

August 3, 2009

To: APR Editorial Board

From: Jim Gimpel, APR Editor

Re: Editorial Report for FY 2008

On July 1, we brought our sixth year (FY2008) to a close.

In November 2008, we initiated a major design of the journal's website, which was unveiled in December. Please have a look at the new site: <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/apr/>. We are always willing to hear your suggestions for improving the site.

Note that we have posted statistics on the site reflecting submission-related data from the last two years. As far as we know, no other political science journal is as thorough and transparent about submission-related information.

As for the "paper flow," for 2008, we observed a small decrease in submissions from last year: -13, to stand at 190, a decrease of 6.4%. Last year's figure was most likely *the historic high* in the journal's 35-year history, so a slight drop from that number indicates that the journal is still receiving a healthy and sustainable level of submissions (see Table 1).

<b>Table 1. APR Submissions and Acceptance Rates by Year of Submission</b>		
Year	Submissions	Acceptance Rate
FY 1997	148	23.5%
FY 1998	123	13.1%
FY 1999	122	13.1%
FY 2000	113	23.0%
FY 2001	108	26.9%
FY 2002	95	26.3%
FY 2003	121	28.0%
FY 2004	142	20.4%
FY 2005	148	18.0%
FY 2006	138	18.1%
FY 2007	203	18.0%
<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>16.3%*</b>
<b>Over 5 Years</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>17.2%</b>
* Figure based on an estimate that 40 percent of R&Rs will be returned and accepted. Percentage for FY 2008 is based on the 147 manuscripts with initial decisions as of July 1, 2009.		

The figures above in Table 1 indicate that over the last five years (since 2003) acceptances have averaged out to 17.2% of submissions. This year acceptances stood at 16.3% of submissions. This figure remains the lowest annual acceptance rate since the journal moved to the six issue format in 2001.

As in previous years, we regularly monitor the amount of time authors must wait to see their work emerge in print. Accepted papers that are in final form this month will find their way into the May and July 2010 issues, so the wait-time is still running 10-12 months. Our sustained high level of submissions does risk lengthening the wait for publication unless we adopt more stringent standards for acceptance, or increase the current allocation of page space (more on this below).

### ***Turnaround Times and the Reviewer Pool***

Given our goal to compete with other journals for the best papers, we must keep turnaround times until first review to a minimum. I am proud to report that in spite of the increase in submissions over the last two years, our turnaround times on *APR* reviews are still much better than most journals. Our average turnaround on reviews over the last 12 months was 45 *total* days (not working days) with a standard deviation of 17 days. For comparison, last year our turnaround time averaged 44 days, with a standard deviation of 19 days. Recent statistics from the *Journal of Politics* report a mean turnaround time of 74 total days with a standard deviation of 31 days (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jop/JournalStatistics>).

I continue to be pleased with the seriousness with which reviewers take our review deadlines and comply with them, particularly in light of widespread complaints from other editors about uncooperative reviewers.

*Thank you for giving of your time to place priority on APR review requests.*

With the increase in submissions observed in recent years, we are working every week to find high quality reviewers. But thanks to an impressive reviewer pool of over 2,200 faculty and advanced graduate students across all subfields of American Politics, we have not had significant delays or major problems in finding willing reviewers. While it is certainly true that our review requests are routinely rejected, we always have suitable alternatives. Authors should not experience delays resulting from the currently high volume of submissions.

I am both impressed and humbled by the willingness of the board members to step-up and review for us, particularly on short notice, or under a tight deadline. This shows the kind of commitment to a journal, and to serving the subfield's authors, that is the envy of every editor of a social science journal. I really could not ask more from a board ...but I still might: If the higher submission numbers hold for the coming years, board members might expect a few more review requests than in the past. Even so, the high end will not likely be greater than six per year.

Remember, you always have the right to refuse or turn down a review request, but please assist us by declining when the request is made rather than later (i.e., when the review is due).

### ***Continue to Raise the Bar for Publishable Work***

In the face of the sustained high number of submissions, we should continue to weigh the three options: 1) increase selectivity (lower the acceptance rate); 2) increase the page space allocation, or 3) pursue some balance of both.

As you know, my decision so far has been to pursue the third option. Last year, I did ask Sage for additional pages to expand the journal's offerings. The request was granted, and we will now be publishing about 1,000 pages per year. Ten years ago, the journal was publishing about 26 articles per year. Today, we are publishing closer to 40, a 40% increase in published content.

In response to the higher submission levels, I do urge board members and associated *APR* reviewers to exercise closer scrutiny and higher standards as they complete reviews for the journal.

In the last 12 months, I have rejected five submissions without review as inappropriate for publication in the journal. These submissions were far off topic, not germane to readers in the American Politics subfield.

### ***Impact Factor***

The *impact factor* is a popular, though volatile, measure of journal prominence capturing the number of citations to a journal's content over the past two years over the number of articles published in that journal during that time. Since it often takes more than two years for any journal's articles to be discovered and cited in the *published* articles of others, the current measure is exacting. The current year-end data show that our impact factor was 0.771, ranking us **38th out of 99** political science journals currently indexed by Thomson.

This year, this indicator places us just ahead of *PRQ* (ranks 39th), and not far behind *LSQ* (ranks 27<sup>th</sup>). We ranked ahead of *Political Science Quarterly* (ranks 50<sup>th</sup>) and *Political Behavior* (ranks 42<sup>nd</sup>). I am very pleased whenever we can rank above these other well-established journals.

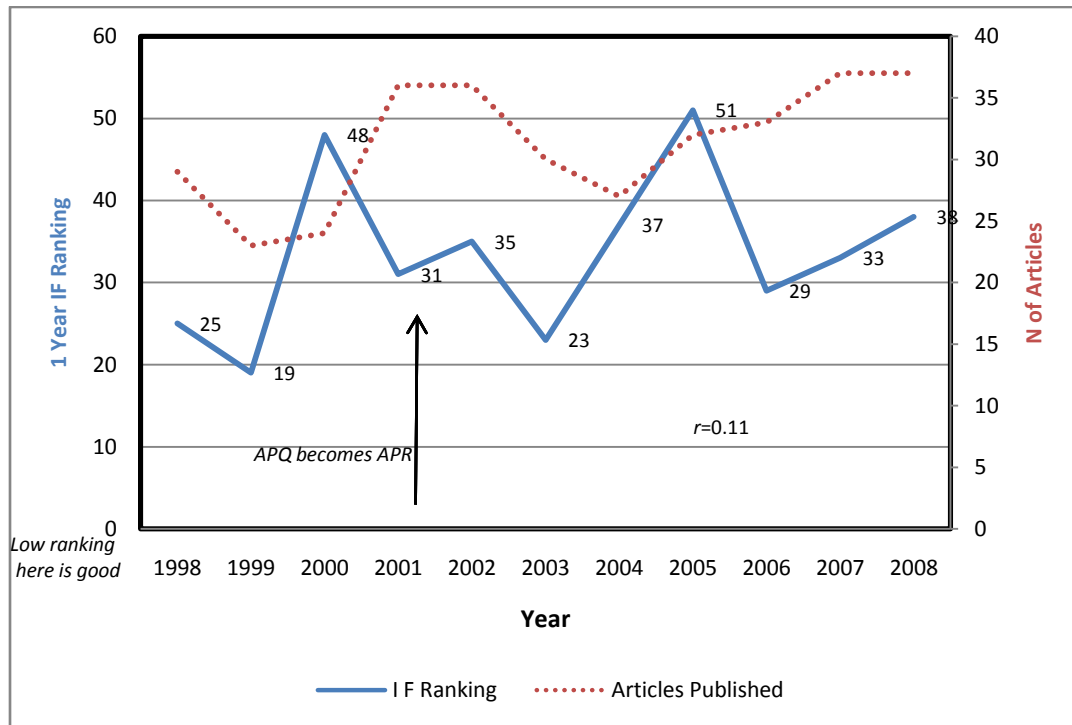
This year, Thomson added a new indicator in the form of a 5-Year Impact Factor score, which gauges the number of citations over the number of articles published for the five year period ending in December 2008. On this measure, *APR* ranked 34<sup>th</sup> of 89 ranked journals. Comparisons with other journals are instructive. Our 5-Year impact rating placed us just ahead of *LSQ* (ranked 35<sup>th</sup>) and just behind *PSQ* (ranked 33<sup>rd</sup>). *PRQ* ranked 25<sup>th</sup> and *Political Behavior* ranked 28<sup>th</sup>.

Certainly I am disappointed that the *APR* impact factor (either the 2-year or 5-year measure) is not dramatically higher, and that the 2-year score has not moved up appreciably during my editorship (see Figure 1). I consider this an important measure of the visibility and readership of the journal, though certainly not the only one. High impact scores indicate that the journal's content is being discovered and used immediately, rather than discovered after being published two, three or ten years.

Low scores indicate that the journal's most recent content is largely irrelevant to other researchers in the field.

Figure 1 shows that the 2-year impact factor *ranking* has dropped a bit over the 10-year period beginning in 1998 (though with wide swings), moving from an average of 30 from 1998-2003 to an average ranking of 38 from 2004-2008. The denominator (number of published papers) has increased substantially from ten years ago, so I suppose the *APR* impact ranking could be worse. Even so, the stubbornness of these scores remains a sore spot for my editorship.

As I have said in the past, *maintaining our status as a visible and influential journal requires a regular readership of scholars who are going to cite APR articles in their own work*. Our in-house research shows that the *APR* impact factor has increased when board members have cited *APR* papers in their own published papers. Highlighting recent *APR* papers in your own publications is the most direct means for improving the professional visibility and standing of the journal.



**Figure 1. Impact Factor 2-Year Ranking and Number of Articles Published 1998-2008**

**Content of Submissions**

The content of submissions to *APR* shows what kind of scholarship authors sent us in the last year and what we will be publishing in the next several issues (see Table 2, below). Over the last year, the leading field for both submissions and acceptances was Political Behavior/Opinion; which broadly

includes voting and elections, election administration, political communications and public opinion, at 52% of submissions and 67% of acceptances. The forthcoming special issues on *Social Networks*, and the *The 2008 Election*, accounted for the especially high share of behavior acceptances this year. As for political institutions, Congress and Judicial Politics remain popular fields, arriving in at 13% and 11% of submissions, respectively.

I would very much like to see more submissions in the area of legislative studies (both Congress and state legislatures), interest groups, bureaucracy and public policy. Please encourage your colleagues and graduate students to consider *APR* as an outlet for their institutions-related research.

<b>Primary Subject</b>	<b>Submissions</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Acceptances ±</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Behavior/Opinion	98	52.1	12	66.7
Congress	24	12.6	2	11.1
Presidency	3	1.6	0	5.6
Judiciary	20	10.5	0	0
Public Policy	3	1.6	0	0
Sub-national Politics	9	4.7	1	5.6
Interest Groups	12	6.3	2	11.1
Political Parties	12	5.8	1	5.6
Bureaucracy	1	0.5	0	0
Political Development	3	1.6	0	0
Other*	5	2.6	0	0

\* Other includes subject fields and topics considered inappropriate for the journal.  
± Figures based on 147 manuscripts with completed review process by July 1, 2009.

### **Popular *APR* Articles**

Six articles published just in the past year cracked *APR*'s top-10 listing of the year's most downloaded articles (see Table 3, below). Kim Fridkin and Patrick Kenney's "The Dimensions of Negative Messages" leads these six, followed closely by Darshan Goux and David Hopkins' "The Empirical Implications of Electoral College Reform." Kim Fridkin is an *APR* board member, Yay!

Leading in website hits and downloads for the past year was the Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan Morris article on *The Daily Show*, from 2006. Adam Berinsky's 2005 article on election reform remains very popular, as does Brian Newman and Mark Caleb Smith's 2007 paper on religions media consumption and Brian Krueger's paper on internet vs. conventional political mobilization from November 2006 (see Table 3).

## **Special Issues**

One special issue, on *The 2008 Elections*, is currently in preparation. Board member Paul Goren (University of Minnesota) is the guest editor for this issue. The issue will probably be published early in 2010, probably in March.

The *Social Networks* special issue is due out within the next month. Guest editors for that issue are Michael Heaney (recently relocated to University of Michigan), and Scott McClurg (Southern Illinois University).

I would still like to schedule a special issue on interest groups and bureaucracy if there is sufficient interest. Volunteers to serve as guest editor for an interest groups-bureaucracy issue would be welcome.

## ***Other Pending Matters***

**Citation Counts.** Remember, citations are probably the most important indicator of journal prestige and prominence. Please try to cite *APR* articles in your own research, and encourage your graduate students and colleagues to do so. Call your colleagues' attention to *APR* articles that might be of interest to them.

**Board Meeting in Toronto.** Yes it is time for another board meeting at the annual APSA convention in Toronto. We are meeting Friday at 12:15 PM, although the room assignment is not yet listed. Please pencil in the time and day and try to make it to this meeting. Lunch will be served.

As always, thank you for your enthusiastic support for *American Politics Research*.

**Table 3. Top 10 Downloaded APR Articles July 2008 - June 2009**

Full text HTML	PDF	Abstracts	Total Full-text Accesses	Age of Article in days from 06/30/2009	Article
74	2,159	4,219	2,233	1,157	Jody Baumgartner, Jonathan S. Morris <b>The Daily Show Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth</b> May 01, 2006 34: 341-367
45	982	977	1,027	303	Kim L. Fridkin, Patrick J. Kenney <b>The Dimensions of Negative Messages</b> Sep 01, 2008 36: 694-723
18	814	656	832	242	Darshan J. Goux, David A. Hopkins <b>The Empirical Implications of Electoral College Reform</b> Nov 01, 2008 36: 857-879
4	682	511	686	181	Brian J. Fogarty, Jennifer Wolak <b>The Effects of Media Interpretation for Citizen Evaluations of Politicians' Messages</b> Jan 01, 2009 37: 129-154
104	498	425	602	1,461	Adam J. Berinsky <b>The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States</b> Jul 01, 2005 33: 471-491
87	461	625	548	365	David C. Kimball, Martha Kropf <b>Voting Technology, Ballot Measures, and Residual Votes</b> Jul 01, 2008 36: 479-509
72	470	454	542	608	Brian Newman, Mark Caleb Smith <b>Fanning the Flames: Religious Media Consumption and American Politics</b> Nov 01, 2007 35: 846-877
0	531	388	531	122	Bethany Albertson, Adria Lawrence <b>After the Credits Roll: The Long-Term Effects of Educational Television on Public Knowledge and Attitudes</b> Mar 01, 2009 37: 275-300
67	446	466	513	973	Brian S. Krueger <b>A Comparison of Conventional and Internet Political Mobilization</b> Nov 01, 2006 34: 759-776
13	470	556	483	242	Scott L. Althaus, Todd C. Trautman <b>The Impact of Television Market Size on Voter Turnout in American Elections</b> Nov 01, 2008 36: 824-856
484	7,513	9,277	7,997	565.4 (avg age)	<b>Totals for Top 10 Articles July 2008 - June 2009</b>

