

Navigating common challenges in manuscript submission

Insights for authors and publishers using
Elsarticle and CAS packages

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Introduction

The `elsarticle.cls`, `cas-sc.cls`, and `cas-dc.cls` are the preferred \LaTeX class files recommended by Elsevier, a publishing company specializing in scientific, technical, and medical (STM) content for manuscript submissions to their journals. These class files are available on CTAN along with templates, Bib \TeX style files, and user documentations. In our discussion today, we will explore mainly the purpose, features and benefits of these class files and how to utilize these packages effectively for their intended purposes. We also list out the challenges due to non-usage of these recommended templates.

The purpose

Elsevier publishes roughly 3,000 journals in different disciplines which adhere to a limited number of typesetting models characterized by specific margins, text areas, fonts, and column formats (single and double columns), etc. In addition to the purpose of formatting \LaTeX submissions to Elsevier journals, the class files, `elsarticle.cls`, `cas-sc.cls`, and `cas-dc.cls` serve the following purposes:

- Maintaining a uniform format for review purposes, especially with wide margins and increased interline spacing.
- Assisting authors in formatting their equations, tables, textboxes, etc., to match the final look and feel of the page.
- Ensuring authors include all mandatory information to avoid rejections.
- Helping typesetters automate the typesetting process and reduce typographical errors.

- To send a clean and accurate proof back to the author after typesetting, avoiding surprises and potential mistakes due to manual coding.
- To ease the authors' proofreading job.
- Authors expect typesetters to flag all changes made to their manuscript. Authors are responsible for checking and verifying these changes. If the number of changes is minimal, the authors' task of checking and confirming these changes will be reduced.
- To reduce the turn around time in production with the help of the above automation and publish the articles as quickly as possible.

Features

- Various class file options like `preprint`, `review`, `nopreprintline`, `twocolumn`, `times`, `sort&compress`, etc.
- A frontmatter which runs on multiple pages can be typeset easily without breaking it manually.
- The position of the whole front matter can be changed to left or right from the default alignment of center.
- Options to unload `natbib`.
- `Double-blind` and `single-blind` options.
- Structured front matter coding. Authors themselves can code the organisation, city, postcode, state in the respective fields so that typesetters don't make any mistake in identifying them.
- Options to insert a page break easily after title, author/affiliation or abstract.

Features contd...

- Options to code graphical abstract, highlights, etc.
- Options like `1p`, `3p`, `5p`, `twocolumn`, etc. as per the journal they choose.
- Many bst files adhering to `numbered`, `authoryear` citation styles are available.
- In addition to the main title, options available to code the alternate title, sub-title, translated title and translated sub-title.
- Orcid link, social media links like X (Twitter), Facebook, Linkedin, etc. can be given in the optional argument of author command.
- Any many more...

The beneficiaries

The primary beneficiary will be the authors themselves if they follow the template as per the instructions laid out in the guide for authors document.

- Authors: It helps in adhering to the submission guidelines of journals, which may reduce the risk of rejection due to formatting issues. It can potentially speed up the publication process since less time may be needed for formatting revisions during the review stage.
- Reviewers: Consistent formatting across submissions can help reviewers focus on the content rather than getting distracted by varying styles and layouts. Good typesetting ensures that the text is legible, which is particularly important for reviewers who may spend long hours reading multiple manuscripts.

- Publishers: Publishers can expedite the publication process when manuscripts are already formatted correctly, reducing the time to market. Publishers can make revisions and update files as needed without extensive reformatting, maintaining the integrity of the document
- Typesetters: Using templates reduces the likelihood of errors in formatting, which can save typesetters time in proofreading and corrections. Templates streamline the typesetting process, allowing typesetters to work more efficiently and handle more projects in less time.

The challenge

- The main challenge is authors overlooking the “Guide for Authors” where the details of the templates with proper instructions are given.
- Authors just load the class file only, but the rest of the coding will not be according to the template.
- Less usage of Bib \TeX database.

How to overcome this challenge?

This is a significant question. Based on our experience as typesetters, we suggest the following:

- Publishers should educate authors by communicating best practices in publishing. Provide numerous use cases and highlight the advantages, including faster publication, of using proper templates. Emphasize the disadvantages of non-compliance with author guidelines (**Big Task**).
- Develop and maintain an effective automatic content profiler that validates author submissions and reports shortcomings back to the authors.
- Ensure user-friendly documentation is created and made easily accessible.

- Establish a robust support system with a knowledgeable typesetting team to assist authors and provide timely help.
- Publishers should actively participate in T_EX conferences and interact with experts to understand the power of T_EX. This will help them modulate policies and communicate effectively with the T_EX author community.
- Organize free webinars or seminars on best practices for manuscript preparation at universities, especially those with a high number of contributing authors.

Useful links

- <https://ctan.org/pkg/elsarticle?lang=en>
- <https://ctan.org/pkg/els-cas-templates/?lang=en>
- <https://support.stmdocs.in/index.php/Elsarticle.cls>
- https://support.stmdocs.in/index.php/Elsarticle_-_CAS
- https://support.stmdocs.in/index.php/FAQ_-_elsarticle.cls
- https://support.stmdocs.in/index.php/Model-wise_bibliographic_style_files
- <https://www.elsevier.com/en-in/subject/next/guide-for-authors>
- <https://www.elsevier.com/en-in/researcher/author/policies-and-guidelines/latex-instructions>

Thank you...