



KAPPA TAU ALPHA

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

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American University professor wins Mott award for work detailing how private investors harmed the newspaper industry

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COLUMBIA, Mo. – It's easy to blame the internet for the decline of newspapers. But for her work shifting the focus to the decades-long influence of private investments behind the scenes, Margot Susca has won the Frank Luther Mott/Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for her book *Hedged: How Private Investment Funds Helped Destroy American Newspapers and Undermine Democracy*.

In *Hedged*, Susca, an assistant professor at American University, examines how mergers and acquisitions by private equities that acquired hundreds of newspapers have gradually undermined the quality of print journalism. This year's Mott award is for the best book on journalism and mass communication based on original research published in 2024.

KTA President Raluca Cozma, a contest judge, praised Susca for her in-depth investigation into how private equity firms that invested in newspaper chains neglected journalism's importance in a democracy.

"Susca's book provides a timely and sobering look at how, for the past two decades, private investment takeovers have led to the decimation of local newspapers," said Cozma, a professor of journalism at Kansas State University. "Her multifaceted analysis shows how private equity funds involved in the newspaper industry are maximizing profits while demanding cuts and layoffs, leading to important stories not being covered, governments not being held accountable, and entire communities being left neglected."

KTA Vice President Patrick File said Susca's book provides a clear examination of the political economy underlying the crisis in America's newspaper industry.

"It's hard to think of a more essential book for anybody—student, scholar, general reader—who wants to understand today's news media landscape and consider a viable path forward," said File, associate professor at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Susca worked as a newspaper reporter in Connecticut and Florida before earning her Ph.D. in mass communication from Florida State University. She will receive the award, which includes a \$1,000 prize, in August at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference in San Francisco.

Named in honor of Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Frank Luther Mott, an educator and longtime leader of the Kappa Tau Alpha national honor society, the Mott award honors the best research-based book about journalism or mass communication published during the year.

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Other finalists for 2024 work were Ira Chinoy for *Predicting the Winner: the Untold Story of Election Night 1952 and the Dawn of Computer Forecasting* (Potomac Books); Larry Heinzerling and Randy Herschaft with Ann Cooper for *Newshawks in Berlin: The Associated Press and Nazi Germany* (Columbia University Press); W. Wat Hopkins for *Hate Speech is Not Free: The Case Against First Amendment Protection* (Rowman & Littlefield); and William E. Porter and Thomas A. Mascaro for *Assault on the Media: The Nixon Years* (University of Michigan Press).

Kappa Tau Alpha, the national college honor society founded in 1910 for scholarship in journalism and mass communication, has recognized research contributions to the field since the inauguration of the Mott award in 1944. KTA has about 100 chapters at universities throughout the United States.