

Corruption and Reform  
Cycles (A journal of cyclical data)  
Daedalus  
Disasters (Disaster Studies)  
Empirical Studies of the Arts  
Ethnic and Racial Studies  
Experimental Studies of Politics  
Futures (Forecasting)  
General Systems Yearbook  
Human Ecology  
Human Rights Quarterly  
Journal of American Studies  
Journal of Black Studies  
Journal of Contemporary History  
Journal of Environmental Education  
Journal of Ethnic Studies  
Journal of Libertarian Studies  
Journal of the American Philosophical Society  
Micropolitics  
Plural Societies  
Political Geography  
Problems of Communism  
Publius (Federalism)  
Review of Public Data Use  
Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society  
Simulation and Games  
Studies in Comparative Communism  
Women and Politics

### About the Author

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Gregory Brunk is an associate professor of political science at the University of Oklahoma. In an age of specialists, he has a broad background in the social sciences, and has published extensively in a wide variety of fields. His research focus is on what is generalizable in politics: models in behavior that have potential applicability in a wide variety of settings.

## Reviewing The Book Reviews

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Helen M. Ingram  
and  
Penny B. Mills  
University of Arizona

### Introduction

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**B**ook review sections of academic journals serve a number of diverse purposes. It



Back row: l-r, Penny Mills, Carole Mitzer, Kristina Mao. Front row: l-r, Rachel Quenck, Helen Ingram.

is virtually impossible for a political scientist to read all the books relevant to the discipline and hard enough to keep up in areas of specialty. Through reviews readers are able to determine what is being published, how new books fit into existing literature and contribute to on-going debates, and whether books merit closer scrutiny. Authors are interested in book reviews as a means of recognition and criticism of their work by peers.

Even though book reviews are an important professional tool, there is little information available on how well the section serves its audience. Further, many political scientists have no information on how the book review process at the *APSR* actually works. The purpose of this paper is, first, to describe how the process works, and then to compare book review practices across different disciplines and different journals.

### Evaluation Criteria

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Readers and writers may view book reviews as serving different purposes, but their criteria for evaluating how well a journal's book review section serves their needs may not differ all that much. Both are interested in authoritative reviews—readers because they want some assurance that they have a sound basis for selecting books and writers because they want their work evaluated by reviewers

who are well informed in the writer's particular area of research. Readers and writers are also interested in timeliness, or the availability of reviews soon after publication. Readers look to the APSR as a current guide to new scholarship. Authors understand that book purchases and paperback reissues may depend on early reactions from reviewers. Without a timely positive reaction from the discipline, a political science book may very quickly disappear from advertisements and even go out of print

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*General interest journals provide readers, whose time for reading and research is limited, a central source with more extensive coverage of the issues, topics, subfields, and debates in the discipline.*

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Both readers and writers wish the book review section to be comprehensive and to review all the important books in political science. Writers, who want to reach the widest possible audience, see value in getting their book reviewed in the discipline's more comprehensive general interest journals. General interest journals provide readers, whose time for reading and research is limited, a central source with more extensive coverage of the issues, topics, subfields, and debates in a discipline. The amount of space devoted to reviews in journals and the number of reviews published provide some measure of comprehensiveness. Arguably one indicator of the priority given to book reviews is whether a journal has a book review editor to devote substantial time and energy to reviewing books

## **Book Review Editor's Task**

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The Book Review Editor is expected by authors and readers to deliver a review section which broadly covers the literature in the various fields in political science and which contains timely, authoritative reviews. The space made available in the journal for the section presents a major constraint and imposes some difficult choices. The first is deciding which books to review and to reject since far more books are received from publishers than can be accommodated in reviews in a timely manner. In a recent one-year period at the APSR Book Review, 1,500 books were received from 133 publishers. Of these, 768 were accepted for further consideration, and 732 were rejected. A set of general rules of thumb have been developed to govern book selection. Biographies and histories are generally rejected as are books with publication dates over a year old. For example, during 1988 only books published in 1987 and 1988 were accepted. Some exceptions were made, with a few 1986 books reviewed, but only when they could be combined with a more current book in a multiple-book review. Reference material and textbooks are also rejected. The large number of edited collections being published are subjected to particularly exacting scrutiny in part because disparate chapters by different authors are especially difficult to satisfactorily review. Therefore, edited books tend to be rejected unless they have a clear unifying theme and contain introductory and concluding chapters which successfully tie the articles together.

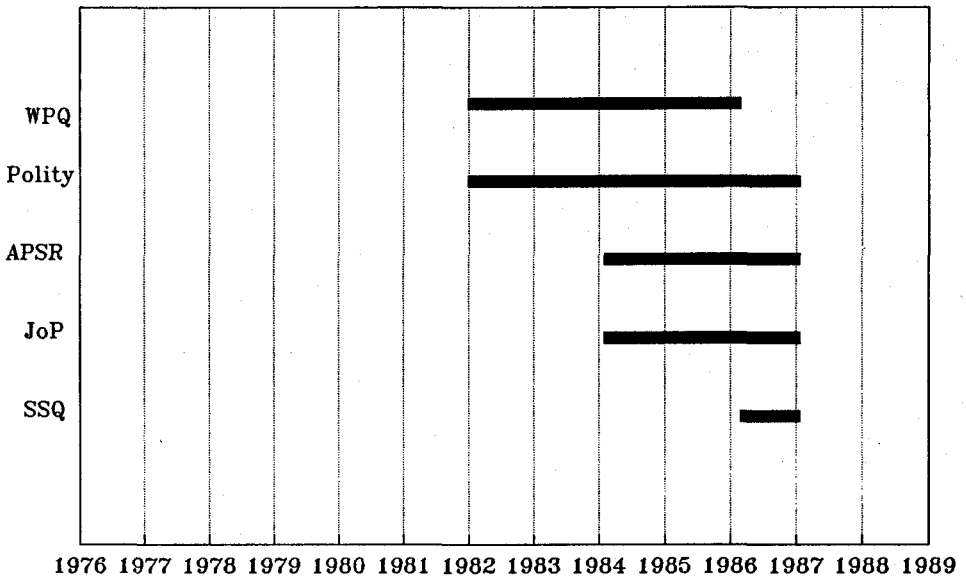
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*In a recent one-year period at the APSR Book Review, 1,500 books were received from 133 publishers.*

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The books retained after the first cut are further winnowed with the quality of the book and the contribution the book makes to the field important factors determining selection or rejection. Only about a

Figure 1. Intradisciplinary Comparison of Publication Dates of Books Reviewed\*



\*In last issue 1987; first 3 issues 1988, APSR/regional association journals.

third of the books originally submitted for consideration are commissioned for review by the APSR. If several books are available for review on the same topic, a multiple-book review is preferable to several single book reviews. While this approach gets more books reviewed in less space, the primary appeal is that a reviewer can compare and contrast several books on a topic, indicating how they contribute to on-going debate, where they fit into the literature, and so on.

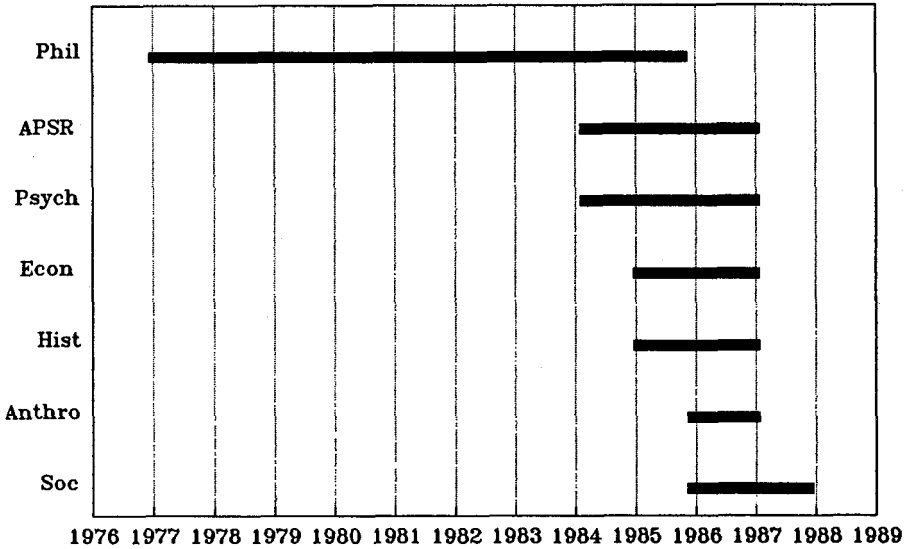
Finding appropriate reviewers is a more difficult choice than selecting among books to review. The ideal reviewer is authoritative in the sense of being recognized by writers and researchers on a given topic as knowledgeable, and skillful in providing informative, balanced criticism. Good reviewers have no hidden or personal agendas in accepting a commission to review, and avoid being excessively laudatory or unfairly critical. If the goal of timeliness is to be achieved for the section, reviewers need to meet deadlines. Potential reviewers are gleaned from a data-based potential reviewer file, bibliographic searches,

professional conference programs, collaboration with other political scientists, and so on. Locating the appropriate reviewer is sometimes a learning process in which the scholars first approached provide referrals to others whose interests are more proximate to a book's subject. In general, however, the probability of finding the ideal, authoritative reviewer is inversely related to the number of declinations. During an 18-month period prior to April, 1989, 67% of the reviewers accepted on initial contact. Potential reviewers who decline an invitation to review a book usually claim that they are too busy; they seldom say that a book is just not worth reviewing.

### Comparison of Book Review Sections

How well the APSR Book Review Section meets the criteria for excellence shared by authors and readers is probably best evaluated through comparison with book review sections available in other political science journals and those available to

Figure 2. Interdisciplinary Comparison of Publication Dates of Books Reviewed\*



\*In last issue 1987; first 3 issues 1988.

scholars in other social sciences. A survey of political science journals and representative journals from six other disciplines was conducted for the purpose of evaluation.

The political science journals listed in the Table of Contents of *Political Science Journal Information* (Martin and Goehlert 1984) provided a preliminary survey list. Of these 56, four were not accessible and 16 did not publish book reviews. (*Presidential Studies Quarterly* was added to the list.) The journals from six other closely-related disciplines which were reputed to serve for other social science scholars the role the APSR performs for political scientists were selected for the analysis: *American Anthropologist*, *American Historical Review*, *Contemporary Psychology*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Journal of Economic Literature*, and *Philosophical Review*. Issues for one year (usually the last quarter of 1987 and the first three quarters of 1988) were examined for each of the 43 journals surveyed. See Table 1 for overall results.

Since the survey was conducted to determine the usefulness of book review sections in various journals for writers and readers, the survey was designed to

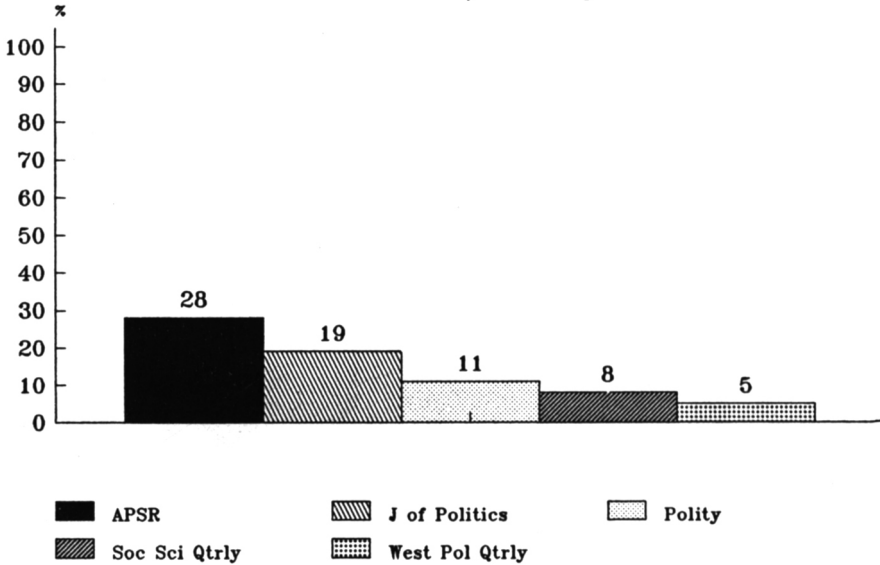
deduce timeliness, the proportion of journals devoted to book reviews, the number of books reviewed, comprehensiveness, and the presence of a book review editor.

*Only about a third of the books originally submitted for consideration are commissioned for review by the APSR.*

Timeliness is reflected in the range of publication dates for books reviewed in the journals. Within political science, *Social Science Quarterly* publishes the most timely reviews (overall) as none was of a book published more than one year in the past. However, the APSR Book Review is generally about as current as book review sections in other political science journals (see Figure 1).

The regional political science association

Figure 3. Intradisciplinary Comparison of Reviews as a Proportion of Journal



APSR/regional association journals

journals (*Journal of Politics*, *Polity*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Western Political Quarterly*—the *American Journal of Political Science* does not publish book reviews) are representative political science journals used as a basis of comparison within the discipline.

The APSR Book Review does not fare as well in the cross-disciplinary comparison (see Figure 2). Sociology, anthropology, history, and economics all confine their reviews to more current books.

Comparison of the proportion of journal space dedicated to book reviews shows that the APSR dedicates a larger proportion (28%) to book reviews than do other political science journals (see Figure 3).

In the cross-disciplinary comparison, four journals *Contemporary Psychology*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *American Historical Review*, and *Philosophical Review* devote a greater proportion and two about the same amount as the APSR (see Figure 4). It should be noted that sociology and psychology do not publish reviews in their leading journal, but instead have journals dedicated exclusively to book reviews,

*Contemporary Psychology* and *Contemporary Sociology*.

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*Since political science does not have a separate journal for book reviews, such as sociology and psychology, the discipline lacks the same access to authoritative reviews of its literature.*

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Comparisons of the number of books reviewed during the year included in the study reveals that the APSR reviewed 339 books, three times as many as any other political science journal (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Interdisciplinary Comparison of Reviews as a Proportion of Journal

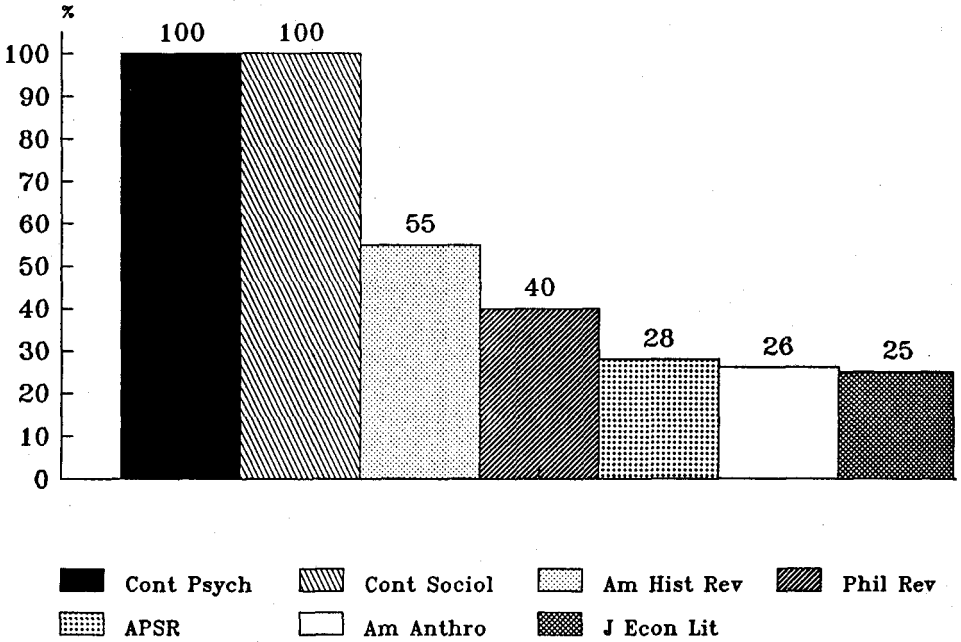
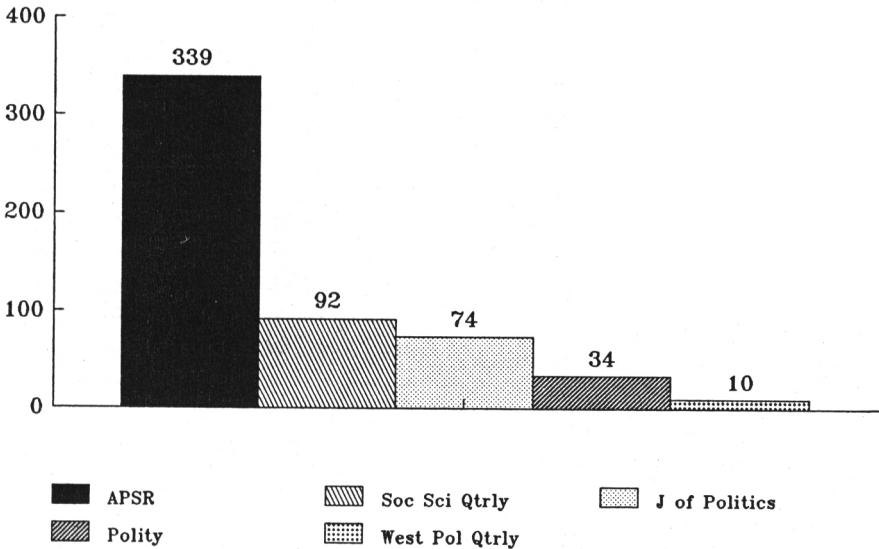
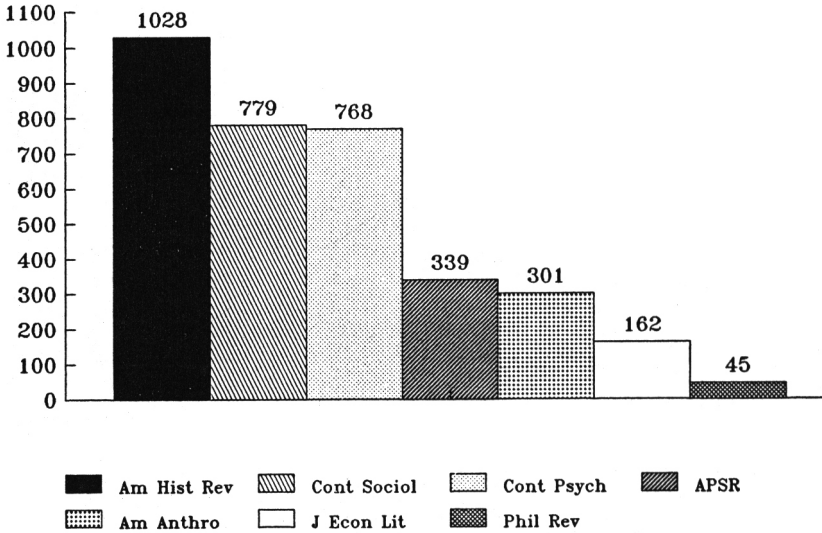


Figure 5. Intradisciplinary Comparison of Books Reviewed in a Year\*



\*Last issue 1987; first 3 issues 1988, APSR/regional association journals.

Figure 6. Interdisciplinary Comparison of Books Reviewed in a Year\*



\*Last issue 1987; first 3 issues 1988

In the cross-disciplinary comparison, the *American Historical Review*, *Contemporary Sociology*, and *Contemporary Psychology* all covered more books during the year than did the APSR (see Figure 6).

Book notes are not included in the book count in this survey since they typically are quite brief descriptions (sometimes containing only 25 words) of a book's contents and often do not provide enough detail to be informative.

A further measure of comprehensiveness besides the number of book reviews published is the scope of topics covered. The general interest journals (see Table 1) typically are considered more comprehensive because they include articles and book reviews in all fields of a discipline. Review essays and multiple-book reviews also contribute to comprehensiveness because they typically tie the books being reviewed into a broader discussion of the topic or debate and the appropriate literature, indicate where the new books fit, and discuss contributions of the new books. The review essays and multiple-book reviews

are usually longer and thus are able to provide more than the description/critique treatment of regular book reviews. During the period surveyed, the APSR published five review essays, 3,000-6,800 words long, and 24 multiple-book reviews, 945-6,800 words long (some of the review essays were multiple-book and therefore are counted in both categories). Among the remaining 36 political science journals, 17 published book review essays, but only three published as many or more than the APSR. Among the other disciplines, three journals published book review essays with only *Contemporary Sociology* publishing as many as the APSR. Most journals published multiple-book reviews; six did not (four political science and two journals from other disciplines). Only four published as many or more than the APSR. (See Table 1).

Of the 43 journals included in the survey, 25 have book review editors, including the APSR (see Table 1). Only one journal from another discipline (*Contemporary Psychology*) has a book review editor

## The Profession

Table 1. Journals Publishing Book Reviews

Journal	Journal Interest	Reviews as Proportion of Journal (%)	Books Reviewed*	Publication Dates of Books Reviewed
American Anthropologist	General	26	301	1986-87
American Historical Review	General	55	1,028	1985-87
American Political Science Review	General	28	339	1984-87
Canadian Journal of Political Science	Special	31	191	1985-88
Comparative Politics	Special	8	16	1978-85
Contemporary Psychology	General	100	768	1984-87
Contemporary Sociology	Special	100	779	1986-88
Foreign Affairs	Special	10	392	1987-88
Government and Opposition	Special	17	28	1985-88
International Organization	Special	4	2	1985
International Security	Special	5	5	1986-87
Journal of Economic Literature	General	25	162	1985-87
Journal of Health Politics/Policy/Law	Special	15	31	1986-87
Journal of Peace Research	Special	13	47	1985-88
Journal of Policy Analysis/Management	Special	13	54	1983-87
Journal of Politics	General	19	74	1984-87
Legislative Studies Quarterly	Special	2	3	1984-87
Orbis	Special	28	243	1986-88
Philosophical Review	General	40	45	1977-86
Philosophy of the Social Sciences	Special	39	40	1980-85
Policy Review	Special	8	14	unknown
Policy Sciences	Special	5	7	1983-87
Policy Studies Journal	General	9	20	1986-88
Policy Studies Review	Special	4	14	1986-87
Political Science (Journal of)	Special	17	23	1984-87
Political Science Quarterly	General	24	129	1986-88
Political Studies	General	35	431	1985-87
Political Theory	Special	14	25	1984-87
Politics in Perspective	Special	13	16	1982-86
Polity	General	11	34	1982-87
Presidential Studies Quarterly	Special	22	111	1979-88
Public Administration Review	General	9	40	1985-87
Public Choice	Special	4	20	1985-87
Public Opinion Quarterly	Special	8	21	1983-88
Publius	Special	7	28	1985-87
Review of Politics	Special	24	61	1985-88
Social Forces	Special	14	103	unknown
Social Science Journal	General	14	37	1985-87
Social Science Quarterly	General	8	92	1986-87
Urban Studies	Special	9	28	1985-87
Western Political Quarterly	Special	5	10	1982-86
Women & Politics	Special	7	17	1983-87
World Politics	Special	37	41	1976-87

\*Book count excludes books described in Book Notes.

Journals with no book reviews: *Administration & Society*; *American Journal of Political Science*; *American Politics Quarterly*; *British Journal of Political Science*; *Comparative Political Studies*; *European Journal of Political Research*; *Foreign Policy*; *International Studies Quarterly*; *Journal of Conflict Resolution*; *Journal of Policy Modeling*; *Policy and Politics*; *Political Behavior*; *Political Communication & Persuasion*; *Political Methodology*; *Politics & Society*; *Social Science Research*



Table 1 (continued)

Review Essays		Regular Reviews		Multiple-Book Reviews		Book Review Editor
No.	Length	No.	Length	No.	Length	
		298	550-900	14	550-900	
1	8850	1,003	600-875	28	600-875	
5	3000-6800	291	565-2650	24	945-6800	X
		179	665-1665	11	665-1800	X
		4	5000-10000	4	5000-10000	
1	7260	714	1210-3630	32	2420-3025	X
5	2338-5525	694	160-1900	53	850-5525	
		367	50-125	22	50-125	X
2	8000	20	1150-3400	6	2500-3400	
1	15750			1	15750	X
		4	5695-6185	1	6185	
		162	785-1570			
3	1115-4475	21	560-6150	3	2000-4475	X
3	3640-6550	41	150-540	2	540-6550	X
		27	1000-3500	16	1500-3500	X
3	7675-13365	60	495-2000	4	1115-13365	X
1	5250			1	5250	
3	3000-6500	233	225-325	1	6500	
		45	1425-10215			
19	3350-17550	14	750-4450	4	2040-8500	
		14	1100-3300	1	3300	
		7	925-1400			X
5	2850-6175	4	475-950	5	2850-6175	
4	2500-4700			4	2500-4700	
		23	240-1530			X
1	1725	124	550-1150	4	1150	
1	7355	13	865-1200	25	865-7355	X
1	5250	22	1100-2200	2	2000-5250	X
1	3000	13	800-1000	2	800-3000	
		8	3500-6000	8	3500-6000	X
1	18400	89	430-1450	5	575-1150	X
6	1920-3600	21	480-1500	7	1200-3600	X
		20	125-2100			X
		17	940-2115	1	2000	
		27	875-2800	1	2800	X
		49	550-4400	5	1000-4400	X
		101	675-2000	5	675-2000	X
		37	675-1350			X
		88	125-1200	2	600-1000	X
		20	800-1500	2	1900	
3	6800-8500			3	6800-8500	X
		11	800-1320	5	900-1320	X
		9	7650-17000	8	7650-17000	X

Overall, the results of the survey seem to indicate that the *APSR* Book Review does as well or better than some book review sections and not as well as others in providing a finished product that is useful to readers and writers. Since political science does not have a separate journal for book reviews, such as sociology and psychology, the discipline lacks the same access to authoritative reviews of its literature. Far fewer books are reviewed and less space is devoted to reviewing by the *APSR* than by the major journal in history. A particular area of concern, and one the *APSR* Book Review is working hard to improve, is timeliness. It is imperative that books are reviewed as quickly as possible after they are published so that the discipline is informed about recent scholarship. Doing so is difficult because time is required to invite and commission a potential reviewer and to allow the reviewer to complete the task. The six to nine month lag time inherent in the submission/publication process adds an additional delay in timely reviews of books.

The performance of the *APSR* in reviewing books may well be a reflection of the relative importance in conveying scholarship of books as compared with journal articles. Clearly historians place rather more stock in authoring books than do political scientists. In contrast with the social sciences, the art of criticism has greater stature in the humanities where the ability to fashion an incisive and witty critique is a significant professional asset. Even so, political scientists have a definite interest in the quality of the *APSR* Book Review Section since it is the most widely read part of the journal.

### About the Authors

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Helen M. Ingram, University of Arizona, is the *APSR* Book Review Editor. Penny B. Mills, University of Arizona, is an *APSR* Book Review Intern.

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## Applied Political Science: Bridging the Gap or A Bridge Too Far?

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Janice A. Beecher  
National Regulatory Research Institute

### I. Introduction

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We can all point to examples of a political scientist turned market researcher, a political scientist turned government employee, or a political scientist turned shoe salesman, and so on. Yet rarely does a political scientist seem to get hired in the public or private sectors *because* he or she is a political scientist.

Many other disciplines—and not just the “hard” sciences—have done a better job of bridging the gap between the theoretical and the applied within their professions and in helping their members move back and forth between applied and theoretical settings without losing their sense of professional identity, connection, or esteem.

Political scientists must begin to rethink the relationship between theory and practice if we want the discipline to grow and expand, and if we want greater recognition for the work we do and the work we are capable of doing both within and without colleges and universities.

This paper makes several suggestions for bridging the gap between theory and practice. It suggests that political science research and theory should move beyond description of political phenomena and focus more on developing real world predictive models. And, it argues that political scientists in applied settings should help develop these models as well as incorporate them in their work. Finally, it argues that “doing political science” or being a political scientist should be more a state of mind than a place of employment. Political scientists need to develop a sense of professional identity that transcends occupa-