



**AMERICAN JOURNAL OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Editor's Midterm Report to the Executive Council  
of the Midwest Political Science Association  
August 27, 2015**

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## Introduction

This Report from the Editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* to the Executive Council of the Midwest Political Science Association covers operations and editorial activities from January 1, 2015 through August 23, 2015. The Report presents information about the *Journal's* status and influence, manuscript processing statistics, and some of the issues confronting the Editorial Offices. Where appropriate and useful, information from previous years will be provided for comparison. Finally, the Report lists the members of the current Editorial Board.

## Impact and Importance

The *AJPS* strives to maintain its position as one of the premier publication outlets, not only within the political science discipline, but also throughout the social sciences generally. To that end, we continue to monitor closely the *Journal's* performance on the various metrics summarizing its presence, visibility, and usage within the research community. The main indicators used for this purpose are the Thomson Reuters Impact Factors and the Google Scholar h5-index scores.

The 2014 Two-Year Impact Factor for the *AJPS* is 3.269. This value reverses the slight downturn that occurred in the comparable figure last year and represents the first time that the two-year Impact Factor has risen above a value of three. For example, the comparable figures for 2012 and 2013 were 2.811 and 2.516, respectively. The current Two-Year Impact Factor places the *AJPS* in fourth place among political science journals, behind *Political Analysis* (2014 2-Yr IF = 4.655), the *American Political Science Review* (2014 2-Yr IF = 3.688), and the *Journal of Peace Research* (2014 2-Yr IF = 3.387).

The 2014 Five-Year Impact Factor for the *AJPS* is 4.506. This value represents an increase over the comparable 2013 figure of 4.324. The current Five-Year Impact Factor puts the *AJPS* in third place among political science journals, behind only the *American Political Science Review* (2014 5-Yr IF = 5.954) and *Political Analysis* (2014 5-Yr IF = 4.659). Clearly, the Impact Factors represent excellent scores that demonstrate the continued presence of the *AJPS* among the most widely-cited journals in the political science discipline.

Additional grounds for optimism about the professional visibility of the *AJPS* are provided by current citation statistics from Google Scholar. The h5-index for the *AJPS* is 58; this means that 58 articles have been cited at least 58 times during the five-year period from 2010 through 2014. The h5-median for the *AJPS* (the median number of citations to the articles used to create the h5-index value) is 93. The h5-index value places the *AJPS* ninth among all social science journals and at second place within political science. It is exceeded only by the *American Political Science Review*, which has a slightly higher h5-index value of 61 and an h5-median of 104. After the *AJPS*, the *Journal of Politics* has the next-highest h5-index, although there is a substantial gap between the two: The h5-index for the *JOP* is 44 and the h5-median is 69. All of these figures confirm that the *American Journal of Political Science* is maintaining its stature as one of the premier outlets for high-quality research in the social sciences.

## Submissions and Turnaround Times

Table 1 provides the total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until the editorial decision for the past fifteen years, as well as for January 5 through August 23, 2015. Stated simply, the number of submissions remains at the high level to which it jumped in 2014. During the first eight months of 2015, 574 manuscripts were submitted to the

*AJPS*. This produces a submission rate of 2.44 manuscripts per day! During the same periods in 2013 and 2014, the numbers of submissions were 344 and 601, respectively. Thus, the 2015 figure remains near the record rate of submissions that we received last year.

**Table 1:** Yearly submissions and mean turnaround times.

Year	Number of submissions	Mean turnaround time (days)
2000	530	46
2001	586	39
2002	657	51
2003	803	36
2004	783	36
2005	691	41
2006	694	67
2007	583	130
2008	531	118
2009	479	113
2010	760	101
2011	665	91
2012	750	107
2013	696	93
2014	874	73
2015 (Jan. 1 until Aug. 23)	574	50

As the figures in Table 1 show, the *AJPS* Editorial Staff and I have been fairly successful at reducing the turnaround time for processing manuscripts. The mean number of days from submission until the editorial decision so far in 2015 is about two-thirds of the average time that we were able to achieve in 2014. But, this figure is a bit misleading. For one thing, it contains manuscripts that are not sent out to external referees for review. These “desk rejects” are processed very quickly: The mean turnaround is less than one day. After the desk-rejected papers are removed from the calculation, the mean turnaround time is 65 days. But, this latter figure is inflated by delinquent reviewers (i.e., those who never provided a review or never responded to my invitation to review). In those cases where the editorial decision was based on two or one reviews, the mean turnaround time is 64 days. For manuscripts that received a full set of three reviews, the mean turnaround time is only 55 days.

### Submission Rates by Subfield

Table 2 reports submission rates by subfield for the first seven months of 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. There are some comparability issues that should be noted. First, previous *AJPS* Editor Rick Wilson used a different system for calculating the percentages in 2012 and 2013. If an author classified a manuscript into several different categories, he used a uniform weighting system to “distribute” that paper’s contribution across the subfield categories. We create the set of subfields based only upon the first category listed by each author. Second, the reporting periods differ

slightly. The 2012 and 2013 figures cover January 1 through August 15. The 2014 figures only cover January 1 through July 31. The 2015 figures cover January 1 through August 23.

**Table 2:** Submissions by subfield, January 1 through August 23 for 2015, January 1 through July 31 for 2014, and January 1 through August 15 for 2012 and 2013.

Subfield	2012	2013	2014	2015
American Behavior	29.5%	28.3%	24.9%	23.2%
American Institutions	20.8%	20.1%	15.8%	15.0%
Comparative Politics	22.0%	21.5%	32.2%	35.9%
International Relations	14.0%	11.7%	16.4%	14.8%
Methodology, Formal Theory	9.8%	13.2%	7.6%	7.5%
Normative Theory	3.2%	4.5%	3.2%	3.5%

The distribution of submissions across subfields during the first eight months of 2015 looks very similar to the distribution during roughly the same time period in 2014. The figures for last year showed some fairly substantial changes from the distribution of submissions in the last two years of Rick Wilson's editorship (e.g., a sizable increase in comparative politics submissions, a smaller increase in international relations submissions, and a drop in methodology/formal theory submissions and smaller declines in American behavior and institutions). But, as explained in the 2014 Midyear Report, these apparent changes almost certainly are due to changes in the subfield definitions (e.g., moving "Mass media and political communications" to the political behavior subfield) and in the counting procedures (e.g., methodology and formal theory often are listed as the second field, which would have boosted the submission figures for this combined subfield under Rick Wilson's system). Taking these differences into account, the distribution of submissions across subfields is remarkably stable over time.

### Editorial Decisions

From January 1 through August 23, 2015, I made decisions on 692 manuscripts. Note that this is almost twice the size of the comparable figure from 2014, when I made 366 decisions from January 1 through August 1. Of the decisions so far in 2015, 604, or 87.3%, were made on initial submissions and 88, or 12.7%, were made on resubmitted revisions. The decision outcomes for initial submissions and first revisions during the first eight months of 2015 are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Editorial decisions, January 1 through August 23, 2015.

Decision	Initial Submission ( <i>n</i> = 604)	First Revision ( <i>n</i> = 88)
Desk Reject	24.0%	—
Reject	67.9%	28.4%
Revise and Resubmit	8.1%	15.9%
Accept	—	55.7%

If desk-rejected manuscripts are eliminated from consideration, then 89.4% of submissions were rejected upon the initial review while 10.6% were issued a “revise and resubmit” decision. Note that 11 of the 14 manuscripts that received a second “revise and resubmit” decision were accepted for publication. Considering only the 639 decisions on manuscripts that completed the entire review process during the first eight months of 2015 (regardless of start date), the total acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to the *AJPS* is 8.3%.

### Reviews and Referees

From January 1 through August 23, 2015, the *AJPS* Editorial Office received 1,308 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until receipt of the review is 34.1 (or 31.8 days from the day the referee accepts the invitation). This is approximately two days faster than during the similar period in 2014. The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is given in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Reviewer recommendations, January 1 through August 23, 2015.

Recommendation	Percentage ( <i>n</i> = 1,308)
Reject	52.4%
Revise and Resubmit	29.3%
Publish with Minor Revisions	10.2%
Publish as Is	8.1%

The figures in Table 4 represent just over 200 more reviews than we received during the similar period in 2014. But, the distribution of recommendations is remarkably stable. There are slightly more than 2% fewer “Reject” recommendations compared to last year, with a corresponding increase in the combined “Publish” recommendations.

Of course, we only receive reviews from a subset of the individuals who are invited to serve as referees. During the first seven months of 2014, I invited 1,735 individuals to review manuscripts for the *AJPS*. The distribution of responses (and non-responses) to the invitation is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Responses to Editor's invitation to review a manuscript for the *AJPS*, January 5 through August 23, 2015.

Response	Percentage ( <i>n</i> = 1,735)	Subtotal
Completed review	67.2%	
Review in progress	5.8%	73.0%
Declined invitation	16.7%	
Never responded	2.5%	19.2%
Did not need review	7.8%	7.8%

When compared to the first seven months of 2014, the 2015 distribution of responses to referee invitations shows some small, but very encouraging, differences. First, the percentage of completed reviews increased by about eight percent. Second, there have been decreases in the number of declined invitations and nonresponsive invitees. Back in the first seven months of 2014, non-completed reviews comprised almost one-fourth of the responses to review invitations (24.2%). This year, they represent less than one-fifth of the responses (19.2%). Third, the instances in which an invited review was not needed (i.e., I was able to make the editorial decision on the basis of two reviews) increased by about three percent. All of these figures confirm that the efforts of the *AJPS* Editorial Staff to encourage our colleagues throughout the discipline to complete their reviews are paying off nicely. Hopefully, these trends will continue into the future!

### **Policies and Innovations**

At the present time, manuscript processing operations are running very smoothly. The procedures implemented by the Editorial Staff to encourage timely submission of reviews clearly have paid dividends. The evidence supporting this conclusion was presented earlier in this report. I believe that we are fulfilling our commitment to submitting authors by providing them with informative and timely critiques from referees. The feedback we have received from various participants in this process—including a sizable number of authors who received negative editorial decisions—has been overwhelmingly positive.

The remainder of this section briefly lists some policy changes for the *Journal* that we have either implemented recently or plan to carry out in the near future.

1. *AJPS* Replication Policy

- A. Authors of accepted articles are required to submit replication files to the *AJPS* Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network.
- B. We now provide specific guidelines about what materials need to be provided.
- C. Current replication guidelines are intended primarily for quantitative data analyses; we intend to add guidelines for qualitative data and analyses in the very near future.

2. Verification of Replication Materials

- A. Article acceptances are conditional upon successful reproduction of results using replication materials submitted by the authors.
- B. Verification is carried out by the Archive Staff at the University of North Carolina's Odum Institute for Research in Social Science.
- C. The verification process was announced on March 26, 2015.
- D. As of August 14, 2015, Odum staff worked with 35 accepted manuscripts. Of these, 26 have been fully verified, and five more are pending.
- E. So far, there have been no failures to replicate reported analyses. However, it usually takes several iterations of the verification process to produce a full set of replication materials.

3. The *AJPS* Website

- A. The current website (<http://ajps.org/>) emphasizes blog entries as the main content.
- B. I would prefer to make the website a useful information resource for authors, referees, and the audience of *AJPS* readers.
- C. I am working with Melissa Heeke at the Midwest Political Science Association to redesign the site, reorganize the existing content, and add new content.
- D. Intended reorganization will downplay the blog entries (probably dividing them into an Author's Blog and an Editor's Blog) and emphasize information about the *Journal's* objectives, the Editorial Staff, and guidelines for both authors and referees.
- E. Planned additions to the website include a clear statement of the replication policy, manuscript processing statistics, bibliometric information (e.g., Impact Factors, h5-index, etc.), and usage information (e.g., the top ten downloaded articles).

4. Submitting authors and manuscript reviews

- A. A chronic problem for the *AJPS* (and other professional journals) consists of authors who submit many manuscripts but refuse to review manuscripts themselves (either declining invitations to review or simply not responding to review invitations).

- B. In response to this problem, the following passage was added to the “Instructions for Submitting Authors”:

Authors and co-authors of submissions to the *AJPS* are expected to review manuscripts for the *Journal*. The *AJPS* Editor reserves the right to refuse submissions from authors who repeatedly fail to provide reviews for the *Journal* when invited to do so.

- C. This policy received unanimous support from the *AJPS* Editorial Board. I hope that it also meets with approval from the Midwest Political Science Association Executive Council.

5. Cover Redesign

- A. I am working with the designers at Wiley Publishers to create a new cover design for the *AJPS*.
- B. Hopefully, the process will be completed in time to use the new design for *AJPS* Volume 60, in 2016.

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