



# GUIDELINES FOR THE ASA PUBLICATIONS PORTFOLIO

*(Revised August 2015)*

## PREAMBLE

In February 1999, the ASA Council approved a set of guidelines prepared and recommended by the Committee on Publications to inform the Committee and Council in operating the publications portfolio of the Association.

The guidelines are designed to guarantee the ongoing vitality of ASA's publications program by ensuring that the range and mix of journals that the Association owns and supports over time are publications of the highest quality and cover the full intellectual range of the discipline. In considering the establishment of new journals or the retirement of ongoing journals, the Publications Committee and Council anticipate giving careful attention to the role of each journal in the Association's publications portfolio.

These guidelines set forth the procedures for evaluating proposals either for new Association-wide journals or for ASA section journals, and for evaluating the ongoing viability of ASA-wide and section journals. The term "new" in this context refers to journals newly owned by ASA, whether they are new starts or are otherwise being published outside of the Association. As is ASA policy, the Association shall own all journals under its aegis, whether ASA self-publishes a journal or engages in a contractual agreement with an external publisher.

The set of guidelines combined will help the Association to maintain a dynamic publications portfolio capable of change and to ensure that any expansion of journal publications is deliberative and prudent. These guidelines are:

1. Formal procedure to evaluate proposals for new ASA-wide journals.
2. Formal procedure to evaluate proposals for new journals sponsored by sections of the Association.
3. Formal procedure for evaluating the ongoing viability of ASA-wide and section-sponsored journals.

## GUIDELINE #1: FORMAL PROCEDURE TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS FOR NEW ASA-WIDE JOURNALS

### *Guidelines for Proposals*

- *Who May Submit a Proposal?* Proposals may be tendered by an individual or group of individuals who are ASA members, including formally organized bodies, such as sections. Such proposals involve no commitment on the part of the sponsoring individuals or groups to participate in the later development of the journal, and approval involves no commitment on the part of the ASA that the sponsoring individuals or groups will participate in implementing an approved proposal. However, the Committee on Publications would expect that those who initiate a project would be a valuable resource in later implementation.
- *New Journal vs. ASA Sponsorship of an Existing Journal.* Proposals can be for the establishment of a new journal, or for the ASA to become the sponsor of an already existing journal. The proposal should have the same form in either case, with small differences as noted below. Proposals for existing journals should also provide a commentary indicating the degree to which they already conform to the following ASA standards and, if not in compliance, what changes will be made to ensure conformance in the future and on what timetable.
  - The journal followed ASA peer review standards in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship
  - The journal followed the equal opportunity guidelines for selection of personnel (editors, editorial board, and reviewers) in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship.
  - The journal utilized a process of open editor selection and periodic succession in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship.
- *ASA Ownership of Journal.* The ASA will be the owner of all ASA journals. Any publisher signing an agreement to publish the journal must agree to the following conditions. (For an existing journal, the current owner must be willing to cede these rights to ASA.):
  - ASA will retain the copyrights for all articles published in the proposed journal.

- ASA retains control of the content of the articles published, including selection and editing of all substantive material.
  - Any publishing agreement with an external publisher will have a fixed term, usually five years or less, with no conditions that prevent ASA from selecting a new publisher at the end of the term.
    - ◆ There can be no conditions under which the publisher has the right to withdraw the journal from the ASA without ASA consent.
  - Any publishing agreement with an external publisher must include a guarantee that the subscription list, including all information about each subscriber (name, address, telephone, email address, etc), be delivered in electronically readable form at the end of each year of the agreement.
  - Any publishing agreement with an external publisher must include a guarantee that the ASA will retain a proportional share (to be negotiated) of all profits from the journal.
- ***Content of the Proposal.*** The proposal should contain the following elements.
- **Title.**
  - **Editorial Policy.** The proposal should include an editorial policy statement that indicates the scope of the subject matter (the fields or sub-fields covered), the intellectual intentions of the journal (theoretical, empirical; basic, policy oriented, applied), and the types of contributions that will be published (e.g., refereed articles, invited papers). Existing journals should include a succinct description of current practice, as well as contemplated changes in editorial policy (if any) once ASA sponsorship is obtained.
  - **Proposed Content.** The proposal should discuss the types of articles to be published (e.g., field or experimental studies, review essays, bibliographic essays, archival analysis), and whether there will be content beyond substantive articles (book reviews, policy reviews, news about the subject area of the journal). Existing journals should include a succinct review of recent content, as well as contemplated changes (if any) once ASA sponsorship is obtained.
  - **Rationale for a new journal.** In order to qualify as an ASA journal, the new journal should fit the following profile:
    - ◆ *Broad subject matter.* The proposal should demonstrate that the subject matter includes some combination of (1) relating to

several disciplines; (2) relevance to a substantial proportion of sociologists; (3) an already established audience in the discipline and in other social sciences.

- ♦ *High quality work.* The proposal should demonstrate that existing work in the area of the new journal has already produced some combination of (1) original theorizing in the area that has informed broader sociological discourse; (2) notable empirical works that have become integrated into the discipline; (3) innovative methodology designed for this area that has promise of broader application.
- ♦ *Dispersed publication of articles in the area.* The proposal should demonstrate a need for a central outlet for work that responds to and builds on prior work.
- ♦ *Not well served by the current mix of journals.* The proposal should demonstrate some combination of (1) a lack of outlets for work in this area; (2) lack of visibility for key articles. Specific reference to possibly overlapping journals should be included, together with an explanation of why any actual overlap does not constitute redundancy (see also below). Special attention should be paid to ASA-sponsored journals, but the commentary should also mention other journals that could be competitive with the proposed journal.
- **Assuring the Viability of the New Journal.** The proposal should discuss the following issues related to the viability of the journal:
  - ♦ *Accessing Potential Contributors.* The proposal should outline strategies for informing potential contributors about the journal and attracting submissions to it.
  - ♦ *Involvement of Senior Scholars in the Area.* The proposal should demonstrate that senior scholars in the field are willing to participate in establishing the journal. (This can be demonstrated, for example, by their involvement in the proposal, or through previously obtained interest in serving on the editorial board.)
  - ♦ *Size of Market.* The proposal should include a discussion of the readership and subscribers of the journal, including sub-fields in sociology and all relevant markets outside the ASA. Numerical estimates of the size of each sub-field (for example, the size of relevant ASA sections) would be useful in assessing the viability of the proposed journal. Reasonable estimates of initial and long-term subscriptions (including institutional subscriptions)

would be valuable. Existing journals can include data on current subscribers.

- ♦ *Marketing Plan.* The proposal should include a strategy for obtaining initial subscriptions sufficient to assure financial viability, including ways to access each of the potential markets. Special attention should be paid to individual subscribers who are not members of ASA and to institutional subscribers.
- ♦ *Lack of Redundancy.* The proposal should explicitly discuss whether subscribers to apparently competitive journals would resist subscribing to the proposed journal.
- *Deadlines.* There are no official deadlines, but submissions must be received at least three months before a meeting of the Committee on Publications to ensure at least initial consideration at that meeting (that is, in September for the December meeting; in May for the August meeting).

### ***Procedure for Evaluating and Implementing a Proposal***

- *Evaluation Subcommittee.* When a proposal is received, a subcommittee of the Committee on Publications, consisting of three individuals, will be appointed to review the proposal. The subcommittee would normally include two elected members and an editor from an ASA journal, appointed by the chair of the Committee on Publications. The subcommittee will have two responsibilities.
  1. *To ensure that the proposal contains the required elements.* If it is deficient, the subcommittee should return the proposal to the submitting individuals or groups, indicating the deficiencies and requesting clarification or amplification.
  2. *Evaluate the Proposal for the Full Committee.* The subcommittee will review the completed proposal and submit a written report to the full committee on its viability. The report can make three recommendations,
    - ♦ Accept the proposal.
    - ♦ Reject the proposal.
    - ♦ Offer a revise and resubmit. This would involve identifying weak points in the proposal that might be remedied, and offering detailed feedback about how they might be addressed.

- ***Committee Deliberations.*** The subcommittee report will be submitted before the full Publications Committee meeting. The Committee will then discuss the proposal and the subcommittee's recommendation, and come to a decision to accept or reject the proposal, or to invite a resubmission.
  - If there is a revise and resubmit, a resubmission will be treated as a new proposal, with a reconstituted subcommittee, except that the resubmission should include a commentary on the changes made.
- ***Submission to Council.*** If the Committee on Publications approves a proposal for a new ASA-wide journal, the proposal will be submitted to ASA Council for final review and approval.
- ***Implementation.*** If Council recommends a new ASA-wide journal, the Committee on Publications will appoint a new subcommittee to develop a detailed implementation plan, including outreach, nomination, and initial review of editorial candidates. This plan will be submitted to the Committee on Publications at its next meeting. The subcommittee will continue to function until the founding editor is appointed.

## GUIDELINE #2: FORMAL PROCEDURE TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS FOR NEW JOURNALS TO BE SPONSORED BY SECTIONS OF THE ASA

### *Guidelines for Proposals*

- ***Who May Submit a Proposal?*** Proposals may be tendered by organized sections of the ASA, either individually or jointly. Only sections with a minimum of 500 members may submit journal proposals.
- ***New Journal vs. Section Sponsorship of an Existing Journal.*** Proposals can be for the establishment of a new journal or for the section(s) to become the sponsor of an already existing journal. The proposal should have the same form in either case, with small differences as noted below. Proposals for existing journals should also provide a commentary indicating the degree to which they already conform to the following ASA standards and, if not in compliance, what changes will be made to ensure conformance in the future and on what timetable.
  - The journal followed ASA peer review standards in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship
  - The journal followed the equal opportunity guidelines for selection of personnel (editors, editorial board, and reviewers) in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship.
  - The journal utilized a process of open editor selection and periodic succession in the period prior to proposed ASA sponsorship.
- ***Content of the Proposal.*** The proposal should contain the following elements.
  - **Title.**
  - **Editorial Policy.** The proposal should include an editorial policy statement that indicates the scope of the subject matter (the fields or sub-fields covered), the intellectual intentions of the journal (theoretical, empirical; basic, policy oriented, applied), and the types of contributions that will be published (e.g., refereed articles, invited papers). Existing journals should include a succinct description of current practice, as well as contemplated changes in editorial policy (if any) once Section sponsorship is obtained.
  - **Proposed Content.** This section should discuss the types of articles to be published (e.g., field or experimental studies, review essays,

bibliographic essays, archival analysis), and whether there will be content beyond substantive articles (book reviews, policy reviews, news about the subject area of the journal, news about the sponsoring section). Existing journals should include a succinct review of recent content, as well as contemplated changes (if any) once Section sponsorship is obtained.

- **Rationale for the new journal.** In order to qualify as a Section journal, the new journal should fit the following profile:
  - ◆ *Relevant subject matter.* The proposal should demonstrate that the subject matter is related to the field(s) or the sponsoring section(s); and that the proposed subject matter covers a coherent area and not a disjointed set of disparate interests.
  - ◆ *High quality work.* The proposal should demonstrate that existing work in the area involves some combination of (1) original theorizing that has informed broader sociological discourse; (2) notable empirical works that have become integrated into the field covered by the section(s); (3) innovative methodology.
  - ◆ *Dispersed publication of articles in the area.* The proposal should demonstrate a need for a central outlet for work that responds to and builds on prior work.
  - ◆ *Not well served by the current mix of journals.* The proposal should demonstrate some combination of (1) a lack of outlets for work in this area; (2) lack of visibility for key articles. Specific reference to possibly overlapping journals should be included, together with an explanation of why any actual overlap does not constitute redundancy (see also below).
- **Assuring the Viability of the New Journal.** The proposal should discuss the following issues related to the viability of the journal:
  - ◆ *Section Membership.* Section must provide evidence of viability by having a minimum of 500 members for a period of at least three years prior to submitting a journal proposal. Sections with students comprising more than 30 percent of overall section membership may be required to show higher membership totals.
  - ◆ *Endorsement by Section Membership.* Section must show strong support amount its members for establishing or sponsoring a journal by conducting an official vote of the full section membership. In reporting the results of that vote (usually held in conjunction with the annual election), the section should report



total membership of the section, number of votes received, and percentages of those voting who voted yes or no.

- ♦ *Accessing Potential Editors and Contributors.* The proposal must show that the section has enough *well-established* members relative to scholarly regard and productivity to edit and serve as editor and on the larger editorial board for the journal, both immediately and over time. Further, the proposal should outline strategies for informing potential contributors about the journal and attracting submissions to it. While the section organization should be central to this process, if the journal intends to reach scholars outside of the section or the ASA, the proposal should discuss how this would be accomplished.
- ♦ *Lack of Redundancy.* The proposal should explicitly discuss whether subscribers to apparently competitive journals would resist subscribing to the proposed journal. Specific attention should be given to ASA journals that might be competitive; but also the commentary should consider other non-ASA journals that could be competitive with the proposed journal.
- ♦ *Size of Market.* The proposal should include a discussion of the readership and subscribers of the journal, including sub-fields in sociology and all relevant markets outside the ASA. A key element in this will be the size of the sponsoring section(s), and the degree to which section members can be expected to be charter subscribers (see below). Reasonable estimates of initial and long-term subscriptions (including institutional subscriptions) are valuable. Existing journals can include data on current subscribers.
- **Marketing Plan.** The proposal should include a strategy for obtaining initial subscriptions sufficient to assure financial viability, including ways to access each of the potential markets. Special attention should be paid to individual subscribers who are not members of ASA and to institutional subscribers.
  - ♦ *Basic parameters.* The proposal should indicate the cost of producing the journal, including the number of issues per year, pages per issue, and size of pages. The proposal must show that the journal can be produced without financial cost to the Association (i.e., with support from a publisher).
  - ♦ *Mandatory Subscription by Section Members.* The ASA expects sponsoring sections to require their members to subscribe to the journal. The proposal should therefore contain the amount of additional dues to be charged to members, and the proportion of

dues allocated to the journal subscription. Sections may choose to have two-tiered or multi-tiered dues to shift the cost of the subscription away from graduate students and other members who are less able to afford the full cost of subscription.

- ◆ *Financial Balance Sheet.* The proposal should give a rough indication of the degree to which section dues will cover the cost of the journal, and how the difference (if any) will be obtained through subscriptions from outside the section.
- **Establishing a Governance Structure.** The proposal should include a clear statement of how the journal will be governed, emphasizing how the structure will guarantee that the journal will adhere to ASA standards. This should consider the following:
  - ◆ Creation and selection of an oversight committee to enforce standards, select editors, and approve editorial boards.
  - ◆ Term of office for editors, and methods of selection. The section must specify a rotation method for editors and for editorial institutions. Term length for section journal editors is the same as for ASA journal editors, currently a maximum of five years (an initial term of three years with an extension of no more than two additional years upon mutual agreement of the editor and the section.)
  - ◆ Size and nature of the editorial board.
  - ◆ Procedures to ensure that the journal will follow the equal opportunity guidelines of the ASA for selection of personnel.
  - ◆ As with other section officers and representatives, section journal editors and members of the larger editorial board are required to be members of the ASA and the sponsoring section.
- **Periodic Review of the Journal.** The proposal should outline how often and by what procedure the section will review the viability of the journal. The ASA expects the review to follow these guidelines:
  - ◆ The formal review should take place prior to the appointment of a new editor.
  - ◆ Prior to the appointment of a new editor, section must report to the ASA Committee on Publications its choice of new editor and agree to the Committee's right to advise them about that choice.
  - ◆ The review should be conducted by the officially appointed oversight committee.

- ♦ The editor of the journal should present the oversight committee with the data that ASA requires of its journals for the period under review, which includes data on number of submissions, rejections, revise-and-resubmits and accepts, length of review process, and so forth; financial data; data on scholarly use and demand; and a commentary on the condition of the journal, indicating its strengths and weaknesses.
  - ♦ The oversight committee should evaluate the report and look for signs of difficulty, notably declines in submissions, subscriptions, and/or financial deficits. It should discuss these matters with the editor and mandate further data if necessary.
  - ♦ The oversight committee should deliver a written report to the section leadership, including a judgment about the current status of the journal. This report should detail problems as well as possible solutions. If the journal is not financially or intellectually viable, and no remedies are identified, the committee should recommend discontinuation of the journal.
  - ♦ The oversight committee's report will be submitted both to the Council of the section and to the Committee on Publications of the ASA.
- **Deadlines.** There are no official deadlines, but submissions must be received at least three months before a meeting of the Committee on Publications to ensure at least initial consideration at that meeting (that is, in September for the December meeting; in May for the August meeting).

### *Procedure for Evaluating and Implementing a Proposal*

- **Evaluation Subcommittee.** When a proposal is received, a subcommittee of the Committee on Publications, consisting of three individuals, will be appointed to review the proposal. The subcommittee will normally include two elected members and one editor, appointed by the chair of the Committee on Publications. The subcommittee will have two responsibilities.
  1. *To ensure that the proposal contains the required elements.* If it is deficient, the subcommittee should return the proposal to the submitting section(s), indicating the deficiencies and requesting clarification or amplification.
  2. *Evaluate the Proposal for the Full Committee.* The subcommittee will review the completed proposal and submit a written report to

the full committee on its viability. The report can make three recommendations:

- ◆ Accept the proposal. Such acceptance can include a recommendation that the journal should be published by ASA, rather than the section.
  - ◆ Reject the proposal.
  - ◆ Offer a revise and resubmit. This recommendation will include a commentary on weak points in the proposal that might be remedied and offer detailed feedback about how they might be addressed.
- ***Committee Deliberations.*** The subcommittee report will be submitted before the full Publications Committee meeting. The committee will then discuss the proposal and the subcommittee's recommendation, and come to a decision to accept or reject the proposal, or to invite a resubmission. The committee could decide that the proposed journal is more appropriate as an ASA-wide journal.
    - If there is a revise and resubmit, a resubmission will be treated as a new proposal, with a new subcommittee, except that the resubmission should include a commentary on the changes made.
  - ***Submission to Council.*** If the Committee on Publications approves a proposal for a new section-sponsored journal, the proposal will be submitted to ASA Council for final review and approval.
  - ***Implementation.*** If Council recommends a new section-sponsored journal, the Committee on Publications will appoint a new subcommittee to work with the sponsoring section(s) to develop a detailed implementation plan, including outreach, nomination, and initial review of editorial candidates. The subcommittee will continue to function until the founding editor and section oversight committee are appointed. Once the editor is appointed by the section(s), the editor will work directly with the section oversight committee.

### ***ASA's Relationship to Section Journals***

- **ASA Ownership of Journal.** The ASA will be the owner of all journals published by sections. Any publisher signing an agreement to publish a section-sponsored journal must agree to the following conditions. (For an existing journal, the current owner must be willing to cede these rights to ASA.):

- ASA will retain the copyrights for all articles published in the proposed journal.
- ASA, through the editorial process developed by the sponsoring section, retains control of the content of the articles published, including selection and editing of all substantive material.
- Any publishing agreement with an external publisher will have a fixed term, usually five years or less, with no conditions that prevent ASA and the sponsoring section from selecting a new publisher at the end of the term.
  - ◆ There can be no conditions under which the publisher has the right to withdraw the journal from the ASA without ASA consent.
- Any publishing agreement with an external publisher must include a guarantee that the subscription list, including all information about each subscriber (name, address, telephone, email address, etc), be delivered in electronically readable form to the Association at the end of each year of the agreement.
- Any publishing agreement with an external publisher must include a guarantee that the ASA and the sponsoring section will retain a proportional share (to be negotiated) of all profits from the journal.
- The Association must sign any publishing agreement with an external publisher, and this authority cannot be delegated to the section.
- ***ASA and Section Roles in Publishing the Journal.*** Since sections have no independent legal standing, ownership of the journal will rest with the ASA. The internal division of labor will be as follows.
  - The section will retain control of the journal's content, and the entire editorial process. This includes selecting the editor and editorial board, determining the content (within the framework approved by the Committee on Publications), soliciting and choosing specific articles, and managing the production process.
  - ASA will determine the basic parameters of the journal, including the number of issues per year, the number of pages per issue, and the budget, based on proposals made by the sponsoring section(s). In the case of an external publisher, these parameters will be negotiated as part of the publishing contract, with both the ASA and the sponsoring section participating in the negotiations.
- ***General Editorial Guidelines.*** All section journals must follow the general guidelines for ASA journals. These are:

- *There must be a process of open editor selection and periodic succession.*
  - *There must be a responsible oversight committee that periodically evaluates the journal's performance.*
  - *The journal must utilize a process of peer review for articles.*
  - *The journal must be committed to equal opportunity in the selection of all those involved in the editorial process.*
  - *The journal must invite and accept contributions from the full range of scholars and ideas in its area.*
- **ASA Oversight.** The Committee on Publications of the ASA will review the periodic reports of the section oversight committee. The reports must document the continued viability of the journal. If the Committee on Publications determines that the journal is not viable, it can recommend to ASA Council that the Association cease to publish the journal (in the case of an external publisher, consonant with fulfilling any contractual obligations).

## GUIDELINE #3: FORMAL PROCEDURE FOR EVALUATING THE ONGOING VIABILITY OF ASA-WIDE AND SECTION-SPONSORED JOURNALS

### *Procedures*

- *Periodic Reviews.* Each journal will be reviewed prior to the appointment of the new editor.
- *Subcommittee.* A subcommittee of the Committee on Publications will be appointed to conduct the review. In the case of section-sponsored journals, the section oversight committee will conduct the review.
- *Data for Review.* The editor will provide the review subcommittee or, in the case of a section, the oversight committee, with the following information:
  - Standard data on submissions that are currently collected for ASA journals, for the years under review.
  - Financial data for the journal for the five years under review.
  - Data on the number and pattern of citations, scholarly use, and demand.
  - A commentary on the condition of the journal, indicating strengths and weaknesses.
- *Review Process.* The subcommittee or the section oversight committee will review the data presented and consider whether there are signs of difficulty.
  - Particular attention should be paid to:
    - ◆ Serious declines in the number of submissions and/or increases in the proportion of submitted articles accepted for publication.
    - ◆ Indications of low scholarly use and demand.
    - ◆ Financial deficits in the operation of the journal.
  - If there are signs of difficulty, the committee can mandate further data from the editor or oversight committee, to ascertain the exact nature of the problem and possible solutions.

- The subcommittee or the section oversight committee will deliver a written report to the Committee on Publications containing one or more of the following.
  - ◆ *A judgment that the journal is viable.*
  - ◆ *A judgment that there are editorial weaknesses.*
    - If such weaknesses are identified, the subcommittee should indicate the sources of the weaknesses (e.g., declining submissions, low use or interest); possible strategies for correction, if any; or a conclusion that there are no viable remedies.
  - ◆ *A judgment that there are financial weaknesses.*
    - If such weaknesses are identified, the subcommittee should indicate the sources of the weaknesses (e.g., declining subscriptions, increased editorial costs); possible strategies for correction, if any; or a conclusion that there are no viable remedies.
- ***Full committee action.*** Based on the recommendation of the subcommittee or the section oversight committee, the Committee on Publications will decide upon one of the following:
  - *Continue the journal without change.*
  - In the case of a section journal, *continue publication as an ASA-wide journal.*
  - *Mandate change designed to remedy identified difficulties.* If this option is taken, a re-review should be scheduled no later than two years hence.
  - *Cease publication of the journal.* If the Committee on Publications determines that an ASA-wide or section-sponsored journal should be discontinued, the Committee will submit this recommendation to ASA Council, which must make the final determination.

Adopted by:

ASA Publications Committee, August 2015

ASA Council, August 2015