Journals and Supplementary Data

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Journals and Supplementary Data

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What Are Supplementary Materials?

Supplementary materials provide detailed results or primary data needed to understand or verify the work but which are outside the core article.

They can include tables, figures, multimedia, and (increasingly) data.

What Are Publishers' Policies Regarding Supplementary Materials (Often Referred to as "SI")?

Some examples of instructions to authors include:

Oxford Journals:

Authors are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to submit Supplementary data whenever appropriate; for example, when the amount of material is too great to warrant inclusion in the main body of the paper, or when the material is in a format that cannot be represented in print (i.e., video clips or animated graphics) ... [Supporting material that has not been peer reviewed will not be published as Supplementary data (so will not be designated 'S' in the Table of Contents), but can be made available through a link to the author's home page, at the discretion of the Executive Editor handling the paper ... Supplementary data should be submitted in a separate file(s), in its final form. Please note that Supplementary data will not be edited, so ensure that it is clearly and succinctly presented, and that the style of terms conforms to the rest of the paper. Also ensure that the presentation will work on any Internet browser. (Oxford Journals)

Nature:

Supplementary Information (SI) is peer-reviewed material directly relevant to the conclusion of a paper that cannot be included in the printed version for reasons of space or

medium (for example, movie clips or sound files) ... SI is not subedited so authors should ensure that it is clearly and succinctly presented, and that the style of terms conforms with the rest of the paper. During SI processing for online publication, standard house formatting will be applied but the contents will remain unchanged. SI is posted on the freely available part of our website at the time of publication and cannot be hosted solely on the authors' own websites for peer-review or publication purposes. Nor can the author alter it after the paper has been accepted for publication. We do not take responsibility for the maintenance of any links or e-mail addresses provided in SI. (Nature, n.d. a)

Taylor & Francis:

Supplemental material, including animations, movie files, sound files and text files, can be submitted for publication in the online edition of our journals. There is normally no time limit on hosting supplemental material. Supplemental material should be submitted at the same time as your manuscript ... Supplemental material online must be pertinent to and support the article to which it relates. It must be submitted simultaneously with the article, but will not be modified by the publisher and authors will not receive proofs. It should at least be subject to editor oversight. More extensive supplemental material (analyses rather than data) ideally should be subject to peer review. (Taylor & Francis)

Issues

The above sounds simple, but after publication of the article/materials, ongoing concerns include:

- Citing the supplementary materials—how do you find it?
- Linking—findability and durability

- Accessing—how do you run them (e.g., computer programs)—issues of curation and migration
- Cost of reviewing

Changes in Publishers' Policies

On August 11, 2010, the *Journal of Neuroscience* issued the following announcement regarding supplementary material:

Beginning November 1, 2010, *The Journal of Neuroscience* will no longer allow authors to include supplemental material when they submit new manuscripts and will no longer host supplemental material on its web site for those articles. (Maunsell, 2010)

The editors specified that they would continue to allow embedded movies or 3-dimensional materials, which can only be presented as supplemental material. In addition, when articles are published, authors would be able to include footnotes with the URL to a site they support and maintain. However, supplemental material would not be peer-reviewed or hosted by the journal. Reviewers could not take on the additional review of stacks of ancillary material and were not prepared to be reporting for unvetted material.

The *Journal of Experimental Medicine* followed in July 2011:

Effective immediately, supplementary information in *JEM* Articles and Brief Definitive Reports (BDRs) will be limited to essential supporting information. This would include: file formats not currently amenable to inclusion in the primary paper (e.g., videos, large datasets, and genomic data), clinical information (e.g., case reports and descriptions of patient populations), and complex detailed methods required to reproduce data in the paper (e.g., chemistry required to synthesize and characterize compounds, evidence of the purity and specificity of new inhibitors or antibodies, or flow cytometry gating strategies). Our aim is to eliminate the use of the supplement as a “data dump.” (Borowski, 2011)

In “Moderating supplementary data”, *Nature Neuroscience* announced that they would now limit the amount of supplementary information that authors are allowed to present (Nature America). Authors should provide one paper, indicating which materials would be better suited as “supplementary information,” when submitting (Nature America). The editors clarified that they continued to recognize the value of supplementary data and to provide repository to present supporting data such as movies, audio files, or large datasets, but “unrestrained SI” was problematic.

Another viewpoint is presented by the editors of *eLife*, a new journal being planned. The editors hope “to move towards a situation in which underlying or primary data—of any size and any composition—will be linked appropriately to an article narrative, will be easily searchable, discoverable, and citable, and will be made available in the most useful formats for reuse” (*eLife*). Since *eLife* will have no page limitations, there will be no necessity for “supplementary material.”

Moving away from the practice of publishers archiving the supplementary materials on their own sites, journal policies increasingly specify data archiving in public repositories. For example, *Nature* authors are required to make materials, data, and associated protocols available to others. Data sets should be provided to editors and peer reviewers at submission as well as be made freely available to readers from the date of publication (Nature, n.d. b).

Data Citation

While outside the scope of this presentation, there are some developments in data citation that are worth keeping an eye on.

CODATA (International Council for Science—Committee on Data for Science and Technology) approved a statement on the need for robust data citation capabilities at its General Assembly in Cape Town in 2010 (CODATA 27th General Assembly, 2010).

DataCite (www.datacite.org/) is working with organizations that host data to assign persistent identifiers to datasets.

NISO

The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) is working on standards and recommended practices for supplementary journal materials.

Volume 22, issue 3 (summer 2010) of *International Standards Quarterly* is a special issue on enhanced journal articles (NISO, 2010).

Most specifically related to this presentation, NISO and NFAIS are working on a Recommended Practices for Online Supplemental Journal Article Materials Project (NISO & NFAIS, n.d.). My co-presenter, Dave Martinsen of the American Chemical Society and co-chair of the Technical Working Group, will discuss this project in more detail.

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