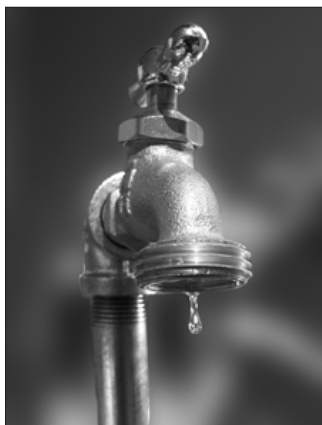


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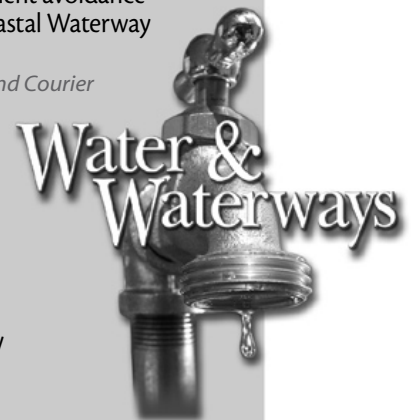
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FROM THE IRE OFFICES

Most news investigations avoid unnamed sources, IRE archives study shows



BRANT HOUSTON

In this *IRE Journal* issue you will find the list of winners in our annual contest. What you won't find is an overabundance of anonymous sources in these stories.

In winner after winner, you will find a combination of traditional interviews and paper trails along with the use of data analysis that bring certainty and credibility to the work. Whether it's railroad safety, flaws in the justice system, racial profiling or public corruption, the doggedness and research to get the information on the record shines through.

Being document driven

Since its inception, IRE has taught journalists to have a "document state of mind." That is, if someone tells you something, there is a high likelihood that a document (or a database) exists to support or contradict what the person said. (In fact, many winners will tell you their training came from IRE seminars and fellow members.)

Year after year, the IRE contest judges select winners that, by a wide, wide majority, are document-based. It doesn't mean that IRE members never use anonymous tipsters who deliver roadmaps to documents and databases. It doesn't mean we never – as a last resort – quote anonymous sources who refuse to go on the record for fear of retribution.

It does mean, however, as a group IRE members like their stories air-tight, thoroughly documented, totally credible and on the record as much as possible.

We have always understood this anecdotally, but recently a Missouri graduate student put some numbers to these principles.

For her master's thesis, Miglena M. Sternadori decided to do a statistical study of the use of sources in IRE contest entries and winners. She looked at 190 entries from 1995 through 2002 broken into two groups. The first group consisted of winning entries and the second group was a (statistically acceptable) random selection of entries.

With advice from social researchers, she developed codes for the kinds of sources used in the stories. While she found winners used more anonymous sources, the overall percentage used was 7.9 percent. For non-winners it was about 4 percent. In either case, less than 10 percent of the sources in the stories were anonymous. The highest percentage overall in all the years studied was 14 percent, still a small portion of the total.

Sternadori, who has worked at IRE and as a professional journalist, did find differences in markets and media, and whether the sources were documents or people. She found that magazines and small weeklies used anonymous sources more often – as much as 14 percent overall and up to a quarter of people sources – while large newspapers were the most cautious.

The highest use of anonymous sources came in broadcast – 15 percent to 24 percent – yet still not nearly the majority of information you may find in day-to-day stories on the government beat.

Improving credibility

There are many more numbers and observations in the study, but the reader can be easily stirred to wonder about relations between documentation and credibility, particularly at a time in which we are deeply concerned about authenticity of information.

As with any study, Sternadori saw many avenues for further research and the need for others to do their own studies to check her findings. But her paper is a strong addition to the debate on anonymous sources and suggests practical ways – taught by IRE for decades – in which news organizations can improve their stories and their credibility.

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.

Davis to head NFOIC; office moves to Missouri

The National Freedom of Information Coalition, an umbrella organization of state FOI groups and advocates, will move its headquarters to the Missouri School of Journalism in July. Charles Davis, associate professor of journalism at Missouri, will leave his post as editorial department chair to serve as the coalition's executive director. Davis is an IRE member and serves on IRE's First Amendment task force.

Since its inception, NFOIC has fostered the growth of state-level FOI groups across the country. Davis said the organization will continue this mission while also ensuring already existing member groups have adequate resources and information.

NFOIC is currently headquartered at the Freedom of Information Foundation in Dallas.

Campaign finance workshop to feature hands-on work

IRE will host a campaign finance workshop May 7-8 in Columbia, Mo., titled "What's next in campaign finance: Covering federal, state and nonprofit money in upcoming elections."

Aron Pilhofer, the Center for Public Integrity, and Derek Willis, *The Washington Post*, will lead the workshop, which will emphasize money in local and state elections, including the impact of 527 organizations. The second day of the session will include optional hands-on training in computer work focused on campaign finance data. The class will use federal and state-level data. Instructors will emphasize story ideas generated by the analysis.

For more information, visit www.ire.org/training/cfcolumbia05.html or call 573-882-2042.

MEMBER NEWS

Donald Blount has been named managing editor of *The (Stockton, Calif.) Record*. He was assistant managing editor at *The Modesto Bee*. ■ **Ron Chepesiuk's** book, "The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking Down Colombia's Cali Cartel" (Praeger, 2003), was published in paperback by Milo Books in April under the name "Drug Lords: The Rise and Fall of the Cali Cartel, the World's Richest Crime Syndicate." ■ **Rose Ciotta**, a former IRE board member, is now education editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. She was previously the newspaper's computer-assisted reporting editor. ■ **Gene Farris** has been named international sports editor at *USA Today*. He will oversee the sports sections of the paper's European and Asian editions. He was deputy sports editor at the *Akron Beacon Journal*. ■ **John Frank**, formerly of *The Daily Tar Heel* at the University of North Carolina, is now the state politics reporter at *The (Charleston, S.C.) Post and Courier*. Before taking this position he completed a political reporting fellowship with the *Houston Chronicle's* Washington Bureau and won an IRE Award for student reporting. ■ **Mary Garofalo**, investigative reporter for WNYW-New York, received the "Woman of the Year" award from the Italian American Police Society of New Jersey for her distinguished reporting career and dedication to the Italian American community. ■ **Jason Gertzen** has left the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and is now a business reporter covering telecommunications and technology at *The Kansas City Star*. ■ **Mark Greenblatt**, formerly with WBBH-Fort Myers, has joined KHOU-Houston as an investigative reporter. ■ **Marina Walker Guevara**, a researcher at IRE and NICAR, was awarded a \$2,000 Overseas Press Club Foundation Scholarship for her essay detailing lead poisoning problems in a Peruvian town where the leading employer

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42 >

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

IRE members receive top industry honors

This year, various organizations saluted the work of IRE members with journalism awards. Winners are spotlighted here. Members' names are in bold:

Pulitzer Prizes Winners

- **Charles Ornstein, Steve Hymon, Mitchell Landsberg, Tracy Weber, Julie Marquis and Robert Gauthier** of the *Los Angeles Times* won in Public Service for their investigation into the quality of health care being provided at Martin Luther King/Drew Medical Center. [Read how they did their work on page 32.]
- **Nigel Jaquiss** of *Willamette Week* (Portland, Ore.) won in Investigative Reporting for his probe into a former governor's sexual misconduct with a 14-year-old girl.
- **Walt Bogdanich** of *The New York Times* won in National Reporting for his stories about the corporate cover-up of responsibility for fatal accidents at railway crossings.

Finalists

- **Diana B. Henriques** of *The New York Times* was a finalist in Investigative Reporting for exposing how thousands of American soldiers were exploited by insurance companies, investment firms and lenders.
- **Clark Kauffman** of *The Des Moines Register* was a finalist in Investigative Reporting for revealing glaring injustices in the handling of traffic tickets by public officials.
- **Steve Suo and Erin Hoover Barnett** of *The (Portland) Oregonian* were finalists in National Reporting for their reports on the failure to curtail the growing illicit use of methamphetamines.
- **Jenifer B. McKim, Valeria Godines, William Heisel, Courtney Perkes and Mark Katches** were part of *The Orange County Register* team that was a finalist in Public Service for an investigation into the dangers of Mexican candy.

Associated Press Sports Editors Award

- **Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams** of the *San Francisco Chronicle* won in Investigative Reporting.
- **Burt Hubbard**, Lynn Bartels, Jody Berger, Brian Crecente, Owen Good, Berry Morson, Javier Erik Olvera and Kevin Vaughn of the *Rocky Mountain News* won in Breaking News.
- **Margot Williams**, Steve Fainaru, Dave Sheinin and Julie Tate of *The Washington Post* won in Explanatory Reporting.
- **Meri-Jo Borzilleri** of *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette* won in Game Story.

Society of American Business Editors and Writers: Best in Business

- **Glenn R. Simpson** of *The Wall Street Journal* won in Enterprise for "Embassy Row."
- **Doug Stanley** and Baird Helgeson of *The Tampa Tribune* won in Enterprise for "A Formula for Disaster."
- **Sharon Smith** of *York (Pa.) Daily Record* won in Enterprise for "Shopping Around."
- **Mary Jane Credeur** of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* won in Enterprise for "A \$19 Million Problem for Georgia Tech's Biz School."
- **Julie Jargon** of *Crain's Chicago Business* won in Enterprise for "Why Can't Wrigley Make No-Stick Gum?"
- **John Frank** and Emily Steel of *The Daily (University of North Carolina) Tar Heel* won in the Student Contest for "Rising Tensions lead CIO to resign."

National Headliner Awards Print

- **George Watson and Guy McCarthy** of *The San Bernardino (Calif.) Sun* won in News Series (circulation up to 75,000) for "Unnatural Disasters."
- **Tim Novak and Steve Warmbir** of the *Chicago Sun-Times* won in Investigative Reporting for "Clout on Wheels."

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BEST OF HOLLYWOOD

Highlights of 2005 CAR Conference

BY THE IRE JOURNAL

More than 300 journalists, educators and students attended the 2005 Computer-Assisted Reporting Conference held in March in Hollywood, Calif. The conference included about 60 panels and about 75 hands-on classes and software demonstrations.

KNBC-Los Angeles and the *Los Angeles Times* served as conference hosts. Other sponsors included *The Orange County Register*, *The San Bernardino Sun*, the Chicago Tribune Foundation and the *Los Angeles Daily News*.

Following are highlights from just a few of the sessions. Check www.ire.org/resourcecenter or call 573-882-3364 for tipsheets from the conference.

Broadcast news

TV reporters and producers learned how to visualize CAR in a series of panels designed for broadcast news. In the "Getting Started" panel, speakers Nancy Amons of WSMV-Nashville and Joe Ellis of KDFW-Dallas/Fort Worth went back to basics.

Ellis urged broadcasters to take their stories to the next level by using data. "Data is like driving: Drive around the block and get comfortable behind the wheel."

Amons and Ellis visualized CAR by playing several video clips of simple stories for beginners. Amons used a speeding-ticket database to produce a story about a habitual speeder who never was charged for vehicular homicide.

One challenge some reporters and producers face is selling CAR stories to news directors. Ellis says the key is to make sure that stories are visual and about people, not the data. "It's easy to get married to your

data and your work, but you need to divorce it once you get into the edit bay," Ellis said.

Amons suggested finding data using the alphabet. Starting with A, Amons has found data dealing with agriculture in Tennessee.

The Hollywood CAR Conference also featured broadcast news panels on using CAR for quick investigations and producing CAR stories using sex offender data.

- Tipsheets from this panel: No. 2280 and No. 2281.

Open records laws and negotiations

Open access to public records continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing CAR reporters. "1984 and its sequels" addressed the best way to negotiate for data. Panelists David Smallman of DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, Guylyn Cummins of Sheppard Mullin and Griff Palmer of the *San Jose Mercury News* delivered some good news to a packed house.

Proposed federal legislation may aid journalists in their fight for data. If passed, the Open Government Act of 2005 would benefit journalists in several ways, including a broader definition of "news media," an annual report to track the use of Freedom of Information Act exemptions and a stricter enforcement of 20-day deadlines.

Smallman, also *The IRE Journal's* contributing legal editor, said the legislation is being pushed because of media efforts to open records. "The pendulum is swinging the other way thanks to the sophistication of the media," he said.

If your FOI request is rejected, the panel offered other options. Palmer said reporters should not assume there is one source for the data. If you are rejected by one person, contact someone else in that agency. "It's sort of like cultivating sources, but do it in the IT department," Palmer said.

The panel warned journalists about picking their battles. If a news organization plans on taking an FOIA fight to court, it needs to make sure it's worth it. "If you fight and lose, you create a precedent for them to reject other data requests," Smallman said.

For support, the panel advised data negotiators to get involved with advocacy groups and to seek advice on NICAR's listserv.

Using statistics

"Focus on the outliers and use the right tools."

These were the themes of "Overview of best practices in using statistics for CAR stories." Panelists Steve Doig of Arizona State University and Jennifer LaFleur of *The Dallas Morning News* introduced journalists to several statistical tools they can use to

develop CAR stories.

LaFleur encouraged journalists to run a few basic statistical tests – such as calculating frequencies – to check assumptions and identify possible stories.

By creating a scatter plot of test scores, Holly Hacker of *The Dallas Morning News* was able to identify schools reporting unusually high increases. She focused on these outliers and found that several were cheating on standardized tests.

Doig recommended that journalists use the tools and formulas of experts in the field they're covering. While Excel and Access can do many calculations, Doig said using programs such as SAS and SPSS will make a journalist more credible, and can make it easier for journalists to get help from other statisticians.

Both LaFleur and Doig emphasized that while statistics is a broad field, journalists only need focus on the specific tools that will aid in their reporting.

- Tipsheet from this panel: No. 2282.
- Check out IRE's most popular beat book, "Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News," by Sarah Cohen. Visit www.ire.org/store/books/math.html.

Disasters

When covering natural disasters journalists can use their mapping skills to extend the basic story.

John Maines of the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* used public data to investigate management of relief funds by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

By comparing maps showing hurricane wind speed with maps of loan applicants and recipients, Maines was able to identify high numbers of loans going to applicants in Miami-Dade County, who were unlikely to be see damage from the storm.

Wendy Shindle of the U.S. Geological Survey introduced journalists to data and tools they can use to help their audiences understand earthquakes. Shindle highlighted the USGS ShakeMaps and Did You Feel It Maps, which can give a better picture of where an earthquake could lead to the most damage.

Journalists can sign up at the USGS Web site for automatic alerts to have these maps and other data e-mailed to them within minutes of an earthquake.

George Watson of *The San Bernardino Sun* emphasized exploring the human element of disaster stories. Watson used GIS data to map dry trees and dangerous areas in local forests following a series of wildfires in the San Bernardino mountains.

- Tipsheets from this panel: No. 2284, 2285 and 2286.
- Shakemaps can be found at <http://earthquakes.usgs.gov/shakemap>
- Did You Feel it Maps can be found at <http://pasadena.wr.usgs.gov/shake>

Police

Law enforcement is an integral part of any community and a great place to use computer-assisted reporting for investigations. In "Law and Order – Part One," Enric Volante discussed the effectiveness of using



Holly Hacker, *The Dallas Morning News*, shares computer files from her coverage of school test scores in Texas.



internal affairs databases for breaking news stories as well as to generate story ideas for enterprise reporting.

Volante discussed some stories that might be found in such a database, including officers lying under oath, officers violating department regulations, identifying which police division receives the most external citizen complaints, and finding how often officers are at fault when patrol cars are crashed and property is damaged.

While internal affairs databases can prove efficient and useful, Volante warned that local law enforcement might not be willing to give up their database because of privacy concerns. He recommends becoming familiar with state public records laws to make an educated argument for openness.

Doug Smith, Scott Glover and Matt Lait of the *Los Angeles Times* also shared how they were able to conduct an investigation of officer-involved shootings by building a database from Los Angeles Police Department records. The data provided a snapshot of 22 years of police shootings and allowed reporters to blend data and revealing officer interviews to provide a detailed examination of the system.

• For more story ideas, see the “Monitoring the Police” package in the January-February issue of *The IRE Journal*.

Social network analysis

Journalists often use computer-assisted reporting as an effective tool for filtering data,

leading them to new story ideas and identifying specific examples, but some reporters also are using it as a visual tool. In “Vision Quest,” Jaimi Dowdell and Brant Houston of IRE and NICAR, Paul Parker of *The Providence Journal* and Doug Stanley of *The Tampa Tribune* discussed the benefits of using social network analysis and simulation software to visualize the news.

In the past year, social network analysis methods and software have helped journalists show readers complex connections and concepts through graphics. Some of these pieces include *Washington Post* stories about George Bush’s fund-raising network and Section 527 contributions and a *Kansas City Star* story about a global terrorist network.

The visual power of social network analysis isn’t limited to publication, though. Stanley explained how reporters at *The Tampa Tribune* used graphics and analysis produced by social network analysis software UCINET to help direct their reporting on a story about boards of directors of corporate, governmental and nonprofit organizations. Simulation software also has the power to serve as a visual resource for reporters and readers. Parker explained how he used Simulex

The IRE Journal



John Maines, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, explains how he used public data to investigate management of relief funds by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

software to recreate the final minutes of the Station Nightclub in West Warwick, R.I., which was engulfed in flames, killing 100. The software allowed Parker to analyze what likely happened as the crowd attempted to flee and hypothesize what changes would have been allowed for safe evacuation.

• Tipsheets from this panel: No. 2283 and No. 2333.

These brief reviews were supplied by Jaimi Dowdell, director of IRE’s FOI Center, and Missouri School of Journalism graduate students Megan Clarke and Brian Hamman.

Who. What. When. How. Why.

No one does it better than Dateline.

Congratulations on your IRE Award for investigative reporting.
From all your colleagues at NBC News.



2004 IRE Awards recognize top investigative work

BY THE IRE JOURNAL

Investigative stories on the conduct of a powerful West Virginia legislator, dangerous railroad crossings, questionable plea bargains in the Florida judicial system and city contracts with mob-owned businesses in Chicago are among the winners of the 2004 IRE awards.

The annual awards recognize outstanding investigative work in 15 categories, most of them based on market or circulation size. The categories are separated into print, broadcast, online media and work that demonstrates superior use of freedom of information and open records laws.

Contest judges gave the top honor – an IRE Medal – to the *Charleston (W.V.) Gazette* for revelations about the misdeeds of West Virginia legislator Jerry Mezzatesta. *Gazette* reporter Eric Eyre found that Mezzatesta held two public jobs but did little work for one of them, diverted school money to fire departments, and broke promises not to use his influence unfairly.

The state Ethics Commission cleared Mezzatesta after he produced letters apparently disproving Eyre's work – until Eyre showed that the “too good to be true” letters were dated before the stationery was created. Voters ousted the politician, he and his wife were convicted of altering official documents and the speaker of the West Virginia House apologized to the *Gazette* for not believing the initial stories.

A story about mob-controlled dump trucks working for the City of Chicago won the Tom Renner Award for crime reporting. *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter Tim Novak's curiosity about a sign on the side of a dump truck, identifying it as leased to the City of Chicago, started his investigation with reporter Steve Warmbir into how Chicago spends \$40 million a year to hire dump trucks that mostly just sit at work sites.

“Clout on Wheels” revealed that the money went to 15 firms owned by mobsters or their families, as well as to politically connected people, who in turn gave at least \$840,000 in campaign donations to the mayor and other politicians since 1996.

A series of reports from Angie Moreschi, Bill Ditton and Gerry Lanosga of WTHR-Indianapolis won IRE's Freedom of Information award for its investigation into problems with Indiana's child welfare system.

“Cries for Help” led to a new law opening child abuse reports and child neglect reports after a child dies. Instead of resting on its laurels, the WTHR team then tested the new law, leading to yet more important disclosures. Along the way, when a state agency failed to obey the new disclosure laws that WTHR's reporting had spawned, the station went to court and forced compliance. The relentless reporting forced substantive changes at the agency.

The IRE Awards program is unique in its efforts to avoid conflicts of interest. Work that includes any significant role by a member of the IRE Board of Directors or an IRE contest judge may not be entered in the contest. This often represents a significant sacrifice on the part of the individual – and often an entire newsroom – who may have done outstanding investigative work. For example, this year *The Seattle Times*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Wisconsin State Journal*, WCNC-Charlotte and WEWS-Cleveland were unable to enter the contest.

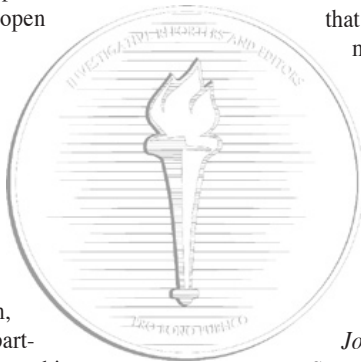
The judges noted that the small newspaper category was unusually difficult to review because of the strength of the entries. “IRE is delighted to see strong investigative work being done across all the categories,” the judges said.

Other certificate winners:

- Walt Bogdanich, Jenny Nordberg, Tom Torok, Eric Koli, Jo Craven McGinty and Claire Hoffman of *The New York Times* for “Death on the Tracks: How Railroads Sidestep Blame.” Using sophisticated computer analysis and good old-fashioned reporting, Bogdanich and his colleagues disclosed the remarkable tale of how railroads have systematically shirked their responsibility to safeguard rail crossings, leading to injury and death on isolated byways across America. The series spurred railroads to take corrective actions and led federal officials to tighten procedures for reporting accidents and signal malfunctions.
- Manny Garcia, Jason Grotto and Judy Miller of *The Miami Herald* for “Justice Withheld,” detailing the Florida plea-bargaining practice in which serious crimes are wiped off the books. Within months of the *Herald's* report, a new law was on the books limiting the practice and requiring judges and prosecutors to justify using it.
- Ames Alexander, Ted Mellnik, Gary Wright, Liz

Chandler, Lisa Hammersly Munn, Henry Eichel and Binyamin Appelbaum of *The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer* for “DWI: Sobering Acquittals, DWI Dismissals,” which used databases from the courts and state records of alcohol tests to paint a damning portrait of a broken judicial system and the price paid by those maimed or killed by drunk drivers who repeatedly had been let off.

- Kevin Flowers and Peter Panepento of the Erie, Pa., *Times-News* for “Insider Trading in City Hall,” about a secret scheme by associates of the city's mayor to profit off redevelopment of an old industrial site. The reporters connected well-hidden dots in such clear and powerful language and graphics that officials paid attention and a grand jury indicted the mayor.
- Nigel Jaquiss of *Willamette Week* in Portland, Ore., broke a blockbuster story that had been whispered about for years in Oregon. In “The 30-Year Secret” and “Who Knew,” Jaquiss revealed that former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, one of the state's most powerful men, had forced a 14-year-old babysitter into a three-year sexual relationship when he was a 35-year-old Portland mayor.
- A team including John Larson, Jason Samuels, Andrew Lehren, Melanie Jackson, Shayla Harris, Ben Vient, Grace Jean, Gary Simmons, Neal Shapiro, David Corvo, Marc Rosenwasser and Aretha Marshall of NBC News' Dateline was recognized for “A Pattern of Suspicion,” a compelling and ambitious examination into racial profiling across the country that analyzed data from more than four million traffic stops in a dozen cities. It found that in almost every city, blacks were at least twice as likely as whites to be stopped or ticketed for non-moving violations.
- Mike Mason, Aaron Wische, Matt McGlashen and Randy Wright of WFTS-Tampa, Fla., for “Expressway Investigation,” which used thousands of engineering reports, board minutes and inspection documents to uncover shoddy construction methods that threatened the structural integrity of the \$350 million highway under construction, including the collapse of one of the elevated segments.
- Brian Collister, Holly Whisenhunt Stephen and Steve Kline of WOAI-San Antonio for “Racial Profiling Problems,” an investigative report that deconstructed a city study that purported to show there was no racial profiling in San Antonio. WOAI exposed that the \$54,000 study was useless; race information had been incorrectly marked by police on 26 percent of the tickets, and the database used to create the report was full of errors.
- Daniel Zwerdling, Anne Hawke, Ellen Weiss and Bill Marimow of National Public Radio for “Abuse of Immigrant Detainees,” an investigation into what happened to immigrants detained at two jails in New Jersey, telling in horrific detail how guards attacked hapless prisoners with dogs



and beat the jailed immigrants if they dared to complain.

- Elizabeth Brown, M. Asif Ismail, Alex Knott, Dan Guttman and Larry Makinson of The Center for Public Integrity for "Outsourcing the Pentagon," an exhaustive study of more than 2.2 million Pentagon contract actions over the past six years. The CPI team discovered that more than 40 percent of Pentagon contracting money, about \$362 billion, was awarded on no-bid contracts, and that nine of the Pentagon's top 10 contractors got the majority of their money without competitive bidding.
- The award for books goes to Ron Suskind for "The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill," published by Simon & Schuster. Suskind teamed up with former Treasury Secretary O'Neill to give an unflinching look at how policy and politics intersected in the administration's first two years.
- The award for student work goes to Claudine LoMonaco and Mary Spicuzza, then students at University of California, Berkeley, for "A Death in the Desert," aired on Frontline/World. LoMonaco and Spicuzza reported and produced a moving, well-written and beautifully photographed story profiling the death of Matias Garcia, one of thousands of migrant workers who have died in the Arizona desert trying to cross the border to work.

This year the judges awarded a special citation for international work to *Joongang Ilbo* of Seoul, South Korea, for a four-day series exploring the plight of children living in abject poverty in Korea. Kyu-youn Lee, Kichan Kim, Jungha Kim and Minho Son used computer analysis and on-the-spot reporting, including interviews with hundreds of sources to produce a report so well-documented and compelling that more than 100 civic and welfare groups allied to address the problems, and the Korean government quickly launched a comprehensive plan that includes paying for the cost of child care for needy families and the construction of more than 500 child welfare centers across the country.

The judges also recognized a team that included students from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Medill professors, and professional journalists from American Public Media with a special citation for a comprehensive analysis of the 4,851 trips taken by members of Congress – and funded by private interests – over the past four years. "Power Trips" was told across several media, with newspaper and radio stories and an online site that included a searchable database allowing constituents to check the trips of their senators and congressional representatives.

The IRE Awards will be presented during the June 4 luncheon at the IRE Annual Conference in Denver. The conference, scheduled for June 2-5 at the Grand Hyatt Denver, will feature many of the winners speaking about the techniques, methods and resources they used to develop their stories.

2004 IRE AWARDS WINNERS AND FINALISTS

NEWSPAPERS

LARGEST NEWSPAPERS (MORE THAN 500,000) OR WIRE SERVICE

CERTIFICATE

"Death on the Tracks: How Railroads Sidestep Blame," *The New York Times*; Walt Bogdanich, Jenny Nordberg, Tom Torok, Eric Koli, Jo Craven McGinty and Claire Hoffman



In Deaths at Rail Crossings, Missing Evidence and Silence
By WALT BOGDANICH
Five articles of news
Five Railroads Sidestep Blame

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Using a sophisticated computer analysis and good old-fashioned reporting, *New York Times* reporter Walt Bogdanich and his colleagues disclosed the remarkable tale of how railroads have systematically shirked their responsibility to safeguard rail crossings, leading to injury and death on isolated byways across America. Repeatedly, the *Times* found, motorists were killed at rail crossings that railroads had long known to be dangerous, yet the railroads had often ignored the law requiring them to report fatal accidents to federal authorities, and had neglected their responsibility to correct hazardous conditions. Instead, the *Times* revealed, some railroads destroyed evidence of fatal accidents, tried to blame mishaps on innocent drivers who had been killed by the railroads' negligence, and shifted the cost of paying for accidents they caused to American taxpayers. The *Times* series spurred railroads to take corrective actions and led federal officials to tighten procedures for reporting accidents and signal malfunctions.

FINALISTS

- **"Captive Clientele,"** *The New York Times*; Diana B. Henriques, Glenn Kramon, Bill McDonald, Sarah Slobin and Antoinette Melillo
- **"National Institutes of Health: Public Servant or Private Marketer?,"** *Los Angeles Times*; David Williams and Janet Lundblad
- **"Miscount: An Investigative Series,"** Scripps Howard News Service; Thomas Hargrove and Michael Collins
- **"BALCO steroids case,"** *San Francisco Chronicle*; Lance Williams and Mark Fainaru-Wada

LARGE NEWSPAPERS (250,000-500,000)

CERTIFICATE

"Justice Withheld," *The Miami Herald*; Manny Garcia, Jason Grotto and Judy Miller

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

A shocking computer-assisted investigation into an unsettling Florida plea-bargaining practice known as "withhold of adjudication of guilt," where serious crimes – rape, child molestation, spousal abuse – are wiped off the books. Intended originally to give some first-time offenders a break, withholds had been increasingly used in the clogged Florida courts to the point that more than 17,000 cases involved repeat offenders. Thousands of pedophiles, pornographers and sexual predators admitted their crimes but walked out of the courthouse without a conviction, and serious crimes like theft, wife beating, embezzlement and bribery had been essentially decriminalized. *The Herald* also found that white offenders were more likely to get the reprieve than blacks. Results were swift: Within months, a new law was on the books limiting the withholds a single offender can get and requiring judges and prosecutors to justify using them.

FINALISTS

- **"Cashing in on Disaster,"** *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*; Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, Luis F. Perez and John Maines
- **"The Long Road to Clemency,"** *The Miami Herald*; Debbie Cenziper and Jason Grotto
- **"Newsday Circulation Scandal,"** *Newsday*; James T. Madore, Steve Wick, Tom McGinty, Mark Harrington and Robert Kessler

MEDIUM NEWSPAPERS (100,000-250,000)

CERTIFICATE

"DWI: Sobering Acquittals, DWI Dismissals," *The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer*; Ames Alexander, Binyamin Appelbaum, Ted Mellnik, Gary Wright, Liz Chandler, Lisa Hammersly Munn and Henry Eichel



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Driving while legally drunk, even falling down drunk, was not resulting in convictions for people whose cases went before North Carolina judges who ignored the law, acquitting up to 60 percent of defendants. Sometimes police who made arrests were never even told when to appear in court, allowing defendants to walk free. Using databases from the courts and state records of alcohol tests, and aided by superb graphics, the reporters and the database editor painted a damning portrait of a broken judicial system and the price paid by those maimed or killed by drunk drivers who repeatedly had been let off. The most lenient judge no longer hears drunken driving cases, the state's chief justice has ordered all judges to follow the law, and the state promises more reforms.

FINALISTS

- **"Beating the Rap,"** *The Des Moines Register*; Clark Kauffman
- **"The Bridge,"** *The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer*; Joseph Neff, Jay Price and Charles Crain
- **"Students Take Housing from the Poor,"** *The Des Moines Register*; Lee Rood
- **"Unequal Force,"** *Austin American-Statesman*; Andy Alford, Tony Plohetzki, Erik Rodriguez, Jonathan Osborne and Claire Osborn

FEATURES

SMALL NEWSPAPERS (UNDER 100,000)

MEDAL

“**Web of Deceit**,” *Charleston (W.V.) Gazette*; Eric Eyre

JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

Eric Eyre relentlessly laid bare the misdeeds of a powerful state legislator who held two public jobs but did little work for one of them, diverted school money to fire departments, and broke promises not to use his influence unfairly. Then the state Ethics Commission cleared the lawmaker after he produced letters apparently disproving Eyre’s work – until Eyre showed that the “too good to be true” letters were dated before the stationery was created. Voters ousted the politician, he and his wife were convicted of altering official documents and the speaker of the West Virginia House apologized to the *Gazette* for not believing the initial stories.

CERTIFICATE

“**Insider Trading in City Hall**,” Erie, Pa., *Times-News*; Kevin Flowers and Peter Panepento

JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

A tip about the sale of an Erie rental home uncovered a secret scheme by associates of the city’s mayor to profit off redevelopment of an old industrial site. Reporters Kevin Flowers and Peter Panepento connected well-hidden dots in such clear and powerful language and graphics that state and federal officials paid attention and a grand jury indicted the mayor.

FINALISTS

- “**Unnatural Disasters**,” *The San Bernardino (Calif.) Sun*; George Watson, Guy McCarthy, Jim Mohr, Ben Schnayerson and Andrew Silva
- “**Attack at the Silk Plant Forest**,” *Winston-Salem (N.C.) Journal*; Phoebe Zerwick
- “**System Failure**,” *The (Hilton Head Island, S.C.) Island Packet*; Jessica Flathmann, Fitz McAden, E.J. Shultz and Noah Haglund

MOVING?



Please send us your new address so you don’t miss one issue of *The IRE Journal* or any important member announcements.

Drop us a note at
memberdesk@ire.org

IRE Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.

LOCAL CIRCULATION WEEKLIES

CERTIFICATE

“**The 30-Year Secret; Who Knew**,” *Willamette Week* (Portland, Ore.); Nigel Jaquiss



JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

Nigel Jaquiss broke a blockbuster story that had been whispered about for years in Oregon. Former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, one of the state’s most powerful men, had forced a 14-year-old babysitter into a three-year sexual relationship when he was a 35-year-old Portland mayor. “The 30-year Secret” detailed the relationship’s impact on the troubled woman and to what lengths Goldschmidt went to hide it over the years. When Goldschmidt learned about the weekly’s story, he resigned from two major boards and public life even before the story ran.

FINALISTS

- “**Sick District**,” *New Times Broward-Palm Beach*; Bob Norman

TELEVISION

NETWORK/SYNDICATED

CERTIFICATE

“**A Pattern of Suspicion**,” *Dateline, NBC News*; John Larson, Jason Samuels, Andrew Lehren, Melanie Jackson, Shayla Harris, Ben Vient, Grace Jean, Gary Simmons, Neal Shapiro, David Corvo, Marc Rosenwasser and Aretha Marshall



JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

For this compelling and ambitious examination into racial profiling across the country, *Dateline* analyzed data from more than four million traffic stops in a dozen cities. It found that in almost every city, blacks were at least twice as likely as whites to be stopped or ticketed for non-moving violations. In a thorough and even-handed investigation, the network put into focus the subtle ways that police target non-white “suspects.”

FINALISTS

- “**Fighting for Care**,” *Primetime Thursday, ABC News*; Diane Sawyer, Robbie Gordon, Ira Rosen and Robert Lange
- “**Abuse at Abu Ghraib**,” *60 Minutes II, CBS News*; Dan Rather, Mary Mapes, Dana Roberson, Mary Alfieri, Jeff Fager, Patti Hassler and Mike Whitney
- “**Dominican Gold Rush**,” *ESPN*; Tom Farrey, Dan Arruda, Ronnie Forchheimer, Vince Doria and John Marvel
- “**The Secret History of the Credit Card**,” *Frontline/New York Times Television*; Lowell Bergman, Patrick McGeehan, Robin Stein, Marlena Telvick, Remy Weber, Michael Schreiber, Michael Sullivan, Louis Wiley Jr., David Fanning, Lawrie Miffin and Ann Derry

TOP 20 MARKETS

CERTIFICATE

“**Expressway Investigation**,” *WFTS-Tampa, Fla.*; Mike Mason, Aaron Wische, Matt McGlashen and Randy Wright

JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

This is a prime example of dogged investigative reporting at its shoe-leather best. Starting with a tip from a construction worker, WFTS’s investigative team FOI’ed thousands of engineering reports, board minutes and inspection documents to uncover shoddy construction methods that threatened the structural integrity of the \$350 million highway under construction, including the collapse of one of the elevated segments. Mike Mason and his team unearthed construction mistakes, inadequate ground testing, a lack of oversight, bogus repairs and the fact that the project’s executive director was using the title of “professional engineer” years after his engineering license had expired. Thanks in part to the myriad of problems unearthed by the investigative team, the project was halted, the executive director resigned, and the state began stepping in to take control of a troubled project.

FINALISTS

- “**The Un-Americans**,” *WFAA-Dallas*; Brett Shipp, Mark Smith and Kraig Kirchem
- “**Changing of the Guards**,” *WLS-Chicago*; Chuck Goudie, Barb Markoff, John Silvey, Steve Erwin, Jackie Denn, Jim Mastri, Rich Hillengas and Susan Mitchell
- “**Senseless Suffering**,” *KMGH-Denver*; John Ferrugia, Kurt Silver, Jason Foster and Jeff Harris
- “**CPD Death Squad/School Bus Bloat**,” *WJW-Cleveland*; Tom Merriman, Greg Easterly, Mark DeMarino, Dave Hollis, Matt Rafferty and Chuck Rigdon

BELOW TOP 20 MARKETS

CERTIFICATE

“**Racial Profiling Problems**,” *WOAI-San Antonio*; Brian Collister, Holly Whisenunt Stephen and Steve Kline



JUDGES’ COMMENTS:

This investigative report deconstructed a city study that purported to show there was no racial profiling in San Antonio. WOAI exposed that the \$54,000 study was useless; race information had been incorrectly marked by police on 26 percent of the tickets, and the database used to create the report was full of errors. The story uses examples that are both hilarious and disturbing.

FINALISTS

- “**High-Dollar Highways**,” *WTVF-Nashville*; Phil Williams and Bryan Staples
- “**Lead Jewelry**,” *WMAR-Baltimore*; Tisha Thompson and Bill Fink

OTHER MEDIA

MAGAZINE/SPECIALTY PUBLICATION

FINALISTS

- “**Mission Impossible**,” *U.S. News & World Report*; David E. Kaplan, Kevin Whitelaw and Monica M. Ekman
- “**Series about flawed prewar intelligence in Iraq**,” *Newsweek*; Mark Hosenball, Michael Isikoff, Evan Thomas, Michael Hirsh, John Barry, Rod Nordland, Melinda Liu, Babak Dehghanpisheh and Christopher Dickey
- “**The Baghdad Files**,” *U.S. News & World Report*; Edward Pound
- “**America’s border: Who left the door open?**” *Time*; Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele
- “**Wall Street’s Dumping Ground**” and “**Bank Funds Draining Investors**,” *Bloomberg Markets*; David Dietz and Adam Levy

RADIO

CERTIFICATE

"Abuse of Immigrant Detainees," National Public Radio; Daniel Zwerdling, Anne Hawke, Ellen Weiss and Bill Marimow



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

NPR put a compelling human face on the Department of Homeland Security's roundup of more than 200,000 aliens last year. It investigated what happened to immigrants detained at two jails in New Jersey, telling in horrific detail how guards attacked hapless prisoners with dogs and beat the jailed immigrants if they dared to complain. The NPR series resulted in major changes, including a department order to all jails to stop using dogs around prisoners.

FINALISTS

• **"Faint Warning,"** Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; Susanne Reber, David McKee, Pauline Dakin, Bob Carty, Sandra Bartlett, Mike Gordon and Paddy Moore

ONLINE

CERTIFICATE

"Outsourcing the Pentagon," The Center for Public Integrity; Elizabeth Brown, M. Asif Ismail, Alex Knott, Dan Guttman and Larry Makinson

THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

An exhaustive study of more than 2.2 million Pentagon contract actions over the past six years. The CPI team discovered that more than 40 percent of Pentagon contracting money, about \$362 billion, was awarded on no-bid contracts, and that nine of the Pentagon's top 10 contractors got the majority of their money without competitive bidding. CPI built an online database that allows the public to see how hundreds of Pentagon vendors got their contracts and how much money they spent on campaign contributions to key politicians.

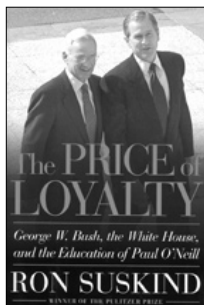
FINALISTS

• **"Power Trips,"** American Radio Works, Marketplace, Medill School of Journalism; Steve Henn, Ochen Kaylan, Chris Farrell, Nate Dimeo and Stephen Smith
 • **"Machine Politics,"** Wired; Kim Zetter
 • **"The Politics of Oil,"** The Center for Public Integrity; Bob Williams, Kevin Bogardus, Laura Peterson, Paul Radu, Daniel Lathrop, Teo Furtado and Aron Pilhofer

BOOKS

CERTIFICATE

"The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill," Simon & Schuster; Ron Suskind



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

A compelling, insider account of George W. Bush's White House. Suskind teamed up with former Treasury Secretary O'Neill to give an unflinching look at how policy and politics intersected in the administration's first two years. The book reads like a novel, but its meticulous reporting gives exclusive insight into such critical subjects as the march to war in Iraq.

FINALISTS

• **"American Taboo: A Murder in the Peace Corps,"** HarperCollins; Philip Weiss
 • **"Critical Condition: How Health Care in America Became Big Business & Bad Medicine,"** Doubleday Books; Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele

SPECIAL CATEGORIES

TOM RENNER AWARD

MEDAL

"Clout on Wheels: The Scandal of Chicago's Hired Truck Program," *Chicago Sun-Times*; Tim Novak and Steve Warmbir



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Reporter Tim Novak's curiosity about a sign on the side of a dump truck, identifying it as leased to the City of Chicago, started his investigation with reporter Steve Warmbir into how Chicago spends \$40 million a year to hire dump trucks that mostly just sit at work sites. The money went to 15 firms owned by mobsters or their families, as well as to politically connected people, who in turn gave at least \$840,000 in campaign donations to the mayor and other politicians since 1996. A riveting series showing how organized crime still drains the pockets of taxpayers.

FINALISTS

• **"Crisis in the Courts,"** *Portland (Maine) Press Herald*; Barbara Walsh

FOI AWARD

MEDAL

"Cries for Help," WTHR-Indianapolis; Angie Moreschi, Bill Ditton and Gerry Lanosga



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

WTHR's investigation into problems with Indiana's child welfare system led to a new law opening child abuse reports and child neglect reports after a child dies. Instead of resting on its laurels, the WTHR team then tested the new law, leading to yet more important disclosures. Along the way, when a state agency failed to obey the new disclosure laws that WTHR's reporting had spawned, the station went to court and forced compliance. The relentless reporting forced substantive changes at the agency.

FINALISTS

• **"U of L Foundation,"** *The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal*; Mark Pitsch
 • **"Secret No More,"** *The Bakersfield Californian*; Charles Adamson and Bob Christie
 • **"Revolving door for fired workers,"** *The Palm Beach Post*; Kathleen Chapman and William M. Hartnett

Copies of Entries

Copies of all contest entries are available from the IRE Resource Center. The center can be reached via e-mail at rescnter@ire.org or by calling 573-882-3364.

STUDENT WORK

(ALL MEDIA)

CERTIFICATE

"A Death in the Desert," Frontline/World; Claudine LoMonaco and Mary Spicuzza

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

University of California, Berkeley journalism students Claudine LoMonaco and Mary Spicuzza reported and produced a moving, well-written and beautifully photographed story profiling the death of Matias Garcia, one of thousands of migrant workers who have died in the Arizona desert trying to cross the border to work. The reporters tell a story of immigration policy through the eyes of a family we care about. The contest committee was so impressed by the network quality of the work they called to verify it actually was done by students.

FINALISTS

• **"Public Business Hidden in TAF's Shadow,"** *The Reveille*, Louisiana State University; Lauren Wilbert and Rebecca Markway
 • **"Players accuse coach of abuse,"** *GW Hatchet*, George Washington University; Brian Costa

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SPECIAL CITATION

FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ENTRY

"Children Trapped in Poverty," *Joongang Ilbo*, South Korea; Kyu-youn Lee, Kichan Kim, Jungaha Kim and Min-ho Son

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

The *Joongang Ilbo* newspaper of Seoul used computer analysis and on-the-spot reporting for a four-day series exploring the plight of children living in abject poverty in Korea. Their work, which included interviews with hundreds of sources, was so well-documented and compelling that more than 100 civic and welfare groups allied to address the problems, and the Korean government quickly launched a comprehensive plan that includes paying for the cost of child care for needy families and the construction of more than 500 child welfare centers across the country.

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JUDGES' COMMENTS:

A team that included students from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Medill professors, and professional journalists from American Public Media organized a comprehensive analysis of the 4,851 trips taken by members of Congress – and funded by private interests – over the past four years. Digging into the paper records buried in congressional offices, the team spent hundreds of hours building their own database of the nearly \$14.4 million spent by corporations and special interest groups to send legislators around the world. The "Power Trips" story was told across several media, with newspaper and radio stories and an online site that included a searchable database allowing constituents to check the trips of their senators and congressional representatives.

ENDOWMENT NEWS



IRE BOARD MEMBER ESTABLISHES FELLOWSHIP IN HONOR OF FATHER

Sometimes quiet determination can net tremendous results. Case in point: IRE board member Nancy Stancill, with the help of her family, has raised more than \$20,000 to establish a fellowship within IRE's endowment in memory of her father, Godfrey Wells Stancill, former editor and publisher of the *Suffolk (Va.) News-Herald*. When the Knight match is applied, the endowed fellowship will total more than \$30,000. Way to go, Nancy!

How did she do it? Nancy wrote letters to former colleagues and friends of her father, asked co-workers at *The Charlotte Observer* for contributions and even offered complimentary bottles of wine to people who donated more than \$20 to the cause.

Nancy's father, who ran the *News-Herald* from 1968 to 1981, died in 1995. He won several awards for his *News-Herald* editorials from the Virginia Press Association. After his retirement, he served as a longtime columnist for the newspaper. Mr. Stancill served on the board of the state press association in the 1970s and was president of VPA in 1980-81. He was also active in the civic life of Suffolk, Va., serving in leadership roles with Rotary International and Main Street United Methodist Church.

The Godfrey Wells Stancill Fellowship will be awarded annually to a journalist working for a newspaper with Sunday circulation under 50,000. The fellowship will cover the costs of sending the

journalist to IRE's annual conference, beginning with the Dallas/Fort Worth conference in 2006.

Nancy, *The Charlotte Observer's* government editor, is one of five children of Godfrey and Phyllis Stancill. She and other family members, including her late stepfather, Peter Pruden, established the fellowship. It coincides with IRE's Breakthroughs drive to create a \$5 million endowment.

"Our dad loved running a newspaper and he strongly believed in the power of journalism to make a community better," Nancy said. "We believe this fellowship with IRE will honor his ideals and the great work he did throughout his life."

Anyone wishing to contribute to the fellowship may fill out the endowment form on the next page; please indicate that the funds are to be applied to the Godfrey Wells Stancill Fellowship.



1994 photo of Nancy and her father, Godfrey Wells Stancill

CURRENT ENDOWMENT FUNDS

When you give to the endowment, you may designate that your gift be applied to the general fund, which allows IRE to use endowment income where it is needed most within a given year, or choose one of the following funds:

Freedom of Information Initiative Fund: supports IRE's efforts in training, research and publications regarding state open records laws and the Freedom-of-Information Act.

Minority Development Fund: IRE is dedicated to increasing diversity in investigative journalism. Gifts to this fund go toward minority fellowships to IRE conferences, seminars and workshops.

James Bennett Scholarship Fund: allows a limited number of college students in Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma or Louisiana to attend IRE's annual conference. The scholarships are made possible by a donation to IRE by Dr. James R. Bennett, professor emeritus of English, University of Arkansas.

Brent Johnson Fund: in memory of

Johnson, who was an exceptional student at the Missouri School of Journalism and IRE. The fund supports a graduate research assistant for *The IRE Journal*.

Jane Pulliam Fund: in honor of Jane Bleeker Pulliam, this fund supports IRE's Resource Center, a rich reserve of print, broadcast and online stories, tipsheets and guides to help journalists start and complete the best work of their careers.

Tom Renner Award Fund: supports the annual Tom Renner Award, honoring outstanding crime reporting as part of the annual IRE Awards.

Godfrey Wells Stancill Fellowship Fund: in memory of Godfrey Wells Stancill, former editor and publisher of the *Suffolk News-Herald* and father of IRE board member Nancy Stancill. The fund supports a small-news fellowship to IRE's annual conference.

Other: With gifts of at least \$10,000, donors may create endowments for fellowships, technology, research, training seminars and other purposes. For more information, please contact IRE's development officer, Jennifer Erickson, at (573) 884-2222 or jennifer@ire.org.

BOARD MEMBERS DIAL FOR DOLLARS

During the week of Dec. 12, 2004, IRE board members organized and carried out a drive to call current IRE members to speak with them about the Breakthroughs drive and ask for pledges. Each board member has made a significant pledge to the drive.

Board and staff members called nearly 500 IRE members, successfully adding more than \$13,000 to the endowment fund.

With the calls, board members found out how much members value IRE, answered questions about the Breakthroughs drive and shared stories.

IRE board member James Grimaldi said, "This has been a great way to stay in touch with members and increase awareness of our endowment fundraising."

Thanks for answering your phones!

BREAK THROUGHGS

Please make your annual contribution to IRE!

“Courageous investigative reporting can achieve journalism’s greatest value: positive change that benefits all.

For 30 years, Investigative Reporters and Editors has been the standard bearer for this difficult and at times dangerous reporting. We hope you will join us in helping this great organization build a permanent platform.”

Hodding Carter III
President and C.E.O.,
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

FUNDING IRE’S FUTURE

WHY YOU SHOULD PLEDGE TO IRE’S ENDOWMENT DURING IRE’S 30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR:

Your dollars will go further: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation will match \$1 for every \$2 you donate or pledge, for a limited time. A \$100 donation will immediately grow to \$150. In addition, many companies have matching gift programs that will match your donations – please see your human resources department for more information. Make your dollars grow!

You may pay over time: Pledge now and pay over three, four or five years. Any pledges that come in this year will be partially matched by the Knight Foundation.

You may choose which program your gift will benefit: Each year, IRE receives gifts that are specifically in honor or memory of someone or are earmarked to support designated programming. Please see Endowment News for a list of the current funds. For more information about creating new funds, please contact IRE’s development officer, Jennifer Erickson, at (573) 884-2222 or jennifer@ire.org.

Be a part of this grassroots effort: You will join the hundreds of individuals who together have donated nearly \$250,000 over the past three years, supporting IRE’s mission of promoting excellence in investigative journalism. To see the list of donors, please visit our Web site: www.ire.org/endowment.

A strong endowment will help secure IRE’s future: Your gift will help ensure the future of IRE’s training programs, services, resources and ability to create new initiatives for investigative journalism. The endowment’s investment income – joined with our membership and training fees – will ensure that IRE’s core activities will have solid financial support every year. It also means we can continue to improve our programs that help every journalist – print, broadcast or online – to do a better job every day.



To make a contribution, please use the form below, visit www.ire.org/endowment or phone

IRE Development Officer Jennifer Erickson at 573-884-2222. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

YES! I would like to support IRE’s Endowment Fund

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Wk Phone _____ Hm Phone _____

I will pledge \$ _____ over _____ years.

My check is enclosed and **made payable to IRE.**

Please write “Endowment” in the memo line of your check.

Please charge my credit card with the amount indicated

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Account Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

I would like my gift to benefit IRE in this way:

Endowment - general operations

Endowment - specific program, services or resource area

Name area _____

Amount of gift \$ _____

My company will match my contribution

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Mile High City readies for 2005 IRE Conference

BY AMANDA BUCK
THE IRE JOURNAL

This year's annual IRE conference will focus on several themes, including authentication and the rise of secrecy in America, while touching on a broad range of issues that lie at the heart of investigative journalism.

Slated for June 2-5 in Denver, the conference will feature nearly 100 panels highlighting experts and award-winning print, broadcast and online journalists. Scheduled speakers include Pulitzer Prize-winning investigator Seymour Hersh, NBC News President Neal Shapiro, David Cay Johnston of *The New York Times*, Eric Nalder of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and Donald Bartlett and James Steele of Time Inc.

Members will hone investigative skills, network with some of the best journalists in the country and celebrate IRE's 30th anniversary throughout the four-day event. The downtown Grand Hyatt Denver will be this year's conference site.

The local host of this year's conference is *The Denver Post*. Sponsors include KUSA-Denver (9News) and the Scripps Howard Foundation on behalf of the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Optional Day offerings

The conference will begin with an optional computer-assisted reporting day on Thursday, June

2. The day will focus on using CAR techniques to add depth and context to investigative stories. IRE instructors will tailor their presentations to both beginning and advanced CAR users.

Hands-on CAR training will be available throughout the conference, with experts in a CAR demo room offering one-on-one instruction and small workshops. In addition, the IRE staff will be available to answer questions and review databases included in the expanding data library of IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting.

Thursday will feature a special Criminal Justice Track with three sessions devoted to the ins and outs of covering the criminal justice system, as well as a "Writing the Story" track.

Special panels

On Friday and Saturday, June 3 and 4, showcase panels will be held on secrecy in America and the struggle to keep broadcast investigative journalism alive. Other panel themes include:

- Caregiving and social welfare: Reporting on nursing homes, assisted living and the pharmaceutical industry
- Reporting on the war: Reviewing military policies, bids and contracts
- Ensuring authenticity: Identifying phony Web



SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

Host:

The Denver Post

Sponsors:

KUSA-Denver (9News)
Scripps Howard Foundation on behalf of the *Rocky Mountain News*
Poynter Institute
Denver Press Club

sites and authenticating documents and tipsters

- Presenting investigative stories: Writing, editing and thinking visually

International journalists will have a chance to meet and get to know one another during a Friday luncheon. During the past several years, 10 percent or more of those attending IRE conferences have come from outside the United States.

Another conference highlight will be Saturday's annual IRE Awards luncheon. The lively luncheon allows members to salute the best investigative work of the year.

The broadcast Show & Tell, always a favorite with television journalists, will return, as will the Poynter Institute's one-on-one mentoring for TV reporters.

The conference also will offer an opportunity for in-depth, one-on-one coaching on investigative reporting. Along with the Poynter sessions, those registering will have the chance to sign up for mentoring sessions with accomplished print reporters and editors who have significant experience. These private sessions will allow attendees to seek advice on challenging stories or follow-up ideas. More information will be posted on the Web site.

Broadcasters may attend a special track throughout the conference focused on writing, editing and producing investigative pieces. Numerous fast-track and "first-day-on-the-beat" sessions will be offered, and the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma will once again collaborate with IRE to

CONFERENCE

Register:

To register for the conference, visit www.ire.org/training/denver05.

Hotel:

This year's conference hotel is the Grand Hyatt Denver at 1750 Welton St. Call 800-223-1234 by Friday, May 6, to get the discounted room rate of \$119 plus tax. When making a reservation, ask for the Investigative Reporters and Editors room block.

FOI REPORT

present a panel.

To register or find the latest updates on the conference, go to www.ire.org/training/denver05.

Bonus events

Another popular event, the annual Blues Bash, will kick off at 7:30 Thursday night. Blues legend Guitar Shorty, who taught tricks to his brother-in-law, Jimi Hendrix, and toured with Ray Charles, will be the featured performer. The bash will be thrown at Herman's Hideaway, a venue located just a short cab ride or healthy walk from the hotel.

The evening will begin with a half-hour of networking. Food will be available to early birds, and a cash bar will be set up as well. Guitar Shorty will perform live at 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. to an IRE-only crowd.

The last two Blues Bashes have sold out in advance, so tickets should be secured early. They can be purchased online during pre-registration at www.ire.org/training/denver05. Any remaining tickets will be sold for \$20 the day of the event and \$25 at the door. All net proceeds will be donated to IRE's Resource Center.

Another exciting event will be a Friday night reception at the Denver Press Club. Founded in 1884, the club is one of the oldest groups of its type in the nation. It boasts 350 members who represent print and broadcast journalism, advertising, public relations and a variety of other professions.

Plans are under way for a third reception, to be held Saturday night. Updates will be posted online.

IRE elections

The IRE Board of Directors election will be held Saturday, June 4, during the conference. Members unable to attend the conference's annual membership meeting will be allowed to vote by absentee ballot. However, absentee balloting is not meant to replace IRE's traditional election process, which encourages discussion and relies upon meeting attendance as a sign of commitment to the group.

Members who do travel to Denver will be expected to vote during the membership meeting. Absentee ballots will be available only to those who are not able to make the trip.

The deadline for requesting absentee ballots is May 16. The ballots must reach the IRE office by May 27 to be counted. For more information, e-mail elections@ire.org.

Those interested in running for a seat on the board of directors must declare by May 27 to be posted on the Web site. June 3 is the last day to get on election-day ballots.

Latest Lineup

For the latest day-by-day schedule of panels and other events, visit www.ire.org/training/denver05.

Sunshine Week highlights need for yearlong vigilance at state and federal levels



CHARLES DAVIS

Sunshine Sunday has come and gone, and never has journalism done a finer job of putting a human face on what can be a somewhat abstract right – the right to know.

I am truly amazed by the breadth of coverage for Sunshine Week. The stories piled up until there were simply too many to read, and I am still pulling them from my e-mail.

In the wake of what has widely been described as an avalanche of secrecy, Andy Alexander, of Cox Newspapers and president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and ASNE's Debra Gersh Hernandez pulled off the cat-herding necessary to move hundreds of American newspapers in the same direction at once. It was a stunning effort, the most prolonged, focused attention on FOI issues that any of us can recall.

One of my favorites was Marjie Lundstrom's piece in the March 17 *Sacramento Bee*, which introduced readers to Rich McKee, "a Southern California man with a head for the law, a heart for justice and a nose for government officials with secrets."

"McKee, a 56-year-old chemistry professor at Pasadena City College, is a tireless crusader from La Verne who has sued 17 government entities in Southern California for trying to shut out citizens.

"His track record: 12 wins, two losses, three cases pending." McKee is emblematic of something I read a lot about during Sunshine Week: citizens using the same tools we use to do our jobs, only at their expense, and on their time off.

If I had a nickel for every time a journalist called me, asked about the availability of a record and then said something along the lines of "it sounds like a lot of work ..." or "I'll never get the records, will I?" ..., well, I wouldn't be wealthy, but I'd be carrying around a lot of nickels. Folks like Rich McKee should remind us all that the battle is half the fun, and that surrender is not an option.

By the way, Lundstrom's piece ended with this tidbit: "McKee's youngest child, a high school senior who lives with his dad in La Verne, recently completed his senior project on – of all things – public records,

auditing 52 agencies."

The next time a state lawmaker says that FOI is "special interest legislation for journalists," put him in touch with McKee.

Or have him call Kathryn Allen, who *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* described in a March 13 story as a "hater of secrets."

Retired now from the Georgia Attorney General's office, Allen served for years as the voice of reason in the AG's office as it advanced open government and began a mediation program aimed at broadening access to records. Lori Johnston's excellent story – one of many the *AJC* did before and during Sunshine Week – put a face on government policy, telling a story about

one of the many good people we can thank for the access we enjoy at the state level.

That's one of the great ironies of Sunshine Week: In state after state, some reporter came to the startling conclusion, whether saying so or

not, that the states are now the hopeful province of greater openness, their federal counterparts growing more secretive with each passing day.

The *AJC* also did a great job using a pending FOI battle – this one over a truly terrible bill to exempt negotiations among city, county and state economic development officials and business prospects. In a story based in exurban Bartow County, northwest of Atlanta, reporter Jeffry Scott let the story unfold:

"Today, as the Georgia Senate takes up a bill allowing government to keep secret its negotiations with business prospects, people in this North Georgia town will be watching with the eyes of those who have been kept in the dark.

"Emerson was founded 125 years ago as a mining center. Trains roll through the center of town carrying coal to nearby Plant Bowen, rated as one of the dirtiest power plants in North America. A pesticide plant operates here, as does a company that makes explosives. Just outside the city is the Bartow County Landfill.

"Waste industry giant BFI is proposing to build another landfill on 1,100 acres of nearby land that is cratered with old mining digs. Locals say BFI and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42 >

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.



BUDGET PROPOSAL

Organization plans additional services, events despite tight budgets for training, travel, data

BY BRANT HOUSTON
THE IRE JOURNAL

Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2006 (July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006) Combined All Programs			
Year	Proposed 2005	Estimated 2005	Proposed 2006
Membership			
Revenue			
New Membership	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$55,000
Membership-student	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Membership-international	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Membership Renewals	\$130,000	\$125,000	\$130,000
Renewals-student	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Renewals - international	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Subtotal membership	\$202,000	\$197,000	\$202,000
Journal subscriptions	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$10,000
Journal ads	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$45,000
Total membership revenue	\$260,000	\$255,000	\$257,000
Membership Service Expenses			
IRE Journal	\$80,000	\$88,000	\$88,000
Staff costs (membership)	\$79,000	\$80,000	\$85,000
Postage and shipping	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$7,000
Total membership service expense	\$165,000	\$174,000	\$180,000
Net membership activity	\$95,000	\$81,000	\$77,000
Sales and Services			
Book sales	\$55,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Book costs	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Net book activity	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Resource Center sales	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$40,000
Resource center salaries and expenses	\$75,000	\$82,000	\$80,000
Net resource center activity	\$ (15,000)	\$ (22,000)	\$ (30,000)
Web services revenue	\$10,000	\$9,000	\$10,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Web services expenses	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$55,000
Net Web services activity	\$ -	\$ (6,000)	\$ (5,000)
Database library revenue	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$50,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Database library salaries and expenses	\$90,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
Net database library activity	\$10,000	\$ (25,000)	\$ (15,000)
Uplink subscription revenue	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Uplink ads			\$1,000
Uplink expenses	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Net Uplink activity	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$18,000
Royalty revenue	\$8,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Other sales and services revenue	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Other sales and services expenses	\$6,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Net other sales and services activity	\$ (4,000)	\$ (8,000)	\$ (8,000)
Net sales and services activity	\$36,000	\$ (13,000)	\$ (9,000)
Conferences and Seminars			
Annual Conferences			
Registrations and fees (IRE and NICAR)	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Optional CAR day	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Other revenues	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$150,000
Total annual conference revenues	\$335,000	\$325,000	\$340,000
Conference expenses	\$140,000	\$130,000	\$130,000
Net annual conferences activity	\$195,000	\$195,000	\$210,000

IRE is looking forward to maintaining a steady and conservative budget in the coming year given the continuing cutbacks throughout the industry in training, travel, and purchases of databases and resource center materials.

At the same time, the proposed budget reflects no let-up in the services we provide or the overall number of seminars and conferences we plan to do. In fact, as we reach the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2005) we have set a record number of 75 seminars and conferences in a 12-month period.

Fueling that number is a combination of grants and collaborations, particularly for our Better Watchdog Workshops that we co-organized with the Society of Professional Journalists.

These low-cost workshops have proven to be one of our most useful and popular programs because we get great volunteer speakers to go on the road with us and provide training to journalists at small- to medium-sized news organizations and in bureaus for larger news organizations.

These workshops also draw more members to IRE and get them interested in our other programs, creating a substantial ripple effect throughout our organization and its revenues.

As you can see in our budget, we expect our membership to stay basically the same because of the quality of programs and because many of our members pay for their own membership. We had hoped that membership would rise more substantially during the past year, but now we could consider ourselves fortunate that it stays in the 4,500 to 5,000 range.

In sales and services, we show a slight deficit that is covered by membership fees. We keep our fees affordable for our members and provide a robust Web site for our members and all journalists. Because we don't want to raise fees during a period of economic hardship for journalists, we rely on grants and other parts of our programs – such as conferences – to bolster these areas.

In the coming year, we plan to offer more packages of information from the resource center and the data library. We also plan to produce more beat books and collections books of IRE resources. In addition, the data library will offer more data analysis services.

In conferences, we continue to do well because of the excellent quality and the measurable skills we offer. Therefore, we are able to keep registration fees

Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2006 (July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006) Combined All Programs			
Year	Proposed 2005	Estimated 2005	Proposed 2006
On the road seminars			
Registrations and fees	\$70,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Prior/current year contributions released		\$16,000	\$20,000
Seminar expenses	\$55,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
Net on the road seminar activity	\$15,000	\$1,000	\$5,000
Boot camps			
Registrations and fees	\$45,000	\$52,000	\$55,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Seminar expenses	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Net boot camp activity	\$45,000	\$52,000	\$55,000
Regional Conference			
Registrations and fees	\$50,000	\$8,000	\$-
Prior/current year contributions released	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$-
Workshop Expenses	\$65,000	\$45,000	\$-
Net regional conference activity	\$35,000	\$18,000	\$-
Better Watchdog Workshops			
Registrations and fees	\$50,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Workshop Expenses	\$65,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Net Watchdog Workshop activity	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Campaign Finance Workshops			
Registrations and fees		\$2,000	\$2,000
Prior/current year contributions released		\$5,000	\$10,000
Workshop Expenses		\$5,000	\$10,000
Net Campaign Finance activity	\$-	\$2,000	\$2,000
Conference Fellowships	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
Fellowship expenses	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
Net fellowships	\$-	\$-	\$-
Net conferences and seminar activity	\$290,000	\$308,000	\$312,000
Grants and contributions			
Temporarily restricted/unrestricted	\$135,000	\$151,000	\$170,000
Permanently restricted	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Total grant and contributions	\$435,000	\$451,000	\$470,000
Other support and revenues			
Contest fees	\$30,000	\$28,000	\$30,000
Contest expenses	\$12,000	\$9,000	\$10,000
Net contest activity	\$18,000	\$19,000	\$20,000
Investment return	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$5,000
General Endowment Return	\$160,000	\$160,000	\$180,000
Net other support and revenue	\$21,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
Net program activity	\$877,000	\$847,000	\$875,000

Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2006 (July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006) Combined All Programs			
Year	Proposed 2005	Estimated 2005	Proposed 2006
General and Administrative Expenses			
Salary and personnel costs	\$369,000	\$370,000	\$354,000
Professional services			
Consulting/Fundraising	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Accounting	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Legal	\$8,000	\$9,000	\$6,000
Total professional services	\$43,000	\$22,000	\$19,000
General office expenses			
Telephone and fax	\$7,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
Postage	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Office supplies	\$12,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Photocopying	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
Insurance	\$15,000	\$13,000	\$14,000
Computer supplies	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$(1,500)
Equipment expense	\$8,000	\$4,500	\$(4,000)
Other office expense	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$(5,000)
Total general office expense	\$56,000	\$51,000	\$56,000
Other expenses			
Publications/Dues	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Travel costs- board	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Travel costs-staff	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
FOI conferences	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Computer purchases	\$10,000	\$18,000	\$(15,000)
Staff Training	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$5,000
Total other expenses	\$24,000	\$33,000	\$33,000
Total in General and Administration Expenses	\$492,000	\$476,000	\$462,000
Fund-raising expenses			
Commissions and other expenses	\$5,000	\$12,000	\$52,000
Promotions	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$2,000
Total fund-raising expenses	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$54,000
Depreciation Reserves			
	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Total Administrative Expenses	\$547,000	\$536,000	\$561,000
Less Endowment Contributions	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Excess net program activity over expenses	\$30,000	\$11,000	\$14,000

low (we haven't raised those fees in eight years) by raising significant amounts of money from media companies and foundations. And because we keep a tight cap on conference expenses, we are able to cover several staff salaries with revenue.

In addition to the on the road conferences and watchdog workshops, our seminars in computer-assisted reporting continue to draw print and broadcast journalists. Our specialized mapping, statistics and editor boot camps also remain popular and we plan to increase those in the coming year.

The key to our long-term stability remains our ongoing endowment drive. The drive has brought our endowment funds to well over \$2 million and we are working hard to raise the next \$2 million. The good news is that our efforts are already paying off.

Currently, investment income from the endowment funds covers nearly half of the resource center's costs and provides support to our Web services, data library and other operations. Efforts are under way to underwrite permanently some of our fellowship programs, *The IRE Journal* and on-the-road training.

With each dollar we raise – matched with 50 cents from the Knight Foundation – we move toward less reliance on fees and operating grants and a more stable future for IRE and all it does.

Salaries and Benefits for 2005-2006 Budget - Current Salaries with Benefit Increase

	Salary	Benefits	Total	Contributions or Allocations	
Executive Director	\$85,000	\$25,000	\$110,000	\$30,000	Journalism school
Deputy Director	\$74,000	\$22,000	\$96,000	\$16,000	Journalism school
Training Director	\$54,000	\$16,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	Seminars
Database Administrator	\$55,000	\$16,000	\$71,000	\$71,000	Database Library
Membership Coordinator	\$39,000	\$12,000	\$51,000	\$51,000	Membership
Admin Asst. Membership	\$23,000	\$ 7,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	Membership
System Administrator	\$40,000	\$12,000	\$52,000	\$25,000	Web/Endowment income
Web Coordinator/Advertising	\$34,000	\$10,000	\$44,000	\$44,000	Journal/Web
Web Administrator	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	
Resource Center Director	\$37,000	\$11,000	\$48,000	\$48,000	Endowed Post
Conference Coordinator	\$41,000	\$12,000	\$53,000	\$-	Administrative
Campaign Finance Director	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	
Finance Officer	\$32,000	\$ 9,000	\$41,000	\$-	Administrative
Program Designer	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	Administrative
International Admin. Asst.	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	Administrative
Admin Asst. Office	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	
FOI Center Director	\$31,000	\$-	\$31,000	\$-	
Development Officer	\$33,000	\$10,000	\$43,000	\$43,000	Endowment income
Subtotal	\$578,000	\$162,000	\$740,000	\$428,000	
Graduate Assistants	\$32,000	\$-	\$32,000	\$32,000	Journalism School
Part-Time Help	\$42,000	\$-	\$42,000	\$-	
Student Web	\$ 5,000	\$-	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Student Assistants	\$10,000	\$-	\$10,000	\$10,000	
Sub total	\$89,000	\$-	\$89,000	\$47,000	
				\$475,000	Subtotal of allocations
Total					
Total General/Administrative			\$829,000	\$354,000	Net salaries & benefits

INNOCENCE PROJECTS

Investigations of wrongful convictions continue to spread as formal programs

BY AMANDA BUCK
THE IRE JOURNAL

After serving nearly 20 years for murder, David Munchinski walked out of a Pennsylvania prison last October a free man.

Convicted of double homicide in 1986, Munchinski received two life sentences. Like many people serving life in prison, he maintained his innocence. But a series of appeals led nowhere.

Then on Oct. 1, citing pervasive prosecutorial misconduct, Judge Barry Feudale overturned Munchinski's conviction. It was a victory for Munchinski and his family, but they were not alone. Bill Moushey and his students at the Innocence Institute of Western Pennsylvania also celebrated.

A reporter for about 25 years, Moushey founded the institute in 2001 at Point Park University. As director, he uses allegations of wrongful conviction to teach investigative reporting. His students investigated Munchinski's case for about a year and a half before a series of stories was published in June 2002 in the *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette*. Moushey wrote the stories, which incorporated the students'

contributions.

Although they were not directly responsible for the judge's decision, the students' work brought increased attention to the case. The stories documented instances the judge later identified as prosecutorial misconduct, Moushey says.

The students were excited, he says, but not just for Munchinski. They were excited about uncovering a compelling story, sharing it with the public and seeing change happen as a result.

"We are not advocates for anyone," Moushey says. "We are advocates for what happened. We're advocates for the truth."

Exonerations documented

Munchinski's story is one of five pieces Moushey's students have helped produce for the *Post-Gazette*, where Moushey continues to work. Longer versions are published on the institute's Web site.

Investigation of wrongful conviction and pros-

ecutorial misconduct is fertile ground for journalists, Moushey says.

"I think we're just scratching the surface. I could see it spanning out beyond strict wrongful convictions to look at other aspects of the justice system."

Moushey's students are part of a growing effort across the nation. Since lawyers Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld founded the Innocence Project in New York City in 1992, groups devoted to freeing the wrongly convicted have been established in a majority of states.

The Innocence Project focuses on cases dealing with DNA evidence. By its count, 155 people have been exonerated in the United States through DNA testing alone. According to a report published in April by a team at the University of Michigan, 328 exonerations occurred in the United States between 1989 and 2003. The study's authors emphasize that their count is conservative, and that they have no way to establish an absolute number.

Since 1999, about half of all exonerations were based on DNA evidence, the Michigan study states. Many involved in the field expect that percentage to decrease in the next several years. As Scheck, Neufeld and Jim Dwyer note in their book, "Actual Innocence," the number of prisoners who can be helped by DNA evidence is shrinking.

"In a few years, the era of DNA exonerations will come to an end," they write. "... Yet blameless people will remain in prison, stranded because their cases don't involve biological evidence. The debt of justice will remain unpaid to innocent people accused of crimes in which the criminal did not ejaculate, spit, bleed or shed tissue."

Because their budgets and staffs tend to be small, many innocence projects only accept cases that involve DNA. Others work only with people who have been sentenced to the death penalty or life in prison.

They work toward common goals, but the projects vary tremendously in size and scope. Scheck and Neufeld's organization, once supported solely by Yeshiva University's Cardozo School of Law, has continued to grow since it left the law school in 2003. It now operates as an independent, not-for-profit corporation with 18 full-time staff members and an annual budget of about \$2 million.

In addition to litigation, the project focuses on national public policy reform, says development associate Jane Fox. That effort is aimed at changing policies that lead to wrongful convictions.

Today Scheck and Neufeld stand at the forefront of America's innocence movement, which began nearly 60 years ago. Mystery novelist and lawyer Erle Stanley Gardner paved the way for future efforts in 1947 when he founded The Court of Last Resort, a group devoted to freeing the nation's wrongly convicted.

Probably best known as the creator of fictional attorney Perry Mason, Gardner first explored the case of William Marvin Lindley, who had been



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Pete Slover

The Dallas Morning News
"Dan Rather's Doubts"

**Stephen Jimenez, Glenn Silber
and Elizabeth Vargas**

ABC 20/20
"A Murder in Laramie: The Mystery and the Myth"

The Medill School of Journalism sponsors the Mongerson Prize, honoring journalists who uncover and correct incomplete, inaccurate or misleading news stories.

The prize is the only one that recognizes journalists for serving the public interest by being watchdogs of news coverage.

Submissions for the 2006 Mongerson Prize are welcome throughout the year. Stories must have been written in the calendar year 2005.

Entries are welcome from U.S.-based newspapers, magazines, radio, television, wire services or online news outlets readily available to the American public.

To see the winning entries or to apply for the 2006 prize, please see our Web site:
www.mongersonprize.org

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Washington, DC 20005

convicted of murder in California. Gardner's investigation proved Lindley's innocence.

Gardner put together a group of experts and soon began to devote most of his energy to the Court. By the time he stopped working with the organization in 1960, he estimated that the Court had looked into about 8,000 cases of alleged actual innocence.

As far as can be determined, no organization of national scope arose again until the early 1980s, when James McCloskey founded Centurion Ministries in Princeton, N.J. A former student chaplain at Trenton State Prison, McCloskey left the ministry to devote himself to freeing the innocent.

Centurion continues to operate, focusing on murder and rape cases that have resulted in life imprisonment or a death sentence.

More than 30 innocence projects now make up the Innocence Network, an informal association organized by Cardozo and Northwestern University. Most are small, and many are associated with law schools.

Collaboration on cases

Northwestern University's Medill Innocence Project is perhaps the most recognized effort involving journalists. Working under the direction of professor David Protes, students at Medill have developed evidence that freed 10 men, four of them from death row, since 1996. Their project gained national attention when, in 2003, outgoing Illinois Gov. George Ryan cited the students' investigations as a factor in his decisions to impose a moratorium on the death penalty in 2000 and grant clemency to all death row inmates in 2003.

The Medill Innocence Project operates separately from Northwestern's Center on Wrongful Convictions, headquartered in the law school. Protes says he and his students investigate cases of wrongful conviction while the law students engage in legal advocacy. Occasionally, the two groups collaborate on cases, he says.

Steve Weinberg, former executive director of IRE, has researched and written about innocence projects and recently began teaching a class at the Missouri School of Journalism about investigating the criminal justice system. Weinberg says the goal of innocence projects – seeking justice not just for the wrongly convicted, but for victims and their families as well – too often is overlooked.

When a person serves time for a crime he or she did not commit, it means the real perpetrator might still be free, Weinberg says.

Despite the surge in innocence projects during the past decade, most geographic areas and most inmates who say they are wrongly imprisoned still are left without assistance, Weinberg says.

"I can't imagine that the supply would ever catch up to the demand. I just can't see that happening."

Amanda Buck is a graduate research assistant for IRE.

A Glance at Current Projects

Organizations or individuals in the United States involved with freeing the wrongly imprisoned are listed below. This list is intended as an overview rather than a comprehensive record.

- Northern Arizona Justice Project
- Arizona Justice Project
- James E. Hensley, lawyer, Cabot, Ark.
- Robert Lightfoot, lawyer, Harrisburg, Ark.
- California Innocence Project, California Western School of Law, San Diego
- Northern California Innocence Projects: Santa Clara University and Golden Gate University Law School's satellite branch in San Francisco
- Colorado Innocence Project
- The New England Innocence Project serves Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont
- The Innocence Project of the National Capital Region serves Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C.
- Florida Innocence Initiative, Florida State University College of Law, Tallahassee
- Florida Innocence Project, sponsored by Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale
- Georgia Innocence Project, Atlanta
- Idaho Innocence Project, Moscow, Idaho
- Center on Wrongful Convictions, Northwestern University School of Law, Bluhm Legal Clinic
- The Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, Innocence Project led by professor David Protes
- Downstate Illinois Innocence Project, University of Illinois at Springfield
- Indiana University School of Law, Indianapolis
- The Innocence Project New Orleans serves Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama
- Clinic at the University of Maryland Law School at Baltimore
- The Thomas M. Cooley Law School Innocence Project, Lansing, Mich.
- The Innocence Project of Minnesota, headquartered at Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul; serving Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota
- Midwestern Innocence Project, University of Missouri School of Law, Kansas City
- The Innocence Project for Justice at New Jersey's Rutgers University School of Law, Constitutional Litigation and Urban Legal Clinic
- Centurion Ministries, Princeton, N.J.
- New Mexico Innocence and Justice Project, University of New Mexico School of Law, Albuquerque
- Berry Scheck and Peter Neufeld's Innocence Project in New York City
- Second Look Program, Brooklyn Law School
- North Carolina Center on Actual Innocence, Durham, N.C.
- Ohio Innocence Project, Lois and Richard Rosenthal Institute for Justice, University of Cincinnati Law College
- Indigent Defense System, Norman, Okla.
- The Innocence Institute of Western Pennsylvania, Point Park University
- Duquesne University Law School Innocence Project, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Palmetto Innocence Project, Columbia, S.C.
- Innocence Project at the University of Tennessee Law College in Knoxville
- Texas Innocence Network, University of Houston Law Center
- The Rocky Mountain Innocence Center in Salt Lake City, Utah; serving Utah, Nevada and Wyoming
- The Innocence Project Northwest, University of Washington School of Law; serving Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho and Montana
- Wisconsin Innocence Project, University of Wisconsin Law School

Investigative tips from America's corporate insiders

BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

When corporate scandals unfold, journalists often are frustrated trying to get knowledgeable insiders to talk candidly. Journalists are outsiders when the scandal emerges, and almost always remain outsiders throughout the proceedings, whether in criminal court, civil court, or both.

So imagine the pleasure investigative journalists will derive when they read the chapters of a just-published book called "Restoring Trust in American Business." Each of the nine chapters is written by insiders from the corporate realm, followed by a critique from independent experts in corporate behavior. For a journalist, reading each chapter and the accompanying critique is like eavesdropping on previously secret conversations.

For example, the chapter titled "The Auditor as Gatekeeper: A Perilous Expectations Gap" is written by William R. Kinney Jr., a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' Auditing Standards Board, as well as a member of the Financial Accounting Standards Board's Advisory Council. He is an editor of the *Accounting Review*, holds a PhD and has taught accounting/auditing at major universities.

Critiquing his insider's account is John H. Biggs, former chairman of the giant retirement fund TIAA-CREF, on the board of directors at two multinational corporations and a trustee of the International Accounting Standards Committee Foundation. How about those guys for sources?

In his chapter, Kinney addresses three questions that journalists should have been asking, and trying to answer, for decades:

1. What are the auditing profession's obligations to the public interest vis-à-vis corporate misconduct?
2. How well have auditors performed over the past decade in restraining corporate misconduct?
3. What steps should be taken to improve the auditing profession's performance in restraining corporate misconduct?

Unfortunately, too many journalists know so little about the crucial role of auditors in the corporate realm that they could not ask any intelligent questions, much less the most important ones. Kinney casts doubt on

the first word of a two-word phrase journalists often write on automatic pilot: "independent auditor." Yes, auditors of corporate accounts are hired from outside the corporation. But are the auditors truly independent when they frequently rely heavily on corporate fees, and when they know the corporation can dismiss them at will without facing legal consequences?

Picking your judge

Kinney offers a comparison from the world of figure skating, which seems like a more comprehensible world to many journalists than that of corporate finance.

Suppose, Kinney says, that Olympics officials established rules for figure skating competition, then allowed each skater to judge herself: "We would expect each skater's self-score to be higher than a score prepared by an independent expert judge." Then, Kinney says, suppose each skater could hire a reputable expert to assess whether her own scoring is fair and reasonable according to Olympic criteria. That hired judge, Kinney says, "would probably lower the skater's self-score only enough to bring it within the upper limit of a reasonable or fair range."

The corporate world is similar to his concocted figure skating scenario, Kinney says. Corporate

officials grade themselves according to GAAP (generally accepted accounting principles). GAAP are shot through with flexibility, as are Olympic judging criteria. (After all, reasonable people can differ about whether a skater executed a certain routine perfectly, almost perfectly, or in a mediocre manner.) That means corporate officials (the principals in the process) exercise power and discretion when grading themselves, then hire an expert auditor in the hope she will exercise what Kinney calls "principal-serving bias." Kinney ends the example with a kicker that all journalists should be able to remember: "Of course, real-world skaters do not get to keep their own score and hire their own confirming experts – but corporations do."

Kinney educates journalists about the expanded responsibilities of auditors in the wake of gigantic

corporate scandals: "Auditors have been criticized for allowing excessive corporate misconduct risk by not correcting small biases in managers' accounting choices and by accepting (or facilitating) managers' designs for transactions specifically to achieve a desired financial statement treatment within GAAP. They have also been criticized for not reporting managers' excessive consumption of perquisites of office. In addition, they have been criticized for failing to warn investors about corporate business risk due to possible declines in business prospects that fall short of business failure, as well as for failing to warn investors about poor decisions by management, risky management decisions, and lax internal controls."

Based on Kinney's insider view, journalists are within bounds when they inquire about how supposedly independent outside auditors are performing on all such counts. But Kinney suggests a realistic view of human nature when examining auditor performance.

"How can the auditor meet these expanded responsibilities?" Kinney wonders. "What are the objective criteria (comparable to criteria for scoring a triple axel in Olympic figure skating) for reliably measuring business risks, measuring inefficiencies, and determining when reportable misconduct exists? And what substantive experience is needed to investigate and apply such criteria in practice?"

Auditors' incentives

Journalists should never forget, Kinney suggests, that auditors compete with other auditors for corporate accounts. A low bidder for an account "faces production cost pressures that limit possible investigation efforts." Furthermore, if an auditor decides she can afford to mount an inquiry that results in reporting problems publicly, "the corporation may fire the audit firm on the spot, in which case the firm loses all future income from the corporation." To add insult to injury, Kinney says, "such an auditor is often sued for not discovering and reporting the problems sooner." Journalists should never forget that auditors have little incentive to act vigilantly, Kinney is saying.

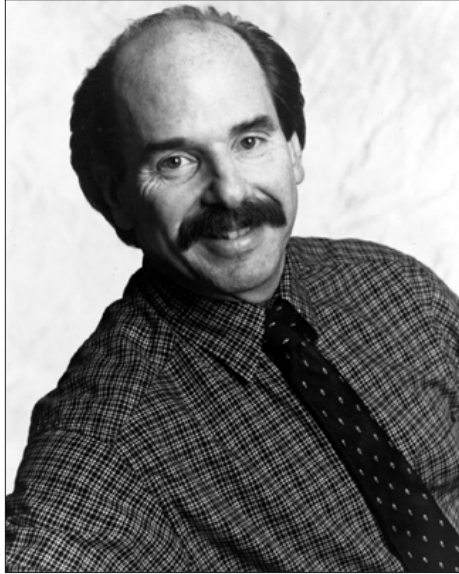
Can the system be improved? Yes, Kinney says, marginally. But if an auditor's role is to automatically encompass the watchdog function, a major revision will have to occur. As Kinney explains, "Problems will remain...if the auditor who has been hired by a corporation...and who discovers and reports bad results still loses...her income stream and faces potentially ruinous lawsuits. It seems essential to establish some mechanism for compensating auditors who act in the public's interest, as well as a more efficient system for private lawsuits."

Turning to corporate boards of directors, New York City lawyer Martin Lipton and Harvard University Business School professor Jay W. Lorsch make the case that those who serve should undergo professional training. Yes, most directors are part time, invited to serve because of the prestige they bring as much as their expertise. Yes, achieving professional

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42 >



Restoring Trust in American Business
Edited by Jay W. Lorsch, Leslie Berlowitz
and Andy Zelleke
American Academy of Arts and
Sciences/MIT Press



NPR's Daniel Zwerdling Wins IRE Award for Revelations of Detainee Abuse at U.S. Prisons

In his two-part series “Abuse of Immigrant Detainees,” NPR correspondent Daniel Zwerdling exposed violence by guards in two New Jersey prisons contracted by the Department of Homeland Security. His investigation prompted immediate reforms in U.S. prisons.

We celebrate Daniel Zwerdling’s long career, his insightful investigation and his deep commitment to serving the more than 23 million listeners who listen to NPR programming every week.

To hear the award-winning pieces,
please visit npr.org.





Water & Waterways

We use it to clean, to bathe, to drink and to play. Water is such an integral part of our everyday lives that we often don't consider the role it really plays until something goes wrong. But water can be dangerous on many levels, from boating accidents to lead in the drinking supply to neglect of its pathways.

Investigations into water often take many twists and turns, but reporters digging through documents and personal stories will tell you that even if it only starts out as a trickle, water stories are well worth the effort.

TOXIC DRINK

*Lead contamination found in local water supply;
federal, local agencies hid problem from citizens*

BY CAROL D. LEONNIG
THE WASHINGTON POST

The call that started it all was a fairly typical one for the city desk.

A frustrated Washington, D.C., resident couldn't get answers from the city water utility about unusual amounts of lead in his tap water and complained to local government beat reporter David Nakamura that he should check into it.

It triggered reporting that would dominate public news conferences, congressional hearings and dinner-table conversations in the nation's capital for months to come.

Nakamura began by calling the manager at the utility – the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority – who acknowledged the city water contained lead levels considered unsafe by EPA. But he said the risk was minimal, and WASA had done its legal duty of notifying residents about high lead in a brochure.

Few residents noticed that line about lead levels deep inside a glossy brochure proclaiming their water was safe. Nakamura published a story that alerted most Washington residents – for the first time – that the drinking water running through their pipes and faucets had unsafe concentrations of lead, and had been that way for 18 months.

Exposure to high levels of this toxic metal can cause brain damage and hypertension, and fetuses and small children are especially vulnerable. Angry residents, shocked that their families had been drinking D.C. water for more than a year without knowing of the elevated lead, demanded immediate answers and action.

Within days, the mayor announced a public health advisory urging that pregnant women and small children drink only bottled or filtered water, and he began holding news conferences three times a week to update the public on the city's own lead inquiry and plan of action.

Government accountability

The *Post's* city desk then dispatched a team of reporters to answer the swirling questions. Most pressing for the public was: "How serious is this and what homes are most at risk?"

Nakamura had learned that the Water and Sewer Authority, a quasi-government agency independent from the city, had tested 6,000 home pipes for lead levels in 2003 and found unsafe amounts of lead in 4,000 of them. But WASA refused to release the addresses of homes it tested, saying that information would violate its customers' privacy. The paper

obtained the addresses and test records from a local activist, and database editor Sarah H. Cohen produced a series of maps for the Web.

Despite legal threats from the authority, the paper published the maps – telling readers about lead results in each home tested down to the city block. Readers called and wrote the newspaper to express their gratitude, with some reporting that they learned the lead levels in their own home's water from the paper.

Government accountability questions such as "Who knew what when?" required a separate track of reporting. By making immediate requests for expedited production of documents under the Freedom of Information Act, D'Vera Cohn and I were able to produce a string of stories in the next days and weeks that revealed officials at the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had discussed the unsafe lead levels for more than a year through e-mails and letters, but had done little to fix the problem.

Some e-mails showed that lower-level EPA employees urged their bosses and the D.C. Department of Health to take quick action and sound a public alert, but were ignored.

By making rolling FOIA requests as we learned more about the story, the team was able to document the 2004 lead problem had been foreshadowed by water corrosion experts more than a decade earlier. Since 1994, consultants urged local water officials and the EPA to add a softening chemical that would prevent the water from becoming corrosive and leaching lead from the high number of lead service lines that brought water into homes. The utility and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which treats the water, had rejected the recommendations as too costly.

Though WASA would not provide addresses of homes it tested, documents obtained through FOI requests and a whistleblower lawsuit showed how WASA had broken federal drinking water laws by not testing homes that would have a high-risk of lead corrosion. These records also showed that WASA, by hiding just a handful of test results a year earlier (in 2001), had concealed

from the EPA that lead levels were unsafe a year longer.

Improper testing

The lead story was both fast moving and investigative. It also was extremely complicated because reporters had to master the basic science of water treatment and a technical federal rule for treating drinking water. Reporters focused on expertise areas, with Nakamura, health reporter Av Goldstein and rotating city reporters tracking many of the daily developments. Cohn and I chased the documents, but we also fit interchangeably into each other's roles as the stories demanded.

Led by city editor Gabe Escobar and assistant city editor Marcia Greene, the team met regularly, sometimes daily, to hash out new developments, story lines, and areas requiring additional reporting. While journalists often joke about the time spent in meetings, these gatherings produced a kind of cross-pollination that always generated better stories and reporting strategies.

At one of these gatherings, the team parsed various tips from sources and agreed it had to check whether other utilities were following the federal water rules on lead. Using a flawed EPA database on utility-reported lead levels and doing reporting to fill in its gaps, reporters Jo Becker, Nakamura and I created a list of hundreds of cities to scrutinize, then split it up to start reporting.

The list included communities with past lead



Juana Arias | The Washington Post

Water samples from a school in Falls Church, Va., will be tested for lead at Dalecarlia Waste Water Treatment Plant lab in Washington, D.C.

COVER STORY

problems and those hovering around the trouble level. We reviewed hundreds of public “consumer confidence” reports, in which utilities are required by law to report levels of lead and other toxins in their water. We filed FOI requests with states and utilities for their test results over several years, and home locations they tested. In one city, Becker even reviewed plumbing records and kitchen renovation permits to determine that a utility was not properly testing the homes that were likely to have lead problems.

After several months of investigation, the team uncovered how dozens of water utilities were concealing high lead levels, misleading the public and breaking the law. In New York City, for example, the utility had concealed thousands of tests that would have made the EPA label its water unsafe and required expensive fixes for three of the past four years. The EPA immediately issued emergency guidance to states and utilities about how to comply with the rule and announced an investigation.

health in harm’s way without their knowledge. Here they told us they relied on the paper to gather all the facts and tell them the full story.

The results were many, and continue. Congress called for hearings on how the city and EPA had handled the lead contamination, and whether other parts of the country might be at risk. Eight separate investigations were launched, including a multi-year project by the Government Accountability Office. The local health department began testing residents’ blood lead levels for free to gauge their risk. WASA’s board announced it would replace all lead service lines in the city to avoid the problem in the future.

Meanwhile, EPA leaders admitted they had not acted as quickly as they should have, and ordered the city to provide free water filters and special warnings to its customers. Numerous states and the EPA announced investigations and cited other water utilities for violations of the law. The EPA also announced early this year that it will revise the federal rules on lead in drinking water for the first time in 13 years to make sure utilities spot and report lead problems, and residents learn immediately of risks.

A key lesson of these stories was the value of involving readers. The paper created a special e-mail drop box for readers to write to us with story suggestions and tips, and many helped us check the accuracy of official pronouncements. This medium also helped the team learn the crucial role a newspaper can play in the lives of its readers.

Many D.C. residents had lost faith in their local and federal government, which they believed had put their

Carol D. Leonnig covers federal courts and has worked on several investigative projects at The Washington Post.

Lucian Perkins | The Washington Post



Satu Haase-Webb watches as workers check whether the water pipes to the houses on her block are made of lead. Most of them were. Workers will replace them.

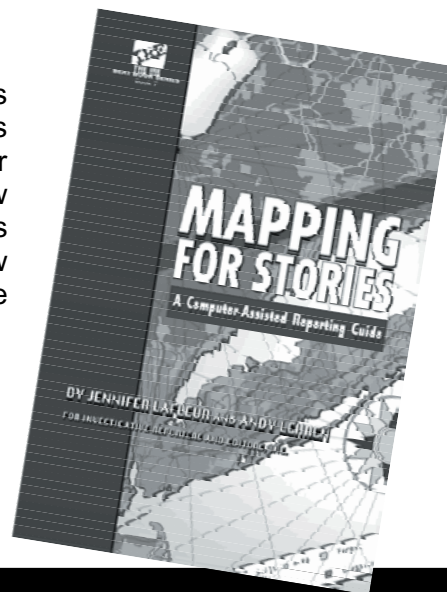
Mapping for Stories

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BOATS AND BOOZE

Data-supported story on river, lake accidents evolves into look at tragedies, boating laws

BY NATALYA SHULYAKOVSKAYA
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Like me, when you think of boating and California, the first thing that may come to mind is the Pacific Ocean.

But it is the lure of the Colorado River – deep in the arid landscape miles away from the sandy beaches – that draws many.

The river and its manmade lakes have become party central for a growing number of California boaters. The ice-cold river of serene beauty can turn into a desert Mardi Gras, with boats forming floating islands of partying and beer-drinking, complete with beads, booming music, the flashing of flesh and illustrious tattoos.

At times, the mix of boats, booze, speed and sun turns tragic.

The *Register* decided to take an in-depth look at boating accidents after three Orange County teenagers were killed and one severely injured in a hit-and-run collision on a narrow stretch of the Colorado River called the Parker Strip in September 2003. We reported on the accident, talked to the kids' friends, read reports on boating safety and talked to law enforcement on both sides of the river which borders Arizona and California.

Then, we turned to the data.

The U.S. Coast Guard has been building its Boating Accident Report Database since 1969. The database, available from IRE and NICAR or directly from the agency, keeps track of all accidents resulting in injury, serious property damage or fatalities.

The database has three tables containing details on accidents, victims and boats. The boat table lists licensing numbers. We used them to track boat owners

and analyze from where the boats came. Because each license number started with a state code, the analysis was very straightforward. We discovered that a stunning number of California boats were involved in accidents that happened, were investigated and prosecuted on the Arizona side of the Colorado River.

The Coast Guard collects information from the states once a year, runs consistency checks and attempts to fill in missing data. Its annual update and report is available some time in late spring, but that date is a moving target. There is only one analyst working with the dataset, and when I first requested a data update from him, his office was flooded and his phone dead for weeks.

Needless to say, by the time he responded I had already sliced and diced data I got from NICAR. [See "Cleaner data" box]

Further, there were other good sources of quantitative information on boating laws, boats and accidents, such as the National Transportation Safety Board, the state Boating Law Administrators and their national association, the National Marine Manufacturers Association and insurance companies.

The first round of reporting and analysis made it clear: The number of boating accidents, fatalities and injuries has been steadily declining. Yet, there were two trends peaking from the numbers: a sharp two-year spike in the hit-and-run accidents and a growing number of alcohol-related accidents and fatalities.

The hit-and-run trend turned out to be a fluke: I made a list of 13 states that saw a galloping increase in the number of hit-and-run incidents and contacted their boating law administrators. I asked them to

CLEANER DATA

The recreational boating accident database is full of stories for almost every community in the United States. To make those stories easier, the IRE and NICAR Database Library has made some substantial improvements to its version of the database, obtained each year from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Journalists can use the data to dissect the thousands of accidents involving personal watercraft, power boats, houseboats and other types of boats. Every year, hundreds of people die. Because of the simplicity of this database, it is a good one for beginning CAR reporters to use.

The improvements make it even simpler. In the past, the data were provided in a year-by-year format. Now, we've appended years 1995-2003 together, making the analysis quicker. The years 1969-1994 are also merged. The Coast Guard made significant changes after 1994.

Current as of Dec. 31, 2003, the data includes 65,995 records of accidents covering 1995-2003. For more information, visit www.ire.org/datalibrary/databases/BoatAcc. We anticipate another update this fall to cover 2004.

— Jeff Porter, IRE Database Library director

Mike Schwartz | The Orange County Register



A pair of speed boats race down the Colorado River's Parker Strip at dusk. The area is popular among visiting boaters.



Partying river visitors drink from a beer bong while wading in the Colorado River near Parker, Ariz.

double-check the numbers and tell me if there were any changes in the law, enforcement or record keeping that could have explained the sharp increases. The answer was disappointingly simple: The Coast Guard changed its data submission system to a Web-based interface and some fields logged wrong data.

The agency assured me the latest year's dataset

BOATING DATA SURPRISES

If you are analyzing boating accident data and are coming up with new national trends or come across spikes, talk to your state's data analyst, because no one understands the data and its quirks as well.

In investigating my story, there were surprises on the boating data CD:

- The data came in a nice set of dbf files, three for each year, but rebuilding the 27 tables into a comprehensive set of three took some fiddling with table structures in Excel.

The Coast Guard built its database in Access, creating a new file every year. So, the system sported minor structural inconsistencies. I ended up building a master structure in SQL and appending 27 files one by one. NICAR distributes a rebuilt database.

- In 1995, the agency switched to a new, more detailed data format.

We decided to stick with analyzing the last nine years of data because the earlier data had no detail on the accident locations. Many times, in my reporting, I wished I had a quantitative way of checking the locals' stories about the old days on the "Red River of the West."

- It turned out to be difficult to use state boating accident reports to check consistency of the national data.

The Coast Guard uses its own set of guidelines when it collects data from the states. Currently, they only record no-injury accidents with a property damage of \$2,000 or more. The amount has been changing over time.

Some states, such as Arizona, log and base their analysis on every investigated accident. Their raw data could be harder to get than the national set. California refused to provide us with raw data, citing a state law from the 1960s.

— Natalya Shulyakovskaya

was solid, but we were still cautious making much of the hit-and-run information since there were so few accidents logged nationally.

Mardi Gras atmosphere

Booze and boats became our story. And I went to the river.

I spent an illuminating July 4 weekend on Lake Havasu and Parker Strip. The lake and the strip, although connected, seemed like two separate worlds. The lake was wide and calm, with few large boats and parties. The strip was darker, the waves choppy. It felt crowded.

I spent two days on a patrol boat.

I went to the local bars and eateries that were dependent on the river and its parties.

I hung out with tattooed punks. I spent time with a specialized paramedics' rescue unit built on the river's Arizona side. I talked to the ambulance workers who routinely rushed victims of boating accidents to helicopters, so they could be airlifted to Las Vegas or Phoenix. Lake Havasu did not have a trauma center capable of handling severe injuries.

I returned to my computer sunburned and fascinated.

As I wrote my first draft, the story became more about the place, its people who called themselves river rats and its Mardi Gras atmosphere. The numbers and trends – and the weaknesses in the law and law enforcement – became the steel frame that held the story together. Still, the story was missing a voice.

Meanwhile, the *Register* continued reporting on the accident in which three teenagers were killed. We wrote that the case was slowly making its way through the plea-bargaining process. After one of those stories, I got a call about an accident that happened exactly a year ago on the very same Parker Strip. The family of the 30-year-old father of four who was killed lived three miles from the *Register*. The man whose boat sliced the victim to death lived eight miles away.

At that moment, the story born from numbers turned into a narrative, a horror tale about two Orange County men whose paths crossed brutally 300 miles away from home, on the narrow stretch of the Colorado River.

Both had alcohol in their blood.

I met with the widow and her sons. I met the dead man's cousin who was on the river the day of the accident. I tried to talk to the man accused of causing the accident and abandoning the accident site.

Then, I drove back to the river.

Accident timeline

In my backpack and my purse, I carried four tools of geekdom that ultimately helped me save every single scrap of information I found. With me were my digital camera, my digital voice recorder, my portable scanner with an automatic feeder and my Global Positioning System receiver.

I talked to the sheriff and his investigators. I visited the accident scene. I found and talked to one key accident witness. I got a copy of the civil and criminal court file from the local courthouse.

I spent hours scanning the investigative file at the local prosecutor's office. Among the documents was an autopsy report that detailed the victim's injuries and his blood alcohol content. There was also a printout from the sheriff's database that tracked every piece of evidence and every witness in the case.

I watched the police interview tape of the man arrested after the accident. I recorded the sound with my recorder and then used my digital camera to record a video. Later, while writing, I ran the tape and the video over and over again, to get precise quotes and check the time of the interview against the wall clock recorded on the video.

With the GPS, I logged accident locations, the sheriff station location, the hospital and drinking establishments along the river. I drove to key spots, checking time and distances.

Using the records, I created a timeline of the accident, a spreadsheet tracking witnesses and what they said they saw. The court files provided support letters from both families, which allowed me to bring in voices from the side of the accused man who refused to talk to me.

We used California and Arizona online liquor license databases to find all drinking establishments along the Parker Strip. We tried to map them using ESRI's MapShop server-based mapping program. When geocoding failed on most of the rural addresses, I built an Excel spreadsheet of places selling alcohol along the river. Our graphics reporter, Chantal Lamers, drove along the Parker Strip looking for bars, liquor stores and alcohol-selling boat launches using GPS to log all locations.

I converted the coordinates my GPS unit recorded into the format that MapShop accepted and uploaded the file into the MapShop server. Our graphic artist used the file to create maps for publication. They were helpful in other ways: As I wrote my story, I used MapShop's aerial photography available through its Premium Imagery layer to double-check locations and make my descriptions more precise.

Ultimately, "A Deadly Mixture" is the tale of two men, alcohol, weak laws, and one of the most dangerous areas in the United States for boating – the Colorado River.

Natalya Shulyakovskaya is an investigative reporter specializing in data analysis at The Orange County Register. Her editor, Mark Katches, is the paper's senior team leader for investigations, state and county coverage.

RUNNING AGROUND



Probe details how government avoidance leads to choking of Intracoastal Waterway

BY BRIAN HICKS

THE (CHARLESTON, S.C.) POST AND COURIER

On their own, the stories barely warranted metro briefs:

- A fisherman is stranded overnight in the marsh after his johnboat becomes stuck in the mud.
- The Coast Guard impounds and inspects two oil barges after they run aground in a river.
- Bridge and lock tenders face layoffs due to federal budget cuts.

These news items were reported along the East Coast in the past year without creating so much as a ripple in the regular flow of news. But the stories hint at a serious problem, one that could affect millions of people and deliver a staggering \$10 billion-plus blow

to the Southeastern economy.

Still, it is a problem largely ignored by the public, the politicians and the press.

In the late spring of 2004, the special projects team at *The Post and Courier* decided to plumb the depths of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway – and we found it wasn't very deep.

That was the problem.

The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway is a 1,200-mile long collection of rivers, inlets and man-made canals stretching from Norfolk, Va., to Miami. It is designed to give commercial, military and recreational boats shelter from the unforgiving sea. In 1937, Congress authorized maintenance of

the waterway as a way to curb "hazard to life and vessels." Mostly, though, the U.S. government – under the growing threat of war – wanted a safe way to move military ships and supplies securely along the coast.

Since that time, the maritime superhighway has become a lifeline for East Coast commerce. According to *The Post and Courier's* calculations, enough fuel, raw materials, manufactured goods and military supplies are moved on the Intracoastal Waterway every year to flood Interstate 95 with almost 2 million tractor-trailer rigs.

Ongoing struggle

To allow for commercial traffic, federal law requires the waterway channel to be dredged to a low-tide depth of 12 feet. But waterway maintenance has become a favorite place to trim bloated federal budgets. In most places, federal records show, the controlling depth of the waterway is less than 8 feet. That leaves much commercial, and a lot of recreational, traffic constantly in danger of running aground.

In the early 1990s, allocations for waterway maintenance began shrinking. The Army

Corps of Engineers says it takes about \$20 million a year to keep the channel maintained. In 2001, it was budgeted for \$18.5 million, by 2003, just \$6.7 million. In 2004, the Bush administration recommended nothing for the waterway.

The government has been ignoring its own laws. But on the surface, this was a budget story. How could anything about the water be so dry?

Special projects editor Doug Pardue and I decided we wanted to investigate unexplored areas of the state, but also wanted to know the waterway's impact and value. As we dug into that question, we soon found a major, ongoing struggle for the waterway's survival.

Then-executive editor John C. Huff Jr. signed off on the project, but said he wanted to see it done as a special section that would touch on every single way these budget cuts affect people.

"Real people" is one of those mantras that echo through every newsroom across the country from editors and reporters who want to humanize the news. Take a numbers story and tell readers what it means to them. (Spending all that time in the late spring and early summer on the water was a sacrifice that Pardue and I were willing to make – for the good of the paper, of course.)

As a result, photographer Grace Beahm and I embarked on a two-month, five-state, 1,200-nautical-mile journey down the complexities of the Intracoastal Waterway, and the lives and businesses it touches every day.

We started on land. Interviewing several Army Corps of Engineers officials, we found there was a great deal of internal strife over the waterway's dilemma. The Corps initially blamed the Bush administration for the funding cuts, which had shut down part of the waterway in North Carolina and had amassed \$100 million in maintenance undone. When we interviewed White House officials, though, they said the Office of Management and Budget didn't get into line-item quibbles; the Corps simply didn't consider the waterway a priority in lean budget years.

Shortly after that, the Corps stopped publicly criticizing the Bush administration.

We found that the federal government was subverting its own laws with a loophole that gives bureaucrats – and politicians – cover when cutting the waterway's dredging money. The value of each of the country's 27 inland waterways is measured, for budgetary sake, by the ton-miles of barge traffic that travel on them.

Grace Beahm | The Post and Courier



Sailboats cruise north on the Dismal Swamp Canal in Camden County, N.C., toward the Virginia state line.

COVER STORY

Because the Atlantic Intracoastal is the longest inland waterway, its ton-mile rating is diluted to the point that it doesn't meet these arbitrary federal funding levels. That formula ignores the billions in spending by recreational traffic and any commercial ships that aren't using barges, and severely underestimates the waterway's economic value.

Rosemary Lynch, the waterway's lone Washington lobbyist, said the average recreational boater on the water leaves about \$300 in his wake every day. We found a Florida study that suggested most of the \$7.8 billion in economic impact the waterway has there is generated by recreational boaters. No other state has done a comparable study.

It didn't seem to make sense, scrimping on \$20 million a year – a pittance in the federal budget – for something that generated what we estimated to be an economic impact in excess of \$10 billion. Imagine the problem if the Department of Transportation left parts of your closest interstate highway impassable

and full of potholes. (OK, imagine if it was a lot worse than it is ...)

Running aground

What brought this budget story to life was those real people. As we traveled the water – by tugboat, with snowbirds and in our own boat – we found businesses not big enough to hold much sway on Capitol Hill. For every millionaire cruising the waterway in a yacht, we met a dozen retired or middle-income couples who had scraped together enough money for a modest sailboat to live out a dream they'd had for years.

We found cities, such as Elizabeth City, N.C., and Beaufort, S.C., struggling with a loss of tourism dollars because the shallow water was forcing many waterway travelers to sail offshore. Some of the boaters, afraid of the temperamental Atlantic, told us the waterway's woes had forced them to reconsider their retirement plans.

We talked to towing companies with military contracts who said they sometimes couldn't deliver jet fuel to major Air Force bases. During the G-8 Summit, we saw Special Forces boats – on hand to protect international dignitaries – mired in mud behind Jekyll Island, Ga., where parts of the channel are bone-dry at low tide. We found the federal government about to close the Great Dismal Swamp, a grand historic area surveyed more than 200 years ago by George Washington. We talked to members of a grounded shrimp fleet in McClellanville, S.C.

Perhaps the most enlightening part of the trip was 24 hours on a tugboat pushing six barges up the waterway. We rode the tug into Lockwoods Folly Inlet, an important way station on the North Carolina coast that the Coast Guard had been forced to close because it was a mere 3 feet deep at low tide.

The tug, which drew 7 feet, sailed through the inlet at 7:30 a.m. with Grace snapping pictures and me interviewing the captain. Within minutes of sailing into the inlet, the tug lurched to a stop – aground.

The captain had to release his barges, wrestle his boat off a sandbar and snag his barges before they crashed into private docks along the waterway. That scene became the lead of our story.

Ultimately, we decided to write the story as a journey laid out in a special section to take better advantage of Beahm's amazing photographs and the storytelling aspects of the reporting. We encapsulated the hard news in a front-page teaser.

A few months after the story, the newly formed congressional waterway caucus began securing little bits of money for trouble spots along the waterway. It's a Band-Aid approach that has kept the traffic flowing, if still occasionally running aground.

Brian Hicks is a senior writer with The Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C., and the author or co-author of three books on maritime subjects, including "Raising the Humley" and "Ghost Ship" (Random House).



Grace Beahm | The Post and Courier

The Island Express, from Yorges Island, S.C., keeps to the left side of the bank, away from the encroaching land, as it makes its way north on the Intracoastal Waterway in Myrtle Beach.

ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting

INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM
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A \$20,000 first-place prize and up to five \$1,000 finalist awards aim to recognize, reward, and foster international investigative reporting.

Journalists of any nationality working in print, broadcast and online media are eligible to apply. Books are not accepted. The work must have been first published or broadcast in general information media between June 1, 2004 and June 1, 2005. Deadline to apply is July 15, 2005.

For more information on the ICIJ Award, as well as the 2004 winners and finalists, see www.icij.org or call 202-466-1300.

LEVEE NEGLECT



Neglected river banks, flood control have left city dangerously vulnerable

BY STUART LEAVENWORTH
THE SACRAMENTO BEE

During big winter storms, there is only one thing that stands between California's capital and the might of two raging rivers – a levee.

What is a levee? It's a decidedly low-tech mound of earth originally piled up by farmers hoping to keep their fields dry. About 1,600 miles of levee now protect Sacramento and other fast-growing communities in the Central Valley. Many are nearly a century old. Most are taken for granted – until they collapse.

In 1997, Fred Haddix and his wife were getting ready for bed when the Feather River tore through a levee next to their home in Yuba County, just north of Sacramento. The couple barely escaped the resulting wave of water. Others didn't. Three people died and 100 homes were lost during that levee disaster. Had the flood occurred in a more

urban area, it might have killed thousands of people.

Given that Sacramento is home to 400,000 residents, the state Legislature and the governor, you might have expected the 1997 flood would have some lasting effect. It didn't. Within a few years, California leaders had moved onto other crises, such as power blackouts and the state fiscal meltdown. By 2001, Gov. Gray Davis was cutting funding for flood control. Levees started leaking.

Soon, state officials were leaking information to me.

The first was an internal report, prepared by the California Department of Water Resources, documenting how levees, bypasses and other flood-control structures were becoming dangerously neglected. The deferred maintenance was

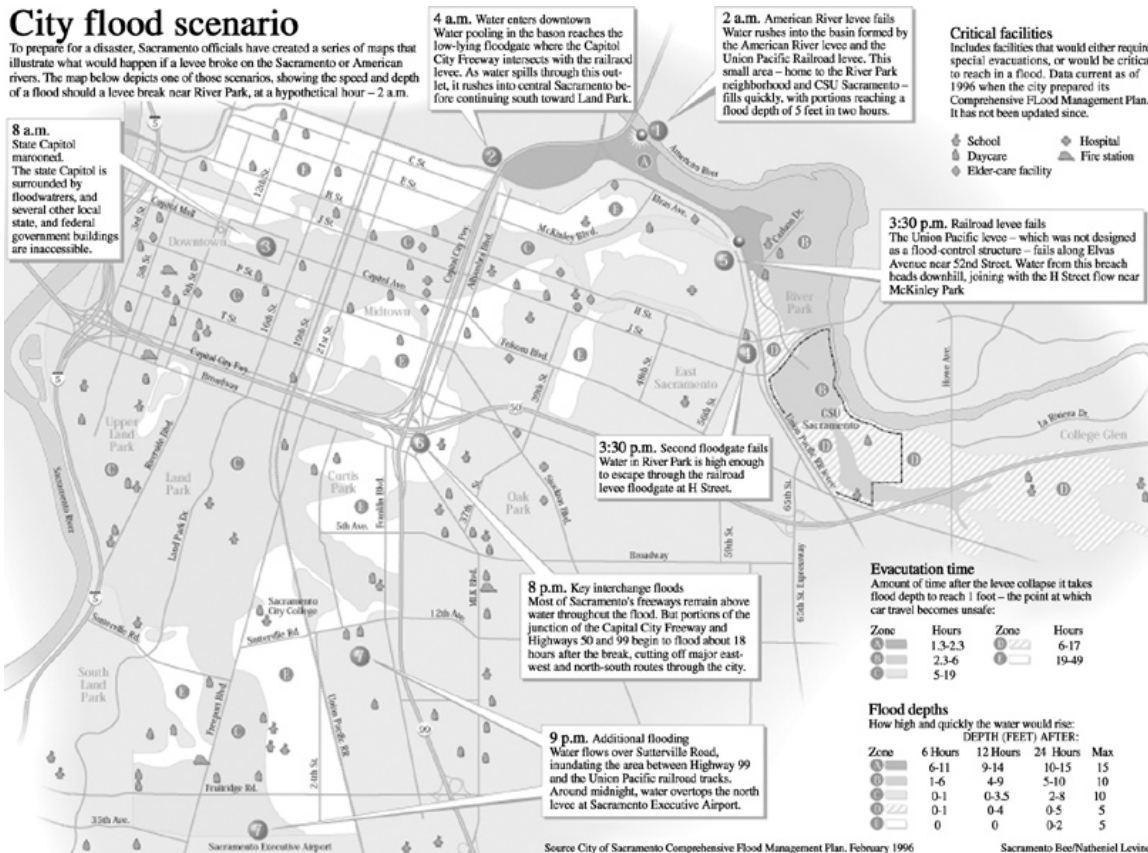
saving the state money, but California taxpayers were holding the bag for billions of dollars in potential liabilities.

That point was underscored a few days later, when an appeals court ruled California was responsible for a 1986 levee break (also in Yuba County) that flooded thousands of properties. Because of that ruling, taxpayers suddenly faced a \$1 billion judgment.

At *The Sacramento Bee*, these two events provided the peg for a long-overdue series on local flood risks. After writing front-page stories about the leaked report and the court judgment, I suggested to our projects editor, Amy Pyle, that we dig deeper. We soon got the green light from our executive editor, Rick Rodriguez, and went to work.

City flood scenario

To prepare for a disaster, Sacramento officials have created a series of maps that illustrate what would happen if a levee broke on the Sacramento or American rivers. The map below depicts one of those scenarios, showing the speed and depth of a flood should a levee break near River Park, at a hypothetical hour – 2 a.m.



Stories from the IRE RESOURCE CENTER

More stories by journalists who have investigated various water-related issues can be found in the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter). Here's a sample of available stories:

- **Story No. 20132:** "Florida's water crisis," by Debbie Salamone, *Orlando Sentinel*. This 12-part investigation focuses attention on what some experts see as Florida's "long-term water crisis." Special attention is given to critical issues such as the factors leading to lower water quality and a decreasing water supply, as well as political barriers that are preventing long-term solutions. (2002)
- **Story No. 20587:** "Leasing the rain," by William Finnegan, *The New Yorker*. As fresh water resources continue to be depleted and privatization increases, more and more people are facing the realities of water shortage. This article examines some of the statistics outlining this growing problem and looks at cases where the clash between necessity and privatization of resources has already begun. (2002)
- **Story No. 17634:** "A run on the banks," by Colin Woodward, *E Magazine*. This investigation follows the history of the cod fishing industry, showing how factory fishing ultimately destroyed Newfoundland's cod reserves. The article also raises questions as to whether or not Canada has learned from this mistake, or has simply turned its attention to fishing other species. (2001)
- **Story No. 18763:** "River barons," by Keith Darce and Jeffrey Meitrodt, *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans). This story examines the dangers in allowing state-commissioned river pilots who navigate the Mississippi River to elect and regulate the members of their three pilot groups. Upon investigation, the reporters found that 85 percent of new river pilots are related to existing members, and are rarely disciplined when involved in accidents. (2001)
- **Story No. 17827:** "Dishonorable discharge," by Joe Miller, *Pitch Weekly* (Kansas City). This investigation shows how the Nelson Complex, a sewage treatment facility, dumps its waste into the Turkey Creek waterway by operating under a permit that expired 10 years ago. Although the investigation detailed several studies showing unsafe amounts of waste in the creek, the county's chief wastewater engineer says the water pumped out is clean. (2001)
- **Story No. 18242:** "Sandcastle politics," by Cristopher Swope, *Governing*. This investigation looks at the environmental and fiscal controversies surrounding beach nourishment in areas around the Gulf Coast, the Pacific shore, the Great Lakes and hurricane-prone East Coast states. The story points to geologists' warnings that multimillion-dollar efforts to keep sand on the beaches often make matters worse by enabling coastal areas to put off more serious land-planning discussion. (2001)
- **Story No. 17357:** "Boom on the beach," by Owen Ullmann, Paul Overberg and Rick Hampson, *USA Today*. This report analyzes economic growth and development along the East and Gulf Coasts, finding that, despite multiple natural threats, coastal counties are growing significantly faster than the rest of the country, with more than one in seven Americans now residing in a county on the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. (2000)
- **Story No. 17773:** "A fish story," by Sam Stall, *Indianapolis Monthly*. This investigation into a chemical spill on Indiana's White River shows that the treatment plant responsible for the accident apparently took a week to admit the incident to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, which in turn took several more days to notify the public. As a result, environmentalists are now calling for the IDEM to be staffed with more environmental professionals. (2000)
- **Story No. 18217:** "Liquid assets: A water-policy critic tries going corporate to tap new market," by Rick Watzman, *The Wall Street Journal*. This report looks at the emerging private market to purchase, store and ship massive amounts of water across the arid region of Sausalito, Calif. The article also explores factors that potentially contribute to drought in the West and examines industry expectations for agreements, mergers and acquisitions among the largest water companies. (1999)

A valuable database

Some of our initial questions: Where are levees most vulnerable? Who was responsible for putting off repairs to these structures? To what degree had California implemented reforms recommended after the 1997 disaster?

We had little time to spare. It was late November, and flood season would end in three months. From the outset, we wanted to publish our findings before the lawns turned brown, the creeks dried up and floods were the last thing on people's minds.

Right off the bat, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided us with a database of so-called "erosion sites" – places along the Sacramento River where currents had badly eroded chunks of the levee. Graphic artist Nathaniel Levine loaded this database into a mapping program. The results were impressive. The Corps data showed there were 183 spots along the Sacramento River where levees were visibly eroded, and 25 were "critical" – likely to collapse in a big flood.

Around that same time, I asked Sacramento city and county officials to provide me with their emergency response plans. The county's plan was pretty feeble, but the city had put together numerous maps showing which parts of Sacramento would become submerged – and at what depths – should a levee break. Few Sacramento residents had ever seen these maps. They were startling, and before long, we would put them on the Web.

Other tasks were more challenging. The administration of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger balked at providing key documents, including some that would shed light on why his predecessor, Gov. Gray Davis, had cut flood-control funding 74 percent in four years. Our formal requests could not shake loose these documents. (Prior to November 2004, California had a weak open-records law that allowed officials to withhold documents that were part of their "deliberative process." Proposition 59, a law passed by voters last year, is expected to make such documents more accessible.)

Along with pursuing the paper trail, I worked at cultivating relationships with flood-control engineers, geologists, public works employees, emergency response officials and others. Former aides in the Davis administration told me about the internal infighting that led to budget cuts. Some officials, such as Butch Hodgkins of the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, were surprisingly blunt about the state of affairs.

"I hate to criticize my profession, but our whole system of evaluating these levees sucks," Hodgkins said in a memorable line. "We keep picking off the worst spot after every successive storm, and that is a hell of a way to run a flood-control system."

New procedures

On March 28-30, 2004, *The Bee* published "Rising Risk," a three-part series that examined, literally, the holes in Sacramento's flood defenses.



The first day provided an overview of the area's flood-control system, explained why levees and bypasses were in a state of disrepair and summarized who was responsible. Randy Pench's photographs helped bolster my case, and Nathaniel Levine produced a page-length map that allowed readers to see where levees were eroding.

Day 2 examined the Natomas basin, a fast-growing suburb of Sacramento that could flood 23 feet deep if a levee ever broke. The stories challenged the prevailing thinking that Natomas was safe because of recent levee work. It also revealed how local builders and politicians had downplayed the flood risk as they pushed to develop the area.

The final day was my favorite, and possibly the most controversial. Using the city's flood inundation maps, we laid out what would happen, hour by hour, if a levee broke just upstream of the Capitol. The story questioned whether authorities could safely evacuate Sacramento given the region's recent growth, traffic congestion and outdated evacuation plans. It also examined the economic impact of a levee break. According to a prominent local economist, a major flood would affect 242,388 jobs and cause \$7.7 billion in total damages.

As I expected, the series had immediate impact. One day after it ran, officials of the Corps of Engineers and environmental agencies announced new procedures for speeding up reviews of levee work in the Central Valley. Dozens of readers called in with questions. Several Natomas residents told me they had bought extra flood insurance because of the series. Others wanted copies of the city's previously unknown flood inundation maps.

On the state side, Schwarzenegger soon pushed for increased funding for flood-control and instructed the state's water resources director to develop a plan for stable financing of the system. That plan, completed last month, calls for a new valley-wide assessment district to raise funds for levee upgrades. It is now before the state Legislature.

Some readers complained I had exaggerated the area's flood risks, but I stopped hearing those gripes within a few months. On a warm, blue-sky summer day last June, a levee in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta broke open, flooded several miles of farmland near Stockton and caused about \$90 million in damages. No one was hurt, but the mishap was a visible reminder that many of levees are made of Swiss cheese.

Engineers suspect that, given the low river flows at the time, a rodent might have dug a hole in the levee, causing it to collapse.

Stuart Leavenworth served as The Sacramento Bee natural resources reporter from 1999 to 2004. He now writes about state politics for the paper's editorial board. The "Rising Risk" series can be viewed at www.sacbee.com/content/news/projects/flood

WHEN WATER RUNS LOW

BY BRENT ISRAELSON
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

With Utah in its fifth year of drought, many residents and officials were becoming increasingly concerned about conservation – and angry about water waste. Complaints about water wasters seemed to peak in the summer of 2004.

So *The Salt Lake Tribune* decided to see who were the biggest culprits.

Because culinary water is stored, treated and distributed by Salt Lake City, a government entity, it seemed natural that water consumption records would be open to the public.

A simple phone call to the assistant manager of the Salt Lake City Public Utilities Department confirmed that, indeed, the records were public but that I would need to make an official request under Utah's Government Records Access Management Act.

I then sent the requisite GRAMA request and within a week, I had my data, which included the water user's name, address, telephone number, amount of water used in 2003, and the dollar amount of the user's water bill.

From there, it was simply a matter of plugging the data into a spreadsheet program and crunching the numbers, which included converting cubic feet into gallons.

In addition to asking for residential water use, I asked the city to provide me with the top 10 industrial-commercial users, and the top 10 institutional (government/nonprofit) users.

Of course, my research for the story didn't end with the numbers. I called the water users to give each of them a chance to defend or explain their high water use.

Given that they are run and largely governed by engineers, water agencies tend to love numbers, and they love to share them, according to my experience. You should be able to access a large amount of data to explain trends and issues facing your local water provider.

Tipsheets from the IRE RESOURCE CENTER

For more information on how other journalists have successfully covered water-related issues, take a look at the tipsheets available in the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter).

Here's a selection of what's available:

- **No. 1099:** Mark Grossi of *The Fresno Bee* lists contact information for organizations that deal with water quality in California and includes a graphic depicting the different steps in water management. (1999)
- **No. 1507:** MaryJo Sylwester from the Center for Public Integrity provides information on covering storm water runoff and the impact it has on urban areas. (2002)
- **No. 1674:** Paul Rogers of the *San Jose Mercury News* describes how to pitch and write ocean environment stories and explains why such stories are important. (2002)
- **No. 1721:** In this article from *The IRE Journal*, David Helvarg details how to cover a big topic such as ocean governance. (2002)
- **No. 1750:** In this tipsheet, David Donald, formerly of the *Savannah Morning News*, gives guidelines and Web links to help reporters cover water-related issues. (2002)
- **No. 1761:** Maud Beelman, director of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, explains how the ICIJ conducted a yearlong global investigation of water privatization. (2003)
- **No. 1842:** Robert McClure of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* provides a list of Web sites and databases that can aid in tracking down water polluters and in determining whether regulatory agencies are properly protecting the public. The tipsheet also includes lists of sources for current pollution information, environmental groups, cleanup of polluted sites. (2003)
- **No. 2077:** Cathy Zollo of the *Naples Daily News* shares insights gained during her investigation of the Gulf of Mexico. (2004)
- **No. 2101:** Wade Rawlins of *The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer* provides a list of resources, databases and Web sites regarding the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, which discourages development of coastal barriers in order to protect wildlife, natural resources and water quality. (2004)

‘KILLER KING’

County-run hospital mired in poor care, financial misdeeds and empty promises

BY TRACY WEBER AND CHARLES ORNSTEIN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

We didn’t set out to investigate Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center.

At first, our plan was to assess Los Angeles County’s public hospital system after a lawsuit alleged substandard care and unnecessary deaths at County-USC Medical Center, the largest county-run hospital.

Once we started gathering documents – health inspectors’ reports, malpractice suits, the findings of accreditors – the real story came into focus: King/Drew appeared to be in the worst shape.

From the start, we knew that any investigation of King/Drew couldn’t be just about a broken hospital. King/Drew has, for more than three decades, stood as a symbol of justice and political power to many black people in South Los Angeles and beyond. It was built out of the anger of the 1965 Watts riots. Lack of health care was one of the biggest complaints of a community with many reasons to feel neglected. King/Drew opened in 1972 with the promise that it would be “the very best hospital in America.”

Yet, King/Drew also gained a reputation early on as a hospital where bad things happen – it has been known for years as “Killer King” among the very neighborhoods it was intended to serve. In 1989,

the *Times* published a yearlong investigation of the hospital, uncovering a series of dangerous lapses in patient care. But repeated vows to fix the hospital never stuck.

We decided, along with our editor Julie Marquis, that we needed to examine not only what was going wrong now at King/Drew, but why things had been allowed to go wrong for so long. We needed not only to scrutinize patient-care failings, but to look critically at the excuses offered repeatedly by hospital supporters over the years. They claimed the hospital was starved of cash and that its troubles were no different than any other public hospital.

Because King/Drew is county-run, we knew our reporting would rely heavily on public records. Initially, we worried that by requesting individual records or reports, we would be tipping off county officials and others to what we were investigating. But because we filed so many requests – more than 100 with various agencies – it became impossible for officials to keep track of exactly what we were doing.

We built a network of sources that helped us identify other records to request. Along the way we discovered ways to track the performance of physicians that we hadn’t known existed, such as internal

county documents showing how many surgeries each surgeon performed or details of their outside employment arrangements.

Among the records we reviewed or requested were those pertaining to malpractice spending, salaries, workers’ compensation, state and federal health inspections, county Civil Service Commission filings, physician training programs, search warrants, budgets and other financial information.

Neglecting patients

After more than a year of reporting, we published a five-part series in December. Our conclusion was that King/Drew, by various measures, was among the very worst hospitals in the country. And its failings had little to do with money.

We found that errors and neglect by King/Drew’s staff had repeatedly injured or killed patients over more than a decade, a pattern that remained largely unchecked. Some lapses were never reported to authorities. Several times, we tracked down patients to speak with them about mistakes in their care, only to learn they either weren’t aware of the mistakes or never had been told why they occurred.

In one case, a pathologist had misdiagnosed a woman with endometrial cancer based on a slide containing another patient’s cancerous brain tissue. As a result, the woman was given a radical hysterectomy. Two years later, she learned from us that she’d never had cancer.

We had qualified medical experts review all of the cases we discussed at any length in the series. We did not, however, want to base our series purely on individual horror stories, as compelling as they were. We needed a statistical backbone. So we tried to measure King/Drew based on the few yardsticks of quality available for hospitals: malpractice payouts, violations of health regulations, and death and complication rates.

We found that King/Drew spent more per patient on malpractice than any of the state’s 17 other public hospitals and was cited for violating California health regulations more than 97 percent of hospitals statewide. Its nurses neglected patients (some as they lie dying), fabricated chart entries and made major medication errors. Unfortunately, King/Drew’s data on death and complications rates, which we sent to a qualified expert to review, proved too murky to yield useful comparison.

We also cited the findings of federal regulators and accreditors to give a sense of King/Drew’s poor national standing.

Digging deep into certain departments at the hospital, we detailed how some were riddled with incompetence, infighting and, in some cases criminality. Employees stole drugs – one pharmacy tech peddled them out of his garage – assaulted one another or routinely didn’t show up for work. In one case, a nursing assistant missed more than 18 weeks of work without permission over two years. In her disciplinary letter, included in her Civil Service Commission file, an administrator counseled her,

Robert Gauthier | Los Angeles Times



Angel Ayala’s mother feeds him through a stomach tube. When he was 8 months old, doctors missed a viral infection that later led to irreversible brain damage.

“The act of being employed in itself requires you to report to work.”

The flaws did not stem from poverty. King/Drew spent more per patient than 75 percent of the public and teaching hospitals in California and far more than the three other general hospitals run by Los Angeles County. King/Drew’s problem was the way it squandered those funds.

The hospital spent nearly \$34 million on employee injuries in the past five years. Workers made claims for such things as damage to their “psyche” or pricey tumbles from chairs. Between April 1994 and April 2004, employees filed 122 chair-fall claims, costing the hospital more than \$3.2 million.

And contrary to widely held beliefs, King/Drew paid its ranking doctors lavishly. Some drew twice what their counterparts made at other public hospitals – often for doing less.

Robert Gauthier | Los Angeles Times



Johnnie Mae Williams, here with her great-niece, had a hysterectomy after a hospital pathologist said she had cancer. The findings were apparently based on slides of another patient’s brain cancer. Williams did not have cancer.

Facing challenges

Reporter Mitchell Landsberg was brought in to focus on the history of King/Drew, its ardent community supporters – whose language and tactics harkened to the civil rights struggles of the 1960s – and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, whose timidity when faced with community anger allowed the hospital to founder. The five board members tenures ranged from eight years to 25 years.

A fourth reporter, Steve Hyman, did crucial legwork, tracking down the workers compensation files of King/Drew employees involved in unusual on-the-job misadventures, collecting comparative worker’s comp data from public hospitals statewide. He also wrote moving sidebars about those harmed or killed by mistakes at the hospital.

Because of the hospital’s status in the African-American community, reporting the story required sensitivity. We were four white reporters and a white photographer, Rob Gauthier. An African-American reporter who had been part of the team left the paper for another job midway through the reporting process.

Each of us, and the *Times*, was accused of being racist for pursuing the story. While we understood, and respected, how hard many older community members fought for the hospital and how fearful they were of losing it, we also got to know the victims, poor blacks and Latinos with few other options for care.

Victims provided one of our biggest reporting challenges. Often their lives were roiled by poverty and violence. They moved frequently. Their phone service was cut off. They were preoccupied with family members who’d been shot or gone to jail.

Sometimes they had a hard time understanding what went wrong with their care or that of loved ones. Often they weren’t surprised; it seemed as though they expected poor care. And in a few cases, they shrugged it off as just one more bad thing in a rough life.

We also faced challenges of our own making. When we discovered particularly egregious mistakes or neglect, we reported them as dailies. Regulators and accreditors would then swoop in and we were forced to report on their findings, too. We constantly worried about how these stories – more than 60 since August 2003 – would affect our project. In fact, these stories helped spur the county supervisors to hire temporary outside managers to run the hospital for a year and to close King/Drew’s trauma center.

The daily stories also caused us to constantly refocus the project. Luckily, we had support and guidance early on from the paper’s editor, John Carroll, who saw the importance of the story. During numerous rewrites, he and editor Marquis helped us find the right mixture of anecdote and fact, statistic and quotation. Each day’s story took a different tack to detail the failings of the hospital, something we all felt made the lengthy series more readable and surprising.

We all felt the series wasn’t complete without at least attempting to offer solutions. But we felt no one could come up with educated solutions without viewing the full scope of King/Drew’s problems.

So, on the final day of the series, we sent the series out to two-dozen national health care experts with the idea of publishing a comprehensive “solutions story” two weeks later. We also solicited

suggestions from readers. More than 300 people responded with often thoughtful, detailed ideas, some of which we published.

Our series and the solutions piece generated significant discussion on radio, television and in civic and political circles. Many commentators applauded the paper’s straightforward approach to the issue of race.

Since our story ran, two prominent King/Drew physicians who were featured in the series have resigned. One, the chair of the neurosciences department, had made a total of more than \$1 million over the past two fiscal years, yet top county officials were unable to say what he did to justify the compensation. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also created a hospital advisory board including some of the national experts quoted by the *Times* in its series to oversee changes at the hospital. Two state Assembly members have introduced legislation to create an independent hospital authority to oversee the county’s five public hospitals.

Tracy Weber is a member of the metro investigative projects team at the Los Angeles Times. Charles Ornstein covers public health and serves on the board of directors of the Association of Health Care Journalists. “The Troubles at King/Drew” has received the National Journalism Award for Investigative Reporting/Ursula and Gilbert Farfel Prize from the Scripps Howard Foundation. It also has won the Paul Tobenkin Award from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, and most recently, the Pulitzer Prize.

Norma Jean Gargasz | Tucson Citizen



The Tucson Fire Department took almost nine minutes to repond to this June 2003 fire, longer than the national standard for fire response. The fire eventually spread to a nearby duplex, which was destroyed.

FIRE RESPONSE

National standards provide benchmark for judging local times, risks, reasons

BY BRAD BRANAN
TUCSON CITIZEN

When Tucson officials approved an ambitious annexation plan last year, they made improved fire service the cornerstone of their pitch to resistant residents near the city limits.

Wildfires have given firefighters a mythic reputation in the West. Urban firefighters are no exception in Tucson, where a life-size version of a *Smithsonian Magazine* cover story about the department's training program hangs proudly in the chief's office. The city manager said Tucson had one of the best fire departments in the country.

But firefighters in Tucson and across the country face a grim reality. They don't have enough resources to consistently respond to fires on time, putting themselves, residents and property at greater risk.

Tucson fails to meet the national standard for response times about half the time. In 2003, the department took more than five minutes to arrive at 255 fires involving an estimated \$2 million in damage.

Tucson has consistently expanded its city boundaries without adding enough fire stations. Fire departments are often under-funded in growing communities, and residents receive slower service as a result.

Fire department response times haven't received

much attention, even though many departments are failing to meet the standards for this basic municipal service. Despite the pressing needs, reporters can't count on the fire department or experts to help them tell the story.

“Tucson fails to meet the national standard for response times about half the time. In 2003, the department took more than five minutes to arrive at 255 fires involving an estimated \$2 million in damage.”

Little scrutiny

The National Fire Protection Association set the standard for responding to fires and other emergencies in 2001. (Ask your fire department for a copy of the written standard, which calls for an engine company to respond within six minutes of a 911 call and five minutes of receiving the emergency dispatch.)

Departments are urged to hit the target time on

90 percent of all calls. Fires typically need just a few minutes to expand from a burning object to a flaming room, a process called “flashover.”

Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini, chairman of the NFPA committee that wrote the standard, told me in December no one has conducted a national study of compliance with the voluntary standard. His committee hadn't reviewed results of the standard either.

However, the NFPA and the U.S. Fire Administration estimated in 2002 that only one-fourth to one-third of the country's fire departments had enough stations to meet the standard. And in February, Bill Dedman of *The Boston Globe* reported that only 58 percent of the country's full-time departments consistently meet the standard.

Dedman obtained the National Fire Incident Reporting System database from the U.S. Fire Administration, which is useful for making comparisons among departments. If your fire department sends reports to NFIRS, you will still need to get more current data directly from the department.

“Fire protection in America is a myth,” Vincent Dunn, a retired New York City deputy fire chief and an author of fire safety books, told Dedman. Other fire officials said the deadly consequences of under-funded departments have been ignored by elected officials and residents who don't want to pay for more firefighters and stations.

Many fire departments still don't use the NFPA guidelines to calculate response times. Departments in Tucson and elsewhere report average response times, which distorts the true picture. Tucson's average response time is a little more than five minutes, but almost half the time the department still doesn't respond to fires within five minutes.

I obtained a database from the department of all vehicle responses to about 11,000 fires and other emergency calls in an 18-month period. Reporters might want to limit their inquiry to actual building fires, although firefighters don't always know what's happening at the scene based on a 911 call and should respond accordingly.

The database included several time fields: the 911 call, the fire company's receipt of the call, departure and arrival. Case numbers allowed me to obtain written reports of fires that received a late response.

I queried the database to extract the first responding engine for each emergency. Then I calculated how often the first engine on the scene arrived within five minutes — 53 percent.

Mapping the results led to a better story. Using ArcMap 9, I placed response times for each fire station on a city map. Stations in the newest and fastest-growing parts of the city were covering far more area than in the city's core. They also had far slower times than the citywide average.

In one part of Tucson, three stations were responsible for about 100 square miles. Experts

recommend having one station every five square miles in a rural or suburban setting.

Overcoming obstacles

Analyzing the data was relatively easy. I encountered challenges trying to find experts to put my findings in context and help me identify examples of fires that received a late response.

The lack of academic study devoted to fire response is one reason. The widespread support for firefighters is likely another.

A spokesman for the U.S. Fire Administration, which had documented the country's fire service woes in the 2002 report, ignored repeated requests to interview agency experts or even answer basic questions about the report.

The spokesman also called the Tucson Fire Department about my request. Other experts "warned" the department about my story, even though they declined interview requests. Several potential sources said they didn't want to be viewed as criticizing the department, even though I told them the story was about a funding shortage, not firefighter competence. Other local experts had ties to the fire department.

Private fire investigators, who often work for insurance adjusters, can help. I found one in Tucson with national credentials as an NFPA committee member. After reading reports at my request, he identified good examples for the story. Factors such as a homeowner trying to put out a fire before calling 911 can make meaningless a slow response by firefighters.

We found examples of homes that might have been saved if the department had arrived within five minutes. Insurance may cover such losses, and the costs of adding fire stations and firefighters may be more than a city loses because of delayed responses.

But an ex-Marine, Ronald Luks, drove home the point of why cost-benefit ratios fail to account for the importance of fire protection. A house fire that received a late response from the department consumed all the photos of his recently deceased wife and commendations he received for his service in Vietnam.

"I was 10 minutes away from suicide," Luks said. "It was just the loss of all the memories."

The fire department said a shortage of fire stations was preventing it from meeting the NFPA standard, but added that it would be "irresponsible" to ask officials for more stations considering the city's shortage of funds.

City officials responded by saying they would consider funding options for more stations this year. And after my stories were published, the fire department announced that it needed eight more stations to serve the growing edges of town.

Brad Branan is a projects reporter at the Tucson Citizen. He previously worked as a regional affairs reporter for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

20 QUESTIONS FOR YOUR FIRE CHIEF

By Bill Dedman, *The Boston Globe*

These questions were distilled by *The Boston Globe* from the 300-page Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual, a publication of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (cfainet.org). [They are meant for readers, but work equally well for reporters.]

1. What is your personal expectation of how many minutes will pass from the time I call to report an emergency to the time that a fire engine or ambulance arrives?
2. Does the Fire Department have a response time goal? How close is it to your expectations? What factors went into setting the goal, such as fire loss data, areas of greater fire hazard, and water supply? Has this goal been adopted by the community's elected leaders?
3. What percentage of the time does the fire department meet that goal right now?
4. Are there areas where there are frequently longer response times? Which parts of the community are not within four minutes drive time of a fire station? What about within five minutes? Does the Fire Department use GIS (computer mapping) to evaluate current and future station locations?
5. How long does it take for dispatchers to process calls? Does the fire department run the dispatch center or contract with someone else to run it? Can time or money be saved by cooperating with neighboring communities on a joint dispatch center?
6. How long does it take firefighters to get on the road once they are notified of an alarm?
7. What statistical reports does the fire agency produce on its response time performance and the extent of local fire losses? How do you make these reports available to the public?
8. Do you keep the data in terms of whole minutes only or does your system record times down to the second? Do these reports show performance by station or company?
9. Do you report all fires to the National Fire Incident Reporting System?
10. What is the department's goal for staffing for a fire response? How are the stations staffed – by volunteers, by part-time personnel or full-time personnel?
11. What percentage of the time do they meet goal? Does each engine and ladder company have four firefighters? Can the department muster 12 to 15 firefighters at a fire within 10 minutes?
12. What role do simultaneous calls play in your response times and staffing? If there's a medical call, how many firefighters are available for a fire alarm, and vice versa?
13. How many calls did the department handle 10 years ago, and how many last year? What percentage of growth has occurred? How has staffing changed in that time?
14. If you rely on volunteer or paid-on-call firefighters, how many respond to an alarm for a mid-day house fire? For a fire at night? How many live or work outside of town? How many volunteers do we have, compared with 10 years ago?
15. If the nearest fire station to my home is in the next community, which fire department is dispatched first? Is the response from another department "mutual aid" (slower) or "automatic aid" (faster)? How much could you improve service by cooperating with neighboring communities on fire stations and staff?
16. Would transportation improvements speed response? Are there speed bumps that should be eliminated, or road network changes that could be made? Would devices to help you control traffic signals speed up response? Do we have any bridges that can't handle the weight of an ambulance or fire truck?
17. What level of service does the department provide for emergency medical service? Is it basic life support (BLS) or advanced life support (ALS)?
18. What level of service does the department provide for fire prevention, public education, fire investigation, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and disaster planning? How does the department measure performance in these areas?
19. Are your physical resources adequate, including fire stations, training facilities, fire apparatus, and personal protective safety equipment to meet the level of risk in this community? Do you have adequate training and personnel safety programs? What's the plan to pay for repair or replacement of fire apparatus?
20. What is the community's ISO rating for fire protection? for building code enforcement? Have these ratings changed? If we spent money to improve the fire department, how much of that money would come back to taxpayers through lower insurance premiums?

Bill Dedman's investigation of fire response times, staffing, and civilian and firefighter fatalities for The Boston Globe can be found at www.boston.com/news/specials/fires.

STUDENT TRAINING

College journalists study campus crime using FOI requests, statistics and tenacity

BY CRAIG FLOURNOY AND DAN MALONE
FOR THE IRE JOURNAL

In recent years, journalism scholars across the country have been re-evaluating the best way to teach journalism. The Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and other colleges are emphasizing a broad approach, putting emphasis on history, economics, law and theory.

That's OK. It's helpful to know the background of *New York Times v Sullivan*. But knowing facts and knowing how to research and write an investigative story are two different things. And in our way of thinking, the best way for students to learn journalism is to do it.

In the fall of 2004, we assigned our students to investigate violent crime on college campuses in Texas and whether campus police were telling students about the crimes.

We had 15 students – six undergraduates at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and nine graduate students at the Mayborn Graduate Insti-

tute of Journalism at the University of North Texas in Denton. The assignment was part of a broader effort sponsored by the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas. That "Light of Day" project was designed to help student journalists access public records under Freedom of Information Act and the Texas Public Information Act.

Students in our classes filled out surveys at the beginning and end of the project. Initially, most said they were excited – and anxious – at the prospect of doing a kick-ass story. Most had never worked on an investigative piece, particularly one of this magnitude. "I worry that focusing on the entire state of Texas may be a larger task than expected," said Jennifer McDowell, a 20-year-old junior at SMU.

They worried they would not have enough time to do the story right. They worried bureau-

crats would give them the runaround. They worried there would be no story. "What if we don't uncover anything?" asked one graduate student at the University of North Texas.

Still, most students said they looked forward to the challenge. "It's somewhat overwhelming given the many factors we're dealing with," said Pablo Lastra, a senior at SMU. "But it's hands-on, it requires analytical skills and best of all, it's a real-world experience."

The Clery Act

The students first compiled a list of all campus police departments licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. Next, the students obtained crime statistics for each school for 2001-2003 from the U.S. Department of Education, then used this information to create a database that showed the number and type of crimes being reported at about 100 college campuses across Texas.

Next, the students examined the performance of campus police in reporting crimes to students. The Clery Act – a federal law named after Jeanne Ann Clery, a Lehigh University student who was raped, sodomized, tortured, and murdered in her dorm room in 1986 – requires universities to disclose campus crime statistics, publish daily crime logs and distribute crime alerts to warn students and others of dangerous situations. Students also

College investigations from the IRE Resource Center

Want to read other investigations conducted by students? These stories were all recent IRE award winners or finalists and can be found at www.ire.org/resourcecenter.

- **Story No. 20800.** "Raising the Cap," by John Frank, Jamie Dougher, Matt Hanson, Joe Rauch, Lynne Shallcross, and Suzanne Presto, *The Daily Tar Heel*. This investigation looked at the University of North Carolina's appeal to increase the 18 percent cap on nonresident students. By using computer-assisted reporting techniques this team of reporters was able to invalidate the university's arguments for increasing the out-of-state student population. (2003)
- **Story No. 20772.** "Hotel Workers Held in IRS sweep," by Olivia Doerge and Ann Friedman, *Adelante* (University of Missouri). This story exposed new ways big-business employers recruit and retain illegal immigrant labor without legal repercussions, while also taking a thoughtful look at the lives and hardships of the workers and their family members back in Mexico. (2003)
- **Story No. 20794.** "Effluent Escalation," by Dan Wilcock, *Times-News* (Cumberland, Md.). An investigation that started out as a class data-collection project ultimately unveiled an aging sewage system in the state of Maryland, where raw sewage grew by almost 1250 percent in 2003 alone. (2003)
- **Story No. 19441.** "State Salaries," by Hanah Cho, Capital News Service (University of Maryland). This investigation found that top university officials in Maryland were receiving salaries several times higher than the governor or other high-ranking state officials, while also detailing how university physicians and coaches bolstered their already-high salaries with grants and contract deals. (2002)
- **Story No. 19438.** "The Secret Court of 1920," by Amit R. Paley, *The Harvard Crimson*. This article chronicles the story of "The Court," a university tribunal that had been kept secret for more than 80 years. Following the suicide of a Harvard student in 1920, the court labeled 14 men "guilty" of being or knowing homosexuals, and forced some of the men to leave the university and the city of Cambridge. (2002)

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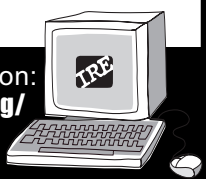
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As part of its beat book series, IRE offers "Understanding Crime Statistics: A Reporter's Guide" by Kurt Silver. The guide, completed in cooperation with Criminal Justice Journalists, provides detailed information on useful resources and data for pursuing local investigations into crime. Order the book by visiting www.ire.org/store/books/crime.html or calling 573-882-3364.

filed open records requests with campus police departments for the actual offense reports behind the statistical information.

The students then compared the statistical information required by Clery with the offense reports, crime logs and alerts issued by police. From this, they were able to develop a working nut graph: Campus police at many universities routinely fail to report violent crime to students despite federal laws requiring them to do so.

Failure to comply with the law was widespread. El Centro Community College in Dallas did not notify students when a rape or other violent crime took place at its satellite campuses, even though it has one of the highest crime rates among Texas colleges. At one community college campus in Houston, seven homicides occurred but police never told students about the crimes.

Several colleges ignored the students' requests for information. Private universities such as Baylor and SMU, for example, refused to release offense reports requested under the Texas Public Information Act even though their police departments are licensed by a state agency and operate much like small town cop shops.

Students also encountered a records dodge familiar to professional journalists – stiff charges for public records. The University of Texas at Arlington, for example, demanded more than \$100 for records that other state universities provided free.

Each student was responsible for gathering Clery Act information and filing open records requests for a group of colleges. While continuing their reporting, the students wrote up their findings. The findings at individual schools became the building blocks for the final story that we – and *Fort Worth Weekly's* editor Gayle Reaves – helped the students polish.

Learning experience

Because there were so many students involved, we had each one double- and sometimes triple-check statistics, quotes and spellings to guard against possible errors. They caught several mistakes prior to publication.

The students published their findings in a 5,000-word story on Dec. 1 in *Fort Worth Weekly*, an alternative newspaper, and in a follow-up on Dec. 8. The initial article said police at many Texas colleges had failed for years to inform students about violent crime in and around their campuses. As for the Clery Act, many officials simply ignored it.

"SMU reported one rape as an illness and failed to issue warnings about four others," the students reported. "Baylor provided information to students that did not match up to what it reported to the federal government. The University of Texas at Arlington failed to issue crime alerts for two on-campus rapes and misidentified both on daily crime logs as mere 'assaults' instead of 'sexual assaults.' And Texas Woman's University destroyed daily crime logs for 2001 and 2002."

The story's take on the "so what" question was clear: "Many campus officials are misinterpreting or ignoring parts of the Clery Act in ways that leave their students in the dark about potential dangers, thereby undercutting the original purpose of the law."

A few days after the story was published, an official with the nation's leading advocacy group for campus safety, Daniel Carter of Security on Campus, asked state and federal education officials to review the students' findings. The U.S. Department of Education responded, pledging to investigate what the student journalists found and to "take action, as appropriate, to ensure compliance with the law." The federal investigation is ongoing.

The students – most of them seniors or graduate students – said researching and writing the story was the most important learning experience they had in college. "I am almost finished with my second journalism degree, and I have never had this kind of hands-on experience," said Taylor Timmins, a graduate student at the University of North Texas. "I learned about how to actually *be* a reporter."

Students said they learned to challenge law enforcement officials who refused to turn over records. To use a database to sift through large amounts of data. To think on their feet. Most important, several students said they discovered they had the wherewithal to do investigative reporting.

"It takes guts and stamina to deal with sticky situations that people do not want to talk about," said Farrar Johnson, a senior at SMU. "You cannot learn guts in a classroom lecture."

Craig Flournoy is an assistant professor of journalism at SMU who won the 1986 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. Dan Malone is a staff writer at Fort Worth Weekly and is an adjunct journalism instructor at UNT who won the 1992 Pulitzer for investigative reporting. (The story, "Insecurity on Campus," and the database students built is available at www.fwweekly.com/issues/2004-12-01/feature.asp.)

ABOUT THE DATA

The Clery Act campus crime statistics from the U.S. Department of Education represent alleged criminal offenses reported to campus police or security and local law enforcement.

The federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act requires colleges and universities to disclose certain timely and annual information about campus crime and security policies. All public and private institutions participating in federal student aid programs are subject to it.

On Oct. 1 of each year, schools are required to publish and distribute an annual campus security report to all current students and employees with crime statistics for the three most recent calendar years. The statistical information contained in each report is based on the calendar year in which the crime was reported to campus officials.

This data is available through IRE at www.ire.org/datalibrary/databases/campus or by calling 573-884-7711.

Crimes are reported in the following major categories, with several sub-categories:

- criminal homicide broken down by
 - murder and non-negligent manslaughter
 - negligent manslaughter
- sex offenses broken down by
 - forcible sex offenses (includes rape)
 - non-forcible sex offenses
- robbery
- aggravated assault
- burglary
- motor vehicle theft
- arson

These crimes are included in the report regardless of whether they are prosecuted.

Schools also report the following three types of incidents if they result in either an arrest or the accused is referred for campus disciplinary proceedings:

- liquor law violations
- drug law violations
- illegal weapons possessions

The report must also indicate if any of the reported "index" crimes, or any other crime involving bodily injury, was a "hate crime."

The statistics are broken down geographically into on campus, residential, non-campus and public property.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

State failure to rehabilitate youth documented; fear and violence shown as standard practice

BY KAREN DE SA AND BRANDON BAILEY
SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

Last year, looking to expand coverage of juvenile justice, Karen de Sa accepted a county prosecutor’s offer to join him on a tour of the California Youth Authority.

The network of state-run prisons houses the juvenile offenders who counties won’t – or can’t – handle in local programs.

On the tour, even the most hardened district attorneys were shocked by what they saw – inmates as young as 12 confined in cages and dungeon-like cells best described as medieval.

The tour inspired us to take a closer look at the CYA, culminating in a six-part series published in October. Together with photographers Judith Calson and Richard Koci Hernandez, we revealed how dramatically the state fails in its legal mandate to treat and rehabilitate. Fear and violence dominate the largest network of youth prisons in the nation. Its adult-prison atmosphere allows for little education or therapy.

In addition to showing the system’s inhumanity, we demonstrated that taxpayers were getting little return for the \$71,000 spent annually to house each inmate. And we were able to quantify a clear

public danger: Three of every four CYA parolees are arrested on new criminal charges within three years of their release.

Building relationships

Several factors made our timing just right. Facing a sweeping lawsuit earlier this year, the state agreed to a series of audits. The consultants’ reports that emerged detailed failures from inadequate health care to the excessive use of force. Freshly elected Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger faced a messy public relations battle when the *San Jose Mercury News* published front-page photos of a CYA “ward” at school in a cage. The same month, news broke of a double suicide and a videotaped incident in which a guard struck a subdued inmate 28 times.

But we decided that a few breaking news stories were not enough. We wanted to take readers inside this shadowy institution, housing nearly 4,000 young men and women.

The first challenge we faced in reporting this story was answering the question: Would readers care?

Our central finding, a recidivism rate of 74 percent, made that question easier to answer. This dismal return rate meant more victims, more cost to taxpayers, and more families mourning lost children.

Despite skeptics in our own newsroom, we felt readers would be more sympathetic if they knew more about the CYA “wards.” Yes, they are perpetrators in many cases of serious and violent crimes. But to a large extent, they are also victims of crimes themselves, suffering from severe childhood abuse and neglect. Most come from impoverished and violent neighborhoods where gangs and drugs are endemic. The vast majority has some form of mental illness.

So, we decided to avoid stories with a straight-news approach, and chose human characters instead. In our series, readers took a weeklong journey through the CYA, beginning with the moment one young man arrives at the intake center, and concluding with a parolee stepping into freedom.

Telling the story through inmates required access, so we built relationships early on with prison officials.

We decided to be clear and open about what we were doing throughout the investigation. At the onset, we presented lists of data requests and set up a calendar of visits. We communicated often with the new CYA director, and accompanied him on tours of youth prisons in two other states.

Finding numbers

Our editors – assistant city editor John Hubner, metro editor for enterprise Elisabeth Rubinfien and assistant managing editor for metro Bert Robinson – encouraged us to report as often as we could from the inside. We visited the wards who anchored our stories repeatedly over many months. But despite the great cooperation we received, we were challenged by a glaring absence of data. One of the CYA’s central failures is its inability to track or measure the effectiveness of state-sponsored programs. Until recently, they had no count of use-of-force incidents or even the number of youths on suicide watch.

When de Sa asked a staff psychologist about outcome measures for mentally ill offenders in treatment, he laughed, saying: “Does she know where she is?” Bailey was told that no one in the central office knew how to run the computer program tracking results of basic literacy proficiency tests.

So, while we were out in the field, database editor Griff Palmer gathered numbers we had learned might actually be available – post-release arrest rates. Although we had hoped to compare California’s recidivism rate to other states, that would turn out to be a challenge we could not overcome. There is no consistent definition for recidivism that is used nationwide; some agencies measure arrests, some convictions, some only count

Judith Calson | San Jose Mercury News



Angel Caurillo, 21, breaks down in tears minutes after hearing he will be immediately released from CYA. He had just appeared before the parole board in a televised hearing. He served two and a half years in the state’s youth prison system on domestic violence charges.



California Youth Authority wards fall to the ground with their hands at their backs as a fight breaks out during school at O.H. Close Youth Correctional Facility. Even though they were not part of the fight, policy requires all wards to assume this position during a fight anywhere on campus.

cases that send the offender back to prison. Palmer made sure the numbers we used were precise.

With hard data other than recidivism rates in short supply, we relied heavily on direct observation to buttress our findings, which we discussed with juvenile justice experts and state officials before publishing.

The violent climate, for example, was not hard to miss. Fights broke out at least half of the time we were inside the CYA. We witnessed a two-on-two fight inside a classroom where guards used pepper spray for the second time that day, and a group of youths scaling a barbed wire fence to pounce on rival gang members.

Bailey spent a total of 14 reporting days inside four CYA facilities, often accompanied by Koci Hernandez. They visited more than a dozen classrooms and shadowed three different teachers as they made their rounds in lockdown units, passing out worksheets and having brief conversations with their students through food slots or cell door jams.

De Sa and Carlson reported from the CYA's largest unit for mentally ill offenders for a week, arriving just after dawn and observing activities until late each day. Several shifts of medical and security staff spoke candidly with us about their jobs. We interviewed and photographed wards in suicide cells, sex offender treatment groups and psychiatrists' offices. We tracked a parolee from the final weeks of his incarceration, through the day of his release, and over five months on the outside as he struggled to shed his prison identity.

The photographers captured many powerful images: Koci Hernandez was able to document

the violent climate with a dramatic photograph of young wards on their stomachs – hands behind their backs and feet up in the air – following a group disturbance he witnessed. Carlson's picture of a suicidal ward in a spit mask and handcuffs revealed the dismal failure to treat the mentally ill.

Yet, we also offered readers some hope. Each of the six days had sidebars and graphics offering alternatives to the California model, as well as programs in and out of the state that are more effective.

Since the series ran, a state senator has pledged to introduce legislation overhauling the CYA. The governor took the unusual step of announcing a settlement to the lawsuit, in person, from one of the harshest prisons that we had focused on in our series. A doctor offered to remove our featured parolee's tattoos at no charge; others pledged donations for counseling and volunteered as mentors. The unsympathetic callers were far outnumbered by people thanking us for telling these stories.

Although the series pointed out numerous failings, state officials thanked us for being thorough and balanced in our approach. They have promised reforms and we plan to follow their efforts.

Karen de Sa covers juvenile justice and child welfare for the San Jose Mercury News, where she has worked for the last five years. Brandon Bailey is a member of the San Jose Mercury News' enterprise reporting team who has written frequently about criminal justice issues. Their series can be found at www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/special_packages/cyal.

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NEWS RADIO

Reporting on each break in investigation aids station's probe into official misdeeds

By ERIC LEONARD
KFI-AM, LOS ANGELES

A councilman from a small Los Angeles area city became the subject of a criminal investigation after a series of our reports detailed how he had tried to use his political influence to get his son out of trouble with the law. Twice.

KFI's investigation into Albert M. Vera, Culver City's vice mayor and a councilman, began with a tip from a news colleague and some simple document research.

In January 2004, Vera's son, Albert P. Vera Jr., pleaded no contest to a single count of possession of a loaded firearm, stemming from an incident at a Costco store. Vera Jr. had been stopped by store security for shoplifting and was cited by Culver City police for petty theft. I obtained a copy of the court file from the clerk's office, but at the time, the arrest and plea bargain didn't seem particularly newsworthy.

On Aug. 7, 2004, Vera Jr. was arrested again by Culver City officers, this time on suspicion of drug possession. Almost immediately, officers complained the suspect's father, the councilman, had appeared at the scene of the arrest, threatened the arresting offi-

cer, and tried to stop the officer from impounding his son's car.

Later we learned from an internal police department memo that the recently hired chief of the Culver City police department, John Montanio, had ordered the arresting officer to omit all information about the councilman's conduct from her official report.

"I continue to be very uncomfortable with the handling of this matter, which may have jeopardized the investigation and placed me in a position of liability," Officer Heidi Keyantash wrote.

The alleged interference by Councilman Vera and the reported personal involvement of the police chief moved the story to the front burner. I used the case file from the first arrest to generate a list of possible sources and began backgrounding the participants.

I made a series of document requests to Culver City, its police department, city attorney and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (the prosecutor for most local crimes) under the California Public Records Act, asking for copies of police reports, personnel information and police radio audio tapes.

Special treatment

Culver City is a relatively small community that doesn't often make news, so LexisNexis searches weren't particularly helpful. Few newspapers had written stories about the city, let alone the police department, its new chief, or the city council. This made the records requests and research even more critical.

Making matters worse, I'd never had occasion to cover a story involving the Culver City police department, so I began the investigation with no sources and no relationships with city officials.

We decided to report the second arrest first, including the allegations of misconduct being made by the police officers.

The story was based on copies of a police incident report, that inter-departmental memo written by the arresting officer, and an on-the-record interview with the attorney for the Culver City police officers' association. The chief refused to respond on the air, but issued a written statement denying any wrongdoing.

Many of the documents were leaked through newly found sources, so I spent lots of time confirming authenticity and trying to locate other sources to put the information in context.

Councilman Vera agreed to an interview. His version of the arrest events aired the next day. Vera denied interfering or threatening the officer, and even

accused the arresting officer and other "bad apples" on the Culver City Police Department of planting the drugs on his son.

Within days, I'd reported on that first arrest, and questions raised by the police officers' association about why Vera Jr., having been cited for shoplifting, pleaded out to a gun charge. More research revealed Vera Jr. had been carrying a concealed pistol and fake police ID at the time of the arrest. That was next on the air.

Criminal investigation

About this time, the records requests began to pay off. In September, I received a package from the district attorney's office containing letters written by top members of the Culver City police department asking for leniency on behalf of the councilman's son.

The letters were part of the shoplifting arrest incident, and had been sent to prosecutors at the request of Vera Sr. One was written by the current chief, Montanio; one by the former acting chief; another by the assistant chief; and another by a well-known sergeant.

We immediately reported on the letters. Their mere existence seemed to violate the Culver City police policy against employees becoming involved in court cases. The chief and his top staff refused to respond.

I learned the councilman and Montanio had a close relationship. The councilman was best man at Montanio's wedding, and had often referred to the chief as "my son."

Within days of our reports, the officer who had arrested Vera Jr. in August 2004 was allowed (by the chief) to write a complete police report detailing the councilman's actions she'd previously been ordered to omit. The city manager wrote to the district attorney, requesting an outside investigation. The chief asked the L.A. County Sheriff's Department to investigate the new police allegations.

Later, Councilman Vera sent an apology letter to the Culver City police, expressing regret for accusing officers of planting drugs.

"I now know that was not the case," Vera Sr. wrote. "My son will need to deal with his own legal and personal difficulties."

While a criminal investigation was opened into the councilman's actions, the district attorney ultimately turned down Culver City's request for a broader investigation into Vera Sr.'s behavior.

Creative records requests

Presenting complicated investigative stories on radio has always been a challenge, especially boiling these stories down to digestible one-minute packages understandable to anyone driving home and casually listening to a car radio.

We focused on the bottom line of each story element and, rather than attempt to present the entire chronology at once, broke the items down into their own stories and broadcast them in succession. I later detailed the entire story in a one-hour segment broad-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43 >

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Broadcast

- **Tom Merriman, Bill Sheil** and Lorrie Taylor of WJW-Cleveland won in Continuing Coverage of a Single News Event for "Secrets and Lies."
- **Angie Moreschi, Gerry Lanosga** and Bill Ditton of WTHR-Indianapolis won in Public Service for "Failure to Protect/Cries for Help."
- **Tom Merriman, Dave Hollis** and Matt Rafferty of WJW-Cleveland won in Investigative Reporting for "CPD Death Squad."
- **Amanda Townsend**, Aaron Brown and Beth Nissen of CNN won in Documentary or Series of Reports for "NewsNight with Aaron Brown: War Dead Series."
- **Allan Maraynes, Richard Greenberg, Chris Hansen** and David Corvo of Dateline NBC won in Investigative Reporting for "Children for Sale."

Scripps Howard Foundation

- **Tracy Weber, Charles Ornstein**, Mitchell Landsberg and Steve Hymon of the *Los Angeles Times* won in Investigative Reporting for their five-part series that uncovered a pattern of bad treatment at the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center.
- **Theo Francis** and Ellen E. Schultz of *The Wall Street Journal* won in Business/Economic Reporting for their report showing that, contrary to companies' claims, retiree medical benefits were not a crippling burden, but rather allowed companies to improve their bottom lines at the expense of retirees' benefits.
- **Sandra F. Chance** of the University of Florida was named Journalism Teacher of the Year by the Scripps Howard Foundation. She is executive director of the University of Florida's Brechner Center for Freedom of Information and has been a journalism educator for 25 years.

Goldsmith Prize

- **Diana Henriques** of *The New York Times* was awarded the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting from the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Her report, "Captive Clientele," exposed how thousands of American soldiers and their families have been duped into buying misleading insurance policies and loans.

Education Writers Association National Awards for Education Reporting

- **David Hunn** of *The Bakersfield Californian* won in Feature, News Feature or Issue Package (under 100,000 circulation) for "Special Cases."
- **Eric Eyre** of the *Charleston Gazette* won in Investigative Reporting (under 100,000 circulation) for "Web of Deceit: The Fall of West Virginia Education Chairman Jerry Mezzatesta."
- **Karla Schuster** and **Eden Laikin** of *Newsday* won

in Breaking or Hard News (over 100,000 circulation) for "Roslyn Embezzlement Scandal."

- **Holly Hacker**, Joshua Benton and Herb Booth of *The Dallas Morning News* won in Investigative Reporting (over 100,000 circulation) for "Children Left Behind: Corruption and Cheating in Texas."
- **Julian Barnes**, Anna Mulrine, Lynn Rosellini, Samantha Stainborn, Justin Ewers, Linda Kulman, Jay Tolson, Ulrich Boser and Christopher Shea of *U.S. News & World Report* won in national circulation magazines for "Unequal Education."

Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting

- **Carol D. Leonnig, D'Vera Cohn** and **Sarah Cohen** were part of *The Washington Post* team who won the \$35,000 annual prize from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication. Their winning series included more than 200 articles alerting area residents to dangerously high levels of lead in the District of Columbia water supply and exposing public officials' failure to protect residents.

George Polk Awards

- **Mark Fainaru-Wada** and **Lance Williams** of the *San Francisco Chronicle* won in Sports Reporting for their investigation into steroid and performance-enhancing drug use by star athletes.
- **Robbie Gordon** and Diane Sawyer of ABC News PrimeTime won in Television Reporting for "Fighting for Care." Their investigation revealed problems,

such as poor conditions, inadequate care and gross mismanagement, that have plagued veterans' hospitals around the country for years.

- **Walt Bogdanich** of *The New York Times* won in National Reporting for his "Death on the Tracks" series, which revealed how politically connected railroad companies evaded costs and regulations by manipulating evidence, government officials and public opinion.
- **Diana Henriques** of *The New York Times* won in Military Reporting for "Captive Clientele."
- **Theo Francis** and Ellen E. Schultz of *The Wall Street Journal* won in Economic Reporting for "Financial Surgery: How Cuts in Retiree Benefits Fatten Companies' Bottom Lines." Their investigation exposed deceptive corporate accounting practices that reduce employee benefits.
- **Justin Pritchard**, an Associated Press reporter based in San Francisco, won in Labor Reporting for "Dying to Work," an investigation of the high rate of job-related deaths for Mexican workers in the United States.
- **John Hill** and **Dorothy Korber** of *The Sacramento Bee* won in State Reporting for their story detailing how high-level administrators nearing retirement at the California Highway Patrol inflated pension benefits by making questionable health claims.
- **Tim Novak** and **Steve Warmbir** of the *Chicago Sun-Times* won in Local Reporting for "Clout on Wheels," which exposed a \$40 million municipal dump truck program to be a hotbed of payoffs, mob connections and ties to city officials and politicians.

Better Watchdog Workshops

Investigative Reporting on the Beat

IRE and SPJ, with funding from the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation of the Society of Professional Journalists, the Chicago Tribune Foundation and the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, have joined forces to offer a series of workshops focused on doing investigative reporting while covering a beat.

The workshops, specifically for journalists at small- to medium-sized news organizations and those in bureaus of larger organizations, will emphasize the use of FOI laws and address juggling a beat while producing investigative and enterprise pieces.

"You'll learn enough in the first 15 minutes to keep you busy for a month."

Kevin McGrath, *The Wichita Eagle*

Workshops are scheduled for:

May 7-8, 2005 — Columbia, Mo.
 May 14-15, 2005 — Philadelphia, Pa.
 May 21-22, 2005 — Fort Worth, Texas
 Oct. 8-9, 2005 — Columbus, Ohio

For more information, visit
www.ire.org/training/betterwatchdog

To request a workshop for your area, contact Training Director David Donald at watchdog@ire.org.



Member news

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

is also America's largest producer of lead.

■ **Reynolds Holding** is now senior editor at *Legal Affairs*. Previously, he was a legal columnist and investigative reporter at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. ■ **Andrew Jarosh** is now an assistant metro editor at *The Fort Myers (Fla.) News-Press*, where he is responsible for city and county government coverage. He previously held a similar position with *The Fort Wayne (Ind.) News-Sentinel*.

■ **Chris Lopez** has been promoted to editor of the *Contra Costa (Calif.) Times* from managing editor. ■ **Monica Rhor** has joined *The Orange County Register's* investigative team, focusing on criminal justice and immigration. She previously covered immigration at *The Boston Globe*. ■ **Tracy Simoneaux** has moved to the *Mesquite (Texas) News*, where she covers the Mesquite Independent School District and East Dallas County economic struggles. She worked previously at 2theadvocate.com, a news Web site for *The (Baton Rouge, La.) Advocate* and WBRZ-Baton Rouge. ■ **Pat Stith** has been inducted into the North Carolina Journalism Hall of Fame. Stith, a 1996 Pulitzer Prize winner, has been an investigative reporter at *The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer* for more than 30 years. He was also previously a member of IRE's board of directors and served as chairman of its first national conference on computer-assisted reporting.

PASSINGS

Kevin Carmody, an environmental reporter with the *Austin American-Statesman* and a founding member of the Society of Environmental Journalists, died March 9. During his 26-year-career, he won numerous national awards for his reporting on complex topics such as pollution, landfills and government corruption. He was a speaker at IRE conferences and assisted in the editing of IRE's beat book "Covering Pollution."

FOI Report

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

city have come in on the sneak.

"We're tired of Emerson and Bartow County being used as the dumping ground for industry," said Brenda Tidwell, a founder of Alliance for a Better Bartow, which claims about 200 members who organized last fall to fight the landfill...

"In Emerson, Tidwell said that only through open records requests by her group and the Bartow County Commission, which also opposes the new landfill, have they been able to get sketchy details of the deal."

Making FOI real is a tough task, but the *AJC's* stories do just that, bringing to life the hefty price tag

attached to secrecy. As of press time, the bill closing economic development negotiations was stalled in the Georgia State Senate.

In case you missed it, Sunshine Week also broke some news: A new survey commissioned for Sunshine Week found that seven out of 10 Americans are concerned about government secrecy, and more than half think there's not enough access to public records.

Journalists should keep Sunshine Week in mind all year. As the wave of publicity fades, expect quiet but firm opposition to the FOI bills in Congress, and expect the usual wave of exemptions in statehouses across the nation. Back to work we go, with fresh evidence of the importance of FOI in our back pockets.

Books

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

izing of directors would be difficult.

Still, Lipton and Lorsch maintain, professionalizing "would lead to a clearer understanding of what the goals of boards should be. Just as doctors are charged with assuring patient health and lawyers with acting in the interest of clients, directors should be charged with the responsibility of achieving clear, but broad, objectives. We would argue that for a large public company, the goal of the professional director should be long-term success of the company.

That goal, Lipton and Lorsch say, would benefit shareholders, as well as customers, suppliers and employees. As part of that approach, directors would do their best to see that all employees behave legally and ethically.

Professionalizing boards also would be linked to organizing directors' tasks in a sensible manner. Each director would be expected to perform tasks that allow them to understand and oversee what are usually complex business operations.

One interesting feature of the book for journalists who are obligated to listen to all sides of an issue are essays commenting upon, and sometimes dissenting from, the lead pieces. For example, the Lipton-Lorsch proposal is followed by three commentaries. Their authors are Margaret M. Blair, a Vanderbilt University law professor; Damon Silvers, an AFL-CIO lawyer; and Michael Klausner, a Stanford University business and law professor.

Silvers, for example, comments that professionalizing directors is not as important as democratizing directors. Noting that corporate boards are dominated by insider chief executives and general counsels, Silvers wonders how true director power can exist until the power of the CEO or general counsel is diminished inside the board room. "This is like trying to solve the problem of slavery without actually freeing the slaves," Silvers says. "You can spend all day exhorting them to be free — you can call them independent,

or even professionals, and demand that they run free — but at the end of the day, there they are, still in chains."

Teaching future reporters

The chapters by insiders about the performance of investment bankers, lawyers and government regulators are as equally enlightening as those about auditors and directors.

The role of journalists is addressed directly, too, in a chapter titled "Journalists and the Corporate Scandals: What Happened to the Watchdog?" The author is Geneva Overholser, former *Des Moines Register* editor, former *New York Times* editorial writer, former *Washington Post* ombudsman, and now on the University of Missouri journalism faculty. Overholser is rightly critical of journalism school professors who fail to train students in covering the private sector, of newsroom managers who fail to allocate adequate resources to the business beat, and of individual reports who react instead of initiative inquiries. She mentions the hope to be found in journalism school curricular reform, in increased newsroom training, in the shedding by individual journalists of outmoded attitudes about a government beat seeming more important to the public and more prestigious in the newsroom.

Interestingly, Overholser notes that "media leaders, ironically, tend to be even less forthcoming than their peers in other businesses."

"Even as their own organizations push for openness from others, media executives hold financial information exceptionally close to the vest," she says. "This must change. Media executives can create greater confidence in the concept of openness by leading the way toward a culture of business transparency."

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

Radio

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

cast on a weekend.

Creative public records requests were the key to the bigger story. A reporter friend taught me to always request department manuals and policy guides when beginning investigative work. This paid off.

The Culver City police manual section on court cases turned the leniency letters into a great, stand-alone story, and the manual served as a guide for identifying other documents to request.

Additionally, plenty of early records requests provided a steady stream of information once we broke the first part of the story. This kept us ahead of the competition.

I had made a wide range of individual, specific records requests. I wasn't exactly sure what the department and city would release, or for that matter, what information I'd need, so I began submitting requests for everything I thought could be released on the incident plus requests for information on the players.

By keeping each request separate from others (not asking for a set of documents, rather, each on its own), the city's records denials often didn't affect every record on a particular subject. I've found this to be an effective tactic in dealing with tight-lipped police departments.

The court file on the original arrest was a great resource in identifying sources inside the department and in other agencies tied to the case. The first contacts assisted me in finding other primary sources and spreading my phone number around the department, though the placement of my phone number and e-mail address on the station Web site was most productive.

In the months that followed, the L.A. County Sheriff's Department conducted an investigation into the August 2004 arrest. The findings were reviewed by the district attorney's office, which ultimately declined to file criminal charges against Vera Sr.

In the D.A.'s filing rejection, however, the head deputy of the public integrity division, Dave Demerjian, wrote he could not prove charges Vera interfered in a police investigation, in part, because "the elder Vera was never arrested nor was there any mention of his conduct in the incident report prepared by Officer Keyantash."

This was surprising since the core of the case involved the police chief ordering the officer to omit that very information from her report.

In an interview with Demerjian, he admitted he had never seen officer Keyantash's memo detailing her objection to the chief's order, and had never seen her complete, follow-up report filed a month after the initial incident.

Eric Leonard is KFIAM-640's investigative reporter. Prior to joining the staff full time in 2000, he produced television news magazine stories and worked as a private investigator.

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 20,000 investigative reporting stories through our Web site.

Contact: Beth Kopine, beth@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: David Donald, ddonald@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: David Herzog, dherzog@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: Brant Houston, brant@ire.org, 573-882-2042

For information on:

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If you have hotel or general conference questions, please contact Ev Ruch-Graham, sr. conference coordinator, ev@ire.org or 573-882-8969. If you have registration questions, please contact John Green, membership coordinator, jgreen@ire.org or 573-882-2772.

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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. Preregistration closes May 19. After May 19, you must register onsite. *Please write carefully! This information will be used to make your nametag.*

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CAR DAY – optional: Thursday, June 2

(requires additional fee)

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BLUES BASH – optional: Thursday, June 2 at 7:30 p.m.

_____ **\$15** Advance tickets (specify how many tickets)

Tickets sold June 2 at the conference site will be \$20.

Tickets at the door - if available - will be \$25.

FRIDAY RECEPTION (Advance Ticket Required)

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