Building a preprint community as a scholarly society: a case study of APSA Preprints

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Growth in preprints over time

“The number of preprints uploaded online per year has been increasing steadily in the past decades, from 3k in 1991 to 227k in 2019.”

Case studies / success stories

- Over 100 COVID-19 related papers started their journey on APSA Preprints and it became a key platform for disseminating social science research on the pandemic in real-time.
- APSA Preprints have been cited in flagship APSA journals.
- Clifford Shaggy and Paton, “Increasing Precision in Survey Experiments; Without Increasing Bias” was approved as a preprint on June 1, 2020.
  - It was submitted to the leading journal, the American Political Science Review, on same day.
  - The paper underwent peer review and was published April 12, 2021.
  - During those 10 months the preprint accumulated over 2,000 views, 1,000 downloads and 2 citations, and authors gained valuable feedback.

APSA Preprints by categories

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For more information about APSA Preprints, contact preprints@apsanet.org, or to enquire about building a preprint site using Cambridge Open Engage, please contact cambridgeopenengage@cambridge.org.

Starting a preprint service

For scholarly societies starting a preprint service, you may wish to consider:

- Your community and preprints: How well-served is your community and how well do they understand and engage with preprints? What will the scope of the service be, and will you accept content beyond preprints, e.g. conference posters and presentations?
- Your strategic aims: Do you want to drive journal submissions, or increase the impact of conference outputs, or provide a preprint space where one is lacking in your community? This will guide the functionality you require: for example, APSA Preprints enables direct submission to APSA journals.
- Moderation: Most preprint servers check submissions for legal and ethical risks before posting, as well as ensuring they fit the scope of the site. These checks can take around 20-30 minutes per submission. Who will undertake your moderation tasks? What will your policies be?
- Log in and access: APSA Preprints uses APSA Member IDs for log-in, and some other services use ORCID IDs. How will your preprint service integrate with existing data structures to enable easy log-in?
- Metadata best practices: Given the proliferation of preprint platforms, it is essential to build in best practice to make sure your new service integrates with the scholarly communications ecosystem. Integrations with persistent identifiers are key, as is indexing in popular search engines.