

(Read ebook) What Are Journalists For?

## What Are Journalists For?

*Professor Jay Rosen*

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#2990331 in Books 1999-11-10Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 1.12 x 6.39 x 9.46l, #File Name: 0300078234352 pages | File size: 78.Mb

**Professor Jay Rosen : What Are Journalists For?** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Are Journalists For?:

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A superb, serious and constructive book!By Ervin S DugganMany professors probably dream of launching intellectual movements that change things for the better. Jay Rosen of New York University, author of "What Are Journalists For?" has actually done it. His superb, serious and constructive book tells the story of public journalism, a movement aimed at questioning the conventional wisdom of journalists and at re-centering their efforts. Public journalism encouraged journalists to be "for" richer democratic discourse, for example,

and to reflect the real concerns of citizens in their stories, rather than each election year's set of "issues" as devised by politicians. Controversial from the start, the movement has had real impact: Sneered at by haughty power-journalists in some major metropolitan media, public journalism was embraced in more open-minded places like Kansas, Florida and North Carolina, and the results have been both interesting and encouraging. In its diagnosis of what's wrong with today's media and its search for constructive alternatives, Rosen's book is fascinating. (With James Fallows' earlier "Breaking the News," this highly readable book is essential information for citizens who care about the way the media work.) And in its careful, fair, thoughtful and modest account of the public-journalism movement, author Rosen actually creates a model of the kind of journalism he advocates--- and teaches. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study of public journalism By David T. Z. Mindich The title of Jay Rosen's excellent new book is deceptively complex, especially in the absence of the colon embedded in most academic titles. "What are Journalists For?" asks two questions: What is the utility of journalists and what do they stand for. What are journalists for? Rosen argues, among other things, that journalists should be for democracy. In the face of a declining civic life and a growing public distrust of journalists, a number of reporters have realized that they could (or perhaps should) try to change this. This idea is called public journalism, a notion that has been debated in academia and in the press for a decade. Rosen, the intellectual leader of public journalism, could have used the publication of his book as an opportunity to fight with the more rabid of his critics. The views of the critics are discussed and evaluated with more thoughtfulness than their tenor might merit. But Rosen has done far more here: he has written an engaging and provocative book that is at once history, analysis and a prescription for change. Anyone who has taken even a passing interest in Rosen's enterprise has been waiting for the publication of this book with anticipation. Readers will find that it was well worth the wait. It is one of the most important books about journalism of our time. 18 of 22 people found the following review helpful. Needed: Journalistic Diversity By Siva Vaidhyanathan For almost a decade, the diverse journalistic experiments collectively known as "public journalism" or "civic journalism" have elicited hysterical overreactions from established pundits such as David Remnick, Michael Gartner, and Michael Kelly. They have raised fears that if journalists at all levels ask the simple question "what is my role in my community?" they are likely to tumble down a slippery slope of self-importance and compromised ethics. In his book, What are Journalists For?, Jay Rosen summarizes the various attempts journalists have made to connect with their readers in a meaningful way. Rosen is anything but boastful about the success of public journalism. He is frank about the shortcomings of some experiments. He generously credits the practitioners over the theorists -- a rare stance for an academic in our age. Most importantly, Rosen grants his critics ample space to air their concerns. Then he gently answers his critics. Again, this is a rare move for an academic. It's an even rarer move within the cacaphony of voices that attempt to pass for public deliberation in this culture. What becomes painfully clear from the accounts of the enemies of public journalism is that they all deeply believe their role in the culture is to be as cynical as possible, so that through their work, "we won't get fooled again." However, the roles of New York- and Washington-based political journalists are very different than the roles of those who cover school boards in Round Rock, Texas or Augusta, Maine. The answer to Rosen's titular question is that journalists are for many things. There is no single way to be an effective and responsible journalist. If we learn anything from the experiments that make up public journalism, it that we need experimentation. We should not be afraid to fail, not be afraid to err. Our political culture is so poor and malnourished that surely something must change. Rosen and the public journalists he counsels and describes are the first to concede that they do not have all the answers to the question, "what are journalists for?" But 10 years ago, no one dared ask that question.

The public journalism movement emerged after the 1988 presidential election as a countermeasure against eroding trust in the news media and widespread public disillusionment with politics and civic affairs. In this book, public journalism advocate Jay Rosen recalls the history of the movement and explains how its innovations offer an opportunity to revitalize the press and improve civic life.

.com New York University communications professor Jay Rosen asks a question in his title What Are Journalists For? and devotes the book to arguing that the answer ought to be different from what it is today. Journalism, he says, should not simply report the news and move on to another story; rather, it should become "democracy's cultivator, as well as its chronicler." Rosen advocates "public journalism," a disorganized movement among newspaper editors and reporters around the United States striving to connect with their readers in new and untried ways (see, for example, Breaking the News, by former U.S. News World Report editor James Fallows). He describes, for instance, how the Virginian-Pilot, a newspaper in Norfolk, Virginia, based its election reporting one fall on issues raised by ordinary residents in a series of focus groups, and then published a voting guide. Rosen provides plenty of examples of other newspapers doing similar things, and these case studies are one of the book's strengths. Although several powerful news organizations such as The New York Times have criticized public journalism for abandoning the traditional goal of objectivity, Rosen believes his movement may help newspapers during a time of decreasing readership--and also advance the common good. Print journalists wondering whether their profession will survive long into the 21st

century--as well as anybody interested in the future of the media--will want to grapple with Rosen's ideas, whether they ultimately accept or reject them. --John J. Miller  
From Publishers Weekly  
Are journalists eyewitnesses who describe to a passive audience the actions of political insiders? Or are they catalysts to a public conversation and civic action? This debate is at the center of the development of "public journalism," a movement that Rosen, former director of the Kettering Foundation's Project on Public Life and the Press, helped found. This partisan but fair-minded history examines both theory and practice, as Rosen recounts the movement's intellectual roots, its adoption by some newspapers and reaction within the profession, including criticism from heavyweights like the New Yorker's David Remnick and the New York Times's Max Frankel. Some examples of public journalism are clearly salutary: a newspaper refuses to accept political candidates' framing of a campaign and instead queries the candidates on vital issues; another supplements local crime coverage with regular charts, so trends are not distorted by the sensationalist focus on particular crimes. But many journalists remain skeptical of a theory that may lead newspapers to start recommending civic solutions in their news pages. Rosen distinguishes between advocating projects (e.g., building a new stadium) and engaging citizens without recommending specific goals, offering responses to critics that are mostly thoughtful but don't resolve, for example, how public journalism ought to approach subjects readers should care about but don't, like foreign news. It's disappointing that Rosen does not muse on journalism as practiced by the European press, the American alternative press or even opinion magazines like the Nation or the New Republic. While none play the civic role of a dominating daily newspaper, they certainly resist framing issues according to newspaper conventions of objectivity. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
Rosen (journalism, New York Univ.) is best known for founding public journalism (also known as civic journalism), which aims to generate civic action; here he records the movement's history and goals. He argues that in an era of commercialized media, journalists have increasingly become distanced from their audience. While candidates spout rhetoric based on manufactured issues, playing to constituencies and cameras, journalists treat politics like an insider sport. The role of a responsible journalist should be to connect to citizens' concerns, helping them gain access to a democratic system. Critics of civic journalism say journalists' involvement in public issues could degrade to a market-driven posture or jeopardize their objectivity; to bolster his argument, Rosen quotes from highly regarded journalists, such as David Broder, James Fallows, E.J. Dionne, and Ted Koppel, who deplore current media trends. But the result is disappointing. Overwriting and repetitiousness suggest that the text would have been adequate as a magazine article. Recommended for journalism libraries only.  
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