



American Journal of Political Science

Mid-Year Report to the Executive Council of the
Midwest Political Science Association

October 2024

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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 – September 8, 2024, also includes a few miscellaneous updates relevant to the Association, Board, and user community.

Journal Performance

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 doesn't happen again. In fact, 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 (see below for our strong recommendation to move to another publisher).

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 rise. As of September 2024, *AJPS* had 19,621 Twitter followers, which represents a 3% increase from March 2024. We also have 6,470 Facebook followers, which represents a small uptick in the last six months.

Submission and Turnaround Time

From January 1 – September 8, 2024, we received 896 submissions – an average of 4.0 submissions per day that the journal was open. This is the highest submission rate the *AJPS* has ever experienced (last year at this time, we received on average 3.7 submissions per day).

Comparative Politics (39%) and American Politics (25%) dominated the submission pool, with International Relations (13%), Political Theory (12%), 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 34 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 8 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 4.5 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 twice 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	896	34
Note: Turnaround time is reported in days from initial submission to initial decision. The reporting period for 2024 is January 1, 2024 – September 8, 2024.		

Editorial Decisions

The overall acceptance rate at *AJPS* remains low: 7% from January 1 – September 8, 2024. We sent 52% 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, 10% received an invitation to revise and resubmit, and 65% 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 rare (see Table 2). We did have one manuscript that we did not accept for publication after it had undergone two sets of revisions. In this case, 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.

Table 2. Editorial Decisions, 2024			
	Initial Decision	First Revision	Second Revision
Desk reject	48%		
Reject	43	14%	13%
Revise & Resubmit	10	21	25
Accept	0	65	63
N	874	86	8

Reviews and Reviewers

From January 1 – September 8, 2024, we sent 2,818 invitations to reviewers. Of the reviewers who responded affirmatively to the invitation, 68% completed a review, 4% are still working on their review; and 29% 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 (45%) recommended an outright rejection; one third (35%) 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 –September 8, 2024, authors reported a conflict of interest with the editorial team on 48 manuscripts. On an additional 20 manuscripts, a member of the editorial team spotted a conflict. Sixty-seven 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

Evaluating the relationship with Wiley: We continue to be concerned with Wiley as a publisher and encourage MPSA to solicit proposals from other publishers as soon as possible. Even if we must fulfill the remaining 2+ years on the Wiley contract, it is essential to know our options and, ideally, have a new publisher in place so as to ease the transition. In addition to our previously discussed concerns about a falling impact factor, numerous and protracted production issues, and Wiley's attempts to encroach on editorial discretion, two new issues of concern have recently arisen:

- (1) Our new editor at Wiley informed us that they will no longer honor the open access agreement we arrived at with the previous editor. We had agreed to 30 days of open access for all content in all new issues. Wiley determined that it's not an effective strategy if the goal is to raise citation rates and impact factors. We asked how they arrived at that conclusion and they couldn't tell us. Moreover, they never informed us that they were stopping open access; we learned about it when we went online to view a recent table of contents. Given that we only have eight months left in our term, we asked them to honor the arrangement through May 2025, but they refused.
- (2) Wiley will no longer compile virtual issues. Rather, editors need to select the articles and provide a table of contents as well as introductory language or an organizing theme. We understand that many journals do this for special volumes. But that's not what we've ever done or seek to do. Indeed, for four years, the Wiley team assembled our most cited articles within the last two years and produced a virtual issue based on that content. This is something that is very easy for them to compile, but they will not do it.

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. Then, 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 are committed to ensuring a smooth transition and will be happy to meet with the incoming team over the course of the next eight months. We feel strongly, though, that there be no overlap. When the clock strikes midnight on June 1, we will lose editorial access and the new team will gain it. In January, we will modify 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.

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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Graeme Robertson, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

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Deva Woodly, Brown University

Jonathan Woon, University of Pittsburgh