



An open-source toolkit to assist authors and collaborators during manuscript preparation: *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit

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To the Editor,

Published scientific work is the result of many hours and sometimes years of work. Further, collaborative scientific work includes multiple authors, collaborators, contributors, and those requiring acknowledgement who may come from various departments, institutions, and countries while meeting criteria for authorship as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).¹ One of the most taxing aspects of preparing and submitting manuscripts is creating a contact list of all contributors with the requisite details for the target journal. This work involves tedious, manual email correspondence with increasingly large lists of contributors.^{2,3} Responses

that are delayed or contain incomplete data cause frustration and stymie the submission process. In our experience, this process can take weeks and leads to exasperation among researchers.

To address the challenges associated with the creation and management of a contact list of authors and collaborators, we developed an *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit, which consists of a series of two REDCap⁴ forms that can be sent to individuals to collect the requested information in a standardized manner (Electronic Supplemental Materials eAppendix 1 and eAppendix 2—usage permitted with citation). The corresponding author (or delegate) creates a new *AuthorAndCollaborator* project for the manuscript in REDCap and imports the two CSV files. After adding the manuscript title to the respective project, the corresponding author sends an email with a link to the form to authors and collaborators. The authors and collaborators follow the link to complete the *AuthorAndCollaborator* form, providing all information required by journals, such as conflicts of interest and a signed ICMJE form. The *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit automates and streamlines the collection of the relevant author, collaborator, and acknowledgement information for submission to journals. Figure A depicts the oft repetitive steps required during the manual process of collecting multiple author and collaborator information; in contrast, Figure B illustrates the enhancements provided by the *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit resulting in less time and effort. The deployed *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit reduces the workload of numerous email threads between the corresponding author (or delegate) and authors and contributors. Further, the *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit aides in capturing accurate contact and affiliation details and the completion of conflict-of-interest forms seamlessly. The *AuthorAndCollaborator* forms are also customizable

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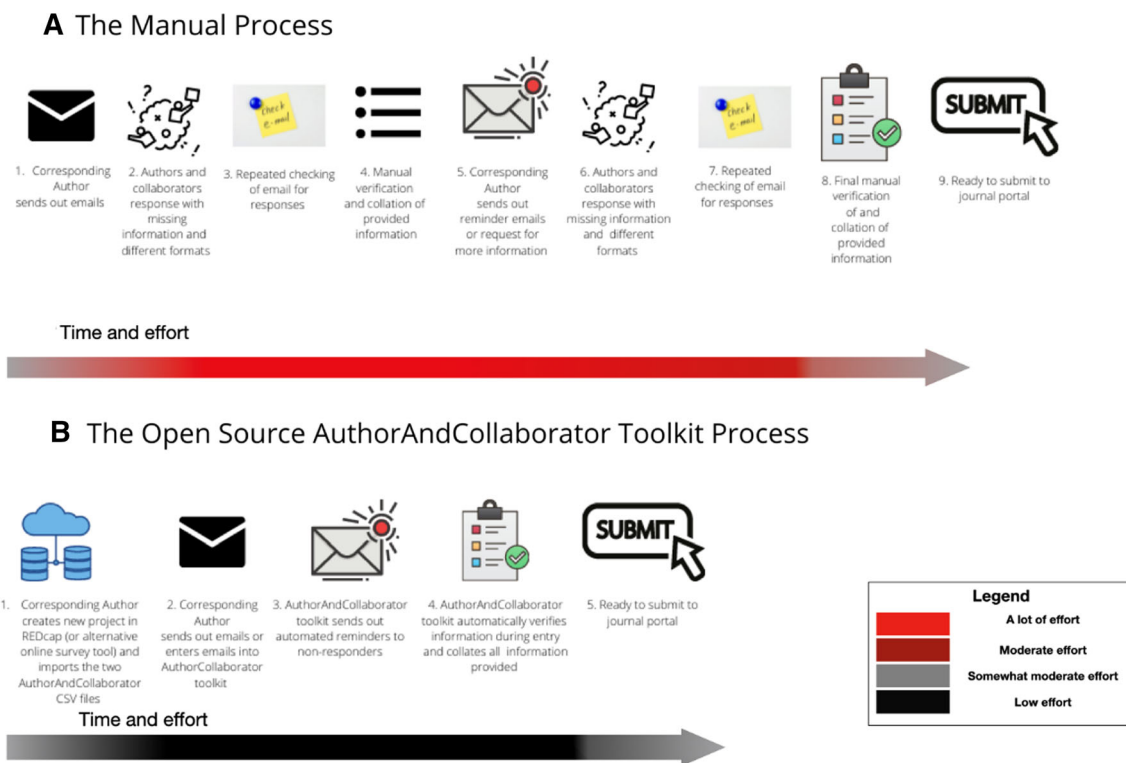


Figure A schematic comparison of the manual and *AuthorAndCollaborator* Toolkit workflows. Panel A illustrates the numerous steps, oft repeated, that are required during the manual process of collecting author and collaborator information; in contrast,

panel B presents the enhancements provided by the *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit resulting in fewer steps and less time and effort required.

and can be used in small collaborations and larger groups of tens or even hundreds. The data dictionary allows adaptation of this toolkit to other manuscript submission systems and online survey tools. Once an author or delegate has deployed the forms on their institutional REDCap or online survey account, a single email is sent to contributors to complete the form(s) relevant to their contributions. The collated responses are available to the author or delegate for download and submission to the target journal. From our experience with manuscript submissions, the *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit has reduced an end-to-end workflow from days or even weeks to just a few hours. From our experience, we believe the *AuthorAndCollaborator* toolkit enhances and streamlines an often manual and labour-intensive step in the manuscript preparation process and will benefit many collaborative research teams.

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