



American Journal of Political Science

Midyear 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 – September 4, 2022, also includes a few miscellaneous updates relevant to the Association, Board, and user community.

Journal Performance

Three years into our term – and the two most recent completely 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 September 2022, *AJPS* had 17,519 Twitter followers, which represents a 6% increase from our last report in March 2022. We also have 6,337 Facebook followers, which represents roughly a 0.5% increase in the last six months.

Submission and Turnaround Time

From January 1, 2022 to September 4, 2021, we received 697 submissions – an average of 3.3 submissions per day that the journal was open (nearly identical to last year). Comparative Politics (33%) and American Politics (25%) dominated the submission pool, with International Relations (17%), Political Theory (12%), and Methodology and Formal Theory (12%) comprising the rest. Compared to 2021, these numbers represent an uptick in American Politics, IR, Political Theory, Methodology, and Formal Theory. The challenge we continue to face is to increase the number of AP submissions, which until the last couple of years had been roughly equal to the number of CP submissions. Of course, many of the Methodology and Formal Theory papers focus on topics that address substantive issues in American Politics, but even accounting for those manuscripts, AP continues to lag behind CP.

The mean turnaround time (from date of submission to first decision) remains swift: just 38 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 8.6 days. Given that seven of those days, on average, are spent with the manuscript back in the authors' hands, we are processing 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 (partial)	697	38

Note: Turnaround time is reported in days from initial submission to initial decision. The reporting period for 2022 is January 1, 2022 – September 4, 2022.

Editorial Decisions

The overall acceptance rate at AJPS remains low: 7% from January 1, 2022 – September 4, 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 (35%) 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 more than 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 Decision, 2021			
	Initial Decision	First Revision	Second Revision
Desk reject	35%		
Reject	56	18%	100%
Revise & Resubmit	9	14	0
Accept	0	68	0
N	690	78	1

Reviews and Reviewers

From January 1, 2022 to September 4, 2022, we sent 2,578 reviewer invitations. Of the reviewers who responded affirmatively to the invitation, 64% completed a review; 11% are currently working on a review; and 26% 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 only one day greater than it was in 2019 and 2020, which is remarkable given the toll that Covid and all that accompanies the pandemic has brought.

The reviewers’ recommendations were largely consistent with manuscript decisions. Roughly half (48.9%) recommended an outright rejection; nearly one-third (31.4%) 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 September 4, 2022, authors reported a conflict of interest with the editorial team on 28 manuscripts. On an additional 15 manuscripts, a member of the editorial team spotted a conflict. Forty-one 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

Confidentiality: Last month, MPSA leadership sent all members of the editorial team (including Board members) forms to sign pertaining to confidentiality. It is vital to ensure that we have an opportunity for open discussion without any worry that communications sent among us will be shared beyond the editorial team and MPSA.

Human Subjects Research: 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 processes. In grappling with these issues, we have had two constructive conversations with the editorial board and plan to undertake more analysis of the issue in Fall 2022.

Verification: We will meet with the Odum Institute in October to implement a new, streamlined set of requirements for verification (based on feedback we received from published authors and the user community).

Proposal to Extend Our Term: The MPSA Executive Council approached us about extending our term for two years (through May 2025). We were pleased to receive the invitation and happy to submit a proposal. In short, our editorial team has continued to lead the way on verification of published work, maintaining the most rigorous verification policy of any major journal, even as we work to modernize and streamline those procedures. We implemented the Conflict of Interest policy and a new review requirement for authors whose work is based on human subjects. We have successfully worked to diversify all aspects of the journal, putting together a diverse editorial team and editorial board, while working to expand both our reviewer pool and the pool of submitting authors. We have managed a systematic appeals process and conducted investigations into a handful of manuscripts about which members of the user community contacted us with concerns. And we have represented the journal by participating on a variety of panels and roundtables on the editorial process at traditional conferences like MPSA, SPSA, and APSA, as well as smaller conferences like the Proposal Development Summer Institute.

Beyond these accomplishments, we have engaged in a number of activities that bring significant value to the journal's user community and to disciplinary conversations as a whole. We undertook an analysis of gendered patterns of submission to the journal, took part in a PS symposium on our policy and practice on desk rejections, conducted two surveys of the user community regarding our verification policy, and have begun a review of our requirement for IRB approval for authors engaging in human subjects

research. Our editorial reports throughout the last three years provide details about these efforts and data pertaining to each.

One reality to acknowledge, however, is the impact Covid-19 has had on our ability to meet some of our original goals. Authors and reviewers were stretched thin by the pandemic, which led to our team having to manage submissions, decisions, verification, and publication more closely to make sure that things stayed on track. We are proud of the fact that we didn't shut down during the pandemic and have succeeded in keeping turnaround times and production schedules at their pre-pandemic levels.

But there were other things we couldn't do. Thus, we still have several goals for our remaining time as editors, including addressing a few items that have recently surfaced. Seeing these areas through to successful completion is a major reason we would like to extend our term to May 31, 2025. More specifically:

1. ***Focusing on Diversity:*** The pandemic arrested much of our planned work to diversify the pool of authors and submissions. Conference cancellations and the inability to travel to conferences has kept us from being as literally visible as we had hoped to be and has made it harder to build the personal relationships necessary to encourage more diverse submissions, both in topic and in author identity. As we (hopefully) move through the pandemic and conference activities return to some manner of "normal," we plan to be present at the major disciplinary conferences and a series of smaller and more specialized conferences. Given that 2022 remains precarious from a Covid perspective, having additional opportunities to focus on diversity at conferences in 2023, 2024, and 2025 is important for reaching our goal.

Of course, we can continue to diversify elsewhere even as conference travel remains somewhat up in the air. Indeed, we instituted the two-year term for board members as a way of creating opportunities to bring in new scholars at regular intervals and we are eager to continue this practice at the end of Year 4. Because many of our members will have served for four years by then, we would have an opportunity to maintain some degree of board continuity, but also make more significant changes to the board's lineup. We imagine swapping out 50% of our Board (about 35 people) and offering the opportunity to serve to a new group of scholars.

2. ***Institutionalizing New Practices:*** We plan to continue our work on the verification and human subjects policies that is already underway. In addition to streamlining verification with Odum, we will continue our discussions with the Cornell Center for Social Science Research about their availability to serve as a second institution for verification, particularly for manuscripts that are beyond Odum's ability and capacity. And we need to communicate with the user community to provide information about what verification requires to quell concerns that a cumbersome process exists to discourage people from submitting their work. Developing a policy on human subjects work that ensures the journal publishes work conducted in an ethical manner, while also acknowledging the different institutional settings academics around the world face, will require continued conversations and data-gathering to determine the scope of the issue. We would then consult with our editorial board about options for keeping or modifying the present policy.
3. ***Evaluating the Relationship with Wiley:*** Two areas for future work involve our relationship with Wiley – and we've already begun conversations about this with the MPSA Executive Committee and Wiley. First, there is the substantive issue of the journal's impact factor. The

extent to which issuing additional virtual issues and expediting publication on Early View could help are possibilities to consider and we plan to speak with our new publisher at Wiley about these possibilities at the end of the month. The other area of concern regarding Wiley is their proposed change in production and layout systems for their journals. The article mock-ups they showed us fell significantly below the standards of quality we believe readers of *AJPS* have come to expect. We are awaiting a second set of mock-ups, but given the challenges, we would be happy to work with MPSA should the organization opt to solicit proposals from other publishers.

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

Editorial Board:

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Brandon Bartels, George Washington University
Shaun Bowler, University of California, Riverside
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Christian Davenport, University of Michigan
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Wioletta Dziuda, University of Chicago
Leonard Feldman, Hunter College
Michael Findley, University of Texas
Richard Fox, Loyola Marymount University
Bernard Fraga, Emory University
Kim Fridkin, Arizona State University
Tim Frye, Columbia University
Scott Gehlbach, University of Chicago
Adam Harris, University College London
Erin Hartman, University of California, Berkeley
Danny Hayes, George Washington University
Sunshine Hillygus, Duke University
Magda Hinojosa, Arizona State University
Mala Htun, University of New Mexico
Valerie Hudson, Texas A&M University
Susan Hyde, University of California, Berkeley
Hakeem Jefferson, Stanford University
Kristin Kanthak, University of Pittsburgh
Kimuli Kasara, Columbia University
Josh Kertzer, Harvard University
Jack Knight, Duke University
Mona Lena Krook, Rutgers University
Katie Levine Einstein, Boston University
Andrew Little, University of California, Berkeley
David Lublin, American University
Ellen Lust, University of Gothenburg
Yotam Margalit, Tel Aviv University
Liz Markovits, Mt. Holyoke College
Lucy Martin, University of North Carolina
Carla Martinez Machain, University at Buffalo, SUNY
Rahsaan Maxwell, New York University
Alison McQueen, Stanford University
Ken Meier, American University
Terry Moe, Stanford University
Victoria Murillo, Columbia University
Paulina Ochoa Espejo, Haverford College
Zoe Oxley, Union College
Efren Perez, University of California, Los Angeles
Jennifer Piscopo, Occidental College
Jeremy Pope, Brigham Young University
Markus Prior, Princeton University
Molly Roberts, University of California, San Diego
Deondra Rose, Duke University
Andrew Sabl, University of Toronto
Kira Sanbonmatsu, Rutgers University
Keith Schnakenberg, Washington University - St. Louis
Melissa Schwartzberg, New York University
Paru Shah, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
David Siegel, Duke University
Randy Stevenson, Rice University
Tracy Sulkin, University of Illinois
Sean Theriault, University of Texas
Debra Thompson, McGill University
Mike Ting, Columbia University
Mike Tomz, Stanford University
Jessica Trounstine, University of California, Merced
Lee Walker, University of North Texas
Jessica Weeks, University of Wisconsin
Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, Brown University
Rachel Wellhausen, University of Texas
Jonathan Woon, University of Pittsburgh
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