

# Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication

Fifth Edition



 Pearson

Ralph Tench  
Stephen Waddington

# Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication



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# Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication

Fifth edition

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*Missing Essential in Public Communication and Evaluating Public Communication: Exploring New Models, Standards, and Best Practice.*

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# Foreword

What public relations is and could be, how to manage it for an organisation, what it does in and for society – these are the themes of this book. In the first edition, the editors promised a lively and comprehensive discussion regarding fundamental concepts and best practices of public relations. A student-centred book, a meeting place for students and teachers with well-known authors, taking the student by the hand to explore what public relations is. The book is grown-up now. Very well established as one of the best introductory texts in our field, mainly oriented at Europe but very international in its context, fundamental but also very practical. With this 5th edition the editors and authors succeeded once more in presenting meaningful updates of their contributions following the latest national and international developments and insights in the fast-changing world of public relations. After so many years, it is still one of a kind.

I have studied numerous books on public relations, and on corporate communication, communication management or strategic communication, as the field is often called in other countries. Most books are very technical ‘how to’ books, promising that you will be able to do the job as long as you follow the tips of the author. Some books are very theoretical, analysing merely one single theoretical focus, with the promise that you will become a good practitioner as long as you follow this approach. *Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication* is none of these, or to put it differently: it is all of these books in one. It is theoretical and practical at the same time, it provides an insight in almost all theoretical approaches and different ideas on how to look at and do public relations, and it raises unsettled questions about the definition, the tasks of the professional, the debate about professional ethics, and the issue of its impact. This is the most open-minded book I know.

Look at the prudent way in which the editors have challenged almost everything that is commonly left un-discussed in the educational and practical fields of public relations. That public relations has to do with persuasion and also with propaganda, that the public

relations field has a problem with its legitimacy, that there is no consensus whatsoever about what public relations is and what its value is for organisations of all kinds. The authors try to avoid taking a stand, leading us through all the discussions, rumours and evidence about these issues. What a book! It is fresh and good, it covers all current topics and simultaneously opens up a lot of perspectives. And all this in a very user-friendly manner. The book is built on the premise that a textbook should put the student at the centre of the learning experience. And that is exactly what it does.

It is an excellent book for undergraduates who want to know more about the field. But at the same time it is also enlightening and very practical for professionals who want to open their windows and learn more about the field they are working in. It not only shows a variety of different approaches and models within the discipline of PR but also interdisciplinary connections with communication studies and the wider context of social sciences. This makes the book also relevant and important for master’s programmes in public relations and communication studies. Public relations is an evolving discipline and its growth requires continual questioning to challenge its boundaries and establish its terrain. The authors have brilliantly succeeded in doing that.

The first edition of *Exploring Public Relations* was a milestone. It was both very British and very international. *Exploring Public Relations* not only provided helpful guidelines to practical action, but raised unsettling questions about impact and implications as well. It was diverse, different and consistently thoughtful in departing from the US norm. Instead of simple platitudes about equal exchanges, *Exploring Public Relations* looked at how to actually perform public relations in an ethical manner across very diverse cultures. It was also theoretically inclusive, with a light touch that challenged students to make up their own minds at the same time as they learned how to become competent practitioners. It was not uncritical of a field where technical mastery can override moral behaviour.



Subsequent editions were updated in an enviable way, including all kinds of new issues, for example about the media context of contemporary public relations and journalism, about the intercultural and multicultural context of public relations, about corporate image, reputation and identity, and last but not least about research and evaluation. This fifth edition has a further update, for example on communication theories (Chapter 8). The book includes reference to almost everything that has been written in the last couple of years. It is updated with the newest insights from European as well as American and Asian perspectives. What an effort!

The first part of the book provides you with the background knowledge you will require to understand the role and purpose of public relations set against the broader business and societal contexts in which it plays an active role. Part two demonstrates that

public relations is multifaceted and can be interpreted through a number of theoretical perspectives. In part three the focus is laid on the practice of public relations and, finally, in part four all kinds of considerations are explored, on health communication, on corporate communication, on positioning celebrities and countries, and on the future of public relations.

This is a book every public relations author wished (s)he had written. It will help to provide students with an introduction into the field, and will also help teachers to discuss important topics with their students. You will not be disappointed.

Betteke van Ruler  
Professor Emerita Corporate Communication  
and Communication Management Department of  
Communication Science University of Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

# Preface

## A thank you first

*Exploring Public Relations* began in Leeds in the early 2000s with a collaboration between myself and Dr Liz Yeomans. Through four editions of the book, and working with exceptional friends and fellow academic colleagues, this book has innovated and led the way in the field of public relations and strategic communication textbooks. A path that – as a clear complement to the project – many other writers around the world have emulated and copied. We still think *Exploring Public Relations* is the leading book to guide students, lecturers and observers of the practice, and we get regular feedback to reinforce this point.

Since the 4th edition my good friend Liz has retired from full-time academic life. I must therefore convey my thanks to Liz for her friendship and collegial collaboration over the many years that we worked together and particularly on the four enjoyable versions of this book. Thank you, Liz.

Since Liz has ended her collaboration with me on the book I have of course thought long and hard about who to work alongside to take the book to the next stage of its journey. My editorial partner, Stephen Waddington, is someone I have known for many years – as have many of my international academic and practice colleagues – because he is a rare breed, what I like to call a thinking practitioner.

Stephen is a professor of practice at the University of Newcastle in the UK but also a well-known and respected senior communicator, author and commentator on the practice. As such he brings an understanding of education and research but also a clear and insightful appreciation that much of what we discuss in the classroom and in our academic reflections plays out in business and society. This is an invaluable asset and positive contribution for the book.

I have enjoyed working more closely with Stephen over the past couple of years as we looked to build on the strengths of the past editions of the book and make it even more relevant to students, lecturers and

tutors as well as practitioners with an eye on deeper understanding of the practice.

*Professor Ralph Tench*

## Welcome to a refreshed 5th edition

This has been an extraordinary edition of *Exploring* to write. Whilst the manuscript has been written and passed through the production phase, the whole world has experienced transformational change owing to COVID-19. The pandemic has and will affect all aspects of society and the economy. It is most definitely going to affect the communications industry. In this version of the book, as we went through the final edits, we capture some of those issues (see Crisis and the final chapter on the Future as well as others). Whilst we are not able to address the breadth of impact that these economic and social changes will have as the book goes to press, we can carry forward to readers the knowledge that things have and will continue to change in the world of organisational communication. Watch this space.

We first conceived of this book in the early 2000s and it started with the idea that a textbook should put the student at the centre of the learning experience. While it is true that textbooks in general are more student-centred for subjects as varied as biology, law, media and psychology, this was not and has not been the case in public relations.

*Exploring Public Relations* very much led the way in this approach for our discipline and the feedback and compliments the book regularly receives are testimony to this. With this approach we wanted students to have an improved learning experience by involving them in a personal journey that brought the subject to life on the page and spurred them on to find out more. And this is what we have tasked ourselves to do with this exciting fifth edition, *Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication*.

With our new editorial partnership, we have endeavoured to reflect on *Exploring Public Relations*, to take on board the many positive reviews, comments and feedback from students, tutors and members of the practice community. This encouraged us to build on the solid and successful foundations of the book and to critically evaluate each chapter and theme to ensure its contemporary relevance, a textbook for the discipline for the 2020s.

We've done this for the new edition. You'll notice the change to the title. It's a subtle but important shift that recognises the strategic importance of public relations to organisations and growing conversation about professionalism in practice.

Our earlier editions brought challenges and so has this version of the book. But we have benefited from the ability to listen to students and academic colleagues in how they read, study with and educate using the first four editions of the book and its supplements. And through this listening we have attempted to answer any questions or gaps in the earlier versions to ensure it is fit for purpose in a challenging, changing world of communication.

Some of the key areas we have addressed are the most obvious ones in contemporary life of how the techniques used in public relations and communication have been influenced by rapid technological change and its integration, a phenomenon that appears to speed up month by month. To reflect this we have introduced new and revised chapters on digital and social media, democracy and political discourse, disinformation and fake news, research and evaluation methods and techniques, the new world of media relations, how we interact with employees inside organisations (internal communications), how corporate communication operates, the importance of NGOs and charities in modern life, celebrities and influencers, health and well-being, the increased interest in leisure and therefore issues like sport and sports public relations and finally a little discussed but popular area of practice, fashion PR.

On top of this we have ensured that all chapters consider the implications of technology and change on the theory and practice of the discipline. Clearly, some chapters have integrated these influences more than others. One of the key features of the book is that it is an edited textbook and all chapters are written and reviewed within a consistent framework. This means that the book has a particular style and consistency that we have been keen to preserve. This is partly achieved by only working with senior and experienced academics and practitioners who share a mission to understand and explain the discipline. We are therefore

pleased to be able to include contributors from around the world who are closely associated with us individually and collectively and have the same aspirations to improve the subject knowledge and application of public relations in society. Again we feel this was and continues to be a unique feature and strength of the book as it has evolved.

So who to write such a comprehensive text? For this we looked to our colleagues at Leeds Beckett University who teach on our well-established undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes. We also engaged with our wider network – senior academics and practitioners worldwide who have contributed to our subject area.

## Target audience

Feedback suggests there is a diverse range of readers for *Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication* from senior practitioners to undergraduate students. It is the preferred textbook for universities around the world as well as for professional bodies and professional courses which adopt it as their core text. Its content is comprehensive, which perhaps explains this broad appeal. That said, the book is written in a way that it can be used and read by someone who is totally new to the discipline as well as a student or practitioner with significantly more depth of understanding. The contents pages of the book demonstrate how it can be used to support more practical and theoretical aspects of the discipline and at different levels. Therefore it is a perfect accompaniment for undergraduates and postgraduates who are studying public relations as a single subject (i.e. a bachelor's or master's in public relations), jointly with another subject, or as a single module or unit within a wider programme.

## Book style and structure

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 provides important background knowledge to help students understand the broad business and societal context in which public relations plays a role. Included here, for example, are chapters on democracy and on the intercultural and multicultural context of public relations and digital and social media. In Part 2 there is a chapter on disinformation, fake news and social reality

as well as a chapter on professional ethics – a topic of ever increasing importance; while Part 3 includes emerging specialisms such as issues management, sponsorship, corporate communication and public affairs. Part 4 comprises chapters that are not conventionally included within a public relations textbook; for example, the chapter on pressure groups and NGOs, health communication, celebrity and the importance of influencers as well as working in financial public relations and indeed fashion. The final chapter looks to the future and provides some themes and questions that we hope student readers will take up as topics for investigation and research. Public relations is an evolving discipline and its growth requires continual questioning to challenge its boundaries and establish its terrain. As students, teachers, researchers and practitioners we are all responsible for achieving this aim.

## Pedagogy and its place

This is an educational textbook for public relations and therefore includes a number of devices that we hope will help both students and tutors to get the most out of the material. First, each chapter begins with a list of the **Learning outcomes** which students should achieve after engaging with the material. We have structured the book to have a range of consistent pedagogy which support the reader in understanding the chapter subject. For example, there are regular **Explore** features which give instructions on where to look for further information or how to engage further with topics. **Think abouts** are included to encourage reflection and for the reader to pause and think a little more deeply about the issues and ideas that are being presented and discussed. We have attempted to define terms or phrases that may not be universally understood or which form part of the specialist language related to that topic or area of study which are included in a glossary at the back of the book. Finally we have included many cases studies (**Case studies** and

**Mini case studies**) which aim to exemplify and apply the principles under discussion.

## Over to you, the reader

The warm response to the first four editions of the book has been both rewarding and motivating. These have been read and used for teaching literally all over the world and with gratifying endorsements of the original pedagogic strategy of making clear links between theory and practice. However, there are many questions about public relations and its practice which remain under explored. These we aim to highlight in this book, inspiring readers to investigate further, possibly through detailed research for undergraduate and postgraduate projects, dissertations and theses. We hope this revised fifth edition continues to bridge the divide between theory and practice and, above all, is a thought-provoking and enjoyable read for students, practitioners and tutors alike.

## Acknowledgements

In addition to the invaluable contributors already mentioned, we would like to thank all those at Pearson Education for making this fifth edition possible.

Finally, but not least, we would like to thank our families. For Ralph, this dedication goes to my father John who passed away during the drafting of the manuscript for this edition. He was a man who loved to read anything, including a book on public relations.

For Stephen, my dedication is to my wife Sarah Waddington. She's a vocal advocate of the drive towards public relations as a management discipline. As President of the CIPR in 2018 she had a significant influence on the book's title and its scope. Her emotional and intellectual support is at the heart of all my projects.

*Ralph Tench and Stephen Waddington, 2020*



## PART 1

# The context of public relations

This first part of the book provides you with the background knowledge you will require to understand the role and purpose of public relations (PR) set against the broader business and societal contexts in which it plays an active role. Chapter 1 discusses how public relations is defined, its early origins, including proto-public relations practices, and how it evolved across the globe as the contemporary practice we recognise today. Chapter 2 discusses frameworks for analysing and understanding the relationship between public relations and the media/journalism, while recognising how both practices are changing in response to technological and economic developments. Chapter 3 examines technological developments in further depth, specifically digital and social media which continue to drive public relations and have become central to the

practice function. Arguably, public relations is essential to modern democratic societies. In Chapter 4 the relationship between democracy and public relations is examined and critiqued drawing examples from recent uses of public relations in political discourse. Chapter 5 examines the societal context of public relations from the organisation's perspective, highlighting the theme of corporate social responsibility and how communicators help organisations to respond to the environments around them as increasingly the sustainability of some businesses is drawn into question. In Chapter 6, the international and multi-cultural context of public relations is introduced and debated. Finally, we turn to the role of the public relations practitioner in Chapter 7 to focus on what public relations practitioners do, how they deliver their role and function and how they should continue to learn and develop for the future.



## Public relations origins: definitions and history



Source: Rafal Cichawa/Shutterstock

### Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- identify, understand and discuss the main aspects of public relations development over time
- review and critique different interpretations of public relations history
- analyse and discuss different national and cultural interpretations of public relations and its history
- examine your understanding of historical research and identify sources, such as articles, books and archives, for future research.

### Structure

- Proto-public relations: the antecedents of modern public relations
- The expansion of public relations in the twentieth century
- The worldwide development of public relations since the mid-twentieth century: the springboards and restraints that shaped it
- How public relations grew.



# Introduction

In this chapter, the formation of public relations as a practice will be traced from its earliest indications in the ancient world through two millennia and up to the end of the twentieth century. There are many antecedents of public relations, mainly methods of promotion and disseminating information. It was not until the nineteenth century that the term 'public relations' was first used although public relations-like practices (also called proto-public relations) were already evident.

Organised communication practices, recognisable as public relations, were introduced in Germany and the United

States in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the United Kingdom, public relations was noticeable from the mid-1920s onward, primarily in government. Professionalisation in the form of university-level education and practitioner associations appeared after the Second World War. From the 1950s onwards, the practices of public relations as promotion (or marketing PR) and public relations as communication management continued to expand across countries in the Western world, although it was suppressed in the Soviet bloc of Eastern Europe and in China until the early 1990s. By the 1980s,

public relations theory and practice were evolving in more sophisticated forms that focused on the formation of mutually beneficial relationships and as a support for organisational reputation. In this and following decades, it expanded internationally and, notably, attracted an increasingly feminised workforce that was educated at university level.

This chapter will consider the definitions of public relations as well as the antecedent, the springboard (impetuses for expansion) and the restraints that held it back in some regions of the world. Methods of interpreting the history of public relations will also be considered.

## Box 1.1

### What is public relations?

At the outset of a chapter on the history and origins of public relations, a definition of the topic is needed. How does it differ from advertising, publicity, propaganda and other forms of persuasional or promotional communication? There have been innumerable attempts to define public relations. Harwood Childs offered one early but still insightful attempt: 'Public relations is not the presentation of a point of view, not the art of tempering mental attitudes, nor the development of cordial and profitable relations. [ . . . ] The basic problem of public relations is to reconcile or adjust in the public interest those aspects of our personal and corporate behaviour which have a social significance' (Childs 1940: 3 and 13).

In the mid-1970s, the social scientist Rex Harlow (1977) identified more than 400 versions or variations. Since then, more have been proposed, discussed and, in some instances, dismissed. Watson and Noble (2014) comment that 'some commentators see the surfeit of definitions as a weakness of public relations; others appreciate the debate that surrounds them as an indication of vigour in the field' (p. 6). This chapter won't propose a single definition, but it will show there have been a wide range of cultural, managerial and political and religious influences upon the formation of public relations theories and practices. There are, however, some characteristics that shape the wide variety of forms of public relations:

- It is a planned communication and/or relationship-building activity with strategic or deliberate intent (Lamme and Russell 2015). Some definitions emphasise the management of communications (Grunig and Hunt 1984; Broom and Sha 2013), the management of relationships (Coombs and Holladay 2006) and the creation and maintenance of reputation (CIPR 2012).
- It seeks to create awareness among specific groups, often referred to as 'publics' or 'stakeholders', and engage their interest. The interest of the public should result in a mutually beneficial relationship or response, possibly as dialogue (Gutiérrez-García et al. 2015). Thus, it is different from publicity which only seeks to disseminate messages.
- In its most common form, public relations has been enacted through the media, which has been the gatekeeper of communication. This is an important difference from advertising which places messages through the purchase of advertisement space and airtime (radio, television and online). With the rise of social media, public relations activity has increasingly become a form of direct communication, bypassing media scrutiny.
- Although the US public relations pioneer Edward L. Bernays proposed that 'public relations attempts to engineer public support' (Bernays 1955: 4–5), the term 'to engineer' is rejected by many as implying manipulation rather than truth-telling. Many scholars and practitioners contend that ethical communication is the bedrock of professional public relations.

This chapter will thus consider how public relations gradually became identified as a planned, strategic practice whose purposes were to communicate and build relationships in a mutually beneficial and ethical manner. As it evolved, public relations developed from personal and

organisational promotion, benefited from technologies such as print and, later, mass media, became an important element in empire- and nation-building, and has formed worldwide practices with increasing employment and economic importance (see Explore 1.1).

## Explore 1.1

### Defining public relations

As a group exercise, each member is going to write a definition of public relations. But how?

First, let us spark some reflection. Start creating two columns on your computer, tablet or sheet of paper. The left side should be labelled 'in' and the right side 'out'. Use the 'in' column to write words or expressions related to what you consider public relations is about, and the 'out' column to write words or expressions which you think are definitely NOT related to public relations activities. Compare and discuss your columns with the rest of the members of your group.

Now, try to incorporate the 'in' column ideas to write your own definition of public relations (PR). Think about how you arrived at that definition:

- Is it based on your observation of PR practitioners at work or personal experience of PR work?
- Is it influenced by representation of PR work and practitioners in popular culture such as TV, movies and books? Is it based on reporting of PR activity in the media (for example, 'a PR disaster')?
- Is it based on what lecturers have told you about PR?

Now compare the definitions each member wrote:

- How different are they?
- What do they have in common?
- What are the differences and why do they exist?

As a group exercise, work together on the preparation of a common set of ideas. Then share them with other groups and see how you agree or disagree.

## Proto-public relations: the antecedents of modern public relations

When did public relations (or similar practices) start? Karl Nessman (2000: 211), in a tongue-in-cheek comment, suggests that it 'would date back to Adam and Eve, to the point when people had to win over the confidence of others'. See Explore 1.2. Other suggestions include Sumerian wall-markings from 2000 BC (in modern Iraq), the persuasive rhetors of Ancient Greece (400 BC) and Roman emperors. Al-Badr (2004) claims that a 4000-year-old cuneiform tablet found in Iraq was similar to a 'bulletin telling farmers how to grow better crops' and thus a form of promotional information. A precedent of election campaigns handbooks can be found in Roman orator Cicero's brother *Commentarium Petitionis* (Comments on elections), in which he advised how to win over public opinion if he wanted to become Consul of the Roman Consulate (64 BC). Julius

Caesar, when he was Roman Consul in 59BC, arranged a daily news tablet or sheet called *Acta Diurna* (Daily Gazette) that offered information to the Roman populus and showed him as an active leader. In the Christian era, Robert Brown (2015) presents the Apostle Paul as a first-century example of a public relations practitioner because of his influence on others, his campaigns to build relationships with faith communities and his writing and publication of 'letters' (books) of the Bible.

Other examples are the formation and promotion of saintly cults (Watson 2008). These are not specimens of public relations, because they were not 'seen as strategically planned activity in medieval times and . . . did not use the framing of language and accumulated best practice that are applied now' (Watson 2008: 20). 'They were PR-like but were not PR' but are 'proto-public relations' (ibid.), a term which is based on 'proto' meaning 'first in time', 'beginning' or 'giving rise to' (Merriam Webster) (OED 2005) and draws to mind the term 'prototype' (Watson 2013: 12).

## Asia

Around the world there were other antecedents to public relations. In China, PR-like activities can be traced for thousands of years, occurring mainly at state level ‘with the intention of the ruler or the emperor to establish a credible reputation among his people, or to maintain a harmonious relationship with different sectors of society’ (Hung-Baesecke and Chen 2014: 24). These occurred in three forms: collections of folklore and culture such as folk songs, lobbying between rival states in order to avoid war and prevent attacks, and diplomacy to open trade links such as the Silk Road across Asia. Chinese, Taiwanese and Vietnamese researchers also point to the tenets of Confucianism as both ancient and enduring influences on proto-public relations and modern practices. Keeping promises and valuing reputation, an emphasis on interpersonal relationships and ‘relational harmony’, being firm on principles and ethics yet flexible on strategy and the importance of propriety (‘respect, benevolence, fairness, friendship, and harmony and being knowledgeable’) (Hung-Baesecke and Chen 2014: 23) led to the formation of proto-public relations that was based on *guanxi* (personal connections). It is also found in Vietnam as *quan hệ* (personal network) (Van 2014: 148). Confucianism emphasises ‘the importance of public opinion’ (Wu and Lai 2014: 115) and thus has given a strong cultural base to modern public relations in East Asia in a manner not seen in other parts of the world. Proto-public relations in Thailand, which was never colonised, evolved through royal institutions from the thirteenth century onwards and was expressed in Buddhist religious beliefs and supported the unity of the nation (Tantivejakul and Manmin 2011). King Rama IV in the late nineteenth century ‘used royal gazettes, printed materials, royal photographs and the release of information to the press’ to provide clear evidence ‘of PR type activity to support national governance and imperialism avoidance’ (Tantivejakul 2014: 130). Although the western forms of public relations are practised in Japan, a culturally different form, *kouhou* (widely notify), was developed (Yamamura, Ikari and Kenmochi 2014: 64). The term first appeared in a leading newspaper and denoted an advertisement or announcement. In the Meiji restoration starting in 1867, many older social and political structures were broken down as part of modernisation although a more democratic society did not evolve. The government formed news agencies to supply information to the rapidly expanding

### Explore 1.2

#### When did PR start?

Although the term, public relations, has been widely used for a little more than a century, when do you consider that ‘public relations’ started as a practice? Was it at the beginning of the twentieth century or did it exist as an unnamed practice before then? You may want to consider the characteristics that define those activities as public relations and thus different from other promotional or persuasive means of communication.

newspaper sector and ‘press agencies were the first organizations to systematically engage in the publicity business’ (ibid.). Unlike China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Thailand, Japanese press agencies did not continue cultural and religious traditions.

India, which was a British colony from the eighteenth century to 1947, has a proto-public relations history that can be traced to the reign of King Ashoka (272 BC–232 BC) whose edicts and inscriptions on rocks and pillars ‘were imperial communications to the subjects of his vast empire’ (Vil’Anilam 2014: 35). During subsequent eras of Maurya, Gupta and Mogul rulers, rulers communicated with society through formal meetings (*Darbar*) at the emperor’s court at which representations were made and decisions given. Vil’Anilam (2014: 35) argues that ‘early practices of maintaining relations with the public cannot, however, be compared with modern public relations’. In this first phase of India’s communication history until 1858, a ‘propaganda’ era (Reddi 1999), there was communication from the East India Company and the formation of India’s first but short-lived newspaper in Calcutta in 1780. It was followed by the ‘publicity and information’ era until independence in 1947. Notably, this period included the formation of governmental Central Publicity Board during the First World War which was India’s first organisational communication operation (Bardhan and Patwardhan 2004) and the development of public relations activities undertaken by Indian Railways. Some authors consider that Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian movement for independence from the British and a former newspaper editor, was the ‘spiritual founder of Indian public relations’ (Reddi 1999) because of his use of mass media in campaigns against the coloniser and to address poverty.

## Middle East and Africa

In the Arab world, before technology accelerated the speed of communication, traditional gathering points, such as the mosque and the *majlis* or *diwaniyya* (a public gathering place for men), were both formal and informal channels for dissemination and discussion of news (Badran 2014). Some scholars have traced antecedents back 1400 years to the era of the Prophet Mohammed when the new religion of Islam began to be disseminated among the tribes of the Arabian peninsula (Abdelhay-Altamimi 2014: 84). Poetry was important in this culture and the poet ‘was considered to be the press secretary of the tribe, attacking the tribe’s enemies, praising its accomplishments and strengthening the fighter’s morale’ (Fakhri et al. 1980: 34). It is a tradition that is still ‘alive and well’ in the modern Arabian Gulf region (Badran 2014: 8). The practice of public relations, prior to the arrival of Western corporate communication departments and agencies, was limited to a protocol role of organising events and taking care of visitors (Abdelhay-Altamimi 2014; Badran 2014). In colonial Africa during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, proto-public relations was in a governmental information form, often supporting the formation of newspapers in British colonies in Eastern and Southern Africa (Kiambi 2014; Natifu 2014) and Nigeria in West Africa (Ibraheem 2014). Kiambi has found evidence of a British Colonial Office information methodology that may have been applied in African, Asian and Caribbean colonies in the early to mid-twentieth century.

## Australia and New Zealand

Australia and New Zealand, both British colonies until the start of the twentieth century, also saw government communication as the preparatory stage for public relations. In Australia, ‘Government attempts to inform, convince and persuade the widely spread population relied on and exploited PR strategies more than any single entity private enterprise could hope to achieve’ (Sheehan 2014: 11). Promotional activities undertaken by the province-type colonies that made up nineteenth-century Australia attracted immigrants to new settlements and miners to the mid-century Gold Rush, as well as lobbying the colonial master in London about independence and trade issues. Promoters of the New Zealand colony sought immigrants and investors and to position the country for a future separate from

Australia as an independent dominion of the British Empire. Galloway (2014: 14) comments that nineteenth-century New Zealand ‘began to develop some skill in the press agency then beginning to emerge in the United States’. Strategic publicity for the colony took place in the London Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Vienna International Exposition of 1873.

## Latin America

In Latin America, public relations is mostly seen as a recent phenomenon, dating from mid-twentieth century onwards. Only in Argentina, a Spanish colony until 1810, is there clear evidence of publicity-type activities in support of the nascent colony and its ambitions to attract investment from Europe. These included newspapers promoting political groups and the national interest, and a diplomatic lobbying campaign (Carbone and Montaner 2014). The start of public relations in Brazil is set at 1914 when a Canadian-owned tramway company in Sao Paulo set up the Public Relations Department, but progress was very slow until the 1950s. In Central America, corporate public relations activity supported the Panama Canal in 1914 but, like Brazil, this was a false dawn.

## Europe

European antecedents vary and are subject to considerable debate. In Eastern Europe and Russia, some scholars (Boshnakova 2014; Ławniczak 2005; 2014) consider that public relations arose only after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet bloc. It was an outcome of the new democratic politics and governments. Others, however, have mapped out proto-public relations activity in preceding decades and centuries, including among former Soviet bloc nations such as the Czech Republic, former East Germany, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia. In Western Europe, it is Germany whose public relations sector was best developed with evidence of organised strategic communication in the eighteenth century.

Early proto-public relations activity can be traced to leading writers being employed ‘as publicists and as state employees in the 1790s’ and a Karl Varnhagen van Ense was hired as a ‘full time “press officer”’ by the Prussian Chancellor von Hardenberg during the Vienna Congress (1814–1815)’ which sought to solve boundary issues arising from the French Revolution and the





**Picture 1.1** The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led to rapid expansion of public relations and political communication in Eastern Europe. However, the German Democratic Republic, which is now part of the Federal Republic of Germany, had 'socialist public relations' which employed more than 3000 people in the 1980s. (source: Luis Veiga/Stockbyte Unreleased/Getty Images)

Napoleonic Wars (Bentele 2015: 48–49). In 1841, a press bureau was started in Prussia 'to correct wrong press reports', with a succeeding Literarisches Cabinet or Buro (Literary Cabinet or Bureau) continuing until 1920. Official newspapers were established and government-friendly newspapers given financial support. Outside of political changes, 'economic and technical progress also shaped PR's development' (Bentele 2015: 50). Coal mining and steel manufacturing were the basis of German heavy industry; electronics and chemicals were innovative sectors. From companies like Krupp (steel), Siemens and AEG (electronics) and BASF, Bayer, Hoechst and Agfa (chemicals), which were seeking national and international markets, the beginnings of systematic, planned corporate and marketing public relations were established. Alfred Krupp was a leader and along with Werner Rathenau and Werner von Siemens 'simultaneously became leading businessmen as well as architects of PR in the nineteenth century' (ibid.). Krupp had a publicity coup of a 2.5-ton block of cast steel at the 1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, London. The reason that led Krupp to become the best 'public relations' for his company might be found in a phrase he wrote in 1866 and was found in his personal correspondence of the company's archives: 'I think the time has come for people, who are true to truth, to write reports about factories and companies for newspapers which are read throughout

the world and can spread the knowledge of these companies' (Binder 1983: 170). In 1867, a full-time 'Literat' (man of letters) was appointed as the manager of Krupp's corporate communications, followed in 1870 by a corporate press department whose role was to monitor coverage of the company in newspapers and prepare articles and brochures to promote Krupp and its products (Wolbring 2000). Other German companies also developed press relations operations. By the beginning of the twentieth century AEG was evaluating its press coverage in an organised manner and the sociologist Max Weber began research in 1910 into the sources of newspaper coverage. These actions demonstrate how well the media economy and promotional communication sectors were established.

In much of the rest of Western Europe, there is little evidence about proto-public relations or planned publicity and press relations that can be compared with the German experience. Although the United Kingdom appears to have had well-organised practices for informational communications in its colonies, these were not evident in the four home nations until after the First World War. There are exceptions such as the Marconi Company issuing news releases in 1910 about new trans-Atlantic telegraph services. In the Netherlands, there was a long tradition of *voorlichting* (a literal translation of 'Enlightenment'), giving people information in order that they could participate

## Box 1.2

### The patron saints of public relations

Saint Bernadine of Siena is the patron saint of public relations, commemorated on 20 May each year. Bernardino (also known as Bernardino) was a Franciscan preacher born in 1380. He was a successful evangelist who travelled throughout Italy for 30 years. Following his death at L'Aquila, near Rome, in 1444, a basilica was built in the town and his relics are on display there.

He was chosen in 1956 when a petition was brought by Cardinal Lecaro of Bologna for his nomination as patron saint of public relations practitioners in Italy. In 1960, Cardinal Feltin, Archbishop of Paris, obtained a similar designation of Bernardino as patron saint of French public relations professionals. Since then, the Italian preacher-writer has become the universal patron saint of public relations.

Saint Paul (also known as the Apostle Paul) lived during the first century in ancient Cilicia (which is now part of Turkey), Syria, Israel, Greece and Italy. He is also considered as a patron saint of public relations workers as well as for journalists, authors and many others. Saint Paul travelled widely as a promoter of the new Christian faith and wrote many letters (books) of the Bible's New Testament.

in discussions about their society. *Voorlichters* travelled around giving information about health, farming, education, politics, etc. (van Ruler and Cotton 2015: 91–2). *Voorlichting*, however, can be interpreted as a communication mechanism 'to show people how to conduct themselves as good citizens and to control them'. The history of PR in the Netherlands can therefore be seen as a history of the battle for information and emancipation on the one hand and education and persuasion on the other but always under the ('Dutch uncle') dogma of 'knowing what is best' (van Ruler and Cotton 2015: 91). In Norway, socially radical policies were promoted by *potetprest* (potato priests of the Lutheran church) in public information campaigns in the mid-late eighteenth century aimed at alleviating poverty through the planting of potatoes. The priests used lectures, handbooks and their enthusiasm in these planned activities (Bang 2015).

## The expansion of public relations in the twentieth century

As previous sections demonstrated, public relations has many, time-varied beginnings. In some countries and regions, it has been influenced by religion and culture; in others, it has been linked to political, governmental and economic developments such as industrialisation and the development of parliamentary democracies. In general, public relations is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. During the first half of the last century,

its expansion was primarily in the United States with some disrupted progress in Germany. The United Kingdom's engagement with public relations commenced after the First World War, but expanded more rapidly from 1945 onwards, as did much of Western Europe and other regions of the world outside of Eastern Europe. In Asia, Thailand established governmental communications in the 1930s but other nations in that continent and in Africa developed public relations structures after independence, which mainly came in the 1960s. The People's Republic of China was closed by its Communist government from 1949 until 1979 after which public relations practice were gradually introduced as the economy re-opened. The advance of public relations in Latin America was varied as many countries were under forms of military government, often until the mid-1980s.

### United States

Public relations practices were developed in the United States from the final decades of the nineteenth century onwards. These have been well recorded and taught around the world through popular textbooks and the example of US education. Although most countries have national approaches to public relations, there are 'International PR' models of practice in general and specialist areas that are used by multinational corporations and international organisations that have derived from US practice.

Railways companies, religious organisations and travelling entertainments (notably circuses) were all engaged in public relations activity in the final two or three decades of the nineteenth century (Lamme and