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Report of the Editor of *Perspectives on Politics*, 2003–2004

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Perspectives on Politics opened for business on June 1, 2002, and has published two complete volumes of four issues each. My first full report as editor covered submissions and, where possible, their disposition from June 1, 2002, through July 31, 2003.¹ This report covers the succeeding year, ending on July 31, 2004.

Structure of *Perspectives on Politics*

Perspectives on Politics has a somewhat unusual editorial structure and review process compared with other political science journals, in keeping with the American Political Science Association's mandate to develop a journal with distinctive types of articles and extensive editorial involvement.² The five associate editors and I created and continually refine the procedures and substantive purposes; we solicit manuscripts and symposia, evaluate submissions, and make final decisions on reviewed manuscripts. The journal is modeled largely on a university press; the editors help authors to develop ideas as well as receive draft manuscripts over the transom. I turn down many drafts and some proposals before review on the grounds that they are inappropriate for the journal's distinctive profile or are of demonstrably poor quality. After discussing the remaining papers with several in-house readers, I send their authors a detailed substantive response suggesting ways to improve the paper and ensure that it fits *Perspectives'* mission. In addition, the editors solicit brief essays from journalists, political actors, political scientists outside of academia, and others with

experience or insights of interest to our discipline. We also invite scholars to write short, incisive, relatively informal essays for the "Perspectives" section. *Perspectives* includes review essays on important books, as well as collections of syllabi or other "texts." (The book review editor does not accept proposals to review particular books, in order to avoid conflicts of interest. We do consider proposals for wider-ranging review essays.) Book reviews and brief commentaries on full-scale articles are not refereed; virtually everything else is.

Most manuscripts submitted after an initial revision get reviewed, and from that point on, manuscripts go through the standard double-blind review process. We typically seek three reviewers across a range of expertise, and I invite authors to suggest referees. Mixed reviews sometimes lead to a "revise and resubmit," depending on their content. The editors almost always make a decision after one round of "revise and resubmit," sometimes after sending the revised paper out for additional reviews.

This introduction will help the reader make sense of the data below. Two final prefatory notes: we do not categorize papers by approach, as does the *APSR*,³ since articles using technical methods or specialized vocabularies are not appropriate for *Perspectives*. More impor-

tantly, we seek manuscripts that cut across conventionally defined subfields of the discipline, disciplinary lines, and methods. Fewer than a quarter of the articles in each of the first few issues of *Perspectives* genuinely cut across subfields; by the last few issues of this reporting period, roughly half did. We hope that proportion continues to rise. Thus the subfield categorizations below are more than usually inexact; in future reports, we may drop this rubric altogether since it may be more misleading than helpful.

Submissions

I start with the number of submissions, noted in Table 1:

Table 2 combines the subdivisions of Table 1, and reports the 329 submissions by subfield in political science (the first six columns) and by non-academics (the final column).

We issued 272 solicitations for manuscripts this year (mostly requests for papers presented at conferences). We received 89 manuscripts in response, which are incorporated into Table 1. A third of those solicitations were in comparative politics, 20% in American politics, 15% each in international relations and political theory, and 5% or fewer in the remaining categories. Of these

Table 1
Submissions, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

Articles	"Perspectives"	Review essays	Proposals ⁴	Total submissions ⁴
75%	10	5	10	100.0
(246)	(34)	(16)	(33)	(329)

Table 2
Submissions by Primary Subfield or Type of Author, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

	American politics	Comparative politics	International relations	Political theory	Methods & philosophy of social science	Public law	Journalists & public actors
Submissions	24%	23	15	20	10	7	1
	(78)	(77)	(50)	(65)	(34)	(22)	(3)

Table 3
Submissions at Various Stages of Decision-Making, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

Decision status of submission	Percentage of all submissions handled this year	
Author revising pre-review	39%	(174)
Manuscript currently out for review	3	(13)
Author revising post-review	2	(10)
Decision made and author notified	56	(254)
Total submissions handled	100	(451)

Table 4
Average Time for Each Stage of Review, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004 (N in Parentheses)

Stage of review process	Average number of days
From author submitting first draft to editor requesting pre-review revisions (N = 97)	26 (mean)
From editor sending manuscript out for review to editor requesting post-review revisions (N = 45)	82 (mean)
From author submitting post-review revisions to editor notifying author of decision (N = 47)	11 (mean)
Total days from author submitting first draft, to editor notifying author of decision, excluding days taken by authors to do revisions (N = 216)	26 (median) 57 (mean)

submissions, 7 were accepted and we had not made a decision on 39 as of August 1, 2003.

Of the 84 proposals received this year, we invited the authors of 71 (85%) to submit a full draft. Four-fifths proposed articles; the rest were evenly divided between “Perspectives” essays and review essays.

With only two years of data, we have little confidence in what appear to be trends. Nevertheless, last year’s imbalance in submissions toward American politics has been reduced, through both solicitations and over-the-transom submissions.

Processing

Table 3 shows how manuscripts fit into the different stages of *Perspectives*’ process for review and decision-making. It includes the 329 new manuscripts of this report year, and an additional 122 that were first submitted prior to August 1, 2003 (for a total of 451 ms. handled this year).

We have made decisions on over half of the submissions dealt with during this 12-month period; a large majority of those are rejections before review. (Remember that many pre-review rejections occur because the article is not

appropriate for the distinctive mission of *Perspectives*, not because of any judgment about quality.) We have sent detailed suggestions for revision to two-fifths of authors. At any one time, only a small fraction of submissions to the journal are under review.

Table 4 shows the amount of time taken by these various stages. Note that the number of items in each row varies, and that the table includes only articles on which we have made decisions.

We take pride in the first row of Table 4. My letter proposing pre-review revisions follows an evaluation by at least two editors and two student assistants to the editor, as well as a discussion of each set of evaluations. So a great deal of careful work goes into that innocuous-sounding first stage.

This is an opportune moment to thank reviewers for responding to our requests for assistance; as the second row shows, with few exceptions their comments have been reasonably prompt, and reviews have almost always been clear, detailed, and extremely helpful.

Comparing the median and the mean days for turnaround in the final row in Table 4 suggests the considerable variance around the average total response time. This variance was caused by a few papers that we found very difficult to evaluate, as well as by papers that were part of a symposium. On the latter, we could not make a final decision on one until we knew the disposition of all; given that reviewers take different amounts of time to respond to individual papers, evaluating a proposed symposium slows the decision-making process down.

Overall, we work very hard to send a substantive response back to authors within a brief period of time.

Outcomes

Table 5 reports the overall outcomes for the report year:

Tables 6 provides more detail for interpreting Table 5. It shows acceptance rates for all submissions according to the subfields of political science (first six rows) or the non-academics (next row). The final row (Total) corresponds to the final column of Table 5.

Our rejection rate for articles is reasonably even across the four largest subfields, although somewhat higher for comparative politics. Our acceptance rate, however, is distinctly higher for American politics than for the other subfields, and very low for international relations. The result for American politics is partly an artifact of how we categorized articles that cut across two or more subfields, especially since these percentages are based on small numbers, and partly a result of the fact that one editor developed a symposium with five articles (on the 2000 presidential election).

Table 5
Acceptance Rates for Submissions by Stage of Review, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

	Accepted	Rejected	Withdrawn	Total decisions made
Without review	2% (5)*	62 (157)	5 (12)	69 (174)
After review	19 (47)	11 (29)	1 (4)	31 (80)
Total	20 (52)	73 (186)	6 (16)	100 (254)

* These include introductions to symposia, commentaries on articles, the annual presidential address, and APSA task force reports.

Table 6
Acceptance Rates by Subfield or Type of Author for Submissions,
August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

Subfield	Accepted	Rejected	Withdrawn	Total in subfield
American politics	37% (19)	20% (38)	25% (4)	61
Comparative politics	17 (9)	30 (56)	6 (1)	66
International relations	4 (2)	18 (33)	13 (2)	37
Political theory	12 (6)	18 (34)	25 (4)	44
Methods & philosophy of social science	17 (9)	8 (14)	31 (5)	28
Public law	11 (6)	5 (10)	0 (0)	16
Journalists & public actors	2 (1)	0.5 (1)	0 (0)	2
Total by decision	100 (52)	100 (86)	100 (16)	254

Table 7
Acceptance Rates, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages
(Ns in Parentheses)

For all submissions:	
To outside review	23% (103 of 451)
To publication, out of submissions sent for outside review	46% (47 of 103)
Overall acceptance rate	12% (52 of 451)
For articles only:	
To outside review	22% (76 of 352)
To publication, out of submissions sent for outside review	46% (35 of 76)
Overall acceptance rate	11% (39 of 352)

The result for international relations is more troubling, even if one takes into account the cutting-across-subfields phenomenon. Our impression is that IR scholars are more inclined to speak mainly to other members of the subfield than is the case in other subfields, at least among the submissions we have received. Therefore their manuscripts are often not appropriate for *Perspectives* despite their sometimes excellent quality. We hope IR scholars see this as an invitation to develop manuscripts for this journal.

Table 7 summarizes the results of decisions made during this report year by the editors of *Perspectives*.

Note that we did not decide to send only 23% of submissions to external reviewers; the 77% of manuscripts that did not go to reviewers reflects both manuscripts that we turned down before review, and manuscripts that authors chose not to send back after we sent suggestions for pre-review revisions.

Publication

Table 8 shows the published results of everything I have described up to

this point. It covers Volume 1, Issue 4 (December 2003) of *Perspectives*, and Volume 2, Issues 1, 2, and 3 (March, June, and September 2004). It provides raw numbers, not percentages, since the totals are so low.

We see a reasonable distribution across the five subfields that one would expect of most of the contributions to *Perspectives*, except for the fact that

American politics may be too predominant. But each article is excellent; we would have been sorry not to publish any of them.

Book Reviews

As Table 9 shows, from July 31, 2003 to August 1, 2004, the book review office at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, received nearly 1,400 books and planned to review 319, for an overall acceptance rate of 23%. The number of books received is somewhat lower than in recent years, during which the book review office received 1,600 to 1,800 books. It is not clear whether this marks a trend in submissions or simply an unusual year.

The distribution of books sent to the review office is fairly typical, with the fields of American and comparative politics having a higher percentage than international relations and political theory. However, the number of books submitted in international relations is lower than in previous years.

The book review editors give first priority for review to singly- or co-authored works published by university presses. They also consider singly- or co-authored works by other presses, as well as edited volumes with a strong thematic focus. The overall acceptance rate of 23% is typical for the book review section. The proportion of books reviewed is generally higher in the subfields of political theory and international relations because the books received are primarily singly- or co-authored scholarly works. (By contrast, in the subfield of American politics and, to some extent, in comparative politics, many of the books received are textbooks, non-scholarly works, or books from other

Table 8
Items Published in *Perspectives on Politics*, December
2003–September 2004

Subfield	Items published, counting each separately	Items published, counting symposia, or papers with commentaries, as single items
American politics	15	8
Comparative politics	5	4
International relations	5	3
Political theory	5	5
Methods & philosophy of social science	10	4
Public law	1	1
Journalists & public actors	—	—

Table 9
Books and Commissioned Book Reviews, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

Subfield	Books received	Books commissioned	
		for review	Acceptance rate
American politics	31% (423)	32% (101)	24%
Comparative politics	34 (463)	28 (91)	20%
International relations	17 (237)	18 (58)	24%
Political theory	18 (238)	22 (69)	29%
Total	100 (1361)	100 (319)	23%

Table 10
Published Book Reviews, August 1, 2003–July 31, 2004, in Percentages (Ns in Parentheses)

Subfield	Percentage of all book reviews
American politics	29% (102)
Comparative politics	29 (101)
International relations	20 (71)
Political theory	22 (75)
Total	100 (349)

disciplines.) However, in comparing these figures to previous years, the

proportion of books accepted in American politics is slightly higher and the

Notes

1. I submitted a preliminary report to the APSA Council on April 5, 2003, which covered June 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003. The first full report (Hochschild 2004), supersedes that one since it encompassed the first full year of operation and included more complete data and better analyses. Reports now

cover the period August 1–July 31 of the following year.

2. This section summarizes information included at www.apsanet.org/perspectives, Hochschild 2003, and Hochschild 2004.

3. However, some papers are categorized as “Methods and Philosophy of Social Science.”

number in international relations slightly lower.

Table 10 shows the number of book reviews per subfield published in *Perspectives on Politics* from Vol. 1, Issue 4 (December 2003) through Vol. 2, Issue 3 (March, June, and September 2004).

The number of books in the subfields of American and comparative politics is slightly higher than is typical, and the number in international relations and political theory is correspondingly lower. We aim to have the distribution of books relatively equal across the subfields, but are limited in any given year by the number and quality of books submitted in each subfield.

Conclusion

Like everything else in *Perspectives on Politics*, the annual report remains a work in progress. The editors and staff welcome queries that were not answered above and suggestions for topics to include in future reports. We welcome even more your suggestions, proposals, and manuscripts for future publication in *Perspectives*.

That category is broad, including all submissions focused primarily on how best to study politics or how political scientists in fact do so.

4. This column includes only proposals for which we had not yet received full submissions by July 31, 2004.

References

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