

**Report of The Editor
to the Editorial Board of *The American Journal of Political Science*
and to the Executive Council of
The Midwest Political Science Association
April, 2008**

Introduction

In the April, 2007 Report, and in response to questions and requests at the time, we described the roles of key personnel associated with the Journal, its goals, its year in review covering the period of January 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007, and plans for the year ahead, including Review School, Editorial Manager, and ajps-e. In this report, we revisit several of these topics before describing and discussing the year in review covering actions on two goals – reviewer pools and global reach – during the period of January 1, 2007 through March 14, 2008, and the year ahead with particular focus on a third goal of enhancing community conversations.

Key Personnel

The key personnel of *The AJPS* remain relatively unchanged with exception of a new Administrative Assistant I and a new editorial assistant at UTD. The hiring of the former was occasioned by the move of Sondra Gadell to New Mexico and the availability of Tommi Ivey who holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from TAMU and previously worked in other administrative capacities at UTD.

Editor and Editorial Office, University of Texas at Dallas – Marianne C. Stewart, Editor; Tommi Ivey, Administrative Assistant I; Walter Casey, Michael Gunnin, and Shawn Williams, Editorial Assistants.

Associate Editors – Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Ohio State University; Darrell Dobbs, Marquette University; Raymond M. Duch, Nuffield College, Oxford; Forrest B. Maltzman, George Washington University; Will H. Moore, Florida State University.

Editorial Board – 60 members from Political Science, Economics, and Sociology in the United States, Australia, Canada, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

Aries System Corporation – Jason Freemont, Account Coordinator, *Editorial Manager*.

Ohio State University – David Gunzburger, Senior Engineer, *Journal Manager*; Susan Meyeter, Office of Communications, Assistant Editor/Copy Editor.

Wiley-Blackwell – Michael Streeter, Associate Editor, Journals; Martha Lovvoll, Associate Productions Manager, Journals; and Billie Skolnick, *AJPS* Marketing Manager

Goals

As noted in the 2006 and 2007 Editor Reports, the goals of *The Journal* and its editorial team for the 2006-09 period have been, and continue to be, ***widespread consultation*** with researchers to develop a sense of stakeholding in the *The Journal* and to position it to benefit from ideas for continuity and innovation and for emerging research developments; ***reviewer pool stocking*** to avert a “tragedy of the reviewer commons” and to encourage a greater degree of thoughtfulness in manuscript preparation and review; and ***global reach*** that projects *AJPS* to a growing audience of readers at both U.S. and non-U.S. institutions.

The Year in Review

In the past two years, *AJPS* has worked hard to achieve the two goals involving reviewer pools and global reach. This Report comments on each of them in turn.

Goal 1. Manuscript Submissions, Reviewer Pools, and Related

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the longer- and shorter-term submission data, respectively. The former reports not only the annual numbers of submissions but also the average times-to-decision for the past 10 years. In this regard, the quantity of submissions declined but the quality of submissions increased between 2006 and 2007. For this period, and per the discussion of the 2006 Editor's Report, the average time-to-decision went from two months to an "acceptable four months," before settling at approximately three months since Editorial Manager went into effect on September 1, 2007.

Table 1.
AJPS Total Submissions and Average Times-To-Decision, 1999-2008
 (Journal Manager calculated, 2003-07; Editorial Manager calculated, 2007-08)

1999	546	47
2000	530	46
2001	586	39
2002	657	51
2003	803	36
2004	783	36
2005	691	41
2006	694	67
2007	583	127 (JM 01/01/07-08/31/07)
2008 (01/01-03/14)	114	97 (EM 09/01/07-03/14/08)

Additional comments on timing are appropriate. They are:

- the "reviewer arms race" now features over 140 journals in Political Science (not including those in other disciplines) that chase too few high-quality reviewers.
- *AJPS* has attempted to refrain from overharvesting qualified reviewers by not issuing invitations to review if an individual has done so within the past 4 months (although we cannot influence the number of invitations to review issued by a growing number of journals in both Political Science and other areas of inquiry as well).
- recent analyses of the reliability and validity of the Journal Manager database that it uses to compile summary statistics (data not shown in tabular form) indicates that JM counts only manuscripts on a calendar year basis, that is, only those submissions received and decided within a calendar year but not those received in one year and decided in the following year. Thus, JM statistics do not include statistics on these manuscripts for either year, thus possibly providing less-than-reliable estimates of time-to-decision.
- We have attempted to promote conversations among researchers as well as to restock the reviewer pools by inviting authors to recommend reviewers under carefully chosen guidelines, and to select categories of their manuscripts from a more extensive list of topical areas that reflect the section headings used by the Midwest Political Science Association to organize its annual meetings. These categories go beyond the very general ones of American political behavior, American political institutions, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, or political methodology. These categories, in turn, allow the editorial office to update and to access more efficiently the names and contact information of people who work in these areas through the more refined data access capabilities of Editorial Manager.
- As noted above, Editorial Manager has strong capabilities to build and manage reviewer databases *within the system*, rather than having to access a separate Excel file stored on the office computers for this purpose (as was the case with Journal Manager). Moreover,

Editorial Manager allows the editorial office to queue up reviewers so that, if one or more declines to review, then another is invited automatically, not manually by the staff as was previously the case.

- The mean number of reviewers contacted to complete a manuscript review is 6 (data not shown in tabular form). The mean reviewer turnaround time was 31 days for the Fall, 2006 period but rose to 64 days for the Fall, 2007-Spring, 2008 (Editorial Manager) period. For this same latter period, the average time that a manuscript is with the *AJPS* staff, in terms of going through technical check, reviewer assignment, reviewer reminder, and editor decision, was 33 days. In sum, 53 days with reviewers and 33 days with the editorial office yield 97 time-to-decision days.
- For the September 1, 2007 through March 14, 2008 (Editorial Manager) period, the total number of reviews requested was 1,145. Of this number, 670 (59%) agreed to review, 289 (25%) declined to do so, and 186 (16%) did not respond or were otherwise unavailable. It also is not uncommon for people to accept an invitation to review (or at least not to decline one), or to respond that they will submit a review by a date given by themselves, and then not do so. Thus, reviewer re-recruitment remains an ongoing activity.

As noted above, Figure 1 displays the daily submission numbers for the January 1, 2007 through March 14, 2008 period. The 697 submissions received during the 439 days of this period demonstrate, among other things, “break” effects, that is, spikes in the series that occur just before and just after *The Journal* closes to manuscript submissions in August and mid-December. Figure 2 gives the summary data for these submissions, with the daily numbers ranging from 0 to 10 and averaging 1.6.

Figure 1.

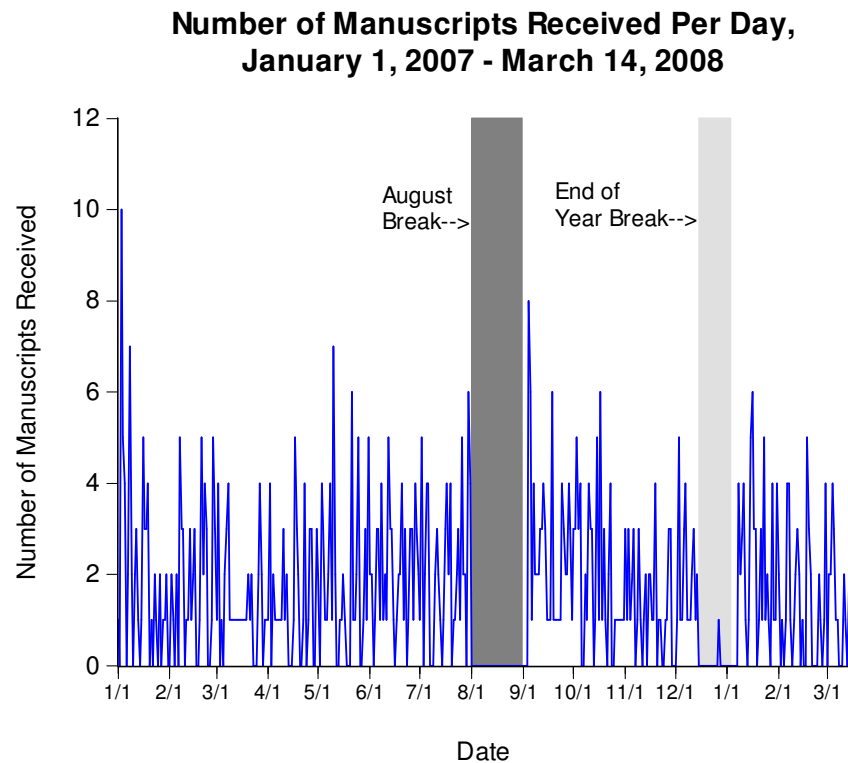
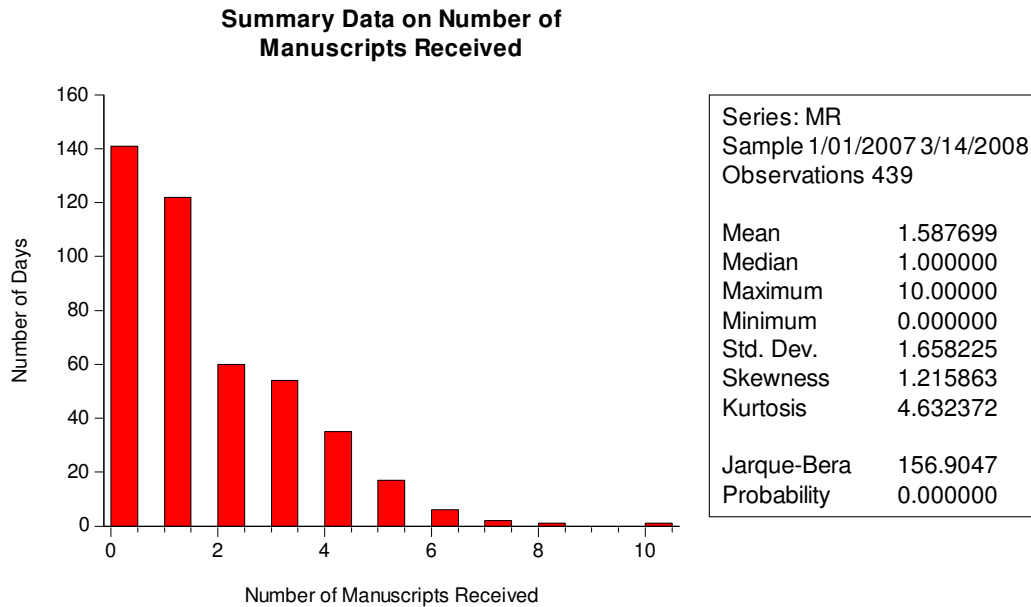


Figure 2.



According to Table 2, 50% of the manuscript submissions were in American political behavior or institutions; 39% in comparative politics or international relations; and the remaining 11% in political methodology or theory. As noted above, there has been a decline in the numbers of manuscripts received, and it appears that some, but not all, of this change is due to a decline in the numbers of international relations manuscripts submitted. This may be due to how submitting authors first classified their manuscripts when entering them into the Editorial Manager, or to how the editorial office recoded these categories into Journal Manager ones for purposes of this Report, or to other factors that need to be considered and, if possible, then reversed.

Finally, for accepted manuscripts (data not shown in tabular form), and in keeping with the commitment to communicate knowledge quickly, the mean time from notification of acceptance by the Editor and time of publication by Wiley-Blackwell averaged six months. In 2007, the total number of articles published was 62 (51.1 – 14; 51.2 – 13; 51.3 – 16; 51.4 – 19). Forth-four articles have been accepted for publication or published in the first three issues of 2008 (volume 52).

Table 2.
AJPS Manuscript Submissions, Revisions-and-Resubmissions, and Acceptances by Area,
January 1, 2007-March 14, 2008
(Journal Manager categories used for all manuscripts)

Manuscript Classification (01/01/07-03/14/08)	N Submissions	N Accepted (est)	N Revision-Resubmission	N Declined	N Open
American Behavior	192 (28%)	11 (22%)	14 (27%)	97 (27%)	66 (28%)
American Institutions	153 (22)	11 (22)	17 (33)	73 (20)	51 (22)
Comparative	183 (26)	10 (20)	7 (13)	92 (25)	72 (31)
International Relations	88 (13)	11 (22)	4 (8)	52 (14)	30 (13)
Methodology	45 (6)	4 (8)	8 (15)	22 (6)	10 (4)
Normative	36 (5)	3 (6)	2 (4)	27 (7)	4 (2)
Total	697	49	52	363	233

Goal 2. Global Reach

Efforts by the editorial office, use of the Editorial Manager system, and the online access and marketing activities of Wiley-Blackwell, have helped to expand the global reach of *The Journal* in several ways. The office and Editorial Manager now can code and contact more easily both ongoing and new reviewers located in the United States or other countries. And, the Association and Wiley-Blackwell have helped to expand the numbers of individuals and institutions that receive *The Journal*, thus increasing its communication potential. According to information provided by both organizations (see the MPSA Executive Director's Report, March, 2008), between 2006 and 2007:

- Individual membership in the MPSA increased from 3,642 to 3,736. This increase reflects, in part, the increase in conference attendance that, in turn, reflects higher professional non-member versus professional member registration fees, as well as the fee structure for membership and member-rate registration charged to graduate students.
- Consortium subscriptions ("smaller institutional subscribers that receive electronic access to *The Journal*") increased from 2,452 to 2,679. This number includes an increase from 292 to 452 subscribers in the United States, and an increase of 55 subscribers in other countries.
- Institutional subscribers decreased slightly from 1,272 to 1,242.
- The *International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications* (INASP) provides subsidized access to *AJPS* in Armenia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Moldova, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In 2006, there were 568 such subscribers; in 2007, 623.
- *AJPS* total circulation rose from 7,366 to 7,657 (in 2002, there were 4,109 subscribers).
- *AJPS* articles were downloaded through Blackwell Synergy 107,010 times in 2006; this number increased to 126,125 times in 2007. The ten articles downloaded most frequently in 2007 were:
 1. 1,910 times. "American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement." Leonie Huddy and Nadia Khatib. 51 January, 2007).

2. 1,856 times. "Persuasion and Resistance: Race and the Death Penalty in America." Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz. 51 (October, 2007).
3. 1,611 times. "The Capitalist Peace." Erik Gartzke. 51 (January, 2007).
4. 1,262 times. "Democratic Transitions." David L. Epstein, Robert Bates, Jack Goldstone, Ida Kristensen and Sharyn O'Halloran. 50 (July, 2006).
5. 1,070 times. "Beyond Negativity: The Effects of Incivility on the Electorate." Deborah Jordan Brooks and John G. Geer. 51 (January, 2007).
6. 1,021 times. "Clarity of Responsibility and Corruption." Margit Tavits. 51 (January, 2007).
7. 943 times. "Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy Shifts and Political Competition." Margit Tavits. 51 (January, 2007).
8. 892 times. "Social Capital and the Dynamics of Trust in Government." Luke Keele. 51 (April, 2007).
9. 825 times. "Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting." John M. Carey. 51 (January, 2007).
10. 821 times. "Learning about Democracy in Africa: Awareness, Performance, and Experience." Robert Mattes and Michael Bratton. 51 (January, 2007).

The Year Ahead

Further steps to reach the goals described above, and to focus particular effect on a third goal of **widespread consultation**, are underway in 2008-09. These include the following, some of which will be discussed by the Editorial Board:

- Review School – The Association's online newsletter, and the completed transition from Journal Manager to Editorial Manager, now help to realize opportunities to inform and to educate people about the importance of review and the method(s) for doing a good review. Both topics will be discussed by the Editorial Board, and then developed into a series of short articles for distribution in the newsletter and *The Journal's* website and especially to younger scholars who form the next cohort of researchers and reviewers.
- ajps-e – This remains an ongoing possibility with several formats under further consideration and one or more going into trial production, presumably this year.
- A (brief) survey of Editorial Board members about what the Journal does well, what it could do better, and how it can continue to capture emerging and important research trends.