

Global Investigative Journalism Conference Copenhagen, May 1-4, 2003

Multinational investigations: Challenges in doing investigative reporting across borders

Saturday, May 3, 1:30pm-2:50pm

Maud Beelman, mbeelman@icij.org
Director, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

**Compiled by the staff of ICIJ (www.icij.org), a project of The Center for Public Integrity (www.publicintegrity.org)*

ICIJ, a network of 84 investigative reporters from 43 countries, conducts long-term investigations on cross-border topics such as smuggling, money laundering, and crime and corruption. Journalists are invited to join ICIJ based on their professional experience and/or expertise in their home countries.

While immensely helpful, you don't need to have a global network of experienced investigators to internationalize your story. Here are some suggested shortcuts, though by no means an exhaustive list.

Team Up with a Local Journalist

If you don't have a correspondent abroad, try to find a reporter(s) in the country/countries where you need local research and reporting. If it's a topic that a local reporter has been working on, chances are good the local reporter will be eager to combine efforts with you. You can track down good local journalists either by contacting one of several professional associations (such as those listed below) or by consulting online news sites that publish local media from the country in question. Using stringers is usually less complicated when it comes time to publish/broadcast. But if you don't have the budget to hire a stringer or have hooked up with a newspaper/broadcast colleague equally interested in publishing, you can usually arrange simultaneous release of your information with good organization and a little trust.

International Journalism Resources

IRE and its Latin America counterpart, Periodistas de Investigacion (<http://investigacion.org.mx>)

The European Journalism Centre (<http://www.ejc.nl>) in Maastricht, Netherlands, which serves as a networking mechanism for journalists from western and eastern Europe

The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (<http://www.pcij.org>)

The Southeast Asian Press Alliance is an umbrella group for several journalism organizations in the region (<http://www.seapa.org>).

The Media Institute of Southern Africa, which supports independent media on the continent (<http://www.misanet.org/>)

The International Federation of Journalists, based in Brussels, Belgium, is an umbrella group for more than 100 national journalist associations around the world (<http://www.ifj.org>)

The International Journalists' Network (<http://www.ijnet.org>), run by the Washington-based International Center for Journalists

Major U.S. journalism fellowships (Harvard, Stanford, Michigan) host international fellows each year, and their lists of past fellows might also turn up good in-country partners

News Sites

There are thousands of media web sites around the world and several others that link to them, including:

AJR has a searchable section on world papers at <http://www.ajr.org/Newspapers.asp?MediaType=1>

Online Newspapers.Com at <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>

World News.Com at <http://www.wn.com>

Kidon's Media-Link at <http://www.kidon.com/media-link/index.shtml>

World News Connection (<http://wnc.fedworld.gov>), the foreign news service of the U.S. government that offers a for-pay database, at reasonable and short-term rates, of translated news stories from around the world

Foreign Wire (<http://www.foreignwire.com>) compiles international news from a variety of sources and puts it into a site that is easy to navigate

Newsgroups on <http://groups.yahoo.com/> can also be a good source to help a reporter find sources or stay on top of a beat

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (<http://www.rferl.org/>) limits its coverage to Eastern Europe and Russia but is a good source on corruption, security and terrorism issues in the region with ongoing coverage as well as newsletters on specific topics

AllAfrica (<http://www.allafrica.com>) provides coverage of news from the African continent, including links to media from throughout Africa

Sites/Databases with International Information

Business/Development

The World Bank's site (<http://www.worldbank.org>) requires some navigational study, but in it you can find some of the best statistics about countries in need (<http://www.worldbank.org/data/>). The site also has a special registration section for journalists, which contains statistics and embargoed material not available to the general public (<http://media.worldbank.org/>).

To search World Bank projects go to <http://www4.worldbank.org/sprojects/>. Clicking on "advanced" search usually produces better and more manageable results. To find the contractor's name after the search is done click on the project name, then find the link for contractors at the bottom of the page. Online contract information goes back only to 2000.

The Bank Information Center (<http://www.bicusa.org>), a nonprofit group, has concise and clear explanations on how multilateral lending institutions work. Although the site is aimed at social activists it can be useful for a baseline of knowledge.

More information on multilateral development banks can be obtained from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency at <http://www.tda.gov/online/banks.html>.

The Overseas Private Investment Corporation provides financial assistance to U.S. companies for projects abroad and their web site (<http://www.opic.gov>) includes press releases of financed projects as well as annual reports that include all the projects financed during a particular year.

The U.S. Office of Trade and Economic Analysis has compiled an extensive set of links to data about trade and other general economic activity. The list is divided by country and subject, making it a useful first step when researching economic figures.
<http://infoserv2.ita.doc.gov/otea/wdl.nsf?OpenDatabase>

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's site contains a "Statistics Portal" that has numerous databases on a variety of topics, including health, economic and social trends. (<http://www.oecd.org/>) Also helpful on the site is a page that has discussions, resources and surveys on worldwide corruption and bribery accessible at <http://www1.oecd.org/daf/nocorruptionweb/>

The Energy Intelligence Group's web site (<http://www.energyintel.com/>) is expensive to access but has several electronic newsletters on the oil and gas industries, as well as guides to top oil companies, oil sanctions and international oil pipelines, including comprehensive market coverage and analysis.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control at the U.S. Department of Treasury administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions against targeted foreign countries and organizations. Its comprehensive web site (<http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/>) contains information on the sanctions and recent actions taken by the department.

The Federal Procurement Data Center, part of the U.S. General Services Administration, maintains a database on federal contracts worth more than \$25,000. A search engine allows you to search for government contracts geographically (both U.S. localities and foreign countries) and by contractor: http://www.fpdc.gov/fpdc/agency_reports.htm

The World Trade Organization web site (<http://www.wto.org>) contains economic statistics and analysis about global trade.

A comprehensive searchable listing of companies registered in South Africa, including their directors, can be found at <http://www.legalcity.co.za>

The special reports section of the Financial Times online (www.ft.com), <http://surveys.ft.com> contains overviews of industries and markets worldwide.

The SEC's EDGAR database at <http://www.sec.gov>. Publicly traded companies are required to file 10-K forms every year and 10-Q forms every quarter. In them, they must list any legal challenges the company faces domestically or abroad. You should also check for 20-F forms, which some companies file in lieu of 10-Ks. Edgar can be searched generally by company name, or by specific form. The SEC does not require companies to list their foreign subsidiaries. The 10K Wizard (<http://www.tenkwizard.com>) allows full text searches of all SEC filings for an annual fee.

Canada's electronic securities documentation filing system, <http://www.sedar.com> is similar to the SEC's EDGAR database.

Many countries have online sites for their Chambers of Commerce. Uniworld Business Publications (<http://www.uniworldbp.com>) can pick up where chambers of commerce leave off. You can purchase directories, such as "American Firms Operating in South America" and "American Firms Operating in Mexico." Alphabetically, each listing contains the company's U.S.

contact information; names of top managers, such as chief operating officer and foreign officer; number of employees; annual sales in millions; and a one-sentence description of the company's products. It also gives the name and contact information for the company's South American subsidiary. The company also sells information in CD ROM, which lists alphabetically all U.S. companies with operations abroad, as well as a database that divides that info by state (i.e., which companies based in Connecticut have operations abroad), by country (i.e., which U.S. business are in Angola) and one that combines the two (i.e., which Connecticut firms have operations in Angola). It also has a limited search engine.

Free international annual reports from a number of international companies are available at <http://www.carol.co.uk> or <http://www.reportgallery.com>

FedWorld.gov, compiled by the U.S. Commerce Department, (<http://www.fedworld.gov>) has a "Prohibited Parties Database" that lists parties subject to various economic sanctions, denial of export privileges, makers of weapons of mass destruction, designated terrorists, narcotraffickers and more. That database can be found directly at <http://chaos.fedworld.gov/bxa/prohib.html>

Hoovers.com provides data and narratives about companies around the world; in-depth information is fee-based (<http://www.hoovers.com>). Also see <http://home.sprintmail.com/~debflanagan/international.html> for links to more online corporate information abroad.

Kompass (<http://www.kompass.com>) is a business-to-business search engine that allows you to search for companies in a certain industry by continents. The basic searches are free but several features require a subscription.

Thomas Register of European Manufacturers (<http://www.tipcoeurope.com>) is a listing of more than 200,000 manufacturers and distributors, categorized by products or services.

Financial Information Net Directory (<http://www.find.co.uk>) is a search engine with hundreds of links to UK financial web sites.

Military

The Federation of American Scientists (<http://www.fas.org>) provides comprehensive information, including searchable databases, on arms trade around the world. Included in the site is a special section on terrorism at <http://www.fas.org/terrorism/index.html>

Global Security is a site run by John Pike, formerly of FAS, that has links to news concerning terrorism, weapons, intelligence, space, satellite imagery, etc. <http://www.globalsecurity.org>

The Pentagon provides a contracts database at <http://www.defenselink.mil> where reporters can search whether local companies are involved abroad. You can also sign up for a daily e-mail that lists Defense Department contracts that have been awarded. Another site for contract information is FedBizOpps which is detailed below under **General**.

NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org>) and Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org>), are often good resources for country/topic background.

Environment/Health

The United Nations Environment Program (<http://www.unep.org>) has data from around the world. Particularly helpful is the recently added GEO-3 section, which gives detailed analysis of environmental policies for the last 30 years as well as the future environmental outlook.

The World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int>) site allows users to access data about global health issues, as well as a variety of reports and press releases from the organization about their work around the world.

General

FedBizOpps at <http://www.fedbizopps.gov> allows you to search unclassified U.S. government contracts valued at more than \$25,000.

The U.S. Department of Justice Foreign Agents Registration Act (<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fara/index.html>) office has semi-annual reports going back to 1997 that contain lists of lobbyists retained by foreign governments and companies.

U.S. court records can be treasure troves since they often elaborate on a company's activity, here and abroad. These records can be searched, for a fee, on Pacer (<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/>). (Often SEC filings can give a lead as to whether a court document exists.)

Global Policy at <http://www.globalpolicy.org> monitors policy-making at the United Nations and provides a weekly newsletter that provides summaries and links to stories on topics ranging from alien tort claims to the World Trade Organization

The Economist Intelligence Unit (<http://www.eiu.com>) is a subscription-based service that provides forecasts of the political, economic and business environment in more than 180 countries.

Free Pint, a community of 49,623 information researchers from around the world, produces a biweekly newsletter with Internet tips (<http://www.freepint.com>)

The Community Research and Development Information Service (<http://www.cordis.org>) provides free information on research and development in the European Union and includes a variety of databases, including one on EU acronyms.

Alphagalileo (<http://www.alphagalileo.org>) is a subscription database for journalists that contains information on the European arts and science scene, including news, images and listings of experts to contact.

The Perry-Castaneda Library Online Map Collection (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/index.html>) includes maps from around the world, and also features maps of special interest areas, such as where hoof-and-mouth disease has broken out.

International online phone directories, including <http://www.infobel.com>, <http://www.teldir.com> and <http://www.worldpages.com/global/>

Search engine experts say the top search tools fail to index up to 75 percent of the pages on the Web. For tips on searching the "invisible web" see <http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol25/invisible.htm>