

Report from the Editor, *Perspectives on Politics*, 2013

Jeffrey C. Isaac, Editor-in-Chief, with James Moskowitz, Managing Editor

I am happy to report that *Perspectives on Politics* continues to thrive. In the almost five years since we assumed editorial control of the journal, in June 2009, we have succeeded in strengthening journal operations and procedures and in projecting a new and growing excitement about *Perspectives* and the role it can play in contributing to the invigoration of the discipline.

We have a highly talented, energetic, and well-organized staff, and we continue to fine-tune a strong set of procedures for dealing with authors, reviewers, and each other. As a consequence we have continued to work efficiently and stay on production schedule with APSA, Cambridge, and the compositors. I continue to receive a great deal of positive feedback from authors and from readers about the journal, its quality, its special sections, and its accessibility and responsiveness. More importantly, we continue to receive a growing flow of manuscripts of an increasingly high quality, from “major” scholars eager to place their work in our journal and from more junior scholars who regard *Perspectives* and its mission as hospitable to their view of political science. In the past year we have published a wide range of authors from a variety of institutions.

In 2013 *Perspectives* published 22 articles (with 42 authors and coauthors combined), two reflections essays (one with responses by eight other scholars), and the APSA Presidential Address, as well as four book symposia (with 16 contributors), seven critical dialogues, 14 book review essays, and 282 book reviews (treating 351 titles). We thus published the work of nearly 400 political scientists. If you add to that the number of manuscript reviewers with which we have corresponded, plus the number of authors submitting pieces that were not selected for external review, and the number of book review invitations declined, in 2013 the journal networked with more than 1,000 political scientists. Through our extensive and substantive correspondence, and through the product of that correspondence—the journal itself—we believe we are succeed-

ing in our goal of fostering a political science public sphere.

The Appendix to this Report (available on) is located at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BosvKFdVXZCJVU1SbkwocondVQzA/edit?usp=sharing>) It includes some basic publication and production data. We will be happy to answer any questions about this data to the best of our ability.

In what follows I briefly outline a range of accomplishments worthy of note, which together help to explain our success thus far. In doing so, I reiterate some of the themes of last year's report, since they are essential to our ongoing operations, and also since each year new members join the Council, and my goal is to keep every member of the Council maximally informed about our journal operations.

1. *Perspectives* is a collaborative effort, and the journal works well because it has a terrific staff. James Moskowitz is an exceptional managing editor. He combines business experience, strong communication and computer skills, a real aesthetic sensibility, and the scholarly perspective of an advanced and published political science PhD student. James has contributed immeasurably to the success of the journal along every dimension, from the efficient operation of the Editorial Management system to the journal's terrific new design, and he is responsible for the extraordinary covers we have featured in the past year. James works full-time on the journal.

Margot Morgan, our long-time book review managing editor, left our staff in August 2013 to take a position as visiting assistant professor of political science at Indiana University, Southeast. This has required some adjustments in the office. James Moskowitz has assumed many of Margot's managerial duties. James does most of his work via telecommuting. He communicates with me electronically on a daily basis, and 90% of his work is done online. He also skypes into our weekly staff meetings, and visits for 3–4 days

every 6–8 weeks. This works beautifully. At the same time, given James's “distance” from the office and Margot's departure, I am now without the regular “presence” of my two most experienced editorial colleagues. As a result, I have been spending more time in the office, and have assumed greater “managerial” responsibility with the staff. This has been incredibly smooth, and because the staff is so excellent, and the more experienced members are so good at mentoring the newer members, I have had to do very little by way of day-to-day “management.” The office runs like “clockwork.” We are adjusting perfectly to the new office situation. At the same time, it is an adjustment.

James is joined by six equally terrific editorial assistants whose contributions to the journal are enormous. Brendon Westler and Adrian Florea work on the journal's front end, reading every article submitted for publication, and participating with James and me in weekly “conference reviews” where we decide which pieces to send out for external review. They then divide up labor to find reviewers for the manuscripts and to stay on top of all communication with reviewers. They also work closely with James to prepare for publication those articles eventually accepted for publication. Rafael Khachatryan, Laura Bucci, Peter Giordano, and Rachel Gears work with James on the Book Review section, helping me find reviewers for each book, corresponding with reviewers, and working to move all reviews to publication.

The staff works very well together. We meet weekly to discuss all aspects of the journal, to prepare manuscripts for copyediting, and to plan ahead. We also typically have lunch (supplied by me). It is a very upbeat work environment. All editorial assistants are encouraged to take initiative and to make sure that their work on the journal complements their academic work and long-term scholarly plans. And I subsidize every staff member (approximately \$500 per person) so that the entire staff can attend the annual MPSA meeting and participate in our editorial board meeting. Much of the work of academic journals is done by staff,

almost all of who are graduate assistants. I am very proud of my staff, and proud of the work environment we have cultivated in our office.

I am also proud of the scholarly progress that my staff has made in advancing their own intellectual agendas. In the past year Margot Morgan both secured an assistant professor position and published her book, *Politics and Theatre in Twentieth Century Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Adrian Florea published an article in *International Interactions*, his second recent publication (in 2012 he published an article in *International Studies Review*, and in 2013 he also received an review and resubmit decision, in process, from *International Organization*); Brendon Westler has had a piece accepted for publication in *Journal of the History of Ideas*; Rafael Khachaturian just received a very favorable review, requiring minor revisions, of an article submitted to *Polity*; Laura Bucci passed both of her qualifying exams; and Rachel Gears and Pete Giordano are also making great progress toward their dissertations. Young scholars such as these do the lion's share of the work of our discipline's journals, and it is very important that their work is recognized as valuable and that it enhance their professional development. Along these lines I note with particular pleasure that Elizabeth Markovits is not simply a current board member who is also the coauthor of a published research article; she is a former *Perspectives* editorial assistant, having worked on the Book Review when it was located at University of North Carolina. I regard this trajectory as a model for my staff.

2. The journal has a terrific editorial board. We stay in fairly regular communication with the board as a whole, and communicate very often with individual board members, to consult on difficult decisions and to seek additional reviews of manuscripts when this becomes necessary. Board members have been very responsive and helpful, and many of them have been proactive in encouraging authors to submit their work for review. I believe that a journal like *Perspectives* can only succeed if a diverse group of excellent and highly respected political scientists are willing to make a commitment and to link their credibility to the credibility of the journal. Sustaining this kind of connection has been an important accomplishment and it remains an ongoing commitment.

I am proud to say that the entire board that began with my tenure continues to serve,

along with some newer and equally exceptional colleagues. This past year we added six new board members, with APSA Council approval (a full list of our board members appears on our masthead, and is included in the online appendix).

When we took over the journal, I instituted a policy that was neither required by APSA rules nor practiced by any other top journal of which I am aware: members of the editorial board could not publish articles or essays in the journal. The reason for this was simple: we wanted to be as emphatic as possible about the seriousness of our review processes, and it was important that the journal in no way seemed to be a venue for its principal supporters. It was a great sacrifice for our board members to agree to this condition. And yet they did so as a matter of principle, helping to review other work while withholding from the journal important work of their own that unsurprisingly fit well with the journal's editorial perspective.

Last year, after consultation with APSA staff, my own staff, and with the board itself, I decided to change the policy, and to open the pages of the journal to editorial board members. Our September 2012 issue featured a book symposium organized by board member Henry Farrell (Henry functioned as an editor, and contributed to this symposium only by composing the editor charge to participants). The March 2013 issue of the journal was the first to contain Reflections essays by two board members, Daniel Drezner and Dara Strolovitch, both of whom have been very active on the board. Our March 2014 issue contains the first peer-reviewed research article published by a board member since at least 2009—Elizabeth Markovits and Susan Bickford's "Constructing Freedom: Institutional Pathways to Changing the Gendered Division of Labor."

In the coming years we will continue to expand our board, and will also continue to feature the writings of board members. Like all of our submissions, this work will be properly vetted according to our standard operating procedures.

3. We continue to have excellent working relationships with the principals with whom we work to produce the journal. At the same time, there have been many changes:

- At APSA, in the past year Michael Brintnall has retired and Polly Karpowicz has been reassigned. We thus now work directly with Barbara

Walthall, APSA's new journal point person, and Steven Rathgeb Smith, APSA's new executive director. This transition has been seamless.

- At Cambridge University Press we continue to work smoothly Mark Zdrozny, journals editor, and Jonathan Geffner, who is the Cambridge point person on all production issues. Michael Marvin, who did terrific promotional work last year, has left the press, and has only recently been replaced by Janise Lazarte, with whom we look forward to working. Cambridge continues to be exceptionally wonderful to work with.
- The compositor of *Perspectives* for the past ten years has been Beljan, Ltd., a small, family-owned company located in Dexter, Michigan. During this time our journal, and especially James, developed a terrific working relationship with the people at Beljan. Beljan went out of business at the end of 2013. And so *Perspectives* is now being composited by a new company, TNQ Books and Journals, Pvt., Ltd., located in India. Both APSA and Cambridge have been extremely professional and supportive. The new company is less accessible to us. They are also working out the kinks of their system relative to our production needs. As a result, the compositing of our March 2014 issue has been moving at a much slower and more complicated pace than is normal, and we need to be much more meticulous in proofing what they are sending us. I am fully confident that this will work out fine. But it involves a transition, and takes some added time and attention.

James does an excellent job in staying in touch with all of these people, being responsive to their concerns, and obtaining their help when it is necessary. I can't say enough about the synergy between Cambridge and APSA and how essential this kind of relationship is to the success of the journal. We are also fortunate to have the help of two excellent copy-editors: Linda Lindenfelser, who worked with Jim Johnson when the journal was at University of Rochester, and Phyllis Berk. While we do some copy-editing in-house, we have budgeted to have almost all

of it done externally by experienced professionals. This is important for a journal in which broad intelligibility, and thus excellent prose writing, is essential.

We are also very fortunate to have the exceptional support provided by Indiana University, its College of Arts and Sciences, and its Political Science Department. IU provided course release for me, and support for graduate assistance for the four years of my tenure as Book Review editor. It also housed our editorial office and furnished state-of-the-art computer support. It is committed to continuing this support for the duration of my tenure as editor in chief of the journal (the only change is that IU has tripled our office space when we took over the entire journal). This means that for 10 years IU will have supported and housed the journal. This support, and the scholarly and collaborative spirit in which it is provided, has been indispensable to the success of the journal. In an age where such support is increasingly hard to come by, this is worth noting.

4. We have maintained excellent and efficient communication with authors, reviewers, and people in the field more generally. We try—and almost always succeed—in completing our internal review of each submitted research article within 7 to 10 days of submission. We move promptly to identify external reviews for all suitable manuscripts. I also write substantial and constructive letters to every author whose paper we decide not to send out for review. I try to send these letters within 10 to 14 days of submission, and when there are delays, I try to explain them to authors in personal letters. I have received a great deal of appreciative feedback from many of the authors whose papers we choose not to send out for external review. We also stay in close touch with authors through the publishing process, from external review through revision through preparation for publication. I write careful, clear, and substantive letters to each author offering guidance. If there are delays we write to authors explaining them. I write follow-up letters to authors from whom we really wish to see a revised paper, encouraging prompt revision and resubmission. I also write often to scholars in the field, inquiring about interesting-sounding conference presentations, and inviting article submissions. I am especially interested in cultivating connections to junior scholars whose work has merited official recognition or seems particularly interesting.

We are always looking to reach out to new authors and readers, and to attract new and exciting work for review and publication. At the same time, all research articles are subject to our strict, double-blind external review process.

As a matter of general policy, we prize efficient, prompt, and kind communication. Every letter is an opportunity to explain the journal's distinctive mission and to make a friend for the journal. We also keep excellent records of all communication. Every official letter is sent through Editorial Manager, and copied to the *Perspectives* e-mail account and my own e-mail account, and all letters are backed up.

5. For the past many years, we have been working hard to make our peer-review process for all research article submissions more serious and systematic and to make clear to all readers that every single research article published in *Perspectives* has been through a demanding blind internal review process and then a double-blind external review process. Our review process—which includes careful editorial selection of reviewers and directions to all authors regarding revisions, and also includes very careful line editing of every sentence by the Editor in Chief, in addition to careful copy-editing—is as serious, if not more serious, than that of any other peer-reviewed political science journal.

I believe we have succeeded in this effort.

We thus continue to receive a growing number of excellent article submissions, many of which, it turns out, are authored by top scholars in the field. By being very serious about our review process, we hope to continue to increase the number of truly excellent articles submitted, and over time to continue to build the journal's reputation as a peer-reviewed journal so that increasing numbers of junior colleagues think of *Perspectives* as a first option for their best work when this work is framed broadly, and so that departmental personnel and tenure and promotion committees will accord peer-review research articles published in *Perspectives* the measure of recognition they are due.

Along these lines, I am especially happy to report that the journal has built a very strong queue of accepted articles. Our June 2014 issue is in press, and our September and December 2014 article sections are already nearly filled with accepted articles (we currently have eight articles accepted for these issues, and expect to have at least 12 articles in hand by our June printer deadline for the

September issue). This queue is growing, and it speaks volumes for the journal moving forward.

6. Journal Thematic Focus: as we have reported in the past, we have become adept at developing a reasonable publication schedule that provides a measure of focus to our planned issues. Our March 2014 issue is a very special issue that features the theme of “gender and politics.” (see materials posted online) Our first special issue, and our first issue with our new cover design, was our March 2010 issue, which (at more than 450 pages!) also featured the topic of gender. This is a very important topic (!), and I hope my Editor Introduction offers some of the reasons why. The March issue is also the topic of the *Perspectives* annual theme panel at the upcoming APSA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Like last year, we will feature a roundtable discussion with a range of authors published in the issue. I am pleased to report that Susan Bickford, Kimberley Cowell-Meyers, Heath Fogg-Davis, Jane Mansbridge, Liz Markovits, and Tali Mendelberg have agreed to participate.

We are a general journal of political science, and the articles we publish represent the best of what is submitted to us that makes it through our review process. But by thinking strategically about timing and production schedule, proactively soliciting “Reflections” essays, and developing special Book Review theme sections, we are able to call attention to some of the “big topics” that touch on all areas of political science—as it is our mission to do. I regard this kind of editorial “visioning” and planning as a central aspect of my job as editor in chief of this particular journal. The themes that I decide to feature are developed on the basis of my own extensive reading, conversations with board members and other colleagues, and extensive staff deliberations. At the same time, I am always listening to and indeed soliciting feedback, from editorial board members and from colleagues more generally, about what we are doing, about themes that are worthy of attention, and about how we can do what we do better.

7. Special Review formats and sections: *Perspectives* seeks to nurture a political science public sphere that allows scholars to move beyond their normal comfort zones and reach broadly, beyond conventional methodological and subfield divides, and to the discipline as a whole. Toward this end, in the

past seven and a half years we have instituted a number of innovative formats to our Review section—book Symposia, Critical Dialogues, creative categorizing of certain books [the rationale for these changes was explained in my March 2006 “Statement from the Book Review Editor,” which is also included in the online Appendix, since our philosophy for the Book Review section has not changed, and indeed the perspectives laid out in that text anticipated what we are now trying to do with the journal as a whole]. Two years ago we added an additional innovation: each issue now contains, in addition to the “standard” four-subfield sections, a special “theme” section highlighting books that address an important substantive theme irrespective of field or approach. In recent issues we have featured the following themes in special sections: Nature and Politics; Elections, Contestation, and Democracy; The Rule of Law, Democracy, and Intelligence; and Politics and Gender. Our forthcoming June 2014 issue will feature the theme of “Contesting Authoritarianism.”

It is worth underscoring that the overwhelming majority of the book reviews that

we publish appear under one of the standard four subfield categories, and that while we have made important innovations in the Book Review section, the basic mission of the review section remains unchanged: to publish careful, constructively critical, and interesting reviews of political science books that feature important scholarly research and writing.

It is also worth underscoring that every aspect of the Book Review section—its innovations and its more conventional features—is designed to serve our journal’s core mission, which is the promotion of a political science public sphere. We believe that the book form represents an invaluable genre for the scholarly development of sustained, integrated analyses and arguments, and that scholarly books are thus an essential component of scholarly publishing. We thus seek to highlight the importance of political science books and to feature interesting discussions of books, in the hope that this will help sustain a book culture within political science and the social sciences more generally.

Indeed, one of our goals is to give full due to the entire range of genres and formats in which scholarly work in our discipline is

published, from scholarly research articles and reflective essays to books, book reviews and review essays, and dialogues.

8. We are working hard to project the journal as an important site of serious thinking about the future and purpose of our discipline. My Editor Introductions to each issue, composed as titled, synthetic, and thematic essays, represent one part of this effort. Beyond those introductions, I do a significant amount of writing intended to promote the journal and to better explain it to readers and potential readers [My essay “Political Science and Publicity,” was published in the June 2013 issue of *Political Studies Review*, a journal of the British Political Studies Association; and my essay “Restructuring the Social Sciences? Reflections from the Editor of Perspectives on Politics, was published in the April issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*].

To sum up, the journal is thriving due to the terrific work of many fine people and the support offered by APSA, Cambridge, Indiana University, and especially by the colleagues who, as authors, reviewers, and readers, are our primary constituency.

Appendix

Number of Books Treated in Published Single or Multiple Books Reviewed by Section, 2013

Standard Sections

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Political Theory | 54 |
| American Politics | 70 |
| Comparative Politics | 76 |
| International Relations | 56 |
| TOTAL | 256 |

Cross-Disciplinary Sections 95

| | |
|---|----|
| (Vol. 11, Issue 1) Politics in the Face of Financial Crisis | 55 |
| (Vol. 11, Issue 2) Politics and Nature | 11 |
| (Vol. 11, Issue 3) Elections, Contestation, and Democracy | 18 |
| (Vol. 11, Issue 4) The Rule of Law | 11 |

NOTE: The Perspectives on Politics Book Review received 1,354 books in 2012 and identified 430 of them for review or treatment in one of our special formats. We contacted more than 700 potential review authors, over 350 of which agreed to write a review, author a review essay, participate in a critical dialogue, or contribute to a book symposium. (Note: some of these have yet to appear in our pages.)

Appendix (continued)

Decision rates by Manuscript Stage, 2013

TOTAL

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Do not externally review | 58% |
| Review externally | 42% |

First decision upon external review

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Decline | 60% |
| Major revision | 30% |
| Minor revision | 8% |
| Conditional accept | 2% |

Final decision to date

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Accept | 10% |
| Do not externally review | 58% |
| Decline upon review | 21% |
| Revise | 6% |
| Under review (V1-R1) | 4% |
| With editor | 1% |

Decision rates by Manuscript Stage 2010, 2011, 2012

TOTAL

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Do not externally review | 58% |
| Review externally | 42% |

First decision upon external review

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Decline | 61% |
| Major revision | 24% |
| Minor revision | 11% |
| Conditional accept | 4% |

Final decision to date

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Accept | 7% |
| Do not externally review | 58% |
| Decline upon review | 25% |
| Revise | 6% |
| Under review (V1-R1) | 3% |
| With editor | 1% |

Note: A comparison of data from the last volume-year against the previous three volume-years indicates a slight increase in the percentage of manuscripts accepted.

We believe this to be a function of the increasing amount of space dedicated to the fine articles that we do receive. Other decision rates remain relatively steady. Total article submissions continue to show a positive trend (2013 = 213)(2012 = 200) (2011 = 195) (2010 = 185). (Reflections pieces are excluded from data.)