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One might wonder if a topic like the White House staff was worthy of the effort required in producing a serious reference work. Upon examining the CQ Press Guide to the White House Staff (2013, 978-1-6042-6604-7, $160) one would have to answer in the affirmative. Prior to FDR, a small professional staff of administrative assistants was available to the President to assist him with basic managerial tasks. But with the passage of the Reorganization Act of 1939 creating the Executive Office of the President, the White House staff started to grow exponentially and now includes hundreds of highly trained specialists. Authored by Shirley Anne Warshaw, this reference carefully traces the history, evolution, and growing influence of the White House Staff, and throws light on the influential role it performs as part of the Executive Branch of government.

The bulk of the Guide to the White House Staff provides researchers with an informed history of the modern White House staff including chapters on the development of its operation as well as the evolution of key policymaking units. However, a discussion of the formative years, when little money or attention was paid to Presidential staff needs, occupies the first section of the book and lays the groundwork for what follows. The overall result is a thorough and comprehensive treatment of the numerous transitions and changes that the White House staff has undergone as well as a discussion of its growing influence and responsibilities. The text is complemented by photos, tables, charts, lists, and informative sidebars that are also visually appealing. An appendix that provides a year-by-year list of the names of all White House staff and their positions for each administration since FDR makes clear the growing number of staff in successive administrations.

In typical CQ Press fashion, the Guide to the White House Staff is fact-filled, even-handed, and exhaustive. Value-added features are impressive with well-chosen illustrations enriching the historical coverage offered by the narrative text. In this reference, Ms. Warshaw makes it clear that the White House Staff has become an integral part of the Executive Branch and it function, fulfilling more than a managerial role. It is obvious that the White House staff has a major influence on policy as specialized staff has been added routinely to help address new issues. Ms. Warshaw also includes a telling final chapter that covers the “career paths for White House staff after leaving office” which provides biographical data showing many of them gaining influential positions in the private sector.

Academic and large public libraries where there is an active interest in the politics and the function of American government will want to give this work serious consideration. As noted in the preface, it can easily be viewed as a companion to the fifth edition of the CQ Press Guide to the Presidency and the Executive Branch (2012, 978-1-6087-1906-8, $425).