

# Gates' Keepers of Journalism

## [Gates' Keepers of Journalism](#)

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- By injecting millions of dollars into various industries, companies and organizations, Gates has risen to become one of the most influential individuals in the world, and he's become increasingly insulated from negative reviews thanks to the fact that he also funds journalism
- Gates has given more than \$250 million to media companies, including BBC, NBC, Al Jazeera, ProPublica, National Journal, The Guardian, Univision, Medium, the Financial Times, The Atlantic, the Texas Tribune, Gannett, Washington Monthly, Le Monde, PBS NewsHour and the Center for Investigative Reporting
- Journalistic organizations such as the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the National Press Foundation, the International Center for Journalists, the Solutions Journalism Network and The Poynter Institute have also received grants from the Gates Foundation
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also has an agreement with Elsevier. Any research supported by the foundation must be published "gold open access." This

means all Gates Foundation's sponsored research is free for anyone to read – thus maximizing the exposure of those studies

- Another recipient of grants is the Leo Burnett Company, an advertising agency owned by Publicis, the third largest ad agency in the world. Publicis also funds the self-proclaimed arbiter of truth in media, NewsGuard, and the newly launched “tool against online health care hoaxes,” HealthGuard

I've written several articles reviewing [Bill Gates' control of global health, technology and food policy agendas](#). Financial influence is, of course, at the heart of this power and not-entirely-obscure influence.

By injecting millions of dollars into various industries, companies and organizations, many of which further strengthen the connections by interlinking and doing business with each other, Gates has risen to become one of the most influential individuals in the world.

While he has faced public backlash a number of times in his career, especially when he was CEO of Microsoft in the '90s, he's become increasingly insulated from negative reviews, thanks to the fact that he also funds journalism and major media corporations.

## **Buying Favorable Press**

In an August 21, 2020, article<sup>1</sup> in Columbia Journalism Review, Tim Schwab highlights the connections between the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and a number of newsrooms, including NPR.

In August 2019, NPR reported<sup>2</sup> how Harvard University's Opportunity Insights program had successfully helped low-income families obtain housing in wealthier “high-opportunity” areas identified by economist Raj Chetty, who heads the

program, thereby allowing the children an opportunity to achieve greater success in life.

*“According to researchers cited in the article, these children could see \$183,000 greater earnings over their lifetimes – a striking forecast for a housing program still in its experimental stage,” Schwab writes.<sup>3</sup>*

*However, “If you squint as you read the story, you’ll notice that every quoted expert is connected to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which helps fund the project. And if you’re really paying attention, you’ll also see the editor’s note at the end of the story, which reveals that NPR itself receives funding from Gates.”*

NPR denies that funding had anything to do with its decision to write the story, or its slant. Still, as Schwab notes, the article is just one of hundreds NPR has reported that is highly favorable to the Gates Foundation and the work it funds.

As such, it’s part of a much larger trend, he says, “with billionaire philanthropists bankrolling the news.” Naturally, when you hold the purse strings, you end up with a fair level of influence as to what gets run.

This is precisely why I decided against allowing advertisers on my website, opting to sell carefully vetted products instead. I never wanted to end up in a situation where an advertiser might try to influence my reporting by threatening to withdraw advertising. As noted by Schwab:<sup>4</sup>

*“As philanthropists increasingly fill in the funding gaps at news organizations ... an underexamined worry is how this will affect the ways newsrooms report on their benefactors. Nowhere does this concern loom larger than with the Gates Foundation, a leading donor to newsrooms and a frequent*

*subject of favorable news coverage.”*

## **Which Media Corporations Are Under Gates’ Thumb?**

Schwab reports he examined the recipients of nearly 20,000 Gates Foundation grants, finding more than \$250 million had been given to major media companies, including BBC, NBC, Al Jazeera, ProPublica, National Journal, The Guardian, Univision, Medium, the Financial Times, The Atlantic, the Texas Tribune, Gannett, Washington Monthly, Le Monde, PBS NewsHour and the Center for Investigative Reporting. (The timeframe of those grants is unfortunately unclear.)

The Gates Foundation has also given grants to charitable organizations that in turn are affiliated with news outlets, such as BBC Media Action and The New York Times’ Neediest Cases Fund.

Journalistic organizations such as the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the National Press Foundation, the International Center for Journalists, the Solutions Journalism Network and The Poynter Institute have also received grants from the Gates Foundation.

Ironically, “The foundation even helped fund a 2016 report<sup>5</sup> from the American Press Institute that was used to develop guidelines<sup>6</sup> on how newsrooms can maintain editorial independence from philanthropic funders,” Schwab writes.

The Gates Foundation has also participated in dozens of media conferences, including the Perugia Journalism Festival, the Global Editors Network and the World Conference of Science Journalism, and has an unknown number of undisclosed contracts with media companies to produce sponsored content.

According to Schwab, the only contract that has been publicly disclosed is one with Vox. An example of the advertising content produced through this kind of contractual agreement is

the 2018 Vox article,<sup>7</sup> “Human Capital and the Benefits, Explained,” which explains how changing world demographics are changing the perception of humans’ value.

## **Bias Is Clearly Evident**

Upon scrutiny, it becomes abundantly obvious that when Gates hands out grants to journalism, it’s not an unconditional handout that these companies can do whatever they see fit with. It comes with significant strings, and really amounts to little more than the purchasing of stealth self-promotions that are essentially undisclosed ads. Schwab writes:<sup>8</sup>

*“When Gates gives money to newsrooms, it restricts how the money is used – often for topics, like global health and education, on which the foundation works – which can help elevate its agenda in the news media.*

*For example, in 2015 Gates gave \$383,000 to the Poynter Institute, a widely-cited authority on journalism ethics ... earmarking the funds ‘to improve the accuracy in worldwide media of claims related to global health and development.’ Poynter senior vice president Kelly McBride said Gates’s money was passed on to media fact-checking sites ...*

*Since 2000, the Gates Foundation has given NPR \$17.5 million through 10 charitable grants – all of them earmarked for coverage of global health and education, specific issues on which Gates works ...*

*Even when NPR publishes critical reporting on Gates, it can feel scripted. In February 2018, NPR ran a story headlined ‘Bill Gates Addresses ‘Tough Questions’ on Poverty and Power.’ The ‘tough questions’ NPR posed in this Q&A were mostly based on a list curated by Gates himself, which he previously answered in a letter posted to his foundation’s*

*website.”*

Schwab also recounts the experiences of freelance journalists looking into the “inadvertent consequences of the Gates Foundation’s relentless efforts to eradicate polio,” who found their efforts undermined when the Foundation “went over their heads to seek an audience with their editors” rather than answer the questions posed.

In 2016, one of those journalists, Robert Fortner, published an article in which he examined the trend of news articles failing to report financial ties to Gates. Among them were 59 news stories by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

### **The Tangled Web of Gates’ Media Connections**

Another recipient of grants from the Gates Foundation is the Leo Burnett Company, an advertising agency that creates news content and works with journalists. The Leo Burnett Company, in turn, is owned by Publicis,<sup>9</sup> the world’s oldest and third largest advertising agency.

Publicis also funds NewsGuard.<sup>10</sup> On top of that, NewsGuard and Microsoft – the tech company founded by Gates – are also partners.<sup>11</sup> Other connections between Gates and NewsGuard include the following:

- The John S. & James L. Knight Foundation Inc., a venture capital fund and another of NewsGuard’s investors,<sup>12</sup> has partnered with the Gates Foundation on other media-related projects.

In 2013, they launched the Media Impact Project, housed at the Norman Lear Center, which is part of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. The mission of this project was to “advance a better understanding of audience engagement and media impact” by “measuring how media influences the ways

people think and act.”<sup>13</sup>

•NewsGuard investor, the Blue Haven Initiative,<sup>14</sup> joined the Gates Foundation’s Global Health Investment Fund in 2013<sup>15</sup> – an investment fund that targets “high-impact technologies with public health applications in both developed and emerging markets.”

Through these few examples alone, you can see just how interconnected the tech industry, media and health organizations are, and how through interweaving connections they all stand to benefit from their financial support of the self-proclaimed arbiter of truth, NewsGuard, and its recently launched “tool against online health care hoaxes,” HealthGuard,<sup>16</sup> which was launched June 2, 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Gates’ Influence Extends to Scientific Journals**

But there’s more. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also has an agreement with Elsevier,<sup>17</sup> enacted in 2015, which requires authors to adhere to the Gates Foundation’s open access policy when publishing their research in any of Elsevier’s 1,700 journals. (A list of Elsevier journals and publications can be found on Elsevier’s website.<sup>18</sup>)

Any research “supported in whole, or in part, by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation” must be published “gold open access.”<sup>19</sup> This means all of the Gates Foundation’s sponsored research is free for anyone to read and cannot be placed behind a paywall – thus maximizing the exposure of those studies.

While ostensibly this would appear beneficial, these studies are typically highly conflicted and promoting one of Gates’ many investments either directly or indirectly.

## **From Tech Geek to Undisputed Health Tsar**

As noted by Schwab, Gates' injection of cash into the media landscape has undoubtedly "helped foster an increasingly friendly media environment" for his various projects.

To garner attention for the issues it cares about, the foundation has invested millions in training programs for journalists ... Experts coached in Gates-funded programs write columns that appear in media outlets from The New York Times to The Huffington Post, while digital portals blur the line between journalism and spin. ~ Seattle Times

This friendly media environment includes the widespread portrayal of Gates himself as a health expert, despite the fact that he has no medical background and is not a public official of any kind:

*"PolitiFact and USA Today (run by the Poynter Institute and Gannett, respectively) – both of which have received funds from the Gates Foundation – have even used their fact-checking platforms to defend Gates from 'false conspiracy theories' and 'misinformation,' like the idea that the foundation has financial investments in companies developing COVID vaccines and therapies.*

*In fact, the foundation's website and most recent tax forms clearly show investments in such companies, including Gilead and CureVac ... News about Gates these days is often filtered through the perspectives of the many academics, nonprofits, and think tanks that Gates funds. Sometimes it is delivered to readers by newsrooms with financial ties to the foundation."*

## **Gates Foundation – A 'Structure of Power'**

I believe that Schwab is correct when he states that most journalists tend to "cover the Gates Foundation as a dispassionate charity instead of a structure of power." This is problematic, as it hides and discourages investigation into



any number of possible ulterior motives behind the Foundation's generosity.

In 2011, the Seattle Times raised concerns about the Gates Foundation's growing media influence, stating:<sup>20</sup>

*"To garner attention for the issues it cares about, the foundation has invested millions in training programs for journalists. It funds research on the most effective ways to craft media messages. Gates-backed think tanks turn out media fact sheets and newspaper opinion pieces.*

*Magazines and scientific journals get Gates money to publish research and articles. Experts coached in Gates-funded programs write columns that appear in media outlets from The New York Times to The Huffington Post, while digital portals blur the line between journalism and spin."*

## **Philanthropy as a For-Profit Business Model**

"Insofar as journalists are supposed to scrutinize wealth and power, Gates should probably be one of the most investigated people on earth – not the most admired," Schwab writes.

Indeed. Many books could be written about Gates' global spider web of connections that tightly integrate health, technology, finance and media for his personal agenda. To be frank, they seem to form the very framework for a global totalitarian regime. These connections are also the foundation of his ever-increasing wealth.

As discussed in "[How Bill Gates Monopolized Global Health](#)" and "[Bill Gates – Most Dangerous Philanthropist in Modern History?](#)" Gates doesn't merely hand out money from his foundation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Trust, a separate entity that manages the assets of the Foundation, invests in the very companies that are given these grants.

In other words, in many cases, the grants handed out by the foundation end up directly increasing the value of the assets held by the trust. He even “donates” money to corporations such as [GlaxoSmithKline](#), Unilever, IBM, Vodafone, Scholastic Inc. and NBC Universal Media.<sup>21,22</sup>

If donating to for-profit companies sounds oddly illegal to you, you’d be right. Gates is a tax evader for doing so – he’s simply getting away with it. The nonprofit foundation is a disguise to avoid taxes while funding the research arms of for-profit organizations that his foundation is invested in.

Using nonprofit money to advance research for companies you’re invested in is also illegal. If you are as repulsed by the fact that Gates is getting away with this illegal behavior as much as I am, then I encourage you to [contact the IRS Whistleblower Office](#) and ask them to investigate Gates’ tax evasion. You can also [file a consumer complaint with the Washington State Attorney General’s office](#).

Far from being a force for good, Gates appears to have chosen to use his wealth and intellect to further a distasteful social control plan to benefit his own nefarious agendas. Fortunately, people all over the world are finally starting to see his true colors. And this despite the fact that he can afford to buy good publicity, and has been doing so for years.

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