



# Handbook of Administrative History

*Jos C. N. Raadschelders*

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Public administration is commonly assumed to be a young discipline, rooted in law and political science, with little history of its own. Likewise, teaching and scholarship in this field is often career oriented and geared either toward the search for immediately usable knowledge or guidelines and prescriptions for the future. Although most administrative scientists would acknowledge that their field has a history, their time horizon is limited to the recent past. Raadschelders demonstrates that public administration has in fact a long-standing tradition, both in practice and in writing; administration has been an issue ever since human beings recognized the need to organize themselves in order to organize the environment in which they lived. This history, in turn, underlines the need for administrators to be aware of the importance and contemporary impact of past decisions and old traditions. In seeking to go beyond the usual problem-solving and future-oriented studies of public administration, this volume adds greatly to the cognitive richness of this field of research. Indeed, the search for theoretical generalizations will profit from an approach that unravels long-term trends in the development of administration and government.

"Raadschelders approaches public administration history from a dual perspective, as trained historian and professor of public administration.... The volume is appropriately called a 'handbook' in view of its methodical listing of the literature on administrative history, together with summaries of numerous authors' principal theories. The second chapter is an essay on sources in the field, including an extended bibliography.... These parts of the book alone make it useful to scholars in the field.... Raadschelders is helpful in other ways as well. The third and fourth chapters offer a highly sophisticated discussion of methodological problems encountered in writing administrative history, including the issue of perceiving 'stages.' Other chapters discuss leading substantive issues such as the development of bureaucracy and citizenship. The author combines his own history-telling with more bibliographic commentary.

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