

Help Shape the Future of Psychological Science

September 01, 2007

If you're a long-time Member of APS, you've no doubt noticed the growth of our flagship journal *Psychological Science*. Over the years, we've increased the frequency of the journal from bimonthly to monthly, and we've increased the number of pages in each issue, all in an effort to publish as many articles as possible and get as much cutting-edge research as possible into the hands of APS Members and other subscribers. We are now seeking your input as we plan for two converging trends — a steeply increasing number of submissions and the electronic revolution in publishing — that could significantly expand the number of articles published in *Psychological Science*.

During its relatively short life, *Psychological Science* has become one of the most influential journals in the field, featuring articles from leading researchers around the world. Submissions have grown at a phenomenal rate. The journal received nearly 1,300 manuscripts in 2006, up 141 percent from 2002, and is on track to receive nearly 1,600 in 2007 — and if current trends continue, we expect to receive almost three times that many in 2012. That's good news for the journal and for the field, but in order to maintain the quality and unique character that attracts so many submissions, we're going to need new and better ways of delivering the journal's content to members.

Starting in 2008, the number of pages will increase by 20 percent, but *Psychological Science* can only grow so much before a printed copy becomes overwhelming. Plus, we want to publish as much excellent research as possible, in keeping with our mission of advancing the discipline. New approaches are needed for 2009 and beyond. We hope that APS Members will help shape what the journal will look like as we move further into the electronic arena.

"*Psychological Science* continues to grow, both in size and influence, and we want to get cutting-edge research to our members in the best — and fastest — possible way," says APS Executive Director Alan Kraut. "We need to radically re-think how the journal is delivered to make sure this happens."

To increase the acceptance rate (currently it's 12 percent — the editors are turning away articles due to space limitations) while still maintaining the journal's special character, there needs to be a significantly increased online component. Printed copies will still be available for those who want them — at least for a while — but we expect most subscribers will prefer online-only subscriptions.

"We want to maintain the unique browsability of *Psychological Science*," says Editor Rob Kail. "Paper copies afford browsing. People pick them up and read them — until they get too big. We want to maintain that browsability through new and expanded online features."

The big question is: What kind of features will be most useful to the journal's many readers? We've brainstormed some ideas, but what we really want to know is: What do you think? Do the suggestions below make sense to you? Could they be better? Is there something totally different you'd like to see? Please read on and then write us at apsobserver@psychologicalscience.org with your comments and

suggestions.

Online-Early Publishing

Rather than gathering up an issue's worth of articles and publishing them as a group, articles will be posted online as soon as they're ready. This will help reduce the publication lag and get citation-ready research to subscribers right away.

Weekly E-mails

We envision weekly e-mail updates as a basic element of online subscriptions. Each week, professional science writers would summarize the best in *Psychological Science* for that week and provide links to the articles themselves. But what else should they include — or not include — that will make them most useful to you?

www.psychologicalscience.org

The APS website also will play an important role in online subscriptions. *Psychological Science* is already available online to APS Members, but what features can we add to make the experience even better? Adding short descriptions of articles in addition to abstracts? Customized home pages for members that would serve as individualized portals to the world of psychological science? Other features and services? What would be useful to *you*? The sky's the limit.

RSS Feeds

That's "Really Simple Syndication" to you and me. Once you get set up with an RSS reader (your Google or Yahoo homepage, for example), you can use it to automatically get updates from websites like CNN, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and soon APS! We're currently testing a system that will alert subscribers the moment *Psychological Science* articles are available. Articles from our other journals, *Observer* stories, and other APS news will also be available. How can we make this new service more useful to you?

The APS Observer

Each month the *Observer* will include a section very similar to the weekly e-mails, which could include short descriptions of the most interesting articles, a full table of contents for that month's *Psychological Science*, or anything else members tell us they would find useful. Would this printed version of the month's highlights enhance browsability? Would you be more likely to opt for an online-only subscription knowing that you could still browse the highlights in printed form?

What Will the Printed Version Look Like?

And finally, for members who opt to continue receiving a paper copy via snail mail, what should that look like? To accommodate the increase in submissions, we have two basic choices: larger monthly issues — which due to their size would serve more as reference volumes — or increasing the frequency of publication, possibly to biweekly. Do either of these make sense to you? Is a paper copy even necessary or useful? What would be more appealing — a really big bimonthly, a gigantic semi-annual, or a bring-in-the-forklift annual reference volume?

Now It's Up to You

These ideas are only intended to get the discussion started. Nothing is set in stone and we look forward

to seeing what the innovative minds of psychological science can come up with. Please send your creative ideas and preferences to apsobserver@psychologicalscience.org. We'll report back in a future issue and continue to keep you informed about how we're working to improve your journal.

Don't Wait for 2009

Members can opt for online-only subscriptions to all of the APS journals starting in 2008, though the features mentioned here may not be available until later in the year. You'll see the online-only option on your APS renewal for 2008. Members will, of course, be able to access published and in-press articles at www.psychologicalscience.org whether or not they opt for online-only.