



Public Relations and the Press: The Troubled Embrace (Medill Visions Of The American Press)

Karla Gower

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We are living in what one author describes as “highly promotional times.” Governments and corporations, nonprofits and special interest groups, all have spin doctors trying to turn the news to their advantage. This increasingly incestuous connection between the practitioners of public relations and journalism has resulted in a troubling shift in power. *Public Relations and the Press* examines how this shift came to be and explores the questions it raises about the role of media in a democratic society and the future of journalism.

A democracy works when individuals have access to reliable information upon which to base decisions—information that in our day comes from the mass media. But what if journalists do not have the wherewithal to question their sources and evaluate the information they provide? This, Karla K. Gower explains, is precisely what happens when economic and competitive pressures shift power from the journalist to the source—and the source, not the journalist, controls the flow of information to the public. Gowers describes a situation in which people, “informed” by practitioners of public relations, do not have sufficient information to make valid decisions. At stake is the core credibility of the press itself, and therefore the essential claim of journalism to a privileged role in a democratic social order.

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