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Australian public relations practitioners and academics have been fortunate in recent years with the publishing of a number of excellent introductory and specialist texts. This development recognises the growth and maturity of public relations professionally and scholastically. For undergraduate students or early career practitioners recent publications such as Chia and Synott’s *An Introduction to public relations* (2009) or Harrison’s *Strategic public relations* (2011) are required reading.

However, up to this time there has been a noticeable demand for a sophisticated volume – one that appeals to the mid-career manager and the postgraduate student undertaking introductory study in public relations. This void has now been filled with the publication of *Public Relations Theories, practices, critiques* (Pearson 2012) by Professor Jim Macnamara of University of Technology, Sydney.

This text has one of the strongest theoretical entries seen in any modern equivalent. While the main “Parts” are similar in outline to Chia and Synott’s approach what sets this text apart is the intertwining of practice methods, theories, models and a contemporary critique of the same. It is in this critique that the author is to be congratulated, the volume is rewarding for the public relations scholar and professional. The non-American reader will be refreshed by the discussion on the US centric heritage of PR.

Each “Part” is structured with thoughtful layout. The writing style is largely informal and in some instances conversational however where formality is required such as the theoretical discussion, a more scholarly tone is assumed. Part 1 is concerned with foundational understandings: communication problems, theories and models; Part 2 has a practitioner focus on practices, methods and the industry while Part 3 looks at critiques and change.

Practical considerations are capably dealt with also. The author’s publishing in the area of social media is well known in Australian academic circles and he brings his vast knowledge to the fore. Rather than allocating a chapter or topic to social media Macnamara has embedded the phenomenon and its impacts in the context of each part and their inclusive chapters. In taking this...
approach the author has also skilfully contextualised the parameters of Web 2.0 for public relations practitioners.

For the teacher each chapter finishes with discussion point and exercises that allow for reflection and activity. Appendices and case studies make this a great resource for academics and provide interesting templates for professionals. It is a handsomely presented volume – with excellent production values.

While its claim to be an Asia–Pacific text is overstated (the highly detailed index includes only one reference for China, Malaysia and Singapore), the comprehensive examination of public relations will provide practitioners and scholars with a solid basis to argue for the future and growth of PR in the region. Mcnamara has in one volume met many of the varied demands of both scholars and practitioners. To paraphrase a cliché, if you only have one PR book in your library make sure it’s this one!