

# American Political Science Review Editor's Report for 1999-2000

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The number of submissions to the *APSR* during 1999-2000 was lower than in any of the previous four years. We received 461 manuscripts; 346 of them original and the balance revisions, a decrease of 47 original manuscripts from the number received in 1998-99 (Table 1). The decline may result merely from random variation but, since we do notice an increase in submissions after many professional conferences, some part of it may stem from the smaller size of the Atlanta Annual Meeting in 1999 as compared to the previous year in Boston (Atlanta drew 849 fewer individual political scientists and had 88 fewer papers scheduled).<sup>1</sup> Since the 2000 meeting in Washington was the largest ever ("APSA 2000" 2000), I am anticipating an increase in *APSR* submissions during the coming academic year (already reflected in the first two months of our 2000-01 reporting period). Given that acceptances are more or less constant from year to year but that the denominator of the calculation grew by a smaller than usual amount, the reduced number of submissions during 1999-2000 has increased the acceptance rate from 9.2% of 1995-1999 submissions (Finifter 1999, Table 6) to 10.1% of 1995-2000 submissions (see Table 7 in this report). But obviously the *APSR* remains a highly selective journal with an exceptionally rigorous peer-review process.

## Field Representation of Manuscripts Received and Published

The annual distribution of manuscripts received by field is shown in Table 2. Field representation in submissions has been quite stable over time. Approximately two-fifths of manuscripts received are in American politics, one-fifth each in comparative politics and normative theory, and the remaining 20% come,

in order, from international relations, formal theory, and methodology.

Table 3 displays the annual distributions of new manuscripts by method within each field. These distributions are also fairly stable over time. An examination of the data suggests that formal theory is used increasingly within American politics (approximately 11% of 1996-98 submissions in that field versus 17% for the most recent two years). There are no obvious trends within comparative politics (formal theory is used in between 15 and 20% of each year's submissions in that field) or international relations (between 30 and 40%). Nevertheless, strictly quantitative research remains the norm in all three fields.

Table 4 shows the distributions by subfield of manuscripts published in the last 16 years. Over time, the published articles are representative of the manuscripts received, although discrepancies can arise in individual volumes for idiosyncratic reasons. (Since one manuscript is approximately 2% of each year's total, small variations in when manuscripts are ready for publication can have important effects on any particular year's distribution of articles by subfield.) The 2000 volume, for instance, contains fewer comparative articles than normal and somewhat more formal theory. The latter stems entirely from two forums involving five critiques and responses. Apart from these two forums, we published only two articles that were categorized as pure formal theory (i.e., they used no data sets that could be characterized as American, comparative, or IR).

Only rough interpretations of the figures are warranted, as there are also some coding anomalies that lead to unusual field assignments. For example, for lack of a better category, two articles published in 2000 that might be considered com-

mentaries on "the state of the discipline" were coded as "methodology." Similarly, because it used international conflict data, a paper that most would consider to have made a methodological contribution was coded as "international relations" (see Table 4, note b for specifics). A review of the types of articles *APSR* has published since 1985 confirms that, despite a continued predominance of articles on American politics (which is historically the largest field in the discipline as it exists in the United States), the *Review* publishes cutting-edge research of interest to scholars in all parts of the discipline. It is also worth noting that the changes over time in representation of the fields have actually led to a more even distribution across fields.

Because there is currently a great deal of interest in the representativeness of *APSR* articles by methodology and type of analytic method, Table 5 presents the distributions of all original manuscripts submitted to the current editorial office and of all articles published in the 1996-2000 volumes by type of analysis. There we see that published articles using formal analysis are represented in very close proportion to submissions. As compared to manuscripts received, we have published a somewhat lower proportion of articles categorized as "interpretive, conceptual" and "small N", and a somewhat higher proportion of quantitative articles. Two factors are primarily responsible for the apparent underrepresentation of nonquantitative articles: (1) almost all of the submitted manuscripts that are clearly unsuited to *APSR*—advocacy articles, purely descriptive discussions of particular events, etc.—are classified as "interpretive, conceptual," and (2) there is greater room for questioning by reviewers of au-

**TABLE 1**  
**Manuscripts Received by APSR**

		Number of Submissions	
		Total	Original
<b>A. Yearly Totals</b>			
	1999–2000	461	346
	1998–99	536	393
	1997–98	537	411
	1996–97	540	391
	1995–96	533	420
	1994–95	495	
	1993–94	480	
	1992–93	487	
	1991–92	479	
	1990–91	438	
	1989–90	428	
	1988–89	447	
	1987–88	391	
	1986–87	427	
<b>B. Editorship Averages</b>			
Finifter	1995–2000 (Average)	522	392
Powell	1991–95 (Average)	485	
Patterson	1986–91 (Average)	426	

*Sources:* Data for 1991–95, and average for 1986–91 are taken from Powell (1995, Table 1). The average for 1991–95 is calculated from the same source. Individual year data for 1986–87 to 1990–91 are taken from Patterson, Bruce, and Crone (1991, Table 1).

*Note:* For 1995–2000, annual periods range from August 15 to August 14. The total column includes revisions; the breakdown between original and total submissions was not provided in previous editorial reports.

thors' conclusions and interpretations in articles that present little or no quantitative evidence.

### Turnaround Time

Despite the larger number of manuscripts received, turnaround time in the present editorial office is somewhat better than in previous years (see Table 6). This is due to our extensive use of email to consult with editorial board members about appropriate reviewers for each manuscript and to receive the reviews themselves. All editors and their staffs have made concerted efforts to process manuscripts efficiently. Given the large number of submissions, however, achieving a rapid turnaround for all manuscripts is one of the most difficult problems faced by an APSR editorial office. I regret that a small number of manu-

scripts with discrepant reviews and difficult decisions, or for which we have difficulty finding willing reviewers, wait considerably longer than the median figures suggest.

### Acceptance Rates

#### *Acceptance Rates by Field*

Considering that there are no field quotas for accepting manuscripts, the differences by field in acceptance rates shown in Table 7 are relatively small. The overall acceptance rate is now 10.1%. Submissions in American politics are accepted in very close to this proportion, while those in comparative politics, normative theory, and methodology are accepted at slightly lower rates. International relations and formal theory submissions are

accepted at slightly higher rates. In fields with relatively few submissions, acceptance rates can be noticeably affected by a small number of outcomes. The only obvious reason for the disproportionately low acceptance rate for comparative politics papers is that reviewers sometimes feel that the detailed case studies of single countries that are included in this category are better suited to more specialized comparative politics or area study journals than to APSR.

#### *Acceptance Rates by Round*

Tables 8, 9, and 10 present various views of acceptance rates for original submissions and over the "revise and resubmit" process. Table 8 shows that the editor's guidance about the probability of acceptance on revision is useful to authors, as many fewer who are "permitted" to resubmit take the opportunity to do so as compared to those who are "invited."<sup>2</sup> As Table 9 shows, almost 70% of papers are rejected after the first round of reviews and fewer than a quarter go through the "revise and resubmit" process. Given the small amount of space available in the journal, it is inevitable that many of even this much reduced number cannot be accepted. Despite the fact that APSR is well known for its rigorous revise and resubmit process, about 70% of all papers actually published in the *Review* are accepted or conditionally accepted on the original or first revision round. I have tried to limit second or third revision rounds to situations where specific changes are proposed, often of a technical nature. Authors differ markedly in their reactions to requests for additional revision. While some seem impatient when reviewers or editor are not satisfied after the first revision, more are pleased to have the additional suggestions and opportunities to revise. I have no specific evidence on factors that distinguish these groups, but my general impression is that the former group contains more senior scholars and the latter more junior scholars. Table 10 shows that the degree of encouragement provided



**TABLE 2**  
**Manuscripts Received by Field, 1985–2000**

	1985–91	1991–95	1995–96 <sup>a</sup>	1995–96 <sup>b</sup>	1996–97 <sup>b</sup>	1997–98 <sup>b</sup>	1998–99 <sup>b</sup>	1999–2000 <sup>b</sup>
American Politics and Public Policy	41%	35%	34%	38%	39%	38%	38%	38%
Comparative Politics	17	22	18	23	25	22	24	22
International Relations	10	12	9	13	13	11	12	10
Normative Political Theory	19	21	19	19	16	17	18	20
Formal Theory	13	10	18	5	5	9	6	7
Methodology	—	—	2	2	2	3	2	3
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Manuscripts	426	485	533	533	540	537	536	461

Sources: The average for 1985–91 is from Powell (1995, Table 1). The average for 1991–95 is calculated from the same source.

<sup>a</sup>Allocates formal theory papers in all fields to the formal theory category for consistency with previous editorial reports. Finifter (1997) presents more detailed discussion of field codes.

<sup>b</sup>Allocates formal theory and methodology papers to their substantive field (American politics, comparative politics, or international relations) whenever possible (based on type of data used in analysis).

to authors in decision letters (the basis of the distinction between invited and permitted revisions) is a reasonable predictor of the final decision to accept or reject a manuscript, although enough papers with “permit” decisions are successful for resubmission to be worthwhile for some of their authors. Many authors make very significant changes to their papers during the review process, sometimes adding new data collections or making important conceptual changes.

I have not allowed a publication backlog to develop, and acceptance generally leads to publication in the next issue to go to the printer. For example, the last article for the December 2000 issue was accepted in early September, only two weeks before the issue went to press. Thus, although the review time is sometimes long, accepted manuscripts are published promptly and are very fresh when they arrive on readers’ desks. This system differs dramatically from those at some other prominent journals that maintain backlogs of up to two years.

### Book Review<sup>3</sup>

As Table 11 shows, between September 1999 and August 2000, we received just over 1600 books from publishers to review. About 100 fewer books in comparative politics and 100 fewer in international relations came in than in the previous reporting period. This could be random variation or it could reflect the fact that the much-speculated decline in the economics of book publishing is hitting area studies and parts of international relations. Informal feedback from publishers indicates that books in these areas sell less well than those in other fields.

Table 11 also shows that we are reviewing approximately one out of every five books received, and that the proportion is slightly higher in political theory than in the other fields. This is because books in political theory more often meet the review criteria discussed in previous reports: single or coauthored works published by university presses. In contrast, for example, in the American politics and policy field we often

receive textbooks, nonscholarly works, and scholarly works by historians.

Finally, Table 12 shows that we consistently review over 80 books per issue, sometimes reaching around 100. Our format continues to include individual book reviews, joint reviews (usually of 2 or 3 books), and review essays. In the four issues beginning with September 1999 through June 2000, we published three review essays: “The Empirical Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Politics: Assessing the First Wave of Research”; “Political Science and the Jews: A Review Essay on the Holocaust, the State of Israel, and the Comparative Analysis of Jewish Communities”; and “Queer Liberalism?”.

### APSR Editorial Staff

The APSR editor was assisted this year by one full-time assistant to the editor (Melody Scofield), one half-time director of manuscript production (Harriett Posner), copyeditor Elizabeth Johnston, and data processing consultant Paul Wolberg.



**TABLE 3****Distribution of Manuscripts Submitted to the *APSR*, August 15, 1996 to August 14, 2000, by Year, Subfield, and Type of Analysis (Original Submissions Only)**

Subfield and Type of Analysis	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>American Politics</b>								
Formal and Quantitative	10	3%	8	2%	17	4%	12	4%
Formal	8	2	8	2	3	4	14	4
Interpretive, Conceptual	9	2	15	4	10	3	11	3
Quantitative	125	32	121	29.5	112	28	91	26
Small N			2	*	1	*	1	*
<i>Subfield total</i>	152	39%	154	37.5%	143	36.5%	129	37%
<b>Comparative Politics</b>								
Formal and Quantitative	5	1%	9	2%	12	3%	9	3%
Formal	9	2	7	2	7	2	3	1
Interpretive, Conceptual	19	5	17	4	11	3	15	4
Quantitative	46	12	50	12	53	13	52	15
Small N	14	4	4	1	9	2	4	1
<i>Subfield total</i>	93	24%	87	21%	92	23.5%	83	24%
<b>International Relations</b>								
Formal and Quantitative	3	1%	11	3%	7	2%	3	1%
Formal	10	3	6	1.5	13	3	7	2
Interpretive, Conceptual	9	2	6	1.5	8	2	10	3
Quantitative	22	6	21	5	23	6	12	3
Small N	1	*	1	*			2	1
<i>Subfield Total</i>	45	12%	45	11%	51	13%	34	10%
<b>Normative Theory</b>								
Formal			1	.5%	2	*	1	*
Interpretive, Conceptual	70	18%	83	20	74	19	64	19
<i>Subfield Total</i>	70	18%	84	20.5%	76	19%	65	19%
<b>Formal Theory of</b>								
<b>General</b>								
<b>Political Processes</b>								
Formal and Quantitative			2	*	2	.5%	6	2%
Formal	20	5%	25	6	19	5	16	4
Interpretive, Conceptual			3	1	2	.5	1	*
Quantitative					1	*	2	1
<i>Subfield Total</i>	20	5%	30	7%	24	6%	25	7%
<b>Methodology</b>								
Formal and Quantitative	1	*	2	.5%	1	*		
Formal			1	*				
Interpretive, Conceptual	5	1	3	1	2	1	2	.5%
Quantitative	5	1	5	1.5	4	1	8	2.5
<i>Subfield Total</i>	11	2%	11	3%	7	2%	10	3%
<b>Total Original Submissions</b>	391	100%	411	100%	393	100%	346	100%

The 33 members of the Editorial Board play a vital role in the review process; members are consulted in choosing reviewers for all manuscripts and for assistance on some

decisions. In addition, *APSR* interns perform invaluable service, reading all new submissions and providing preliminary research on potential reviewers to assist the Editorial

Board and editor in reviewer selection. During 1999-2000, Chris Butler, Jamie Carson, Chuck Finocchiaro, Erik Herron, Ben Kleinerman, Michelle Kuenzi, David



**TABLE 4**  
**Articles Published by the APSR, by Subfield, 1985–2000**

	1985–91	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
American Politics and Public Policy	42%	34%	39%	36%	38%	30%	32%	37%	43%	35%
Comparative Politics	16	17	19	23	18	20	16	21	18	14
Normative Political Theory	20	24	18	21	20	25	20	17	18	16
International Relations	10	13	14	9	6	16	26	13	9	16
Formal Theory <sup>a</sup>	13	11	11	11	18	9	6	10	10	14
Methodology								2	2	5 <sup>b</sup>
Total	100%	99%	101%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Manuscripts	49	53	57	53	49	44	50	48	49	43

<sup>a</sup>For 1996–99, formal theory and methodology articles that also use empirical data are coded in their substantive subfields (American politics, comparative, or international relations).

<sup>b</sup>Paradoxically, both papers classified as “Methodology” this year are completely textual commentaries on the discipline, while a paper that many would classify as “methodology” was coded as “international relations.” Matthew Holden’s Presidential Address, “The Competence of Political Science,” and Paul Pierson’s “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics” were both classified as “methodology” in that they are analyses of how political science should be studied. In contrast, “Improving Quantitative Studies of International Conflict,” by Nathaniel Beck, Gary King, and Langche Zeng, advocating the application of a new methodology, was coded as “international relations” because we code for data use first and these authors tested their method on an international relations data set. The manuscript coding scheme is clearly too limited to reflect well the types of analyses presented in some papers.

Lektzian, Kimberley Ludwig, Mark Souva, and Shane Szalai served as *APSR* interns. William Aviles, Kenneth Fernandez, and Stacey Searl-Chapin assisted the Book Review editor. Reviewers are, of course, the

heart of *APSR*’s peer-review process; they are listed in each December’s issue of the *Review*. During academic year 1999–2000, over 700 different scholars served as external reviewers for the *APSR*.

## Editorial Transition

At its meeting on August 30, 2000, the APSA Council approved Lee Sigelman as the next editor of the *American Political Science Review*, with a term beginning September 1, 2001. I look forward to working with him during this remaining year of my second term and feel confident we will have an efficient and trouble-free transition. Authors will be informed of transition dates and the *Review*’s new mailing address via our web site and in the Editor’s Notes column of the *Review* beginning with the June 2001 issue.

## Feedback and Additional Information

Additional information about *Review* operations can be found on our web site ([www.ssc.msu.edu/~apsr/](http://www.ssc.msu.edu/~apsr/)). We post the table of contents of each issue and abstracts and lists of tables and figures for each article. In addition, whenever an author states in a published article that “supplemental information is available from the author,” that information can also be

**TABLE 5**  
**Articles Submitted and Published by the APSR, by Type of Analysis**

Type of Analysis	Submitted 8/1995–8/2000	Published 1996–2000
Formal and Quantitative	7%	5%
Formal	13	15
Interpretive, Conceptual	30	25
Quantitative	48	55
Small N	2	0
Total	100%	100%
Number of Manuscripts	2042	222 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>This is not the full total of manuscripts published in these five years because some published manuscripts were initially submitted to the previous editorial office and were not entered in the current database. Those manuscripts are not included in this total.



**TABLE 6**  
**Elapsed Time in the *APSR* Review Process, by Year of Submission**

	Patterson Editorship, 1985–91	Powell Editorship, 1991–95	Finifter Editorship, Total 1995–2000 <sup>a</sup>		Finifter Editorship, Current Year August 15, 1999–August 14, 2000 <sup>b</sup>	
	Number of Workdays <sup>c</sup>	Number of Workdays <sup>c</sup>	Median Number of Workdays	Number of Manuscripts	Median Number of Workdays	Number of Manuscripts
From receipt to referee assignment	9	20	9	2218	9	302
From assignment to last review	43	43	47	2218	45	302
From last review considered to decision	6	7	3	2218	1	302
From receipt to final decision	54	67	61	2505	50	357

<sup>a</sup>Includes only manuscripts received at MSU, not those received at Rochester but finally processed at MSU.

<sup>b</sup>Includes only manuscripts on which a final decision had been made as of September 12, 2000.

<sup>c</sup>Calculated from Powell (1995, Table 4). Figures reported for Patterson and Powell may not be entirely correct because the calculation methods used are not described in detail in the Powell report. Figures for Patterson are calculated by averaging figures given for 1985–88 and 1988–91; both columns are headed “average,” but figures for 1985–88 are also identified as medians. Powell’s figures are calculated by averaging figures given separately for each of four academic years, 1991–92 through 1994–95, but the figures for 1992–95 are identified as medians, while the calculation method for 1991–92 figures is not specified. Powell reported in a note to his table that figures for “1992–95 are based on the months for which over half the manuscripts were completed and medians available at the time of report (9 months in 1992–93 and 11 months in 1993–95). Reported figure is the average of the monthly medians.” The number of manuscripts on which figures are based is not given in the Powell table, but the average number of manuscripts received per year during the three editorships are Patterson, 426; Powell, 485; Finifter, 522.

retrieved via a hyperlink that appears with the article’s abstract on the *APSR* web site. We also list forthcoming articles and maintain a comprehensive index of all articles and book reviews published since March 1996. Our documents, “Instructions to

Contributors” (also reprinted in the front matter of each issue) and “Information and Instructions for Authors,” which serves as a mini-style manual, are also available on the web site. We have recently started a notification service to let interested

readers know when new information is posted, usually about three weeks before each issue is mailed. To be added to this alert list or for any other correspondence related to editorial operations, please send an email message to [apsr@ssc.msu.edu](mailto:apsr@ssc.msu.edu).

**TABLE 7**  
**Acceptance Rates by Field, for Original Manuscripts Submitted since August 17, 1995, and Decided by September 12, 2000**

Field	Number of Original Submissions	Number Accepted	Acceptance Rate
American Politics	705	73	10.4%
Comparative Politics	442	33	7.5%
Normative Theory	369	33	8.9%
International Relations	218	30	13.8%
Formal Theory	119	19	16.0%
Methodology	47	4	8.5%
Total	1900	192	10.1%

## Notes

1. Six thousand one hundred forty-nine individual political scientists attended the 1998 Boston meeting (“First Boston” 1998) and 2714 papers were scheduled; 5,300 attended the 1999 Atlanta meeting (“Atlanta Draws” 1999) and 2626 papers were scheduled. Information on number of paper presentations was provided by APSA staff.

2. The coding of the two categories is based on the degree of encouragement for revision in decision letters rather than any hard and fast categorization given to authors.

3. This section of the report was prepared by *APSR*’s Book Review editor, Mark Lichbach.



**TABLE 8**  
**Author Decisions to Resubmit by Decision and Round, for all Manuscripts Submitted and Decided Between August 17, 1995 and August 24, 2000**

Resubmitted to Date?	Original Submission		First Revision		Second Revision	
	Invite Revision	Permit Revision	Invite Revision	Permit Revision	Invite Revision	Permit Revision
Yes	82%	50%	78%	42%	88%	50%
No	18	50	22	58	12	50
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(233)	(202)	(86)	(43)	(17)	(8)

**TABLE 9**  
**Decisions by Review Stage, for Manuscripts Submitted since August 15, 1995, and Decided by August 24, 2000**

	New Submissions	First Revision	Second Revision	Third or Later Revision
Reject	68.5%	37.6%	18.9%	13.6%
Permit Revise and Resubmit	10.7	11.6	5.7	2.3
Invite Revise and Resubmit	12.3	23.2	9.0	13.6
Accept	2.0	26.5	65.6	70.5
Other <sup>a</sup>	6.5	1.1	.8	
Totals	100% (1894)	100% (370)	100% (122)	100% (44)

<sup>a</sup>Primarily papers that we classify as "incorrect submissions," i.e., manuscripts that are too long, nonanonymous, or in some other way inappropriate for APSR review.

**TABLE 10**  
**Outcomes for Revisions by Decision at Prior Stage, for Manuscripts Submitted since August 17, 1995, and Decided by August 24, 2000**

Decision on Subsequent Submission	Decision on					
	Original Submission		First Revision		Second or Later Revision	
	Invite R & R	Permit R & R	Invite R & R	Permit R & R	Invite R & R	Permit R & R
Accept or Conditionally Accept	41%	15%	69%	45%	73%	50%
Invite Revise and Resubmit	28	21	9	11	20	—
Permit Revise and Resubmit	10	16	4	11	0	—
Reject	21	48	18	33	7	50
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N resubmitted to date	187	102	67	18	15	4

Note: Cell entries are editor decisions in subsequent round for manuscripts invited for revision or permitted revision (not rejected, accepted, or conditionally accepted) in prior round. For example, of manuscripts invited for revision following the original round and actually resubmitted, 41% were accepted or conditionally accepted in the first revision round.



**TABLE 11**  
**Books Received, 1998–2000, and Books Reviewed, 1999–2000**

	Books Received		Books Reviewed or Scheduled for Review (of 1999–00 arrivals)	
	Sept. 1998–Aug. 1999	Sept 1999–Aug. 2000	N	% Across
American and Public Policy	500	484	80	16.5%
Comparative Politics	575	465	108	23.2%
Political Theory	289	281	74	26.3%
International Relations	471	386	77	19.9%
Total	1835	1616	339	21.0%

**TABLE 12**  
**Books Reviewed by Issue and Field, September 1999–September 2000**

Issue	American	Comparative	Theory	International Relations
September 1999	17% (17)	23 (23)	27 (26)	33 (32)
December 1999	23% (22)	35 (33)	19 (18)	22 (21)
March 2000	21% (20)	31 (29)	28 (26)	20 (19)
June 2000	19% (18)	35 (33)	18 (17)	28 (27)
September 2000	20% (18)	38 (33)	16 (14)	26 (23)

Note: Ns include books reviewed in review essays and both multiple- and single-book reviews. Percentages across; rows sum to approximately 100% due to rounding error.

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