Open Access Journals and Public Engagement

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Although this brief article was not included in the task force summary report submitted to the APSA Council in August 2014, this open access journal, proposed to the APSA Council in April 2015, brings together many themes in the task force's report: communicating policy-reeavant science, incentivizing manuscript peer review, improving journal publication practices, and promoting political science in the public sphere. In particular, the proposed open access journal directly addresses the task force recommendation "the APSA should add new and dynamic electronic journals." If approved by the council, the open access journal signals the association's movement to better communicate political science's public value.

OBJECTIVES

Open access journals offer an entirely new academic publishing model for scholars and researchers: traditional subscription journals collect manuscripts and then publish then in volumes and issues; access to the published articles is strictly limited by the paywall model that makes access generally inaccessible to the general public. APSA proposes adding a new online-only open access journal to its publication portfolio. This journal will be free of all paywalls or subscription requirements, meaning that it will be accessible to anyone in the world with an Internet connection.

The open access model, together with the absence of a print edition, will combine to create a barrier-free venue for the timely publication of high-quality, peer-reviewed articles, reflecting the research diversity of political science and emphasizing innovation in form, submission, review, and presentation. Such a journal could potentially play a central role as part of the broader APSA strategy to help build and strengthen the discipline of political science in the United States and abroad and to foster new developments in political science research. It will build on APSA's premium brand and ensure that the association publishes more of the top-level research output from its members.

The proposed journal is an excellent fit with the academic and professional development priorities of the association, and this task force, and will permit the association to respond effectively and creatively to emergent trends in higher education and the social sciences. Its core objectives are summarized as follows:

- *Diversity.* Representation of the diverse methodological approaches to political research, as well as of the many subfields that constitute the discipline, is essential. It is vitally important that the journal is perceived as open and welcoming to junior faculty, non-US faculty, and faculty from the full range of subfields and academic institutions.
- *Innovation.* A born-digital journal provides a terrific opportunity for the development of innovations in article presentation including dynamic data visualizations, article commentaries, or video presentations for classroom use. Furthermore, the journal would encourage methodological innovation by promoting experimentation in different qualitative and quantitative research methods, given the quick publication cycle and diffusion of new articles.
- *Public Engagement.* The open access model and the associated promotional strategy, combined with the emphasis on timely publication, will support APSA's goal of public engagement and demonstrate the broader value of political science research and scholarship.
- *Timeliness.* Flexible, rapid publication promotes the professional development and advancement of faculty, fosters the worldwide dissemination of knowledge including methodological innovation, supports diversity in methods, and promotes the engagement of the profession in the public sphere.

The new journal will serve the entire APSA membership as well as the entire audience of individuals around the globe interested in political science research. It is essential and expected that the APSA Council and the journal's editors—as well as the wider APSA community—will be active participants in shaping the form and identity of the journal in the launch phase and the early years of its development. The watchwords at all times must be "quality" and "diversity": both must be evident in the journal's table of contents from the outset.

BACKGROUND

The move toward open access models of academic research communication in academia and the academic publishing industry has the potential to increase the availability, readership, and impact of scholarly work and advance the discipline of political science. In this context, APSA is very well-positioned to provide global leadership on the subject of open access both in the discipline and in the social sciences. Recently, a select number of other academic associations in the social sciences including American Sociological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the American Anthropological Association have offered open access journals. Also, the American Association for the Advancement of Science has recently established *Science Advances*, an open access journal with a public engagement focus. Thus, APSA has the potential to bring together the best features from these journals and build on its own extensive expertise in academic publishing and research to create a cutting-edge,

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reputable, high-quality publication that will be a credit to the association and the social sciences.

OPEN ACCESS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The proposed open access journal is an especially good fit with the public engagement priorities of the association. Manuscripts submitted to the new APSA journal must identify and engage an important political science research topic. This journal will offer quick review and publication on a rolling basis to ensure that its contents can speak directly to the current challenges and questions of politics around the world. Diversity in methodology and subfield will be encouraged through the type of papers accepted, the nature of the peer-review process, and the structure of the editorial team.

Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal would be required to offer an original research contribution that does not cover material published elsewhere. While all articles must be clear and accessible to a broad range of readers, authors will be encouraged to submit manuscripts at a wide variety of lengths and formats with 15,000 words as the upper word limit. Thus, the journal is underpinned by the assumption that the appropriate length for an article varies greatly with the topic and methodological approach. Theoretical papers are likely to be longer than many targeted empirical papers. Supplementary materials, such as archival material including transcripts, historical documents, scholarly letters, videos, as well as conventional datasets will be strongly encouraged, and appropriate online venues will be established for their permanent, open, and linked storage. The journal will keep pace with and abide by the emerging disciplinary norms of research ethics. To facilitate reaching a wider public audience, all articles submitted will be accompanied by a short nontechnical summary that can be used to help prepare materials for social media, blogs, the press, classroom use, and other outlets.

All manuscripts will be published under a Creative Commons license, facilitating re-use with the minimum of restrictions. Authors would be able to choose from a suite of licenses, some of which would prevent downstream commercial use and/or derivative uses of the work. These licenses have become standard in the open access publishing environment and help meet the need for truly "open access" papers to be easily reusable as well as accessible.

In short, the structure of the new open access journal would permit the extensive dissemination of political science research in the public sphere, broadly defined: scholars submitting manuscripts would be required to consider the translation of their research for a lay audience and manuscripts addressing the policy as well as the conceptual implications of their research would be encouraged. Moreover, the continuous publication schedule would facilitate the rapid dissemination of research to policy makers and citizens.

Timely publication would also be encouraged by proposed changes in the review process that are designed to shorten the time from initial submission to editorial decision on manuscript publication. While all articles published in the new APSA journal will be subject to rigorous editorial evaluation and an external peer-review process to ensure that they meet APSA's standards of quality and style, two innovations in reviewing will promote more rapid publication: a cascading review system and new reviewer incentives. Regarding the former, the system for cascading reviews will allow authors to choose to have their manuscript and reviews forwarded to the new journal if they were submitted to but not accepted by other APSA journals. This system will play a strong role in reducing the waiting time for authors and the burden on reviewers, while ensuring that the new journal has a ready supply of reviewed manuscripts, from which the most timely and high-quality will be chosen. The multiple cascade sources will also help ensure diversity of content. In addition to papers cascaded from *APSR*, *Perspectives on Politics,* and *PS: Political Science and Politics*, the new journal will encourage original submissions. The second innovation, new reviewer incentives, would operate as follows: scholars who agree to review and submit their reviews in a timely fashion earn credits that can then be used toward expedited review, across the APSA journal system. This system is designed to be used on noncascaded papers (or on cascaded papers where further external review is deemed necessary). Consequently, the new journal will be in a better position to receive the quick, high-quality reviews that are necessary to maintain a set of timely and relevant articles. At the same time, it represents a first step toward acknowledging and addressing the ongoing concerns in the discipline about reviewer fatigue and overload.

To achieve its potential as a journal promoting public engagement of the discipline, the new journal must have a diverse and high-quality editorial team committed to public engagement. A variety of editorial structures are possible. For example, the new journal might have three coeditors: a theorist, a comparativist, and a political methodologist. Or one lead editor—a scholar of American political development—might be joined by three coeditors from different fields such as political theory, international relations, and political economy. Regardless of the specific structure, an interest in the intersection of political science research and the public sphere will be essential.

The proposed open access journal is an especially good fit with the public engagement priorities of the association.

The open access format supports a dynamic social media strategy by APSA and its publisher, Cambridge University Press. Key components to this plan include engaging with key blogs, media commentators, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, and government organizations with the goal of bringing cutting-edge political science research to the attention of groups that do not have the time or depth of knowledge to engage with the original articles. The provision of nontechnical summaries with articles, as noted previously, will support the work of translating academic work to a much broader audience. In addition, another important part of the promotional strategy will be to flag the journal to institutions at all levels as a key teaching resource.

The success measures for the new journal will also incorporate public engagement measures. That is, the new journal will be

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held to conventional standards of success for an academic journal including the five-year impact factor. However, success will also be measured in terms of the diversity of the research published in the journal, its ability to promote the professional development of the faculty in the discipline, and the impact of the journal's research on the wider world. Thus, performance indicators will be developed to assay diversity and innovation in methodology among the published articles, the public engagement effects of the journal, and the utilization of the journal by the discipline and the broader polity.

The success of the journal also hinges on a sound financial plan. Toward this end, the new APSA journal will have a diversified and sustainable business plan. Financial support for the journal will be from APSA, Cambridge University Press, the home institution(s) of the editorial team, and article processing charges (APCs). The latter are fees charged to authors on the *acceptance* of articles and paid for by authors, their institution, or their research funder. APCs have become a standard approach to funding open access journals across an increasing number of academic fields; several of the new open access publications launched by other social science associations use the APC model. In the case of the new APSA journal, these APCs will be set at a level appropriate to the discipline and scaled to account for the author's position in his or her career and their access to resources. Thus, the APC for the new journal will be at a graduated income scale and go from $99 to $250 for members. The APCs for scholars from low GNI countries using the World Bank index will be waived.

An online-only open access journal will allow APSA to play a critical leadership role for the discipline and the social sciences that will redound to the overall benefit of the discipline, the study of politics and policy, and the engagement of the discipline in the public sphere.

CONCLUSION

APSA is one of the largest academic social science associations in the world. Consequently, it has a responsibility to provide intellectual leadership for the social sciences around the world. Academic publishing is moving in the direction of more open access formats, and social science scholars are facing higher expectations for public engagement, openness, and greater diversity and innovation in research methods. The academy and political science in particular is more diverse on many different dimensions. An online-only open access journal will allow APSA to play a critical leadership role for the discipline and the social sciences that will redound to the overall benefit of the discipline, the study of politics and policy, and the engagement of the discipline in the public sphere. ■

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