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Rewriting the History of Public Administration: What if...?

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Mordecai Lee

In this symposium, its contributors are experimenting with shotgunning history and fiction into a merged subject of Public Administration historical fiction. According to the symposium editor, historical fiction is a form of mental gymnastics that can provide a constructive albeit minor contribution to understanding Public Administration's past, analyzing its present and helping shape its future.

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In this article, the author speculates about the further impact Alexander Hamilton could have had on the development of American public administration and the shape and direction of American government had he survived the duel with Aaron Burr.

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At a fictitious trial, Dwight Waldo is being judged by major public figures from different eras. Such an approach allows the author to simultaneously examine various intellectual perspectives inherent in the field of public administration.

**Trying to Save the Garden:
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A Public Administration Satire 40**
Terence M. Garrett

In the following satire, the author argues that an obnoxious pest has overtaken traditional public administration and is known by a variety of different names including “public choice,” “rational choice,” and “principal-agent theory” (all collectively known here as ‘rat choice’) that has invaded the “garden” of public administration and policy. What if a super-potent rodent killer had been developed to suppress the loss and damage of the fruits and vegetables in the garden? A more truly democratic administration may have been more firmly established in the 20th Century. Public policies today also might be bearing more fruit for all of society instead of being eaten away by wealthy individuals and corporations solely interested in material wealth and not the public interest.

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Mordecai Lee

The United States Bureau of Efficiency (BOE), which had been established in 1916, was abolished in 1933 when President Hoover signed an omnibus appropriation bill on his last full day in office. Given Hoover's commitment to businesslike and efficient management and his ongoing support for the work of the Bureau throughout his presidency, what if he had acted differently and prevented its abolition? This fictional public administration history explores how Hoover could have kept BOE in existence and, if he had, how six of his successors might have treated the agency as part of their administrations.

Analysis and Commentary

**Public Administration’s Dyslexia:
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Pamela A. Gibson

To have a dis/ability opens the possibilities for seeing (understanding) something different because of difference in the disabled’s lens or worldview.

Public administration is awash in self-doubt, discomfort and confusion. As it struggles with setting, moving and removing academic boundaries of the discipline, public administration reveals its own dyslexia. The disabling of public administration offers a view from the balcony (or orchestra pit) granting a greater appreciation of ‘the other’ in the public administration student, public administration theory and public administration practices. The dyslexic individual and institution can suffer and celebrate contradiction, paradox, irony, and other delimiting arenas of learning without resistance. Successful learning and understanding can come not in spite of but because of apparent disabilities.

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