Perspectives on Politics Editors' Report 2018–19

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In this year's annual report, we discuss the journal's operation for calendar year 2018 (January 1 to December 31). The end date marks the end of the current editorial team's first nineteen months at the helm of *Perspectives on Politics*. As in previous reports, we discuss the editorial and technical innovations made by the University of Florida team, and report summary statistics on a number of important areas including submissions, editorial decision making, impact, and the book review section.

The transition to the University of Florida has been completed and our operations are working well. We have a positive relationship with both the Association offices in Washington, DC and Cambridge University Press. We thank both organizations for their consistent support and counsel. Throughout, we have hit our page budgets and all deadlines (give or take a day or two) due to the diligence of the Managing Editor and our Editorial Assistants.[1] We have accumulated an extensive inventory of accepted material that will already take us well into 2020.

EDITORIAL INNOVATIONS

Reinforcement of Review Process Anonymity

In 2017, upon taking control of the editorial process, we were bombarded with a large number of pre-publication solicitations by authors inquiring whether we were interested in specific articles they proposed. We believed that this undermined the double blind process in the article uptake procedure. Specifically, because *Perspectives* has a particular mission as a political science public sphere, and relies on 3–4 reviewers per manuscript, we desk-reject a substantial number of submissions for reasons of fit with the journal or out of quality concerns (see below). For this reason, we believe it is imperative that the identities of the authors remain blind to the editors in this phase of the review process. In order to put an end to author solicitations of the editors on manuscripts and to insulate the assignment of book reviewers from the suggestions of authors, or the volunteering of their friends or detractors, we put strong language on the website discouraging authors and potential book reviewers from contacting the editors about their manuscripts or reviewing specific books.[2] We also pointed out this policy to anyone writing directly to us to shop their article that we put strong emphasis on the blind review process. We are happy to report that the policy has worked in as much as the number of such solicitations has been substantially reduced, though it has not completely ceased.

Thematic Grouping of Articles

One of the hallmarks of the journal has been the grouping of thematically linked contributions in special issues and special sections. We have continued this feature. We often assemble these features on an ad hoc basis when we find that we have number of pieces in the production queue that are in some way linked. Each issue that we published in 2018 contained a special section of this sort. These are summarized in table 1.

Issue 17(1) has also appeared and it also included a special section on "Issues in Qualitative Research" including pieces on the ethics of fieldwork, how to make descriptive inference, and the implications of logical Bayesianism for qualitative social science.[3]

Since taking over we have also formalized the process of special issue and section creation within the confines of peer review by issuing periodic thematic calls for papers. To date we have issued two: "Trump: Causes and Consequences" and "Celebrity and Politics."[4] Both calls have been highly successful.

The submissions for the Trump issue were overwhelming—over 100 manuscripts. The quality of the papers was so impressive that we are planning back-to-back issues in 2019 (17(2) and 17(3)). While the work was extensive, we are pleased with the results. We had submissions in all four major subfields—American, Comparative, International Relations, and Theory. And much to our delight, the call led to collaboration by authors from different subfields. The use of a range of different methods is in line with our commitment to pluralism.

The Celebrity and Politics special section has been enhanced by the work of board member Samantha Majic, who has served as a guest editor and has taken the lead in the process. While the number of submissions was smaller, a few dozen, they were also very diverse in terms of subfield and method. The section is projected to be published in 2020, most likely in issue 18(1).

New Publicity Strategies

Twitter

Managing Editor Jennifer Boylan continues to manage our Twitter feed. When we first took possession of the account in 2017 we had just under 1,000 followers. The present number is over 2,100. Each individual article, reflection, and book review special feature gets its own individual tweet. Many authors also tag us when reviews of their books appear.

Facebook Page

We also created a Facebook page this year and use software to duplicate the posts to the Twitter feed here.[5] Its activity tends to spike when we release a new issue or when we ungate articles. When 17(1) released this February, the maximum reach of the

Table 1

Special Sections in Volume 16 (2018)

Number	Special Section	Link to ToC
16(1)	The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion	http://bit.ly/2DO01iS
16(2)	The New (Ab)Normal in American Politics	http://bit.ly/2DTdffR
16(3)	The Persistance of Authoritarianism	http://bit.ly/2DUS9O3
16(4)	Digital Politics	http://bit.ly/2DUjoZr

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Table 2

Perspectives Manuscript Submissions per Year

Time Period	New Manuscripts	Revised Manuscripts
2018	316	101
2017	294	83
2016	321	51
2015	258	53
2014	253	47

Table 3

Perspectives Manuscript Submissions by Location of Corresponding Author

Time Period	Within the US	Outside of the US
2018	181 (57.3%)	135 (42.7%)
2017	164 (56.6%)	126 (43.4%)
2016	190 (59.9%)	127 (40.1%)
2015	155 (60.8%)	100 (39.2%)
2014	170 (67.5%)	82 (32.5%)

Table 4

Average Number of Days in Review Process

Time Period	Submission to Editor Assignment	Submission to First Decision
2018	0.7	38.3
2017	4.8	46.0
2016	6.9	42.1
2015	6.3	45.9
2014	6	51.8

Facebook page (i.e., any of our posts on their screen) maxed out at 2,291 on February 14, 2019.

Blogging

Upon acceptance, we work with authors to develop publicity strategy. Each author gets a letter talking about our Twitter and Facebook accounts, and how to link to them. We also encourage them to blog about their piece. Several recent authors have placed selections in the Monkey Cage blog and many have availed themselves of the space on *PSNow*. Our biggest success in this regard was a public event produced with the help of APSA Executive Director Steven R. Smith and APSA Publications Director Jon Gurstelle with the Brookings Institute where a recent Williamson, Trump and Einstein article on the Black Lives Matter movement was featured.[6]

The October Surprise

When we moved to FirstView this fall, the first six papers we released were a preview of the first planned Trump issue (17:2). We playfully called this publicity campaign "The October Surprise" and rolled it out it to precede the 2018 elections by two weeks.[7]

TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS

Transparency

In 2018 the *Perspectives* Dataverse page was created and is up and fully functioning without problems.[8] To date we have an inventory of 24 datasets, including 144 files (read.me, replication files, and data files). We continue to require the upload of all quantitative data and replication files. We encourage qualitative authors to upload qualitative data when appropriate and to use online appendices when lengthy explanation is required or desirable to explain their methods of inference or interpretation. We still continue to grant exceptions for reasons of protection of human subjects and legal complications. In cases where the data is owned by a third party, the authors are obligated to explain how to gain access to the data through its owner. In cases where authors have a proprietary interest in making full use of data that they have spent substantial time and resources collecting, we negotiate an embargo period after which they pledge to upload the data.

Cambridge University Press has teamed up with the Qualitative Data Repository at Syracuse University to integrate the *Annotation for Transparent Inquiry* system into the online version of the journal. This software allows researchers to link article text with expansive annotation and available online source material. Our first article employing making use of this new capability appeared in issue 17(1). Authors wishing to make use of the system will be encouraged to do so, though its use is voluntary.

FirstView

After an experiment last year with limited release of accepted articles through FirstView, we have moved to adopt this feature. Because of the volume of accepted articles, and the many demands on the time of the Cambridge editorial staff, we are working to clear the backlog of all accepted articles and get them up on the Cambridge Core website.[9]

Publons

We activated the Publons app on Editorial Manager. This allows reviewers to establish a public verifiable record of their reviews to document their service contribution to the discipline.[10]

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SUBMISSIONS AND PROCESSING

Number of Submissions

Submissions were up in 2018. We received 316 new and 101 revised manuscripts. The total number processed is a new high for the journal, composed of the second highest number of new manuscripts and the most revised manuscripts processed since 2013. The large number of both new and revised items received in 2018 is in part the result of the two calls for papers, "Trump: Causes and Consequences" and "Celebrity and Politics," issued during the year. See table 2 for more information.

One of the goals we set in consultation with the leadership of the association was to further internationalize the journal. We maintain a submission rate of over 40% from outside the United States. This was in a year when a substantial number of submissions were devoted to understanding the Trump presidency.

We also publish a large number of authors from outside the United States, as seen in table 3. In Volume 16 (2018) of the journal, over a quarter of articles and reflections we published (26.78%) came from colleagues based at universities outside the United States.[11] We suspect that the difference in the rates of submission and acceptance are a function of the lesser familiarity of some international colleagues with the conventions of publication in English language journals. The editor has taken an active role in talking to international audiences about the journal, its profile and its submission standards. Last year he made presentations of this nature at the Universities of Toronto and Gothenburg, and at the European meeting of the Association for the Study of Nationalities at the University of Graz in Austria. This summer he will also do so at the Conference on European Studies in Madrid.

Processing of Submissions

We continue to meet our goal of delivering prompt and professional review of submitted manuscripts. Once the editors have decided to send a manuscript for external review, we endeavor to use four reviewers. We sometimes make decisions before all reviews are in if there is a strong consensus among the initial reviews that the piece is not appropriate for *Perspectives*. Many manuscripts go through multiple stages of revise and resubmit before publication. We endeavor on all subsequent rounds, to return to all initial reviewers who continue to express reservations and are willing to read the revisions. When they are not, and the number of reviewers rereading major revisions falls below two, we rely on members of the board for advice. Because of the large number of reviewers we use and the stringency of our peer review process, we monitor all manuscripts on a weekly basis and work with reviewers to expedite timely reviewers. Table 4 indicates that this allows us to provide timely decisions and feedback.

As noted in table 4, the time to editor assignment and first decision has been substantially condensed since we began to edit the journal on June 1, 2017. The 2018 data represents the first full calendar year of our editorship.

Editorial Decisions

Table 5 summarizes our first round editorial decisions for calendar year 2018. We continue to decline a large number of

Table 5

First Round Editorial Decisions 2018

Editor Decision	Total Decisions	Frequency of Decision	Average Days to Decision
Decline—No External Review	181	59.2%	14.5
Decline—After External Review	80	26.1%	79.9
Major Revision	38	12.4%	92.7
Minor Revision	5	1.6%	45
Conditional Accept	2	0.7%	14
Total Editor Decisions	306	100%	41.8

Table 6

Outcome of First Round of the Review Process (%)

Manuscript Decision	2018	2017[1]	2016	2015	2014
Decline, No External Review	59.2	59.4	69.1	69.6	64.9
Decline After Ext. Review	26.1	25.5	22.3	19.2	22.9
Major Revision	12.4	10.4	5.5	7.2	7.4
Minor Revision	1.6	2.7	2.8	4	3.9
Conditional Accept	0.7	0.3	0.3	0	0.4
Accept	0	1.7	0	0	0.4

1. The figure in the table for 2017 combines those of the Indiana and Florida teams. We declined without external review at a higher rate than Indiana last year.

Table 7

Journal Impact 2013–2017*

Year	2-year Impact Factor	Political Science Rank (Annual)	5-year Impact Factor	Political Science Rank (5-year)
2017	1.714	53/169	3.607	19/166
2016	3.234	8/165	3.680	7/161
2015	2.462	10/163	3.257	6/156
2014	2.132	11/161	2.661	16/153
2013	3.035	2/157	2.628	9/142

* Clarivate Analytics. InCites Journal Citation Reports. Accessed February 21, 2019.

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manuscripts without external review. We do so because we still receive a substantial number of submissions which do not fit with the mission of the journal or were not of sufficient academic quality. Of the 123 submissions that went out for external review, only 35% (14% of the total submissions) were given an opportunity to be revised for publication. The vast majority of revision decisions were qualified as major by the editors. Though the data below shows two manuscripts conditionally accepted least year, this statistic requires contextualization. These were both article manuscripts that were sent out for review, rejected, and then, after considerable work with the editors, condensed into reflection essays. No manuscript has been accepted without at least a round of minor revisions during our tenure.

The vast majority of manuscripts given a revision decision under our editorship have been published. In 2018, 40 manuscripts were accepted for publication. These include a number which received revision decisions in 2017. Seven were rejected after the first round of revisions when the reviewers became unsupportive. Seven still do not have a final decision because they are being revised by their authors.

Table 6 compares this year to the previous four. APSA asked us to try to reduce the number of manuscripts declined without external review. We have made moderate progress—reducing the percentage from 63% that we declined in this fashion in the second half of 2017 to 59% this year. More manuscripts are now declined through external review (for the Florida team from 23% in the second half of 2017 to 26% this year).

Our ability to make editorial decisions is based on the generosity of our colleagues in the discipline and neighboring fields of study. Last year we requested assistance from 1104 colleagues. Of those we invited, only 381, a little over one-third, declined to review. We are grateful to those who wrote reviews for sharing their time and expertise. We also thank those, who despite the personal or professional obligations that kept them from writing a review, recommended others who could replace them. These thoughtful suggestions also helped to facilitate our work.

Journal Impact

Table 7 below presents the Thomson-Reuters Journal Citation Reports annual and five-year impact factors, and where the journal ranks in comparison to other political science journals. The two-year impact factor (JIF2) measured by the Journal Citation Reports by Clarivate Analytics for *Perspectives on Politics* saw a substantial decline this year. In 2016 our JIF2 stood at 3.234 and we were ranked 8th in the discipline of political science. In 2017, that score declined to 1.714 and our ranking fell to 53rd in the discipline. Our five year impact factor is largely unchanged and continues to be relatively high, 3.607, the nineteenth highest in the discipline.

The JIF2 for 2017 was based on volumes 13 and 14 published in 2015 and 2016. The most important cause of that decline was the result of a highly cited article falling out of the two year range.[12] When we examined the data for how Clarivate calculated our JIF2 we noted inconsistencies in which of our formats they counted as citable over time. In cooperation with Cambridge University Press we filed an appeal for clarification of the rules with Clarivate. They carefully considered our appeal and adjusted our impact factors upwards. As a result our JIF rank improved five places.

Table 8

Book Reviews Published in Volume 16 (2018)

Field	Conventional Reviews	Review Essays	Critical Dialogue	Symposia	Total
IR	61	0	8	0	69
American	68	1	6	0	75
Theory	68	2	6	0	76
CP	62	4	5	2	73
Digital Politics	9	1	0	0	10
Total	268	8	25	2	303

The Book Review Section

As we noted last year, we consider the Book Review section to be as important a core mission of the journal as the publication of articles and reviews. *Perspectives* serves as the book review of record for the discipline. A review in the journal serves notice of a book's significance and the review itself can serve as important evidence in hiring and promotion and tenure decisions. We receive considerably more books than we can review in any given year, but only have space to review 300–400 of them. We give precedence to the first books from junior scholars, university press books, and books likely to make an important impact on the discipline. We do our best to use the various book review formats in the journal to encourage scholarly conversation within and across fields, and with the broader reading public.

Lining up reviewers is an onerous task that involves persistence due to a high rejection rate of invitations. It is routine to have to several reviewers decline invitations before finding someone who is willing to write a review. From time to time, the process requires the contacting of a dozen or more potential reviewers. Table 8 details the types of book reviews by field that the UF team published in 2018. These include conventional single, double, and triple book reviews, review essays (a more elaborate review of one or several related books by a single author), critical dialogues (an exchange of reviews and responses by the authors of two works on the same subject), and review symposia (where several reviewers give shorter commentary on one book). In 2018 we also did a special book review section in conjunction with the feature on "Digital Politics" (16(4)) on the front end. The total number of books reviewed across all these formats was 368.

Our first full year running the book review section was a success. We reviewed a total of 368 books, distributed roughly equally across all four fields, in the variety of formats featured in the journal. In the previous six years the comparable figures were 347 (2017), 342 (2016), 376 (2015), 291 (2014), 351 (2013) and 316 (2012). The number of books reviewed in our first year is thus roughly comparable to the peak number reviewed by the previous editorial team over the past several years.

CONCLUSION

2018 was the year when we moved from transitional to routine operation of the

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journal and all facets of the production process. We have well-established procedures for the uptake and initial assessment of manuscripts, external review, and decision making. We have developed fair and consistent standards for the book review and are producing a large number of reviews across all fields relying on the variety of review formats that have become a unique hallmark of the journal. Our relationship with Cambridge University Press on the production side has been exceptionally smooth. And when there has been the occasional glitch on our side, they have always supported us with even greater effort and expertise. Cambridge has also been fully accommodating of all our efforts to raise the online publicity profile of the journal.[13] The APSA office in Washington, DC and the leadership of the association has also been highly supportive. They routinely consult us on issues of concern to the journal, listen to our feedback, and work to find solutions that not only work for them, but for us, and the readership of the journal.[14]

The drop in the impact factor this year was concerning, but out of our control. The journal has experienced drops in the JIF in the past (most recently from 2013 to 2014), though note quite of this magnitude. Other important journals in the discipline have experienced similar drops and recovered their stride.[15] Because we believe that long-term performance is more important than normal short-term fluctuations, our focus is forward looking. We are working hard to develop innovative, interesting, and sophisticated programming to better serve the discipline and our wider audience. ■

NOTES

1. We benefit mightily from the diligence of our six editorial assistants – Alec Dinnin, Karla Mundim, Nicholas Rudnik, Marah Schlingensiepen, Dragana Svraka, and Saskia van Wees. We are grateful to APSA and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida, and the University of Florida Foundation for funding that makes this level of staffing possible.
2. See here: http://www.apsanet.org/perspectivessubmissions
3. http://bit.ly/2DR9eZj
4. The calls can be seen here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/call-for-papers
5. Available here: https://www.facebook.com/PoPpublicsphere/?modal=admin_todo_tour
6. Williamson, Vanessa, Kris-Stella Trump, and Katherine Levine Einstein. 2018. "Black Lives Matter: Evidence that Police-Caused Deaths Predict Protest Activity." *Perspectives on Politics* 16(2) :400–415. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592717004273
7. See here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/information/trump-causes-and-consequences?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=pps
8. See here: https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse.xhtml?alias=perspectives
9. See here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/firstview
10. For more information on Publons, see their website: https://publons.com/home/
11. The balance between male and female authors in Volume 16 is 54.75% to 45.25%. While APSA has data on the gender of the authors of submissions, we do not have access to this data.
12. Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564–81. doi:10.1017/S1537592714001595.
13. We would like to personally thank Mark Zadrozny, Brian Mazeski, Nick Michal, Alyssa Neumann, Jim Ansell, David Mainwaring, Andrew Hyde, Linda Lindenfelser, and Gavin Swanson.
14. We would like to personally thank Kathleen Thelen, Steven R. Smith, Jon Gurstelle, Karima Scott, and Nicholas Townsend.
15. E.g., the JIF of *World Politics* stood at just over three in 2011 and experienced drops in 2012 and 2013 that put it below two. Since 2015 it has been consistently over three, even reaching four in 2016.

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