

Report of the Editor of the *American Political Science Review*, 2005–2006

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My last two annual reports sounded a theme of continuity from year to year in the number and variety of the papers that we received and the articles that we published and in the pace of our review process. This year, too, many of these elements have differed only slightly from those of past years. In some important respects, though, 2005–2006 has been a significant departure from the years immediately preceding it. For one thing, as detailed below, during 2005–2006 we received a record number of submissions. For another, while we were considering more papers than ever before, we were simultaneously faced with the self-imposed challenge of conducting a separate review process for the November 2006 centennial issue of the *Review*.

As in previous reports, it seems appropriate to begin by acknowledging the contributions made by Assistant Editor Elizabeth Cook; centennial issue Co-Editor M. Elizabeth Sanders; this year's cohort of Editorial Assistants (Jennifer Deets, Beth Franker, Kara Heitz, and Jennie Schulze); the members of the *Review's* Editorial Board; staff members too numerous to list at the APSA office, the George Washington University, and the Cambridge University Press; the authors who submitted their papers; and the reviewers who donated their time, expertise, and good will to assessing these submissions. Sadly, I must also note the passing of Timothy Cook, a valued member of the Editorial Board and a good friend.

Submissions and Processing

The number of papers submitted

Since 2001–2002 (my first year as editor), “total” submissions to the *Review* have typically hovered slightly above 600 per year, except for a spike during 2002–2003, and “new” submissions have run 100 or so below that (see Table 1).¹ As noted above, in 2005–2006, total and new submissions

Table 1. Submissions per Year

Year	Number of Submissions	
	Total	New
2005–2006	692	596
2004–2005	623	538
2003–2004	611	523
2002–2003	672	546
2001–2002	615	509
2000–2001	427	327
1999–2000	461	346
1998–1999	536	393
1997–1998	537	411
1996–1997	540	391
1995–1996	533	420
1994–1995	495	NA
1993–1994	480	NA
1992–1993	487	NA
1991–1992	479	NA
1990–1991	438	NA
1989–1990	428	NA
1988–1989	447	NA
1987–1988	391	NA
1986–1987	427	NA

climbed to new heights (692 and 596, respectively), rising 11% above the corresponding figures for 2004–2005. (The 2005–2006 count is based solely on “regular” submissions rather than those intended for inclusion in the centennial issue; the latter were completely segregated from other submissions and are treated separately in this report.) Whether this represents the beginning of an enduring increase or will turn out to be another one-year spike remains to be seen. In either case, the implication is that the volume of submissions to the *Review* continues to be high—indeed, much higher over the past

five years than at any other point in the *Review's* history, and considerably higher during 2005–2006 than in any previous year.

Turnaround times

In the face of this record number of submissions and the challenge of simultaneously running a separate operation for centennial submissions, our review process continued to run at virtually the same pace as in previous years (see Table 2). Once again we were typically able to get papers out for review within a day of receiving them. Despite the growing burden that we and other journals are placing on reviewers, our reviewers continued to return their reports in a timely manner—a median of 42 working days. And more often than not, we put a decision letter in the mail on the same day that the last review arrived. Regrettably, the review process on a small number of papers dragged on far too long, but in my judgment the overall pace of our review process continued to be highly acceptable.

The mix of submitted papers

Categorized according to primary analytical approach and disciplinary subfield, the distribution of papers submitted to the *Review* remained virtually unchanged in 2005–2006 (see Table 3). Again in 2005–2006, most submissions were quantitative and/or formal, and about one in four was classified broadly as “interpretive/conceptual.” We continued to receive few “small-N” papers. American politics-focused submissions outnumbered those in any other subfield, followed in order by comparative politics, international relations, and normative theory. Little importance should be attached to year-to-year fluctuations in these figures, which not only are small but also are subject to

Table 2. Elapsed Time (Median Number of Workdays) in the Review Process

Phase of Review Process	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006
From receipt to reviewer assignment	1	1	1	0	1
From assignment to last review	39	40	43	43	42
From last review to decision	0	0	0	0	0
From receipt to decision	39	39	42	42	45

Table 3. Distribution of Papers Submitted (%)

Year	Approach					
	Formal	Quantitative	Formal and Quantitative	Small N	Interpretive/ Conceptual	Other
2005–2006	14	51	5	2	23	4
2004–2005	13	52	6	1	27	1
2003–2004	11	51	8	2	26	2
2002–2003	9	50	10	5	25	1
2001–2002	17	45	7	1	29	2
1995–2000	13	48	7	2	30	0

Year	Field					
	American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Normative Theory	Formal Theory	Methods
2005–2006	37	25	17	15	2	3
2004–2005	38	26	15	14	4	4
2003–2004	32	30	16	12	1	9
2002–2003	34	26	16	13	6	6
2001–2002	30	25	14	17	8	6
1995–2000	38	23	12	18	6	2
1991–1995	35	22	12	21	10	0
1985–1991	41	17	10	19	13	0

the vagaries of categorizing papers that may not fit unambiguously into a particular approach or subfield.

Outcomes

In terms of the outcomes of our review process, only minor fluctuations from previous years emerged during 2005–2006 (see Table 4). The percentage of first-round manuscripts that were rejected

Table 4. Outcome of the First Round of the Review Process (%)

Outcome	2005–2006
Reject, incorrect submission	4.8
Reject without review	4.0
Reject	83.6
Invite revise and resubmit	7.2
Conditional accept	0.4
Accept	0.0

following full-scale review declined slightly, from 88% in 2004–2005 to 84% in 2005–2006. That did not, however, imply a corresponding increase in “revise and resubmit” invitations or conditional or outright acceptances, which collectively held at the level of the previous year—approximately 8%. As in 2004–2005, we rejected 4% of the papers that we received without putting them through the peer review process, based on my own judgment of their unsuitability for the *Review*. Spurred by reviewers’ complaints about the length of the papers we were sending them, we also began enforcing our 45-page limit more stringently by refusing to open our peer review process for papers that met our page limit only via subterfuges of various sorts (e.g., tiny fonts, single- or 1.5-line spacing, or coast-to-coast and border-to-border text). Consequently, during 2005–2006 the percentage of “incorrect

submissions” rose from 1% to 5%. In such instances, we informed the authors of our willingness to open our review process without prejudice if they submitted an appropriately formatted version of the paper that observed our length requirements. Virtually without exception, these authors did follow through by submitting a shorter version of the paper.

As in previous years, we issued “revise and resubmit” invitations sparingly and did not pile one on top of another. The great majority—85–90%—of revised-and-resubmitted papers were ultimately accepted.

With few exceptions, the analytical and substantive distribution of papers that were accepted during 2005–2006 continued to reflect the pattern of recent years. Most accepted papers featured either formal or quantitative analyses or both, with formal papers looming larger this year than last; American politics continued to lead the fields in terms of its presence among accepted papers, with international relations papers down and normative theory papers up. Here again, I would caution against making too much of annual fluctuations, which are subject to the idiosyncrasies of fitting complex papers into simple categories and the small number of cases on which these percentages are based.

The Centennial Issue

The November 2006 issue completed the 100th volume of the *Review*, which began publication in November 1906. To mark this occasion, we began planning two years ago for a thematic issue on “The Evolution of Political Science.” My co-editor for the theme issue was M. Elizabeth Sanders, a member of the *Review’s* Editorial Board.

During 2004–2005, we circulated a call for expressions of interest in submitting brief papers, for which we specified a maximum length of 17 pages in order to enable us to represent a large and diverse array of perspectives on the evolution of the discipline. The submission and review processes for the thematic issue were based on those employed by *Perspectives on Politics* rather than on our own standard model. In announcements of the issue, we advised prospective authors to submit brief abstracts rather than full-blown papers. Throughout 2005 we devoted considerable time and energy to providing extensive reactions to each expression of interest

Table 5. Distribution of Papers Accepted, 2005–2006 (%)

Approach					
Formal	Quantitative	Formal and Quantitative	Small N	Interpretive/ Conceptual	Other
22	36	7	0	36	0
Field					
American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Normative Theory	Formal	Methods
29	24	11	31	2	2

that we received, conveying feedback about whether a proposal seemed promising and detailed advice about how it might be developed. When we announced the issue, we had no idea whether it would spark much interest. It did. In all, we received almost 100 expressions of interest. Based on our feedback, many prospective authors decided not to follow through with their proposed projects. As those projects fell by the wayside, the ones that remained were, for the most part, the most promising that we had received; in every case, however, we informed prospective authors that we could offer no advance guarantee that their paper would be accepted. Ultimately, by or shortly after our January 2, 2006 deadline, we received 42 full-blown submissions. Each of these

was put through a full-scale peer review process. Based on the reviewers' recommendation and on our own assessments of each paper, we rejected 16 and issued "revise and resubmit" invitations to the authors of the remaining 26, providing detailed instructions about the revisions that should be undertaken. Of these, we subsequently accepted 24.

Along with these 24 essays, the centennial issue included two special features. One is an essay that I prepared, titled "The Coevolution of American Political Science and the *American Political Science Review*," based in large part on a content-analytic survey of every research article that has appeared in the *Review* from its founding to the present. The other was a set of 20 brief commentaries on the

most frequently-cited articles in the history of the *Review*, by the authors of these articles or by appropriate stand-ins. We expect these "Top 20" essays to be read with particular interest.

I want to emphasize that although the contents of the special issue do, as we had hoped, represent a wide array of perspectives on the evolution of the discipline, many important topics are unrepresented and others may be overrepresented. That was inevitable, given the limited space available and also given our approach of issuing a general call for papers on a broad theme rather than soliciting papers on a pre-selected set of topics. Still, we are confident that every reader of the *Review* will find something of interest in the centennial issue.

Note

1. As in previous reports, "total submissions" count successive resubmissions of the "same" paper separately. By this measure a paper that was submitted, revised and resubmitted, and then finally resubmitted following its conditional

acceptance pending final changes would count as three submissions, not one. In terms of assessing the workflow for the editorial office, this counting rule is reasonable, for in the example just

given, several separate review processes would have been conducted. For "new" (i.e., "original") submissions, by contrast, that sequence would be counted as a single submission, not as three.