



American Journal of Political Science

Annual Report to the Executive Council of the
Midwest Political Science Association

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Introduction

The following pages update key data from the *American Journal of Political Science*. The report, which summarizes journal operations from January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022, also includes a few miscellaneous updates relevant to the Association, Board, and user community.

Journal Performance

Four years into our term – and the three most recent amid the pandemic – *AJPS* remains strong in terms of both visibility and impact. More specifically, the *AJPS* five-year impact factor (based on citations of papers published in *AJPS* between 2017 and 2021) is 7.260. Using this metric, *AJPS* is the seventh highest ranked journal in the discipline. For some context, the *Annual Review of Political Science* ranked first, with an impact factor of 10.507, the *American Political Science Review* placed second (8.578), and the *Journal of Politics* came in at number 27 (4.480). Although our impact factor dropped a bit, Wiley thinks this is a short-term issue and actually a result of inflated scores for the journals that surpass us (both a result of the current calculation, which will change and settle next year, and some of those journals having single highly-cited articles). Our editor at Wiley is confident that the high impact factors of the other top journals are unlikely to hold past next year (if that).

In 2022, the *AJPS* Google Scholar h-5 index score was 69, an increase over last year's score of 68. This indicates that 69 articles have been cited at least 69 times during the five-year period from June 2017 – 2021. This score is the highest achieved by any political science journal included in the Google Scholar metric. By comparison, the *American Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Politics* scores are 68 and 60 respectively.

Our social media visibility continues to rise. As of March 2023, *AJPS* had 18,233 Twitter followers, which represents a 4% increase from our last report in September 2022. We also have 6,360 Facebook followers, which represents roughly a 0.4% increase in the last six months.

Submission and Turnaround Time

From January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, we received 1,019 submissions – an average of 3.1 submissions per day that the journal was open (nearly identical to last year). Comparative Politics (34%) and American Politics (25%) dominated the submission pool, with International Relations (16%), Political Theory (13%), and Methodology and Formal Theory (10%) comprising the rest. Compared to 2021, these numbers represent an uptick in American Politics, IR, Political Theory, Methodology, and Formal Theory. But compared to just a couple of years ago, our total number of submissions is down.

We contacted the editors at both *APSR* and *JOP* to ask whether they, too, have seen a decline in submissions. And they have. In 2022, *APSR* received a total of 1,467 submissions, including 274 short articles. The 1,193 full-length articles they received represent roughly a 20% decrease compared to recent years. In 2022, *JOP* reported receiving 877 article-length submissions (and 185 short articles). This total represents a 20% decline compared to 2019. Thus, the *AJPS* overall submission numbers, and their decline, are consistent with what we're seeing at other top-tier, general audience outlets. This may be a consequence of the proliferation of more specialized journals.

The mean turnaround time (from date of submission to first decision) remains swift: just 44 days. Roughly one week of this review time is taken up by authors correcting submissions because of failed

technical checks and resubmitting the paper. Then, our editorial assistants reconduct the technical check and we send manuscripts to reviewers. Indeed, the average time from receiving an author’s original submission to sending it out for review is only 8.2 days. Note that this is 2 days longer than last year. The entire increase in processing time, however, is on the part of authors. Seven of those 8 days, on average, are spent with the manuscript back in the authors’ hands. Thus, we continue to process manuscripts as expeditiously as possible.

Table 1. Manuscript Submission and Turnaround Time		
Year	Submissions	Turnaround Time
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	876	45
2016	928	54
2017	906	54
2018	1,035	55
2019	1,185	46
2020	1,161	43
2021	1,093	46
2022	1,019	44

Note: Turnaround time is reported in days from initial submission to initial decision. The reporting period for 2022 is January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022.

Editorial Decisions

The overall acceptance rate at *AJPS* remains low: 7% from January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022. This rate increases to roughly 10% when we remove desk rejects from the denominator. We sent nearly two-thirds of manuscripts out for review, making our desk rejection rate (36%) a bit lower than other top journals in the discipline. This rate is somewhat higher than in our first years as editors, when it hovered at 25%. The increase is not the result of more substantive desk rejects, though. In the last year, we received an unusually high number of manuscripts that are simply not political science as we define it;

they were journalistic or opinion pieces, review essays, or those containing neither data nor a theoretical argument.

In terms of manuscripts submitted in 2022, 9% received an invitation to revise and resubmit, and roughly two thirds of those manuscripts were accepted after just one round of revisions. Careful reviews and our detailed letters and instructions to authors have allowed us to ensure that second round R&Rs are rare (see Table 2). We did see a somewhat higher proportion of manuscripts go out for a second round of revisions, though, likely a result of the switch in our Methods editors. Although we expect to accept most of these manuscripts, a shift in editors often requires a new set of comments for authors to address. We did have one manuscript that we did not accept for publication after it had undergone two sets of revisions. This was the result of our learning that the authors had just published another manuscript (in a different journal) that overlapped significantly with the piece under review with us. Thus, we declined to move forward with the manuscript.

Table 2. Editorial Decisions, 2022			
	Initial Decision	First Revision	Second Revision
Desk reject	36%		
Reject	55	17%	13%
Revise & Resubmit	9	18	0
Accept	0	64	88
N	970	103	8

Reviews and Reviewers

From January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, we sent 3,570 reviewer invitations. Of the reviewers who responded affirmatively to the invitation, 72% completed a review and 28% were “uninvited” because we were able to dispose of the manuscript with two reviews. To decline a manuscript, we require at least two reviews. To extend an invitation for a revise and resubmit, we require at least three. In general, the reviews were lengthy, detailed, and professional in tone. The mean number of days between sending out a reviewer invitation and receiving a review was 34 days. This number is the same as last year and only one day greater than it was in 2019 and 2020.

The reviewers’ recommendations were largely consistent with manuscript decisions. Roughly half (49.7%) recommended an outright rejection; three in 10 (30.4%) supported an invitation to revise and resubmit; and the remainder supported publication of the initial submission. It’s important to use caution when considering these proportions, though, as reviewers often click “R&R” despite the fact that the substance of their review, and sometimes their explicit recommendation to us, points toward a clear decline.

Conflicts of Interest

From January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, authors reported a conflict of interest with the editorial team on 31 manuscripts. On an additional 29 manuscripts, a member of the editorial team spotted a conflict. Fifty-eight of the conflicts involved authors who are colleagues at the same institution, current collaborators, or are/were involved on a dissertation committee with one of more of the editors. In those cases, a different editor was assigned to shepherd the manuscript through the review process.

The two remaining cases were referred to the MPSA Publishing Ethics Committee (PEC) as these authors indicated that their conflict involved a current or past interaction that may unduly influence an editor's professional judgment, including actions perceived to be harassment, assault, or discrimination, or other relevant conflicts of interest of a serious nature. After contacting the authors, the PEC established that one of the authors had selected this option in error and did not have a conflict of interest of any kind, so that manuscript was referred back to the editorial team for handling. In the other case, the conflict simply arose out of a friendship that the author had with one of the Associate Editors. That manuscript was also referred back to the editorial team; however, the editor with the conflict of interest was blinded in Editorial Manager so that he could not see the submission and it was assigned to a different Associate Editor for handling.

Miscellaneous Updates

IRB Policy: Authors whose manuscripts include human subjects must confirm upon submission that they have IRB approval. We adopted this policy to ensure that human subjects work follows important ethical considerations, but we have had a small number of circumstances in which submitting authors work in countries or at institutions that don't have a formal IRB review process. In grappling with these issues, we had two constructive conversations with the editorial board and appointed an ad-hoc committee to assess the situation and make policy recommendations.

The committee (David Broockman (chair), Sunshine Hillygus, Mala Htun, and Josh Kertzer) met in February and considered several issues the *AJPS* policy should take into account:

- The costs to scholarly knowledge of having a blanket prohibition on articles from institutions without IRBs (e.g., industry or universities in certain countries).
- The unfairness of allowing researchers at such institutions to publish without any ethical review, as authors at U.S. universities often must go through a costly IRB process.
- That ethics are subjective, but *AJPS* is a U.S.-based journal and as such, it is reasonable and legitimate for *AJPS* to choose to apply the ethical standards that have been democratically chosen in this country (the federal IRB regulations).
- That it would be undesirable for the *AJPS* Editors to need to deal with these issues themselves or set up a quasi-IRB to deal with a small number of exceptions.
- That some of the debate about the *AJPS* policy reflects misconceptions about what IRB review does and does not require.

Given these considerations, the committee recommends that if the research was conducted at an institution with an IRB (meaning that any of the authors works at an institution with an IRB), then IRB review is required. If none of the authors' institutions has an IRB, then authors must (1) state in the main text that one's institution does not have an IRB and so IRB review was not obtained; and (2) include an appendix section that should convince reviewers that the research would be deemed ethical under the U.S. federal IRB regulations. It would then be up to reviewers – the vast majority of whom

will have submitted to IRBs, and to whom the appendix will be flagged – to raise concerns. The committee is in the process of drafting author guidelines for such an appendix, which will contain a summary of the questions/considerations authors should address.

We, along with the committee, recognize that this is an imperfect set of guidelines given the impossibility of completely distilling a pre-data collection IRB process into a post-data-collection set of reporting guidelines. We can also imagine hypothetical scenarios that would be undesirable. As such, we recommend to the Board that we adopt this policy and encourage the next editorial team to revisit it.

Verification: We relayed to the Odum Institute the new, streamlined set of requirements for verification (based on feedback we received from published authors and the user community). The most notable change pertains to the datasets authors will be required to submit to Odum. More specifically:

- When authors receive notification that we have accepted their article, they will be required to share with Odum, and upload to Dataverse, the complete dataset they used in the analysis. In the paper and/or appendix, authors will be responsible for explaining where the data come from and how they compiled the analysis dataset.
- Authors will no longer be required to submit the raw data or provide citations or information to Odum on how to access the raw data.
- Authors can opt to make the code used to construct the analysis dataset available to people who contact them, but the only requirements for verification will be to submit the analysis dataset and the code for all analyses conducted in the manuscript.

We are working with Odum to implement these changes, which will go into effect on June 1, 2023.

Extension of Our Term: We are delighted that the MPSA voted to extend our term for two years (through May 31, 2025). We are also happy to announce that four of our five associate editors have decided to stay on for the additional two years. Unfortunately, Maggie Penn will not be able to continue in her role as the associate editor for Formal Theory after May 31, 2023. But David Siegel (Duke University) has agreed to take on the role and we are thrilled. Because many of our members will have served for four years when our renewal goes into effect on June 1, 2023, we plan to retire about 50% of our Board (about 35 people) and offer the opportunity to serve to a new crop of scholars.

Collecting New Data: At the October MPSA Council meeting, members asked if we could collect data on author race and ethnicity. We've begun collecting those data and plan to analyze submission and outcome patterns once we have a year's worth of manuscripts to consider.

Evaluating the Relationship with Wiley: In early March, we met with Wiley and the MPSA Executive Committee to discuss renewing our contract. There are important issues to consider – including a push to publish more articles, encouraging more Open Access contracts, a move away from Editorial Manager, and adopting new production and layout systems. We are awaiting responses from Wiley to a number of questions we posed, as well as a new set of mock-ups so we can compare the current and proposed layouts. Given the challenges we've endured with Wiley for quite some time, we are happy to work with MPSA should the organization opt to solicit proposals from other publishers.

Update on Allegations of Data Fraud: RetractionWatch published a story about the data fraud allegations we've been addressing since March 2022:

<https://retractionwatch.com/2023/03/06/journals-dismiss-claims-that-harvard-researcher-work-on-race-is-pseudoscience/>. From our perspective, this issue is now settled.

Appendix: Editorial Team

Co-Editors in Chief (and Field Editors for American Politics):

Kathleen Dolan, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Jennifer L. Lawless, University of Virginia

Associate Editors:

Frederick Boehmke, University of Iowa
Elizabeth Cohen, Syracuse University
Elizabeth (Maggie) Penn, Emory University
Dan Reiter, Emory University
Graeme Robertson, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

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