journal content under, and according to the terms and conditions of, existing customer licenses.
3. The prior and new publishers should work together to minimise disruption to users by sending out joint communications and co-ordinating work on changing the access arrangements. The new publisher should aim to provide access on-line as soon as reasonably practicable after the transfer.

Continuing post-termination access may be provided by the original publisher to existing customers for previously licensed content, provided this is consistent with the existing society journal publishing contract and with existing customer license terms and conditions.

Certain of these principles may be varied by express agreement among the two publishers and the society involved. Contractual matters are solely the province of the contract parties, and STM has no role in such "private" matters and does not intend in any way to interfere with existing contractual relationships.

2 June 2015