GSA
®

Genetics Society of America

"I'm always glad when I open up a new submission and see that the authors have used Overleaf to prepare their manuscript. It makes it easier for me to evaluate the manuscript, and I know reviewers appreciate the easy-to-navigate format. I wish all authors would use Overleaf to format their submissions."

– Mark Johnston,
  Editor-in-Chief,
  GENETICS

Editorial team saves time and streamlines editorial process

70% of all accepted LaTeX submissions coming into GENETICS are now written and submitted using the Overleaf template and platform.

Executive Summary

The Genetics Society of America (GSA) editorial team was looking for a way to simplify and ease the LaTeX submission process for authors and editorial staff. The team wanted:

1. To simplify the LaTeX submission and publication process:

   a. To improve the consistency of article format of LaTeX submissions – minimizing time required to review articles.

   b. To improve consistency of file submissions by helping authors consistently submit all necessary files – decreasing the time required to chase authors for missing files and information.

   c. To receive LaTeX files which were technically up to date and able to compile without errors – reducing time required to debug files and/or pass files back to author for updates.

2. To outsource LaTeX author support.

3. To be seen as a technology innovator to authors and within the GSA.

Challenges

Prior to partnering with Overleaf, the Genetics Society of America editorial team dreaded seeing LaTeX submissions come into their system. Most authors used a range of local LaTeX installations – which often differed from GSA's. This resulted in LaTeX submissions that consistently had formatting issues, missing files and a multitude of errors preventing successful compilation by the GSA. These inconsistencies and errors added hours to the time necessary to process and move these submissions through the GSA workflow.

Furthermore, the GSA was receiving LaTeX support requests from authors. These requests were difficult to handle as the GSA did not have a person or group dedicated to answering questions or helping with LaTeX issues.

Jim Bull, past *GENETICS* Editor, The University of Texas - Integrative Biology, discovered Overleaf and saw the potential benefits related to the GSA and contributing authors. He showed the GSA Editorial Team the Overleaf platform and explained how it could save time and streamline their current LaTeX workflow.

Jim Bull said:

"...there is a new LaTeX interface that uses journal-specific templates and allows direct submission to journals... I'm using it for the first time...it looks pretty amazing, both for allowing collaborators to edit the manuscript and for avoiding the hassles of finding all the journal-specific forms. I suspect that something of this ilk will be increasingly common, and indeed the journals could implement templates themselves."
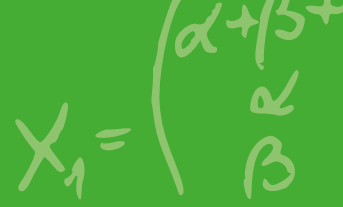
How Overleaf Helped

Overleaf is a cloud-based, collaborative LaTeX and Rich Text authoring platform. Think of it like Google Docs™, but for users of LaTeX – particularly, but not exclusively, researchers, scientists and engineers. It's incredibly intuitive and simple to use – users go to the website, open a template (over 3000 available), and start to write. There's nothing to download or install. The author's file is automatically composed as they write - they write on the left and the file is composed on the right, in real-time, based on the template they choose. Users can choose to write in LaTeX or a Rich Text mode, which provides a 'word processor' type environment for users who are new to or aren't familiar with LaTeX. In addition, Overleaf has Publishing Services which allow publishers to streamline their workflows, provide authors with an innovative author writing experience, greatly simplify the authoring and publishing submission process, and offer LaTeX author support.

Partnering with Overleaf provided a comprehensive solution for the Genetics Society of America – it allowed their authors to continue using LaTeX, while providing them with an innovative authoring template, a reduction in compilation issues, and full-time LaTeX support. Thanks to Overleaf, LaTeX authors can now use a single, consistent and state-of-the-art LaTeX installation – not only does this minimize compatibility issues but, at the same time, gives authors the freedom to fully utilize the power and flexibility of LaTeX.

Overleaf and the GSA worked together to develop a new LaTeX authoring templates for the *GENETICS* and *G3* Journals. Each of these templates offer authors multiple article-type options to account for the different formats of articles found in each journal (ex: Investigation, Genomic Selection, Genetics of Immunity, etc.). Authors can easily find links to these templates within the GSA journal websites or on Overleaf, and simply click the link to open the template on the Overleaf platform. The templates provide examples, guidelines and instructions within the template, directly where the author is writing. This has the combined effect of increasing compliance with the guidelines whilst also easing the writing process for the author – allowing the author more time to focus on the content of their article.
To provide a further consistency of working environment for the authors, the Overleaf platform is co-branded, with a journal's logo and information clearly visible to the author while writing in the journal's customized template. This visual element acts as confirmation to the author that the Genetics Society of America is working with Overleaf to provide a state-of-the-art authoring experience.
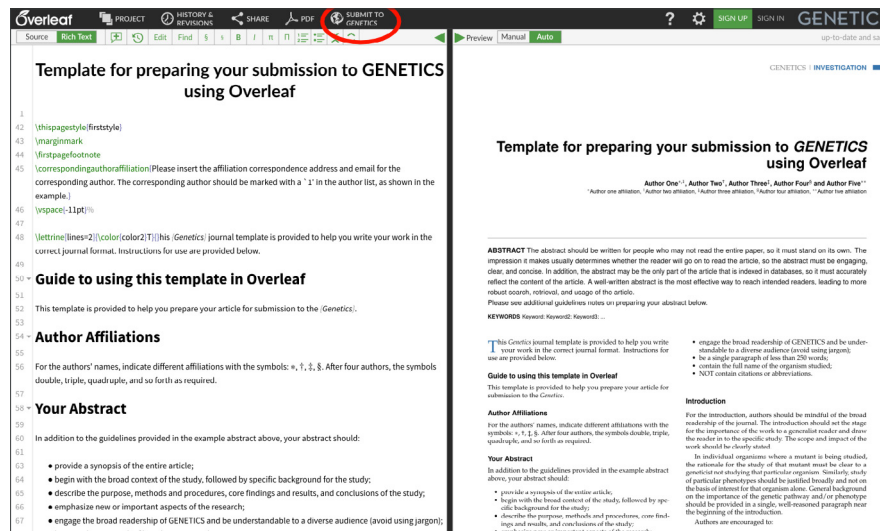
Each template includes a simplified submission link that provides a streamlined submission process for the authors. When the author is finished writing (and collaborating!) they simply click a button at the top of the template to submit their article and supporting files to the journal. This simplified submission button provides journal-specific instructions related to the submission process, a link to download all necessary files (including all necessary supplementary files) and a link to the journal's submission web portal.
Author questions that come into the GSA can be redirected to the Overleaf support team. Overleaf provides fast and effective LaTeX support through their on-staff 'TeXperts'. These 'TeXperts' are available to answer questions on the platform, the templates, or on LaTeX itself.

cont.

Results

The *GENETICS* and *G3* journal templates were developed and announced to authors within 1-2 months of initial collaborative discussions. Since that time, over the course of 2 years, the templates have been viewed over 15,000 times, with over 1,800 articles worked on and an estimated 214 articles completed or close to completion via the Overleaf platform. 70% of all accepted LaTeX submissions coming into *GENETICS* are now written and submitted using the Overleaf template and platform. These submissions take significantly less time to process and review than non-Overleaf submissions, and Ruth Isaacson, Managing Editor, GSA Journals, adds that:

"Things are coming in in the proper order and format. We would previously always have to chase authors for additional files (e.g. .sty files). But now we're getting all we need, we don't have to chase authors as much. It's much faster and easier for us to process submissions now."

Mark Johnston, Editor-in-Chief, GENETICS also comments:

"It's much easier for me to go through the manuscript and get all the key points out that I need. It's much easier for me to get to these quickly with an Overleaf manuscript."

As an author writes and edits in Overleaf, the print-version of the file is compiled in real-time in a separate window pane on the right-hand side of the screen. This allows the author to see what their finished file will look like, as they're writing. This helps in two ways:

1. It ensures that the files are correct and error free. If an error is introduced by the author, the file won't compile and an error alert is shown. This allows the author to correct any errors as they go – thus significantly reducing errors that the GSA receive further down the road.

2. It allows the author to ensure that their file looks the way they want it to look – tables and figures are where they want them to be. This allows the GSA to reference these author files when composing the finished pages – there are fewer questions required for the author when the reviewers and editors can see a PDF of what the author originally intended.

Use of the templates has decreased the number of questions received from LaTeX users – the instructions and requirements are readily available and it's very clear what is required. And any LaTeX questions that do come in are redirected to the Overleaf 'TeXperts'.
Ruth Isaacson, Managing Editor, GSA Journals:

"Overleaf decreased the amount of questions we receive and the amount of processing time required from LaTeX users - with Word users we still have to answer a lot of questions, and it takes a lot more of the editorial staff time."

Unexpected Benefits

There were a few unexpected benefits the Genetics Society of America realized from their partnership with Overleaf:

- Encouraging more authors (including non-LaTeX using authors) to use the Overleaf LaTeX workflow and templates.

- Gaining a deeper understanding of their author-base.

- Data and Analytics information on author writing and template use.

The GSA is recognized as a technology innovator. They were one of the first publishers to implement Overleaf to support their authors and the response has been excellent. Overleaf is positioned as a LaTeX technology leader in researcher and institutional communities and the GSA acknowledged the importance of implementing this leading technology. The GSA is an organization that listens to what their authors need and then adopts new tools to help them with those needs.

Author from the *GENETICS* journal said:
"I'm very happy to see GENETICS providing this option. I've been very pleased with Overleaf and am using it to collaborate with a number of people on different projects. I've recently become so tired of dealing with Word, that I now choose journals for submission based in large part on whether they allow LaTeX and ease of the submission process... "

The GSA is now looking to encourage more authors (non-LaTeX using authors) to use the Overleaf LaTeX workflow and templates. They now have evidence that this will save the editorial team time and will streamline the editorial workflow.

Since one of Overleaf's distinctive and developed features is the option to write in either Rich Text mode or LaTeX mode, writing in Overleaf makes it easier for authors who aren't traditional LaTeX users to open customized templates and begin writing. Rich Text mode looks and feels more like a standard word processor and the GSA intends to promote use of this writing mode to expand Overleaf use among all GSA authors – not just LaTeX authors.

The GSA intends to further support authors through useful data and analytics associated with the Overleaf LaTeX templates and platform partnership. Overleaf provides publishers with a Data and Analytics Web Hub. Data on template use, edits made on documents, collaboration numbers, geographic locations of authors, and other information allows the GSA to get a deeper understanding of their author-base and better feedback on their marketing initiatives.

Get in touch for more information and a demonstration of our services.
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