

**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 2, 2009**

Introduction

This Report of The Editor – the fourth of four during the 2006-09 editorial term – to the Editorial Board of *The American Journal of Political Science*, and to the Executive Council of the Midwest Political Science Association, has three purposes. The first is to review developments and trends in submissions and acceptances during the previous year. The second is to describe and evaluate the previous four years of the overall editorial terms in terms of goals met. And, the third is to discuss several ways forward for what is increasingly regarded as the premier journal for advancing knowledge and understanding of citizenship, governance, and politics, and the public value of political science research.

I. The Year in Review

Table 1 reports the annual numbers of submissions received as well as the average times-to-decision for the past 11 years. In this regard, the quantity of submissions declined by approximately 10% between 2007 and 2008 – in large part, according to in-house review, due to a decrease in the submissions of subprime manuscripts (manuscripts that are inappropriate or not ready for external review). In addition, the average time-to-decision (that is, from date of submission to date of notification of the Editor’s decision) now averages 3.6 months. This figure is calibrated in terms of calendar days, including weekends, the four days when the editorial staff attends the annual MWPSA meeting, the month of August when *The Journal* is closed to new submissions, and the last two weeks of December when it is closed for all business. This average of 3.6 months also includes two days of technical check of new submissions, 24 days of reviewer selection, assignment, and reassignment, 82 days review, and approximately 25 days for cluster processing of editorial decisions and author notification.

**Table 1.
AJPS Total Submissions and Average Times-To-Decision, 1999-2009**

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	130
2008	531	118
2009 (01/01-3/18)	143 (+6.7% YTD)	NA

Figure 1 displays the daily submission numbers for the January 1, 2008 through March 18, 2009 period. Similar to previous and equivalent submission periods, submissions received during the 442 days of this period demonstrate “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 7 and averaging 1.5 per day.

Figure 1. Number of Manuscripts Received Per Day, January 1, 2008 - March 19, 2009

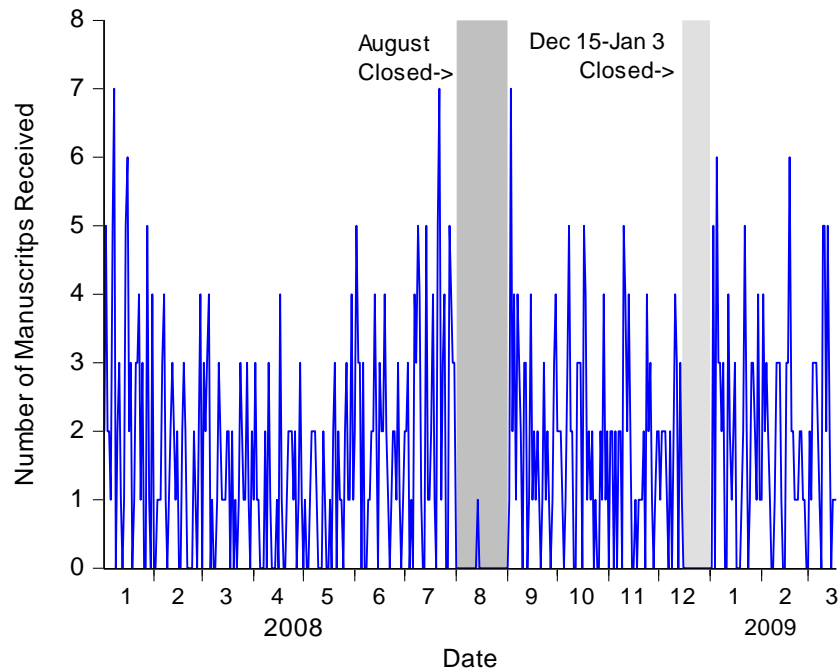
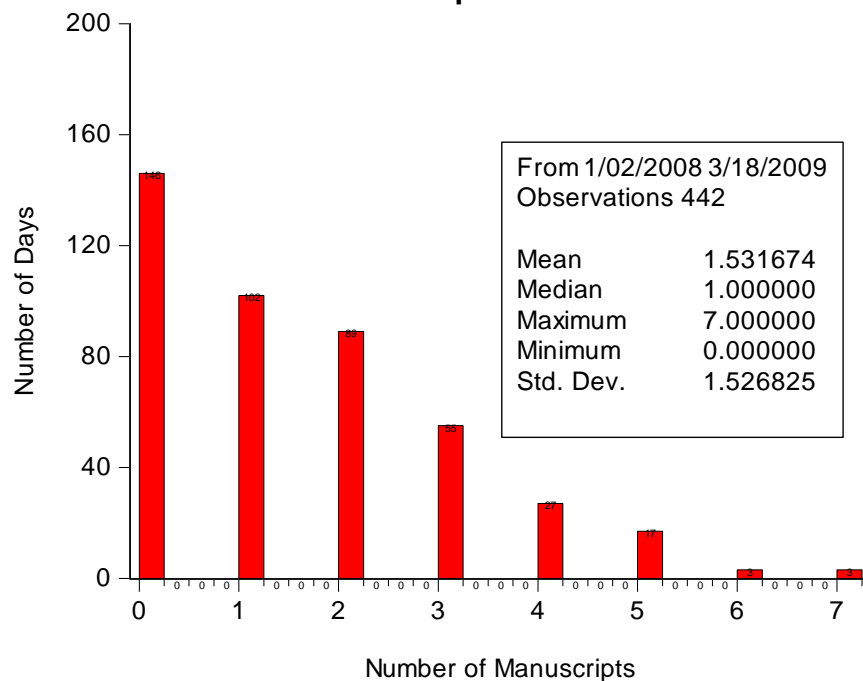


Figure 2. Number of Days When Varying Number of Manuscripts Were Received



According to Table 2, 45% of the manuscripts submitted between January 2, 2008 and March 18, 2009 were in the areas of American political behavior or institutions (5% decline from the previous equivalent period), 45% in comparative politics or international relations (a 6% increase); and 11% in political methodology or theory (unchanged). In terms of these categories used, it is important to note that the same categories are used in Table 2 as have been used for previous years in order to maintain comparability over time. However, *The Journal* has adopted more finely grained classifications, including moving from one category of Foundations of Political Theory to eight categories involving Political Philosophy and Theory. All categories now used correspond, in part, to the sections of the annual meeting of the MWPSA and they allow authors and reviewers to classify singly or multiple which, in turn, helps to online-match manuscript categories with reviewer areas of expertise under Editorial Manager

Table 2.
***AJPS* Manuscript Submissions, Revisions-and-Resubmissions, and Acceptances by Area**
January 1, 2008 – March 18, 2009

Classification	N of Submiss.	Accepted	R&R	Declined	Decline w/o Review	Incomp.	Open
American Behavior	162 (25%)	12 (25%)	12 (20%)	87 (28%)	7 (24%)	9 (18%)	35 (20%)
American Institutions	135 (20)	13 (27)	15 (25)	58 (19)	7 (24)	11 (22)	31 (14)
Comparative	200 (30)	14 (29)	12 (20)	98 (31)	8 (28)	14 (28)	54 (31)

International Relations	103 (15)	7 (14)	11 (19)	43 (14)	5 (17)	10 (20)	27 (18)
Methodology	36 (5)	3 (6)	6 (10)	10 (3)	1 (4)	2 (4)	14 (8)
Normative	28 (6)	0 (0)	3 (5)	16 (5)	1 (4)	4 (8)	14 (8)
Total	674	49	59	312	29	50	175

Of the accepted manuscripts, approximately half lie in the areas of American institutions and behavior, 40% in comparative or international relations, and the remainder in methodology or normative theory areas, especially the former given the reintroduction of the Workshop to the pages of *The Journal*. The mean time from notification of acceptance by the Editor to time of publication by Wiley-Blackwell has averaged six months. In 2008, the total number of articles published was 59, including five Workshop articles (52.1 – 14; 52.2 – 14; 52.3 – 16; 52.4 – 15). Forty-five articles, including four Workshop articles, have been accepted for publication or published in the first three issues of 2009 (volume 53).

Finally, in 2008, the total number of *AJPS* article downloads through Blackwell Synergy and Wiley InterScience (excluding JSTOR) was 131,555. Of this number, the top 10 downloads were as follows:

- “Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising” (Huber and Arceneaux) 50.4 (490 times)
- “Of Time and The Development of Partisan Polarization” (Stoker and Jennings) 52.3
- “State Public Opinion, The Death Penalty, and the Practice of Electing Judges” (Brace and Boyea) 52.2
- “What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration” (Brader, Valentino, and Suh) 52.4
- “Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement” (Solt) 52.1
- “Democracy and Economic Growth: A Meta-Analysis” (Doucouliagos and Ali) 52.1
- “The Politics of Foreign Direct Investment into Developing Countries” (Buthe and Milner) 52.4
- “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War” (Humphreys and Weinstein) 52.2
- “Mobilizing Interest: The Effects of Money on Citizen Participation in State Supreme Court Elections” (Hall and Bonneau) 52.4
- “Agreement without Peace? International Mediation and Time Inconsistency Problems” (Beardsley) 52.4 (448 times)

II. (Nearly) Four Years In Review

The Letter of Interest in the Editorship of *The American Journal of Political Science*, as well as the three previous Editor Reports, have stated that the principal goal of the editorial team for the 2006-09 period has been to enhance the contributions of *AJPS* to knowledge generation, production, and communication and ultimately, to strengthen *AJPS* as a leading resource in the study of citizenship, governance, and politics. This goal has had three components. The first is *conversations among communities* to give researchers a sense of stakeholding in *The Journal* and to position it to benefit from ideas for continuity and innovation and for emerging research developments. The second component is *reviewer pool stocking* to avert a “tragedy of the reviewer commons” and to encourage a greater degree of thoughtfulness in manuscript preparation and review. The third is *global reach expansion* by which *AJPS* is projected to a

growing community of authors, reviewers, and readers in the United States and other countries. Each of these components is commented on in turn.

Conversations Among Communities

The editorial team has viewed *The Journal* as being able to uphold its broad obligation to the representation of diverse research interests in Political Science and to expand its responsibility to scientific knowledge generation and accumulation. In our view, it has advanced these two purposes in at least three ways:

- a more forceful voice for emerging research developments between two or more fields, including breaking down the theoretical, methodological and, in some cases, communication differences between them. Examples include, but are not limited to, conceptual analysis in philosophy and theory and measurement and methodological refinements in comparative analysis, theory building and empirical model testing, and group conflict analysis in American politics and international relations.
- active seeking of “talent deserving wider recognition,” that is, genuinely promising, if not already proven, scholars, to participate in cross-field or, indeed, cross-disciplinary manuscript production and review.
- the thematic bundling of published manuscripts in each issue – this bundling has included, but is not limited, to innovations in experimental research, conflict analysis, institutional design, regime change, local governance and reform, and policy innovation and diffusion.

Time Frames and Reviewer Pools.

At least two unintended consequences of a well-intentioned acceleration of the review process undertaken by many, but not all, of the approximately 140 journals in Political Science during the past decade have been to motivate aspiring authors to engage in less risk-averse behavior and, in turn, to deplete the intellectual and time resources of reviewer pools. One ultimate outcome may be an overall reduction in research quality as manuscripts that should not be submitted are, and as civic-minded reviewers stretch to accommodate editors’ turnaround demands by diverting time from other projects. In this regard, it is not unusual for “highly demanded” reviewers to have *at least* four manuscripts on their desks awaiting review. To help minimize the “tragedy of the reviewer commons” and to build the quality of the reviewer pool, *The Journal* has:

- become more assertive in declining inappropriate or incomplete manuscripts without external review.
- worked with an Advisory Board that has performed the functions typically conducted by an Editorial Board as well as acting as a “working” board that has been a standing reviewer pool with each member agreeing to provide on average 5 manuscript reviews per year.
- refrained from overharvesting qualified reviewers by not issuing invitations to review if an individual has done so within the past three-four months (although we cannot influence the number of invitations to review issued by other journals).
- promoted conversations among researchers as well as restocked the reviewer pool by inviting authors to recommend reviewers under carefully chosen guidelines, and to select categories of their manuscripts from a more extensive list of categories. As noted above, 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 both authors and reviewers, and thereby to match manuscripts with the reviewers.

However, the recruitment and re-recruitment of highly qualified reviewers and, accordingly, the building of the reviewer database very much remain ongoing activities. For example, in 2008, the number of invitations-to-review totaled 2,559. Of this number, 1,263 reviewers completed their reviews (for a response rate of 49%); 495 did not respond to the invitation or agreed to review but did not so do; and 675 declined to review. Editorial office review of the invitations sent during the first three months of 2009 (N=180) indicates that, of those who declined to review, 45% said they were “too busy,” 15% that the manuscript was out of their field, 10% that they had a conflict of interest with the author or with the manuscript, 9% that they had personal reasons involving health or family, and 21% did not give a reason.

A Journal of Increasingly Global Reach

Efforts by the editorial team and 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* to authors, reviewers, and readers in several ways.

- In terms of authors and reviewers, the journal now receives manuscript submissions and reviews from individuals primarily in the United States but, increasingly in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and Russia.
- In terms of readers, information provided by Wiley-Blackwell and the MWPSA Executive Director’s Report (March, 2009), shows that:
 - a) Total circulation stood at 7,706 in 2008 (compared with 4,109 in 2002).
 - b) Institutional, consortia, and philanthropic circulation increased from 3,921 to 4,070. Consortia access increased largely in the “rest of the world,” strongly in Europe and Australia/New Zealand, and modestly in the United States. Access held constant at relatively smaller numbers in Canada, China, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The *International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications* (INASP) provides subsidized (philanthropic) consortia access to *AJPS* in Armenia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Moldova, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and other countries. In 2007, there were 623 such consortia; in 2008, 610.
 - c) Online institutional (e.g., library) subscriptions increased from 31 to 405 (by 34%).
 - d) Association membership (regular, student, retired) decreased slightly from 3,676 to 3,636.

III. Some Ways Forward for The AJPS

Additional ways to reach the goals described above can be undertaken. Three are:

- ajps-e – Although little progress has been made in the past four years, common sense and economic, environmental, generational change, and scientific considerations now suggest that a “serious think” by the incoming Editor, the Association, and Wiley-Blackwell is in order about ajps-e. In this regard, Editorial Manager has enabled online manuscript and review submission, and the Association and the publisher provide online subscription. But, ajps-e can emerge as a platform where the current 40-page manuscript limit becomes open to allow not only text, figures and tables, but also code and data compilations, experimental and survey protocols, formal proofs, and multi-media presentations, some perhaps in real time. The scientific value of this can promote *conversations among communities* and is potentially enormous, but the implications for the reviewer pool (when given more than 40 pages to review) are potentially non-salutary and need to be carefully considered.

- Review School – The “tragedy of the reviewer commons” is a development that is not unique to *AJPS*: it is increasingly experienced by most, albeit not all, *peer-reviewed journals*. In addition to the efforts discussed above, the Association’s online newsletter, and the transition to Editorial Manager, now help to realize opportunities to inform and to educate people about the importance of review and the characteristics of good review. But, more can and should be done. One way is to boost the D term in the Cost (time/effort)-Benefit equation that reviewers may employ when deciding to review. And, one way of doing this is to inform all scholars, including those who will form the next cohort of researchers and reviewers, that:
 - a) Something helpful (1.5 pages) is better than nothing at all (including no response to a reviewer invitation) and, in many cases, is better than a 6-page, single-spaced but vague review.
 - b) Inconsistencies among review content, summary evaluation, and overall recommendation do make the Editor’s job more interesting, but they also puzzle many authors. In this regard, a summary evaluation of Very Good with a recommendation to grant a revise-and-resubmit may be charitable to the author(s) but are inconsistent with a review content that argues that the research fundamentals are unsound – e.g., breakdowns among theory, hypotheses, data, evidence, and written expression.
- *The Journal* has made headway with respect to projecting its *global reach* to authors, reviewers, and readers. But, here too, more can be done. First, robust communication to scholars in the United States and abroad about the existence and the scientific value of The Workshop is in order. Second, knowledge gains have been made by ongoing work on the empirical implications of theoretical models (EITM), but additional gains are promised by new, innovative work that bridges philosophy, theory, and empirical analysis on some of the most important, and seemingly intractable, problems of the human sciences, and that considers the theoretical implications of methodological experience (TIME). And, third and relatedly, *The Journal* can do much to advance the public value of political science research by bundling articles that address some of the most important and pressing problems involving quality-of life issues – issues that are similar in kind, but not always in degree, in the United States and other countries.

IV. Key Personnel

The AJPS is an intellectual activity and a professional business. The people who have given their effort, time, judgment, and intellect to achieving both during the past year are:

Editorial Office – Tommi Ivey, Administrative Assistant I; Michael Gunnin and Shawn Williams, Senior Editorial Assistants; Chelsea Jenkins, Kristina Mitchell, and Walter Casey, Editorial Assistants; all University of Texas at Dallas.

Associate Editors – Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Ohio State University; Darrell Dobbs, Marquette University; Raymond M. Duch, Nuffield College, Oxford; Forrest 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, *Editorial Manager*.

Midwest Political Science Association – The Executive Council and Will Morgan, Executive Director.

Ohio State University – Susan Meyer, Office of Communications, Assistant Editor/Copy Editor.

Wiley-Blackwell – Michael Streeter, Associate Editor, Journals, and Martha Lovvoll, Associate Productions Manager, Journals.