Overleaf

Overleaf Improves the Author Experience with F1000Research

Prior to the integration with Overleaf, F1000Research could not easily accept LaTeX submissions. Now, approximately 10-15% of all submissions come in via the Overleaf template and submission link.
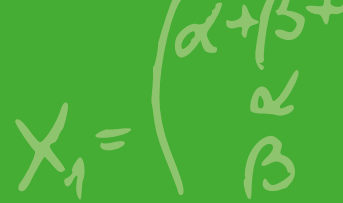
We interviewed Michaela Torkar, Editorial Director, and Thomas Ingraham, Publishing Editor at F1000Research, on the positive effect Overleaf has had on the article submission process and on the author and editorial workflow. Overall, the results have been impressive.

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Background

Michaela manages the editorial team that deals with article submissions to the F1000Research publishing platform, and she explained how F1000Research and Overleaf are working together to enhance the author and editorial experience. Thomas was an Associate Editor at the time of the interview, handling manuscripts and working with authors to ensure their articles met the F1000Research publication criteria.
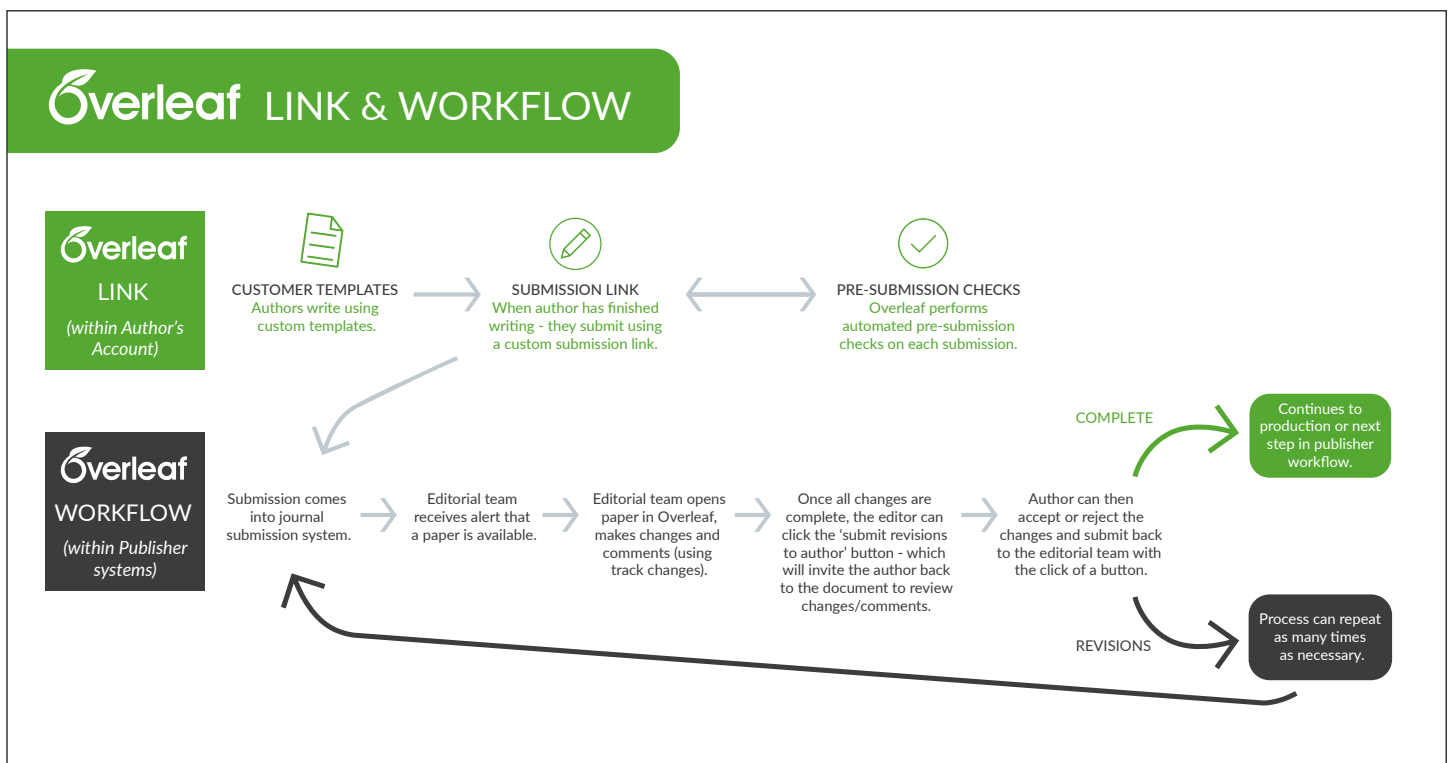
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The Overleaf cloud-based, collaborative authoring and submission platform is offered to authors to ease the writing and submission process to F1000Research. Overleaf developed custom LaTeX article templates for F1000Research that authors can quickly and easily open from within the F1000Research author guidelines website. This allows authors to effortlessly write in the correct style and format, collaborate with colleagues through the Overleaf cloud-based authoring tool, and then submit their finished article with 1-click directly to F1000Research. From there, the Overleaf platform is integrated into the F1000Research editorial process whereby editors can efficiently review and update the article, submit changes back to the author with 1-click, and collaborate with the author on suggested article updates and changes.

F1000Research uses an author-led process, publishing all scientific research within a few days and this, Michaela and Thomas both believe, attracts a lot of authors to the publisher. Open, invited peer review of articles is conducted after publication, focusing on scientific soundness rather than novelty or impact.

On average, articles are published within seven days of submission. The publishing workflow functions as follows: An author submits an article for publication. The editors check the submission against F1000Research editorial criteria and then they work with the author to get the article into the correct format to be published. For most LaTeX submissions, this is done through the Overleaf editorial workflow shown below:

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The peer review process begins once the article has been published. Michaela's team checks that the methods are described in sufficient detail for referees to be able to assess them and that the source data supporting the presented results is included to help support reproducibility. Michaela and her team also focus on ensuring that the article metadata information is correct. The metadata gets transferred automatically from Overleaf during the submission process, so there is no new data entry required for these submissions. Peer review happens post publication and is completely open. The peer reviewers names and referee reports are published alongside the articles. Michaela's team handles the peer review invitation process and they work with the authors to ensure that the peer review goes smoothly. Experts are invited to do the peer review; it is not crowdsourcing.

F1000Research has in-house editors with scientific backgrounds who check the papers that come in and edit them if necessary. Michaela comments:

"These editors deal primarily with submissions and so will be familiar with the Overleaf process. After publication, another in-house team liaises with the authors and referees during the peer review process."

Authors can publish revisions and updates as new versions of their articles, and they can use Overleaf for this process, too. A new 'project' is created on Overleaf with the most recent version, allowing authors to make changes directly and submit the new version directly to F1000Research, as before.

Reasons Behind the Selection of Overleaf

Managing Director Rebecca Lawrence met with Overleaf Co-Founder John Hammersley at the Oxford Future of Science conference in March 2013. During the conference, John gave a lightning one-minute demo of the product's recent integration with figshare, which caught the eye of Rebecca who was in the audience. Through a follow-up meeting in London, John and Rebecca talked through the opportunity to provide a similar link from Overleaf to F1000Research, and simply put, it made a lot of sense for both sides.

The business rationale for integrating Overleaf into the submission process was to provide a compelling service to authors from the bioinformatics and genomics fields in particular. Scholars from these communities are the first ones to fully embrace F1000Research's unique model. Researchers in these fields often use LaTeX to format their articles and to do their graphical notation. Michaela comments:

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"Many bioinformaticians and biologists who use computational models have told us that they generally prefer using the LaTeX format over [Microsoft] Word. By working with Overleaf, we can offer this group of authors an alternative to Word, and this helps improve their overall experience with F1000Research."

Benefits and Gains

Prior to their work with Overleaf, Thomas states that it was challenging for F1000Research to accept LaTeX as a form of submission. They provided no LaTeX templates and had limited LaTeX author support. This was not ideal for many of their authors who preferred to use LaTeX for authoring their scientific documents. Through the Overleaf partnership, F1000Research now has a customized LaTeX article template, a simple LaTeX submission and editorial process, and even LaTeX author technical support. With these implementations, they now receive 10-15% of all submissions as LaTeX via the Overleaf submission link. Michaela states that they also offer authors the option to go through another cloud-based LaTeX tool, but that they have received very few submissions from the other tool. Michaela comments:

"We don't promote one tool over the other, but our authors typically choose Overleaf."

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