



## Handbook, Take Two

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## Handbook, Take Two

James L. Perry, ed. 1996. *Handbook of Public Administration*, 2d ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 769 pp.

The second edition of the *Handbook of Public Administration* appears seven years after the first, which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the American Society for Public Administration. Edited, as was the first edition, by James L. Perry, the new edition has as its theme "the increased dynamism of public administration . . . reflected in . . . a flurry of reports from blue-ribbon commissions . . . the enormous popularity of reformist books, such as *Reinventing Government* . . . and realignments of political power" affecting intergovernmental relations and relations with the nonprofit sector (p. xix). The result, according to Perry, has been nothing less than a "sea change" in public administration, fully justifying a new edition of the *Handbook*.

Though patterned after the first edition, the new *Handbook* incorporates several substantive shifts of emphasis. Instead of highlighting environmental changes that affect public administration, such as socioeconomic developments and the globalization of economies, the new edition "emphasizes the evolving administrative consequences of environmental change, including the changing structure of public service networks, efforts to create high-performance systems, and increasing attention to customer service" (p. xxi). Sixteen of the forty-two chapters are completely new, Perry says in his preface, and the others have been substantially revised. Thirty-three of the fifty authors (eighteen of whom are women, more than doubling the previous number) are first-time contributors. Though the new edition has one less chapter, the text is 120 pages longer. As before, however, the intended audience is practitioners and students of public administration, and the approach, as Perry puts it, is both *how-to* and *how-do-we-know-it*, placing professional practice in the context of relevant research and theory.

A comparison of the tables of contents of the two editions suggests the extent of both continuity and change in the new *Handbook*. Part 1, "The Challenge of Managing the Changing Public Sector," omits the first edition's chapters on demographic

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changes and global interdependence but is otherwise similar, featuring context-setting chapters by Donald F. Kettl, Chester A. Newland, Carl W. Stenberg, and others. In part 2, material similar to that in the first edition has been given a catchier title, "The Keystones of Accountability and Responsiveness." The new part 3, "Shaping and Implementing Policy—From Political Arenas to Program Delivery," incorporates subjects from the old parts 3 and 4. A chapter on managing grants and contracts has been added, the chapter on program evaluation has been moved to a new part 6, "Tools and Methods to Promote Effectiveness," and a chapter on policy analysis has been dropped (the topic no longer has even an index entry, despite considerable intellectual activity in this field). As before, the next two parts (4 and 5 in the new edition) concern "Effective Budgeting and Fiscal Administration" and "Managing Human Resources." Their respective subjects are virtually identical to the first edition; a chapter titled "Realizing the Promise of Diversity" has replaced one titled "Developing Executive and Managerial Talent."

The new part 6 is a retitled part 7 from the former edition, and most subjects are the same. New chapter titles include "Listening to Customers" and "Facilitating Organizational Development and Change." The new part 7, "Public Administration Skills," has much new content reflecting the themes in recent literature: "Leading in a Shared-Power World," "Managing Conflicts Creatively," "Negotiating for the Public Good," and "Developing Intrapersonal Skills." The concluding part 8, "The Professional Practice of Public Administration," is similar to that in the first edition, incorporating papers on ethics and liability and the editor's summing up. Charles Goodsell's earlier chapter, "Balancing Competing Values," is no longer included.

A comparison of editor Perry's concluding chapters might be taken as an indicator of his efforts to reshape the new edition of the *Handbook*. In both editions he asks, "What makes an effective administrator?" In the first edition, his answer features seven skills (in order): technical skills; human skills; conceptual skills; responsiveness to democratic institutions; focus on results; networking ability; and balance. In the second edition, networking ability and balance have been omitted and a new one, "intrapersonal skills," has been added. Perry's discussion of effectiveness plays down this list and now features four themes, developed by the volume's contributors, "that can be linked to effective public enterprises: clear missions, visions, and goals; effective program, organizational, and control system design; resource stewardship; and assessment of results" (p. 735).

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The last section of Perry's summing up, "Public Administration as a Profession," while generally the same as in the first edition, contains revealing differences. The phrase *successful public institutions* has been replaced by *effective public enterprises*. The word *competence*, used four times in the first edition, now appears only in the (identical) concluding sentence. The first edition's emphasis on joining commitment and competence and on "maintaining order according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution" have been dropped in favor of the above-mentioned four themes.

How significant are these apparent shifts of editorial emphasis from competence and Constitution to enterprise and effectiveness? Will practitioners who turn to the new *Handbook* for guidance find David Osborne and Al Gore instead of Dwight Waldo, John Rohr, and David Rosenbloom? In a literal sense, the answer is yes. Dwight Waldo, cited ten times in the first edition, is gone from the second, whereas Gore is cited twenty-one times and Osborne twenty-two in the new *Handbook*. Rohr citations are down from eight to two, and Rosenbloom is down from ten citations to two. (Harold Seidman, cited twenty times in the first edition, is out; Michael Barzelay and Sandra Hale, newly prominent owing to Barzelay's *Breaking Through Bureaucracy*, are cited nineteen times in the new edition.)

Yet the retitled chapter on public law, "Understanding What the Law Says About Administrative Responsibility," authored as in the earlier edition by Phillip J. Cooper, creates a different impression. Cooper not only repeats the argument of his earlier chapter—"the tools of legal responsibility are extremely valuable for administrators" (p. 134)—he explicitly refutes the contention of Osborne, Gaebler, and Gore that excessive legal controls are inimical to good public management. Arguing that the rule of law and good management are contradictory, as Osborne and Gore do, is, Cooper says, "a false dichotomy" (p. 118), an argument that might well have been more fully developed. Cooper's important chapter thus provides valuable continuity with the earlier edition.

Perhaps it is Perry's many new authors who are marching to different, younger drummers. Patricia W. Ingraham, a "first-time author," has written a rather thorough update of the previous edition's chapter on civil service systems. Observing that "there is growing consensus that serious problems exist," she asks, "What lessons can be learned from the activities of different government units around the world as they undertake and evaluate their various reforms" (p. 377).

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Ingraham surveys the by-now familiar terrain of bureaucratic problems—excessive controls, disinclination to innovate, isolation from elected officials and citizens, fragmentation—and solutions—contracting out, decentralization and downsizing, pay-for-performance, total quality management, process reengineering. Two new models of public management are emerging, she says: *market management* and *participatory management*. But the important lesson from recent efforts at reform, in her view, is that "a new range of opportunities and a new menu of choices for elected officials and public administrators" is now available. She cautions, however, that choosing solutions that address specific needs will require levels of analysis and managerial skill that "have not always accompanied past reforms" (p. 389). Altogether contemporary in tone, Ingraham's chapter defines an appropriate standard for the *Handbook*: drawing on the wisdom and experience of the profession without defensiveness, and addressing current concerns and ideas without seeming to pander to public administration's often Dada avant garde.

Anne M. Khademian, too, has produced a new version of an earlier chapter on "Developing Effective Relations With Legislatures." Using the original data from case studies of over twenty federal, state, and local agencies, Khademian examines these agencies' efforts to manage relations with legislative bodies. She notes at the outset that such efforts can enhance administrative accountability, but they also can preempt or impede legislative inquiries, exacerbating antagonisms between the two branches.

Khademian concludes a useful survey of agency strategies and mechanisms for managing legislative relations by noting that unavoidable uncertainties and tensions pervade this relationship. Self-interest can drive officials on either side to attempt to manipulate the other, with consequences inimical to good administration. In the end, she says, "there are fundamental limitations on an agency's ability to manage its relationship with the legislature" (p. 194). She expects growing institutionalization and professionalization of the function of legislative liaison. Hers is a sound, helpful analysis.

Altogether new to the *Handbook* is Sonia M. Ospina's chapter, "Realizing the Promise of Diversity." While diversity encompasses individual, professional, and social attributes, according to Ospina, she notes that contemporary workforce diversity efforts focus on social (i.e., on *cultural*) diversity. The goal of such efforts, she says, ought to be to motivate and reward high performance in all employees, regardless of social background. Her intention is to outline strategies for achieving this goal.

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Ospina summarizes evidence concerning the reality and benefits of workforce diversity. The centerpiece of her chapter is a framework for creating diversity strategies. First, stakeholders must identify the benefits of greater diversity. Second, they must take steps to promote diversity. Third, managers must motivate, develop, and reward the diversified work force. Fourth, managers must maximize the benefits of having a diverse work force by adopting without condescension measures that take advantage of the unique strengths and attributes of various employees. She concludes by outlining a diversity change effort an administrator might enact. Grounded in research and practical, Ospina's chapter adds considerable value to the *Handbook*.

A further, selective comparison of the two editions suggests that the updating to reflect the public management environment and issues of the 1990s has strengthened the *Handbook* by imparting new purpose, energy, consistency, and practicality—a new dynamism—to the exposition. Acceptance of buzzword *concepts* substitutes for good analytic judgment a bit too often for my taste—the tide of reform is hardly strong enough to have washed away practitioners' need to address classic problems of administration. Nevertheless, the volume is sober, authoritative in a broad-brush way, practical in a *how-to* sense, generally free of ideological reflex and cant, and intellectually honest.

I searched chapters for indicators of what, to me, is authorial common sense and, thus, grounds for trusting an author's treatment of a topic. John Parr and David Lampe's chapter "Empowering Citizens," for example, sensibly insists that citizens would prefer their government to be competent in addressing their concerns. "Civic engagement competes with other legitimate interests, such as family and children" (p. 198). (Later they also say, inexplicably, that citizens "want to be seriously involved, from beginning to end, in any project or problem-solving process." They were right the first time.) Harry Hatry, in his chapter "Tracking the Quality of Services," says that "most performance measurement efforts have been top down, driven by requirements from the legislature or from a central administrative office, and their results have been little used by program personnel for management or program improvement purposes" (p. 539). Sue R. Faerman argues, in "Managing Conflicts Creatively," that "when there is little or no conflict, performance is relatively low; as conflict reaches some (unknown) optimal level, performance rises correspondingly; if conflict increases beyond this point, performance starts to decline" (p. 633). However, she warns, "there have only been a few empirical studies to test this theory. . . ." Says Douglas C. Eadie in "Leading and Managing Strategic Change": "In the

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change business, the popular adage 'No pain, no gain' certainly applies" (p. 500).

There are exceptions, but most authors, though voicing a clear message, have no inclination to preach, indoctrinate, or dissemble. I have little taste for new-age literatures concerning spiritual renewal, but I thought their inclusion in Eadie's balanced chapter on change was appropriate and useful.

In a further attempt to test the book's value to the public administration community, I approached it as a practitioner in any field might approach a work termed a *handbook*. The term suggests a ready, concise, reference for practitioners and students, organized and indexed to facilitate access to state-of-the-art information on topics of central importance. What might public administration students and practitioners in the state of Illinois want to look up in the *Handbook*? What would they find that would help them?

The most significant and widely discussed administrative reform initiative in Illinois in the year of the *Handbook*'s appearance was a proposal by the governor to consolidate seven human services agencies into a department of human services. (A partial consolidation was enacted.) His goals were service coordination and integration and streamlined, more efficient administration leading to budgetary and personnel savings.

Turning to the *Handbook*, I searched the index for key words and phrases: reorganization, consolidation, services integration, and coordination, both alone and under the headings *agency* or *human services*. I identified only one useful reference. Both *reorganization* and *consolidation* directed the reader to Stenberg's chapter "Engines of Change: Leading from the States." In that chapter, Stenberg includes a 4+ page summary of recent state administrative reform commissions and their recommendation topics, two of which were *reorganization* and *consolidation*. (Full citations to the commission reports are in a footnote.) One learns that at least ten state commissions recommended consolidations of programs or functions or other forms of state-level reorganization. But the recommendations are not described in detail or analyzed, and neither this nor any other chapter attempts to distill the lessons of decades of efforts to achieve the goals of agency reorganization, services integration, and consolidation. (Other than consolidation and reorganization, the other key terms and phrases mentioned above are not in the index.)<sup>1</sup> The next step for the practitioner is presumably to look up relevant state commission reports.

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps an author or editor of such a project might begin by planning the index, visualizing what readers will want to look up, then producing a book that such an index would fit.

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A second preoccupation of Illinois state legislators, mayors, and a variety of other administrators is school reform, specifically, achieving greater accountability, efficiency, and citizen participation in local school management. The *Handbook* includes no useful information on this or any other subject related to education administration. The terms *education*, *schools*, *choice*, *vouchers*, or related phrases are not in the index. (As a by-product of this search, I discovered that the index entry *reform* refers only to Ingraham's chapter.)

A third subject of widespread interest is the promotion of interorganizational collaboration among private sector vendors of services to state agencies in order to assure continuity of care. A closely related subject concerns state agency and local government reliance on networks of community agencies for planning and priority setting. The index entry *collaborations*, *community-based* directs readers to the Lampe and Parr chapter, "Empowering Citizens." Their theme is that governments do not consult the public out of distrust or a reluctance to share power, and their approach is didactic rather than analytical. They advise more public participation and offer general advice: for example, "convene people from very different backgrounds and help them work toward results despite their divergent values." A considerable literature attests to difficulties that impede citizen and agency collaborations and go far deeper than simple governmental reluctance to share power, but the authors make no use of it.

The index entry *networked organizations* directs a reader to the much more useful (i.e., candid and analytical) discussions in Laurence J. O'Toole's chapter, "Implementing Public Programs," and to Rosemary O'Leary's chapter, "Managing Contracts and Grants." O'Toole directs the reader further to H. Brinton Milward's chapter, "The Changing Character of the Public Sector." A practitioner inexperienced in collaborations or networks who studies these chapters and absorbs their many lessons and cautions will acquire an excellent foundation for tackling the practical tasks of identifying opportunities for the use of networks and designing appropriate mechanisms and processes to promote good results. Chapters such as these establish the general value of the *Handbook* to its intended audience.

The results of these attempts to use the *Handbook* as a reference, therefore, were mixed. Administrators looking for help with problems that arise in particular policy domains—environmental regulation, child welfare, public assistance, employment and training, transportation, health care—will be disappointed;

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the discussion throughout the *Handbook* is pitched at a rather high level of generality. At the same time, certain generic problems—coordination and services integration; incentives, choice, and competition; cost control; measurement and indicator construction; agency reorganization—are either not covered or are covered at an introductory level of generality. Moreover, because of index limitations, a reader might miss useful material tucked away in off-diagonal chapters.

Further, the research base on which many chapters draw is not particularly comprehensive or even representative. Only exceptionally (Milward's chapter is an example) is a reader likely to discover the cutting edge of public administration research in the new *Handbook*. The relevance to practice of recent scholarship on institutions and of research by, for example, Paul DiMaggio, Elinor Ostrom, Jonathan Bendor, Thomas Hammond, Jack Knott, Mathew McCubbins, Randall Calvert, Gary Miller, and David Weimer fall outside the *Handbook's* scope.

The *Handbook of Public Administration*, then, will be a useful reference for students in university public administration programs (and for their teachers who are looking for authoritative and accessible introductory readings), for relatively inexperienced practitioners (including service providers moving into managerial roles in public and nonprofit sectors), and for practitioners who are relatively unfamiliar with particular topics and who are looking for a general orientation rather than scholarly depth or technical advice. Thus the *Handbook* resembles an introductory textbook in many respects.

This choice of audience and editorial emphasis is not inevitable. The public administration oriented handbooks published by Marcel Dekker, for example (*Handbook of Regulation and Administrative Law*, *Handbook of Public Budgeting*, and so forth) appear to put greater emphasis on presenting cutting edge research and research at the boundaries of disciplines, neglected but significant topics, and pathbreaking or highly original analyses that substantially advance thinking and aspire to scholarly depth. Public policy textbooks generally cover both generic and substantive topics. Technical appendices, guides to literature, and breakthrough contributions are widely used devices that might enrich a handbook of this sort.

A preponderance of the forty-two chapters in the consistently edited *Handbook*, however, is well crafted, thoughtful, clearly written, and intentionally practical. In a volume aspiring to comprehensive coverage of the broad terrain of public

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administration and to usefulness to a wide audience, Perry and his authors have served the profession well.

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## Civil Service Systems Resource

Hans A.G.M. Bekke, James L. Perry, and Theo A.J. Toonen, eds. 1996. *Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspective*. Indiana University Press.

This is indeed a welcome book. Not much is available for people interested in comparative administrative systems and truly precious little is available for scholars concerned about civil service systems in comparative perspective. This text begins to fill the need for information about the characteristics of civil service systems throughout the world. The book is important, not just because it contributes to the much neglected area of research in comparative administration, but because it provides several useful frameworks for studying public service systems, no matter where they are nested.

*Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspective* is organized into five major parts: Theory and Data; History and Structure; Context; Configurations; and Change and Transformation. The volume is introduced by a section on conceptualizing civil service systems from a comparative viewpoint. It concludes by introducing a number of theoretical propositions for future research. Each major part of the book is previewed briefly for readers. Overall, the book's organization maintains contact with readers at every juncture, continually refocusing the discussion and integrating broad themes.

The introduction by the editors establishes three theoretical viewpoints on civil service systems, which serve as touchstones for each of the contributors. First, civil service systems are seen in familiar terms as employment or personnel systems designed around problems of staffing, evaluating performance, training and development, and evaluation. Second, civil service systems are envisioned as governance mechanisms representing forms of collective decision making. In the case of civil service systems,