

## Series Editor's Preface

This series will make a major contribution to the history and historiography of public relations (PR). Until recently publications and conference papers have focused mainly on American tropes that PR was invented in the United States, although there have been British and German challenges to this claim. There are, however, emerging narratives that public relations-type activity developed in many countries in other bureaucratic and cultural forms that only came in contact with Anglo-American practice recently.

The scholarship of public relations has largely been driven by US perspectives with a limited level of research undertaken in the United Kingdom and Central Europe. This has been reflected in general PR texts, which mostly tell the story of PR's development from the US experience. Following the establishment of the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC), first held in 2010, it is evident there is increasing level of research, reflection and scholarship outside Anglo-America and Central European orbits.

From IHPRC and a recent expansion of publishing in public relations academic journals, new national perspectives on the formation of public relations structures and practices are being published and discussed. Some reflect Anglo-American influences while others have evolved from national cultural and communication practices with a sideways glance at international practices.

I am attached to the notion of 'other' both in its postmodern concept and a desire to create a more authentic approach to the history of public relations. It was the UK [p.ix] public relations scholar and historian Professor Jacquie L'Etang who first used 'the other' in discussion with me. It immediately encapsulated my concerns about some recent historical writing, especially from countries outside Western Europe and North America. There was much evidence that 'Western hegemonic public relations' was influencing authors to make their national histories conform to the primacy of the United States. Often it was processed through the four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984). This approach did not take account of the social, cultural and political forces that formed each nation's approach to PR. It was also dull reading.

*National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* will be the first series to bring forward these different, sometimes alternative and culturally diverse national histories of public relations in a single format. Some will be appearing for the first time. In

this series, national narratives are introduced and discussed, enabling the development of new or complementary theories on the establishment of public relations around the world.

Overall, the series has three aims:

1. Introduce national perspectives on the formation of public relations practices and structures in countries outside Western Europe and North America;
2. Challenge existing US-centric modelling of public relations;
3. Aid the formation of new knowledge and theory on the formation of public relations practices and structures by offering accessible publications of high quality.

Five of the books will focus on national public relations narratives which are collected together on a continental basis: Asia and Australasia, Eastern Europe and Russia, Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, and Western Europe. The sixth book addresses historiographic interpretations and theorization of public relations history.

Rather than requesting authors to write in a prescribed format which leaves little flexibility, they have been encouraged to research and write historical narratives and analysis that are pertinent to a particular country or region. My view is that a national historical account of public relations' evolution will be more prized and exciting to read if the author is encouraged to present a narrative of how it developed over one or more particular periods (determined by what is appropriate in that country), considering why one or two particular PR events or persons [p.x] (or none) were important in that country, reviewing cultural traditions and interpretations of historical experiences, and theorizing development of public relations into its present state. Chapters without enforced consistency to the structure and focus have enabled the perspectives and voices from the different countries to be told in a way that is relevant to their histories.

A more original discussion follows in the concluding book because the series editor and fellow contributors offer a more insightful commentary on the historical development in the regions, identifying a contextualized emergent theoretical frameworks and historiography that values differences, rather than attempting to 'test' an established theoretical framework or historiographic approach.

Tom Watson  
twatson@bournemouth.ac.uk

## Reference

Grunig, J., and Hunt, T. (1984) *Managing Public Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).

Tom Watson (ed.) *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* [series of six volumes: Asian; Eastern European; Middle Eastern & African; Latin American & Caribbean; Western European; Historiography and Historical Theorization]. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014-15. Preface included in all volumes, pp. viii-x.