



ROBERT B. DENHARDT
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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

AN ACTION ORIENTATION

FIFTH EDITION

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Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt

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PREFACE

The fifth edition of *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* updates the text, taking it to the beginning of President George W. Bush's second term. But it also adds new material that should be helpful to those becoming acquainted with the field of public service. Most notably, the book has been revised to reflect changes such as developments in e-government, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and the intergovernmental and fiscal challenges of coping with the threat of terrorism. In addition, we have included important new material dealing with organizational theory and bureaucracy; an expanded discussion of special purpose governments, including school districts; and a closer look at the increasingly important connection between public administration and civic action or citizenship. This book also provides the latest approaches to management in the public sector and continues to pay special attention to the skills needed for administrators at all levels of government and in nonprofit organizations. We have reordered the chapters to create a more logical progression of material given the large number of revisions since the organization of the first edition. Finally, to enliven the text, short vignettes asking "What Would You Do?" have been inserted into the chapters to give students the opportunity to think about and discuss their responses to specific and realistic challenges in public service.

Like previous editions, the fifth edition contains subtle but telling differences from other books in the field. We assume that students in an introductory course in public administration don't want to learn about the profession only in the abstract, but are interested in influencing the operations of public agencies, as managers from the inside or as citizens from the outside. They want to acquire the skills necessary for changing things for the better.

For this reason, it is important that the text not only introduce students to the scholarly literature of public administration, but also that it help them develop the insights and abilities that will make them more effective and responsible actors. This book contains a good deal of material that is basic to working in or with public organizations. At the same time, the discussion attends to the complex and often confounding values that distinguish work in the public sector. Most significant, however, is the focus on the technical expertise and interpersonal skills that are crucial to effecting change in public organizations.

Another feature of the book is its balanced attention to the work of managers at all levels of government and in nonprofit organizations. Although the federal government is a powerful model for the study of public administration, managers of state and local agencies are important actors in the governmental process, and their work is acknowledged and examined as well. Similarly, we show how managers of associations, nonprofit and "third-sector" organizations, and even traditionally private organizations are now confronting the same issues faced by administrators in the public sector. In fact, we frequently use the term *public organizations* to describe all such groups involved in the management of public programs.

This edition also gives proper attention to the global dimensions of public administration today. No longer are administrators confined in their work to their own organizations or even to their own jurisdictions. The complexity of modern life means, among other

things, that administrators must be attentive to developments around the world as well as to those at home. Decisions made in a foreign capital may affect the work of a public administrator even more significantly than those made only miles away. Today, knowledge of international affairs and comparative issues is important not only to those who work in other countries but to all who work in public administration.

Public Administration: An Action Orientation remains distinctive in its treatment of the ethics of public service. Not only is the topic of ethics thoroughly covered in a separate chapter, references to ethical concerns appear throughout the text. Ethical issues cannot be separated from action. Indeed, every act of every public servant, at whatever level of government or in any related organization, has an important ethical dimension. For this reason, we have made a strong effort to be attentive to the ethical considerations that are a part of all administrative activities.

Finally, *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* is the first text on this subject to be fully integrated with the Internet resources that are available to assist public administrators and those studying public administration. In each chapter, we highlight “networking” resources available to students, including websites that contain material that supplements the text, provides examples and case studies, and links the student to other materials available online.

In this text we talk about action, but we also invite students to act. At the end of each chapter are self-diagnostic materials and exercises (cases, simulations, discussion points, and so on) designed to supplement students’ cognitive learning with behavioral practice. These activities impart a sense of not only what public administration looks like to the impartial observer, but also what it feels like to the manager or private individual engaged in public action. Students have opportunities to test, practice, and improve their skills. Each chapter also contains a list of key terms and definitions (which reappear in the glossary) and recommendations for further reading.

There are very exciting possibilities in public administration today. Working to solve important public problems, sensing the human drama involved in such work, and gaining the satisfaction of doing something really worthwhile make being involved in public organizations quite fascinating. The perspective adopted here—focusing on the experiences of people acting in the real world of public organizations and on the skills needed for managerial success—permits a lively and interesting presentation of the field. We particularly hope to convey, in a personal and direct manner, the challenges and rewards of public service.

Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to this book. From our work with members of the American Society for Public Administration, we have gained special appreciation of the complexity of public management and of the dedication and hard work required for public service. We hope we have conveyed the commitment and concern that guide the work of the best public managers; they deserve great credit and respect.

In the first edition of the text, Bob’s colleagues in the Department of Public Administration at the University of Missouri-Columbia were a great source of help and support. In

subsequent editions, good colleagues and friends at the University of Colorado, the University of Central Florida, the University of Delaware, Arizona State University, and Wichita State University have made important contributions.

We wish to thank the reviewers who provided invaluable feedback on the fourth edition for our use in creating this new edition. They are George W. Clarke, University of North Texas; Buck Miller, Christopher Newport University; and Brett S. Sharp, University of Central Oklahoma. We also want to give a special thanks to Lindsey Gorzalski and Donald Friesner for their excellent research assistance.

Finally, this book is dedicated to Bob and Janet's children, Michael and Cari, Ben and Mary, who have been a constant source of joy, wonderment, and pride. Thanks to all.

Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt

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