Report of the Editors of the *American Political Science Review*, 2015–2016

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We report here on the journal's operations from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, the fourth, and final, full year of the University of North Texas (UNT) team's editorship of the *Review*. When we first became editors of *APSR* in 2012, we laid out three goals in our manifesto: 1) Improve the efficiency of the *Review's* editorial process; 2) Increase the number and diversity of submissions, which we anticipated would lead to a greater diversity of articles appearing in the *Review*; 3) Maintain *APSR's* position as the leading political science journal in the world. The following report presents a summary of our progress relative to these three goals. In this report, we also discuss our adoption of Data Access and Research Transparency (DART) principles in our recently released submission guidelines. First, however, we would like to begin with the overview of the transition process to the new editorial team at the University of Mannheim/London School of Economics.

Before turning to the report, some thanks are in order. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to APSA, and to all of the presidents with whom we had the pleasure to work: G. Bingham Powell, Jane Mansbridge, John Aldrich, Rodney Hero, Jennifer Hochschild, and David Lake. We would also like to thank APSA executive director Steven Smith, former executive director Michael Brintnall, director of publications Barbara Walthall, former publications coordinator Polly Karpowicz, the entire APSA staff, the Council, the Publications Committee, as well as Cambridge University Press for their support and guidance over the past four years. As always, we would also like to thank the members of our editorial board, who have helped us with their advice on more than a few submissions and have served as "guest editors" on UNT-connected submissions that might otherwise raise issues of conflicts of interest. We also want to thank all of the authors who submitted their papers for consideration in the past year and the referees who reviewed them. In particular, without the scholarship of talented authors and the referees' commitment of time and effort in service of the profession, there simply would be no *Review*.

TRANSITION PROCESS

The transition process from UNT to the University of Mannheim/London School of Economics team has taken a bit of time to negotiate, but the process has been quite smooth given the circumstances. We have worked closely with the Mannheim/LSE team, and per agreement, the UNT team will process all manuscripts that come in prior to August 31, 2016. Previous transitions were scheduled for July 1 of the transition year but the unique and unprecedented situation of transitioning to an international team required a delay. To facilitate the transition process, the UNT team agreed to extend our term as editors to provide enough time for the new team to prepare and organize their office. In addition, the UNT team has agreed to continue processing all submissions we began (including revise and resubmits) until December 31, 2016. After that date, responsibility for finishing up processing will pass to the Mannheim/LSE team. The UNT team will be responsible for production of the November 2016 issue—the first issue for which the Mannheim/LSE team will be responsible is the February 2017 (Volume 111 No. 1) issue. However, to facilitate the transition, the UNT team has enough accepted manuscripts currently "in stock" to provide a sufficient number of articles to fill BOTH issues 1 and 2 of Volume 111. This should significantly ease the pressure on the new team to produce their first full issue. Thus many of the articles that will appear in the first two issues of Volume 111 (2017) will have been accepted and processed by the UNT team.

SUBMISSIONS AND PROCESSING

Number of Submissions

In terms of number of submissions, for 2015–2016, the UNT team reports the highest number of total submissions to *APSR* on record, breaking the previous record established last year (see table 1). From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 we received 975 new submissions, which is up from the 928 from the previous year. When revisions are also factored in, 2015–2016 represents the highest total number of papers handled in any 12-month period on record for *APSR*, from the previous year's reported total submissions of 1,057 to 1,073. Despite this record number of submissions, we still maintained a turnaround time of 54.3 days from receipt to first decision, which is somewhat higher than the previous year of 49.3 days, but significantly lower than previous years. The increase in review time was influenced most by a marked increase in processing time by our editorial assistants (an increase of four days on average). This increased processing time was largely due to the rising volume of original submissions, as well as the fact that there was a fairly large turnover among our graduate editorial assistants in 2016 due to completion of dissertations and graduations from among our staff.

From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 we invited 5,100 reviewers—2,611 of which accepted, 1,242 declined. The remaining reviewers were either withdrawn as reviewers, or a response to our request to review for papers currently under review is pending. Thus 68.5% of those who responded to our review request agreed to review, which is lower than the 70.4% from

Table 1

Submissions per Year

YEAR	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	
	Total	New
2015-2016*	1073	975
2014–2015*	1057	928
2013–2014*	1056	961
2012–2013*	1007	895
2011–2012	846	761
2010–2011	779	685
2009–2010	770	677
2008–2009	757	693

*years under the UNT team

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2014–2015, but higher than the 65.5% rate that we reported for 2013–2014.

It is notable that the editorial team has made an effort to understand the reasons why reviewers decline to review. In an article that appeared in *PS: Political Science & Politics* in the fall of 2015 (after our last report), *APSR* editor Marijke Breuning and her coauthors analyzed the reasons given for declines to review, which had a great deal to do with the increasing overall workload faced by faculty members. This has impacted negatively on reviewer agreement rates.

It is important to note two things from the *PS* article. First, an underlying concern expressed at previous APSA Council and *APSR* editorial board meetings, was that reviewer declines were caused by "reviewer fatigue" (i.e., too many reviews were being requested of reviewers), and that this jeopardized the efficiency of the editorial process. The report by Breuning et al. (2015) indicated that the "fatigue" issue is much more complex than reviewers being asked to do too many reviews. Generally, faculty face many demands on their time beyond being asked to review. Second, there appears to be no relationship between reviewer fatigue and efficiency of the editorial process, as demonstrated by our own success in maintaining fairly quick turnaround times, irrespective of "decline to review" rates.

Turnaround Times

We have made great efforts to reduce the number of days it takes to process manuscripts from first receipt of a submission to first decision (table 2). As indicated in the table, despite the substantial uptick in submissions processed by the UNT team from 2014–2015, we have maintained a respectable turnaround time of 54.33 days. Although higher than our previous year, this is substantially lower than previous years. One of our primary goals was to shorten the editorial assistant vetting and coeditor reviewer assignment time. Our editorial assistants have been very diligent in processing manuscripts quickly, and we have endeavored to be as quick as possible in reviewer assignment times. We have also engaged in the practice of directly contacting late reviewers to expedite the review process, although our reviewers have been generally very prompt in completing their reviews, 34 days on average. Indeed, the lion's share of the credit in maintaining respectable turnaround times lies with the efficiency of our reviewers.

Mix of Submissions

In terms of mix of submissions (see tables 3a–4) during the period 2014–2015 the distribution of submissions are essentially unchanged compared to previous years. Categorized by disciplinary subfield, the papers we received from July 2015 to June 2016 are reported in table 3a. The largest proportion of manuscripts continues to be from the comparative politics field (36%). Overall, the proportion of submitted manuscripts from all fields has remained unchanged when compared to the previous year.

During the period 2015–2016, in terms of the mix of submissions by approach, the patterns of submissions are also consistent with past patterns. The largest proportion continues to be quantitative (61.0%), with papers using purely formal approaches and, and those using both formal and quantitative approaches, staying about the same. Those classified as interpretive/conceptual and

Table 2

Elapsed Time (Avg. No. of Days) in Review Process, 2011–2016

Phase of Review Process	2015–2016*	2014–2015*	2013–2014*	2012–2013*	2011–2012
From receipt to editor assignment	10.3	6.2	5.6	2.3	12.2
From editor assignment to first reviewer assigned	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.2	7.4
From editor assignment to first decision	44.2	43.9	43.6	39.7	49.3
From receipt to first decision	54.3	49.3	49.2	41.3	68.9

*years under the UNT team

Table 3a

Distribution of New Papers Submitted, 2015–2016 Compared with Previous Years (%)

	SUBFIELD							
YEAR	American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Normative Theory	Formal Theory	Methods	Race, Ethnicity, & Politics	Other
2015–2016*	22	36	16	16	4	3	3	1
2014–2015*	21	36	16	15	4	3	4	1
2013–2014*	21	36	16	15	4	3	4	1
2012–2013*	21	32	20	15	6	3	3	1
2011–2012	23	30	17	16	7	3	4	1
2010–2011	20	30	17	17	6	3	4	3
2009–2010	23	29	16	18	6	4	3	2

*years under the UNT team

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Table 3b

Distribution of New Papers Submitted, 2015–2016 Compared with Previous Years (%)

	APPROACH						
YEAR	Formal	Quantitative	Formal and Quantitative	Small N	Interpretive/ Conceptual	Qualitative and/ or Empirical	Other
2015–2016*	13	61	9	0	12	5	0
2014–2015*	12	59	9	0	13	5	0
2013–2014*	12	58	6	0	15	7	2
2012–2013*	8	54	9	1	22	5	1
2011–2012	9	53	12	<1	20	5	<1
2010–2011	8	50	10	3	29	n.a.	<1
2009–2010	11	49	12	1	26	n.a	1

*years under the UNT team

qualitative/empirical have remained essentially the same since last year. Overall, in the past year, formal, quantitative, and formal and quantitative submissions constitute 83% of all submissions, in comparison to the 80% of all submissions from these approaches in 2014–2015. This proportion has remained the same for several years, although the mix has varied somewhat over time.

In addition to traditional indicators of the diversity of submissions that have appeared in past reports, we have also collected data on two other indicators of diversity during the period July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016—gender of first author of the submission, and national location of first author of the submission (data that we first reported in last year's annual report). These data were not collected by previous editorial teams.

Thus far, 70.7% of *first* authors during this period were men, and 29.3% were women (see table 4). Although we believe that this is progress (with the proportion of women first authors higher than our first year as editors), this is still lower than the estimated 32% of the APSA membership that is comprised of women (although progress is being made, albeit slowly). Further, approximately 33% of first authors of submitted manuscripts are affiliated with institutions outside the United States, a bit higher than the previous year (32%). This is an encouraging sign as *APSR* continues to strive to be the leading political science journal in the world. We are hopeful that these trends will continue in the future.

Table 4

Distribution of First Authors of Submitted Papers by Gender and International Authorship (%)

YEAR	% FIRST AUTHORS WHO WERE WOMEN	% FIRST AUTHORS FROM NON-US INSTITUTIONS
2015–2016	29.3%	32.9%
2014–2015	28.7%	32.0%
2013–2014	27.5%	33.0%
2012–2013	24.0%	31.0%

Outcomes

Table 5 reports the outcome of the first round of the review process for the year 2015–2016 (as well as for previous years to provide comparative perspective). For the past year, the proportion of summary rejects and inappropriate submissions (both without review), the proportion of rejects after reviews, conditional accepts and accepts after first round, were very consistent with percentages reported in the previous years.

Continuing the practice of our predecessors we have made use of summary rejection in order to relieve "reviewer fatigue" and to remove from consideration submissions that would most surely not survive the usual review process. In comparison with previous year (2014–2015), in 2015–2016 summary rejects increased to nearly 29% of the total. Further, rejection after review remains about the same percentage in comparison to previous years (66.1%). The percentage invited to revise and resubmit is lower than the previous year (4.7% as compared to 6.4% in the previous year).

Tables 6a and 6b report outcomes by accepted manuscripts by field and approach. Papers accepted by field showed that the largest proportion of manuscripts accepted were from comparative politics (34%) and normative theory (29%). The proportion of acceptances in American politics, formal theory, and methods increased compared to the previous year. There has, however, been a decline in the proportion of accepted papers that were from international relations. However, it should be remembered that authors categorize themselves in these fields. Increasingly there is much less distinction made in the published scholarship between comparative politics and international relations. Indeed, this is especially true for studies that focus on conflict. Thus, there is likely to be great overlap between comparative politics and international relations. Nonetheless, there has been a decline, and we are hopeful that this issue will be addressed by the new editorial team.

As indicated in table 6b, the percentage of quantitative as well as formal and quantitative acceptances continued to increase slightly, but purely formal approaches did not. Collectively, the three categories account for 67% of all papers accepted from 2015–2016. This is a somewhat higher percentage than the 66% reported last year, but substantially lower than the 74% reported by our predecessors in 2011–2012 (and much lower than the 2009–2010 proportion of 84%). On the other hand, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of papers using qualitative, conceptual, and interpretive methods accepted by the *Review* over the past four years.

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Table 5

Outcome of First Round of the Review Process (%)

OUTCOME	2015–2016	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013	2011–2012
Withdrawn	0.2	0.5	0.4	1.3	1.1
Inappropriate Submission and Summary Reject (Without Reviews)	28.9	26.9	24.6	20.1	19.9
Reject after Reviews	66.1	65.9	68.4	71.0	73.0
Invite R&R	4.7	6.4	7.0	8.9	5.3
Conditional Accept	0	0	0	0.5	0.7
Accept	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.1

Table 6a

Distribution of Papers Accepted by Field (%)

	FIELD							
Years	American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Normative Theory	Formal Theory	Methods	Race, Ethnicity & Politics	Other
2015–2016*	20	34	7	29	2	7	1	0
2014–2015*	18	35	15	26	0	3	3	0
2013–2014*	13	42	11	25	5	2	2	0
2012–2013*	21	33	11	16	4	7.5	0	7.5
2011–2012	21	33	7	19	10	5	2	2
2010–2011	24	38	14	16	3	0	3	3

*years under the UNT team

Table 6b

Distribution of Papers Accepted by Approach (%)

	APPROACH						
Year	Formal	Quantitative	Formal and Quantitative	Small N	Interpretive/ Conceptual	Qualitative and/ or Empirical	Other
2015–2016*	2	55	10	0	30	3	0
2014–2015*	3	54	9	0	28	6	0
2013–2014*	5	50	7	0	26	12	0
2012–2013*	8.5	54	4	0	27.5	6	0
2011–2012	12	48	14	2	19	5	0
2010–2011	11	65	8	0	16	NA	0

*years under the UNT team

In 2014–2015, 33% of the manuscripts accepted were in these categories, slightly down from 34% in 2014–2015, but up from 24% in 2011–2012. We view this as evidence that the *Review* continues to make progress in diversifying its content, particularly in terms of approach.

In addition to keeping track of the diversity of acceptances by field and approach, beginning this year we report on the diversity of acceptances and published articles in *APSR* by gender and by whether the authors were based at non-US institutions. This was requested during previous *APSR* editorial board meetings and we agree that such data provide greater insight on our team's progress in diversifying the articles that the *Review* produces.

Tables 7a and 7b report two different types of data. In table 7a we report the breakdown of articles accepted for publication in terms of gender and non-US institutional affiliation, for first authors, by year. In other words the data are similar to the breakdown of submissions reported in table 4, but in table 7a the data are only for *accepted* articles. The table only covers the years in which we were at the editorial helm (such data are not available for previous editorial teams). As shown in table 7a, and consistent with the submission results above, the percentage of accepted pieces whose first listed author was a woman was lower at 21.1% of the total number of accepted pieces by year. This decline is of concern to us, and we hope that the new editorial team can address this.

The percentage of articles accepted whose first author hailed from a non-US institution, is, however significantly higher than before

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with the percent of submissions from non-US institution (25.0%). This is an encouraging development, as *APSR* becomes the leading global journal for political science.

Table 7b reports the breakdown by gender and international authors, *for all authors* that appeared in *APSR*, by year, from 2011 to the third issue of 2016. As indicated in the table, *APSR* has made significant strides in publishing women scholars. Since 2013 (the first volume year for which the UNT team was responsible), the percentage of women authors has increased to approximately 33% of all authors published in the *Review* in 2015, which is significantly higher than when we took over the editorial reins of *APSR*. This percentage is now at par with the estimated 32% of members of the association who are women. We have made less significant, but steady progress in terms of publishing scholars from non-US institutions. We are particularly proud of these results after four years at the helm of *APSR*.

VISIBILITY

The *American Political Science Review* remains near the *top ranked journal in political science* with a Thompson-Reuters Impact Factor (IF) score in 2015 of 3.444 (slightly down from 3.68 in 2014). However, and perhaps more importantly, the *Review*'s five-year impact factor score in 2015 has risen significantly to 6.341, up from 2014 (5.954), which is the highest level recorded to date for *APSR*. Thus, the *Review* is in first place in the 5-year impact factor rankings, far ahead of all comparable journals (see table 8).

In addition to maintaining top rankings for the *Review* in terms of IF scores, we also worked closely with Cambridge University Press (particularly with Janise Lazarte at CUP) to more broadly publicize pieces that appear in the *Review*. This has included the use of press releases, e-mail notifications, and other electronic media (such as twitter) to "get the word out" about work that appears in *APSR*. Further, we continue our relationship with the editors of the popular political blog, *The Monkey Cage*, to highlight important pieces that are scheduled to appear in the *Review* (using it as a way to publicize and preview pieces in much the same way as movie "trailers"). We believe that these efforts have greatly increased the public visibility of the *Review*.

Finally, it should be noted that the UNT editorial office, up until 2016, always delivered issues on time, and the physical production of *APSR* was generally on schedule. However, this year there were delays in production for issues 1 and 2, although issues 3 and 4 are on target in terms of production date. The delays of the first two issues were due to the implementation of DART in our new submission guidelines, which we introduced in volume 110, issue 1. In December 2015, the APSA leadership requested that we delay that issue in order to further refine the new guidelines. These changes led to significant delays in production of volume 110, issue 1, which then spilled over into further delays in the production of issue 2. This disruption was temporary and we are now back on track in terms of production. However, because of these difficulties production was delayed. We take full responsibility for this and apologize to our readership.

UPDATE ON DART

A very important accomplishment for us in the past year was the finalization of our new submission guidelines, which incorporated the DART principles. This culminated a process that began prior to our taking over as editors in 2012, beginning with changes made in the APSA ethics guidelines. These guidelines were carefully fashioned after consultation with our own editorial board, important constituencies in the discipline, and the leadership of the association. The first draft of changes to our submission guidelines was introduced to our editorial board in August 2014, and a follow up report on these revised guidelines was discussed at our last board meeting in San Francisco in September 2015. Since then we have received further feedback from a number of scholars, particularly regarding guidelines for qualitative research—and especially issues surrounding human subject protection. We have also had input from the leadership of the association on this as well. As mentioned earlier, there were some last minute delays in implementation, but these new submission guidelines were adopted with the publication of Volume 110, issue 1.

Table 7a

Percent Women and International Scholars Who Were First Authors of Accepted Papers through June 30, 2016

Year	% Women First Authors	% First Authors from Non-US Institutions
2015–2016	21.1%	25.0%
2014–2015	26.4%	20.0%
2013–2014	24.5%	20.0%
2012–2013	26.8%	17.9%

Table 7b

Percent Women and International Scholars Who Were Authors of Pieces Published in *APSR* 2011–2015

	% OF ALL AUTHORS WHO WERE WOMEN	% OF ALL AUTHORS FROM NON-US INSTITUTIONS
2016 (AS OF 110.3)*	33.3%	22.0%
2015*	27.0%	23.0%
2014*	21.4%	21.4%
2013*	19.5%	17.2%
2012	13.9%	11.4%
2011	16.4%	27.4%

*years under the UNT team

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We put a great deal of thought and effort into fashioning these guidelines, balancing a commitment to DART principles while also paying heed to the concerns expressed by many scholars. As you may recall, the DART principles apply to papers that make evidence-based knowledge claims, as described on pages 9–10 of the APSA's *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* (2012).

We incorporated important passages into the current draft of the guidelines that we believe address the concerns of many scholars. These include concerns regarding protection of human subjects, and concerns about provision of sensitive data. As you can see in the draft guidelines, we have provided for the ability to "opt out" of the provision of materials for transparency purposes if the protection of human subjects requires nondisclosure, if confidentiality agreements prohibit disclosure, if data are under legal constraint (i.e., they are classified, proprietary, or copyrighted), and/or if the logistical burden of sharing relevant data would be particularly high. We have pledged to be very flexible when it comes to human subjects concerns.

Importantly, we have also committed to NOT desk rejecting pieces that do not meet these requirements; however, meeting these guidelines is a requirement for publication. This addresses the concern that editors will be arbitrary in their application of these principles to shut out certain kinds of work (without review) from *APSR*. We have also been very careful to be clear that there are a wide variety of ways to meet these guidelines. This includes the use of a number of alternative "trusted digital archives" including the use of the online appendix sections of *APSR*.

We would also like to note three other things. First, what we propose is not new or unprecedented. Variants of the "opt out" system are used by a number of other journals in international relations (such as *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Interactions*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*) as well by journals such as the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Political Analysis*. Second, it is important to note that the "opt in" system, in which scholars promise to share data and evidence (but are not required to do so as a condition for publication), is the *current* system we use (and in our experience this system does not work very well). Third, we believe that creating separate guidelines for different types of scholarship sets a bad precedent—and that common guidelines, applied with care, do more to advance the discipline as a whole. We think we have fashioned a very reasonable way for the discipline to move forward. The guidelines have struck a careful balance between need for transparency and the necessity of protecting human subjects. The new guidelines went into effect March 1, 2016—any paper submitted prior to that date is subject to our past submission guidelines.

Finally, given the recent nature of these changes, we have as yet not accepted manuscripts that were submitted to the *Review* after March 1, 2016. However, we anticipate that some will be accepted this fall and we will fully process those papers. We hope the next team's report will reflect the results of these changes, and we will provide the necessary data to them as it becomes available.

Table 8

Annual and 5-year Thomson-Reuters JCR impact factors for APSR

YEAR	IMPACT FACTOR	5-YEAR IMPACT FACTOR
2015*	3.444	6.341
2014*	3.688	5.954
2013*	3.844	5.298
2012*	3.933	4.516
2011	3.050	3.759
2010	3.278	3.849

*years under the UNT team

CONCLUSIONS AND THANK YOU

Based upon the above, the *Review* has made great strides over the past four years in terms of significantly reducing the processing times of manuscripts to first decision, maintaining the diversity of types of submissions to the *Review,* and increasing the diversity of types of articles accepted by *APSR* for publication, while maintaining *APSR* as the world's leading journal in political science in terms of the five year impact factor. Not only have there been increases in submissions to the *Review* and increases in the diversity of what appears in *APSR*, but citations to articles that have appeared in the *Review* have also increased. In short, we believe we have made good progress in realizing the goals that we laid out in our initial editors' manifesto in 2012. We also had the very difficult task of adopting the DART principles as part of the submission guidelines under our watch—a task that was both incredibly challenging and time consuming. However, we are confident that the guidelines that we have adopted strike an important balance between research transparency and the protection of human subjects, and thus represent a major step forward for our discipline and association.

In sum, we are very proud of our accomplishments over the past four years. We are very grateful to APSA for providing us with the opportunity to be editors of *APSR*, which was both a great honor and an enormous challenge. We know that in the beginning, some expressed doubts as to whether we could do the job. We do hope that our record over the past four years has helped to dispel these initial doubts.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to serve the association and our discipline. We remain grateful for the trust and support of our colleagues. It has been a great privilege and honor to serve our colleagues in the field, and we hope we have left *APSR* in a better place. ■

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