

Why *PAR*?

Is the Public Administration Review still necessary? Some think that PAR, which debuted in 1940 as America's first and only generalist scholarly public administration journal, belongs to a bygone era of two-cent postage stamps—a time of coal furnaces, steam radiators, and wood-burning stoves, when language was crafted longhand or by manual typewriter; when a slide rule calculated most math problems; when a long-distance telephone call was rare and expensive; when the entire Army, Navy, and State departments were housed within a single building in Washington, DC, the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House; when President Franklin D. Roosevelt communicated to Americans through fireside chats; and when many in the United States still worried about keeping their jobs in the aftermath of the Great Depression, fiercely favoring isolationism over foreign entanglements and strict racial segregation throughout the South.

That was a different time and a different place: Jack Benny and Fred Allen's comedy could be heard on the radio, and Mae West, W. C. Fields, and *The Wizard of Oz* were featured at the neighborhood movie theater. Instantaneous communications through 24-hour cable news, the Internet, computers, e-mail, fax and cell phones were unknown. That was a time without commercial jet travel whisking us at near-sound-barrier speeds seven miles above Earth, without central heating, air conditioning, or automatic garage door openers. Little League baseball mitts were still manufactured in Cincinnati, Ohio, not abroad. That was an era without fast food from McDonalds, without controversy over stem-cell research, funding for public television, greenhouse gases, nuclear energy, space exploration, or when life begins—not to mention a time when the United States exercised its vast global political, economic, and military might as the last world superpower.

Today, why *PAR*, with its printed double-column pages and lengthy professional essays, mailed bimonthly to subscribers? Why *PAR*, when hundreds of specialized public administration publications now

exist for practitioners and dozens more journals appeal to academics? Why *PAR*, when the world demands information in push-button, high-speed, instant sound bites with appealing MTV-style visuals, tailored to ever-narrowing clusters of survey-targeted audiences? Why *PAR*, when today's bureaucrats rank alongside used-car salesmen in popularity—as opposed to the 1940s, when a popular book was dedicated to “Bill Bureaucrat”—and innumerable economic, social, technological, and military transformations have rocked America since the seemingly halcyon pre-World War II days?

In our view, it is precisely because of—not despite—the profound shifts that have occurred in America and throughout the world that *PAR* is necessary today more than ever before. Here's why:

First and Foremost, for Advancing Generalist Administrative Expertise

Beginning with *PAR*'s inaugural issue, which appeared 66 years ago under the able editorship of Leonard D. White and Don K. Price, and continuing through the most recent capable editorial direction by Larry D. Terry and Camilla Stivers, *PAR* has remained the premier American journal that bridges practice and research in public administration. In the apt words of former editor Chester A. Newland, *PAR* is all about “ongoing struggles for connectedness.” Yes, this struggle is ongoing, and yes, in our view, this struggle remains the journal's central editorial mission, though it is somewhat like hitting a moving target—never in the same place, always elusive, always invisible.

Therefore, as the new *PAR* editors (just as past editors), we will continue to attempt to integrate theory and practice, art and science, and the intellectual and applied in this journal of record. Note: “Attempt” is the key word in the preceding sentence. We make no claim that we *can* or *will*, but we more modestly *attempt* because, realistically, every issue will not succeed in melding these twin dimensions of public administration. We can only attempt to seek out the best

administrative research, encourage the exploration of critical dilemmas and controversial topics in the current practice and study of public administration, survey what is occurring throughout the field, and, we hope, convey solutions to readers at all levels of government in clear, concise, and compelling prose.

William Mosher, ASPA's first president, envisioned *PAR* as a journal that would be "both scholarly in style and practical in substance." Published articles should not only strive to blend applied experience and academic expertise but also draw on a wide range of interdisciplinary social science and historical learning. (Or, in the words of Paul Appleby's delightful pun, "make a mesh of things.") Like great institutions of higher education, *PAR* will remain a repository for the best and most up-to-date knowledge and skills that are relevant to this significant human endeavor, one requiring advanced education and in-depth experience and one of the most important (at least in our opinion) for sustaining and advancing modern civilization. Recall: Historian E. N. Gladden once referred to public administration as the second-oldest profession in world history, second only to the priesthood. Prostitution had to await the rise of urbanization! In other words, complex society requires specialization, hence public administrators.

Second, for Building a Shared Sense of Professional Identity

PAR is the official voice of our professional association, the American Society for Public Administration. Therefore, from its inception, it has been important for knitting together our diverse professional community of administrative practitioners and academics. This journal—along with ASPA's national and regional conferences, sections, chapters, and other publications—fulfills a crucial role: promoting a shared sense of collective unity and professional consciousness among ASPA members and, even more broadly, public administrators everywhere. In this respect, *PAR* must convey to its readers the history and importance of the field, as well as its seminal role in society, current needs, priorities for future development, urgent research agendas, and highest professional standards to which members ought to aspire.

With regard to envisioning the broad field of public administration, Dwight Waldo once suggested that *PAR* nurtures a "professional identity without the possibility of ever becoming a profession." In other words, *PAR* fosters a shared sense of organic community and a feeling of belonging to a vital calling that is devoted to advancing the art and science of public administration without necessarily adopting the traditional roles, restrictions, or trappings of an established professional body. Although most scholars today agree that public administration is not—and probably will never become—an established

profession such as law or medicine, who could argue with the aspiration to build a sense of professionalism throughout the practice and study of public administration? Stress its worth and significance for society? Repeatedly emphasize its historic role and continuing importance for the future of civilization?

The late Daniel Boorstin, the Pulitzer prize-winning historian and Librarian of Congress, pithily observed that to "try to plan the future without knowing the past is like trying to plant cut flowers." Particularly at the dawn of the 21st century—an age of rapid technological and social change, fissionary occupational specialization, commercialization, and vehement scapegoating of government employees or anything "public" in general—*PAR* is central to ASPA's principal goal of fostering a shared historical sense of corporateness among its members, a mutual bond linking like-minded colleagues, by instilling an enduring respect for this common enterprise that contributes to incalculable social achievements.

At its best, *PAR* should be a significant venue for lifting individuals' eyes above a particular workplace—whether it is a social worker managing an overwhelming caseload, a police officer running a terrorist response team, a city manager facing harsh media critics, a USAID or UN mission chief making tough developmental choices within an impoverished nation—to reflect on the broader purposes of their calling and to appreciate how and why their uniquely rewarding public-service careers collectively contribute to humankind. So, perhaps, is the best way of describing this particular purpose, "Instilling inspiration by helping those in the public service grasp the big picture?"

Third, for Fostering Ethical Responsibility

The application of administrative expertise within the public sector imposes special social responsibilities on both practitioners and scholars. Their work cannot be employed for narrow, selfish, or partisan gain. Particularly during the first decade of the 21st century, the life-and-death stakes that public administrators worldwide face have risen dramatically and exponentially. As September 11, 2001, and the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster so clearly underscored, ethical responsibility is not merely defined by overt bureaucratic action but also by its absence—in theological parlance, sins of *commission* as opposed to sins of *omission*. Thus, *PAR*'s prime duty unquestionably remains ensuring that generalized expertise and a shared professional identity are rooted in a sensitive appreciation of administrators' fundamental ethical responsibility to serve society, community, and individuals fairly and justly.

"Public," the first word in this journal's title, epitomizes its distinctive, enduring purpose. The editors,

therefore, are committed to continually challenging readers to explore and analyze what Chester Barnard once referred to as the “inherent moral ambiguity of modern organizations,” which executives must wrestle with daily—successfully or not—and which only increases with mind-numbing ferocity as anyone climbs the administrative hierarchy. Therefore, we will continue to prominently feature ASPA’s code of ethics in each issue, in addition to including thought-provoking pieces, highlighting complicated moral dimensions of contemporary administration, examining written ethical canons, exploring unwritten norms and poignant moral conundrums.

Fourth, for Ensuring Balanced Representation

Producing *PAR* is a demanding process that is perhaps best characterized by Elliot Richardson, who once titled a book describing his lengthy, impressive government service *A Delicate Balance*. On several levels, the new *PAR* editorial team will engage in a delicate balancing act throughout our tenure: institutionally, to ensure that multiple facets of the field are covered clearly, concisely, and comprehensively; intellectually, to treat both the practical and academic dimensions of public administration adequately; socially, to make certain that a wide range of interests are properly addressed; methodologically, to reflect both the art and science of this fascinating yet ever-changing enterprise; and operationally, to appoint a *PAR* editorial board that is diverse and fully represents the ASPA community. Because we believe that *PAR* advances the highest ideals of ASPA, *PAR* editors are committed to working closely with the National Council, executive officers, professional staff, sections, and chapters to draw on ASPA’s eclectic talent and wide network of impressive human resources so as to ensure balanced representation on multiple levels throughout *PAR*’s pages.

Practically speaking, how do we intend to initiate these four (perhaps overly) ambitious purposes?

First, the Journal You Are Reading Will Have 30 Additional Pages in Each Issue

This change is the result of the efforts of ASPA’s executive director, Antoinette Samuel, as well as former *PAR* editor-in-chief Larry D. Terry. Simply put, more pages will allow *PAR* to cover more of the field.

Case in point: The additional space has permitted us to expand the book review section in every issue, allowing greater room for “dragnet review essays” surveying clusters of germane public administration books. Our new book review editor, Naomi Caiden, who teaches at California State University, Los Angeles, is particularly well qualified to assume this significant responsibility. As a former editor-in-chief

of the influential professional journal *Public Budgeting and Finance* and the author of many superb scholarly contributions, Dr. Caiden is among the most respected and knowledgeable academics in the field. She possesses a unique depth and breadth of understanding of the public administration literature, as well as a keen, critical, and demanding editorial eye, which is so necessary for managing this section, the most widely read part of the journal.

Second, International Coverage Will Be Featured Regularly

During his tenure as *PAR* editor, David Rosenbloom significantly broadened this journal’s overseas coverage by appointing the first European correspondent, Professor Theo Toonen of Leiden University, The Netherlands. We have built on his creative idea by asking Christopher Hood, a fellow at All Souls College, Oxford University, and one of the outstanding internationalist and comparative administrative scholars in the field, to become *PAR*’s new international editor. He will establish a network of leading academic correspondents around the world who will file periodic regional reports on best practices that are applicable to American public administration—that is, innovative administrative concepts, processes, tools, and techniques from which Americans and others might learn from and even adopt.

Third, an Old Section Will Reappear in PAR

Under Dwight Waldo’s editorship in the 1970s, a feature called “TOPS” (those other publications) was initiated to survey government documents. This section has been reinstated under the title “Public Documents,” and it will report on seminal contemporary government publications and, more broadly, major public reports issued by nonprofit organizations and thinktanks such as the Brookings Institution and American Enterprise Institute, as well as executive orders, statutes, and court opinions that have a significant impact on the work of public administrators. Nancy Roberts, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, who specializes in national security affairs and business strategy, will assume the responsibilities of *PAR*’s new public documents editor. Her unique background and qualifications make her particularly well suited to covering these vast and critical publications and helping *PAR* readers to decipher their meaning and understand their significance.

Fourth, an Innovative New Feature Will Address Current Research

Frederick Mosher suggested many years ago, after he stepped down as *PAR*’s editor-in-chief, that it would be helpful to both practitioners and scholars to see periodic summaries of state-of-the-art administrative research on such germane subjects as employee

motivation, budget forecasting, and implementation theory. Professor Robert Durant, a professor in the School of Public Affairs at American University, Washington, DC, and a highly regarded administrative scholar, has enthusiastically agreed to become *PAR*'s new research editor.

A section of each issue will be devoted to a new feature, "Theory to Practice," which will highlight reports by top academic experts on probing questions, such as what lessons do current theoretical studies hold for dealing with problems confronting administrative practitioners? Who is doing the most up-to-date empirical analyses? Where is the best research being done? How does this research directly aid us in improving contemporary public administration? What central questions and key problems need further analysis? What are the next steps for advancing our professional research agenda?

Fifth, *PAR*'s Pages Will Contain Two New Sections That Will Appear in Alternate Issues, "Administrative Profiles" and "Administrative Cases"

The former will spotlight outstanding role models or mentors in government, exploring how these leaders developed their careers, honed their skills, overcame managerial and political challenges, dealt with complex decisions, and resolved complicated ethical dilemmas in the workplace. Professor Norma Riccucci, a professor at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey, author of the acclaimed book *Unsung Heroes*, and recipient of the ASPA/NASPA Distinguished Research Award, has accepted the role of administrative profile editor.

In alternate issues, an original case study will analyze a recent public-sector innovation, a new procedure, a complicated governmental decision, or an institutional development of interest to a broad cross-section of public and nonprofit administrators. As in law, medicine, social work, and other professions, such cases studies enhance our applied learning skills and theoretical knowledge by outlining basic facts in a straightforward narrative that succinctly recounts the who, what, where, when, and how of a difficult problem-solving process and provide generalized administrative lessons. Mark Abramson, who heads the IBM Center for the Business of Government and has developed one of the most innovative administrative case programs in the field today, has kindly agreed to become the new *PAR* case editor.

Sixth, the New *PAR* Editorial Team Wants to Find Out What Readers Are Thinking so That We Can Tailor the Journal's Content More Directly to Readers' Interests and Needs

One of the first new editorial appointments is Christine Gibbs Springer, a former ASPA president

and current principal of Red Tape Limited, Las Vegas, Nevada, who will become the new *PAR* communications editor. She will conduct periodic focus groups and survey readers to gain regular feedback on *PAR* content: What topics should be included in *PAR*'s coverage? How did readers respond to recent articles? What do readers like and dislike about the journal? From time to time, letters to the editor will be published that reflect readers' opinions, criticisms, and reactions. Specifically, we want to use this information to develop a long-term business plan for *PAR*. Sylvester Murray, who teaches at Cleveland State University and is a former ASPA president and distinguished city manager of several communities, has accepted the new post of *PAR* business manager. He will help us to develop a strategic plan, based on reader feedback, which will enhance *PAR*'s visibility, particularly by increasing federal, state, local, and nonprofit institutional memberships. In a nutshell, we want more of the 17 million public employees in all levels of American government to read *PAR*.

Finally, Readers Will Find Two Regular Lead Series, "Rethinking the Foundations of Public Administration" and "Academic-Practitioner Dialogue"

The former will pair an acknowledged senior scholar with a rising star in academe to analyze the past, present, and future significance of a seminal concept of public administration—such fundamental ideas as "merit" or "the executive budget." The second series of articles will offer a venue for regular academic-practitioner exchanges about pressing administrative problems that are relevant to the entire field. Both series are designed to confront the big questions facing public administration, which readers repeatedly told our editorial predecessors, Larry Terry and Camilla Stivers, during their extensive "Listening Tour" six years ago, they wished to see featured regularly in *PAR*.

Lest we forget, the new *PAR* editorial team must add our special public thanks not only to Larry and Cam, but to Shelly Pepper, outgoing managing editor, and to Doreen Clifford, outgoing production manager, for making the editorial transition smooth and well organized—a "model" hand-off of editorial responsibilities.

Though we have outlined much that will be new in future *PAR* issues, its fundamental meat-and-potatoes content will remain unchanged. Namely, it will continue to be the premier peer-reviewed public administration journal by publishing the best and brightest authors as well as the most up-to-date and relevant articles. Indeed, the new editors promise that everything appearing in *PAR* will be as thoroughly peer-reviewed as it has always been. All of the newly appointed associate editors have been asked to select an editorial board of well-qualified

experts to ensure that all published material carefully meets the highest professional standards.

So again, why *PAR*?

The famed Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter might have inadvertently answered this question

when he cleverly defined capitalism as “creative destruction.” Couldn’t we describe what public administration is all about—in general, and our own particular editorial task—as the reverse, as *creative construction*?

—Richard J. Stillman II and Jos C. N. Raadschelders

Call for Papers

With generous support from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, *PAR* will release in 2006 a special issue on *collaborative management*. For purposes of this issue, collaborative management is defined as the process of facilitating and operating in multi-organizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by single organizations. Where traditional administration relied primarily on organizational structure to shape administrative action, collaborative management is more fluid, thus requiring managers to shift from structure to process for leverage. Thus, the needed skill set of public managers has changed to one that heavily emphasizes negotiation, facilitation, mediation, and collaborative problem solving.

For more information on this special issue of **PAR**, or if you wish to submit an article for consideration, contact David Lampe, Graduate School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 303-352-3873.