

THE IRE JOURNAL

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Chicago Tribune

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USA Today

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ABOUT THE COVER

From breaking news to lifestyle features and sports analysis, census and other demographic data can provide depth and meaning to beat stories.

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Clockwise, from left: Woman and daughter on the balcony of one of the few wooden structures to survive the U.S. invasion of Panama. In the highlands of the Srpska Republika, a deaf woman has a word with U.S. soldiers. Haitian man knocked unconscious with the butt of a M-16 rifle wielded by riot police. Presidential candidates wave to onlookers in the streets of Colon, Panama.

U.S. foreign policy hasn't focused on the aftermath of military victories. Our journalists did.

The United States has shown it can achieve swift military successes abroad, most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. But these U.S. interventions don't necessarily lead to stability, law and order, and budding democracies. America's record over 100-plus years of nation building is mixed – from success in Grenada, to mixed outcomes in Panama and the Balkans, to little effect on the chaos in Haiti.

Reporter-photographer teams from the San Antonio Express-News spent seven months analyzing the status of recent nation-building efforts by the United States. The result was "America's World: The Record on Regime Change," an unprecedented newspaper series that examined the footprints left on four nations by the world's sole remaining superpower. By bringing readers a better understanding of complex world politics, Hearst Newspapers deliver excellence every day.



Reporters

Gary Martin
Lisa Sandberg
Hernan Rozemberg
Stewart Powell



Photographers

Nicole Frugé
Jerry Lara
Delcia Lopez
Edward Ornelas
Gloria Ferniz



To read more on this series go to www.mysanantonio.com/news/



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FROM THE IRE OFFICES

Awesome pace of 2003 sets bar for future years



BRANT HOUSTON

In 2003 it seemed as though IRE's staff, members and supporters never stopped to catch their collective breath.

IRE conducted 65 training conferences and seminars in the United States and other countries over the past year.

Among those seminars were our Better Watchdog Workshops, which we strategically scatter across the country to increase training opportunities for journalists who can't make it to an annual conference. With help of the Society of Professional Journalists, its local chapters and 44 other local sponsors, we conducted 19 of the Better Watchdog Workshops in 17 states for more than 1,900 print and broadcast journalists.

We held our annual conference on computer-assisted reporting in Charlotte and attracted nearly 300 journalists despite the impending war in Iraq. Our annual conference in Washington, D.C., last June brought in more than 1,100 journalists from the United States and 12 other countries.

In the spring, we held our second Global Investigative Journalism Conference with our Danish colleagues in Copenhagen for 300 journalists from 30 countries. We also traveled to Korea, Argentina, Brazil, the United Kingdom and Canada to conduct training in investigative reporting and computer-assisted reporting.

We published six information-packed issues of the award-winning magazine you are reading – *The IRE Journal* – and six issues of *Uplink*, our growing newsletter on computer-assisted reporting. We published a fifth beat book – this one on campaign finance titled “Unstacking the Deck” – and have two more nearing publication.

The IRE Resource Center assisted more than 300 news organizations (some numerous times) in news research and administered a contest that attracted 551 entries, one of the highest numbers in our history.

The IRE and NICAR Database Library assisted about 200 news organizations, providing data and training, often six to seven days a week.

Our membership averaged 5,000 for the year.

The Web site provided countless training and resource pages, a vibrant job site, and new feature, Extra!Extra!, that allows journalists and the public to see some of the week's best investigative stories being done despite legal and monetary challenges at every turn. The staff put together 15 breaking-news Web resource packages on deadline, pulling together tipsheets, data, and Web links on the shuttle crash, fires in California, building collapses and other disasters.

We also forged ahead on our endowment drive with current and previous board members pledging more than \$100,000 to help us to reach our \$5 million goal. We are almost at \$2 million now. With a partial matching grant of \$1 million from the Knight Foundation (\$1 for every \$2 raised), we can reach our goal by raising another \$2 million.

We did this all with only a dozen full-time staff members, a group of dedicated part-time staff and students, and an army of volunteers.

All of this shows that IRE is still a strong grassroots organization that depends on extensive donations of time, resources and money.

For example, the Missouri School of Journalism – our host for 25 years – donates our office space, Web connections, seminar rooms and computer labs. It also gives us constant exposure to groups and visitors who would not otherwise know about IRE. In addition, the school draws top students from across the country and around the world, many of whom end up working at IRE or NICAR, a joint program of the school and IRE.

Countless IRE members give what little free time they have – especially on weekends – to help train other journalists, to contribute to our publications, and to organize our training events. And the IRE Board of Directors devotes endless hours to the conferences, fundraising and planning for the future.

We thank all of you for your unfaltering support in 2003 and look forward to another great year in 2004.

Brant Houston is executive director of IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. He can be reached through e-mail at brant@ire.org or by calling 573-882-2042.

IRE awards fellowships to 2004 CAR boot camps

IRE has awarded fellowships to seven journalists from across the country to attend six-day intensive computer-assisted reporting boot camps in 2004, conducted by IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. Four of the fellowships are for minority journalists, backed by funding from the Nicholas B. Ottaway Foundation. The other three are fellowships to journalists from small news organizations, funded by IRE and the Chicago Tribune Foundation.

The NICAR boot camps give working journalists a solid grounding in CAR techniques. Participants learn to acquire electronic information, use spreadsheets and databases to analyze the information and translate that information into high-impact stories. Those interested in attending should contact Jennifer Erickson at IRE at 573-884-2222, or visit the IRE Web site (www.ire.org).

The minority fellowship recipients are:

- Vikas Bajaj, *The Dallas Morning News*
- Yamil Berard, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*
- Delawese Fulton, *The (Raleigh) News & Observer*
- Victor Ramos, *Newsday*

The small-news fellowship recipients are:

- Jacqueline Cochran, *The (L.A.) Daily World*
- Scott Morgan, Princeton (N.J.) Packet News-group
- Jennifer Porter, (Fargo, N.D.) *Forum*

Special CAR training set for editors, news directors

IRE and NICAR will hold a special computer-assisted reporting boot camp designed for newsroom managers April 16-18 in Columbia, Mo. The Editors' Boot Camp is an intensive three-day workshop tailored to the needs of top editors, line editors, news directors and team leaders.

The boot camp will give editors the skills to successfully conduct CAR projects in their newsrooms, even if they are new to the field. Participants will get just enough hands-on experience to familiarize them with the challenges CAR reporters face on the job, and what they can be expected to accomplish. Editors with long experience supervising CAR projects also will offer tips on avoiding the most common pitfalls. Participants will learn how to help their reporters negotiate for electronic records without turning to a lawyer right away.

Like all IRE training sessions, the emphasis will be on practical techniques that can be put into use immediately. Editors interested in attending this unique training session should contact Jennifer Erickson at 573-884-2222, or visit the boot camp page at the IRE Web site (www.ire.org/training/bootcamps.html).

IRE members score wins in DuPont broadcast awards

Several IRE members were among the winners of the 2004 DuPont-Columbia Awards in broadcast journalism. The winning members were:

- **John Burnett** of National Public Radio as a member of NPR's news team in Iraq.
- **John Ferrugia** and **Jeff Harris** at KMGH-Denver for their work on the investigative series "Honor and Betrayal," about sexual abuse at the U.S. Air Force Academy.
- **Bryan Staples** and **Phil Williams** at WTVF-Nashville for their work on the investigative series "Friends in High Places," about state contracts awarded to friends of the governor of Tennessee.
- **Anna Werner** and **David Raziq** at KHOU-Houston for their work on the investigative series "Evidence of Horrors," about problems at the Houston crime lab. (See page 13 in this issue of *The IRE Journal*.)

California regional workshop to draw many top speakers

A special Regional Better Watchdog Workshop is slated for Feb. 7-8 in Fullerton, Calif. The workshop will include a dozen panels or presentations on Saturday and optional hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting on Sunday. The Sunday classes will be both introductory and intermediate.

Speakers and trainers will include David Boardman, *The Seattle Times*; Ron Campbell, *The Orange County Register*; Kim Christensen, *The Oregonian*; Matthew Goldberg, KNBC-Los Angeles; William Heisel, *The Orange County Register*; Brant Houston, IRE; Mark Katches, *The Orange County Register*; Louise Kiernan, *Chicago Tribune*; Robert Lopez, *Los Angeles Times*; Eric Nalder, *San Jose Mercury News*; Seth Rosenfeld, *San Francisco Chronicle*; Kelli Sager, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP; Norberto Santana, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*; Natalya Shulyakovskaya, *The Orange County Register*; David Washburn, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*; Tracy Weber, *Los Angeles Times*; and Duff Wilson, *The Seattle Times*.

The program is sponsored by the Orange County Press Club and hosted by the Cal State Fullerton Society of Professional Journalists.

The Better Watchdog Workshop series is aimed mostly at helping journalists from small- to medium-sized news organizations – and those in bureaus of larger organizations – learn the investigative skills to produce enterprising and informative stories. Critical among the skills is the ability to use federal and state FOI laws to open the doors to public information.

IRE and the SPJ, with funding from the SDX Foundation, have joined forces to offer these fast-paced workshops, bringing together IRE's expertise at journalism training and SPJ's leadership on FOI issues.

Information on Fullerton and other workshops can be found at www.ire.org/training/betterwatchdog.

MEMBER NEWS

Marisa Agha has joined the Riverside *Press-Enterprise* as a higher education and general assignment reporter. She previously was a local government reporter at the St. Paul *Pioneer-Press*. ■ **Graham Brink** has been selected to contribute to the 2003 edition of "The Best American Travel Writing." The anthology will feature his story "Stranger in the Dunes" from the *St. Petersburg Times*. ■ **Rich Galant** has been promoted to managing editor for news at *Newsday* in Melville, N.Y. He was an assistant managing editor at the paper, where he has worked since 1970. ■ **Gary Graham** has been named managing editor of the Spokane *Spokesman-Review*. He previously was managing editor of the Binghamton, N.Y., *Press and Sun-Bulletin*. ■ **George Haj** has been named assistant managing editor for business at the *Houston Chronicle*. He was the executive business editor for *The Miami Herald*. ■ Jennifer LaFleur has joined *The Dallas Morning News* as computer-assisted reporting editor. The move follows a one-year fellowship with The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and earlier CAR work at the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. ■ **Dave Lieber** won a 2003 Katie Award from the Dallas Press Association in the best general column category. Lieber is senior metro columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, president of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists Education Foundation, and author of the book "The Dog of My Nightmares: Stories by Texas Columnist Dave Lieber," released in October 2003. ■ **Thomas Maier** of *Newsday* is the author of the recently published book, "The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings." ■ **Todd Milbourn** has joined *The Modesto Bee* as a labor reporter. He had been a reporter with the *Minnesota Daily*. ■ **Doug Most** has left *Boston Magazine* where he was senior editor to become editor of *The Boston Globe Magazine*. ■ **Seth Rosenfeld** of the *San Francisco Chronicle* has been named the *Daily Californian* Alumnus of the Year for

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Send Member News items to Len Bruzzese at len@ire.org and include a phone number for verification.



2004 CAR CONFERENCE

Make plans to get the latest
journalism training in Cincinnati

BY RICK KENNEDY
THE IRE JOURNAL

This year's Annual Computer-Assisted Reporting Conference will offer special features, including a start-to-finish track for broadcast journalists, pre-conference sessions for advanced practitioners, and roundtable discussions for journalism educators and trainers.

The conference will run from Friday, March 12, to Sunday, March 14, in downtown Cincinnati at the art-deco Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hotel on 35 West Fifth St.

The non-stop conference will be titled "Head First CAR" for the aggressive sliding style of Cincinnati's hometown hero, Pete Rose. The conference will bring together top journalists and other experts.

As always, the conference will feature the best recent work in CAR and have a variety of panels and workshops for participants of all professional backgrounds and CAR skill levels. In addition, the best trainers will conduct hands-on sessions

for all three days of the conference. The hands-on training will offer fast, effective instruction in how to search the Internet and how to analyze data with spreadsheets, database managers, and mapping and statistical software.

The conference will have specialized workshops in the demo room of the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting on the newest techniques in such fields as social network analysis.

The Cincinnati Enquirer will host the conference and *The Cincinnati Post/The Kentucky Post* and WCPO-Cincinnati are co-sponsors. A local committee of journalists is helping to ensure that regional topics are covered and is putting together a nighttime entertainment guide for those visiting the city.

Key issues and beats

"CAR has become so much a part of the newsroom that we will have to have sessions involving every major beat and topic," said Brant Houston, IRE's executive director.

The panels will cover campaign finance analysis, the latest uses of census data, tracking military personnel and spending, federal contracts and grants, investigating accidents and disasters, and monitoring the deterioration of roads, bridges and dams.

To help participants on daily beats, panels will look at issues facing reporters when cover-

ing crime, the environment, local government, business, sports, health and education.

"The strongest aspect of these conferences is that the speakers and teachers are journalists who practice these techniques all the time, whether it's on daily or long-term stories," Houston said.

Houston said the speakers will come from both print and broadcast fields and from both large and small news organizations.

"We want to pay close attention to the large variation in time and resources that each journalist has," he said.

Hands-on training

For journalists who are new to CAR, an intensive hands-on program will be coordinated with beginner-specific panels to create a mini-boot camp experience. IRE added the mini-boot camp sessions for the 2003 CAR conference in Charlotte, N.C., and 36 journalists graduated from the program. "I wanted to learn the basics of Excel and Access and get some ideas for using them," one Charlotte participant wrote in an evaluation. "My expectations were met."

CAR veterans will want to attend the pre-conference workshops offered from 2 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 11, covering the latest cutting-edge techniques. Advanced classes will continue throughout the conference. Broadcast journalists can jump on the "Start to Finish" track designed to cover CAR issues and techniques unique to their medium. Broadcasters also can discuss with IRE staff members how data analysis techniques can lead to help with sweeps period stories.

Journalism educators, who are facing increasing demands for courses in CAR, can take advantage of Sunday-morning workshops focused on college curricula, syllabi and the teaching of database analysis in an academic setting. IRE also hopes students will take this opportunity to hear and meet working professionals from both the United States and other countries.

CONFERENCE

**Annual Computer-Assisted
Reporting Conference
March 12-14, 2004
Cincinnati, Ohio**

**Hilton Cincinnati
Netherland Plaza Hotel**

**For reservations:
513-421-9100 or 1-800-HILTONS
(Ask for the "CAR" room block to
receive the discounted rate of \$99
single/double occupancy plus tax.
Room block expires Feb. 13.)**

COSTS

**Registration: \$150
(Students: \$100)**

**To attend, membership must be
current. See [www.ire.org/training/
cincy04/](http://www.ire.org/training/cincy04/) for latest details.**

New service makes data available more quickly

BY HSUJU HO
THE IRE JOURNAL

Deadline pressure can force journalists to set aside their data because of the time it takes to process and digest it. The IRE and NICAR Database Library now has a solution to that problem: a user-friendly online subscription service that provides cleaned and updated databases for instant use.

In the past, the Database Library staff took government data orders from journalists and made the data available on CD or via FTP download. Journalists can still purchase data this way and use the online subscription service to report on breaking news.

The online subscription service allows journalists to obtain data as fast as a government agency updates it. IRE sets up a special Web page for each subscriber and links that page to the latest avail-

able data files.

Twenty news organizations have signed on so far.

The Database Library processes the data and puts it in a format that is easy to use with Microsoft Access, FoxPro or other database managers. The service also includes the record layouts and other documentation.

The service not only provides a shortcut for journalists who lack the time to deal with raw data, it also helps save time for journalists who could process the data themselves but would rather spend their time on other pursuits.

Another advantage of the online service is that it makes data available to subscribers any time. Subscribers can download the data when they like, even on weekends.

The databases that are offered are released weekly or monthly by government agencies and then immediately processed by the Database Library. News organizations can update their own database as frequently as they wish.

Weekly data updates offered on the service include the Federal Aviation Administration Accidents and Incident database, the FAA Service Difficulty Reports and Federal Election Commission campaign contributions.

Monthly data updates include the FAA Aircraft Registry, FAA Airmen Directory and the Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt organization database.

The Database Library is adding databases from its extensive collection gradually to ensure proper processing and the accuracy of the data. Keep an eye on the IRE and NICAR listservs for additions to the online service.

Subscribers also have the option of getting the data updates on CD every month.

For the latest database announcements and more information about the online subscription service, contact Jeff Porter, director of the Database Library, by e-mail at jeff@ire.org, or see www.ire.org/datalibrary/databases.

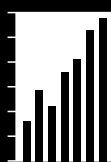
“What’s the lead in New York and in York, Pa.?”

Coming in February

BusinessJournalism.org

- Commentary on business sections
- Q&A about covering business
- Ideas from top business journalists
- Glossary of financial terms
- Finding business in all beats

“Business journalism training for *all* journalists”



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BOOKS OF 2003

Vietnam-era history
but one of year's best
worthy of your time

BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

One cliché of our craft goes like this: "Journalism is the first rough draft of history." But what happens when an investigative reporter decides to explore a historical topic and nails it? Do we then say the journalism that results is a second, not-so-rough, draft of history? Or do we call the finished work history, and not journalism at all?

I have been reflecting on this not only because

of my roles as author, as editor and as reader, but also because of my role compiling the annual list of investigative-explanatory books starting below. I have been wrestling for years about which books belong on the list, and which would dilute the list's meaning.

One of the books I wrestled hardest with during 2003 in terms of inclusion or exclusion is also one of the most compelling, most memo-

orable books I read.

The book is by David Maraniss, a long-time *Washington Post* reporter and editor who previously wrote superb biographies of contemporary controversialists Bill Clinton and Vince Lombardi. Maraniss' new book is "They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace in Vietnam and America, October 1967."

As the title suggests, much of the book explores individuals, institutions and issues from a vantage point 36 years later. Does that book belong on an investigative-explanatory reporting list?

I decided it does. Why? First, because many of the individuals Maraniss profiles are still alive. Second, all the covered institutions – especially the U.S. Army, Dow Chemical Co. and the University of Wisconsin – are influencing society every day. As for the issues of war and peace, well, they resonate in White House and Pentagon decision-making about Afghanistan, Iraq and other locales around the globe.

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INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2003

Every year, Steve Weinberg does his best to compile this exclusive list for *The IRE Journal*. It consists of books of investigative or explanatory journalism, broadly defined, published for the first time during 2003, in the United States, in English. The list is limited to authors who work primarily as journalists for American media outlets, and who are trying to reach general audiences through retail bookstore sales. If you know of a book unintentionally omitted from this list, please send an e-mail to Steve Weinberg at weinbergs@missouri.edu or by fax at 573-882-5431.

A

- Alexander, Brian
Rapture: How Biotech Became the New Religion
(Basic Books)
- Alterman, Eric
What Liberal Media? The Truth About Bias and the News
(Basic Books)
- Anders, George
Perfect Enough: Carly Fiorina and the Reinvention of Hewlett-Packard
(Portfolio)
- Anderson, John
Art Held Hostage: The Battle Over the Barnes Collection
(Norton)
- Arax, Mark, and Rick Wartzman
The King of California: J.G. Boswell and the Making of a Secret American Empire
(PublicAffairs)
- Auletta, Ken
Backstory: Inside the Business of News
(Penguin Press)

B

- Baldacci, Leslie
Inside Mrs. B's Classroom: Courage, Hope, and Learning on Chicago's South Side
(McGraw-Hill)
- Baron, David
The Beast in the Garden: A Modern Parable of Man and Nature
(Norton)
- Benedict, Jeff
No Bone Unturned: The Adventures of the Smithsonian's Top Forensic Scientist and the Legal Battle for America's Oldest Skeletons
(HarperCollins)
- Berenson, Alex
The Number: How the Drive for Quarterly Earnings Corrupted Wall Street and Corporate America
(Random House)
- Bergner, Daniel
In the Land of Magic Soldiers: A Story of White and Black in West Africa
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

- Blum, Howard
The Eve of Destruction: The Untold Story of the Yom Kippur War
(HarperCollins)
- Bovard, James
Terrorism and Tyranny: Trampling Freedom, Justice and Peace to Rid the World of Evil
(Palgrave)
- Bowker, Michael
Fatal Deception: The Untold Story of Asbestos
(Rodale)
- Brill, Steven
After: How America Confronted the September 12 Era
(Simon & Schuster)
- Brimelow, Peter
The Worm in the Apple: How the Teacher Unions Are Destroying American Education
(HarperCollins)
- Briody, Dan
The Iron Triangle: Inside the Secret World of the Carlyle Group
(Wiley)
- Brown, Chip
Good Morning Midnight
(Riverhead)
- Bruck, Connie
When Hollywood Had a King: The Reign of Lew Wasserman, Who Leveraged Talent Into Power and Influence
(Random House)

- Burrows, Peter
Backfire: Carly Fiorina's High-Stakes Battle for the Soul of Hewlett-Packard
(Wiley)

C

- Cannon, Angie, et al.
Twenty-three Days of Terror: The Compelling True Story of the Hunt and Capture of the Beltway Snipers
(Pocket Books)
- Cannon, Carl M.
The Pursuit of Happiness in Times of War
(Rowman & Littlefield)
- Cannon, Lou
Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power
(PublicAffairs)
- Chepesiuk, Ronald
The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking Down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel
(Praeger)
- Cohen, Stanley
The Wrong Men: America's Epidemic of Wrongful Death-Row Convictions
(Carroll & Graf)
- Combs, Stephen, and John Eckberg
Road Dog
(Mickler's Books)
- Conason, Joe
Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth
(St. Martin's)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2003

• Corn, David
The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception (Crown)

• Corwin, Miles
Homicide Special: On the Streets With the LAPD's Elite Detective Unit (Holt)

• Coyne, Kevin
Marching Home: To War and Back With the Men of One American Town (Viking)

• Crile, George
Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History – the Arming of the Mujahideen (Atlantic Monthly Press)

• Critser, Greg
Fat Land: How Americans Became the Fattest People in the World (Houghton Mifflin)

D

• Davis, Joyce M.
Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East (Palgrave Macmillan)

• Delsohn, Gary
The Prosecutors: A Year in the Life of a District Attorney (Dutton)

• Deutschman, Alan
A Tale of Two Valleys: Wine, Wealth, and the Battle for the Good Life in Napa and Sonoma (Random House)

• Dracos, Ted
Ungodly: The Passions, Torments and Murder of Atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair (Free Press)

• Dubose, Louis, Jan Reid and Carl Cannon
Boy Genius: Karl Rove, the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush (PublicAffairs)

• Duke, Lynne
Mandela, Mobutu and Me (Doubleday)

E

• Easterbrook, Gregg
The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse (Random House)

• Edds, Margaret
An Expendable Man: The Near-Execution of Earl Washington Jr. (New York University Press)

F

• Fialka, John J.
Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America (St. Martin's)

• Fishkoff, Sue
The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch (Schocken)

• Flanagan, William G.
Dirty Rotten CEOs: How Business Leaders Are Fleecing America (Citadel)

• Fleeman, Michael
The Stranger in My Bed (St. Martin's)

• Fox, Loren
Enron (Wiley)

• Fromson, Brett
Hitting the Jackpot: The Inside Story of the Richest Indian Tribe in History (Atlantic Monthly Press)

G

• Gantenbein, Douglas
A Season of Fire: Four Months on the Firelines of America's Forests (Putnam/Tarcher)

• Garrels, Anne
Naked in Baghdad: The Iraq War as Seen by NPR's Correspondent (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• Glanz, James, and Eric Lipton
City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center (Times Books)

• Glatt, John
Twisted (St. Martin's)

• Goldberg, Bernard
Arrogance: Rescuing America From the Media Elite (Warner)

• Goltz, Thomas
Chechnya Diary: A War Correspondent's Story of Surviving War in Chechnya (St. Martin's)

• Graysmith, Robert
Amerithrax: The Hunt for the Anthrax Killer (Berkeley)

• Greider, Katharine
The Big Fix: How the Pharmaceutical Industry Rips Off American Consumers (PublicAffairs)

• Greider, William
The Path to a Moral Economy: Reconstructing American Capitalism (Simon & Schuster)

• Gross, Michael
Genuine Authentic: The Real Life of Ralph Lauren (HarperCollins)

H

• Haberman, Maggie, and Jeane McIntosh
Held Captive: The Kidnapping and Rescue of Elizabeth Smart (Avon/HarperCollins)

• Haberstroh, Joe
Fatal Depth: Deep Sea Diving, China Fever and the Wreck of the Andrea Doria (Lyons)

• Hack, Richard
The Clash of the Titans (New Millennium)

• Hall, Stephen S.
Merchants of Mortality: Chasing the Dream of Human Life Extension (Houghton Mifflin)

• Hammer, Joshua
A Season in Bethlehem: Unholy War in a Sacred Place (Free Press)

• Harris, Lis
Tilting at Mills: Green Dreams, Dirty Dealings and the Corporate Squeeze (Houghton Mifflin)

• Hawthorne, Fran
The Merck Druggernaut: The Inside Story of a Pharmaceutical Giant (Wiley)

• Hendrickson, Paul
Sons of Mississippi: A Story of Race and Its Legacy (Knopf)

• Hentoff, Nat
The War on the Bill of Rights and the Gathering Resistance (Seven Stories Press)

• Henwood, Doug
After the New Economy (New Press)

• Herman, Marc
Searching for El Dorado: A Journey Into the South American Rain Forest on the Tail of the World's Largest Gold Rush (Doubleday)

• Hiltz, Philip J.
Protecting America's Health: The FDA, Business and 100 Years of Regulation (Knopf)

• Hirsh, Michael
At War With Ourselves: Why America Is Squandering Its Chance to Build a Better World (Oxford)

• Horgan, John
Rational Mysticism: Dispatches From the Border Between Science and Spirituality (Houghton Mifflin)

• Horwitz, Sari, and Michael E. Ruane
Sniper: Inside the Hunt for the Killers Who Terrorized the Nation (Random House)

• Hulbert, Ann
Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children (Knopf)

• Humes, Edward
School of Dreams: Making the Grade at a Top American High School (Harcourt)

I

• Ivens, Molly, and Lou Dubose
Bushwhacked: Life in George W. Bush's America (Random House)

J

• Jackman, Ian, editor
Con Men [60 Minutes compilation] (Simon & Schuster)

• Jeter, Lynne W.
Disconnected: Deceit and Betrayal at WorldCom (Wiley)

• Johnsen, Carolyn
Raising a Stink: The Struggle Over Factory Hog Farms (University of Nebraska Press)

• Johnson, George
A Shortcut Through Time (Knopf)

• Jones, Aphrodite
Red Zone: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the San Francisco Dog Mauling Story (Morrow)

K

• Kemper, Steve
Code Name Ginger: The Story Behind Segway and Dean Kamen's Quest to Invent a New World (Harvard Business School Press)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Maraniss' brilliant conception for the book was to examine what was occurring on a Vietnam battlefield and on a volatile American college campus on the same day during 1967. By juxtaposing the soldiers in combat and the students protesting a recruitment visit, Maraniss is able to wrestle profitably with good and evil, right and wrong, winners and losers.

One reason "They Marched Into Sunlight" belongs on the list is the investigative techniques used by Maraniss. Those techniques include locating obscure government documents, interviewing key figures over and over, visiting sites where important events occurred and reading the works of previously published journalists for context.

If Maraniss had used similar techniques to produce an important, compelling book set during World War II, would I have included it on the list? Probably, because so many World War II veterans and homefronters are still alive, and they continue to influence public policy.

I would have excluded the book from the list, however, if it had been set during World War I.

The most urgent reason I included Maraniss' book on the list, though, is wrapped up in thinking too seldom connected to journalism and journalists.

Professional historians and other academics hardly ever count books by journalists as scholarship. That "first rough draft of history" cliché has taken root. But Maraniss' book is scholarship

at its best. Not many academic historians, for example, would have made an arduous trip to a remote area of Vietnam to view the battlefield, to interview survivors through an interpreter, to look for existing documents, diaries and newspaper accounts.

To label Maraniss' book "history" only would have been a compliment – but an insufficient one. "They Marched Into Sunlight" is history, and it is investigative journalism by a contemporary practitioner.

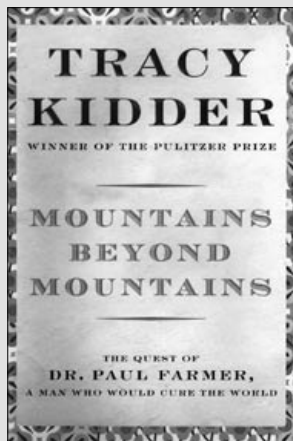
I hope it is one of many books from 2003 you will read after perusing the annual list.

Steve Weinberg is senior contributing editor to The IRE Journal and a former executive director of IRE.

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2003

- Kersten, Jason
Journal of the Dead: A Story of Friendship and Murder in the New Mexico Desert
(HarperCollins)

- Kessler, Ron
The CIA at War: Inside the Secret Campaign Against Terror
(St. Martin's)



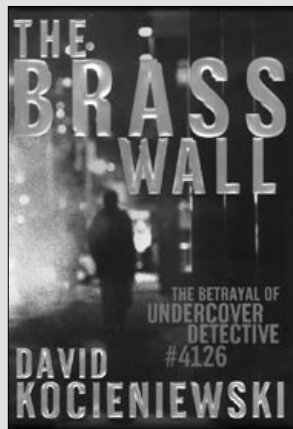
- Kidder, Tracy
Mountains Beyond Mountains: Healing the World – the Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer
(Random House)

- King, Gary C.
Angels of Death
(St. Martin's)

- Klein, Alec
Stealing Time: Steve Case, Jerry Levin and the Collapse of AOL Time Warner
(Simon & Schuster)

- Klein, Edward
The Kennedy Curse
(St. Martin's)

- Kleveman, Lutz
The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia
(Atlantic Monthly Press)



- Kocieniewski, David
The Brass Wall: The Betrayal of Undercover Detective #4126
(Holt)

- Kolata, Gina
Ultimate Fitness: The Quest for Truth About Exercise and Health
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

- Krakauer, Jon
Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith
(Doubleday)

- Kroeger, Brooke
Passing: When People Can't Be Who They Are
(PublicAffairs)

- Kukis, Mark
My Heart Became Attached: The Strange Journey of John Walker Lindh
(Brassey's)

- Kushner, David
Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture
(Random House)

- L**
• Lance, Peter
One Thousand Years for Revenge: International Terrorism and the FBI
(Regan Books/HarperCollins)

- Langer, Elinor
A Hundred Little Hitlers: The Death of a Black Man, the Trial of a White Racist, and the Rise of the Neo-Nazi Movement in America
(Metropolitan/Holt)

- Langley, Monica
Tearing Down the Walls: How Sandy Weill Fought His Way to the Top of the Financial World, and Then Nearly Lost It All
(Wall Street Journal/Free Press)

- LeBlanc, Adrian Nicole
Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble and Coming of Age in the Bronx
(Scribner)

- Ledbetter, James
Starving to Death on \$200 Million a Year: The Short, Absurd Life of the Industry Standard
(Perseus)

- Lehr, Dick, and Mitchell Zuckoff
Judgment Ridge: The True Story Behind the Dartmouth Murders
(HarperCollins)

- Lewis, Michael
Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game
(Norton)

- Lipsky, David
Absolutely American: Four Years at West Point
(Houghton Mifflin)

- Lowry, Rich
Legacy: Paying the Price for the Clinton Years
(Regnery)

- M**
• Maclean, John N.
Fire and Ashes: On the Frontlines of American Wildfire
(Holt)

- Magee, David
Turnaround: How Carlos Ghosn Rescued Nissan
(HarperBusiness)

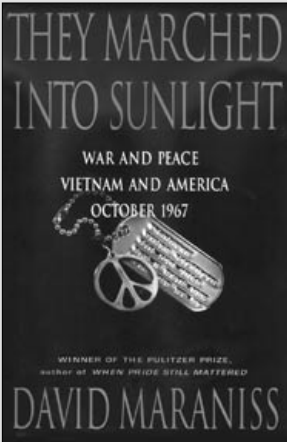
- Maier, Tom
The Kennedys
(Basic Books)

- Magida, Arthur J.
The Rabbi and the Hit Man: A True Tale of Murder, Power and the Shattered Faith of a Congregation
(HarperCollins)

- Malik, Om
Broadbandits: Inside the \$750 Billion Telecom Heist
(Wiley)

- Maran, Meredith
Dirty
(HarperSanFrancisco)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2003



- Maraniss, David
They Marched into Sunlight: War and Peace in Vietnam and America, October 1967
(Simon & Schuster)
- Marsh, Lisa
The House of Klein: Fashion, Controversy and a Business Obsession
(Wiley)
- Maynard, Micheline
The End of Detroit: How the Big Three Lost Their Grip on the American Car Market
(Doubleday)
- McKibben, Bill
Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age
(Times Books)
- McLean, Bethany, and Peter Elkind
Smartest Guys in the Room: The Rise and Fall of Enron
(Viking)
- McVicker, Steve
I Love You Philip Morris: A True Story of Life, Love and Prison Breaks
(Miramax)
- Meier, Andrew
Black Earth: A Journey Through Russia After the Fall
(Norton)
- Meier, Barry
Pain Killer: The True Story of a Prescription Drug Disaster
(Rodale)
- Menn, Joseph
All the Rage: The Rise and Fall of Shawn Fanning's Napster
(Crown Business)
- Meyer, Karl E.
The Dust of Empire: The Race for Mastery in the Asian Heartland
(PublicAffairs)

- Moore, James, and Wayne Slater
Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential
(Wiley)
- Morris, Mark, and Paul Janczewski
Fatal Error
(Pinnacle)
- Morris, Roger
A Land We Never Knew
(Knopf)
- Mowbray, Joel
Dangerous Diplomacy: How the State Department Threatens America's Security
(Regnery)

N

- Nace, Ted
Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy
(Berrett-Koehler)
- Newhouse, John
Imperial America: The Bush Assault on the World Order
(Knopf)

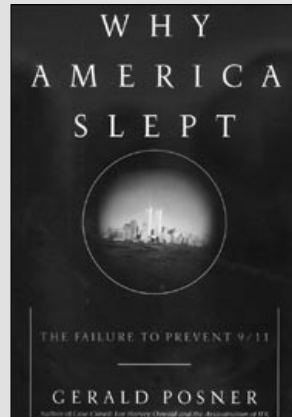


- Oppenheimer, Todd
The Flickering Mind: The False Promise of Technology in the Classroom and How Learning Can Be Saved
(Random House)
- Owen, Frank
Clubland: The Fabulous Rise and Murderous Fall of Club Culture
(St. Martin's)

P

- Penenberg, Adam L.
Tragic Indifference: One Man's Battle With the Auto Industry Over the Danger of SUVs
(HarperBusiness)

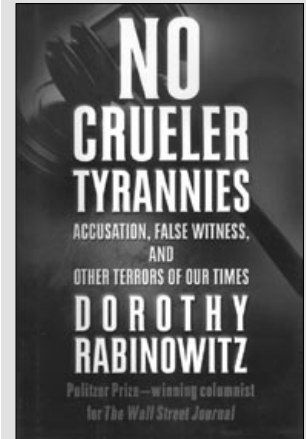
- Perlstein, Linda
Not Much Just Chillin': The Hidden Lives of Middle Schoolers
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Phelps, M. William
Perfect Poison
(Pinnacle/Kensington)
- Platt, Larry
Only the Strong Survive: The Odyssey of Allen Iverson
(Regan)
- Posner, Gerald
Motown: Music, Money, Sex and Power
(Random House)



- Posner, Gerald
Why America Slept: The Reasons Behind Our Failure to Prevent 9/11
(Random House)
- Possley, Maurice
The Brown's Chicken Massacre
(Berkley)
- Powell, Robert Andrew
We Own This Game: A Season in the Adult World of Youth Football
(Atlantic Monthly Press)
- Priest, Dana
The Mission: America's Military in the Twenty-First Century
(Norton)
- Pringle, Peter
Food Inc.: The Promise and Perils of Genetic Agriculture
(Simon & Schuster)
- Purdham, Todd S., and The New York Times staff
A Time of Our Choosing: America's War in Iraq
(Holt)

Q

- Quammen, David
Monster of God: The Man-Eating Predator in the Jungles of History and Mind
(Norton)
- Quart, Alissa
Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers
(Perseus)



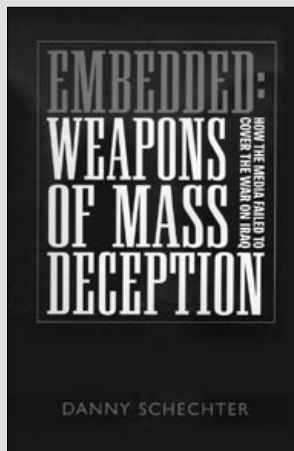
R

- Rabinowitz, Dorothy
No Crueler Tyrannies: Accusation, False Witness and Other Terrors of Our Time
(Wall Street Journal/Simon & Schuster)
- Ressa, Maria
Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia
(Free Press)
- Rich, Laura
The Accidental Zillionaire: Demystifying Paul Allen
(Wiley)
- Roberts, Janine
Glitter and Greed: The Secret World of the Diamond Cartel
(Disinformation Company)
- Roen, Samuel
Evidence of Murder
(Pinnacle)
- Rottenberg, Dan
In the Kingdom of Coal: An American Family and the Rock That Changed the World
(Routledge)
- Ruhlman, Michael
Walk on Water: Inside an Elite Pediatric Surgical Unit
(Viking)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2003

S

- Saletan, William
Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War
(University of California Press)



- Schechter, Danny
Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception
(Prometheus)
- Schell, Jonathan
The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People
(Metropolitan)
- Schlosser, Eric
Reefer Madness: The Rise of the American Underground
(Houghton Mifflin)
- Schramm, Martin
Avoiding Armageddon: Our Future, Our Choice
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(Pinnacle/Kensington)
- Seagrave, Peggy, and Sterling Seagrave
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- Sharp, Kathleen
Mr. and Mrs. Hollywood: Edie and Lew Wasserman and Their Entertainment Empire
(Carroll & Graf)

- Sheehy, Gail
Middletown, America: One Town's Passage From Trauma to Hope
(Random House)



- Smith, Rebecca, and John R. Emshwiller
24 Days: How Two Wall Street Journal Reporters Uncovered the Lies That Destroyed Faith in Corporate America
(HarperBusiness)
- Southwick, Karen
Everyone Else Must Fail: The Unvarnished Truth About Oracle and Larry Ellison
(Crown Business)
- Sperry, Paul
Crude Politics: How Bush's Oil Cronies Hijacked the War on Terrorism
(WND Books)
- Stanton, Mike
The Prince of Providence: The True Story of America's Most Notorious Mayor, Some Wiseguys, and the Feds
(Random House)
- Stone, Brad
Gear Heads
(Simon & Schuster)
- Stout, David
Night of the Devil: The Untold Story of Thomas Trantino and the Angel Lounge Killings
(Camino)
- Stowers, Carlton
Scream at the Sky: Five Texas Murders and the Long Search for Justice
(St. Martin's)
- Strauch, Barbara
The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries About the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids
(Doubleday)
- Swift, Earl
Where They Lay: Searching for America's Lost Soldiers
(Houghton Mifflin)
- Swisher, Kara, with Lisa Dickey
There Must Be a Pony in Here Somewhere: The AOL Time Warner Debacle and the Quest for the Digital Future
(Crown Business)

T

- Taubman, Philip
Secret Empire: The Spy Satellites, the CIA and American Intelligence
(Simon & Schuster)
- Tett, Gillian
Saving the Sun: A Wall Street Gamble to Rescue Japan From Its Trillion-Dollar Meltdown
(HarperBusiness)
- Thompson, Marilyn
The Killer Strain: Anthrax and a Government Exposed
(HarperCollins)
- Tidwell, Mike
Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast
(Pantheon)
- Timmerman, Kenneth R.
Preachers of Hate: Islam and the War on America
(Crown)

V

- Vaitheeswaran, Vijay
Power to the People: How the Coming Energy Revolution Will Transform an Industry, Change Our Lives, and Maybe Even Save Planet Earth
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Van der Zee, John
Agony in the Garden
(Thunder's Mouth)
- Van Meter, Jonathan
The Last Good Time: Skinny D'Amato, the Notorious 500 Club and the Rise and Fall of Atlantic City
(Crown)
- Verton, Dan
Black Ice: The Invisible Threat of Cyber-Terrorism
(McGraw-Hill/Osborne)
- Victor, Barbara
Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers
(Rodale)
- Vistica, Gregory L.
The Education of Lieutenant Kerrey
(St. Martin's)
- Vollman, William T.
Rising Up and Rising Down
(McSweeney's)

W

- Watters, Ethan
Urban Tribes: A Generation Redefines Friendship, Family and Commitment
(Bloomsbury)
- Weinberg, Samantha
Pointing From the Grave: A True Story of Murder and DNA
(Miramax)
- Weiss, Gary
Born to Steal: When the Mafia Hit Wall Street
(Warner)
- Weiss, Murray
The Man Who Warned America: The Life and Death of John O'Neill, the FBI's Embattled Counterterrorism Warrior
(Regan Books)
- Weller, Sheila
Dancing at Ciro's: A Family's Love, Loss, and Scandal on the Sunset Strip
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Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America
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- Wicker, Christine
Lily Dale: The True Story of the Town That Talks to the Dead
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- Wolcott, Barbara
David, Goliath and the Beach Cleaning Machine: The True Story of How a Small Town Fought an Oil Giant and Won
(Capital)
- Wolf, Gary
The Spark: The Rise and Fall of Wired and the Birth of the Boom
(Random House)
- Yeomans, Kate
Dead Men Tapping: The End of the Heather Lynne II
(International Marine/McGraw-Hill)

DNA TESTING

Study calls into question long-trusted lab results

BY DAVID RAZIQ AND ANNA WERNER
KHOU-HOUSTON

In America's fourth largest city, the work of scientists in the police DNA crime lab had gone largely unquestioned.

That's because many Houston prosecutors and even defense attorneys say they implicitly trusted the scientists. Year in and year out, the lab did forensic testing in tens of thousands of murders, rapes, and other crimes. The results of those tests often sent someone to prison or to an execution.

In fact, Houston is a part of Harris County, the county that sends more people to death row than any other in the nation, which made KHOU's discoveries all the more disturbing.

Our investigation, "Evidence of Errors," revealed that for years the Houston Police Department's crime lab scientists had – according to experts – been making serious and surprising mistakes in their tests and in their interpretation of those tests during trial testimony. As a result, the lab's work may have put the innocent in prison and let the guilty go free – or even undetected.

In less than a year, our ongoing probe of the lab has resulted in the shutting down of the DNA lab; more than a thousand past criminal cases getting new DNA testing of crime scene evidence; the removal or forced retirement of the director of the lab, the supervisor of the lab, an assistant police chief, and even the chief of police; the impaneling of two grand juries to investigate both the lab and the district attorney's office; the creation of new state laws to regulate crime labs and to establish an "Innocence Commission" to help the

wrongfully imprisoned; and a young man being freed from prison for a crime he did not commit.

Evaluating questionable cases

It began with a tip from a defense lawyer: In a recent rape case, he had noticed that the HPD crime lab seemed to be having problems with one of its forensic tests (called a P-30, which is not a DNA test.) Curious, we spoke with other attorneys, one of whom eventually led us to forensic scientist Elizabeth Johnson. She had been a paid defense consultant in a number of Houston-area criminal cases. Not only did she say the lab's work was a problem, but that it had been one for a long time and no one would listen to her.

So, we decided to start looking at cases involving DNA and other types of forensic testing done by the police lab. First, we started out by debriefing Johnson for hours about seven problem cases she identified.

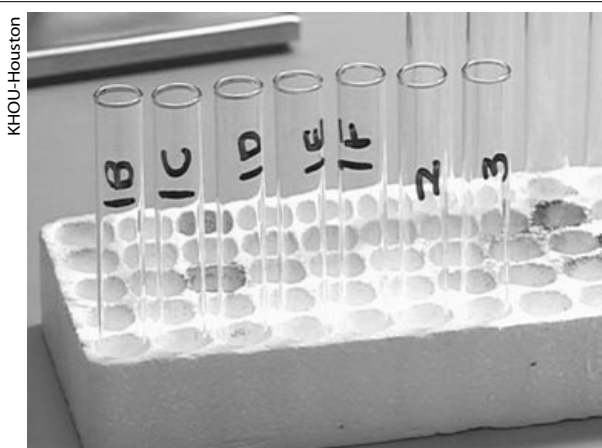
We also collected other relevant criminal cases by putting postings on the computer bulletin boards and electronic mailing lists of local criminal defense organizations, asking lawyers to call us if they had encountered problems with the lab's work.

Then, taking our list of cases, we reviewed court files and transcripts to see how the facts of the cases stood up, how strong the prosecution's arguments had been, and how much weight the lab's test results and testimony held in the case.

But in evaluating our questionable examples, the most important set of documents we obtained were the lab's reports of results and conclusions and the underlying test results and paperwork for those reports. Without them you can't tell what, if anything, a lab might have done wrong. (We obtained these documents using open-records requests to the HPD lab or by talking to the hired scientific experts or defense attorneys on the various cases.)

About that time, we began a process of self-education, using books from organizations like the National Research Council on evaluating forensic DNA testing and articles on commonly accepted lab standards and procedures. In addition, one member of the team had long experience in lab and science protocols.

Right away we spotted problems



The Houston Police Lab uses standard tubes like these to help test DNA extracted from crime scene evidence. After an investigation by KHOU-Houston, the lab was closed down

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with the HPD documents: The lab's paperwork often had no initials on the corners, a sign that at least one – if not several – scientists are checking the results of another, something known as “peer review.”

Scientific train wreck

Of course, we knew we also needed expert help. So, we began doing research to find some of the best-regarded molecular biologists and forensic science experts in the field. Our investigative unit has a standard of using at least three experts in our investigations. (For this investigation, we would eventually rely on five forensic scientists.) We also looked for them to have worked for both law enforcement and for defense attorneys or defense organizations. Then we began supplying them with all of our documentation: the lab reports, the test results, transcripts, etc. All three experts would have to substantially agree on a judgment or conclusion for us to be able to use it in our reporting.

The result? In the first of our three initial broadcasts, viewers learned that our experts found the police lab had made “errors” that were “egregious” and showed “repeated gross incompetence.” In fact, all of the experts said the lab's mistakes “seem to favor the prosecution.” Lab work in one rape case was so bad, a DNA specialist called it “the equivalent of a scientific train wreck.”

Our experts also found:

- A man indicted and tried for rape because of a “positive” lab test for semen. In fact, the actual test result was negative.
- The Houston lab said its DNA tests indicated a young man was guilty of rape. As a result, he received a prison sentence. In fact, documents from the HPD lab indicated that its own test results had exonerated the man.
- A murder case where the HPD lab said it had “matched” the DNA from a hair at the crime scene with a suspect's DNA. Actually, the lab had “under tested” the hair sample and did not perform other tests that could have cleared the murder suspect. The suspect was found guilty and now sits on death row, waiting to be executed for the crime.
- A murder-rape case where the HPD lab said its DNA tests of items found at the crime scene pointed to only one suspect, who confessed and was sent to prison. But the Houston lab never reported that its DNA tests actually indicated two or more people might have been involved in the crime.

The Houston police had promised KHOU an interview if we would supply them with the names



A Houston Police lab technician prepares DNA samples for testing. KHOU discovered repeated problems with the lab's testing and test reports.

of our problem criminal cases. But four days later, the police reneged on doing the interview and refused all comment, later telling us they would not investigate any of the allegations about the lab. After we reported that fact in the third part of our series, the HPD announced it would find an independent team to audit the lab, its practices and procedures, along with some past casework.

In early 2003 came confirmation: The Houston Police Department and the Harris County district attorney announced that all DNA testing had been discontinued at the lab because of serious problems

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 >



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PUBLIC HEALTH

Despite city-state stonewalling, persistence uncovers syphilis epidemic

BY KIMBERLY HAYES TAYLOR
THE DETROIT NEWS

What I thought would be a quick feature story on the success of a needle-exchange program to stem new HIV cases evolved into a four-month investigation. The findings led to an expose' on how the Detroit Health Department allowed syphilis to become an epidemic despite numerous warnings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At a time when syphilis was at its lowest point in American history, it was raging in Detroit to the point where babies born with the disease were actually dying.

The story unfolded during an interview with a program director about the needle exchange. She explained that while her group and others had spent so much energy on HIV, syphilis was out of control and was the highest in the country.

This meant that Detroiters who contracted syphilis were up to 10 times more likely to contract HIV if they came into contact with the virus.

I saw a bigger story and called the Detroit Health Department. In my initial conversation, the director of the department's sexually transmitted disease program was informative. He confirmed that Detroit indeed had a problem with an escalating syphilis rate and provided data for Detroit. He also provided data for Indianapolis, Baltimore, Nashville and Memphis, which had syphilis outbreaks in 1999 and 2000 and had ranked higher than Detroit. Friendly, helpful and open, he provided the number of new syphilis

cases and steered me to other sources.

Little information given

But everything changed when I visited the health department, housed in a dank old building that was formerly a psychiatric hospital. I was asked to meet with the head of the department's sexually transmitted diseases program. He was not the guy with whom I had spoken via telephone.

This new guy, someone sent from the Michigan Department of Community Health, was guarded and evasive, even about basic information. It seemed the goal was to make me as uncomfortable as he was. Our meeting took place in a vacant, sweltering office on a day that felt like 100 degrees.

After a futile, hour-long interview, nothing was adding up. My first source had mysteriously disappeared. The new acting unit director arranged for other interviews with health workers, but would only allow me into the vacant office and he always remained in the room.

I proceeded with my reporting by calling the other cities that had syphilis epidemics. Each city, state or county health department official I spoke with in the other cities was helpful, informative and concise in what steps had been taken to reduce the numbers of new syphilis cases.

They talked about how city mayors had done television, radio and newspaper ads to inform citizens about syphilis. Community service announce-

ments were placed on bus placards. The cities formed community coalitions with agencies, neighborhood groups and churches. They held festivals, parades and spent months blitzing problematic neighborhoods with educational materials and testing. Perhaps most important, they found a correlation between syphilis and criminals and changed their jail testing methods.

Within two years, their numbers had

dropped to only a handful of new syphilis cases. After talking to officials in the four cities, I realized just how little information Detroit health officials had actually provided on what they had specifically done to lower the rate of syphilis in the city.

Why did syphilis cases dip in the other cities and increase five-fold in Detroit?

Although a city flack called to say my interviews had become too time intensive and needed to stop, I called Detroit officials back and asked them what organizations they had worked with, what coalitions (if any) they had formed, whether they had worked any neighborhoods, and if they had tested Wayne County jail inmates. They said that they had done all of those things.

I then called each organization. Turns out that one group had rounded up prostitutes and tested them. Another had gone into homeless shelters to do testing, but no issues were found in those communities. Each group I contacted had at one time had a contract with the health department. But all the contracts had since expired.

I phoned the state, but kept being forwarded to the same guy who held me up in the hot office. While requesting an interview with a particular state official, the state flack asked me not to call anymore and hung up on me.

Epidemic proportions

Finally, I called an out-of-state health official who told me why no one in Detroit or the state wanted to talk about syphilis.

He was my best and most important human source. He explained that the department was in crisis and that the CDC was in town to investigate. The state had taken over key positions in the department. My first source had been fired because his unit had failed to stem syphilis.

He led me to a report on the CDC Web site, "Eliminating Syphilis in the United States." He advised me to spend a couple of hours with the report and then to make a list of hard-hitting questions for the health department based on the goals set out in the report.

My editors and I then decided to file a Freedom of Information Act request to get the answers. Two months later, I received a stack of letters and other documents from the CDC written to Detroit and Michigan health officials. The letters dated back nearly three years and clearly showed that the CDC had practically begged the Detroit department to do its job, to no avail. The department had done little or nothing to stop the spread of syphilis and had allowed the disease to reach epidemic proportions.

In this report, the only computer-assisted reporting I used was going to the CDC Web site. It took basic, good old-fashioned reporting and instinct. I would offer these suggestions in uncovering such a story:

- Always look for the biggest story. The needle

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Community Health Awareness Group staffer Lindsay Wright-El of Detroit collects information and hands out free condoms. CHAG sends out a van in Detroit for a needle exchange program and STD prevention.



IRANIAN NUKES

Checking and rechecking
credibility of varied sources

BY DOUGLAS FRANTZ
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The caller was outside the hotel on Place Pigalle in Paris. He refused to describe himself, saying that he would recognize me. I stepped out of the hotel and waited until a clean-shaven man in a gray suit walked up.

“Pleased to meet you,” he said. “I’m Tony. I have to be careful.”

Three weeks of negotiations had brought me face-to-face with a skittish Iranian intelligence officer whose real name was not Tony. He had defected last January, bringing out what he described as fresh details of Iran’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

The rendezvous occurred in early July, two months into my reporting on Iran’s nuclear program. I already had interviewed United Nations officials, independent experts and intelligence agents in seven countries. A week before, I had spent two days debriefing another Iranian defector living outside Copenhagen with a new identity.

The evidence was creating a clear picture of how Iran was using its civilian nuclear program to disguise efforts to build a nuclear bomb. Tony promised to take the reporting to a higher level, complete with diagrams and photographs.

In May, the Bush administration had declared victory in Iraq and world attention turned to Iran and its suspicious nuclear program. Would it be the next U.S. target? Tehran said its program was strictly peaceful, but U.S. officials were adamant that Iran wanted the bomb.

My assignment was to compare the U.S. assertions with what I could dig up independently. I needed not only to break new ground, but to make sense out of information that was already public. Because of the questions surrounding the Bush

administration claims about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, it was important to find sources outside the U.S. intelligence community.

In mapping out a reporting plan with Dean Baquet, the *Times*’ managing editor, and Marjorie Miller, the foreign editor, we decided to try to do the story without U.S. government sources. We figured the results would be more credible, though it meant starting almost from scratch in terms of contacts.

Between the lines

While there is a useful debate about anonymous sources, sparked by the Jayson Blair episode, sometimes they are the only way to get a story. Investigative reporters live or die by their sources. Documents are great and first-hand observations are critical, when possible. But in the end, most stories depend on sources.

Building sources overseas is tough. When the subject is as politically charged as Iran’s nuclear program, it can be even harder because everyone has an agenda. On the plus side, the large number of competing intelligence agencies offers plenty of opportunity to develop multiple sources.

Because of confidentiality promises, I can’t talk about who helped, but the process reaffirmed two important investigative techniques.

First, to recognize when something is wrong, you must understand how it is supposed to work. In this case, it meant learning how Iran should operate a civilian nuclear program in order to spot the red flags that signal a weapons program.

A big part of this process involved dissecting a report on Iran prepared in early June by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. The report got plenty of press attention the day it was leaked,

but that was my starting point.

I spent several days going over the report with experts to understand what the agency was saying between the lines and answer questions left hanging by the language of diplomacy. The result was a road map of where Iran’s nuclear program stood and what I should be looking for.

This evaluation and much else depended on background interviews with current and former international inspectors and on-the-record interviews with experts outside government. I did not become an expert, but I developed a working knowledge of the subject and a list of experts who could be trusted.

The second technique was figuring out which intelligence agencies would be most likely to help. This was not rocket science, or nuclear physics. In some cases, I relied on contacts from previous stories. Most of the time, I went in cold, a far less successful method but a vital one.

Without long-time sources, the key was to filter what the sources said through my understanding of each source’s agenda, compare the information with what others said and find corroboration.

Few people were willing to speak on the record. But I got lucky when one official gave me a confidential analysis of Iran’s nuclear program presented to an intergovernmental group in May by the French government.

The report provided strong new information and the assessment echoed what others were saying on background. Here was the chance to use material on the record and write with more authority – assuming the document was authentic.

A French government official who was helping me agreed to examine the report, but he specified that I send it to his home fax. Once it arrived, he said he had not seen it before. Two days later, he confirmed that the document was real.

Which brings us back to Tony. During a database search, I had found an interview with him in an Arabic newspaper and a winding path through various intermediaries finally resulted in a call from him one night. He asked me to call him Tony and said he was living in northern Europe, under the protection of an unnamed government. He said he might be willing to meet.

He had been an intelligence officer with Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and some of his training involved security at missile and nuclear installations. The potential for a major scoop was huge and it grew when Tony’s first solid information arrived a few days after our phone conversation.

The fax was a 10-page, hand-written description of secret nuclear and missile installations throughout Iran. It was in Farsi and the first two translators I tried were so frightened by the material that they refused to translate it. After finding a willing translator, I ran the information past officials at two separate agencies. They confirmed that much of it was accurate and the rest was credible.

“This guy has terrific information or knows

someone who does,” one source wrote in an e-mail after reviewing the material.

Master manipulator

But there were problems. Foremost, Tony wanted to be paid. I explained patiently and repeatedly that, by newspaper policy and personal rule, I never paid for information because it would taint the article. He never quite believed me, but he seemed satisfied when I wired a small amount to an anonymous bank account to cover his travel to Paris for our meeting.

We talked for three hours. He was smooth and consistent, dropping several potential bombshells along the way. He insisted that his real name be used in the article. In the days that followed, we spoke several times by phone as I pressed for details and clarification.

Again, the information checked out. The material that no one had heard about fit the overall pattern. Tony looked like a winner.

As a final step in vetting him, I asked two colleagues in the Washington bureau, Robin Wright and Greg Miller, to run his name past the Americans. While I was not relying on American sources, it seemed sensible to check him out. (I did use an American diplomat who confirmed one piece of information from two non-American sources.)

Wright and Miller came back with the same verdict: Tony was a legitimate defector and some of his information was accurate, but he was a master manipulator whose spin made it impossible to separate good information from credible invention.

“He’s a very good fabricator,” one U.S. intelligence official said. “A very good storyteller. I can’t emphasize this enough.”

Washington had no reason to dump on Tony. On the contrary, his position was identical to the administration’s – Iran was close to a nuclear bomb. Since it seemed likely the administration would want his story out, the warning carried extra weight.

Still, it was hard to let go. One anecdote was so juicy and so plausible, and other sources had corroborated much of what he said. Tony defended himself and railed against the Americans. But in the end, Tony’s information was scrubbed from the story. A single unreliable source would make the whole article vulnerable.

Not long after the article was published, I had dinner with one of the intelligence sources as part of an effort to cultivate him. He said his agency had heard that the Iranian government was deeply angered by the article, which the Iranians assumed was a leak from Washington. They wanted to find something to discredit it, he said, but after an analysis they decided there was nothing substantive to dispute.

Douglas Frantz is an investigative reporter for the Los Angeles Times, based in Istanbul. He is a former investigations editor at The New York Times and co-author of a recently published book, “Death on the Black Sea.”

More daunting tests ahead pitting ‘right to know’ against ‘need to know’



CHARLES DAVIS

A pair of recent discussions with lawmakers, policy analysts and industry experts has me deeply concerned about the balance between openness and secrecy in a society still reeling from the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

As an invited presenter at an energy security summit sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, and two days later on a teleconference with the Council of State Governments, I was asked to provide the “access perspective” regarding energy security and related homeland security issues. In a pair of freewheeling exchanges of ideas, I was reminded of the complexity of these issues, and heartened by the lawmakers’ earnest attempts to balance the interests of safety and security with public access to information.

State lawmakers gathered at both meetings clearly are wrestling with these issues, and are searching for answers from all parties – hence the invitations. Determining what is – and what should not be – public information under federal and state public records laws requires a nearly impossible culling of documents, and a fair amount of predictive policymaking. Who could use what against us, and for what devious purposes?

The fundamental questions I posed led to a lively discussion: Can we assume that greater secrecy leads to greater safety? Does diminished accountability lead to increased efficiency? Historical evidence leads me to the opposite conclusion, yet history offers nothing remotely like the events of 9/11. Clearly, secrecy surrounding some information on critical infrastructure makes sense. I am not, nor have I ever been, an FOI absolutist. Arguing that all governmental information, regardless of its nature, should be released to us all would put us all at great risk. I’ve been shown plenty of documents that meet what I call the “Yikes!” test – records I don’t even want to know about!

Protecting public interest

Those documents represent but a tiny fragment of the FOI universe. In fact, the category of “sensitive” records is only a tad bit larger. The calculus gets much more difficult when the analysis turns to the vast majority of sensitive records, however, because these records offer benefits as well as potential costs.

Documents valuable for their ability to warn the public of looming environmental risks, of vulnerabilities in our infrastructure and of potential corruption

in our emerging homeland security apparatus cannot simply exist in a closed loop of private sector-government regulatory “information sharing,” I argued. Agreed, said the lawmakers, but look at how these records could be misused!

One important area of consensus emerged from at least the majority of the attendees. Any exemptions relating to such “sensitive” documents should contain a provision protecting the public interest. I prefer an *ad hoc* approach, given the relative rarity of these documents in the broader FOI context: the exemptions, like Michigan’s recently enacted homeland security exemption, should clearly state that the exemptions require a judge to determine whether the interest in secrecy is outweighed by the public interest in disclosure.

The more distressing reality is that while states do have a say in their own records, the federal exemption in the Homeland Security Act preempts state and local law when the information is shared with the feds. That means the federal government will dictate the breadth and depth of secrecy, and recent events augur poorly in that regard.

Mobile Bay test

Take the looming dispute in Mobile, Ala., over a liquefied natural gas plant. Mobile likely will be the testing ground for new restrictions on energy information, as *Mobile Register* reporters learned when they tried to access information about the safety concerns related to the proposed plant.

As you may recall, immediately following the 9/11 attacks, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission began restricting access to information it deemed too sensitive and detailed. This approach culminated in a new rule allowing FERC to control access to critical infrastructure information. At the time, openness advocates criticized the rule as overly broad and vague, allowing FERC to restrict information critical to ensuring the accountable and safe operation of energy facilities.

Now ExxonMobil is proposing to build a liquefied natural gas plant just south of Mobile, close to residential areas. The *Register*, residents and other interested parties are making numerous inquiries into the potential risks associated with this plant, and thus far are making little to no headway.

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Charles Davis is executive director of the Freedom of Information Center, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism and a member of IRE’s First Amendment task force.

ADD STRENGTH TO INVESTIGATIONS, SNAP TO BEAT STORIES

It was a slow day, the sort of day when desperate editors put snoozers on Page 1.

Matthew Waite of the *St. Petersburg Times* used census data to turn his snoozer into something better. After a small-town council reduced the speed limit to 20 miles per hour “for the safety of the children,” Waite confirmed the rhetoric with hard facts: “The number of 5- to 9-year-olds went up 19 percent in the 1990s, and the number of 10- to 14-year-olds increased by 18 percent.”

In the three years since the first results of Census 2000 were released, journalists have found thousands of ways to turn numbers into news.

A decade ago, just a handful of newspapers had the computer power to tackle in-depth census stories. This time, thanks to cheap computers and IRE’s aggressive census training, many more journalists jumped onto the census beat.

Thanks to the census, mapping became a “killer app” – or hot software – in newsrooms across the country. Dozens of newspapers used maps to explain differences among areas as small as a few blocks in size.

A handful of papers also built census intranets to share key bits of data with computer-challenged colleagues. Using ImageMapper, an add-on for ArcView mapping software, I created a tool that allowed reporters to get instant neighborhood demographics just by pointing and clicking on a map. Bill Dedman at *The Boston Globe* and Rob Gebeloff at *The (Newark) Star-Ledger* built demographic almanacs that let reporters rank and compare communities on several measures.

Armed with these tools, journalists have pushed census reporting far beyond traditional stories about population growth. The 2000 Census has figured in beat investigations as well as breaking stories about politics, schools, traffic and – just in case you’re getting bored – sex.

Demographics with a twist

The Oregonian wove census data and interviews into a November 2003 series that examined growing differences among “The Nine States of Oregon.”

“Oregon can now be seen as nine distinct regions, each with its own values, economic approach and political outlook,” the reporters wrote. “These differences are at the heart of why the legislature has been gridlocked, why there is little consensus on how to compete in the global economy and why Oregon’s prospects don’t seem as clear as they did 30 years ago when timber was king.”

Garry Lenton of the *The (Harrisburg, Pa.) Patriot-News* caught the Pennsylvania government making a potentially dangerous math mistake at Three Mile Island. Neighbors of the nuclear plant wanted potassium iodine pills, which protect the thyroid from radiation. The state claimed it already had provided enough potassium iodine pills for 35 percent of residents within 10 miles of TMI.

But census data revealed that there were many more residents living near the nuclear plant than the state claimed. Lenton reported that the state had provided enough pills for just 17.7 percent of TMI’s neighbors.

Basic demographics have been a staple of census reporting for decades. Following Census 2000, many reporters found ways to deliver basic demographics with a twist.

One staple story – the decline of rural America – received a big twist in Oklahoma from the *Tulsa World’s* Shaun Schafer. He discovered that several small towns held steady or even grew in the 1990s.

How? By making room for new prisons and their inmates – a trend captured in the census count of the “institutionalized population.”

“Although they finally came to town under lock and key,” Schafer wrote, “in places like Sayre, Watonga and Holdenville they’re VIPs: Very Important Prisoners.”

Elsewhere many cities are losing residents in the early morning and getting them all back at night, causing mammoth traffic jams.

Lori Weisberg of the *The San Diego Union-Tribune* used census data to put a number to commuters’ frustration:

“If you’ve been battling traffic on Interstate 15, the U.S. Census Bureau has evidence that your worst suspicions about mounting traffic congestion are right,” Weisberg wrote. “Over the last 10 years, the number of people commuting between Riverside and San Diego counties increased by 167 percent.”

But sheer numbers are just part of the picture. Census data also can lead to subjects that statisticians normally ignore.

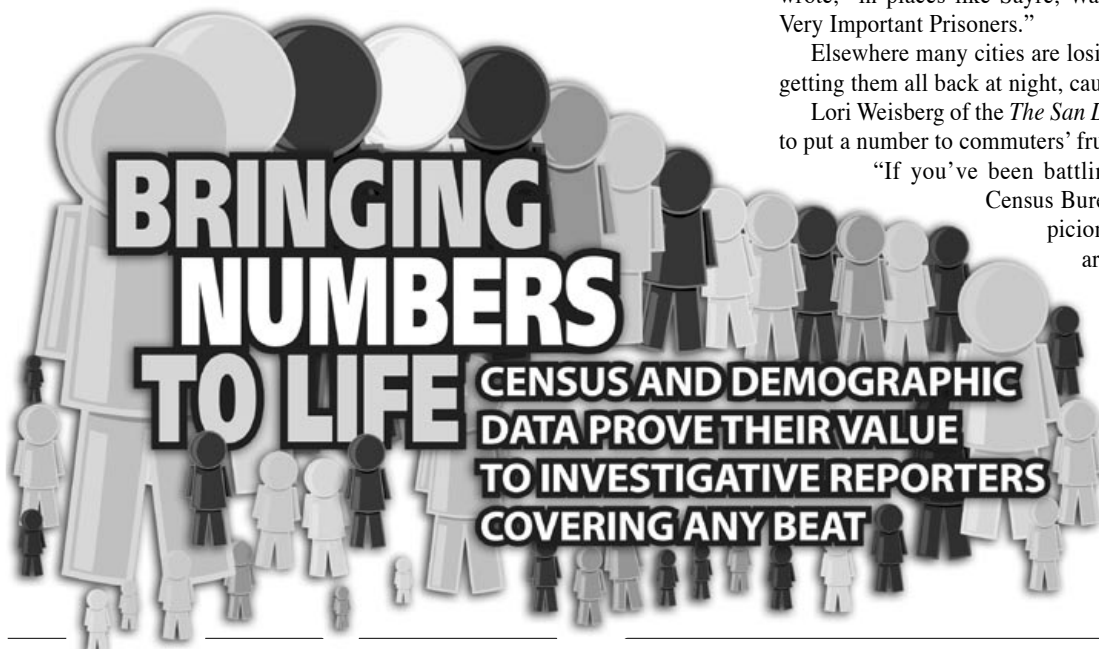
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BY RONALD CAMPBELL
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Daniel A. Anderson | The Orange County Register



Drills at an American Youth Soccer Organization tryout. *The Orange County Register* used census data to show AYSO, an institution in white neighborhoods, is nearly invisible in Hispanic neighborhoods.



Any beat can benefit from census information

By Jennifer LaFleur
The Dallas Morning News

No matter what a journalist covers – from the environment to schools – demographic data such as that provided by the U.S. Census can provide the backbone for any reporting.

Census demographic data will not only provide you with the basic knowledge you need to understand a place or a population, but help you dig deeper when doing investigations.

Demographics will show whether services for poor, disabled or elderly are placed in appropriate areas, or provide insight into voting patterns when compared to election results. At the same time, census data can – and should – be part of any crime analysis to see what types of neighborhoods are subject to which types of crimes.

Remember: Any beat can benefit from census information. Consider these areas:

- **Education.** Census data provide a clear look at private school versus public school enrollment. Overlaying school district enrollment figures against census numbers on school-aged children gives an estimate of the number of kids not in school. Most analyses of school test scores take into consideration other factors such as income and race, which are in the decennial census data.

- **Transportation.** The census data provide insight into commuting patterns, where people work versus where they live, what mode of transportation they use to get there and how long it takes them to get there. Also, the Census Bureau's consolidated federal funds report provides information about federal road contracts.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch transportation reporter Jim Getz used census data to look at proposed routes for the area's light rail system. Despite the transit agency's assertions, the data supported an activist group's contention that its proposed route would serve more people dependent on public transit.

- **Business.** *The Seattle Times* used census data to look at income disparity in the Seattle area. News organizations also have used census data to look at employment by industry and other workforce characteristics. Using census data with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission data would allow a reporter to compare the business workforce to the resident workforce. Census data used as the base against Home Mortgage Disclosure Act lending data will show if loans are being made fairly.

Several years ago, Ron Campbell of *The Orange County Register* mapped bank locations against census data. His analysis showed areas, largely poor and minority, that were without bank services. Banks are required to have locations in all different sorts of neighborhoods. Campbell's technique could be applied to other services such as grocery stores, garbage pickups or street cleaning.

Reporters have used census data to demonstrate the impact of floods, tornados, landslides and even the attacks of 9/11.

The census data have come in waves over the last couple of years, beginning with basic population counts. The data were summarized by whatever groups the Census Bureau decided to provide it to, and it was available in small geographies such as census blocks or block groups. The latest release of data, the Public Use Microdata Samples, allows users to do their own cross tabulations.

For example, if a reporter wanted to look at disability status for a particular race or income group, that reporter could run such a report with PUMS data. *Dallas Morning News* reporter Paula Lavigne used this data to look at diversity

in the national workforce. Her analysis showed that the growth in minority populations was not reflected in the number of minorities in many job categories. PUMS sets also are available for the American Community Survey (more information about that below).

The Census Bureau conducts many different surveys and studies that can be useful reporting tools. The Census Bureau also collects and analyzes data for several other federal agencies. Here's a sampling of the other data available:

American Community Survey: This is an annual survey of housing and population characteristics. Eventually, this data will be available for areas as small as census tracts each year.

American Housing Survey: National housing statistics is collected every other year, and statistics for each of 47 selected metro areas is collected about every four years, with an average of 12 metropolitan areas each year.

Current population survey: This survey provides yearly population counts and tabulates the population changes that are due to deaths, births, in-migration and out-migration.

Housing Vacancy Survey: This survey provides current information on rental and homeowner vacancy rates.

National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: Data include the state in which these activities occurred, number of trips taken, duration of trips, and expenditures for food, lodging, transportation, and equipment. The survey was last conducted in 2001.

Property Owners and Managers Survey: This survey, conducted in 1995 and 1996, was designed to provide information about rental housing and the providers of rental housing.

Survey of Income and Program Participation: This survey provides information about programs such as social security, disability and health insurance.

Advance Monthly Retail Sales Survey: This survey provides information about sales in various retail sales categories.

Census of Agriculture: Conducted every five years, this study provides information such as crop acreage and quantities harvested, inventories of livestock and poultry, value of products sold, land use and ownership, irrigation activities, amount of commodity credit loans, number of hired laborers, federal program payments and operator characteristics.

Commodity Flow Survey: This survey provides data on the flow of goods in the United States.

Consolidated Federal Funds Report Survey: This survey provides data about federal expenditures for grants, salaries and wages, procurement contracts, direct payments for individuals, other direct payments, direct loans, guaranteed or insured loans, and insurance.

Economic Census: The Economic Census profiles the U.S. economy every five years, from the national to the local level. The last survey was sent to businesses in December 2002. The Census Bureau will begin releasing data from this survey in 2004.

Federal Assistance Awards Data System Survey: This survey provides information about grants to nonfederal individuals and organizations.

Plant and Equipment Survey: This provides information about environmental cleanup equipment used by companies.

Transportation Annual Survey: This survey provides national estimates of revenue, expenses, and vehicle fleet inventories for commercial motor freight transportation.

Jennifer LaFleur is computer-assisted reporting editor at The Dallas Morning News and a former training director for IRE.



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Never thought to ask

My *Register* colleague Jim Hinch used census data to underline the disconnect between the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) and Orange County's soccer-crazy Hispanic population.

AYSO, an institution in white neighborhoods, is nearly invisible in Hispanic neighborhoods, Hinch wrote. Anaheim, with 60,000 Hispanic youths, had no AYSO region or league. Huntington Beach, a mostly white city with half as many residents, had four AYSO regions.

Cincinnati doesn't usually appear on lists of Hispanic centers. It had just 22,000 Hispanic residents in 2000, up from 9,000 in 1990. But the influx was enough, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter Chuck Martin found, to spur several entrepreneurs into the food business.

Martin discovered that businessmen were opening Hispanic food markets, offering immigrants nopales, chorizo, poblano chiles and other foods from home. Even supermarket giant Krogers is getting into the act, setting aside valuable shelf space for Mexican and Asian foods.

A handful of reporters are going deep into the census data, using the Public Use Microdata Set, known to census geeks as PUMS. With PUMS and a good statistical program such as SPSS or SAS, a reporter can scroll through thousands of anonymous census questionnaires. The payoff comes with answers to questions that the Census Bureau never thought to ask.

Mark Houser of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* tracked migration patterns for young adults in 28 metropolitan areas to determine if Pittsburgh was losing young adults faster than other areas.

"The Pirates will never win another pennant, nobody wants to shop downtown and young people are deserting Pittsburgh in droves," Houser wrote. "At least one of those local laments is wrong."

Using PUMS data, Houser found that relatively few young adults, aged 25 to 34, left Pittsburgh during the late 1990s. The problem was that "while Southwestern Pennsylvania doesn't lose lots of young people, it attracts even fewer."

Gebeloff of *The Star-Ledger* dove into PUMS to answer questions of the heart. By looking at cur-

rent residents' place of birth, he proved something that every Bruce Springsteen fan suspected: Quite a few young New Jersey men grow up and fall in love with Jersey girls.

The 2000 census was the first to provide detailed information about gay and lesbian couples.

Gebeloff and *Star-Ledger* reporter Mary Jo Patterson mined this data to show some surprising similarities between gay and lesbian couples on the one hand and straight couples on the other hand.

Among their findings: 31 percent of same-sex couples have children vs. 48 percent of married couples. While there is an income gap between gay and straight couples, they found it is smaller than widely believed. The median household income for a same-sex household is \$60,000, compared with \$57,900 for a married household.

Ronald Campbell is a staff writer at The Orange County Register. He has done computer-assisted reporting for more than 10 years, covering the 1990 and 2000 censuses as well as the trade in human body parts, loan discrimination, charity and political finances. He is a past winner of the IRE Award, the Gerald Loeb Award and the Society of Professional Journalists' public service award.



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IRS migration data show income trends, points to possible two-tiered economy

BY DAVID WASHBURN AND LORI WEISBERG
THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

California: The land of milk and honey. Sunshine, beaches, babes – the place everyone wants to be, right? That's what the Chamber of Commerce keeps telling us.

The truth is more Americans are leaving the Golden State than arriving, and have been for quite awhile. Astronomical home prices, hellacious traffic and really questionable gubernatorial candidates have been driving people away for a decade.

Reporters at *The San Diego Union-Tribune* started following this trend during Southern California's deep recession in the early 1990s. We knew thousands of people left then in search of jobs, and more recently, we knew that people were leaving in search of more affordable housing. But we had done little to document this trend beyond anecdotal stories.

Deciding it was time to go a couple steps further, we turned to a recent release from the 2000 Census, which reported migration in and out of counties.

The census data was a great start, but limited. First, it only provided a snapshot in time because it was based on the long-form question asking households where they had lived five years earlier (1995). Second, the data didn't go beyond 2000.

So we needed more, and found it in the IRS migration database from IRE and NICAR. The database, which goes back to the 1980s, keeps track of individual tax returns by county. With it, you can

determine yearly county-to-county migration patterns through 2002. And, as a bonus, it allows you to track the movement of income in and out of counties.

An analysis of both databases gave us the same story: San Diego County, which for a century had gained people from across the country, recorded a net loss in domestic migration from 1995 to 2002. Further analysis and reporting revealed the following:

- San Diego's 12.6 percent population increase during the 1990s was due primarily to births and foreign immigration. Domestically, the county lost thousands to Maricopa County, Ariz., (where Phoenix is located) and to the Las Vegas area.
- Within the state, San Diego lost more than 30,000 people and \$638 million in personal incomes to Riverside County, which is increasingly luring San Diego workers in search of affordable housing.
- Between 1995 and 2002, those who settled here represented an additional \$2.4 billion in income than what those moving out had earned, according to tax return data compiled by the Internal Revenue Service.
- Of those migrating to San Diego County, many were from the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states. The county had a net gain of 13,000 people and \$668 million in income from that part of the country. San Diego also attracted large numbers from the Chicago metro area with a net gain of 3,000

people and \$174 million in income.

- The data analysis turned out to be a relatively easy chore. Both databases have inflow and outflow tables, so it only takes one query to count the people coming to your county from other counties in the nation and another one to count those leaving and where they are going.

A worrisome trend

If you're looking to do a similar story in your community, keep in mind that the IRS database has a "returns" field that counts the number of tax returns from each county, and a field labeled "exempts" that counts the total number of exemptions or dependents claimed by the head of household on the returns.

To find the total number of people coming or going, you need to query the exempts field. Go with the returns field if you are more interested in the number of households moving to or from your area.

Also in the IRS database are two income fields. One is an "aggregate adjusted gross income" field, and the other tallies "median adjusted gross income." We used the aggregate income field because we wanted the total income coming or going.

Our wealth analysis turned out to be one of the most interesting aspects of the story. Though we expected to see more people leaving San Diego than arriving, we were somewhat surprised to find that those who came brought in significantly more income than those departing took with them.

The income numbers did, however, make sense. During the 1990s San Diego became a center for biotech and other high technology industries that require a highly educated workforce. And, unless you are talking about journalists, more education usually means more money.

The tech rush theory was further bolstered when we reviewed from where people were coming. We found that many were coming from metro areas with established technology industries. They included the Washington, D.C., metro area as well as the Boston and Seattle metro areas.

Though San Diego's income gain may appear encouraging, demographers and economists foresee a worrisome trend. They fear the emergence of a two-tiered economy supported by poorly paid immigrant workers at one end and, at the other, an upper middle class able to afford San Diego County's rising housing costs.

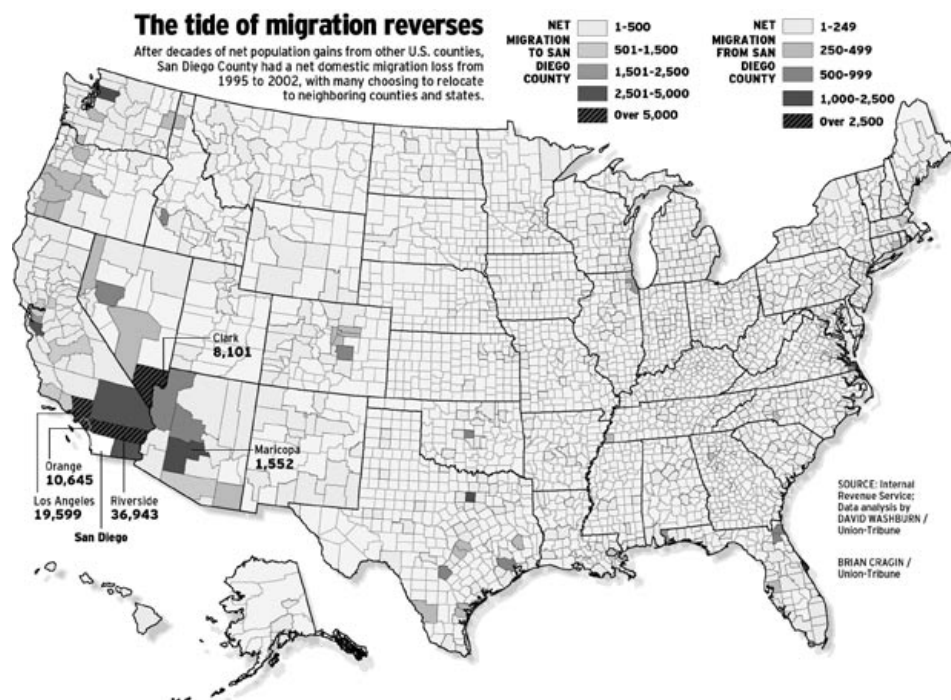
Graphics steal the show

If we had it to do over again, we also would have completed an analysis using the median income field. With that analysis, we could have determined the counties where people with the highest and lowest median income came from, as well as the median income of those leaving.

Like just about every database, there are a few weaknesses in the IRS data. First, it misses first-time income tax filers. And due to the way it is organized,

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Brian Cragin | The San Diego Union-Tribune



By mapping IRS migration data, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* was able to show where former county residents were moving to and where new ones originated.

PUMS: Up-close sampling can reveal the bigger story

BY ROBERT GEBELOFF
THE (NEWARK) STAR-LEDGER

When I first interviewed for a job at *The Star-Ledger*, I ran the typical gantlet of glass-office editors. At one of the stops, the man behind the desk sized me up for a moment and remarked: “So, you’re a Jersey kid, huh? That’s good!”

A Jersey kid?

Though I consider myself having a broader perspective – I did work in Michigan and Wisconsin for several years— it was true. I was a son of the Garden State. And while I had never really thought about it much before then, the comment did get me thinking: To a lot of people, where you’re from matters a lot.

Fast forward a few years and it finally dawned on me how to take this somewhat abstract concept and turn it into a story. Not just any story, but a story that had some factual basis.

I would profile the native New Jerseyan and compare Jersey-borns as a group with people who live here but were born someplace else. And to go beyond anecdotal storytelling, I would summon the Public Use Microdata Sample, a recently released batch of 2000 Census returns unlike any of the 2000 Census releases that came before.

Working with PUMS is like having a giant, electronic filing cabinet of actual 2000 Census returns. The PUMS release goes down to the household level, providing a set of responses for each individual. The names and addresses are removed to protect privacy, but everything else is there.

Whereas other census datasets come in a series of pre-fab tables, PUMS allows you to create any table you want, based on any variable on the census form.

For example, the regular census data will tell you the number of people who commute more than 45 minutes each day. But PUMS allows you to develop a complete set of characteristics of people who spend that much time getting to work.

We put together a package of stories around the characteristics of people born in our state. Working with reporter Mary Jo Patterson, I found that:

- New Jersey natives earn less than people who arrived from other states. New Jersey natives make up 53 percent of the state’s population, but they represent only a third of those who earned more than \$100,000 in 2000.
- More than 70 percent of Jersey-born brides are married to Jersey-born grooms, a trend that plays out in many states, but is somewhat surprising, given that New Jersey has so many outsiders within its borders.
- Natives make up more than half the workforce, but only a quarter of those who struggle to make

it across the rivers and into Philadelphia and New York each morning.

- New Jersey is among the national leaders in producing well-educated Americans. Only, compared to other states with diversified economies, New Jersey’s best and brightest are more likely to leave.

The more we looked, the more we seemed to find little quirks in the data that led to good storytelling. For instance, when looking at the traditional migration of New Jerseyans to Florida, we found a significant change. Unlike 20 years ago, when mostly retirees made the jump, the New Jersey transplants now in Florida are mostly younger people pursuing economic opportunity.

Patterson spent a couple of days in Pasco County, Fla., and found the Lucadano family, who reinvented themselves as Florida landscapers after their small New Jersey trucking company failed.

Another story played off of the traditional rivalry between New York and New Jersey. We found that New Yorkers living here were something of an economic elite compared to the natives. We also found in interviews that most New Yorkers still considered themselves New Yorkers – even those who have lived here for a quarter-century. Kind of like the New York football teams that play in the Meadowlands.

Second line of inquiry

Working with PUMS is much more involved than regular census tables. In my case, I took the PUMS record for every person who lived in New Jersey and keyed on the census question: “Where was this person born?” I collapsed the respondent’s reply into four categories: born in New Jersey, born in New York, foreign born, and other. I then spun out a series of custom-made census tables based on these four possibilities, following the logic I might apply if I were interviewing the data.

What is the age breakdown of people born in New Jersey compared to the other groups? How many of the adults own their own homes? How many are employed? What types of jobs do they have? How much money do they make? How many are college graduates? When they get married, do they marry somebody born in New Jersey or born elsewhere?

It soon dawned on me that I needed to open a second line of inquiry. What about people who were born in New Jersey but lived in other states? So I cut myself another slice of PUMS – this time from the national data. I pulled out every record for individuals who were born in New Jersey but resided someplace else. I called this the New Jersey Diaspora.

I started a new interview. What was the age breakdown of this group? How long had they lived in their current home? Were they more or less educated than people who were born in New Jersey and still lived there? Once you start down this line of inquiry, you’ll find it hard to stop. PUMS gives you an almost unlimited number of questions to ask,

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Scott Audette | AP



Ernie Lucadano, center, stands with his sons David, left, and Pete outside the family landscaping business in Holliday, Fla., where they moved after a business failure in native New Jersey.

Beware census data pitfalls

By D'Vera Cohn

The Washington Post

Census Bureau numbers are about as good as it gets, but they are not flawless. And people will try to spin them. The wise reporter knows to ask questions – as you would of any source – before plunking them down in a story.

Fortunately, the Census Bureau produced a mountain of research to help users determine the reliability of its figures. Or, in the words of one former census official: "Never before have I been part of an organization that produces the whips with which it gets flogged."

First, here are four general points to remember about working with numbers (with thanks to *Washington Post* data guru Dan Keating):

1. Two data points do not make a trend. Avoid making big statements about little changes. Accuracy deteriorates the lower you go in level of geography, so be especially wary of block-level numbers (go up a level to "block group"). Be aware of the difference in reliability between a full population count, a sample, an estimate and a projection, even if you don't give your readers all the gory details.

The bureau's own research includes caveats about some widely used figures on race, noting that the census has a difficult job imposing a series of fixed categories on what is a fluid social phenomenon.

The 2000 Census form offered people the option for the first time to include themselves in more than one racial category, and other government programs will follow suit. But census research suggests that many people describe themselves or their children as mixed-race in some surveys, yet not in others. The Census Bureau also has had a long-time problem persuading Latinos to check a race category on their forms. One in five did not do so in 2000, often because they do not believe they fit the categories used in this country.

There is a range of other reasons that data may not be gold-plated. Census Bureau officials concede they did not do a good job counting the number and characteristics of people living in "group quarters," which include prisons, college dormitories, halfway houses, homeless shelters and mental hospitals. In some college communities, the 2000 Census reported excessively high unemployment rates; this problem does not affect standard Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment figures.

The bureau's own report notes that whites, homeowners and the well-off are more likely to fill in census forms than younger people, renters, minorities and people who do not speak English. If people do not answer, the Census Bureau makes an educated guess, but that can weaken data quality, especially in demographic categories that include only a few people.

2. Sometimes a question is poorly worded. Census Bureau research criticized the question asking grandparents whether they were responsible for the care of their grandchildren. Sometimes a concept is difficult to measure, such as asking people to evaluate how disabled they are or how well they speak English.

Home values are one of the census topics on which Census 2000 evaluations advise using the most caution. Others include work disability, months responsible caring for a grandchild, number of weeks worked,

and agricultural sales. Housing items to be careful about include cost of electricity or gas; second mortgage payment; insurance payment; and cost of a mobile home. Caution should be exercised, according to bureau evaluations, in using figures about receipt of interest or dividend payments, public assistance and "other income," and of the amount of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and public assistance.

3. The Census Bureau found that when it conducted a follow-up survey, people's answers were very inconsistent on the following items for a variety of reasons: ability to speak English; disability; some periods of military service; housing questions about number of rooms, plumbing or kitchen facilities; telephone service; and businesses on the property.

Keep in mind that most data items with caution labels attached are sub-categories. The broad overall numbers on income, housing and family type are solid.

At the same time, remember that figures can be subject to puffery and misinterpretation. Or they can be filtered through the agenda of a group presenting a report using census numbers.

One example of how numbers can be read differently was the Census Bureau's data on same-sex couples. The 2000 Census form offered people the option to describe themselves as an "unmarried partner," which is different from a roommate or boarder.

The number rose 300 percent between 1990 and 2000. Belatedly, after some stories had been written about the rising trend, the Census Bureau published guidance that it was not appropriate to compare the 1990 and 2000 figures, in part because the government changed the way it analyzed the numbers. In addition, some gay and lesbian advocacy groups had discouraged people from checking "unmarried partner" in 1990, but urged them to do so in 2000.

Various advocates in the debate over same-sex marriage found comfort for their point of view in the numbers. The Human Rights Campaign argued that the presence of same-sex couples in nearly every county meant that they are "real families" whose needs cannot be ignored. The Family Research Council countered that the census figures show that same-sex couples were only 1 percent of U.S. households and not very important at all.

4. There may be more than meets the eye in what a number is telling you. When the Census Bureau published figures about communities with more unmarried men than women, it seemed like a fun story idea to tell people where to look for a mate. Some communities are that way, though, because they have male-only prisons. Others have a gender imbalance because of an influx of immigrants; often, young men arrive alone and send for family members later. So, that single guy may be too busy working three minimum-wage jobs to go out on dates.

You can read the bureau's evaluations of its numbers on the Census Bureau Web page – www.census.gov – by going to the Census 2000 section, under "evaluations."

D'Vera Cohn has covered demographics for The Washington Post since the 1990 Census. She also writes about the natural world, and sometimes describes herself as a reporter who covers population counts across species. She has worked for the Post, on the metropolitan staff, since 1985.

Related UPLINK STORIES

Uplink, a bimonthly newsletter by the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting, regularly features articles that provide tips from journalists about using census data. It also highlights stories that have used census data analysis as a key element in the reporting. Here are some recent articles:

- "Ticket data shows search rate gaps." Karisa King of the *San Antonio Express-News* recounts how she used city police traffic-stop and Census data to uncover disparities in search rates by race. (May-June 2003)
- "Mapping the Census" shows how journalists used geographic information system software to map Census data and discover patterns in poverty levels, non-English speaking areas and commutes. (November-December 2002)
- "Children: tracking quality of life." Dave Davis of *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer* explains how he used Census data along with Ohio health and environmental data to reveal that Cleveland children are living in worse conditions than other areas in Ohio and other major cities nationwide. (September-October 2003)
- "Using Census files to link 1990 and 2000 geography." Dan Keating of *The Washington Post* explains one way to deal with Census geography shifts using tract-to-tract relationship files. Keating provides step-by-step guidance. (March-April 2003)
- "Segregation in black, white, shades of gray." Holly Hacker of IRE and NICAR offers advice on using Census data to measure segregation and explore the racial makeup of cities, counties and other geographic areas. (May-June 2003)
- "Plotting race by population." In the "Mapping It Out" feature, *Uplink* illustrates three journalists' stories that use Census data and GIS to map patterns of blacks and whites, looking for segregation and migration changes. (May-June 2002)
- "Covering income, commuting with SF3." Jeff Porter, director of the IRE and NICAR Database Library, provides a guide to the Summary File 3 release from the 2000 Census and highlights some stories that used the data. (November-December 2002)

— *Compiled by Megan Clarke, IRE*

IRE launches Web service with processed census data

By *The IRE Journal*

A recently discontinued census data service by The Associated Press will be made available again through IRE.

Under a contract with AP, the IRE Database Library processed three sets of releases from the U.S. Census Bureau, starting in the spring of 2001. AP then made this information available to its member newsrooms through a Web site.

From the raw government files, the Database Library translated some of the coded material, added geographic information to every file for ease of use, and produced the data in a series of dBase IV files, easily read by any database manager software.

With the recent closing of the AP's Web census service – and as a service to journalists continuing to work with census data – IRE and NICAR will add services to provide easy access to the data.

The datasets soon to be offered:

- The data used for congressional redistricting (released in spring 2001), down to the block level with population counts for race and Hispanic or Latino categories. Public Law 94-171, enacted in 1975, directs the Census Bureau to provide redistricting data needed by the 50 states for their use in redrawing districts of the Congress and state legislatures.

The redistricting data provide population counts. It also has counts of Hispanic/Latino persons by race (63 categories) and not Hispanic/Latino persons by the race categories for both the total population and the population 18 years and over.

Other types of geographic entities covered include states, counties, county subdivisions, places, census tracts, block groups, congressional districts (106th Congress), American Indian and Alaska Native areas, and Hawaiian homelands.

Data also are provided for election precincts and state legislative districts where states have identified them for the Census Bureau.

- Summary File 1, from the Census short form and released in the summer of 2001, contains 286 detailed tables focused on age, sex, households, families, and housing units. These tables provide in-depth figures by race and Hispanic origin; some tables are repeated for each of nine race/Latino groups.

Counts also are provided for more than 40 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and for groups within race categories. The race categories include 18 Asian groups and 12 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups. Counts of persons of Hispanic origin by country of origin (28 groups) are also shown. Summary File 1 goes down to the block level for several data files, but only to the Census tract level for others. Other geographic areas include ZIP Code Tabulation Areas and congressional districts.

- Summary File 3, released in the summer of 2002, consists of 813 detailed tables of Census 2000 social, economic and housing characteristics compiled from a sample of approximately 19 million housing units (about 1 in 6 households) that received the Census 2000 long-form questionnaire.

Summary File 3 includes 484 population tables and 329 housing tables. Fifty-one tables are repeated for nine major race and Hispanic or Latino groups. Summary File 3 presents data down to the block group for many files, but only to the Census tract levels for others. Like the Summary File 1 data, it includes geographic areas such as ZIP Code Tabulation Areas and congressional districts.

The IRE Database Library will include documentation to describe each table and data element and will offer help in using, interpreting and mapping this data.

"This is part of our continuing effort to help and train journalists in the use of data for better in-depth and investigative stories and to archive and preserve government data," said Jeff Porter, Database Library director.

IRE will announce future developments on its listservs and its Web pages at www.2000census.org and www.ire.org. Send comments or questions via e-mail to census@ire.org.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

Census data key to government actions of the next decade

BY PAUL OVERBERG
USA TODAY

It's hard to believe there's still anything new to come from Census 2000, but there is. Two big special tabulations of Census 2000 data will be released in coming months, each with a special audience and purpose. More about that in a minute.

First, it's important to remember that serious researchers are just now digging into the pile of data called Census 2000. This kind of research can't be scheduled for next Sunday's newspaper. But this work – on assimilation, discrimination, poverty, family dynamics, gentrification and more – will set the idea and action agendas for philanthropy and government policy for the next decade.

Investigative journalists can take a cue. You can use the census to help audit many big government efforts of the 1990s. Two examples:

Breaking up concentrated poverty. The 1990 Census documented a fourth decade of growing poverty concentration in inner cities. Other research had documented the staggering toll in lives, property and potential. So, the federal government spent billions of dollars to literally blow up scores of high-rise housing projects. Some of their residents were resettled into new small-scale housing, but many others were scattered.

This happened at the same time that the federal government was cutting funding for new public housing and shifting emphasis toward vouchers. Finally, state and federal welfare overhaul forced many poor people to change where and how they live.

So where did the poor go in your area? Have you mapped the census tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or more in 1990 and 2000 and compared them? Are there more or fewer? How many people live in such areas compared with 1990? If your area has just as many poor people, but fewer living in high-poverty areas, are the poor better off? What do they think? Are there more or fewer people in deep poverty? Has this shift suburbanized local poverty? What does that look like? Are the poor the same kind of people who were poor in 1990, or have they moved up or elsewhere and been replaced by a new group? Have poverty programs adjusted with the shifts in who and where the poor are?

Assimilating the immigrants. Forget how many immigrants arrived in the 1990s – that's old news. Think about how they and their native-born children are assimilating. It happens in different

ways and speeds in each place for each group. Census 2000 offers a way to get started with data on linguistic isolation by native language, citizenship rates by year of arrival and poverty status by citizenship. You also can look at rates of outmarriage and generational differences within households.

As I write, Congress is about to reauthorize for the rest of the decade the law that sets federal transportation funding formulas and programs. At the same time, a federal working group is about to certify and ship copies of the special Census 2000 tabulation that was compiled just for transportation planners.

Pretty dull stuff, right? But behind the alphabet soup of acronyms, engineering jargon and arcane financial formulas there's a back room. That's where politicians, landowners and builders divvy up the pot. Look around your community and you'll see the result of past deals, set in concrete and stone. If you don't like what you see, start thinking about how you can shine a light into this room.

Will the new funds promote congestion and sprawl and smog? Will they subsidize middle-class transit at the expense of transit for the working poor? Will they help your suburbs urbanize coherently?

The Census Transportation Planning Package is the ugly name for a wonderful new look at Census 2000 data on commuting. It includes hundreds of new tables on how and when people of all kinds commute. The data is available for metros, counties, cities and small areas called transportation analysis zones.

For example, table 1-36 breaks down by poverty status how people get to work. This release also has scores of tables grouped not just by where people live, but by where they work. So table 2-01 breaks down when people *arrive* at work. Of all the Census 2000 data released so far, this is the



first to provide something equivalent to local daytime populations, of keen interest to emergency planners, especially for homeland defense.

The first wave of this data has reached local planners, undergone corrections and is about to be sold on CD to the public (Watch the "products" section of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, www.bts.gov/pdc/index.xml). To use this data, your best bet is to read up at www.fhwa.dot.gov/ctpp/ and make friends with the transportation specialist on the staff of your city, county or met-

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Web Resources

The Internet provides myriad demographic resources, though many of them actually use U.S. Census data. Public and private universities are often good sources of specialized studies. A selection of other useful sites, including the Census Bureau:

- Claritas, www.claritas.com. Gathers and sells current demographic data, usually for marketing purposes.
- FedStats, www.fedstats.gov. An excellent portal to U.S. government statistics from federal agencies. Includes census data, but also incorporates agencies such as the Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Health and Human Services. Can provide statistical profiles of various geographical units with its MapStats feature.
- RAND, www.rand.org. Originally founded in World War II to coordinate military research and development (hence the name), RAND still studies national security issues, but also conducts demographic research, compiling data related to aging, migration and education.
- The Urban Institute, www.urban.org. Set up under the Johnson Administration to study America's urban population, this institute features data from its National Survey of American Families.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov/home.htm. An excellent source of wage and occupation information, comprehensive enough to consult in addition to census data.
- U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov. Gateway to data from the 2000 Census and the 2002 American Community Survey. Features the excellent American Fact Finder search tool.
- Woods and Poole Economics, www.woodsandpoole.com. Provides its paying customers with population and economic data dating back to 1975, with projections to 2025.

Demographic data help pinpoint disparity in city's teen programs

BY DARNELL LITTLE
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

One of the many challenges of investigative reporting is turning anecdotal information into quantifiable facts. A reporter covering a beat often develops impressions and makes observations that lead to potential stories. But a solid investigative piece requires that those impressions and observations be supported by real data.

For reporters and editors, few other data sources will prove as continually useful as the decennial U.S. Census, the endlessly rich collection of social and economic information on the American population. Many newsrooms trot out a ritual demographics story when the Census Bureau has a major data release, but the information can be tremendously useful at all times to support daily or enterprise pieces.

Recently, a team of metro reporters at the *Chicago Tribune* made effective use of demographic census data to help examine how fairly the city of Chicago distributed public park programs among its teenaged population.

Because of a persistent problem with inner-city juvenile crime, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and other city officials have in recent years touted government-run programs for teenagers as a potential remedy to youth violence.

Last spring, *Tribune* metro editor Hanke Gratteau and city editor Michael Cordts asked metro reporter Liam Ford to examine what the city, especially the Chicago Park District, offered for teens.

Since juvenile crime is a much bigger program in Chicago's economically deprived neighborhoods than in its more affluent counterparts, the editors wanted to check if poorer areas were getting their fair share of recreational programs compared with the city's wealthier neighborhoods.

Comprehensive profile

To begin his reporting, Ford used the Park District's Web site to determine the number of available programs aimed at teenagers for each ZIP code in Chicago. The Web site gives information for all programs available within one mile of each ZIP code, and Ford transcribed the information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

After compiling a list of park programs by ZIP code, Ford wanted to compare them to the number of teenagers in each of those same ZIP codes. He asked if I could provide him with the population of teenagers for each ZIP code along with the area's racial makeup and median household income.

Thanks to continual improvements to its Web site, the Census Bureau has made it simpler than

ever to access census information for a variety of geographical areas. Using the American Factfinder tool on the Web site, I was able to quickly download the data that I needed for all of the ZIP codes in Chicago.

The Summary File 1 release of the 2000 Census contains the 100 percent count of the U.S. population. It also contains the population by age for a variety of geographical areas. I constructed a table of every 13- to 19-year-old for all of the city's ZIP codes, broken down by race and by Hispanic origin.

The Summary File 3 release of the 2000 Census contains the sampled, long-form questionnaire information on the U.S. population. This is where the economic data we required for the story was to be found. Using SF3, I downloaded the median household income for Chicago's ZIP codes.

By combining the Census data with the Park District data, we had a comprehensive profile of where the programs were located, the number of teenagers in the area and the area's racial and economic makeup.

A quick examination of the data found that although some ZIP codes had both high numbers of teens and high numbers of programs, areas with large numbers of minority teens had fewer programs than affluent areas with even small numbers of teens.

The analysis led to the top three paragraphs of

the story:

"More than 20 years after the federal government sued the Chicago Park District for neglecting field houses and playgrounds in minority neighborhoods, teens in those areas are being shortchanged in recreational programs compared with peers in more affluent areas, a *Tribune* analysis has found.

"The underserved areas encompass a swath of primarily black and Hispanic neighborhoods with many teens and high levels of poverty and crime.

"Mayor Richard Daley and his wife, Maggie, have long pushed recreation programs for teens as an alternative to gangs and drugs and as a way to lower the crime rate. But the Park District has lagged behind because of competing priorities and what Supt. David Doig describes as a history of inertia and ineffective management."

Sorting the ZIP codes by population and by the number of park programs revealed that the area with the most teenagers in the city (the mostly Hispanic 60623 on Chicago's West Side) ranked 11th out of 50 in the number of programs run by the Chicago Park District.

Meanwhile, the heavily white ZIP code 60618 on the city's Northwest Side had the most park programs, although it ranked 12th of 50 in the number of teenagers. The census and Park District data had pointed out two perfect areas for the reporters to compare in the story.

A compelling narrative

Armed with the census and Park District data, a team of reporters interviewed dozens of teenagers, parents, program directors, funding agencies and city officials. After doing initial reporting in a number of neighborhoods, reporters zeroed in on ZIP codes 60623 and 60618 to examine park

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John Lee | Chicago Tribune



Teammates huddle after a summer league basketball game at a park on Chicago's Northwest side.

Mapping your way to great demographic stories

BY DAVID HERZOG
THE IRE JOURNAL

Census data analysis can aid investigative reporting by providing context and adding hard numbers to your hunches. But making sense out of screens full of data arrayed in columns and rows can sometimes prove challenging.

Many journalists have uncovered great information lurking inside census numbers by mapping the data using computer programs called geographic information systems (GIS). They've detected patterns that otherwise might have gone unnoticed just by scanning data tables. And, by adding other map layers on top of their census maps, they've come up with some great stories. Here are some from the past few years:

Shuttle. Soon after the space shuttle Columbia broke apart over Texas in February 2002, *Florida Today* reporter John Kelly wanted to investigate the risk of shuttle re-entry dangers over populated areas. No one had died on the ground.

Kelly mapped the population density, using data from Census 2000, in the region and then layered maps of Columbia's flight path and the oval "debris footprint" that approximated the area where recovery workers on the ground had found shuttle pieces. Then he added a second oval footprint that showed where the debris field would have been if the shuttle had started breaking up just one minute earlier.

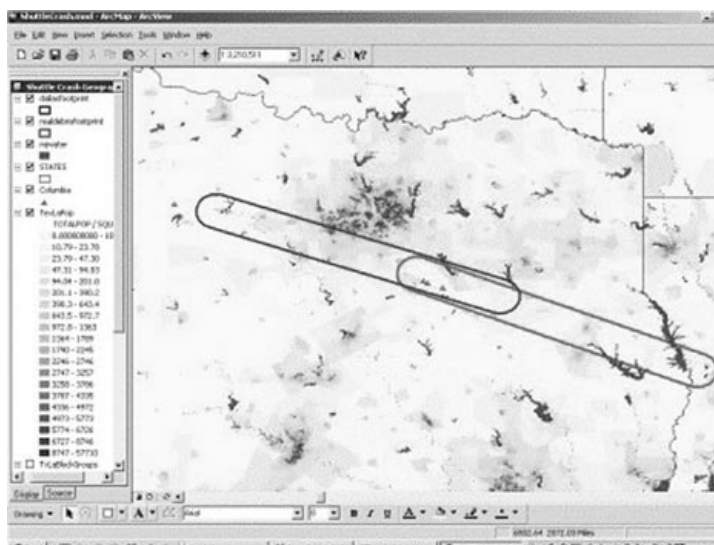
Kelly could see that under the earlier breakup scenario, debris would have hit the Dallas suburbs, where there were three times as many people and houses. (For more details see the July-August 2003 edition of *Uplink*.)

Voting. Dan Keating, a database editor at *The Washington Post*, used GIS, voting results and census data to examine claims that punch-card ballots cast by African-American voters in the 2000

presidential contest had been rejected at higher rates than whites because of voting error.

For one of the two articles he did with John Mintz, Keating used 1990 Census data – the latest available – to compare rejected ballots with race in Chicago and suburban Cook County.

By layering a map of the minority voter precincts that he created using the census data over the ballot rejection rates by precinct, Keating saw a clear relationship. The results mirrored those Keating had generated for a similar story about ballot rejection



An ArcView 8.3 map created by John Kelly of *Florida Today* shows just how narrowly the Dallas-Fort Worth area (the dark area) missed the fallout from the Columbia space shuttle disaster. The oval on the left represents the area where debris would have fallen if the shuttle had broken up just one minute earlier. The oval on the right shows the actual debris field.

patterns in Florida.

Juries. Mark Houser of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* wanted to see how well juries in Allegheny County courts reflected the racial make-up of the community. Specifically, he wanted to check whether the county's jury-picking process systematically overlooked blacks.

The county courts provided a list of the people who had been called to serve on juries for an 18-month period, their addresses and dates served. After Houser removed duplicate names from the list in Microsoft Excel, he moved the data into his GIS program and created a pin map from the addresses.

He also used the GIS program to attach census demographic data to each point so he could tell, for each person's neighborhood, the percentage of the population that was black.

After some more analysis, Houser found that residents of black neighborhoods were half as likely as residents of white neighborhoods to get the call for jury duty. (For more on this story, see the January-February 2003 edition of *The IRE Journal*.)

Seeing the potential

Journalists have been using GIS as an investigative reporting tool for about a decade. A handful of journalists started using GIS in the early 1990s to look at patterns in data from the 1990 Census. Steve Doig, then at *The Miami Herald*, saw the potential for GIS as an investigative reporting tool after Hurricane Andrew struck southern Dade County.

The hurricane left an uneven path of damage, and Doig was part of a team at the *Herald* assigned to investigate the devastation. Doig mapped the damage patterns and overlaid a wind speed map.

His analysis showed that the newer homes suffered the greatest damage. Some newer subdivisions with lesser winds had greater damage than older subdivisions with higher winds.

That key fact in hand, the *Herald* reporters dug into the story and found that poor residential construction and loose regulation contributed to the damage patterns. The stories were part of a package that won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for public service and spotlighted how GIS could bolster investigative reporting.

Getting started using GIS

Using GIS to uncover information is nothing new, of course. People in a multitude of other professions had been doing it for years before journalists.

Several forces helped to propel GIS into newsrooms during the early 1990s. First was the spread of computer-assisted reporting and the realization that great stories lurked inside databases. Second was the makers of the old command-line GIS programs developed point-and-

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Tipsheets from the RESOURCE CENTER

The IRE Resource Center offers many helpful tipsheets for journalists interested in using census data. These tipsheets are written by journalists who have served as expert panelists on IRE conference panels. IRE members can access tipsheets and stories from the Resource Center at www.ire.org. A selection of the available tipsheets:

- **No. 1488** – This tipsheet explains how to use the American FactFinder feature found on the U.S. Census Web site, www.census.gov.
- **No. 1501** – Paul Overberg of *USA Today* offers tips for getting local census data off the Web. In **No. 1587**, Overberg gives ideas on how to deal with census summaries and multi-directional trends. Included: online resources for universal topics like segregation, urban sprawl, income inequality and redistricting.
- **No. 1503** – Richard O'Reilly, director of computer analysis for the *Los Angeles Times*, writes about the Public Use Microdata Sample. O'Reilly explains the benefits – and pitfalls – associated with using PUMS data.
- **No. 1540** – This tipsheet reveals that census data can be key to stories about proximity, inequality, government resources and per capita spending, ethnic identity, and children and family issues. The handout provides examples of stories that newsrooms have done on wildfires, transit services and police deployment.
- **No. 1571** – William Frey, a demographer with the Population Studies Center, provides a list of research studies that are available. Among the studies are "Race, Class and Poverty Polarization across Metro Areas and States: Population Shifts and Migration Dynamics" and "Immigration and Internal Migration Flight: 1990 Census Findings for California."
- **No. 1591** – Hurley Schweers of the *National Journal* offers helpful links on redistricting. The handout also includes charts based on data from the Census Bureau and the National Conference of State Legislatures.
- **No. 1643** – A list of related sites for census data mapping software, GIS data, reporting the census and census data.
- **No. 1748** – Matthew Waite of the *St. Petersburg Times* offers a step-by-step method for basic census analysis without spending any money. The analysis also includes basic mapping techniques.
- **No. 1833** – This is a must-have tipsheet for those who have always wanted to work with the census but never had the courage to wade through the terminology and other barriers. Steve Doig defines much of the census terminology from SF3 to PUMS and more. He also explains some of the statistics behind the different census data. Another important piece of information included is what is asked and what isn't in the survey.

Migration data

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

it leaves out people who, for whatever reason, file one year, skip the next and then file again in the third year. It also does not capture all the wealth entering or leaving a county, the simple reason being that rich people tend to underreport their wealth to the IRS.

However, we were reassured to learn that the findings in our analysis of the IRS data were remarkably similar to the census analysis.

Although many readers had kind words for the story, which took about 10 days to research and write, the graphics stole the show. We imported the data into ArcView and built a map showing the net migration to or from San Diego from each county in the nation.

Then, with help from graphics artist Brian



Cragin, we devised a color scheme that made it easy for readers to take a quick glance at the map and see where most of the migration activity occurs. The six-column map ran on the front page.

David Washburn is the enterprise business reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune. He worked on the Union-Tribune's investigative team for more than three years before joining the business staff. Lori Weisberg has been a staff writer at the San Diego Union-Tribune since 1980, having covered local government, growth and development. For the past decade, she has specialized in demographics and census reporting.

Up-close sampling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

and if you're naturally curious, you'll find yourself wanting to ask them all.

Like anything in life in which absolute freedom is granted, PUMS is an example of being careful in what you wish for. For one, you'll soon find yourself drowning in a sea of information and wondering what to make of it all. Moreover, since the tables you're creating are unique and not comparable to anything published by the census, you'll begin to feel naked; if a PUMS query produces result X, you won't be able to whip out some census printed report and compare your findings to something else.

You also have to really stretch your thinking cap. Just when you come up with a fascinating table based on educational attainment and home ownership, you'll realize that something else might be in play. Maybe race is a factor – so then you'll have to rerun the same query, but break everything down into more categories.

Using common sense

Finally, they don't call PUMS a sample for nothing. It's literally a statistical sample of all individual census returns, and that means there's an error margin involved. I won't go into the technical aspects of dealing with the last two problems, except for two general guidelines.

First, when you carve up PUMS data, resist the temptation to go small. While you theoretically can extract the income characteristics of Asian-Indian female truck drivers who are between the

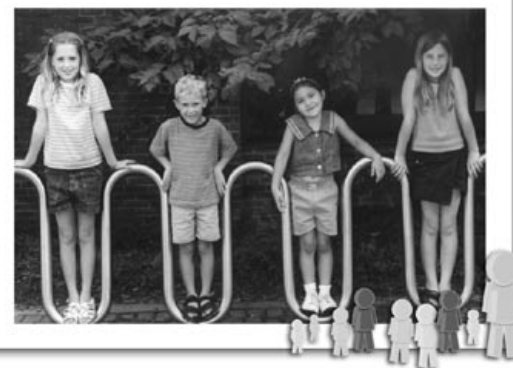
ages of 23 and 34 and live in an apartment with at least two roommates, you're almost certainly going to end up with a gigantic standard error. The more unusual the characteristics, the more unlikely the sample is to capture a broad spectrum of people who fit.

Secondly, when you do your analysis, do not make big deals of small differences. If the gap between two groups is 3 percent, say they're about the same. If the gap is 30 percent, then you know you have a significant difference between the two groups – whether the gap is really 27 percent or 33 percent isn't as important.

Lastly, the biggest fail-safe is old-fashioned reporting. Run your results by sources and if somebody tells you that your findings sound funny, go back and review. In a PUMS story we did about same-sex couples, I actually made a major revision in my numbers after an expert told me that one of my conclusions sounded askew.

In other words, PUMS problems can usually be overcome with common sense. And if you're still not sure of your conclusions, simply don't publish them.

Robert Gebeloff is a computer-assisted reporting specialist at The Star-Ledger.



What's ahead?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

ropolitan planning agency.

Further, affirmative action became a major social issue in the late 1990s, with referendums and lawsuits that even produced Supreme Court rulings. At the same time, tides of diversity rolled through the workforce. But what do you know about how well local industries and employers perform in preventing discrimination and promoting diversity?

A group of federal agencies has paid the Census Bureau to produce a special tabulation of Census 2000 data that will be used to enforce equal opportunity laws. The Census 2000 Special EEO file, as it's called, will include detailed industrial and occupational breakdowns by age, race, sex, income and education. The data will be published for states, most metros, counties and cities as small as 50,000 people. (Data for smaller counties will be grouped.) Like the commuting data, it will total people both where they live and where they work. This will allow you to report on the landscape of daytime diversity, and how it varies from downtown to office park to factory.

More aggressively: How hard is the local glass ceiling, and how much does its height vary among local industries? Do labor unions make a difference for better or worse in workforce diversity? Which industries or occupations diverge most from your local workforce profile – and why? Are nonprofits or local governments doing a better job than businesses?

To get ready, read up at www.eeoc.gov/stats/census/plans.html.

Paul Overberg is a database editor at USA Today, where he has analyzed everything from sprawl to Oscars to purebred dog registrations and has led Census 2000 coverage. He has helped teach a series of IRE workshops about using census data.

Teen programs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

facilities. Their findings provided the following passage in the story:

"The *Tribune's* analysis found the ZIP code with the most teens in the city – which includes Lawndale and Little Village on the West Side – ranks 11th of 50 in the number of programs run by the Chicago Park District.

"Even where programs are offered in the underserved areas, many consist merely of throwing open a gymnasium door for pickup basketball or offering 'open swims' at district pools, activities that lack the formal structure that child-development experts see as antidotes to delinquency and risky behavior.

"It's a different story on the North Side.

"The area with the most park programs for teens – a ZIP code that includes North Center, Irving Park and Avondale – ranked 12th of 50 in the number of teens. In all, the North and Northwest Sides are home to seven of the city's top 10 areas for teen park programs, with gymnastics, boxing and other specialized activities that are nonexistent in Lawndale and Little Village."

The reporters' findings were further boosted by a confidential study obtained by the *Tribune* that was critical of the teen programs offered by the city. The study identified 17 Chicago neighborhoods receiving "low funding for teen programs despite suffering high levels of unemployment, teen pregnancy, gun violence and other social ills." Most of the neighborhoods were on the city's predominately black and Hispanic South and West Sides.

The reporting by Ford, along with reporters Oscar Avila, Jon Yates, Gayle Worland and Stan Donaldson, produced a compelling narrative about the state of Chicago's public park programs.

Darnell Little is a computer-assisted reporting specialist for the Chicago Tribune's metro department.

Mapping

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

click versions that were much easier to use.

Meanwhile, government agencies began adopting GIS and creating map data journalists could obtain under public records laws. Around the same time, agencies began posting their GIS data on the Web for free.

So what do you need to get started with GIS?

You will need a GIS program. The three programs most widely used by journalists are Caliper Corp.'s Maptitude (\$495 list), ESRI's ArcView (\$1,500) and MapInfo's MapInfo Professional (\$1,495).

Then you will need the census map files that display census geographic units, such as blocks, tracts and places. Most GIS vendors include these maps with their software. You also can find the data at the U.S. Census Bureau and commercial Web sites. You may have to convert the files so they work with your program. (See the January/February 2004 *Uplink* for more about finding map data on the Web).

You'll need census data, available through IRE and NICAR or the Census Web site.

It helps to have some know-how – GIS programs have a sharper learning curve than spreadsheets or database managers. IRE and NICAR offer regular GIS training for journalists, including mini-boot camps in Columbia, Mo. Journalists also can learn about GIS by reading *Uplink*. The newsletter contains a regular "Mapping it Out" feature showing how journalists use GIS to find newsworthy patterns.

The last thing you'll need is a little imagination because the story possibilities are limited only by what you want to map and uncover.

David Herzog is an assistant professor at the Missouri School of Journalism and academic adviser to NICAR, a joint program of IRE and the school. The former investigative reporter for The Providence Journal is the author of "Mapping the News: Case Studies in GIS and Journalism" (ESRI Press).

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Kevin McGrath, The Wichita Eagle

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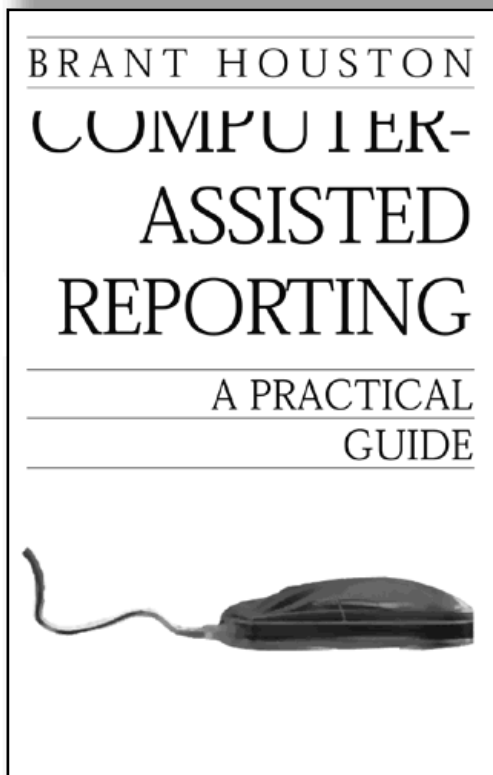
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DNA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

detected in the independent audit. Those problems included: the possible contamination of DNA evidence; lab chemists misinterpreting their own test results and subsequently misrepresenting them to prosecutors and juries; lab personnel being unable to do basic tests; miscalibrated lab equipment; missing documentation of test results; and a lab operating below FBI standards. The audit even found that the lab had a leaking roof that allowed rainwater to drip onto crime scene evidence.

As a result, authorities announced that re-testing would begin in at least 600 past criminal prosecutions, including death row cases that had relied on the HPD lab's work. Further, the district attorney said all DNA evidence in all successful prosecutions would be re-tested, bringing the total to more than 1,000 cases. Those re-tests are now being done by outside independent laboratories.

More problems revealed

After our first pieces aired in November, we received an e-mail from a desperate Houston mother. She said her teenage son had been convicted because of HPD lab work and she was sure he was innocent. We televised a story about then-16-year-old Josiah Sutton, who had been sentenced to 25 years in prison for rape. The lab's DNA testing in the case was the linchpin of his conviction. The lab had reportedly "matched" Sutton's DNA with DNA found on the rape victim.

But KHOU's experts found that the lab's tests had been contaminated or were malfunctioning. Within days of our story, the Harris County district attorney and the Houston Police Department ordered a re-test of the evidence in the Sutton case, the work to be done by an outside lab. A month later, the results of that re-test came back: Sutton could not have been the rapist. In fact, the DNA test showed that two unidentified men with DNA patterns very different from Sutton had been responsible for the crime. And so after serving four years behind bars, Josiah Sutton was released from prison by the same judge who had sentenced him.

Since then, the district attorney's retesting of evidence has revealed more problems with work done by the HPD lab in past criminal cases. Despite this, all 22 district judges want the district attorney to recuse himself from the investigation of the lab's work since it was his prosecutors who handled those cases. They want to appoint a special prosecutor to look at both the lab and the office of the district attorney.

In the meantime, our investigation goes on.

David Raziq is the investigative producer and Anna Werner is the investigative reporter at KHOU-Houston. Their reporting on problems at the Houston Crime Lab has earned them the IRE Award, the DuPont-Columbia Award, the Scripps Howard Award and the Sigma Delta Chi Award.

Public Health

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

exchange story, done well, would have been a good story. It would have satisfied my editors' desire for feature stories that have impact and are revelatory. I had only lived in Detroit two months when I first began reporting the needle story. Despite having a good story in hand, I decided to go for the story that had even more impact.

- When the going gets tough, don't give up. After it seemed that no one in Detroit, the state or the CDC really wanted to talk in detail about syphilis, it would have been easy and less time-consuming to move on to another story. I was initially going after a two- or three-day story which eventually took months to report and write. But tenacity paid off in the firing of employees and an eventual overhaul of the departments. It heightened public awareness, which was my initial reason for wanting to write about syphilis.
- Keep your editors aware of what's going on. I am blessed with supportive editors. But good communication with them still was key in doing this project. Had I not shared detailed reports on numerous complications in what seemed to be a simple story to report – and steps I was taking to overcome obstacles – the project could have been a bust. Or at the very least, it could have been boiled down to a story about Detroit having the highest syphilis rate in the country. Keeping my editors abreast helped me gain support along with their input and guidance.
- Find your sources where you can. In this case, a Southern health official provided all the information I needed to put together the pieces of a puzzle I had accumulated. If people in your local area cannot provide the expertise you need, call an out-of-state counterpart. In this case, the favorite source explained that his industry was a small circle just like the journalism industry. Health officials move around the country. He knew detailed information on what was going on in Detroit despite being hundreds of miles away. Word gets around, even around the country. That being said, be careful about how much information you provide sources. It could get back to your city.
- Always think of yourself as an investigative reporter. Some reporters and editors tend to believe that only people who are on a projects team or who have a lot of "investigative" experience can uncover hard-hitting enterprise pieces. Even if you don't carry that title, remember that you really are an investigative reporter. Always think like that and act like that. It pays off.

Kimberly Hayes Taylor is a features reporter for The Detroit News. Her story, "A Failure of Public Health" was honored as a finalist for the 2002 IRE Freedom of Information Act Award.

Libel claims after Suzuki: Costly road ahead?



DAVID SMALLMAN

As the global audience for news grows, so do the perceived consequences of reporting about business operations and consumer safety issues. With global markets and brands to protect, companies now turn to their law firms to counteract negative stories. Lawyers, hunting the hunters, engage in proactive tactics prior to publication. If that proves unavailing, litigation ensues against the bearers of bad tidings. Resulting lawsuits focus attention upon alleged misconduct or flaws in the investigatory process as much as the substance of the reporting itself. Not surprisingly, judicial decisions arising from these cases often reflect dismay at newsgathering practices and can expose journalists, media companies, and their insurers to new, sometimes significant financial risks. A good example is the ongoing battle between Suzuki Motors Corp. and Consumers Union. Not only has the case already resulted in millions of dollars in legal fees, it also threatens to increase the overall likelihood of future protracted libel actions.

The disputed article first appeared in *Consumer Reports* in 1988, which rated the Samurai – a sport utility vehicle manufactured by Suzuki – “Not Acceptable” based on its propensity to roll over during accident-avoidance tests. During the next 10 years, Consumers Union republished references to the 1988 Samurai rating on numerous occasions. This apparently provoked Suzuki to sue in 1996, alleging that Consumer Union’s ongoing publication of the negative Samurai rating constituted product disparagement.

Consumers Union sought dismissal of Suzuki’s claim before trial. It relied upon established Supreme Court precedent that requires dismissal when public figures can’t offer clear and convincing evidence of actual malice and permits reviewing judges to evaluate the entire record. Historically this approach has worked well for the press. A recent study shows that between 1980 and 2000, media defendants succeeded in obtaining dismissal prior to trial of libel claims in nearly 80 percent of cases in which such relief was sought.

In November 2003, however, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review an appellate court holding that media attorneys believe could alter the status

quo and allow unworthy claims to proceed to trial, even though the evidence can’t ultimately support a jury verdict under established First Amendment law. The legal issue involves whether a reviewing court can, in essence, independently examine and weigh the evidence presented by *both sides* in a pretrial motion. Courts are required to view the evidence in a light most favorable to the party that opposes the motion. If the undisputed facts show that a plaintiff has presented evidence from which a jury might return a verdict in its favor, a trial is required. In *Suzuki*, the appeals court held that the car company presented evidence of “rigged testing” from which a reasonable jury could find that Consumers Union had recklessly disregarded the truth and therefore acted with actual malice. One of the panel members disagreed. He argued the court should have considered, through independent examination of the evidence, that Consumers Union had disclosed the basis for its negative rating of the Samurai, and that even if Suzuki could show bias by the magazine, that alone does not supporting a finding of actual malice.

In a stinging dissent from denial of rehearing by the full 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Kozinski (writing for 11 other judges) observed: “[t]he practical effect ... is that our review for sufficiency at summary judgment is now governed by one standard, while our review after a jury verdict is governed by another standard. The cost,” he continued, “for news organizations to defend themselves in resulting ‘mock trials’ will be enormous ... [and will] result in self-censorship” by news organizations. He went on to call the panel decision a “dangerous precedent,” noting that if Consumers Union “can be forced to go to trial” under the facts alleged by Suzuki, “this is the death of consumer ratings.” Perhaps. But there is also a lesson here in risk management. True, the law supposedly protects “slashing and one-sided” commentary. Still, read the decision and the briefs. See how Suzuki’s lawyers were able to tell their own story of bias. Then, give some thought to how you approach your own projects. Would you be considered an intractable “bulldog” or a thorough watchdog?

David B. Smallman, The IRE Journal's contributing legal editor, is a partner in the law firm of Steinhart & Falconer LLP. He is First Amendment counsel to IRE and NICAR and a member of IRE's First Amendment task force.

Federal data highlight state hit-and-run trend

BY ERIN MCCORMICK AND MICHAEL CABANATUAN
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

When police found the body of a San Francisco college student lying crumpled in the street – run down, then abandoned by a hit-and-run driver – it seemed like a recurring nightmare.

In the months preceding, hit-and-run deaths had peppered the pages of the *San Francisco Chronicle*: a 5-year-old killed by an unlicensed illegal immigrant, a teenage girl facing charges in the death of a first-grader, and numerous other tragedies.

The *Chronicle* decided to find out whether the drumbeat of deaths was more of a trend than a coincidence.

Using an online query system available from the

crisis they had never even considered – and flushing out details of years-old traffic fatalities – turned out to be the more time-consuming part of the story.

When editors returned from Memorial Day weekend to hear that 22-year-old college student Srijaya Dalton had been run down while walking home from a late-night graduation party, *Chronicle* Managing Editor Robert Rosenthal asked: “How often is this happening?”

The paper wanted answers quickly. We went to the California Highway Patrol’s Web site and found that the state tracks only the barest statistics on hit-and-runs, an annual count of the total number

of accidents. Calls to state officials didn’t help much either. One CHP official explained that the agency was so busy dealing with drunken driving and seat belt laws, it hadn’t even considered hit-and-runs.

So, clearly, if we wanted answers we were going to have to get them ourselves. Fortunately, the federal Transportation Department now makes its entire Fatality Analysis Reporting System

available through a Web-based query system. The query system allowed us to quickly answer the first question on our minds: Is this a story worth pursuing?

Each state is required to report the details of all deadly accidents into the federal FARS database, including such variables as exactly where the accident happened, the type of vehicles involved, the age of the drivers and whether drunken driving was involved. Ironically, the federal government publishes California’s data months before the state gets around to releasing its accident statistics and the federal information is far more detailed.

Like many of the database query systems that are popping up online, the FARS data available at www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/queryReport.cfm?stateid=0&year=2002, is not exactly user-friendly. The long list of variables and references to things like “univariate tabulations” can be a bit intimidating. But virtually anyone with the patience to spend a few hours plodding through the accompanying help menus and terminol-

ogy lists can learn it. No database expertise is required, although it helps to know a little about Excel.

We found one of the keys to using this system was to have a succinct question in mind. The query system, with its complex labyrinth of variables and options, is a lousy place for a fishing expedition. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to use it to find the deadliest roadway in your region. But it is great for pinpointing answers to specific statistical questions that come up in news coverage. Our question was simple: How does California compare to other states in the number of hit-and-runs?

For our first query, we choose only one variable from the list of 100 or so available: hit-and-runs. It was no surprise to find that California had the highest number of hit-and-run accidents; it has the highest population and by far the most cars of any state. So, we did another query to get the total number of fatal accidents in each state. We downloaded the two queries into Excel to calculate the percentage of accidents that involved hit-and-run drivers. California was the top state in this measure as well, with only the District of Columbia having a higher percentage of fatalities caused by hit-and-run drivers.

After a half-day’s work, we had the nut graph for our story – and an excuse to go on to the next question, which was: Why?

For this we wanted to massage the actual FARS data and see all the possibilities the dozens of variables offered. So, we called IRE and took advantage of one of journalism’s best-kept secrets. If you call the IRE and NICAR Database Library with a breaking story and a tinge of adrenalin in your voice, you are likely to get more enthusiastic assistance than you dreamed possible. Within hours, the Database Library staff had cut us a portion of the FARS database that included only hit-and-run accidents in California over an eight-year period. This meant we could skip having to cull through tens of thousands of accidents of no interest to us and, instead, focus immediately on the 2,000 or so records that addressed the question at hand.

We looked at such factors as the location of the accidents, the types of cars involved and, for those drivers who were eventually caught, the driving records and license status of the hit-and-run drivers.

We found that about half the hit-and-run drivers had a reason to flee: their licenses had either been revoked or they never had one.

In the meantime, we embarked on what turned out to be the most difficult part of our story: getting people to talk about hit-and-runs.

To get comments on our findings, we pulled out our source lists and began phoning contacts in law enforcement, traffic and pedestrian safety, academia and the state bureaucracy.

Several sources, particularly those in state government, were reluctant to comment on our findings since it wasn’t their research and they were surprised to learn that California led the nation in fatal hit-and-run accidents.

The same police officers, who had been eagerly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ➤



John Storey | San Francisco Chronicle

A woman walks past a sign showing where a pedestrian was killed by a hit-and-run driver in San Francisco.

U.S. Department of Transportation and a slice of data provided by the IRE staff, the *Chronicle* was able to quickly examine hit-and-run deaths to discover that California was truly facing an epidemic.

The resulting stories revealed that hit-and-run drivers were causing a higher percentage of highway deaths in California than in any other state – and about half of those runaway drivers who were eventually identified did not have valid driver’s licenses.

The *Chronicle*’s coverage sparked a debate on the role of illegal immigrants in California’s hit-and-run crisis – at a time when driver’s licenses for illegal immigrants was one of the state’s most hotly contended issues.

The stories are an example of how, by tapping into the some of the data-crunching shortcuts that are increasingly available to journalists, papers can turn routine breaking news into illuminating short-term enterprise reporting.

In this case, the data work was the easy part. Getting public safety officials to respond to a hit-and-run

Using online query systems

Online query systems, many of which offer journalists and researchers instant access to very large databases, are cropping up all over the Internet. Many have a bit of a learning curve, but they're worth the trouble if you use them to confirm a hunch or show a trend going on in your community. It is often best to approach them with a very specific question in mind. Want to know if it's really true that low-income residents are being driven out of your community or whether your state's incarceration rates for African-American drug users are going up? Many of the following query systems are geared for academic researchers, but could offer a wealth of untapped information to journalists as well. Like virtually all government data, the information offered by the query systems tends to be several years old.

Fatal Accident Reporting System online queries

www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/queryReport.cfm?stateid=0&year=2000

The Census Bureau's American Factfinder – The mother of all query systems, this utility gives users high-powered access to all kinds of details from the 2000 and 1990 censuses – down to the census block level. Seems like getting census data ought to be simple, but spend a few hours getting in this system and you'll realize it isn't necessarily so. Hint: to get a sense of all the data available, start by going to datasets and clicking on Year 2000 Summary File 3 (for social and income data) or Summary file 1 (for racial data.) Then, scroll down the right side of the screen to click "List all tables." This will allow you to peruse the hundreds of available tables.

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet?_lang=en

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research – This research repository's online query system allows you to work with 110 databases covering everything from crime victims to annual surveys of high school students. The databases are complex, but the online engine allows you to ask your own questions without having to download the data and crunch it with a high-powered statistical package like SAS. Hint: The codebook is the place to start. Start by clicking the option that allows you to open a codebook in a separate window, then spend some time familiarizing yourself with the list of the available variables.

www.icpsr.umich.edu

National Archive of Criminal Justice Data – The Inter-University Consortium also hosts this collection of crime data, including an annual census of the prison population, uniform crime statistics and hate crime data at a county level.

www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/SDA/das.html#STUDIES

CDC Wonder

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides query capabilities for about 40 sets of health information, ranging from AIDS public use files and asthma prevalence to occupational death rates.

<http://wonder.cdc.gov>

Survey of Income and Program Participation – Users can download the free software, Dataferret, to get survey information on topics including poverty, unemployment, food stamps and health insurance coverage.

www.sipp.census.gov/sipp

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Upcoming CAR Workshops

Computer-Assisted Reporting Boot Camps

These unique seminars, taught by IRE and NICAR's experts, train journalists to acquire electronic information, use spreadsheets and databases to analyze the information and to translate that information into high-impact stories. In addition, IRE and NICAR provide follow-up help when participants return to their news organizations. Five CAR Boot Camps are scheduled for 2004 in Columbia, Mo.

- Jan. 4-9 (full)
- March 21-26
- April 16-18 (for print and broadcast news managers)
- May 16-21
- Aug. 1-6

What previous Boot Campers have said about the experience:

"They were able to talk in a real way about issues that reporters face when practicing computer-assisted reporting skills ..."

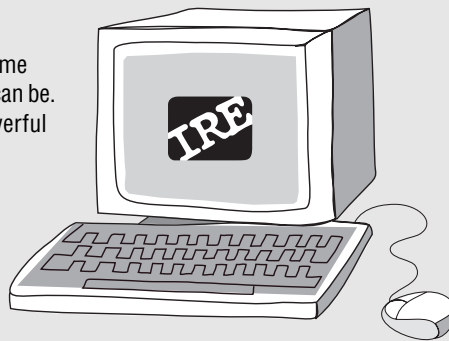
– Analisa Nazareno, *San Antonio Express-News*

"The intense, small group workshop helped me understand how powerful database research can be. ... I now consider CAR one of the most powerful tools to expose wrongdoing."

– Holly Whisenhunt, *WOAI-San Antonio*

"I realized I hadn't been fully tapping my beats, and you don't have to be a computer nerd to do computer-assisted reporting."

– Teresa Taylor Williams, *Muskegon Chronicle*



Advanced Boot Camp on Mapping

Jan. 9-11 • Columbia, Mo.

Intensive hands-on training using mapping software for news stories will be offered by David Herzog, of NICAR and the Missouri School of Journalism, and Jennifer LaFleur, computer-assisted reporting editor at *The Dallas Morning News*. All lessons are based on government data. Participants are asked to have a basic knowledge in using relational database programs such as Access or FoxPro. Participants are encouraged to bring local data to work on during open lab time.

Advanced Statistics Workshop

Feb. 13-15 • Arizona State University

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Steve Doig, interim director of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University, and Sarah Cohen, database editor of *The Washington Post*, will team to teach this workshop. This session is aimed at strengthening the skills of reporters who want to move beyond basic computer-assisted reporting and use statistical analysis in their work. Reporters should know spreadsheet and database-manager applications and have experience in computer-assisted reporting.

Fellowships

A limited number of minority and small-news organization fellowships are available for IRE and NICAR workshops. Visit www.ire.org/training/fellowships.html for more information and an application.

More information is available at www.ire.org/training/bootcamps.html

FOI report

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This much is known from previous governmental studies: Research on liquefied natural gas indicates that a fire in a single tanker compartment could result in a wall of flames a half-mile wide and hundreds of feet high. If an entire tanker caught fire, people two miles away could suffer second-degree burns. An elementary school and numerous homes are located within one mile of the proposed plant site south of Mobile.

When asked by the *Register*, an ExxonMobil spokesperson refused to even comment on what types of information the corporation might attempt to withhold. The company could try to restrict access to accident planning scenarios and other matters related to possible plant hazards, which companies have long sought to withhold from the public.

Closely related to the issue of the plant itself is the issue of transporting the gas. Since a relatively small hole in a tanker ship could create a conflagration under certain circumstances, the safety question involves not just the facility but the entire Mobile Bay.

Despite the safety concerns, the port authority and ExxonMobil have ignored calls for an independent study of the safety issues before the deal is set.

The *Mobile Register* has focused a steady spotlight of articles and editorials on the LNG terminal proposal. Mobile is one of several cities where new LNG terminals are being proposed.

A story by Ben Raines and Bill Finch cites contradictory and vague statements by FERC as to whether it even takes safety into consideration when licensing facilities such as the proposed LNG terminal. Their lead:

"The *Mobile Register* has been unable to find any evidence that federal agencies are required to consider the risks of giant liquefied natural gas tanker ships when deciding whether LNG terminals would be appropriate for populated areas like Mobile."

In previous written statements, even officials with the FERC, which oversees the permitting of onshore LNG terminals, said they would not take hazards posed by the ships into consideration when deciding whether to allow a terminal.

Controversies such as these offer no black-and-white solutions, and are sure to generate demand for information that will strain policy which so far has drawn little notice from anyone but lawyers and bureaucrats. Already in Maryland, a subsidiary of the Virginia-based utility, Dominion, has employed the new policy to restrict access to its emergency response plan – as well as operations and safety manuals – for its Cove Point liquefied natural gas terminal on Chesapeake Bay. The terminal lies some three miles away from a nuclear power plant. It sparked controversy two years ago when FERC approved its reopening and expansion one month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Access advocates demand the "right to know." Energy officials prefer to limit access to "need to know." Somewhere there lies a golden mean.

Member news

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2003. Rosenfeld won several awards, including the 2002 IRE Freedom of Information Award, for his series "The Campus Files," published in the *Chronicle* last year. The series sprang from inquiries he initiated while at the *Daily Californian*, a student newspaper at the University of California-Berkeley. ■ **Deborah Sherman** has joined KUSA-Denver as an investigative reporter. She was formerly with WTVJ-Miami and is a member of IRE's board of directors. ■ **Jeff Taylor** has been named assistant managing editor for investigative reporting at the *Detroit Free Press*, where he was previously metro editor. ■ **David Wethe** has moved from the *Dallas Business Journal*, where he covered the automotive, hospitality and retail industries, to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, where he's covering sports business and tourism.

Hit-and-run

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

answering our questions about individual hit-and-run cases as they happened, seemed stumped when we wanted details of old cases or information on what the statistics meant.

But sources from nonprofit pedestrian and traffic safety organizations proved invaluable. They offered insightful comments, including the idea that illegal immigrants and other unlicensed drivers – drivers with nothing to lose – could be a big part of the problem. And they, unlike some of the official sources, were willing to go on the record.

The safety organizations – advocacy groups – also offered us some anecdotal evidence to back up their observations and pointed us to law enforcement officials they had worked with who were interested in and willing to talk about the problem of hit-and-run accidents.

Prosecutors and advocacy groups helped us get some of the surprisingly hard-to-find case information. So did the *Chronicle's* electronic library.

We also ran into reluctant sources on the issue of illegal immigrants and their role in the problem. Many were unwilling to be quoted by name, in large part because of the politics surrounding any issue in California involving illegal immigration.

Erin McCormick is a member of the San Francisco Chronicle's investigative team, specializing in computer-assisted reporting. Michael Cabanatuan is a transportation writer for the Chronicle, where he has worked for six years.

IRE SERVICES

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS AND EDITORS, INC. is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of investigative reporting within the field of journalism. IRE was formed in 1975 with the intent of creating a networking tool and a forum in which journalists from across the country could raise questions and exchange ideas. IRE provides educational services to reporters, editors and others interested in investigative reporting and works to maintain high professional standards.

Programs and Services:

IRE RESOURCE CENTER – A rich reserve of print and broadcast stories, tipsheets and guides to help you start and complete the best work of your career. This unique library is the starting point of any piece you're working on. You can search through abstracts of more than 19,000 investigative reporting stories through our Web site.

Contact: Carolyn Edds, carolyn@ire.org, 573-882-3364

DATABASE LIBRARY – Administered by IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. The library has copies of many government databases, and makes them available to news organizations at or below actual cost. Analysis services are available on these databases, as is help in deciphering records you obtain yourself.

Contact: Jeff Porter, jeff@ire.org, 573-882-1982

CAMPAIGN FINANCE INFORMATION CENTER – Administered by IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. It's dedicated to helping journalists uncover the campaign money trail. State campaign finance data is collected from across the nation, cleaned and made available to journalists. A search engine allows reporters to track political cash flow across several states in federal and state races.

Contact: Brant Houston, brant@ire.org, 573-882-2042

ON-THE-ROAD TRAINING – As a top promoter of journalism education, IRE offers loads of training opportunities throughout the year. Possibilities range from national conferences and regional workshops to weeklong boot camps and on-site newsroom training. Costs are on a sliding scale and fellowships are available to many of the events.

Contact: Brant Houston, training@ire.org, 573-882-2042

Publications

THE IRE JOURNAL – Published six times a year. Contains journalist profiles, how-to stories, reviews, investigative ideas and backgrounding tips. *The Journal* also provides members with the latest news on upcoming events and training opportunities from IRE and NICAR.

Contact: Len Bruzzese, len@ire.org, 573-882-2042

UPLINK – Newsletter by IRE and NICAR on computer-assisted reporting. Published six times a year. Often, *Uplink* stories are written after reporters have had particular success using data to investigate stories. The columns include valuable information on advanced database techniques as well as success stories written by newly trained CAR reporters.

Contact: Jeff Porter, jeff@ire.org, 573-884-7711

REPORTER.ORG – A collection of Web-based resources for journalists, journalism educators and others. Discounted Web hosting and services such as mailing list management and site development are provided to other nonprofit journalism organizations.

Contact: Ted Peterson, ted@nicar.org, 573-884-7321

For information on:

ADVERTISING – Pia Christensen, pia@ire.org, 573-884-2175

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS – John Green, jgreen@ire.org, 573-882-2772

CONFERENCES AND BOOT CAMPS – Ev Ruch-Graham, ev@ire.org, 573-882-8969

LISTSERVS – Ted Peterson, ted@nicar.org, 573-884-7321

Mailing Address:

IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211

2004 Computer-Assisted Reporting Conference

Cincinnati, Ohio • March 12-14, 2004

Don't miss panels by the best in the business on every beat and topic including Census, campaign finance, crime, education, business, local and state government, freedom of information, transportation and more. Hands-on classes will be offered featuring spreadsheets, database managers, mapping, statistics, social network analysis and more.

PLUS! Exhibitors, networking, software demonstrations and special tracks for beginners, educators, broadcasters and advanced users.

For more information visit www.ire.org/cincy04

Conference Location and Hotel:

Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hotel
35 West Fifth Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

To make a hotel room reservation, call 513-421-9100 or 1-800-HILTONS and ask for the CAR room block to receive the discounted rate of \$99 single/double occupancy plus tax.

Last day to make reservations at the discounted rate is Feb. 13.



Local Host: *The Cincinnati Enquirer*

Sponsors: *The Cincinnati Post/The Kentucky Post*, WCPO-Cincinnati

Presented by Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

REGISTRATION FORM. To register, please complete this form. Visit our Web site regularly at www.ire.org or call 573-882-2042 for the latest details. *Please write carefully! This information will be used to make your nametag.*

Name: _____

Employer/Affiliation/School: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

Office Phone (required): _____ E-mail (required): _____

Home Phone: _____ Fax: _____

To register, mail this form and a check to IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211. To register by credit card, you must have a VISA or MasterCard. We cannot accept American Express. You may fax your credit card registration to 573-882-5431 or register online at www.ire.org/training/cincy04.

Cancellations need to be sent via e-mail to jgreen@ire.org. There is a \$50 processing fee for all cancellations until March 11, 2004. Refunds will not be given for cancellations after March 11.

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Card Holder Name: _____

Card Holder Signature: _____

To attend this conference, you must be a current IRE member through April 1, 2004. Memberships are nonrefundable.

MEMBERSHIP

____ I am a current member of IRE through April 1, 2004.

____ \$50 I need to join/renew my U.S. or international Professional Academic Associate or Retiree membership.

____ \$25 I need to join/renew my student membership.

REGISTRATION

____ \$150 I would like to register for the conference as a Professional Academic Associate or Retiree.

____ \$100 I would like to register for the conference as a student.

LATE FEE

____ \$ 25 For registrations postmarked or faxed after Feb. 27.

TOTAL \$
