



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**Report to the Editorial Board and the Midwest
Political Science Association Executive Council
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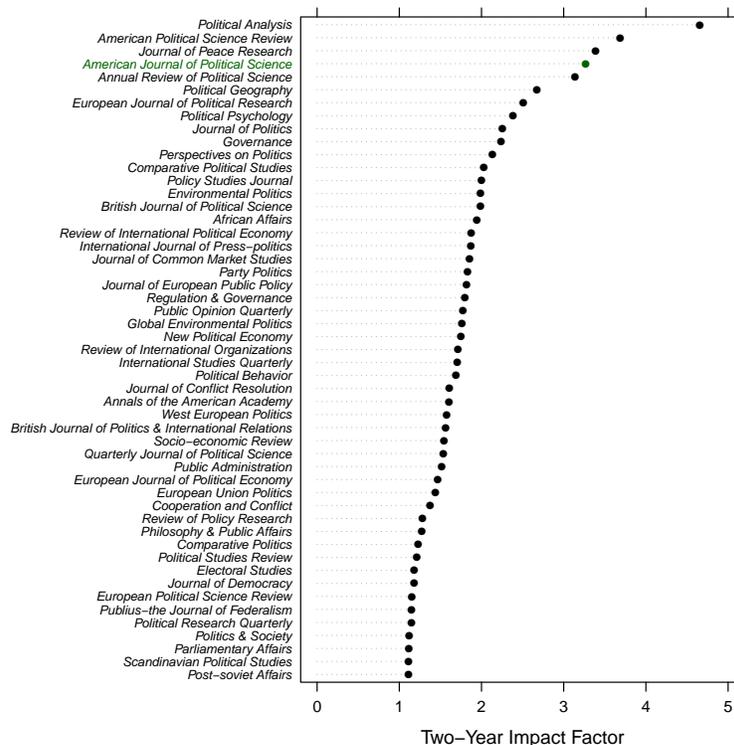
This Report from the Editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* to the Editorial Board and to the Executive Council of the Midwest Political Science Association covers the *AJPS* and operations in the Editorial Offices at Michigan State University during calendar year 2015. The Report presents information about the *Journal's* status and influence, usage of *AJPS* content, manuscript processing statistics, referees and reviews, and the Editorial Board. It also explains several new policies and innovations that have been implemented from the start of the current editorial term through the present time. Finally, the Report will provide information about manuscript processing during the first three months of 2016.

IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

The *AJPS* strives to maintain its position as one of the premier publication outlets, not only within the political science discipline, but also throughout the social sciences more generally. To that end, we continue to monitor closely the *Journal's* performance on the various metrics that summarize its presence, visibility, and usage within the research community. The main indicators used for this purpose are the Thomson Reuters Impact Factors and the Google Scholar h5-index scores.

The Impact Factor for a journal is defined as the average number of citations received per paper published in that journal during the preceding two, or five, years. The 2014 Two-Year Impact Factor for the *AJPS* is 3.269. This figure represents a fairly sizable increase over previous years' values. For example, the comparable figures for 2012 and 2013 were 2.811 and 2.516, respectively. Figure 1 plots the top fifty political science journals, according to their Two-Year Impact Factors for 2014. The current Two-Year Impact Factor places the *AJPS* in fourth place among political

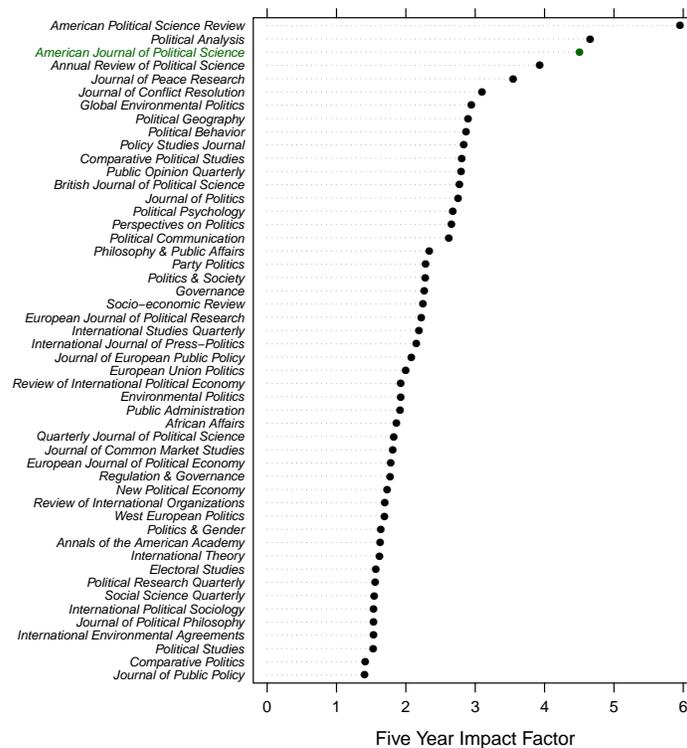
Figure 1: Top fifty political science journals, according to 2014 Two-Year Impact Factors



science journals, behind the *Political Analysis* (2014 2-Yr IF = 4.655), the *American Political Science Review* (2014 2-Yr IF = 3.688), and the *Journal of Peace Research* (2014 2-Yr IF = 3.387).

The 2014 Five-Year Impact Factor for the *AJPS* is 4.506. This value represents an increase over the comparable 2013 figure of 4.324. Figure 2 plots the top fifty political science journals, ranked by their 2014 Five-Year Impact Factors. Here, the Five-Year Impact Factor puts the *AJPS* in third place among political science journals, behind the *American Political Science Review* (2014 5-Yr IF = 5.954) and *Political Analysis* (2014 5-Yr IF = 4.659). The figure also shows that there is a drop-off in the Five-Year Impact Factors after the *AJPS*; the next largest score is 3.929 for the *Annual Review of Political Science*, and only two other journals have scores greater than 3.00 (the *Journal of Peace Research* at 3.549 and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* at 3.099). Thus, the *American Journal of Political Science* is retaining its position as one of the most widely-cited journals in the entire discipline.

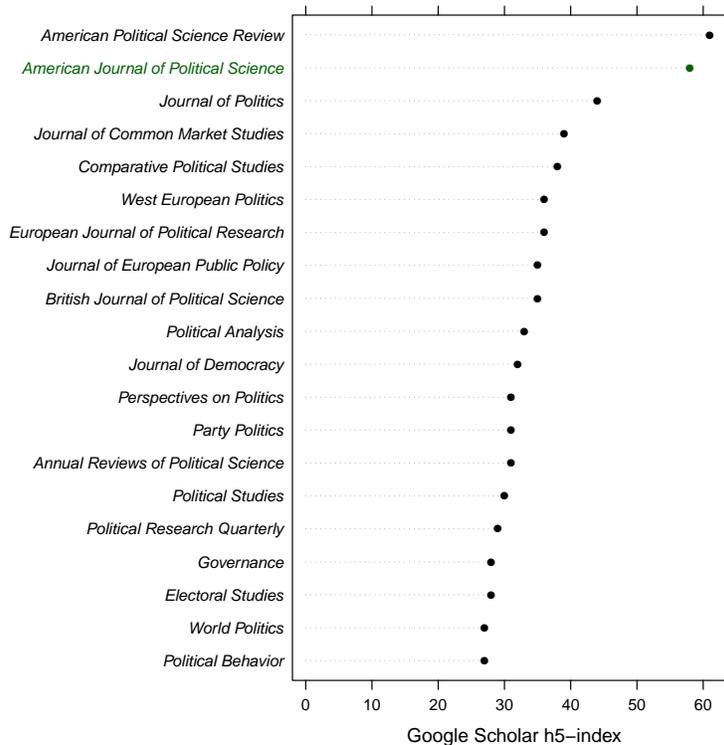
Figure 2: Top fifty political science journals, according to 2014 Five-Year Impact Factors



Additional grounds for optimism about the professional visibility of the *AJPS* are provided by current citation statistics from Google Scholar. The h5-index for the *AJPS* is 58; this means that 58 articles have been cited at least 58 times during the five-year period from 2010 through 2014. The h5-index value places the *AJPS* ninth among all social science journals and at second place within political science (see Figure 3). It is exceeded only by the *American Political Science Review*, which has a slightly higher h5-index value of 61. Once again, the graphical display shows that there is a sharp drop-off after the *AJPS*, with the *Journal of Politics* and the *Journal of Common Market Studies* showing h5-index values of 44 and 39, respectively. The general similarity in the patterns for the 5-Yr IF and the h5-index confirm that the *American Journal of Political Science* shows a

temporally reliable distinctiveness in the degree to which scholars look to its content as support for their work. More generally, all of these figures demonstrate that the *AJPS* is maintaining its stature as one of the premier outlets for high-quality research in the social sciences.

Figure 3: Top twenty political science journals, according to 2014 Google Scholar h-5 index values



CONTENT USAGE

The *American Journal of Political Science* is disseminated very widely. According to the 2015 Report from the publisher, there are 4,482 institutional subscriptions throughout the world. Of these, 18% are from the United States and 36% are from Europe. There are 5,626 individual subscriptions. Of course, the vast majority of these are obtained through membership in the Midwest Political Science Association. Among individual subscribers, 90% are taking the electronic version of the *AJPS* only, with 10% obtaining the traditional, print version of the *Journal*.

Readers of the *AJPS* increasingly are accessing content by downloading articles from the internet and this provides a useful source of information about usage. The ten most frequently downloaded *AJPS* articles from 2015 are listed in Table 1. During 2015, a total of 31 articles were downloaded more than one thousand times each!

Further insights about the extent to which scholars rely on *AJPS* content is shown in Figure 4, which presents the h5-median scores for the journals that received the twenty highest h5-index scores from Google Scholar. The h5-median gives the median number of citations to the articles

Table 1: Ten most-frequently downloaded *AJPS* articles in 2014 (Number of downloads in parentheses).

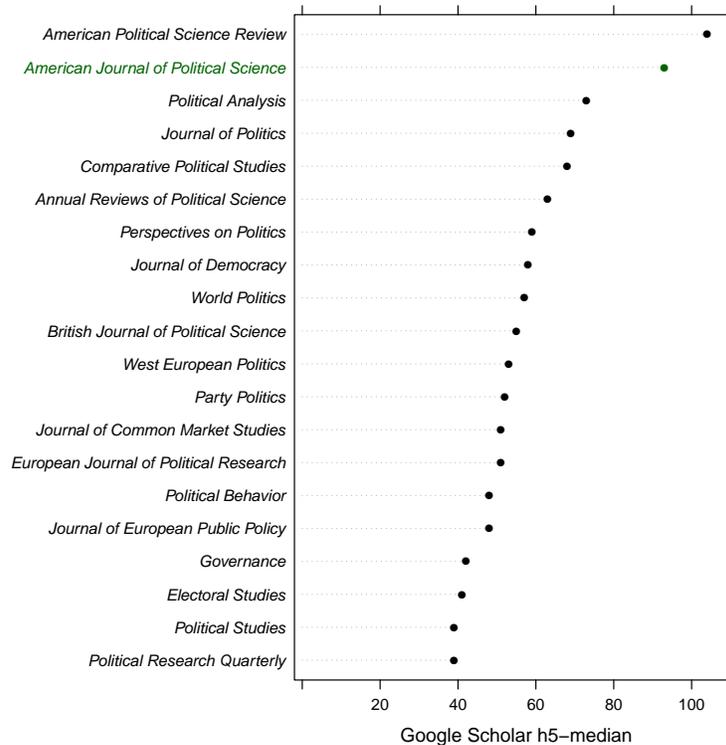
1. Büthe, Tim and Helen V. Milner. 2008. "The Politics of Foreign Direct Investment into Developing Countries: Increasing FDI through International Trade Agreements?" *AJPS* 52: 4. (4,040)
2. Brader, Ted; Nicholas A. Valentino; Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." *AJPS* 52: 4. (2,626)
3. Bechtel, Michael M.; Dominik Hangartner; Lukas Schmid. 2015. "Does Compulsory Voting Increase Support for Leftist Policy?" Wiley Online Library, Early View. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12224. (2,336)
4. Abadie, Alberto; Alexis Diamond; Jens Hainmueller. (2015) "Comparative Politics and the Synthetic Control Method." *AJPS* 59: 2. (1,995)
5. Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas J. Wood. (2014) "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *AJPS* 58: 4. (1,961)
6. Dowling, Conor M. and Amber Wichowsky. (2015) "Attacks without Consequence? Candidates, Parties, Groups, and the Changing Face of Negative Advertising." *AJPS* 59: 1. (1,803)
7. Kelley, Judith G. and Beth A. Simmons. (2015) "Politics by Number: Indicators as Social Pressure in International Relations" *AJPS* 59: 1. (1,662)
8. Knutsen, Carl Henrik and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård. (2015) Institutional Characteristics and Regime Survival: Why Are Semi-Democracies Less Durable Than Autocracies and Democracies?" *AJPS* 59: 3. (1,661)
9. Bechtel, Michael M.; Jens Hainmueller; Yotam Margalit. (2014) "Preferences for International Redistribution: The Divide over the Eurozone Bailouts." *AJPS* 58: 4. (1,529)
10. Mason, Lilliana. (2015) "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *AJPS* 59: 1. (1,519)

that are used to create the h5-index score. The *AJPS* has the second-highest h-5 median score, at 93. This falls slightly below the score for the *American Political Science Review* (at 104) and it is substantially above the next highest h-5 median score (73, for *Political Analysis*). Clearly, a very large number of scholars are citing work that appears in the *American Journal of Political Science*.

Along with aggregate figures about downloads and citations, there is now a great deal of information readily available about the usage and impact of specific articles. Since July 2014, the [Wiley Online Library](#) has been displaying [Altmetric](#) information for all *AJPS* articles. Michael Streeter, from Wiley, explains that "... Altmetric is a service that tracks and measures the impact of scholarly articles and datasets across traditional and social media, online reference managers, post-publication peer-review sites, and public policy documents." An Altmetric score is derived from three main factors: The volume of distinct mentions and citations; the types of media in which the article is mentioned; and the originator of each mention. Altmetric assigns a score to each article and that is displayed as part of the article's entry in the Wiley Online Library.

Larger Altmetric scores are better, but it is difficult to interpret specific values. Altmetric provides some guidance regarding interpretation. Each article's Altmetric score is linked to a web page that lists "Score in context" information. So, for example, "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion" by Oliver and Wood (*AJPS* 58:4, pages 952-966) has an Altmetric score of 169 (as of March 21, 2016). The "Overview of attention for article" information says that this

Figure 4: The h-5 median values for the political science journals with the twenty highest h-5 index values.



score falls “(i)n the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric;” is “(o)ne of the highest-scoring outputs from this source (#2 of 642);” and is a “(h)igh score compared to outputs of the same age (99th percentile).” There is also a graphical display (“The Altmetric Donut”) that uses color to indicate the types of media in which each article has been mentioned or cited.

According to Altmetric’s FAQ page, “most articles will score 0. A mid-tier publication might expect 30%-40% of the papers that it publishes to be mentioned at least once” Across all years of publication, 461 *AJPS* articles have non-zero Altmetric scores. To provide a relative assessment, consider that the *AJPS* published a total of 447 articles from 2009 through 2015. Of these, 332 or approximately 74% have non-zero Altmetric scores. This confirms that *AJPS* articles are attracting a great deal of attention in both absolute and relative terms— precisely what is to be expected for a top journal in the discipline.

It is important to emphasize that attention to, and usage of, *AJPS* content spans most fields of the discipline. Table 2 shows the distribution of subfields for the 50 most-frequently downloaded articles from 2014 and the 58 articles in the h-5 index. American political behavior is the modal category for downloads, at 36%. But American political institutions are the modal category in the h-5 index at 31% of the articles. American political behavior has almost as many articles in the h-5 index, at 29% whereas downloads of articles on American political institutions are relatively uncommon, at 6% of the total. The large number of articles on American politics in both lists is reasonable, given the traditional focus and reputation of the *Journal*. However, a sizable proportion of the articles receiving attention are from comparative politics: 32% of the most downloaded articles and 14% of the articles in the h-5 index. International relations articles comprise 14% of the

Table 2: Distribution across subfields for the 50 most frequently downloaded articles and the 58 articles that contribute to the h-5 index.

	50 most frequently downloaded articles	Articles contributing to the h-5 index
American political behavior	36%	29%
American institutions	6%	31%
Comparative politics	32%	14%
International relations	14%	14%
Methodology, formal theory	12%	12%
Normative theory	0%	0%

articles in each of the two lists. While these figures are quite respectable in themselves, they are probably a bit low due to the sizable number of subfield-specific journals that focus on various aspects of international relations. Articles in methodology and formal theory represent 12% of the most frequently downloaded articles, with an identical percentage of the articles going into the h-5 index. Normative theory, unfortunately, is not represented at all in these usage statistics. No theory articles occur among the top fifty downloads and there are none contributing to the h-5 index. So, with the admittedly serious and potentially troubling exception of normative theory, the *American Journal of Political Science* publishes content that attracts interest from across the entire discipline. That, in turn, solidifies the *Journal's* position as one of the top general-audience publication outlets for political scientists.

Still more information about the attention being paid to the *AJPS* can be gleaned from the metrics associated with social media. The *Journal* has had a [Facebook](#) page and a Twitter account for several years. The Facebook page currently (March 22, 2016) has 2273 “likes.” Note that this number has been growing consistently, at a rate of about three or four every day. On Twitter, the *AJPS* has 3475 followers and this figure also grows steadily at a rate of more than 100 new followers each month. One measure of an entity’s influence on social media is the Klout score, which assesses the reactions to posts that originate with the entity. The *AJPS* Klout score is 45, a value that appears to be relatively high since the average Klout score is 40. Taken together, the information presented here confirms that the *American Journal of Political Science* is appealing to a large audience through several channels of communication!

SUBMISSIONS AND TURNAROUND TIMES

Table 3 provides the total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until the editorial decision for the past sixteen years, from 2000 through 2015 . Across the 2015 calendar year, 876 manuscripts were submitted to the *AJPS*. This produces a submission rate of 2.78 manuscripts per day (counting only the days that the *Journal* was open for submissions)! It also sets a new record for yearly submissions, although it only exceeds last year’s record-setting

figure by two manuscripts (there were 874 submissions in 2014). The submissions in 2014 and 2015 represent sharp increases over the immediately preceding years, as well. In 2012 and 2013, the numbers of submissions were 750 and 696, respectively. Thus, the figures for either 2014 or 2015 represents a 26% increase over 2013 and a 17% increase over 2012.

Table 3: Yearly submissions and mean turnaround times.

Year	Number of submissions	Mean turnaround time (days)
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

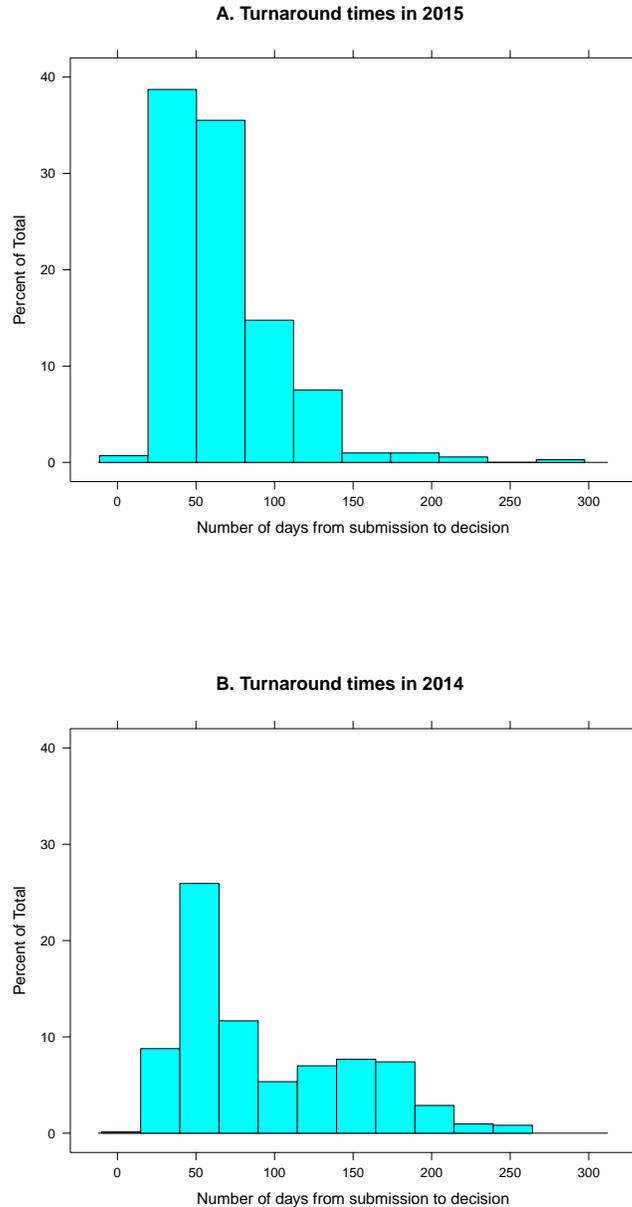
In previous annual reports, I speculated whether the increase in submissions represented a temporary fluctuation or a new standard of activity for the *Journal*. At this point, I believe the weight of evidence suggests the latter. Submissions have remained at an unprecedented high level during the first half of my term. And, the submission rate definitely has not abated! During the first three months of 2016, the *AJPS* received 221 submissions (through March 28). The comparable figures for 2014 and 2015 were 240 and 263, respectively. Thus, the high submission rate seems to be a new regular pattern for the *Journal*.

As the figures in Table 3 show, the *AJPS* Editorial Staff and I have been very successful at reducing the turnaround time (i.e., the number of days from submission to editorial decision) for processing manuscripts. Across all editorial decisions in 2015, the mean number of days from submission until decision is 45. This figure is exactly four weeks less than the mean turnaround for 2014 (73 days) and it is less than half the size of the figure from 2013 (93 days).

Note that the average overall turnaround time includes manuscripts that are not sent out to external referees for review. These “desk rejects” are processed very quickly: The mean turnaround is less than one day (0.74 to be precise). Once the desk-rejected papers are removed from the calculation, the mean turnaround time is 64 days. This represents a one-month reduction from the comparable figure in 2014 (97 days).

Figure 5 provides more detailed information about manuscript turnaround times. Panel A of the figure shows the distribution of times from submission to editorial decision for all externally-reviewed manuscripts in 2015. For comparison, Panel B of the figure shows the same distribution for

Figure 5: Distributions of turnaround times for externally-reviewed manuscripts in 2015 and 2014.



2014. A comparison of the two graphical displays clearly illustrates the improvement in turnaround times that we have achieved across the two years. For both years, the distribution is skewed positive, with the mode falling close to 50 days. But, the mode for 2015 is much more clearly defined than that for 2014, and the upper tail of the distribution is not nearly as “heavy.” In other words, a higher proportion of manuscripts are reviewed within about 50 days in 2015, compared to 2014, and a much smaller number of manuscripts have extremely long turnaround times (say, greater than 90 days). The differences show up clearly in the summary statistics. The median turnaround time for 2015 is 48 days, with an inter-quartile range of 44 days. In 2014, the median turnaround time was 72 days, with an IQR of 72 days.

One of my ongoing objectives as *AJPS* Editor has been to speed up the review process. The preceding evidence shows that the *AJPS* Editorial Office has been very successful in doing so. For manuscripts that are desk-rejected, the decision almost always is made in a day or less. This allows the author to resubmit the paper quickly, presumably to a more suitable publication outlet. During the year prior to the start of my editorial tenure, the average time until a desk rejection was 17 days. For manuscripts that are sent to external referees, the average wait time until a decision is a little more than two months (64 days). This is over a month faster than the 2014 average turnaround time of approximately three months (97 days). And it is less than half of the nearly four-month average turnaround time in 2013 (131 days). Of course, there are some unfortunate cases in which authors have had to wait a long time for the editorial decision: In 2015, 13 manuscripts had turnaround times greater than 180 days. But, these definitely are outliers. Three-fourths of the editorial decisions in 2015 were made after the manuscripts were under review for less than 69 days. At this point, there are no manuscripts that have been under review for more than three months. And most of the manuscripts currently in the queue have been there for a considerably shorter period of time.

SUBMISSION RATES BY SUBFIELD

Table 4 shows submission rates by subfield for each year, from 2011 through 2015. Note that the subfield for each manuscript is determined by the submitting author's own designation. Authors are allowed to select more than one subfield for a manuscript, but the figure uses only the first subfield selected by the author.

Table 4: Manuscript submissions by subfield, for each year from 2011 through 2015.

	Year				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
American political behavior	23.3%	24.9%	23.4%	26.1%	23.1%
American political institutions	16.4%	18.3%	16.7%	16.3%	14.6%
Comparative politics	33.7%	36.5%	37.7%	32.1%	36.2%
International relations	13.6%	11.1%	11.1%	14.8%	14.0%
Methodology and formal theory	7.3%	6.4%	7.5%	7.8%	8.4%
Normative theory	5.4%	2.7%	3.6%	3.0%	3.7%

The distribution of submissions across subfields shows a great deal of temporal stability. Comparative politics is the modal subfield across the four years, usually making up slightly more than one-third of the total submissions. In 2015, comparative manuscripts comprised about 36%, up about four percentage points from the corresponding 2014 figure of 32%. American political behavior is the next largest category, with just under one-fourth of the yearly submissions occurring

in this subfield. The 2015 figure is down three percentage points compared to 2014 (about 23% in 2015 versus 26% in 2014). International relations submissions are at about 14% for 2015, slightly below the high point of about 15% in 2014. American political institutions have slightly fewer submissions in 2015, at about 15% of the total (down about one percentage point from 2014). The remaining two subfields show slightly higher levels of submissions from 2014, with methodology and formal theory at just over eight percent and normative theory at just under four percent.

Given that submission rates do not change very much across the period from 2011 through 2015, it seems unnecessary to discuss trends in submissions. Similarly, it is difficult to specify any “appropriate” levels of submissions for the respective subfields. Nevertheless, the extremely low submission rates for normative theory are a bit troubling. It is not clear whether the Editor should try to take steps in order to increase submissions in this subfield and, if so, exactly how to go about doing that. So, ideas and suggestions are especially welcome on this point!

EDITORIAL DECISIONS

During calendar year 2015, I made 1,002 editorial decisions on manuscripts (up from 894 decisions in 2014). From this total, 867 were decisions on an initial submission. Of the remainder, 109 were decisions on a resubmitted first revision, and 26 were decisions on second revisions. The distributions of editorial decision outcomes, calculated separately for initial submissions, first, and second revisions are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Editorial decisions for calendar year 2015.

	Initial submission (<i>n</i> = 867)	First revision (<i>n</i> = 109)	Second revision (<i>n</i> = 26)
Desk reject	23.0%	—	—
Reject	64.4%	21.1%	11.5%
Revise and resubmit	12.6%	23.9%	7.7%
Accept	—	55.0%	80.8%

If desk-rejected manuscripts are eliminated from consideration, then 83.6% of submissions were rejected after the initial review and 16.4% were issued a “revise and resubmit” decision. The two manuscripts that received second “revise and resubmit” decisions both were accepted. Combining those manuscripts that were accepted after one and two or more revisions, the total acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to the *American Journal of Political Science* during 2015 is 8.3%. With desk-rejected manuscripts omitted from the calculation, the *AJPS* acceptance rate for 2015 is 10.5%. These figures seem very reasonable for a top-tier journal.

Table 6 breaks down the editorial decisions by subfield, separately for initial submissions and for revised resubmissions. (Note that the table only includes manuscripts that have been assigned a final disposition; therefore the total number of manuscripts in the table does not sum to the

Table 6: Editorial decisions from 2015, by subfield. Percentages are calculated separately for decisions on initial submissions and on revise and resubmits. (Figures in parentheses are numbers of submissions for each subfield).

	Initial submissions:			Revise and resubmits:	
	Desk reject	Reject	Revise and resubmit	Accept	Reject
American political behavior (247)	24%	69%	7%	78%	22%
American institutions (155)	25%	70%	5%	100%	0%
Comparative politics (137)	30%	57%	13%	89%	11%
International relations (161)	30%	65%	5%	67%	33%
Methodology, formal theory (92)	21%	68%	11%	80%	20%
Normative theory (33)	52%	42%	6%	100%	0%

total number of decisions for 2015). For the most part, there are not any major differences in the distributions of review outcomes from one subfield to the next. And, one feature that does appear to be distinctive in Table 6 is more illusory than real: Comparative politics, international relations, and normative theory show higher percentages of desk rejections than the other fields, at 30%, 30%, and 52% respectively. These figures are due entirely to the surprisingly large number of nonviable submissions that we receive from individuals in Russia, the Middle East and Africa, and from non-academic authors (especially for normative theory). If we were to adjust for the inappropriate manuscripts, the distributions for these fields would look much like those for American political behavior or institutions.

REVIEWS AND REFEREES

Across calendar year 2015, the *AJPS* Editorial Office received 1,947 referee reports; this is down from the 2,041 reports that we received in 2014. For completed reviews, the mean number of days from the invitation to review until receipt of the review is 34.3 (or 32.1 days from the time the referee accepted the invitation). These numbers are very slightly lower than the comparable figures from 2014 (36.0 and 32.8, respectively). The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is shown in Table 7.

Of course, we only receive reviews from a subset of the individuals who are invited to serve as referees. Across calendar year 2015, I invited 2,642 people to review manuscripts for the *AJPS*. It takes an average of 0.7 days from initial submission to invite the initial set of referees for a submitted manuscript. Considering only those who responded to the invitation, the mean number of days to provide the response (either positive or negative) was 3.1. The distribution of responses (and non-responses) to the invitation is shown in Table 8.

Table 7: Reviewer recommendations, calendar year 2015.

Recommendation	Percentage (<i>n</i> = 1,947)
Reject	53.6%
Revise and Resubmit	29.4%
Publish with Minor Revisions	10.0%
Publish as Is	7.0%

Based on the figures in Table 8, referee responsiveness and performance improved a bit in 2015 compared to 2014. For one thing, I issued fewer invitations— 2,642 in 2015 compared to 2,826 in 2014. At the same time, the percentage of referees who completed their reviews is up by about three percentage points from about 70% in 2014 to slightly more than 73% in 2015. Conversely, the percentage of invited referees who did not provide reviews is down by a similar amount, from 27% in 2014 to just under 24% in 2015. In summary, we solicited fewer reviews in 2015, and those people who were invited to serve as referees were more likely to provide reviews than was the case in 2014.

Table 8: Responses to Editor's invitation to review a manuscript for the *AJPS* during 2015.

Response	Percentage (<i>n</i> = 2,642)	Subtotal
Completed review	73.2%	
Review in progress	0.5%	
		73.7%
Declined invitation	16.7%	
Never responded	6.9%	
		23.6%
Did not need review	2.7%	2.7%

The database of potential referees for the *AJPS* currently contains information on 10,133 individuals. During 2015, 883 new people were registered into the database. The Editorial Staff edits the database contents when carrying out other tasks, and one of the Student Assistants is assigned to check entries and update information systematically.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The *American Journal of Political Science* Editorial Board currently is composed of 75 people. Most are mid-career scholars, along with a number of senior professors and a few junior faculty. All Board members are professionally active and highly visible members of the political science discipline. The composition of the Board has changed a bit since its initial creation. Several people left the Board and a number were added, not only to replace the vacancies but also to cover subfields in which we have had more submissions than originally expected.

I have relied very heavily on Editorial Board members for assistance with my editorial activities. As I stated at the outset of my Editorial term, I regard the Editorial Board more as a set of 75 Associate Editors than as mere names on the masthead of the *Journal*. Members of the Board have regularly provided me advice regarding desk rejections, decisions on manuscripts with divided referee recommendations, and author appeals of negative decisions. I also have asked several Board members for suggestions about possible additional members.

More than anything else, members of the Editorial Board review *many* manuscripts. I tell incoming Board members to expect up to one invitation to review a manuscript per month. In fact, I have never asked for that many from any Board member. But, the frequency with which I request reviews from Board members is almost certainly much higher than that for Editors of other journals or for previous *AJPS* Editors. Table 9 shows the distribution of the number of reviews completed by each of the active Board members who served during 2015. The mean number of reviews per Board member was 3.3 in 2015. This is quite a bit higher than the mean for 2014, 2.8 reviews per Board member.

Table 9: Distribution of reviews completed by Editorial Board members during 2015.

	Percentage of Board members ($n = 76$)
No reviews	5.3%
One review	3.9%
Two reviews	17.1%
Three reviews	30.3%
Four reviews	25.0%
Five reviews	14.5%
Six reviews	3.9%

The members of the 2016 *American Journal of Political Science* Editorial Board are:

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AJPS Editorial Board (continued):

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Melissa Schwartzberg, *New York University*
Carol L. Silva, *University of Oklahoma*
Betsy Sinclair, *Washington University in St. Louis*
Shane Singh, *University of Georgia*
Marco Steenbergen, *University of Bern*
Cameron Thies, *Arizona State University*
Jakana Thomas, *Michigan State University*
Rocio Titunik, *University of Michigan*
Joe Ura, *Texas A&M University*
Craig Volden, *University of Virginia*
Kenny Whitby, *University of South Carolina*
Guy Whitten, *Texas A&M University*
Kenneth Williams, *Michigan State University*
Alan Wiseman, *Vanderbilt University*
Jonathan Woon, *University of Pittsburgh*

POLICIES AND INNOVATIONS

Throughout 2015, the *AJPS* Editorial Staff and I continued to build upon the policies that we implemented during the early months of my term as Editor. Innovations and changes adopted during the year fall into four broad areas: Cover redesign, new logo, and new information; manuscript submission; data access and research transparency; and the replication policy for published work.

Cover Redesign, New Logo, and New Information

Probably the most visible innovation over the past year has been the new cover design for the *Journal*. The previous design had been used for approximately ten years, so this seemed like a good time to make a change. Working with the design and production team at Wiley Publishers, The *AJPS* Editorial Staff and the Midwest Political Science Association staff worked through a number of proposals for the new cover during the late summer and fall of 2015. All of us would like to acknowledge, and express our thanks for, the great encouragement, support, and assistance that we received from our colleagues at Wiley, especially Michael Streeter, Katie Haemmerle, and Melissa Evans. We all believe that our efforts have paid off nicely. The new cover design, using green and blue as the main colors, was initiated with Volume 60 of the *AJPS*, in calendar year 2016.

At the time of this writing, only Issue 1 has been published. So far, reactions to, and feedback we have received on, the new cover design have been entirely positive. We believe that the attractive design and the new colors on the cover complement the published material nicely and, in so doing, emphasize the quality of the work that appears within the *American Journal of Political Science*.

It is important to emphasize that the changes associated with the *AJPS* cover redesign are not merely cosmetic in nature. Melissa Heeke, from the Midwest Political Science Association, used the new logo to redesign the [AJPS website](#) and reconfigure the information that is available there. The site is easier to navigate and now provides ready access to information about the *Journal* (e.g., the Editorial Board, Editor's Reports, etc.), *Journal* policies (e.g., submission guidelines, replication policy, etc.), links to the Wiley Online Library, and to various social media outlets for the *AJPS*.

One important new feature available on the *AJPS* website is the document, "[Information and Resources for Authors](#)." Written by Katie Haemmerle from Wiley Publishing, this memorandum explains a number of terms and concepts associated with modern scholarly authorship and publishing (e.g., DOI, ORCID, Altmetric, etc.). It also explains authors' rights for material published in the *AJPS* and introduces some services and tools that authors can use to obtain information about academic publishing, along with strategies for optimizing the impact of their work (e.g., the Wiley Exchanges Blog, the Kudos service, etc.). This concise document should be an invaluable resource for anyone who wants to understand the components and complexities of scholarly publication.

Still another new innovation is the [American Journal of Political Science Mobile App](#). Available for all members of the Midwest Political Science Association, the iPhone version of the App was unveiled in spring 2015 and the Android version was introduced in late fall 2015. The App provides convenient access to *Journal* content, optimized for mobile devices. It also gives easy access to the *AJPS* social media outlets and allows users to sign up for new-content alerts. As of February, 2016, 2,132 people have downloaded the *AJPS* App. This represents about 32% of those who have access to the app through membership in the Midwest Political Science Association.

Manuscript Submission

Over the past year we have made some small, but important, modifications to the manuscript submission process. These changes are intended to address two vexing issues that sometimes arise during manuscript processing. First, some authors of manuscripts accepted for publication have waited until the end of the review process to let the *AJPS* Editorial Office know about requests for exceptions to, or exemptions from, the *Journal's* data access and replication policy. This slows down the workflow and occasionally has led to some rather complicated negotiations with authors and data providers. Second, some authors who submit work to the *AJPS* refuse to review manuscripts for the *Journal*. This behavior occurs more frequently than one might expect, and it is inequitable and unfair for several different reasons.

In order to address the first issue—requests for exceptions to the general replication policy—we have modified the confirmation message that the Editorial Manager system automatically sends back to the corresponding author upon submission of a manuscript. The new text reads as follows:

As you probably know, the *American Journal Of Political Science* is strongly committed to the principles of data access and research transparency. As part of this commitment, the *AJPS* maintains a strong policy about replication materials and verification of analyses in published articles. You can read the policy and related materials on the *AJPS* website (<http://ajps.org/>). Any exceptions to the policy must be addressed before the manuscript is sent out for external review. Please click on one of the following

three options to indicate how you will deal with the *AJPS* replication policy if your manuscript is accepted for publication:

- I will comply fully with the requirements of the *AJPS* replication policy.
- My manuscript does not contain any empirical data analysis so the *AJPS* replication policy does not apply in this case.
- Restrictions on the data or other analysis materials used in my manuscript lead me to request an exception to the *AJPS* replication policy (please explain).

[Text box for comments if the third option is selected]

Note that, if you click on the third option, the *AJPS* Editorial Office will contact you to deal with the request for an exception to the replication policy before the manuscript is reviewed.

By including this new material in the submission confirmation message, we make sure that authors are aware of the replication policy before their paper is reviewed. Any requests for exceptions will be considered and resolved at the outset, facilitating smoother workflow throughout the process. Everyone involved (i.e., the author, the *AJPS* Editor and Editorial Staff, and sometimes the data provider) will proceed with full information and common understanding of how data issues will be handled.

The new version of the submission confirmation message, including the new language about the replication policy, was first used on February 1, 2016. Since then we have had only one request for an exception to the general replication policy and that was handled easily using our usual procedures. The vast majority of submitting authors indicate either that they will comply fully with the replication policy or that their manuscript does not contain any empirical data, meaning that the policy does not apply. With this simple change to the submission procedure, we believe we have largely eliminated the practical issues that sometimes arose while attempting to implement the *AJPS* Replication and Verification Policy.

We have handled the second problem—submitting authors who refuse to review manuscripts—in several ways. For one thing, the *AJPS* submission guidelines now include the following language:

Authors and co-authors of submissions to the *AJPS* are expected to review manuscripts for the *Journal*. The *AJPS* Editor reserves the right to refuse submissions from authors who repeatedly fail to provide reviews for the *Journal* when invited to do so. Any such submission refusals will be made only after consultation with at least two members of the *AJPS* Editorial Board.

And, the submission confirmation message was further amended to include the following language:

Authors and co-authors of manuscripts submitted to the *American Journal Of Political Science* are expected to review manuscripts for the *Journal*. Please click on one of the following two options:

- In submitting this manuscript, I agree to review up to two manuscripts for the *AJPS*, if invited to do so, within the next 18 months.
- I do not agree to review manuscripts for the *AJPS* (please explain).

[Text Box For Comments If The Second Option Is Selected]

Of course, there is no way to enforce compliance with the agreement to review manuscripts for the *AJPS*. But, I believe that including this language in the submission process places the burden of responsibility on the author. From a practical perspective, it definitely provides the Editorial Staff with a pool of readily available candidates to serve as referees for other submitted manuscripts!

The preceding language and checklist also was included in the new version of the submission confirmation message that has been used since February 1, 2016. So far, all submitting authors have checked the first option. And, most of them have reviewed manuscripts when invited to do so. (The policy still is quite new, so a number of authors have not yet been invited to review a manuscript and a number of those who have been invited are still working on their reviews). To date, I have not refused a submission from any author. But, before the new confirmation message was implemented, I did contact two submitting authors with dubious records as referees, to make sure that they would review at least one manuscript in the near future.

Data Access and Research Transparency

The *American Journal of Political Science* has been heavily involved with the [Data Access and Research Transparency](#) (DA-RT) initiative. As explained in the 2015 Report to the Editorial Board, I helped create the DA-RT [Journal Editor's Transparency Statement](#) (JETS) and the *AJPS* was one of its initial five signatories. Furthermore, the *AJPS* has gone farther than any other journal in implementing the DA-RT principles through our replication and verification policy for accepted articles. Our leadership status has been recognized explicitly through the fact that other editors have used the "[American Journal of Political Science Guidelines for Preparing Replication Files](#)" to create replication protocols for their own journals.

The DA-RT initiative has been the subject of some disagreement within certain circles of the discipline. There have been two manifestations of this that directly involved the *AJPS*. The first was a "[Petition to Delay DA-RT Implementation](#)" that appeared online in fall 2015, and was sent to the *AJPS* Editorial Office on November 12, 2015. The second was an e-mail message from G. Bingham Powell and 19 current and former Presidents of the American Political Science Association on January 7, 2016, expressing several reservations about the implementation of the DA-RT guidelines.

I did not respond directly to either the petition or the e-mail message from the APSA Presidents. But the *Journal's* position should be very clear. Prior to receiving either of the aforementioned communications, the *American Journal of Political Science* already expressed a full commitment to the general principles of data access and research transparency. The *Journal* will not compromise this position in any way. This stance reflects the overriding objective of maintaining the impeccably high quality of the work that appears within the pages of the *AJPS*.

The DA-RT principles should be non-controversial for most empirical researchers. These ideas comprise a central element of scientific practice, regardless of subject matter, specific investigative strategy, the nature of the data, or the analytic procedures employed in the knowledge generation process. They pertain to the vast majority of the work that is submitted to *the American Journal of Political Science*. So far, we have had 100% cooperation (and often enthusiastic support) from authors with respect to the replication policies. Requests for exceptions have been based upon practical considerations (e.g., confidentiality protection; proprietary data, etc.), not epistemological objections.

Moreover, the *AJPS* policies already allow for exceptions to the general replication requirements to accommodate scholars who follow different research traditions. We have never maintained that "one size fits all" and state explicitly in the policy itself that this is not the case. As a simple and rather obvious example, works in normative and formal theory generally are exempt because they do not analyze empirical data. We certainly are willing and prepared to consider other exceptions due to human subjects protection and other confidentiality concerns. In fact, we have just revised

the original replication policy, to incorporate guidelines for information drawn from qualitative research (see further discussion on this point below). However, we realize that the policy never will be able to anticipate every possible situation that may arise. Therefore, the general requirements always can be adjusted for specific research contexts.

Again, the *American Journal of Political Science* already has publicly demonstrated its commitment to data access and research transparency through our rigorous replication and verification policy. Recent events in political science and other disciplines demonstrate the utility and importance of opening up scientific research to broader scrutiny. This oversight is vital for guaranteeing the quality of the work that guides the theory construction process and contributes to human knowledge. It also helps reassure those outside the immediate scientific community about the legitimacy and utility of our work. Replication policies like that adopted by the *AJPS* contribute directly to the preceding objectives. Any or delay in implementation of the DA-RT principles would have detrimental effects on the achievement of these objectives. Furthermore, any suspension of the existing *AJPS* replication policy would provide an unacceptable signal of a diminished commitment to data access and research transparency.

To the contrary, the *AJPS* will provide more visible signals of its commitment to these principles by adopting some of “Badges to Acknowledge Open Practices” from the Center for Open Science (COS). Specifically, we will use the “Open Data” and “Open Materials” badges illustrated in Figure 6. According to the COS guidelines, “(t)he Open Data badge is earned for making publicly available the digitally-shareable data necessary to reproduce the reported results.” Similarly, the guidelines state that “(t)he Open Materials badge is earned by making publicly available the components of the research methodology needed to reproduce the reported procedure and analysis.” Thus, the badges are intended to be a salient indicator that the articles to which they are awarded conform to the principles and best practices of openness in scientific research.

Figure 6: Badges to acknowledge open practices, from the Center for Open Science



Any manuscript that has been accepted for publication at the *AJPS* and completed successfully the data replication and verification process will automatically meet the criteria for the Open Data and Open Materials badges. Therefore, upon release of the replication Dataset on the [AJPS Dataverse](#), the Odum Institute Archive staff will add these two badges to the metadata of the Dataverse Dataset. The badges appear near the bottom of the main page for the article's Dataverse Dataset, along with the statement, “The associated article has been awarded Open Materials and Open Data badges. Learn more about Open Practice Badges from the Center for Open Science.” When the article, itself, is published, the badges will appear with the information near the beginning of the electronic version in the Wiley Online library. And they will be included as part of the statement about replication materials on the first page of the article's print version.

Currently, Open Practice Badges are used by four psychology journals and one linguistics journal. The *AJPS* will be the first political science journal to award them to articles. The badges appear

on the Dataverse Datasets for *AJPS* articles beginning with Volume 60, Issue 1 (January 2016). We hope to begin placing them on the articles, themselves, in Volume 2, Issue 2 (April 2016). The badges serve a useful purpose by helping to emphasize the distinctive quality of the work that appears in the *AJPS*.

Replication Policy

The *American Journal of Political Science* has adopted a very rigorous policy regarding replication materials and verification of analyses for accepted articles. There are two basic requirements to the policy, both of which must be fulfilled before an accepted manuscript can proceed to publication: First, the author must provide materials and information sufficient to reproduce all empirical results reported in the article. Second, the submitted materials must be verified to guarantee that they do, in fact, properly reproduce the results. So far, the verification process for all accepted manuscripts has been carried out by the Archive Staff of the [Odum Institute for Research in Social Science](#), at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Authors can request exemptions from parts or all of the replication requirements in cases of restricted-access data, human subjects concerns, or other exceptional circumstances.

Since the policy went into effect, only four authors have requested exemptions due to data-access restrictions. These all have involved the dataset alone; each of the authors has provided software code and output from their analyses. In three cases, the authors still have made the data available to the Odum Institute staff for verification purposes. They merely cannot make the data publicly available on the *AJPS* Dataverse. Instead, they have provided instructions explaining how interested researchers could gain access to the data for themselves. In the fourth case, legal restrictions prevented the author from supplying a dataset to the Odum Institute for verification purposes. But, summary statistics and a correlation matrix were provided, along with instructions for access to the actual dataset.

The new *AJPS* Replication Policy was announced on March 26, 2015. From that date through March 15, 2016, I have accepted 74 manuscripts for publication. Of these, 11 manuscripts had no empirical component, because they either presented strictly formal analyses or fell within the subfield of normative political theory. Thus, the Odum staff have worked with replication materials for 63 accepted manuscripts. Of these, 50 manuscripts (about 79% of the total 63) have gone through the verification process successfully. This leaves 13 manuscripts (21%) awaiting verification of their replication files. Of these, the Odum staff currently are processing the materials for three manuscripts (5% of the total 63) and they are awaiting resubmission of replication files from the authors of ten more manuscripts (16%).

The initial replication files usually need additional work. Most are sent back to the authors one or more times after an initial submission for correction and resubmission. The maximum number of resubmissions (across the 50 manuscripts that have completed the verification process) is four and the mean number of resubmissions is about 1.6. There are only six cases out of the 50 (or 12%) in which the replication files successfully reproduced all analyses on the first try. Most of the resubmissions involve requests for more information (e.g., more detail in the codebooks describing the datasets), incomplete replication materials (e.g., the author leaves out the code to produce a table or figures), or minor inconsistencies in the results (e.g., the coefficients estimated from the replication file do not match those presented in the manuscript). In virtually all cases, authors have

been able to make the necessary corrections and adjustments very easily, with no major changes or modifications to the accepted manuscripts.

In a few cases, the verification process has revealed minor numeric differences in the results which require a new version of the manuscript even though the substantive interpretations and conclusions remain unchanged. Somewhat surprisingly, the source of the differences in these cases has been different versions of the software used to carry out the analysis; so far, we have encountered instances in which new implementations of Stata, R, and MATLAB have produced different estimates from earlier versions. Of course, these minor differences have been very easy to resolve. At this point, there is only one case in which the failure to replicate results may lead to rescinding the acceptance of a manuscript. (The *AJPS* Editorial Office currently is awaiting information from the author, who has been nonresponsive to requests from the Editor).

The replication and verification process does add some time to the publication workflow. The number of days from the arrival of replication files at the Odum Institute to the release of the Dataverse Dataset ranges from 8 to 156, across the 50 manuscripts for which the verification process has been completed. The mean length of the verification process is 46.32 days. Of course, part of the time in the verification process is due to the author responses. The number of days from the arrival of replication files at the Odum Institute to the initial Verification Report (which is sent to the author) ranges from 1 to 56 days (again, counting only those manuscripts for which the process has been completed). The mean time interval until the initial Verification Report is 18.65 days.

We currently are making some major modifications to the replication policy. These are aimed at alleviating concerns that the policy places qualitative researchers at a disadvantage. That certainly has never been the intention, and the original draft of the replication guidelines stated explicitly that qualitative analyses could be handled differently from the normal procedures if necessary. But with excellent input and assistance from Colin Elman (Professor, Political Science, Syracuse University; Director, Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry, Syracuse University; Co-Director, Qualitative Data Repository, Syracuse University) and Diana Kapiszweski (Associate Professor, Political Science, Georgetown University; Co-Director, Qualitative Data Repository, Syracuse University), we have produced a revision of the "[American Journal of Political Science Guidelines for Preparing Replication Files](#)." This new version of the Guidelines provides separate sets of instructions for information generated by quantitative and qualitative analyses. It also discusses confidentiality and human subjects protection as important considerations in the preparation of replication files for both types of data.

Along with the Guidelines, the [AJPS Replication Policy](#), itself, has been revised in order to enable different verification procedures for quantitative and qualitative analyses. When articles rely on quantitative data and analyses, verification will continue to be carried out by the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science. But for articles that rely on qualitative sources to provide evidence for substantive interpretations and conclusions, verification of materials will be carried out by the staff of the Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University. Furthermore, the new policy recognizes that it may be impossible to reproduce precisely certain types of qualitative evidence. But, the policy enables interested researchers to evaluate the procedures and criteria that are used to produce the evidence. Thus, the *AJPS* verification process makes sure that the datasets and related materials associated with empirical analyses are examined and evaluated by teams with specific expertise in handling the relevant types of information. Overall, the latest version of the

AJPS Replication Policy explicitly addresses several of the major concerns that were mentioned by critics as reasons to limit the implementation of the DA-RT principles.

The *AJPS*' leadership status in promoting data access and research transparency has been recognized explicitly in several ways. For example, Sara Bowman, Project Manager at the Center for Open Science, says that they use our replication procedures frequently as examples and that the *AJPS* is attracting a great deal of attention throughout the scientific research community with our efforts. At the same time, others are emulating our procedures: The Editors of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* have used the first version of the "[American Journal of Political Science Guidelines for Preparing Replication Files](#)" and our "[Quick Reference for Uploading Replication Files](#)" as the foundation for their own journal's replication policy. Still other groups are looking to us for guidance: Along with Colin Elman, I participated in a teleconference with the Executive Council of the European Consortium for Political Research on February 3, 2016. The purpose of this electronic meeting was to advise the Council about adopting replication policies for ECPSR journals. Thus, we have been attracting favorable attention from a number of sources and we are influencing the ongoing development of standards for openness and access to the research materials underlying published work.

In summary, the *American Journal of Political Science* Replication Policy makes an important contribution to the infrastructure of social scientific research. The benefits of the replication and verification process far outweigh any costs to authors, the Editor, or the publisher. The procedures guarantee that complete replication materials are available and operate satisfactorily for all articles that appear within the *Journal's* pages. This ensures the quality of the analyses reported in the *AJPS*, contributes to the fairness of the review process, and provides an invaluable resource for teaching and facilitating further research.

JOURNAL OPERATIONS IN 2016

While most of this Report focuses on *AJPS* operations during 2015, I do want to provide a brief update on the first three months of 2016. As already noted, the number of submissions remains very high. From January 11 (the *Journal's* opening date for the year) through March 28, we received 221 manuscripts. This is slightly lower than the number of submissions we received during a similar time period in 2015 but it still represents a submission rate of 2.87 manuscripts per day!

The breakdown of 2016 submissions across subfields is shown in Table 10. The distribution differs a bit from the ongoing pattern discussed above with respect to the information in Table 4. For the first three months of 2016, submissions in comparative politics are down to about 19% (compared to the typical yearly rate of over 30%). Conversely, submissions in American politics, with behavior and institutions combined, are up to slightly more than half of the total (51%), compared to their typical yearly rate of approximately 40%. Submissions in the other three subfields remain similar to their long-term patterns. Of course, it is impossible to say whether these figures represent temporary fluctuations or the start of a lasting change in the balance of submissions.

From January 11 through March 24, I made a total of 199 editorial decisions. The mean turnaround time for all of these manuscripts is 42.2 days. With desk rejections excluded, the mean turnaround is 55.8 days. From the total number of decisions, 23.1% were desk rejections, 62.4% were rejections after external review, 7.0% were invitations to revise and resubmit, and 7.5% were conditional acceptances.

Table 10: Manuscript submissions by subfield, January 11 through March 26, 2016.

	Percent of total ($n = 214$)
American political behavior	30.3%
American political institutions	21.1%
Comparative politics	18.8%
International relations	16.3%
Methodology and formal theory	11.1%
Normative theory	2.4%

In conclusion, the *American Journal of Political Science* had a very successful year in 2015, and operations continue to run very smoothly during the first quarter of 2016. *AJPS* articles are highly influential and widely cited, manuscript submission rates are high, review turnaround times are low, and *Journal* policies help maintain the integrity of the scientific process. For all of these reasons, the *American Journal of Political Science* is widely recognized as a premiere publication outlet for research of the very highest quality and a leader in promoting open science principles, not only within the political science discipline, but also throughout the entire social scientific research community.