AJPS

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, 2024 – December 31, 2024, also includes a few miscellaneous updates relevant to the Association, Board, and user community.

Journal Performance

More than five and a half years into our term, *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 2019 and 2023) is 7.1 (up from 6.6. last year). 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 14.2, the *American Political Science Review* placed third (7.9), and the *Journal of Politics* came in at 36th (4.2.).

Although the impact factor has rebounded, we continue to be concerned about Wiley's inability to offer any analysis for why it declined or how to ensure that it doesn't happen again. As we noted in our October report, when we proposed two ways to increase the journal's visibility and citation rates – more virtual issues and open access for each issue for 30 days – they refused. Because a new editorial team will begin soon, and because a search for a new publisher is underway, we have not continued to badger Wiley on this front.

The current *AJPS* Google Scholar h-5 index score is 63 (similar to last year's score of 69). This indicates that 63 articles have been cited at least 63 times during the five-year period from June 2019 – 2023. This score is the third 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 82 and 62, respectively.

Our social media visibility continues to hold strong. As of December 2024, *AJPS* had 19,068 Twitter followers and 6,462 Facebook followers, which represents a 3% decrease compared to last year. We suspect that this is part of the broader trend of people leaving these sites given the political environment. Indeed, we now have a Bluesky account with more than 6,300 followers.

Submission and Turnaround Time

From January 1 – December 31, 2024, we received 1,317 submissions – an average of 4.1 submissions per day that the journal was open. This is the highest submission rate *AJPS* has ever experienced (in 2023, we received on average 3.7 submissions per day).

Comparative Politics (39%) and American Politics (25%) dominated the submission pool, with International Relations (14%), Political Theory (12%), and Methodology and Formal Theory (10%), comprising the rest. This breakdown is not markedly different than what we saw in 2023.

The mean turnaround time (from date of submission to first decision) remains swift: just 35 days. Roughly one week of this review time is taken up by authors correcting submissions because of failed technical checks and resubmitting the paper. Indeed, the average time from receiving an author's original submission to sending it out for review is only 7.5 days. Six of those days are spent with the

manuscript back in the authors' hands. In cases of desk rejects, the average decision time is 4 days, so authors know very quickly if we won't be sending their manuscript out for review. In short, we continue to process manuscripts as expeditiously as possible. In fact, this is the fastest turnaround time the journal has seen in the 25 years for which we have data, and we are processing nearly two and a half times as many manuscripts as the editorial team did two decades ago.

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
2023	1,187	39
2024	**1,317**	**35**

Note: Turnaround time is reported in days from initial submission to initial decision. The reporting period for 2024 is January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.

Editorial Decisions

The overall acceptance rate at *AJPS* remains low: 7% from January 1 – December 31, 2024. We sent 51% of manuscripts out for review, making our desk rejection rate comparable to other journals in the discipline, and notably lower than the 70% desk rejection rate at *APSR*. Our desk reject rate has steadily increased throughout our term because so too have the manuscripts we receive that are simply not

political science as we define it: journalistic or opinion pieces, review essays, or manuscripts containing neither data nor a theoretical argument.

In terms of manuscripts submitted in 2024, 9% received an invitation to revise and resubmit, and 64% of those manuscripts were accepted after 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 not the norm (see Table 2). We did have two manuscripts that we did not accept for publication after they had undergone two sets of revisions. In both cases, the authors just did not take seriously the reviewers' concerns and did not go far enough to convince the reviewers or the editors that the paper's contribution was sufficiently broad and compelling. We are very clear in our R&R letters about what authors must do, especially on a second round R&R, to convert the R&R into an accept. Although these authors were disappointed, they did not appeal our decision.

Table 2. Editorial Decisions, 2024			
	Initial Decision	**First Revision**	**Second Revision**
Desk reject	49%		
Reject	43	14%	23%
Revise & Resubmit	9	22	23
Accept	0	64	54
N	1,306	120	13

Reviews and Reviewers

From January 1 – December 31, 2024, we sent 3,982 invitations to reviewers. Of the reviewers who responded affirmatively to the invitation, 70% completed a review and 30% were "uninvited" because we were able to dispose of the manuscript with two reviews (or in a small number of cases, because they were unresponsive and neither submitted a review nor responded to follow up emails throughout a 60 day period). To decline a manuscript, we require at least two reviews. To extend an invitation for a revise and resubmit, we typically require 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 35 days.

The reviewers' recommendations were largely consistent with manuscript decisions. Nearly half (46%) recommended an outright rejection; one third (34%) 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 –December 31, 2024, authors reported a conflict of interest with the editorial team on 67 manuscripts. On an additional 46 manuscripts, a member of the editorial team spotted a conflict. One hundred twelve 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 remaining case was referred to the MPSA Publishing Ethics Committee (PEC) as the authors indicated that their conflict involved a current or past interaction that may unduly influence an editor's professional judgment. The PEC contacted the author twice over the course of a month to discuss the issue, but never received a response. As a result, the PEC allowed the journal to remove the submission and asked the author to contact the PEC if they would like to have their paper considered for publication.

Miscellaneous Updates

Enabling the transition to a new editorial team: Prior to the MPSA call for proposals for a new editorial team, we met with the executive committee as well as the search committee for the new team. We shared our thoughts about journal operations, the ideal composition of an editorial team, and the challenges we've faced in an ever-changing publishing environment. After the call went out, we held an open zoom session with anyone who might be interested in submitting a proposal for the journal. We have regularly corresponded with incoming editors-in-chief Adam Berinsky and Dan Reiter about journal operations, best practices, and the logic behind many of our policies. And in January, we modified the language in our R&R letters to alert authors to our last day and let them know that a new team will likely make the final decision on the manuscript. When the clock strikes midnight on June 1, we will lose editorial access and the new team will gain it, which is what we asked for in terms of a transition (i.e., no overlap). But we are confident that the transition will be smooth.

Thank you, thank you, thank you: Given that this is our last editorial report, we want to take an opportunity to thank MPSA for the incredible support we've received throughout the last six years. The staff made our lives and journal operations as easy as possible – from a financial, logistical, and mental health perspective! The Council and its leadership have provided unwavering support, even in the face of very challenging circumstances. Our associate editors have been absolutely amazing – in constant communication, always responsive, consistently exercising good judgment, and never tiring of what are often thankless tasks. Our Board members have always risen to the occasion and been happy to complete reviews, often on an expedited basis, and weigh in on policy decisions. And the dozens of students who have worked at the journal have allowed us to process manuscripts effectively and efficiently. Of course, we'd be remiss not to offer our biggest debt of gratitude to Julia Salvatore, Managing Editor Extraordinaire. We can count on one hand the number of days throughout the last six years in which we did not receive an email from Julia (and the day she went into labor and had a baby is not among them!). Without her, the journal would not operate. She knows the ins and outs of every manuscript, every author, every reviewer, every student, and every error. She responds to important emails and insane ones with the same level of professionalism and grace, patiently works with Wiley even when she has to tell them the same thing 47 times, indulges our (well, Jen's) neuroses about how page proofs "must" look, and motivates the students to do their work. For the last few months, she's also been meeting with the new team to ensure a perfect transition and we're sure it will be.

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

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Elizabeth Cohen, Boston University
Dan Reiter, Emory University
Graeme Robertson, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
David Siegel, Duke University

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