

## ***Teaching Brief/GIFT***

# **Creating a Prompt Library: Applying Generative AI Skills to Public Relations Practice**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Preparing public relations students with knowledge and skills to apply generative artificial intelligence (AI) to professional practice has become an essential part of PR education. This teaching brief presents a public relations course assignment, Creating a Prompt Library, that involves developing prompting skills, applying AI tools to a variety of public relations tasks, and critically analyzing AI output.

*Keywords:* generative artificial intelligence, AI, public relations, prompting, education

### **Summary of Assignment**

Creating a Prompt Library is a main assignment for the course, Public Relations and Artificial Intelligence, taught for the first time in Spring 2024. This assignment teaches artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, develops skills for writing prompts and editing output, and applies generative AI tools to the real-world practice of public relations. Students first gain experience using AI to complete a variety of in-class and homework exercises and then create a “prompt library,” a collection of their prompts and outputs, along with analytical reflections about what they learned. The prompt library is a key component of the course because it requires students to not only learn how to use generative artificial intelligence in public relations (PR) work, but also to assess the effectiveness of their prompts, understand how to improve them, and think critically about the quality of AI output to meet professional PR standards. The assignment’s effectiveness was evident by significant increases in students’ knowledge, proficiency, and confidence in applying AI skills to public relations practice.

### **Overview and Rationale**

When awareness and use of ChatGPT exploded in late 2022 and early 2023, application of generative artificial intelligence to PR work became a topic of wide discussion among PR practitioners (Freedman, 2023; Staley et al., 2023; Waddington, 2023). Along with concern about how that technology would affect public relations work, including the potential loss of jobs, came excitement and interest in how generative AI could be a valuable tool. This dynamic growth of AI technology and its impact on the public relations profession underscored the importance of beginning to instruct students on AI literacy and the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT. A Muck Rack study reported that 87% of PR professionals surveyed in November and December 2023 said they were using or expected to use AI, a jump from 61% in March (Muck Rack, 2024). Public

relations trade publications, websites, blogs, and webinars began exploring and documenting the application of generative AI for completing different PR tasks, such as content creation, summarizing articles, social media, drafting different types of writing (Jarboe, 2023; Kerr, 2023; O'Connell, n.d.; Wylie, 2023; Yan, 2023). This interest transferred to the workplace, with employers looking for professionals who know about and have experience using AI tools (Marcinuk, 2023). At the same time, a top concern of PR practitioners expressed in a Muck Rack survey (2024) is that young professionals will not learn the fundamentals of public relations and instead rely too much on AI. Consequently, along with learning how to use generative AI, students need to know the underlying PR principles for whatever they ask an AI tool to do. Including instruction or review of relevant PR basics and a guide or rubric for assignments can help students evaluate what AI-generated.

Recognizing this rapid pace of adoption of ChatGPT and other generative AI platforms, the creation of a new course, Public Relations and Artificial Intelligence, was fast-tracked and taught in Spring 2024. The Creating a Prompt Library assignment serves as a foundational assignment for the course by focusing on AI literacy and building AI skills for application to various aspects of public relations work, from writing news releases and fact sheets to brainstorming and creating PR plans, to conducting research and creating social media content and calendars. In addition to being a valuable learning assignment, the prompt library concept has professional relevance as a productive way to retain prompts for reuse, adaptation and sharing with other members of an organization (Penn, 2023).

### **Student Learning Goals**

Student learning goals for the Creating a Prompt Library assignment are aligned with the overall objectives of the Public Relations and Artificial Intelligence class. After completing the prompt library assignment, students will be able to:

- Produce effective AI prompts using different techniques that generate desired outputs.
- Use of a variety of generative AI tools strategically for different public relations purposes.
- Evaluate AI output against professional PR principles, standards, and best practices.
- Create a prompt library collection of effective prompts used to generate PR materials.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of generative artificial intelligence.

**Prompt Library Assignment Description**

The Creating a Prompt Library assignment involves students evaluating the prompts and output of in-class activities and homework assignments using generative AI to produce a variety of PR materials. While in this case the prompt library was part of a course that was focused on learning to use AI, the concept is applicable to individual assignments, such as writing news releases, bios, fact sheets, blog posts, Q&As, media talking points, and slide presentations. It could also be used in courses that cover such topics as social media content and calendars, events, content and sentiment analyses, and PR plans. In general, students create a “prompt library” to document their work in writing prompts, analyzing the effectiveness of their prompts, and assessing the quality of AI output in relation to professional PR standards.

In using the prompt library, students enter information into a template provided by the instructor to record purpose, Large Language Model (LLM) used, date, prompt, output, and a reflection on each assignment’s effectiveness in generating professional-quality PR material. To help ensure students can knowledgeably assess the quality of output, each assignment includes a review of the relevant PR basics and a guide, or rubric, to help students evaluate what AI generated. Students’ reflection

comments in the prompt library provide an indication of how well they evaluated AI-generated material. The instructor can then determine whether the comments were thorough and address any gaps in the critique, further reinforcing PR principles (See Appendix A for assignment details, Appendix B for examples of student work, and Appendix C for examples of in-class/homework assignments).

Students turn in prompt library assignments at mid-term and at the end of the semester. Each must include analysis of a minimum of five PR prompting assignments. Maintaining the prompt library serves several purposes in the course. It gives students a disciplined way to go beyond typing a quick prompt, requiring them to thoughtfully examine the AI process. They have a record of prompts that worked well and could be used or adapted for future use without “reinventing the wheel” in school or at work. The analytical framework used in the prompt library assignment is applicable to individual assignments involving use of AI tools, not just a semester-long course. Examples of assignments could involve writing, PR planning and brainstorming, social media, and case study analysis. The steps in reviewing prompts and their output require students to thoughtfully document the process followed and critique the results – what worked, what did not, and what they would do differently to produce better outcomes. The prompt library also can be included in a student’s professional portfolio to demonstrate their ability to use artificial intelligence in PR practice. From an instructor’s perspective, the prompt library helps in assessing students’ prompt-writing skills, their progression in the course, and what they are learning about the application of AI to public relations tasks.

In-class instruction reviews the principles behind the AI assignments to ensure that students “know PR” and are able to do what they ask AI to do. This addresses a concern of professionals that new PR practitioners may use AI tools without understanding underlying public

relations principles and strategy (Muck Rack, 2024). Additionally, through the in-class activities and homework assignments, students exceed the minimum 10 hours of practice recommended to gain a basic understanding of generative AI use (Mollick, 2023).

### **Applying the Prompt Library to PR Assignments**

The prompt library concept can be applied to a variety of assignments in different courses, such as PR writing, that involve teaching students how to use generative artificial intelligence and to write effective prompts to create PR materials. Documenting the prompting process and evaluating the output helps students see what instructions and information must be included in a prompt to achieve the best possible result. Since this process likely entails multiple steps, the prompt library gives students a record of their prompts—including those yielding optimum results—the output produced, and their assessment of what worked and what didn't. They can use or adapt the prompts for creating other documents without having to “reinvent the wheel.” A review of the relevant PR fundamentals and/or rubric for each PR document or activity is provided to ensure students know how to evaluate and what to look for in AI output.

A news release writing assignment in the PR and AI class, for example, involved the use of the prompt library to evaluate an AI-generated release and AI's ability to critique a student's version of the release. After a review of the fundamental elements of a news release, students were asked to write a release using a provided set of facts. This first step was done so the student's release would not be influenced by an AI-generated version. Next, they were instructed to develop prompts using generative AI (such as ChatGPT or Gemini) to write a news release including the same information, record their initial and follow-up prompts to produce an effective news release, and comment on the results using the prompt library template/format. Then, students uploaded their draft of the release to ChatGPT or Gemini and prompted it to critique that version.

Finally, students wrote a brief reflection based on their prompt library assessing both the use of AI to write a release and AI's comments and critique of their version. This helped develop prompt writing and critical thinking skills to evaluate AI-generated PR materials.

### **Evidence of Student Learning**

Pre- and post-course surveys, evaluation of students' prompt library work, and review of reflections on class assignments provide evidence of student learning. The university's Institutional Review Board reviewed and gave "exempt" status to the course assessment study. Participation for each of the voluntary and anonymous surveys was 12 out of 32 students. All student assignment work was deidentified for the purpose of this study. While acknowledging the limitations of a small sample size and the nature of self-reported research, the author found that the strong directional changes in survey results indicate the effectiveness of the prompt library assignment. These findings will help improve and guide development of future content for the assignment and the course.

### **Summary of Survey Results**

Responses to the pre- and post-course surveys demonstrated progress in student learning and skills development. Results showed the following:

- Increased knowledge about AI: At the start of the semester, only 25% of respondents felt they were "knowledgeable" about AI tools. In the post-course survey, 50% of the respondents considered themselves "very knowledgeable" and 50% said they were "knowledgeable."
- Higher confidence in their ability to write prompts: About 58% of post-course respondents said they were "confident" and 42% "very confident" in their ability to write prompts, compared to just one-third who expressed confidence in the pre-course survey.
- Broadened experience with different AI platforms: Before the

class, students' use of AI was limited primarily to ChatGPT 3.5 and Grammarly. Encouraged to experiment with different platforms through class activities, students expanded their use to include Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Claude, and ChatGPT 4 for generating text and Adobe Firefly, Midjourney, and Canva Magic Studio for creating images.

- Greater proficiency using generative AI for tasks such as writing and research: Ten of 12 respondents to the post-course survey described their proficiency level as “expert” in comparison to two at the beginning of the course.
- Greater confidence in using AI tools for PR tasks: At semester's end, nine of 12 students said they would “definitely” be comfortable using AI tools for PR work, while only two said so at the start of the semester.
- Growth in awareness of AI limitations and biases: In the post-course survey, nine of 12 students said they were “very” knowledgeable of AI limitations and biases, a marked increase from two students.

### **Examples of Student Comments and Reflections**

Examples of comments and reflections posted in the prompt library assignment documented that students were learning how to use AI effectively and responsibly:

- “Being detailed and asking plenty of questions is always a good thing when getting a good prompt.”
- “ChatGPT made up some information that was untrue and misleading. This emphasizes the importance of proofreading and contextual understanding.”
- “Sometimes too much information or detailed input doesn't give ChatGPT a chance to create or provide something you don't already have.”
- “GPT has some emotional awareness unlike other AI. I'll try to test the more emotional side of ChatGPT.”
- “It is good to give an example when using ChatGPT.”



- “I learned that ChatGPT can help with professional writing for careers.”

### **Conclusion**

The prompt library assignment teaches basic AI knowledge and skills, while giving students experience applying generative AI to various aspects of public relations. Pre- and post-course surveys along with student work reflected significant progress in students’ knowledge, proficiency, and confidence in applying AI skills to public relations practice. Learning about AI, its value, risks, and limitations, coupled with opportunities to apply AI tools to public relations work elevates students’ capabilities and career readiness. No doubt, artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly engrained—even embedded—into the day-to-day work of public relations, as it is across virtually all professions. Similarly, AI will need to be an integrated component of PR education. Hopefully this assignment can offer a framework and ideas that can be adapted and used by others.

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## Appendix

### Examples of Resources Used to Develop Prompt Library Assignment/ Exercises

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