



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

# LEARNING LAYER

## Does journalism need promotion?

The author says journalism is a fact-based enterprise that ironically often relies on faith-based arguments to earn the trust of communities. Journalists, for all their skills, seem to do a poor job of communicating about themselves and their positive effects on society.

Perhaps journalism needs a good public relations or marketing campaign to show audiences just how valuable it is.

### Assignments for students at three levels:

**Flashlight:** Ask students to choose a local media outlet and explore its impact. Then show the [first “Got Milk?” TV ad](#) and others from that campaign, credited with increasing American milk consumption. Ask students to make their own video ads, highlighting the importance of journalism, including an original slogan or tag line.

**Spotlight:** [The Reuters “Handbook of Journalism”](#) and other news company policies discourage self-promotion and encourage journalistic humility. Class discussion: Is it a conflict of interest for a journalist to discuss the role of journalism involving a story he or she is still reporting? Would that be the same as “becoming part of a story you are covering?” Should individual journalists be ambassadors only in a general sense when explaining the role of journalism?

**Searchlight:** Note the web sites of the [Newspaper Association of America](#) and the [National Association of Broadcasters](#). NAA promotes newspapers; NAB promotes broadcasters. Assignment: Blog about these questions: Who speaks for journalism in general? What about journalism schools? They frequently give [prizes for the best journalism](#). Do they have an obligation to the public to explain why journalism matters? If journalism schools aren’t the right ones to speak up, who should?

**Extra credit:** This video shows library officials in [Dalkeith, Scotland promoting their library with pole-dancing classes](#). Does journalism need a similar make-over? If so, how do you reconcile the [dire warnings of the collapse of democracy](#) and [success of entertainment-driven media](#)? Is the fun of journalism hard to convey without seeming shallow?

