ACM TOCE: Proposal for Updated Review Process

*August 30, 2021*

*Please annotate this document with feedback, questions, comments and concerns.*

1. The EiC desk rejects or unsubmits all new submissions that are obviously out-of-scope, inappropriate for the journal, improperly anonymized, or improperly formatted. All other submissions are assigned to a primary associate editor (AE) who the EiC feels is a reasonable match for the paper.
2. The primary AE reviews the paper in enough detail to make one of three preliminary decisions on the paper:
   1. *Desk reject*—the paper is deemed to have a poor chance of being favorably peer reviewed without substantial revision. If the authors want to resubmit it, they must do so in a new submission.
   2. *Unsubmit*—The paper is deemed to have the potential to be favorably peer reviewed, but there are obvious changes that should be made before the paper can be sent out for peer review. (Note that authors should normally receive only one chance to resubmit a paper that has been unsubmitted. If their resubmission is not deemed ready for peer review, then it should normally be given a decision of “Reject” in the follow-up review by the primary AE.)
   3. *Peer review*—The paper is deemed to be ready for peer review as is
3. Based on their preliminary decision on the paper, the primary AE acts as follows:
   1. *Desk reject.* If the primary AE deems that the paper should be desk rejected, they must “triangulate” this decision with a secondary AE of their choice (see [this list of editorial board members](https://dl.acm.org/journal/toce/editorial-board)) . This is done by assigning the secondary AE as a reviewer of the paper in Manuscript Central and setting the “# reviews needed to make decision" to “1”. In the invitation letter to the secondary AE, the primary AE should state that they are seeking a second opinion on the paper to decide whether it is suitable for peer review. The secondary AE should return their opinion, which can be brief, within three days. Taking into consideration the opinion of the secondary AE, the primary AE can choose either to (a) desk reject the paper by returning that decision to the EiC with a brief rationale (Decision category: “Reject”), (b) “unsubmit” the paper by returning that decision to the EiC with a list of specific, clearly stated recommendations (Decision category: “Revise and Resubmit”), or (c) send the paper out for peer review (rare, but possible).
   2. *Unsubmit.* If the primary AE chooses to “Unsubmit” the paper, they should (a) set the “# reviews needed to make a decision” to “0” in Manuscript Central, (b) set the decision category to “Revise and Resubmit,” and (c) include in their decision letter a set of specific, clearly stated recommendations that authors must address if they choose to resubmit. Primary AEs are expected to return this type of decision to the EiC within one week.
   3. *Peer review.* If the primary AE deems the paper is ready for peer review, they should proceed with the submission as usual by assigning the paper to at least three suitable reviewers in Manuscript Central.