THE IRE JOURNAL

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Wendy Gray, *The IRE Journal*

THE IRE JOURNAL

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Culture critical for investigative reporting

BRANT HOUSTON

In the last week of May, more than 30 editors and publishers from around the United States gathered at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies for two days to focus on one topic.

It wasn't the decline of readership or ethics or credibility, although all those areas were touched on.

The topic was investigative journalism and the discussion was about the importance of doing it, supporting it and encouraging it.

It was about investigative journalism being our profession's "franchise."

The nearly three-day workshop – called "Creating a Watchdog Culture: Claiming an Essential Newspaper Role" – saw a series of speakers give presentations on approaches, techniques, resources and writing.

The speakers included author and investigative reporter Seymour Hersh of the *New Yorker*, reporter and author Mark Bowden of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Roberta Baskin, a veteran broadcast investigative journalist, now head of the Center for Public Integrity, and former IRE board member Pat Stith of *The* (Raleigh, N.C.) *News and Observer*. In addition, members of the Poynter faculty offered their expertise and a host of other reporters talked about investigative stories that made a difference.

You would have thought you were at an IRE conference.

And like an IRE conference, the workshop had a goal far beyond discussion.

Rick Rodriguez, editor of *The Sacramento Bee* and the incoming president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, inspired and organized the workshop with Poynter as part of a plan to make this the year of watchdog journalism.

Over the past year Rodriquez, IRE President David Boardman of *The Seattle Times* and the IRE staff have talked about how to emphasize and produce more investigative journalism around the United States. Rodriguez had seen first hand one of IRE's Better Watchdog Workshops that he had hosted in Sacramento and also IRE's in-house training in computer-assisted reporting. He liked what he saw and he wanted to bring the training specifically to editors.

This spring, Rodriguez settled on creating a program called "Unleashing the Watchdog." The program will be a collaboration of ASNE and IRE that will produce regional workshops for mid-level editors at every size of newspaper. Since then, IRE has been honing a specific curriculum for these workshops that we hope to begin in the fall.

IRE is well-primed to do this work. Over the past three years, we conducted more numerous Better Watchdog Workshops for reporters and editors, have upgraded editor tracks at our conferences, revamped our computer-assisted boot camp for editors, and presented a program at the NewsTrain workshops for editors on using open-records laws effectively to do more investigations while on a beat.

In fact, Stith told the workshop, "The most important thing you can do to build a Watchdog Culture in your newsrooms is to go to war on behalf of your reporters – your readers – on public record issues."

At Poynter, the core group of top management fully supported the idea of training in investigative journalism for mid-level editors. The group recognized that editors need to receive training in how to conceive and carry out investigations, especially when beats require more sophisticated knowledge and when database analysis takes a larger role in investigations. They acknowledged that an inexperienced or untrained editor can be a roadblock or bottleneck to a watchdog culture.

Several teams of publishers and editors immediately volunteered to host these upcoming workshops.

Gregory E. Favre, a former McClatchy executive and now a Poynter faculty member, helped lead the workshop and he summarized the goals and hopes for everyone there and for those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ➢

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.

Bruzzese to lead health care journalists' group

Deputy Director Len Bruzzese is leaving IRE to become the executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists and its Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism.

Bruzzese, who has held his IRE role since 1998, officially assumes his new post in July. The association is currently based at the University of Minnesota, but is moving to the Missouri School of Journalism, where Bruzzese is a member of the faculty.

"We will miss Len and all of his incredibly valuable work for IRE," said Brant Houston, IRE's executive director. "Len has played a key role in IRE's growth as an organization that serves thousands of journalists both in the United States and internationally. He has made outstanding contributions in many areas, especially in publications and our Web site."

"We congratulate Len on his new position and we look forward to working with him in the future on new collaborations and ventures."

Houston pointed to such accomplishments as a redesigned Web site that has become among the most useful in journalism, a redesigned and refocused *IRE Journal* that has won national magazine awards and attracted significant advertising, a crucial role in the planning and carrying out of 20 national conferences, editing and publishing 10 IRE Beat Books and collections, as well as many other efforts.

Bruzzese, who also co-authored the fourth edition of "The Investigative Reporter's Handbook," says he will maintain his membership in IRE and continue to help the organization whenever he can.

"I'm excited to be joining AHCJ during such a period of growth and interest in health care reporting," Bruzzese said. "I credit my time at IRE with preparing me to take on this important role and will miss all the good people who have worked so hard to make IRE a success."

GIS and traffic data ruled public information

IRE participated in two recent court cases to ensure the public's right to data.

The Connecticut Supreme Court upheld a trial court ruling that allows the public access to geographic information system data from Greenwich, Conn. In another case, the New York Court of Appeals ruled the state's Department of Transportation must release its list of most dangerous intersections to *Newsday*.

IRE, represented pro bono by its regular outside freedom-of-information counsel, David B. Smallman, Esq., of DLA Piper Rudnick, filed amicus briefs in both cases supporting access to the information at issue.

For more information about both cases, visit www.ire.org/history/pr.

Four IRE members named as Knight Fellows

Four IRE members have been awarded John S. Knight Fellowships at Stanford University for 2005-06.

Jo-Ann Armao, assistant managing editor/metropolitan news at *The Washington Post*, will study race and immigration in America.

Karen de Sá, a staff writer at the *San Jose Mercury News*, will study juvenile justice and the criminalization of youth.

Pam Maples, assistant managing editor/projects and investigations at *The Dallas Morning News*, will look at the fragmentation of news media and the implications for its watchdog role.

Mike Swift, a staff writer at *The Hartford Courant*, will study how manhood is shaped by culture and the cost to men.

Peabody Awards honor IRE broadcast members

Six IRE members won Peabody awards this year. **Dana Roberson** of CBS News won for the 60 Minutes II report, "Abuse at Abu Ghraib." **Bob Segall** of WITI-Milwaukee worked on "The Bully Project," a series of stories about school bullies that led to a public program aimed at curbing the problem. **John Sherman** of WBAL-Baltimore won for his ongoing "Chesapeake Bay Pollution Investigation," which examines how a town's development is impacting its environment. **Mark Smith** of WFAA-Dallas was associate producer on "State of Denial," an investigation of workers compensation practices. **Bryan Staples** and **Phil Williams** of WTVF-Nashville won for "Friends in High Places," about state contracts awarded to officials' friends.

From the IRE offices

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

of us who have long wished for the true value of journalism to be recognized again.

"We have to increase the knowledge level of our staffers and continue to raise the standards of our work. We have to make sure that the relationship between editors and publishers is a true partnership where there is power on both sides," he said. "Perhaps someday as an industry, we can return to a culture across the landscape where making tons of money is not nearly as rewarding as making a pound of difference."

For more on the workshop and links to other articles on it, please go to the Poynter site (www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=34&aid=82985).

MEMBER NEWS

Kitty Bennett has retired after nearly 21 years at the *St. Petersburg* (Florida) *Times*. She was a news researcher with the paper for 15 years. ■ **Matthew Brady** has left his position as assistant city editor at *The Oklahoman* to work as city editor at *The* (Twin Falls, Idaho) *Times-News*. ■ **Mark Braykovich,** business editor, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, has been elected to the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Board of Governors. Incumbent **George Haj,** assistant managing editor for business, *Houston Chronicle*, won re-election to the board**.** They join current members **Diana Henriques,** financial reporter, *The New York Times*; **James T. Madore**, media writer, *Newsday*, and **Joshua Mills**, professor of journalism, Baruch College/CUNYS.■ **Christopher Carey**, a business reporter at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, has been named a Knight-Wallace fellow for 2005-06. He will study the "Permanent Criminal Subculture in the U.S. Securities Industry." ■ **Nate Carlisle** is a social justice reporter at *The Salt Lake Tribune*. He was previously a higher education reporter at the *Columbia* (Missouri) *Daily Tribune*.■ **Carey Codd**, former reporter at WPEC-West Palm Beach, joins the reporting team at WFOR-Miami.■ **Dani Dodge** has left her position as investigative/enterprise reporter at the *Ventura County Star* to work as a general assignment reporter at *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. ■ **Jaimi Dowdell** is assistant director of news research/CAR specialist at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. She previously worked for IRE and NICAR, most recently as director of IRE and NICAR's FOI Center. ■ **Katherine Eban's** book, "Dangerous Doses: How Counterfeiters are Contaminating America's Drug Supply," was published by Harcourt Inc. in May. Eban previously wrote under the byline Katherine E. Finkelstein at *The New York Times*.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 ➢

Send Member News items to Pia Christensen at pia@ire.org and include a phone number for verification.

Denver conference features candid, emotional Dan Rather

BY *THE IRE JOURNAL*

More than 850 journalists gathered in Denver in June for the 2005 IRE Conference to hear from keynote speaker Dan Rather, learn the latest beat strategies, attend special sessions on authenticity and get hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting techniques.

"In the end, we really are trying to achieve the greater goal of the best possible investigative and public service journalism," said Brant Houston, IRE's executive director. "And the way to do it is, whenever possible, share ideas and techniques."

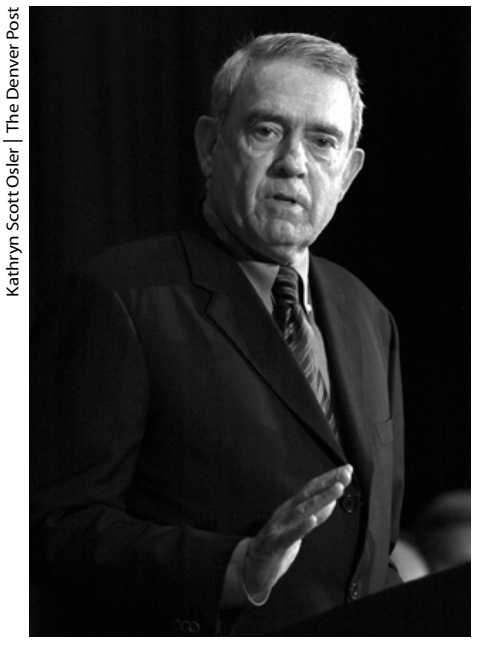
Journalists came from around the United States and 14 other countries.

They came because they wanted to learn how to be better at tracking down important stories, some conference attendees said.

"You can go up and buttonhole a Pulitzer Prize-winner in a hallway, and he's willing to tell you what he did (to get a story)," said Paul Overberg, an editor who specializes in database reporting for *USA Today*. "That's one of the great things about IRE."

L. Kelly, an editor who overseas police and court coverage for the *Wichita Eagle*, said the conference is an important opportunity to learn about emerging "best practices" in journalism.

"This is an industry that's undergoing an awful lot of change," she said.



Kathryn Scott Osler | The Denver Post

As keynote speaker at the IRE Awards luncheon, CBS News' Dan Rather urged journalists to take their role as the watchdogs of government seriously.

The conference offers an opportunity to learn about new technologies and how top journalists do their work, she said.

At the Capitol on the first day of the conference, Gov. Bill Owens was aware that legions of muckrakers were descending on Denver, spokesman Dan Hopkins said. "I don't think we've had to increase security," he said.

Awards presented at IRE's annual awards luncheon included three medals, 12 certificates and two special citations. [See the May-June 2005 *IRE Journal* or the IRE Web site for award winners and finalists.] The group also presented an IRE Board of Directors Award to deputy director Len Bruzzese, who is leaving to become executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists.

Rather accepts criticism

Dan Rather of CBS News offered the keynote speech at the luncheon. Mistakes were made, he and people he works with at CBS News made them, and now his hunt for the next story goes on, Rather said.

At times choking up, Rather answered pointed questions about his critical 60 Minutes II report on the National Guard service of President Bush last fall that CBS has since acknowledged was based on unverified documents.

Rather acknowledged that he improperly defended the story after questions arose about the authenticity of its underlying documents — a finding of the independent panel that later investigated the story for CBS.

"I accept the panel's criticism that I shouldn't have done that," he said.

Asked what he learned from the scandal over that report, he said he learned that the American people are "fair-minded."

"That's the biggest lesson I've learned," he said. "You can trust the audience."

In prepared remarks, Rather took on the role of journalistic evangelist, urging his colleagues to take seriously their role as the watchdogs of government.

Though he has retired as anchor of CBS Evening News, Rather still appears on the network's 60 Minutes.

Asked who he would most like to interview, living or dead, Rather said his dream interview would be with a figure who is very much alive and very much still in the news.

"If you could arrange me to interview the present leader of North Korea, I'd be on a plane before this session's over," he said.

In his long career, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were the most significant event, he said.

And his greatest surprise as a journalist came when President Johnson announced in 1968 that he would not seek a second term in office.

"I wouldn't have been more surprised if Fidel

Conference Sponsors

IRE would like to thank the organizations contributing to the conference and the programs related to the conference:

Host: *The Denver Post*

Primary Sponsors:
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- International Center for Journalists
- Poynter Institute for Media Studies
- U.S. News & World Report

Craig F.Walker | The Denver Post

More than 250 people gathered to hear Seymour Hersh, on a panel with Miles Moffeit of *The Denver Post*, talk about "Exposing the secrets of the military and the war on terrorism."

Castro had come riding through on a giraffe," he said.

As Rather left the room, some reporters said they were impressed by his candor.

"We all make mistakes," said Daniel Zwerdling, a National Public Radio senior correspondent, who had just received an IRE award for his reporting on the abuses of immigrants at two New Jersey jails.

"Every journalist in this room, including me, makes mistakes. The question is, do we acknowledge them and learn from them? He has."

Board elections

IRE board elections also took place at the conference. Six of 13 seats were open this year and all went to incumbents.

Returning to the board were David Boardman, *The Seattle Times*; James Grimaldi, *The Washington Post*; Cheryl Phillips, *The Seattle Times*; Duane Pohlman, WEWS-Cleveland; Deborah Sherman, KUSA-Denver; and Nancy Stancill, *The Charlotte Observer*.

Other members of the board are Shawn McIntosh, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; Paul Adrian, KDFW-Dallas/Fort Worth; Stephen K. Doig, Arizona State University; Andy Hall, *Wisconsin State Journal*; Dianna Hunt, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*; Stephen C. Miller, *The New York Times*; and Mark Katches, *The Orange County Register*.

The board elected Boardman as president, Pohlman as vice president, Phillips as treasurer and Miller as secretary. Adrian joined the four as a member of the executive committee, which is composed of the officers and one other board member.

The membership also elected Nancy Amons of WSMV-Nashville and Duff Wilson of *The New York Times* as judges for the IRE Awards. They will join several board members and a Missouri School of Journalism faculty member on the contest committee.

Jim Hughes of The Denver Post contributed to this report.

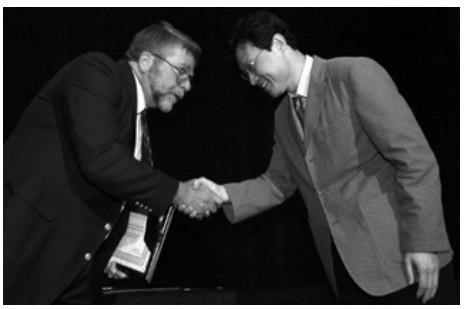
Tipsheets and tapes

Panelist tipsheets and audio tapes and CDs of the conference sessions are available through a link off the conference Web site (www.ire.org/training/denver05).

Kathryn Scott Osler | The Denver Post

Duane Pohlman, vice president of IRE's Board of Directors, presented an IRE Award to Kevin Flowers and Peter Panepento of the *Erie,* Pa., *Times-News*.

Kathryn Scott Osler | The Denver Post



Stephen Doig presents a Special Citation to Kyu-Youn Lee, investigative editor of JoonAng Ilbo of Seoul.

IRE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS!

Vision continues to be upheld through members, board, staff

By Steve Weinberg
The IRE Journal

A dozen people met some 30 years ago and discussed their vision for investigative reporting. Would others be interested in improving investigative efforts? How would the organization be organized and sustained? Would there be enough money to even get it off the ground? How would training be provided?

Today, that vision has evolved into IRE, a nonprofit association for reporters and editors worldwide.

IRE wasn't born overnight: It took countless volunteer hours; numerous appeals for funding; committed board members; and a dedicated staff to make it an international presence in investigative journalism.

IRE's history is rich and unique. Many developments have taken place over the last three decades, but its vision to improve investigative journalism has not changed. The following is a timeline that mentions some of the people who have played such important roles in making the organization what it is today.

February 1975: Journalists meet in Reston, Va., to discuss whether an organization to improve investigative journalism is feasible. In attendance: Myrta Pulliam and Harley Bierce, *The Indianapolis Star*; Paul Williams, former investigative editor and Ohio State University professor; David Burnham, *The New York Times*; Leonard Downie Jr., *The Washington Post*; Frank Anderson, *Long Beach Independent*; Robert Peirce, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*; Jack Anderson, syndicated columnist, and his associate Les Whitten; Jack Landau, Washington, D.C. bureau of Newhouse newspapers; John Colburn, news executive from Landmark Communications, Norfolk, Va.; Robert Friedly, Disciples of Christ Christian Church, Indianapolis; and Edward DeLaney, an Indianapolis lawyer.

The philanthropic arm of the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company, based in Indianapolis, donates a $3,100 planning grant. Advisers from the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the American Press Institute looked on. Ron Koziol from the *Chicago Tribune* newsroom had participated in the planning, but could not attend the meeting.

June 1976: On June 2, *Arizona Republic* reporter Don Bolles is seriously injured by a car bomb in connection with an investigation. He dies 11 days later on June 13. **…** The first Investigative Reporters and Editors national conference is held in Indianapolis. About 250 journalists from 35 states attend. In the wake of Bolles' murder, IRE begins to organize the Arizona Project, intended to show those who harm journalists that the investigation will continue. Bob Greene, a *Newsday* editor, moves to Arizona temporarily to direct the project. Reporters, editors and journalism students volunteer to work under Greene's direction.

Many of the Desert Rats gathered at IRE's Annual Conference in 1997 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Arizona Project.

October 1976: Paul Williams, Ohio State University journalism professor, dies. IRE's plan to establish its headquarters at OSU must be rethought.

March 1977: The Arizona Project team completes its reporting, writing, editing and legal review. The 23-part series about corruption in the state where Bolles died is offered at no cost to news organizations for publication in whole, or in part. Some people named in the series sue IRE for libel.

June 1977: IRE's second annual conference meets in Columbus, Ohio. The June national conference becomes a permanent part of IRE's services. The membership fee is $15 annually for professional journalists, half that for journalism students.

June 1978: The reach of IRE's national conferences increases as transcripts of specific sessions become available from the 1978 Denver gathering, as well as the 1976 and 1977 conferences. In addition, IRE contracts with a private company to produce audiotapes of almost every national conference session. IRE collects and catalogs "tip sheets" and other handouts from conference speakers.

July 1978: The Centre for Investigative Journalism, patterned in part after IRE, opens its headquarters at Carleton University, Ottawa.

August 1978: IRE finds a home at the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia. John Ullmann, a doctoral candidate at the school, becomes IRE's first executive director. A volunteer board of directors, elected from the general membership, devotes countless hours to making the organization strong while fulfilling its educational mission. Early directors come from *The Indianapolis Star*, *Newsday*, NBC News, (Minneapolis) *Star Tribune*, *Tulsa Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Herald-American*, *The* (Riverside) *Press-Enterprise*, *The Denver Post*, *The* (Eugene) *Register-Guard*, *Los Angeles Times*, Long Beach *Independent Press Telegram*, *The Kansas City Star*, *Lewiston Tribune*, and Washington and Lee University.

IRE appoints a volunteer coordinator for each of 13 regions to serve members better. Those coordinators come from print, broadcast and academic positions, mirroring the board of directors. Also devoting

countless hours to IRE are Missouri School of Journalism faculty who volunteer to help produce the magazine and perform other tasks, as well as students who either volunteer or receive modest payment from government work-study money, scholarships and research assistantships through the university.

September 1978: To supplement the national conferences, IRE organizes regional conferences, including its first Far West regional, held in Palm Springs. The regional conferences differ from the national conferences mainly in duration, often running two days instead of three or four.

October 1978: *The IRE Journal* appears as a full-fledged magazine, published bi-monthly. Stories include how to use the federal Freedom of Information Act, the risks of accepting stolen documents, digging out records on corporate conduct, and local angles worthy of investigative reports. **…** IRE establishes the Resource Center, a compilation of print and broadcast investigations to be studied for reporting and writing techniques, as a memorial to Paul Williams.

1979: IRE paid membership reaches 1,000.

February 1979: IRE holds its first conference designed primarily for college students in Columbia, Mo. These student conferences, meant to reach out to future professional journalists, are the brainchild of James Polk, an NBC News investigative reporter, who organizes them each year.

November 1979: Membership dues increase to $20 annually for professional journalists, $10 for journalism students.

January 1980: IRE holds its first conference designed for broadcast journalists, in Louisville. **…** IRE starts its publication program to supplement the *Journal* with a booklet, "Crime Statistics: How Not to Be Abused" by David Burnham of *The New York Times*.

June 1980: IRE presents its annual awards for the first time, recognizing investigations that were published or broadcast during 1979. The six categories yield more than 300 entries.

September 1980: An auction is held in Los Angeles to raise money for IRE's legal defense fund and a separate legal defense fund for IRE director Bill Farr of the *Los Angeles Times*. IRE potentially owes $45,000 to its insurer for deductibles to the Arizona Project lawsuits. Farr owes money related to a jail term 11 years earlier when he refused to divulge a confidential source related to the Charles Manson murder case.

The remains of Don Bolles' car after it was bombed.

February 1981: The only libel suit against IRE from the Arizona Project that goes to trial ends in a verdict favorable to IRE. A plaintiff award of $15,000 for alleged emotional distress was vacated.

August 1981: IRE's libel insurance carrier makes a generous decision about deductibles owed from the Arizona Project litigation. The decision places IRE on the track toward permanent solvency. **…** A survey of IRE members shows 72 percent are reporters, 60 percent work at newspapers, 79 percent are male, and 22 percent spend three-quarters or more of their time on investigative projects.

June 1983: IRE, in conjunction with St. Martin's Press, publishes "The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques." Edited by John Ullmann and Steve Honeyman, it has contributions from dozens of IRE members.

August 1983: Ullmann leaves his position as IRE executive director and is replaced by Steve Weinberg, who is also on the faculty at the Missouri School of Journalism, as all executive directors since have been.

September 1983: IRE names five volunteer regional coordinators, who are all professors of journalism.

January 1984: Accomplished investigative journalists visit IRE and speak to Missouri School of Journalism classes. Funding for the individual trips comes from IRE member Bob Greene of *Newsday*.

June 1984: A second professional journalist, Jan Colbert, joins the IRE staff as assistant director. Like the executive director, her commitments and her salary are divided between the journalism school and IRE.

July 1984: IRE publishes the first of its books based on entry forms from its annual awards competition, "The IRE Book: Summaries of Many Top Investigative Stories of 1983."

August 1985: Two months after the IRE national conference in Chicago, IRE offers a conference on a specialized topic, covering agriculture. It is done in conjunction with agriculture faculty and staff at the University of Missouri. IRE also sponsors a conference on investigating sports in Jacksonville, Fla.

September 1985: Newspaper project editors from around the nation gather in Minneapolis under IRE sponsorship. The conference is Ullmann's idea; he joined the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* as project editor after leaving the IRE staff.

January 1986: Membership dues increase to $25 annually.

April 1986: IRE increases its coverage about freedom of information issues at the federal and state level when the Missouri School of Journalism's Freedom of Information Center halts its publication program.

June 1988: IRE establishes an endowment fund to improve long-term financial stability. The initial goal is to raise $1.1 million.

December 1988: Dale Spencer, a Missouri School of Journalism professor and lawyer, dies at age 63. Spencer played a significant role in bringing IRE to the university, and wrote a column about journalists and the law for almost every issue of IRE's magazine.

January 1989: Scandinavian journalists form an organization patterned after IRE, based in Stockholm.

August 1989: IRE member Elliot Jaspin is hired by Missouri School of Journalism and opens the Missouri Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. The mission is to help journalists learn how to use database analysis to improve their investigations.

January 1990: IRE membership fee increases to $30 annually to help balance the budget of about

$270,000.

February 1990: Jeanne and Stan Abbott leave the Missouri School of Journalism faculty and their co-editorship of *The IRE Journal* for professional reasons. They served as volunteer *Journal* editors for six years, following the intensive volunteer effort of journalism school faculty member George Kennedy. IRE staff members Colbert and Weinberg become the co-editors, with continuing assistance from other IRE staff and members around the world.

March 1990: IRE and the Indiana University Journalism School collaborate on a computer-assisted reporting conference billed as "advanced investigative methods for journalists."

April 1990: IRE publishes a booklet, with supporting materials, about how to conceive, design and teach an investigative journalism course at the college level.

June 1990: Weinberg leaves as IRE executive director to spend more time with his family and to concentrate on writing books and magazine investigations. He continues as editor of the *Journal*. Interim executive directors Jan Colbert, Andy Scott and Tracy Barnett serve the organization until a multi-year search produces a permanent executive director. **…** The IRE board of directors adds a category to the annual awards competition: the Tom Renner award for crime reporting. Renner played a major role in the Arizona Project while on leave from *Newsday*. He later served on the IRE board, including a term as president. The board of directors commemorated his death by establishing the award.

August 1990: A revised edition of "The Reporter's Handbook," edited by Ullmann and Colbert, becomes available through St. Martin's Press. As with the 1983 edition, journalists from around the nation contribute chapters.

December 1990: A book known as "The Investigative Journalist's Morgue" is published by IRE and updated periodically. It provides summaries of thousands of print and broadcast projects available through IRE.

January 1991: *The IRE Journal* changes format from newsprint, tabloid size to regular, magazine size on higher quality paper. The frequency returns from four times a year to six times.

June 1991: Myrta Pulliam of *The Indianapolis Star* leaves the IRE board of directors. An IRE founder, she had served on the board since the first election. Pulliam remains active in IRE's fund-raising efforts.

April 1992: IRE officers and directors participate in the initial meeting of the newly formed Council of Presidents of National News Organizations.

June 1992: For the first time, an entire day is devoted to computer-assisted reporting at an IRE national conference. Held in Portland, Ore., hands-on sessions are part of the package. IRE becomes increasingly involved in publication of *Uplink*, a magazine with emphasis on computer-assisted reporting.

David Herzog, NICAR's academic adviser and an assistant professor with the Missouri School of Journalism, works with a Boot Camp attendee in May 2003.

January 1993: IRE joins with the National Press Club to offer a conference on conceiving, reporting and writing investigations from a Washington, D.C., perspective.

April 1993: Journalists with a special interest in Latin America form the Inter-American Institute for Investigative Journalism, with headquarters in Miami and patterned to some extent after IRE. Executive director Andy Scott and assistant director Tracy Barnett both have experience in reporting in Latin America and are fluent in Spanish.

June 1993: With funding from the Scripps Howard Foundation, IRE offers scholarships for minority student journalists to work at IRE. IRE offers grants for minority journalists to attend the annual national conference.

July 1993: A Freedom Forum grant of $221,000 allows IRE to offer computer-assisted reporting training in newsrooms in the United States. These supplement the CAR boot camps at the Missouri School of Journalism that are run by IRE.

September 1993: Scott leaves the IRE executive director position to teach at a Vermont college. The paid staff now includes a conference coordinator and bookkeeper, an executive director, assistant director and part-time students. Searches are under way for a computer-assisted reporting director at headquarters, a computer-assisted reporting trainer willing to travel, and a computer systems maintenance staff member.

October 1993: Led by board member Pat Stith of *The* (Raleigh) *News & Observer*, IRE holds its first Computer-Assisted Reporting Conference in Raleigh, N.C.

February 1994: The Missouri Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting is renamed the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting and administered by IRE. When MICAR founder Elliot Jaspin leaves in mid-1992, Brant Houston of *The Hartford Courant* is hired as NICAR managing director. Rosemary Armao of *The Virginian-Pilot* is named IRE's executive director. New Missouri School of Journalism faculty member Richard Mullins begins training students in CAR techniques.

March 1994: IRE annual dues increase to $40 for professionals, $25 for students. **…** Jennifer LaFleur from the *San Jose Mercury News* becomes first training director, taking the IRE and NICAR curriculum into U.S. and international newsrooms.

May 1994: A professional fund-raiser, Marcie Setlow, is retained by IRE for a year to raise money for the operations. Over the next few years, she helps

bring in grants of more than $1 million for computer-assisted reporting, campaign finance investigations, minority fellowships, and training in Latin America. Later, fund raising was moved in-house and done by IRE staff member Jennifer Erickson.

July 1994: IRE participates in the first joint convention of the Asian American Journalists Association, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists and Native American Journalists Association, known as UNITY '94. IRE and NICAR conducted panels on investigative reporting and hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting.

January 1995: IRE receives a grant of $125,000 from the Freedom Forum to establish a minority journalists training program as part of IRE's initiative to increase diversity in investigative journalism.

February 1995: IRE, the National Press Club and the Society of Professional Journalists hold a second annual conference on investigative journalism in Washington, D.C.

March 1995: Continuing to build its international presence in multiple ways, IRE sends speakers to a Bulgarian university in conjunction with the Missouri School of Journalism.

May 1995: IRE publishes its budget in the *Journal*, so it can be easily accessed by members. Later, all financial documents are placed online.

August 1995: IRE and NICAR form listservs allowing journalists to communicate effectively online.

October 1995: LaFleur leaves IRE and returns to the *San Jose Mercury News*.

January 1996: IRE sponsors a workshop on covering electoral campaigns, with an emphasis on fund raising and spending of incumbents and challengers. Neil Reisner of *The* (Bergen, N.J.) *Record* becomes training director.

February 1996: Weinberg authors the third edition of "The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques." It is published by St. Martin's Press and copyrighted by IRE.

March 1996: IRE receives proposals from five universities to provide an IRE headquarters. The IRE board of directors considers offers from the University of Maryland, Columbia University, Northwestern University and American University.

June 1996: After months of debate, the IRE board of directors votes 7-4 to stay at Missouri rather than go to the University of Maryland. **…** Elected members on the IRE board of directors increase from 11 to 13.

July 1996: With a three-year grant of $540,000 from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation providing the bulk of the funding, IRE begins operating IRE Mexico and training quickly broadens to operate a similar organization in Central and South America, with a Mexico City headquarters. Periodistas de Investigación will be directed at first by Lise Olsen, a bilingual computer-assisted reporting specialist. Mexico City journalist Pedro Enrique Armendares soon joins the staff.

Sarah Wright, a former researcher for IRE, sorts and organizes entries for the IRE Awards in January 2001.

December 1996: Rosemary Armao leaves IRE to be an editor at *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*.

January 1997: Reisner leaves for a job at *The Miami Herald*. Sarah Cohen, recently of the *St. Petersburg Times*, becomes training director.

March 1997: Brant Houston becomes IRE executive director, in addition to running NICAR.

April 1997: IRE and NICAR create the Campaign Finance Information Center with a $342,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation.

May 1997: With so much expansion, IRE operates with a budget of approximately $1 million. The value of an IRE membership continues to soar as membership revenue accounts for only 12 percent of income, while IRE and NICAR conferences account for about 25 percent; NICAR training about 30 percent. Resource Center requests and publications about 5 percent; and outside money, including foundation grants, constitutes much of the remaining 28 percent.

July 1997: A book, "Investigative Environmental Reporting" by Mary Landers is billed as the beginning of the IRE Reporting Tips Series. It is published and marketed jointly with the Society of Environmental Journalists.


The Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, drew nearly 300 journalists from around the world in May 2003.

October 1997: The Campaign Finance Information Center, a training organization in campaign finance, expands its offerings online, including the publication of a quarterly newsletter called *Tracker*.

November 1997: IRE and its Mexican project, Periodistas de Investigación, organize the first "border gathering" aimed primarily at journalists in the El Paso and Juárez area. In addition, IRE's international training is increasing as staff members, board members and IRE members teach in other countries, including Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands.

May 1998: Newspaper editor Len Bruzzese joins IRE as deputy director and immediately sets to work revamping the Web site. He soon also becomes editor of *The IRE Journal*.

June 1998: The Open Society Institute awards IRE $173,000 to conduct conferences on investigative reporting for small- and medium-sized news organizations. The grant includes funding for a follow-up study to examine the effectiveness of the training. The conferences receive high marks.

July 1998: David B. Smallman, a New York City lawyer who handles freedom of information and other legal matters for IRE and NICAR pro bono, agrees to write regularly for *The IRE Journal*, and ask other lawyers to contribute columns as well. Edward DeLaney also continues as IRE's lawyer and as secretary of the board of directors.

December 1998: Broadcast journalists Mark Lagerkvist and Stuart Watson volunteer to collate and produce a videotape of investigative reporting for use by IRE members.

February 1999: A new version of the IRE Web site makes its debut, offering more extensive resources to journalists.

March 1999: IRE receives $250,000 from the Florence and John Schumann Foundation to support the Resource Center, the Web site and other operations.

April 1999: IRE and the Pew Center on Civic Journalism collaborate on a workshop showing some of the overlap – particularly in social research methods and computer-assisted reporting – between investigative journalism and civic journalism.

May 1999: IRE and NICAR hold the first CAR boot camp aimed exclusively at newsroom managers – editors and news directors – in Columbia, Mo. **…** IRE and NICAR work with the University of North Carolina Journalism School to present an advanced statistics seminar for CAR-trained reporters and editors.

July 1999: IRE participates in the Unity Conference. Sponsored by four minority journalism groups, IRE directs four workshops on doing the best possible reporting and editing. **…** The Joyce Foundation donates $200,000 to IRE to support the Campaign Finance Information Center.

January 2000: Membership tops 4,000 journalists. Dues increase to $50 annually. **…** A redesigned *IRE Journal,* more than twice the size, debuts in a slicker magazine format. It also begins accepting limited advertising focused on services and resources of interest to journalists. Anita Bruzzese, a book author and syndicated columnist, soon joins as freelance managing editor.

April 2000: IRE and NICAR conduct the first of three workshops during the year on obtaining and using U.S. Census data. They are held in Tempe, Ariz.; Columbia, Mo.; and College Park, Md.

May 2000: The first of IRE's seven beat books, "Covering Aviation Safety: An Investigator's Guide," is published. It is written by Marie Tessier. The beat books, originally suggested by Jo Craven McGinty, are coordinated and edited by Len Bruzzese.

June 2000: At the national conference in New York City, IRE honors key people as part of its 25th anniversary: Myrta Pulliam, Bob Greene, Jim Polk, Ed DeLaney, Jan Colbert, John Ullmann and Steve Weinberg. **…** Through the efforts of Pulliam and DeLaney, IRE receives $500,000 from the Jane Pulliam Trust to support the Resource Center director and the director's related activities. This gift allows IRE to embark on a major endowment drive. IRE forms an advisory board of 16 well-known journalists to develop and guide plans for the endowment drive.

October 2000: The second IRE beat book, "Home Mortgage Lending: How to Detect Disparities," is published. The author is Jo Craven McGinty.

November 2000: IRE teams with the Education Writers Association on a workshop about thinking like an investigative reporter while covering the beat.

December 2000: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation contributes $250,000 to IRE for general operating support.

February 2001: The third IRE beat book is published: "Understanding Crime Statistics." The author is Kurt Silver. **…** The Carnegie Corporation of New York provides $250,000 for IRE's Campaign Finance Information Center for training and Web resources.

April 2001: IRE and DICAR, a Danish journalism organization, collaborate on the first four-day Global Investigative Journalism Conference. More than 300 journalists from 40 countries participate in the conference in Copenhagen. The conference was the idea of Houston at IRE and Nils Mulvad of DICAR.

May 2001: The fourth IRE beat book, "Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News," is published. The author is Sarah Cohen. **…** The Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation pledges $100,000 to IRE's endowment drive, to be paid over five years.

June 2001: The Gannett Foundation gives $25,000 to IRE's endowment fund. Tom McGinty, who joined IRE in 1999 as training director, leaves for a job at *Newsday*. Ron Nixon, who has been the campaign finance director since November 2000, becomes training director. **…** Jeff Porter, a journalist at the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, joins IRE and NICAR as the first full-time database library director.

September 2001: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation awards IRE $2 million with $500,000 for operations over a four-year period – $500,000 for the endowment and the second million dollars to be given out on a partial matching arrangement. **…** IRE reschedules a CAR conference for Philadelphia in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.

April 2002: IRE and The Society of Professional Journalists begin a three-year collaboration on one-day "Better Watchdog Workshops" with an initial grant of $100,000 from the SDX (Sigma Delta Chi) Foundation. IRE provides the administration and investigative training for the popular workshops while SPJ contributes training on open records. The number of workshops quickly grows to more than a dozen a year and continues with grants from other foundations and newsrooms.

March 2002: IRE publishes a new summary of annual contest entries, called "The IRE Collection: Winning Investigations."

June 2002: After a board retreat, the IRE board of directors streamlines its committee structure, reducing the number from 11 to six while also redistributing responsibilities.

September 2002: The Gannett Foundation donates a second $25,000 to IRE's endowment fund.

December 2002: The fourth edition of IRE's most popular book becomes available. Re-titled "The Investigative Reporter's Handbook: A Guide to Documents, Databases and Techniques," it is copyrighted by IRE and published by Bedford/St. Martin's. As an updated version of the 1996 edition, Houston, Bruzzese and Weinberg serve as co-authors/co-editors. It is designed to be a companion to Houston's "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide," also published by Bedford/St. Martin's.

January 2003: The IRE and NICAR Database Library continues to expand its collection of government databases, which now reaches about 40. Recent additions include the National Practitioner Databank about transgressions by physicians and other health care professionals; the AIDS Public Information Dataset from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the Adverse Event Reporting System from the Food and Drug Administration.

February 2003: IRE debuts daily Extra! Extra! feature on its Web site to recognize the latest investigative and computer-assisted work. The feature, originally written by IRE member and volunteer Derek Willis and coordinated by IRE Publications Coordinator Pia Christensen, quickly becomes one of the most popular sections of the IRE Web site.

May 2003: The second Global Investigative Journalism Conference is held in Copenhagen. Representatives from nearly 40 journalism organizations agree to create an international network of investigative journalists that will share techniques, tips and resources and help plan future conferences.

August 2003: Nixon leaves for work at the (Minneapolis) *Star Tribune*.

September 2003: The fifth IRE beat book is "Unstacking the Deck: A Reporter's Guide to Campaign Finance." The authors are Aron Pilhofer and Derek Willis.

October 2003: IRE and the Canadian Association of Journalists collaborate on a conference exploring how to investigate issues of relevance on both sides of the border.

November 2003: The Nicholas B. Ottaway Foundation donates $20,000 to IRE to help minority journalists attend computer-assisted reporting boot camps in Columbia, Mo.

January 2004: Membership in IRE continues to range between 4,500 and 5000. David Donald from the *Savannah Morning News* begins as training director.

April 2004: IRE publishes "Interviewing the Interviewers," an expanded version of a series from *The IRE Journal*.

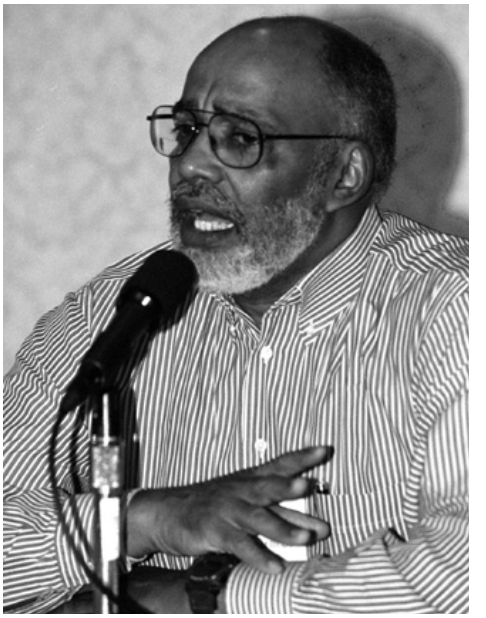
July 2004: The Nicholas B. Ottaway Foundation renews its support of minority fellowships to IRE and NICAR's CAR boot camps at the $20,000 level.

October 2004: The sixth IRE beat book, "Covering Pollution: An Investigative Reporter's Guide," is published with extensive help from the Society of Environmental Journals. Lead author is Lori Luechtefeld.

December 2004: IRE and the Society of Environmental Journalists co-publish the beat book, "Covering Pollution: An Investigative Reporter's Guide."

February 2005: The Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation grants $30,000 to IRE in support of the Better Watchdog Workshop series. This is the foundation's second grant to IRE in support of these workshops – the first was $20,000 in 2004. **…** The seventh IRE beat book, "Mapping for Stories: A Computer-Assisted Reporting Guide," is published. The authors are Jennifer LaFleur and Andy Lehren.

May 2005: The Gannett Foundation pledges $100,000 to IRE's endowment fund in support of computer-assisted and investigative reporting training sessions, to be paid over four years.



Leon Dash, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, spoke about "Great writing: Getting people to take off the public mask" at the 2003 IRE Conference in Washington, D.C.

June 2005: Nearly 900 journalists attend IRE's Annual Conference in Denver. Over the past year, IRE has conducted or played a significant role in 75 conferences and seminars; collaborated with more than a dozen other news organizations; provided resources to more than 280 news organizations; provided data to more than 170 news organizations; and launched a new part of the Web site, IRE Español, that is aimed at providing resources to Spanish-speaking journalists in the United States, the Americas and throughout the world.

Commenting on IRE's 30th anniversary, Executive Director Brant Houston says IRE "does the most on-the-road training of any journalism organization, reaching out to members and newsrooms whose budgets leave little money for training or travel.

"IRE also collaborates with dozens of other journalism groups, hosting Web sites and listservs and creating new and relevant seminars," Houston says. "In addition, IRE takes strong stands on issues of protecting sources, secrecy and freedom of information, while picking our spots carefully since we are an educational organization, not a lobbying organization."

Houston also notes IRE "has managed to do all this in its 30 years with limited resources, a small staff, a dedicated board of directors and the overwhelming generosity of our members – members who consistently and happily volunteer to organize seminars, teach, write articles and beat books, and most of all help the organization and each other at every turn."

This timeline will be posted on the IRE Web site (www.ire.org), and additions will be made over time. See next issue for a history of the IRE board and conferences.

Investigative journalism on radio: Brilliant sparks promising

By Amanda Buck
The IRE Journal

I caught Stephen Smith, managing editor of Minnesota-based American RadioWorks, one afternoon on his cell phone. He was on the road but had agreed to carve out time for my call. Smith has reported and produced award-winning investigative documentaries all over the world; he's a busy man. I wanted to get right to the point.

"I'm working on a story about investigative journalism on the radio," I told him.

Smith didn't miss a beat.

"Must be a short story," he said.

Smith was joking, but like most jokes, this one was funny because of the truth it carried. As anyone familiar with radio knows, when it comes to investigative reporting, American airwaves aren't exactly a hotbed.

Even at IRE, where diligent screeners annually comb through award nominations in search of the year's best investigative work, it is not unusual for a year to pass without a certificate winner in radio. In 25 years of awards ceremonies, IRE has given only one medal to the medium, and that was a decade ago.

So what gives? Is "investigative radio" an oxymoron? A look at IRE's membership suggests not – dozens of radio reporters are among its ranks. It begs the question: What is the state of investigative journalism on the radio? Who's doing investigative work out there, and what pressures might prevent them from doing more of it?

Think investigatively

"Journalism is very healthy in radio right now, ironically, because the abandonment of news by commercial radio has really allowed the field to open for NPR and public radio," says John Dinges, associate professor of journalism at Columbia University. "They've stepped into it and created a gigantic journalistic presence that didn't even exist 25, 30 years ago."

Dinges, author of several books and an NPR alum himself, says he is impressed with some of the investigative work he hears on NPR, particularly pieces by veteran reporters such as Daniel Zwerdling and Nina Totenberg. Dinges is not alone; NPR's investigations routinely rack up awards, IRE and otherwise.

What's more, many observers interpreted last year's appointment of Bill Marimow, former editor of *The* (Baltimore) *Sun* and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter, to managing editor for national news as a sign that NPR had committed itself to investigative work. Already, Marimow's efforts have paid off. Just this June, IRE honored Zwerdling, producer Anne Hawke, editor Ellen Weiss and Marimow with an IRE certificate for a piece on abuse of immigrant detainees.

But has it been enough? Dinges calls himself "among (NPR's) biggest cheerleaders" but echoes other critics who say the network too often follows the news when it should lead it.

Michael Montgomery | American RadioWorks

Stephen Smith, managing editor of American RadioWorks, tapes stories for "Burning the Evidence."

"NPR very, very seldom breaks stories, and they're just not known for kick-ass investigative reporting," Dinges says. "In an era when the domestic and international situation cries out for that, I think as a news organization, that's where you have to be."

Marimow agrees. Context, analysis and perspective on news have long been NPR's strengths, he says. He wants to build upon that by bringing more breaking news and in-depth, investigative reporting to the network's arsenal.

Even so, listeners should not expect change overnight. "I've always believed that an organization that's growing and developing should do so by evolution rather than revolution," Marimow says. "It should happen months in and months out."

Since he joined NPR in March 2004, Marimow says he has started several new beats and encouraged reporters in all areas to look at their work through an investigative lens.

Zwerdling says Marimow's efforts are making a difference.

"He's created a whole new climate here," says Zwerdling, who has been at NPR a quarter century. He says support for in-depth, investigative reporting at NPR has waxed and waned over the years, but he called the period since Marimow arrived "perhaps the best cycle ever."

Rather than developing an elite investigative team, Marimow encourages all reporters to think investigatively. Zwerdling says that since his colleagues witnessed Marimow's support for the piece on immigrant abuse, they have begun to think about projects of their own.

"Several people have come up to me informally to say they've been emboldened, partly by the support they see him giving me," he says. "They're doing more investigative stuff than they've ever done before, or than they've done in a long time."

The challenge, Zwerdling says, lies in harnessing the time and resources required to do investigative work. Marimow agrees but says NPR is moving in the right direction.

"My feeling is that we've made significant progress," he says, "and that there's still a long way to go between where we are and where we hope to be."

For his part, Dinges notes that NPR is just coming into its own as a major news organization with the staff and resources to make investigative stories happen.

"I see the potential for investigative work to be very high in public radio," Dinges says. "They're economical, they've got a good sense of investment. Whether they'll make the decision to put the money in and do smart pieces, that is yet to be seen. But they're capable of doing it."

Expensive programming

Like Zwerdling, Stephen Smith has been in public radio for more than two decades. In 1999, he and Bill Buzenberg, along with Chris Farrell, founded American RadioWorks, which bills itself as public

radio's largest documentary production unit. After NPR, American Public Media (of which American RadioWorks is part) is the second-largest producer of national radio programming, Smith says.

Although some suggest that radio isn't well suited to in-depth, detail-laden pieces, Smith, who shared an IRE certificate with Michael Montgomery for a 2001 documentary on war crimes in Kosovo, does not agree.

"People sometimes have a misconception that investigative reporting is all documents and charts, but behind all of the stories … there are characters and there are narratives," he says. "That's the soul of all great reporting, and it's certainly the core of great radio reporting."

Smith says economics and the expense of long-term, in-depth pieces keep the radio documentary field small. He also cites expense as the main reason radio stations do not offer more investigative pieces. Buzenberg agrees.

> "Investigative reporting is public service journalism in a very significant way, and that's what we should be doing more of."

"It's a resource question, absolutely," says Buzenberg, who was vice president for news at NPR before becoming senior vice president for news at Minnesota Public Radio, where American RadioWorks is based. "Depth is in direct relation to the time you spend, the money, the staff. … This is the most expensive programming on public radio."

Buzenberg says Minnesota Public Radio has been willing to make that investment. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, as well as several other foundations, also fund American RadioWorks.

Smith and Buzenberg say they hope to continue expanding American RadioWorks' coverage. They point to plans to partner with other organizations, such as the BBC and the Center for Investigative Reporting, as a means to that end.

Already, American RadioWorks has worked with Frontline, print reporters and others to produce investigative pieces. One collaboration, titled "No Place to Hide," examined government use of surveillance technology in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001. *The Washington Post*'s Robert O'Harrow Jr. and American RadioWorks' John Biewen produced the documentary.

In addition, correspondents contribute investigative work to "Marketplace," "The World," "All Things Considered" and other programs, Smith and Buzenberg say. Nevertheless, both men say radio needs more investigative reporting.

"That is and should be at the heart of public radio's mission," Smith says. "Investigative reporting is public service journalism in a very significant way, and that's what we should be doing more of."

Investigative core

Since he joined WNYC in New York four years ago, John Keefe has worked to make investigative journalism a priority on WNYC's FM and AM stations. A former print reporter, Keefe says he sees investigative journalism as a way for WNYC to distinguish itself in a media-intense market.

"When I came here, I decided that this is something that we can do, and that it would be very productive for us," says Keefe, now executive producer. "Our audience is the city of New York, the same people who read *The New York Times* and the *Daily News*. Investigative journalism is how we can make our mark."

With a staff of six full-time reporters, Keefe doesn't have the resources to create an investigations-only unit. Instead, he encourages his reporters to look for investigative pieces as they cover daily assignments.

"All of our reporters have been trained in investigative reporting," Keefe says. "Some focus on CAR, some on courts and other documents, some on good source-building and shoe-leather journalism. Everybody knows that it's part of their job, to develop their investigative skills."

While reporters keep their eyes open for investigative ideas, Keefe works on building an "investigative core" of research, legal support, CAR resources and the like. He says the approach has worked well so far.

Andrea Bernstein, a reporter with WNYC since 1998, says Keefe's support makes it possible for reporters to balance the demands of a 24-hour news

Stories from the IRE RESOURCE CENTER

These investigative stories by radio journalists are available from the Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

From American RadioWorks

- **No. 18662**, "Burning the Evidence," by Michael Montgomery, Stephen Smith, Bill Buzenberg, Deborah George and Adriatik Kelmendi. Minnesota Pubic Radio investigated the incineration of the remains of thousands of ethnic Albanians by Serbian forces under the command of Slobodan Milosevic during the 1999 war in Kosovo. The secret operation was part of a highly organized effort by Serbia's leadership to conceal evidence of possible war crimes from international investigators. Documentation showed that the operation was carried out by an elite unit of the Serbian security service. (2001)
- **No. 17329**, "Massacre at Cuska" by Stephen Smith, Michael Montgomery, Deborah George, Stephanie Curtis and Bill Buzenberg. This story documents the direct connections between Serbian security forces committing atrocities in the field and the regime of Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milosevic. Serbian fighters and surviving Albanian villagers offered their observations in this documentary. (2000)

From NPR

- **No. 21790**, "Abuses of Immigrant Detainees," by Daniel Zwerdling, Anne Hawke, Ellen Weiss and Bill Marimow. The story explored the plight of immigrants detained in two New Jersey jails during a two-year period in 2002-04. An investigation into U.S. prison abuse abroad led to information on similar prison abuse in the U.S. Five former inmates of the Passaic County jail were interviewed, and all detailed the same types of treatment at the hands of the guards, including physical abuse and being threatened with attack dogs. (2004)

From WNYC

- **No.20702**, "Handshake Hotels" By Andrea Bernstein and Amy Eddings. In the course of a seven-month investigation, Bernstein and Eddings broke the news that New York was spending more than $180 million a year housing the homeless in emergency hotel rooms and temporary apartments – without formal contracts. They concluded that for 20 years, the city had failed its homeless, its communities and its taxpayers by providing emergency housing through "handshake" deals. (2003)
- **No. 21966**, "Politics and Punishment on Rikers Island" by Andrea Bernstein, Karen Frillman and John Keefe. An investigation revealed that New York City Correction Department employees were forced to work on Republican political campaigns. In the 1990s, corrections officials supporting Republicans were awarded with promotions and better assignments while employees working for Democrats were given dangerous jobs or forced to retire. (2004)

clock with the desire to do more in-depth pieces.

In 2003, Bernstein and Amy Eddings received an IRE certificate and numerous other awards for "Handshake Hotels," an investigation into homeless housing in New York City. Last year, Bernstein completed another heralded piece on political campaigning at Rikers Island penitentiary. The results of both stories were tangible, either in the form of policy changes or indictments.

Audience response has been heartening as well. Bernstein says listeners often react to radio stories as if they've taken part in half of a conversation, even remembering exact words.

"It's not the ordinary thing that people are used to hearing on the radio, so when there's a really in-depth, hard-hitting piece, people notice it," she says. "They write, they call, they come up to you on the streets."

"As a public radio station, we have a direct measure of our success," Keefe says. "Either people send in money or they don't."

Keefe says some listeners have included notes with their pledges expressing thanks or praise for investigative and explanatory pieces. He credits the station's growing audience to the shift since 9/11 in daytime programming away from music toward news. The numbers back him up: According to the station's publicity department, WNYC's combined FM/AM weekly audience is 1.1 million, a 30 percent increase over the past several years.

"We certainly see the results and we hear it in the community too, either from colleagues or just in the communities where we live," Keefe says. "It's pretty exciting."

Larger trend

Eric Leonard hears from his listeners as well. Like Bernstein, Leonard is a radio reporter. However, unlike Bernstein and just about everybody else doing investigative work on the radio, Leonard works for a commercial station: KFI-AM in Los Angeles. Owned by the conglomerate Clear Channel, KFI is known for its popular talk radio programs.

Leonard, who joined the station in 1996, has done in-depth pieces as part of "KFI Investigates" since 2003. He says KFI's listeners are interested in stories that go "beyond the press conference."

"We have a listenership that is extremely politically active," Leonard says. "They're very interested in what their local government is doing to them and for them."

Leonard says KFI's newsroom is separated from its talk show hosts and their political views, which tend to be conservative.

"Regardless of what brings listeners to the radio station, our news reporting is completely divorced from whatever angle or opinion may be driving a talk show on a particular day," he says. "We don't answer to anybody but the news director."

Leonard says it's "worth mentioning" that reporters understand that KFI's talk shows bring more of one politically minded listener than another.

"Just like a magazine might cater to a particular kind of reader, we try and do stories that will be interesting to our listeners," he says. "But that doesn't mean we'll ignore stories for the opposite reason."

Leonard's investigative pieces include a probe into campaigning at the Los Angeles County sheriff's office and an examination of problems with electronic voting equipment. Because he covers law enforcement and courts, his stories tend to come from those areas, Leonard says. He also has worked on coverage of several high-profile criminal cases, including actor Robert Blake's murder trial.

Leonard says one of the reasons he can pursue longer stories is KFI's format. In addition to short, minute or minute-and-a-half pieces on top-of-the-hour newscasts, the station supports more detailed accounts during local programs.

"Our local talk show hosts will spend a half hour or 40 minutes debriefing me or other reporters," Leonard says. During those periods, Leonard can talk about his stories, present more detail and take calls from listeners.

Finding time to present the details required of in-depth pieces is one of the challenges of doing investigative work on the radio, and Leonard cites it as one of the reasons more commercial stations don't do more. Expense, resources, and the high turnover common on commercial stations also play into it, he says.

Since the FCC deregulated commercial stations in the 1980s, freeing them from an obligation to public service, news has all but disappeared from commercial radio, Dinges says. Increasing pressure on news outlets to turn a profit, high production costs and highly paid anchors – what Dinges calls "gold-plated news organizations" – also contributed to the lessening of investigative work on the radio, he says.

Irwin Gratz, president of the Society of Professional Journalists and a local producer and host with Maine Public Broadcasting Network, witnessed that change firsthand. Gratz spent a dozen years in commercial radio before moving to MPBN in 1990.

He says the commercial station for which he worked in the 1980s, WPOR, has since consolidated with five others in its market. Where he once was part of a four-person news staff (including part-timers) at WPOR, all six stations now rely on about that many people for all their news coverage. Such a severe cut in the newsroom obviously doesn't lend itself to investigative work, Gratz says.

He notes that the move away from investigative reporting is not unique to radio. Instead, he sees it as part of a larger trend common to newspapers and television. Gratz says he is not optimistic that things will change significantly in the near future.

"I don't see what's going to drive a change in trends," he says. "On a much longer time horizon, I do believe that people want and need good journalism, and after a while, if they aren't getting it, they will find it somewhere."

Gratz names that desire for news as a factor behind the rise of public radio in recent years. He says that like it or not, it sometimes takes huge news events to make people demand rigorous journalism.

"I think sometimes the lack of demand for really good, hard-hitting journalism may, to some degree, reflect the fact that things are not all that bad in the United States right now," he says. Gratz points to the turmoil of the 1960s and public reaction in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks as periods in which the public demanded more.

"I don't want to have to think about what might have to happen to drive people to demand greater news coverage," he says. "It may be driven by some as-yet-unforeseen event or events in the future."

For his part, American RadioWorks' Smith says public radio might just be entering its prime. It is up to journalists to make the most of that.

"Public radio is a primary news source for millions of Americans, and that wasn't always the case," Smith says. "Now that we are a primary news source, we need to take on more responsibility."

Jay Paul | National Public Radio

Bill Marimow, managing editor of NPR since March 2004, and award-winning correspondent Daniel Zwerdling, right.

Amanda Buck is a graduate research assistant for IRE.

JAILHOUSE TALK

Phone companies, counties earn millions through unregulated rates for inmate calls

By Kim Curtis and Bob Porterfield
The Associated Press

It all began when Bob Porterfield wondered about the signs he saw posted in county jails informing visitors their phone fees were deposited into so-called Inmate Welfare Funds. What were these IWFs, he wondered? How much did they contain? And how were they really used?

More than a year later, The Associated Press published a package of stories, which revealed that telephone companies and California counties have earned hundreds of millions of dollars through high, unregulated phone rates for calls from local jails. It added up to more than $120 million a year in phone bills for families and friends of county inmates statewide, arguably a segment of society least able to pay them.

But getting the information was more complicated and involved than we expected.

Haphazard record keeping

We began the investigative project in August 2003 with an initial round of requests under the California Public Records Act to the state's 58 county auditor's offices seeking financial statements and other documents pertaining to the county's Inmate Welfare Fund for the preceding five years. Responses trickled in. Some counties provided what we asked for immediately. Others referred us to the sheriff's office, which, they said, maintained IWF records. And still others said records were missing, lost or unavailable. This despite the fact, that an obscure state law establishing the funds more than a half-century ago required annual reports.

We made a second round of requests a few months later, followed by phone calls to recalcitrant counties. Responses were as diverse as the counties themselves. Some made an issue of charging for copies, while others did not. Many counties responded with suspicion and were reluctant to provide information about their funds, proclaiming: "No one has ever asked us about that before."

Collecting the raw data required about nine months. The process could have been accelerated considerably had we done a bit more research. Because of the haphazard methods of record keeping, we quickly learned that in dealing with California county governments, it's not always productive to make logical assumptions.

The data was provided to us in many forms – ranging from succinct financial reports to hundreds of pages of computer-generated check registers. Little of the information was in electronic format. It took several weeks to extract the information we sought from the mounds of paper records provided to us. Check registers from many counties comprised thousands of entry lines from which specific accounting codes had to be located and extracted. Several more weeks were required to validate the data from many counties because of duplicate or missing entries. In a few counties, data older than three years didn't exist because of record-destruction policies or because the records had been lost.

Jail telephone market

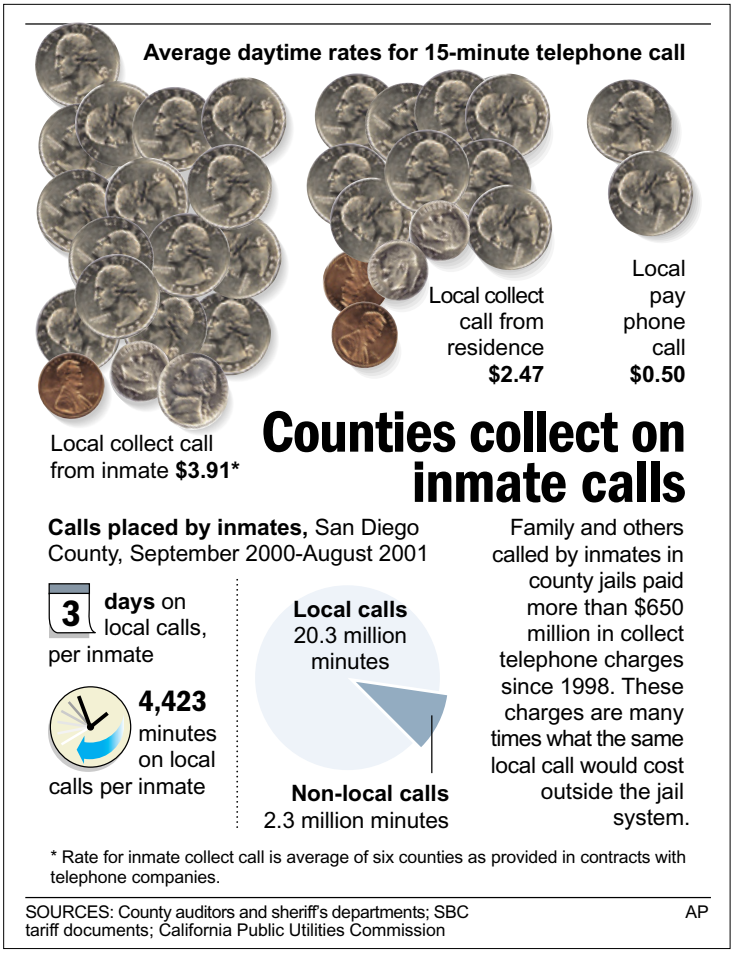
To organize the data, and for later use in graphical charts, we constructed a spreadsheet that permitted us to not only keep track of responses, but also facilitated later statistical analysis in categories such as revenue by inmate and to track the growth in county jail telephone revenues across the state.

A preliminary examination of the data indicated that many counties were collecting "signing bonuses" for awarding contracts to specific telecommunications carriers. These bonuses ranged from a few thousand dollars to nearly $20 million. This resulted in a final round of FOI requests for actual telephone service contracts. Responses to these requests provided us with information showing that on a statewide basis, there was no uniformity in rates and many telephone companies were charging what the market would bear. It also revealed that many counties had not renewed contracts and some had only rudimentary agreements. The information also revealed the inroads being made by correctional communication management and service companies into the county jail telephone market.

There were many surprises. We learned that federal regulators have been studying whether to regulate correctional telephone services for almost a decade and have taken no action. In a state already perceived across the country as being over-regulated, California authorities have virtually ignored the subject of telephone service for jail inmates.

Also, the number of counties that failed to keep close tabs on what often amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars and the presence of often-shoddy bookkeeping in any era of computerization was staggering. In fact, in many counties, only the sheriff could explain how and where the funds were spent.

Unfortunately, the law governing such funds is written so broadly that sheriffs have virtually complete discretion to spend the jail telephone revenues as they see fit. While Inmate Welfare Funds are supposed to provide quality-of-life improvements for inmates, they are too frequently used to supplement shrinking county budgets, and pay for building maintenance and repair.



Bob Porterfield is an award-winning journalist who works part time developing investigative projects for The Associated Press. Kim Curtis is an award-winning journalist who has worked for The Associated Press since 1995.

Brian Tietz | Herald-Leader

Ralph Annis leaves a courtroom with a fellow inmate after his arraignment.

FUGITIVE CAPTURE

Electronic documents help reporter track killer, 15 years after prison escape

BY LINDA J. JOHNSON
LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER

The Kentucky State Police failed to find Ralph Annis for 15 years after he escaped from prison. I found him a few days after I went searching for him.

My discovery would eventually lead to this fugitive's capture, but it also would spark a wonderful debate within the newsroom over what to do with the information I had found. Should we go find Annis ourselves, and risk him fleeing again? Or, should we take our information to the police and possibly appear to be an agent for them?

Annis was no two-bit criminal. He was a murderer. He had pleaded guilty in 1978 to killing Melanie Kaye Gifford, his girlfriend's 10-month-old baby from a small town north of Lexington, Ky. Annis had escaped from prison in July 1990 and lived, until his February 2005 arrest, in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Family photo of Melanie Gifford, taken when she was about 6 months old.

I learned about Annis from the Kentucky Department of Corrections Web site under a category called "wanted inmates." Of the 15 people on the list of escapees, Annis was the only murderer and the most interesting one of the bunch.

I spoke with state police who had the escape file and the local detective who arrested Annis for the murder. I tracked down family members, and requested every document I could from the Department of Corrections, state police and the county courthouse.

Coughing up the alias

I started with the simple stuff: I found his first marriage and divorce, and Melanie's death certificate on the Internet and ordered them from VitalChek.com.

While reviewing old newspaper articles and Melanie's obit from the *Cynthiana Democrat*, the local paper that covered the murder, I noted that Ralph Annis was a pallbearer at her funeral. How could that be? I wondered.

The baby's mother refused to talk to me, and Annis' first wife didn't know where he was. She did tell me that he called her collect one time to say he was returning to Kentucky to turn himself in. She said the call originated in Corpus Christi, which was also the last place police believed him to be around 1993, based on an anonymous tip.

In the prison records, I found a marriage certificate for Annis and a woman he married while incarcerated. The corrections people had blacked out everything about her except her name. So, I ordered the marriage certificate from VitalChek.com and discovered the identity of the bride's parents.

According to documents, Annis had escaped while on furlough, picked up by his second wife, Jane. Annis' stepsister, who also hadn't heard from him since he escaped, told me that Jane's teenage son also left with them. That wasn't in the prison or police records I had.

Once I finally convinced the cops to cough up the alias they knew Annis had used at one time – Mike Winters – I decided I ought to look a bit for him before writing anything.

To my amazement, I found him almost immediately and was 98 percent certain it was Annis within a couple of days.

How did I find him? I plugged Annis' Social Security number (retrieved from prison records) and his alias into the LexisNexis people finder and searched in the four states where I knew he had ties: Pennsylvania, where he was born; Kentucky, where he lived most of his young life; Indiana, where his second wife was from; and Texas, where the anonymous tip in 1993 placed him.

No one close to his age turned up in three of four states. But I found two "Mike Winters" in Corpus Christi. One was about 30 years old. I ruled him out and then checked the other one.

This Mike Winters was about a year younger than Annis and the first five digits of their Social Security numbers matched. (Lexis often won't provide the last four digits.) Winters' number had been issued in Kentucky in 1967, about the time Annis would have been 16.

That piqued my interest. Using Nexis.com and Google.com, I got more and more suspicious. The Mike Winters in Corpus Christi didn't have a driver's license or voting record that I could find, nor did he appear to own any property.

To double check that, I went to the experts: our news research department. I asked Linda Minch to find everything she could on this guy, using both names and the Social Security number. She came back with an AutoTrak record that turned out to be a gold mine.

It confirmed for me what I had learned about his life, that he was keeping a low profile. But it also gave me what appeared to be another wife – or perhaps the second wife with a different name.

This wife didn't show up in Texas marriage licenses, nor was there a divorce for Annis or Winters. (I later learned that the second wife died in 2000 of cancer, long after she and Annis had split up.) The third wife was Linda Winters.

We ran AutoTrak on her and discovered she had recently filed for bankruptcy protection.

I downloaded the bankruptcy files from PACER

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BLOG ALERT

Battalion of citizen investigative reporters cannot be ignored by mainstream media

BY MICHELLE DAMMON LOYALKA
THE IRE JOURNAL

After more than two decades as a professional journalist at publications like *The Nation* and the *New York Post*, I.F. Stone felt the media were inadequately covering the day's most pressing concerns. In 1953 he took matters into his own hands and, armed with little more than a typewriter and a $3,000 loan, launched his own independent newsletter. Though something of a pariah in his day, Stone consistently scooped the nation's most powerful publications and ultimately attracted a loyal following of 70,000 subscribers.

Today, more than 30 years after Stone laid his newsletter to rest, the grumblings of media discontent live on. Only this time, they come not from the work of a lone muckraker but from a growing battalion of citizens armed with blogging software that is rapidly enabling anyone with computer access to comment, criticize and even collaborate in the traditionally closed and tightly controlled process of news hunting, gathering and publishing.

In recent months blogs and the bloggers who blog them have burst into the limelight, breaking high-profile stories and making it clear to skeptic, critic and true believer alike that the blogosphere – that intangible collective of Weblogs lurking out in cyberspace – is a force that today's mainstream media can no longer afford to ignore.

The meteoric rise

Blogs are, essentially, little more than a public journal. They come in all shapes, sizes, topics and tones. From personal diaries to political soapboxes, all kinds of people are bloggers, from avid hobbyists to expectant mothers to technology specialists – even corporate leaders. Although it is difficult to accurately estimate the number of blogs worldwide, a study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project showed that of the 120 million American adults who use the Internet, more than eight million had created a blog by the end of 2004.

According to Nora Paul, director of the University of Minnesota's Institute for New Media Studies, part of what has made them so appealing is that, unlike their somewhat cumbersome predecessor, the more static and difficult-to-update personal home page, blogs are easy to make and easy to modify. Throw in the fact that they enable instant interactivity, with readers posting their comments and providing links to other sites with a few simple mouse clicks, and blogging was a phenomena waiting to happen.

"The revelation is not about the blog," Paul says. "The revelation is that this revealed such a huge population who had something they wanted to say."

But the meteoric rise of the blogs is not just about the unique publishing platform, it's also about the network, says Krista Bradford, an Emmy Award-winning investigative journalist who is now founder and principal of Bradford Executive Research. Bloggers who write about similar subject areas or share similar ideologies tend to link to and reference one another. As readers who frequent these sites begin to contribute to the conversation, social networks are forged where people feel their opinions are valuable, Paul said.

While any given site may not attract a large percentage of the more than 32 million Americans who read blogs, Paul says they become an extremely important source of information for their particular audiences.

The perceived threat

A significant part of what bloggers do is point out, and comment on, news items of interest to their readers. Over time, they have become something of the watchdog's watchdog, critiquing journalists' work down to the last dot and comma.

On blogmaverick.com, owner of the Dallas Mavericks and blogger Mark Cuban warned mainstream journalists: "Let me assure you that from now on, EVERYTHING said. Every video shown. Every picture presented from any traditional media source is going to be scrutinized. The level of scrutiny will make your editors blush."

While such intense inspection of their work has left many journalists feeling skittish, knowing they will be held responsible for any shortcuts they take in their reporting helps to keep them more honest, says Bob Sullivan, technology reporter at MSNBC.com.

But in consistently monitoring the press, bloggers become frustrated when stories and angles they are aware of online do not show up in mainstream media, Bradford said. This has led some to make more purposeful and concentrated efforts at reporting the news on their own.

Dan Gillmor, who recently left his position as technology columnist at the *San Jose Mercury News* to pursue a project to encourage more citizen-based media, says that while some bloggers are doing what can easily be called journalism, so far overall he says he has "seen very little from the blog world that would qualify as true investigative journalism."

One of the more recent examples of bloggers foraying into the world of investigative journalism was the unmasking of "Jeff Gannon," Gillmor said. Shortly after Gannon, a reporter for the conservative online Talon News, asked President Bush a question about working with Senate Democratic leaders "who seem to have divorced themselves from reality," bloggers began questioning his credentials. They quickly discovered that Gannon was working under a pseudonym and ultimately exposed him as James Guckert, a man who had no journalism background and had made a living running a gay escort service before becoming a White House reporter.

This incident followed closely on the heels of the blogging community's success in questioning the authenticity of National Guard documents presented by CBS in what came to be known as Rathergate, named after newsman Dan Rather. Shortly thereafter bloggers called so much attention to comments made by Eason Jordan, CNN's chief news executive, regarding military targeting of journalists in Iraq that Jordan ultimately resigned. Such incidents have thrust the growing power of the blogosphere into the media spotlight in recent months, leading some bloggers to predict the demise of the mainstream media altogether.

Yet, there seems to be a growing sense among journalists and bloggers alike that pitting the two against each other is futile.

The reason, Bradford says, is because they are two different entities which complement – rather than compete with – one another. Those interviewed for this story pointed out that bloggers are not constrained by traditional journalistic values. They do not have editors ensuring that facts have been checked and rechecked, nor do they have pressure to do original reporting and track down eyewitness reports. Instead, they tend to make use of second-hand sources and online documents. They write informally, typically employing a style more like that of a commentator than a news reporter. They are apt to have clear agendas and ideologies that are integral to their popularity and they generally establish credibility not so much by living up to a certain set of prescribed standards, but rather by staying true to what their particular blog stands for.

In addition, stories typically unfold on the blogosphere in a granular way, coming out in bits and pieces rather than as a single, polished article, Bradford says.

"In essence, somebody reports a tidbit they've found and it isn't necessarily verified but it's sort of an open-source research model of 'here's what I've turned up,'" she says. The original piece of news is then revised as readers either build on or invalidate the information, Bradford says.

"These are people who are doing a different kind of research and contributing to the dialogue in a different way," she says.

The essential tool

Regardless of any methodological differences, bloggers, like professional journalists, are bringing to light stories that would otherwise go unheard, says Laura Frank, member of the projects team at the *Rocky Mountain News*.

In one example this April, days after a Canadian judge imposed a publication ban on witness testimony in a government fraud inquiry, American blogger Ed Morrissey posted portions of the testimony on his Captain's Quarters blog (captainsquartersblog.com). As word spread across Canada, hits on Morrissey's site grew from 20,000 a day to about 400,000, and the ban was ultimately lifted.

"That's real journalism, and that's how democracy is supposed to work," Frank says.

While it is essential to vet bloggers' claims with the same rigor as any other source of information, Derek Willis, research database editor at *The Washington Post* who has been blogging on investigative and computer-assisted reporting (www.thescoop.org) since 1998, says the time is coming when the blogosphere is going to be a regular stop on investigative reporters' checks of resources. Blogs are becoming an increasingly important source for story ideas, tips, expert opinions and insider information that would be hard to come by through traditional channels, Paul says.

"It's like hanging out in the locker room," she says. "It's fantastic, and you're not going to get that same type of thing going and covering the school board meeting."

On his previous Silicon Valley tech blog (http://weblog.siliconvalley.com; find him now at http://dangillmor.typepad.com), and later in his book "We the Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, For the People," Gillmor discusses principles underlying what he considers to be "journalism's next wave." Foremost among these are that his readers know more than he does and that this is not a threat, but rather an opportunity to engage readers in something more like a conversation than a lecture. Interactivity and communications technology, he writes, are the vehicle that makes it happen.

One publication attempting to seize this opportunity and enter into a dialogue with their readers is the *News & Record* in Greensboro, N.C. In late 2004 citizen-journalism coordinator Lex Alexander was asked to recommend how to revamp the paper's Web site into more of an online public square.

"The more research I did the more I began to believe this was not just a matter of changing the Web site, this was a matter of changing the way we do news," Alexander says. That meant first recognizing that online audiences expect to have a say in what is covered, how it is covered, and why, he says.

In addition to many interactive features that allow readers to submit story ideas, comment on stories, and post their own stories, several *News & Record* editors and reporters blog directly from the Web site on topics related to their local beats. Although it has not yet happened, Alexander says he anticipates local bloggers with an expertise in a given area will eventually co-write stories with staff reporters.

Bill Mitchell, director of publishing and editor of Poynter Online, says investigative journalism also would benefit from a more open-source style of reporting in which journalists blog about their investigation from the very planning stages and solicit readers with special knowledge or experience to come forward. "I think there's actually a bigger opportunity here than people have realized to enlist readers as collaborators in investigative reporting," he says. And with most investigations, he says, tipping off competitors is usually less of a risk than people think.

Mitchell also says collaboration with bloggers shouldn't stop when the story is published. Since it is nearly impossible to get every last detail correct in longer, data-packed investigations, he says opening up a space where readers and sources can blog their comments and corrections and where reporters can respond and update their stories accordingly engages the audience and provides a more comprehensive and effective news product.

The unknown future

To some degree, the lines between blogging and mainstream journalism are already blurring. More professional journalists like Willis are starting their own blogs and more media outlets like the *News & Record* are looking for ways to carve out their corner of the blogosphere. At the same time, more bloggers are joining "professional organizations" like the Media Bloggers Association (www.mediabloggers.org), while also looking for ways to draw larger audiences and financially support their blogging endeavors.

With Howard Dean's phenomenal success in using his blog to generate millions in campaign donations and the innovative approach being utilized by bloggers like Christopher Allbritton, a former Associated Press reporter who went to Iraq on nearly $15,000 donated by readers of his blog, (find him now at www.back-to-iraq.com), people like Bradford also are looking closely at how to use blogs to fund more online investigative journalism projects.

In January a Blogging, Journalism and Credibility conference at Harvard was attended by bloggers, journalists and media leaders alike. Mitchell, who presented a paper at the conference with Bob Steele of the Poynter Institute, says that while bloggers are not interested in having the standards of professional journalism pushed on them, they are concerned about establishing credibility with their audience. For bloggers, this might mean providing greater detail about their own particular practices and guidelines, such as whether information is verified before it is posted, he says.

As some of the best bloggers start to make a living from their blogs, they'll likely end up adopting a set of standard operating procedures, Sullivan says. For those bloggers who are interested in doing more serious reporting, that may already be in the works.

On Big, Left, Outside (www.bigleftoutside.com), a blog that analyzed the 2004 presidential elections and is now on sabbatical, blogger Al Giordano (who is also the founder of www.narconews.com) writes that for bloggers working on investigative stories, turning to basic journalistic principles is the way to avoid – and win – potential libel lawsuits.

"I think this is a realm in which old-fashioned 'investigative journalism' is, in fact, the goal that 'investigative bloggers' must strive to reach," he writes.

Although a preliminary ruling by a California court denied bloggers who had leaked details about unreleased Apple products the journalistic right to protect their sources, the blogging community continues to press for greater recognition of its contributions to the free flow of information.

In March, Freeculture.org organized Blogshine Sunday, a parallel to news organizations' Sunshine Sunday. The purpose: to highlight the need to preserve the rights of all citizens – rather than just mainstream journalists – to observe the workings of the government and access digital public records.

Michelle Dammon Loyalka is editorial intern for The IRE Journal and a graduate student at the University of Missouri.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation has published its Legal Guide for Bloggers online at www.eff.org/bloggers/lg

TRAFFIC STOPS

Justice for sale as police downgrade violations in return for 'donations'

BY CLARK KAUFFMAN
THE DES MOINES REGISTER

Sheriff Larry Jones leaned back in his chair, took a deep breath, and tried again to explain to me Cass County's policy of reducing charges against criminal defendants in exchange for cash "donations" to his department.

"If a person, such as yourself, got a traffic ticket and you were ready to lose your license, well, I guess you would gladly pay a donation," he said. "And if somebody offers me $400, I'm going to take it."

Acting on a tip from a *Des Moines Register* reader, I had just spent two weeks reviewing thousands of court files and documenting the Cass County prosecutor's practice of downgrading traffic violations against offenders who donated about $200 to the sheriff's office. The donations were entirely off the books: Judges didn't approve the payments and the money was stashed in a safe in Jones' office.

The review of court files also showed that the Cass County prosecutor, James Barry, was routinely converting $70 speeding tickets to fictitious defective-equipment violations that carried "fines" of several hundred dollars. It was a process that enabled repeat offenders to keep their licenses and remain on the road while government officials benefited from the increased revenue generated by the fines.

In one case, a driver ticketed for doing 98 mph on the interstate had his ticket replaced with bogus citations for a defective muffler, defective windshield wiper, defective tail light, defective back-up lamps, defective horn, defective windshield, defective signal lamps, defective mirrors and a defective safety belt. The deal cost the driver more than $1,300, but he kept his license.

The interests of justice

Documenting the problems in Cass County traffic court was easy. Figuring out how many of Iowa's 98 other counties had adopted similar practices would be more difficult. The state's online database of civil and criminal court cases was good for verifying information culled from court files, but a hands-on review of those files would still be necessary.

Knowing that it would be impossible to review court records in all Iowa counties, my editor, Gage Church, suggested I narrow the search to a half-dozen central Iowa counties bisected by Interstate 80 – the most-traveled road in the state. To that list, we added two northwest Iowa counties where prosecutors were alleged to be cutting other types of questionable deals.

In a few of the counties I visited, cases were being handled appropriately. In the others, there were obvious problems.

In northwest Iowa, I ran across cases in which prosecutors had won a conviction, then had a judge rescind the conviction "in the interests of justice." Concerned that the prosecutors might be working both sides of those cases, I pulled each driver's administrative file at the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT). As I suspected, the prosecutors were representing some of these defendants in license-suspension hearings at the DOT. Citing the rescinding orders they had obtained as prosecutors, these lawyers had successfully appealed their clients' license suspensions.

In other counties, I found examples of prosecutors downgrading or dismissing drunken-driving charges in return for court-ordered "charitable donations." Additional checking showed that some of the donations were routed to police agencies, despite a state law prohibiting such payments.

In two Iowa counties, prosecutors were converting charges of reckless driving and drunken driving to fictitious charges of defective "cowl lamps." Arm-mounted cowl lamps haven't been seen on cars since the 1930s, although the state law requiring them to be of a certain size and color was still on the books. Often, the drivers who had their charges converted to cowl-lamp violations had agreed to donate money to police canine programs or anti-drug efforts – another violation of Iowa's sentencing law.

New oversight

During the six weeks spent reviewing court files, I also was doing background checks on drivers and prosecutors, as well as researching the various state laws and ethics rules pertaining to perjury, conflicts of interest and the prosecution of criminal cases.

When it came time to contact the drivers, I made a point of calling not just those who had accepted questionable plea bargains, but also those who had

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TICKETS

At first glance, traffic court might not seem like the best place for an investigative reporter to look for "the big story."

After all, the offenses handled there are typically minor. While there may be certain trends or practices worth examining, the sheer volume of cases means a reporter could spend days sifting through court files before any clear patterns begin to emerge.

But it's the big caseload and the minor nature of the offenses that cause some prosecutors and judges to cut corners, putting dangerous drivers back on the road. That became clear to me when one Iowa judge explained his rationale for approving dozens of guilty pleas on plainly fictitious charges.

"They pile stuff on my desk," he told me. "I'll say, 'What do you need on this?' And they'll say, 'Well, these people need to be found guilty. Just mark on the back 'guilty' and put your initials on there and the date.' And I'll say, 'OK.'"

So much for judicial consideration.

If you're interested in digging into traffic court, here are a few tips:

- **Take a scanner and a laptop computer to the courthouse.** This project will take time, and every judge, lawyer and clerk in the courthouse will want to know why you're wading through traffic tickets for a story. They'll cheerfully offer to make copies, just to gain some insight as to which cases you're scrutinizing. Copy the records yourself with a scanner. You'll minimize the chances of interference with your research and high-resolution scans can work as an art element for your story.
- **Look for conflicts of interest.** In some states, prosecutors also have private law offices. Are prosecutors in your area granting favorable deals to people they've represented in divorces or other civil cases? Do they represent drivers in license-suspension hearings that grow out of criminal cases they prosecuted?
- **Research the state laws and ethics rules.** For years, some Iowa judges routinely approved deals in which drivers pleaded guilty to fictitious offenses, not realizing that Iowa law requires a factual basis for all criminal charges, even in traffic court. Many other Iowa judges were ignorant of the state law that prohibits them from ordering defendants to donate cash to police agencies.
- **Follow the money.** If charitable contributions are an element of sentencing, find out who selects the charities that receive the money. Are some judges routing money to local charities in which they're involved?

Wendy Gray | The IRE Journal

SPORTS

The Cost of Competition

The sports business is very big business. Millions of dollars are tied up in everything from football players to race horses. Crushing injuries can happen in a heartbeat, but the push to continue is powerful when there's big money involved. Players take drugs in an effort to keep up, rules are changed to make it more exciting for fans, and doing the right thing can be lost in the heat of competition for prestige and money. Investigations look into the true cost of the business of sports ...

BLOODY SUNDAYS

Analysis finds NFL injuries worse after rule changes to energize game

By Carl Prine
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

On any given Sunday in the National Football League, 31 ankles and knees snap, twist or blow out. Nine shoulders separate. Five feet come up lame. Six hamstrings tear. Four spines or necks quit working the way God intended and three brains slosh violently around in their skulls, sometimes forever altering the way men think and dream.

How do I know all of this? The *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* did the math, tallying the who, what, when, where and why of 6,558 injuries over the last four years in the NFL.

We also sliced and diced six decades of numbers culled from archival research to map the mounting body count in the NFL, then conducted interviews with hundreds of current and former players, coaches, league officials, trainers, equipment managers and manufacturers, top sports physicians and university statisticians to produce an eight-page special section, "Bloody Sundays."

A few of our findings:

- Half of the NFL's players are hurt every season, with defenders more likely to get injured than athletes on offense. A defensive back alone has a 30 percent greater risk of suffering an injury than a quarterback, and a passer touches the ball on every offensive play.
- Quarterbacks, tight ends, wide receivers, safeties and cornerbacks routinely suffer brain concussions and spinal injuries that could trigger paralysis, dementia, depression and other serious ailments later in life. Seven pro players face potentially life-altering head and spine trauma every week.
- The NFL has failed to mandate the wearing of proper padding and safety gear, despite internal research identifying better helmets and other vital pieces of body armor.
- Despite multimillion-dollar contracts and mounting league profits, long-term health care for retired players hasn't kept pace with the rising violence of the game. Half of NFL players leave football because of a debilitating injury, and another 25 percent will suffer lifelong degenerative bone and joint conditions or mental illness from the jarring play and repeated concussions. More than 500 new claims for medical care from impoverished veterans arrive annually, but the union has only enough cash to help a fraction of them.
- No position is immune from the violence. One of out every five kickers and 14 percent of all punters get hurt annually, suffering numerous wrist, heel and leg injuries.

Chaz Palla | Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Half of the NFL's players are hurt every season, with defenders more likely to get injured than athletes on offense. A defensive back alone has a 30 percent greater risk of suffering an injury than a quarterback, and a passer touches the ball on every offensive play.

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Steelers Chidi Iwuoma in the cart with team doctor Richard Rydze at M&T Bank Stadium on Sept. 19, 2004.

Mining the data

With any computer-assisted sports project, finding and validating meaningful data can be a major headache. Before we began our investigation, team doctors, general managers and trainers told us the best snapshots of their players' health could be found in the weekly injury reports, a compilation of maladies found in most newspapers' sports agate before Sunday's games.

Working extensively with surgeons, medical statisticians and NFL trainers to set up the database fields, we built a series of interlinking datasets that accurately captured 27 types of injuries suffered in the NFL, the players and teams involved, playing surfaces on which the trauma occurred and numerous other important tidbits that allowed us to report with unchallenged authority on a complex medical subject.

Unfortunately, these injury records don't exist in electronic form, so a four-person crew at the *Trib* spent more than a month punching into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets four years of data, from the 2000-01 season to the end of the 2003-04 campaign, including playoff games.

We mined the data, and then sent our analyses and the raw numbers to a blue-ribbon panel of the nation's top neurosurgeons, sports physicians, trainers, agents and general managers to make sure our conclusions matched with their gridiron expertise.

Both the experts and the *Trib* concluded that the major cause for the injuries stemmed from changes in the rules dating back to the late 1970s that transformed a weekly scrum of lumbering linemen and pounding rushers into a made-for-TV spectacle of downfield passes, blitzing behemoths and high-velocity collisions, often in midair, between receivers and the men hurtling to crush them.

As old-timers put it, the pre-1978 game "killed you slowly" with degenerating bones and joints caused by repeated injuries, whereas the modern game "killed you quickly" with punishing high-impact, high-velocity body blows.

> "Lowering penalties for offensive holding, for example, gave greater incentives for offensive linemen to reach out and touch someone blitzing the quarterback."

Bleeding pulps

Under the guidance of managing editor Bob Fryer, the project began to identify concrete changes in the rules before tracking the unintended consequences of these reforms through decades of archival records uncovered at the Professional Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, government, union and league medical surveys, workers' compensation filings, lawsuits and, most important, the highly accurate and organized compilation of injury stats we built from scratch.

Lowering penalties for offensive holding, for example, gave greater incentives for offensive linemen to reach out and touch someone blitzing the quarterback. To avoid the grasps of guards, centers and tackles, defensive linemen began to "windmill" their arms, slapping down the limbs impeding them.

While this melee of whirling digits has served to greater protect passers huddled in a "pocket" of blockers, it has turned the fingers, hands and arms of offensive and defensive linemen into bleeding pulps of flesh. While they only constitute a third of an NFL team, these linemen account for half of all arm, hand and finger injuries.

And because of other rules favoring quarterback protection – including "roll blocks," "cut blocks" and "leg whips" that focus hits to the defensive linemen knees, calves and shins – defensive tackles and ends suffer more than 20 percent more below-the-belt injuries than their opponents across the trenches.

These examples weren't unusual. Our research consistently found that whenever the league shifted the rules to spur offensive production, there was a disproportionate increase in injuries to defenders. Hardest hit – literally and figuratively – are defensive backs. Two out of every three DBs will get hurt during the season, and half of them will suffer a second, unrelated injury before the Super Bowl.

They suffer nearly twice the number of injuries as quarterbacks or their blockers. Exacerbating the body count for defensive backs is the increasing size of receivers, running backs and tight ends. The typical NFL player has super-sized 25 percent in body mass over the past six decades, but the average cornerback or safety has barely changed, exposing them to routine spine, head and bone injuries as they try to bring down charging wideouts, running backs and tight ends.

And the super-sized players also risk major health problems, with more than a third of all linemen suffering from obstructive sleep apnea, not to mention high rates of high blood pressure, fatigue and heart problems.

Changing the rules

Interviewing players after practices, camps and games was an absolute necessity and the most rewarding part of a six-month odyssey through the NFL. All the data crunching in the world will never substitute for what these warriors tell you. Rather than "jock speak" answers, the *Trib* recorded hundreds of deeply felt, painful reminiscences of how and why life in the NFL can be so excruciating, and what can be done to make it safer without

SPORTS
The Cost of Competition

ruining the competition on the field.

During the reporting and writing process, an internal panel of experts – composed of primarily sports editor Kevin Smith, special projects editor Trish Hooper and Steelers beat writer Jerry DiPaolo – asked the tough questions to make sure the statistical analyses, medical surveys, graphics and interviews made sense to a very sophisticated gridiron fan in Pittsburgh, our typical reader.

With most of our 221,000 readers rabid Steelers fans, we knew that any error in reporting or analysis would be picked up immediately, so scrutiny of the data was paramount.

Coaches, players' representatives and agents came armed with the "Bloody Sundays" report to an NFL summit on changing the rules, the first major probe into injuries they had ever seen.

The Competition Committee moved to end forever legal field maneuvers that left hundreds of players seriously injured every year, including "cut" blocks, leg "whipping" and "roll" blocks, and reformers continue to use the stories we published to advocate during the latest collective bargaining agreement for more medical and retirement benefits to wounded gridiron vets long gone from the game.

To us, that's a touchdown for players, fans, coaches and owners. And an extra point for the *Trib*.

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Pittsburgh tailback Jerome Bettis struggles to climb the stairs in his home the morning after the Steelers defeated the Cleveland Browns. "It's so hard to get up and down the stairs," Bettis said. "I can just imagine when I'm 50 years old."

Carl Prine joined the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review in 2000. Over the last four years, he has probed security at chemical plants with CBS 60 Minutes, served as a war correspondent in Iraq and written numerous award-winning stories on race and gender discrimination. "Bloody Sundays" can be found at www.pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/specialreports/specialnfl/.

HORSE TRACK INJURIES

Health privacy laws help trainers hide lack of coverage for workers

By Janet Patton
Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader

In Kentucky racing, the running joke is that the horses are treated better than the people. It turns out that in many ways, that's true.

"Wrong Side of the Track," a *Lexington Herald-Leader* investigation over the course of a year, found that injuries to racetrack workers are frequent but that workers' compensation coverage is rare.

Photographer David Stephenson and I spent mornings at the tracks. We had no difficulty finding workers who had been injured, but few were willing to let us use their names. The *Herald-Leader* does not use anonymous sources.

Workers are at the mercy of trainers who can decide to toss employees – who live free at the racetracks where they are employed – off their private property any time.

The fear is justified; although racetracks are usually welcoming to reporters, one track president told us that we would either be escorted in the stables or we would be forced to leave. Naturally, with the track honcho in tow, previously talkative sources clammed up.

Together with fellow reporter Frank Lockwood and photographer Pablo Alcala, we spent months

David Stephenson | Herald Leader

Clyde Bramble, who lost his arm while exercising a horse at Turfway last year, checks the feet and legs of one of his brother's horses in training at Tampa Bay Downs in Florida.

talking with jockeys, exercise riders and stable workers from the "backside" or "backstretch" of the track, getting their stories.

Eventually, Stephenson and I convinced several to go on the record, including Clyde Bramble, who lost his right arm in a gruesome accident, and Shawn Autry, who was paralyzed at a training center in Lexington.

Independent contractors

In covering this story, I ran up against the same wall over and over: the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, which has created an extensive clamp-down on personal information that can in any way be construed as health-related.

One exception to this tends to be workers' comp files. I looked at dozens of cases that included medical records, pay stubs, depositions and more to see how the system should work, and the reality racetrackers face. Still, with a transient and undocumented population, sometimes finding people proved difficult.

For example, a crucial figure in our story was a jockey injured in 1976. His case set the legal precedent for excluding riders from workers' comp coverage, but it took six months to track him down, partly because people kept insisting he was dead.

Through his last known address, our news researchers found John Munday's former neighbors in a senior citizens' low-income housing complex in Collinsville, Ill. They, along with his former priest, all claimed Munday had died the previous summer, about the time we had begun looking for him.

David Stephenson | Lexington Herald-Leader

Former jockey John Munday pulls himself through a hall at the long-term nursing facility where he lives.

Illinois refused to reveal death records to non-family. And the hospital he'd been taken to couldn't even confirm he had been a patient because of HIPAA rules.

Finally, through small Midwest racetracks I tracked down the grandmother of Munday's former girlfriend. The grandmother also claimed Munday had died, but she recommended I talk to her daughter.

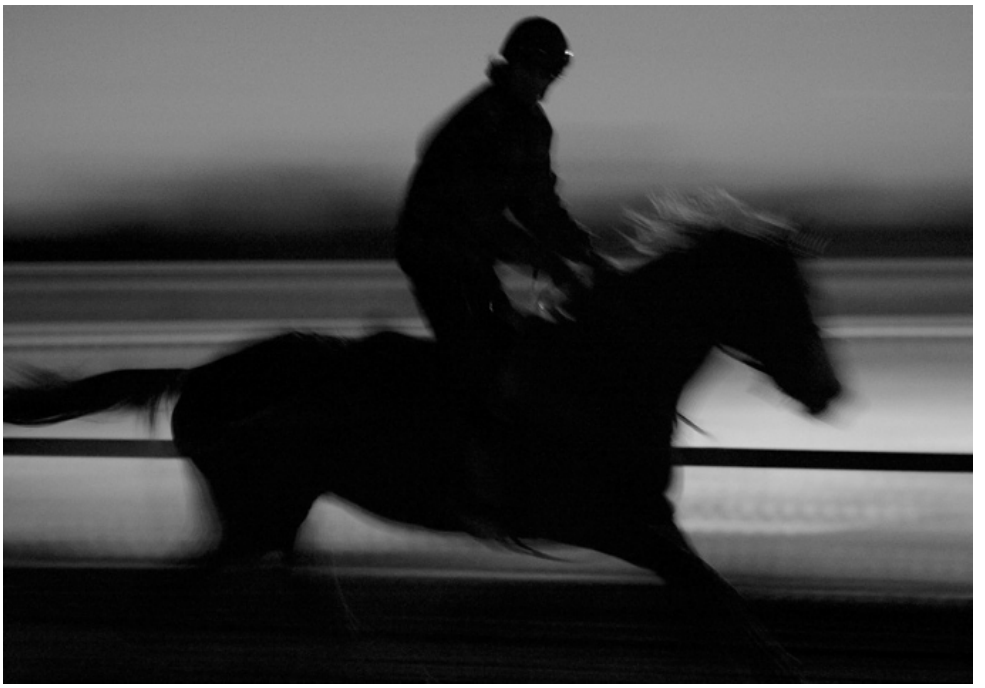
The daughter said Munday was alive but in a

Stories from the IRE RESOURCE CENTER

If you'd like to read more stories involving sports investigations, take a look at what the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter) has to offer. Here are just a few of the stories you'll find there:

- **No. 21590.** "The High Price of Recruiting." Mark Alesia of the *Indianapolis Star* showed that together Indiana University and Purdue spent more than $600,000 to procure football players in 2003-04, including flying one recruit in a University-owned private jet. (2005)
- **No. 21145.** "Toughman: Bouts with Danger." Fred Girard of the *Detroit News* reveals disturbing statistics on the number of amateur boxers who have died during amateur boxing events. Girard shows how deaths at these poorly-regulated bouts are often a result of negligence by referees or lack of immediate medical attention. (2003)
- **No. 19767.** "Scandal on Ice." Ed Bradley, Michael Radutzky and Tanya Simon of CBS News' 60 Minutes expose a widespread pattern of corruption in international figure skating, one of the world's most popular and profitable sports. (2002)
- **No. 19307.** "Fatalities Infrequent but Devastating." Sal Ruibal of *USA Today* examines heart-related athlete deaths, particularly youth dying on high-school football fields. (2000)
- **No. 18530.** "The Shame of Boxing." Jack Newfield of *The Nation* details corruption in the boxing industry that leads to bribery, rigged fights, empty commissions, meaningless rankings and physical danger for boxers. (2001)
- **No. 18693.** "The Foreign Game." Christine Vasconez, Doug Harris, Mike Wagner and Russell Carollo of the *Daily News* (Dayton, Ohio) look into the growing number of foreign athletes at high schools in the Dayton area and reveal a sophisticated network of sports agents, coaches and middlemen that frequently employs deception to conceal violations of high-school and college athletic regulations. (2001)
- **No. 18004.** "Top Dollar, Top Coaches." Steve Wieberg of *USA Today* examines skyrocketing college athletic salaries by taking a close look at two college coaches who make more than $2 million a year. This article also explores a mounting concern that universities are shifting away from education to focus more on entertainment. (2001)
- **No. 17898.** "Badgers Shoe Discounts May Violate NCAA Rules." Andy Hall and Todd Mulhern of the (Madison) *Wisconsin State Journal* examine the suspension of 26 Badger football players for accepting hundreds of dollars in unadvertised shoe discounts in violation of NCAA rules. Other university athletes who received the discount, including swimmers, runners, rowers, soccer players, golfers and basketball players, were ordered to pay back the discount difference to a charity. (2000)
- **No. 17245.** "High School Basketball Investigation." Steve Irvine, Billy Witz and Favsto Ramos of the *Press-Telegram* (Long Beach, Calif.) investigate Artesia High School's nationally recognized basketball program. Their series finds that a coach had violated numerous California prep sports rules in building his championship team. (2000).

David Stephenson | Lexington Herald-Leader



A rider endures single-digit temperatures to work horses at the Thoroughbred Center on Paris Pike in Lexington.

nursing home, which explained why he dropped off the grid. I called the home, which confirmed his residence but said he was at lunch. Eventually, I was able to sit down with the broken, destitute ex-jockey and use his poignant story to put a human face on the story.

At the same time, we needed to show how widespread the problem was. OSHA numbers were of little use because the industry is so small that it is lumped together with car racing and entertainment in Standard Industrial Classification – or SIC – codes, and injuries are typically reported by employers.

Further complicating the story was the fact that many backside workers are considered "independent contractors," and not employees.

Using public documents, I was able to get some scope of the frequency of serious track accidents and to quantify the lack of workers' comp coverage.

I requested records of city ambulance runs to the major racetracks and a large training center in Lexington. Most of the requests were denied, with the cities citing HIPAA.

By arguing that I was not seeking patient information – just time, date and chief complaint for runs to specific addresses – I got the cities to give me some records. Because tracks also use private ambulances, the data couldn't be definite. But it did give an illuminating look at the nature and frequency of injuries.

I eliminated those that might not be horse-related accidents or injuries. Starting with more than 600 runs over about five years, I dropped out all those citing chest pain or unconsciousness, for instance.

I also took out those that according to the time of the year might not have involved racing. For example, Keeneland Race Course in Lexington conducts massive horse auctions in September and November, so I eliminated runs to that track in those months.

That left 260 injuries at four facilities from January 1999 to March 2004, which worked out to a serious accident about every seven days, on average, in Kentucky racing.

More than 100 specifically cited horses as the cause of the injury.

That made having workers' comp vital for those handling horses. Kentucky law specifies that anyone with one employee must carry insurance. But I had been told over and over that this was not the case for trainers.

In researching how that could happen, I looked at the application for a Kentucky training license. The form asks trainers how many horses they have, if they have any employees who are required to be covered by workers' comp, and asks for policy information if they do. Trainers are supposed to initial a statement saying they will obtain insurance if they get employees. The state also asks for a copy of proof of insurance.

Inadequate coverage

The state wanted nearly $1,000 for an electronic copy of its complete license database. So, we took paper copies, at 10 cents a page, of the 1,400 applications for trainer or owner/trainer licenses and all the insurance proofs on file.

Those records proved vital. They showed that only about a third of all those with a training license said they were carrying workers' comp. Less than half of those actually had proof of insurance on file.

Most trainers claimed they had no employees, even if they said they had a dozen or more horses. In interviews, they said they do it all themselves, or use family or friends to help.

Through people like Autry and comparisons of Kentucky to other states, however, we were able to show that it is impossible even to saddle a horse in the paddock alone, and that family and friends can get hurt, too.

With projects editor John Voskuhl, we started the four-part series with Bramble's story of losing his arm; the second showed how the safety net that is supposed to help backsiders doesn't work; the third showed what a difference having coverage could make with Autry's story; and the fourth showed how Kentucky lags behind other states.

Before the end of the series, state and racetrack officials acknowledged the need for mandatory coverage of jockeys and exercise riders, as well as greater enforcement of existing workers' comp laws.

The governor has asked for legislation next year, and a U.S. representative from Kentucky recently opened a congressional investigation into the coverage inadequacies nationally.

Janet Patton has been a reporter at the Lexington Herald-Leader since 1998. Her coverage of the horse industry has won Loeb, Eclipse, Associated Press Sports Editors and North American Agricultural Journalists awards.

SPORTS
The Cost of Competition

STEROID SALES

Illegal drugs obtained on eBay despite site's security measures

By Mike Brunker
MSNBC.com

The eBay Internet auction site is one of the brightest successes in e-commerce, but it also is a safe harbor for a variety of thieves, scam artists and other crooks. Among them, until recently, were drug dealers who used a simple ruse to sell illegal anabolic steroids on the site.

The steroid sales came to a halt in January, when a phone call to eBay's spokesman to inquire about the presence of the illegal strength-enhancing drugs triggered an all-out sweep to remove listings and prompted threats of legal action against the sellers.

The call came at the tail end of a three-month investigation by MSNBC.com during which dozens of items that appeared to be anabolic steroids were advertised and sold on eBay. A few of the auctions occurred in the open but many used the simple dodge of listing the drugs as "books about steroids" – often accompanied by photos showing the drugs – to avoid detection by the site's security team.

The biggest obstacle in reporting the story was determining whether the items were in fact illegal steroids – not just a scheme to dupe would-be musclemen by selling them bogus drugs. That required some unusual reportorial tactics to avoid the legal jeopardy that the purchase and delivery of illegal drugs would bring.

Powerful allies

More about how that was accomplished later, but first a bit of background on eBay and how the steroids story came looking for me, rather than vice versa.

Like many of the other eBay stories I've done, the steroid sales story was the result of a tip from a reader, a great example of how aggressive reporting on a topic can build its own momentum. That's especially true when you're writing on the Internet, where links inviting readers to e-mail a reporter make it exceptionally easy for them to share their stories.

Since colleague Bob Sullivan and I began writing about fraud on eBay in the late 1990s, we have received both professional recognition – a public service award from the Society of Professional Journalists in 2002 – and, more important, a steady stream of leads and tips that have led to numerous site-leading stories about vast frauds, counterfeit rings and illegal practices such as "shill" bidding.

Reporting on eBay, which is publicly traded on the NASDAQ exchange, has its own special set of challenges. EBay officials are notoriously tight-lipped when it comes to discussing fraud, sticking to the oft-repeated assertion a mere 0.01 percent of the millions of transactions conducted on the site each day are fraudulent – a statistic that anecdotal evidence suggests does not tell the full story. EBay officials also decline to discuss individual cases, citing privacy concerns, or the anti-fraud measures that the site's security team employs, saying that doing so would only help the crooks avoid them.

That puts a reporter trying to look into an allegation of criminal activity at a disadvantage. Fortunately, the great wall of silence can sometimes be circumvented through use of the site's "feedback" and "reputation" tools, which record transactions and satisfaction ratings for buyers and sellers and provide a list of possible victims in the event of a major scam.

On other occasions, it's possible to take advantage of a powerful ally – a dedicated band of eBay users who conduct their own investigations into wrongdoing in the face of what they say is a laissez-faire attitude by eBay's police. These eBay "vigilantes" aren't hard to find; do an Internet search on "eBay fraud" or in news groups and you should have little problem finding someone willing to assist you.

While the independent investigators have proven invaluable on many eBay stories, it quickly became apparent that they wouldn't be much help in chasing the steroids tip.

Unmarked pills

The only way to find out whether the items

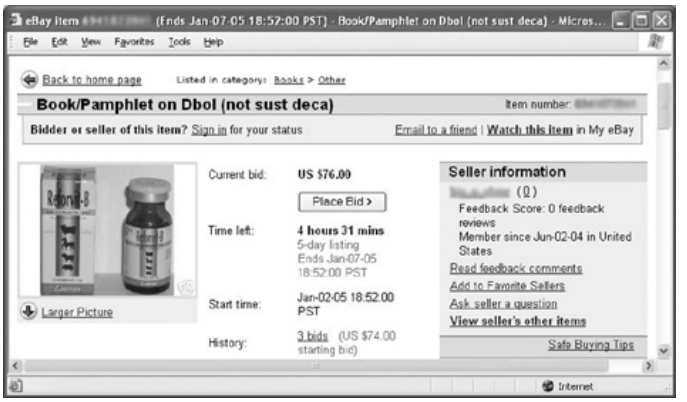
being sold on eBay were actually steroids would be to purchase some and have them tested. But conversations with a lawyer who specializes in steroid cases and an MSNBC.com attorney made it clear it would be rash to do so myself. If the drugs happened to be intercepted by postal inspectors, I could face up to a year in prison and/or a minimum fine of $1,000 for possession of Schedule III controlled substances under federal law.

Short of asking someone else to run into such legal jeopardy or finding a talkative insider in the shadowy world of online steroids sellers and buyers, I appeared to be at an impasse.

My big break came when I spoke with officials at the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, an organization that represents state agencies that regulate pharmacies and, as I found out, has helped law enforcement agencies in investigations of illegal sales of prescription drugs over the Internet.

After outlining the story I was working on, emphasizing the public service aspect of unmasking steroid sales on one of the most popular sites in the Internet, the NABP agreed to work with me and have one of its investigators purchase some of the apparently illegal products.

In October and November, an NABP investigator purchased four items on eBay that appeared to be steroids, paying between $90 and $140 for each order. In two cases, eBay shut down the auctions before they ran their course. But even then, the transaction still was completed, as the seller simply shifted consummation of the deal outside the eBay universe.



When the products arrived in the mail, all appeared to be anabolic steroids – injectable solutions in factory packaging, oral tablets labeled in Spanish as being for veterinary use and unmarked pills in a plastic bag. But to be sure, I needed to have them tested.

The NAPB does not have the capability to test steroids, so I got back on the phone and began cold calling drug testing labs. It didn't take me long to find Aegis Sciences Corp., a Nashville, Tenn., company that is a leader in testing for steroids.

Once again, after I explained the basics of the story and emphasized the public service aspect, company officials agreed to perform the complex and expensive tests without charge.

Ten working days later, I had my answer from the lab: All four products turned out to be just what the sellers claimed they were: anabolic steroids like Dianabol, Sustanon and testosterone propionate.

In addition to putting a stop to the sale of steroids on one of the most popular sites on the Web, the story generated a considerable tide of e-mail and coverage from other media outlets.

My reporting also brought forward the surprising fact that the sale of steroids on eBay had been prominently mentioned at a congressional hearing in the summer of 2004.

At the July 13 hearing of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, Sen. Charles Grassley called the easy availability of steroids on eBay "outrageous and unacceptable" and noted that "young athletes (also) can buy the needles used to inject the illegal steroids directly into their bodies on eBay."

Strangely, though the hearing resulted in letters being sent from the caucus to eBay and the Drug Enforcement Administration, little, if any, action was taken to crack down on the sales until the days before the MSNBC.com article was published.

Mike Brunker is West Coast news editor at MSNBC.com, where he has worked since August 1996. Prior to that, he spent 15 years working at newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area, the last 11 of them at the San Francisco Examiner. You can read the steroids story at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6809149 and other eBay stories in the "Lure of Online Auctions" report at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3038441.

Tipsheets from the IRE RESOURCE CENTER

To get pointers from journalists who have done sports-related investigations, check out the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter). Here is a sample of some of the tipsheets available:

- **No. 1596.** "Beyond the scores: Probing the sports beat." Tom Farrey of ESPN.com provides guidance for how to research a student athlete's educational background and determine whether scores used to meet NCAA eligibility requirements were obtained at accredited schools. (2002)
- **No. 1546.** "A whole new game." Suzanne Hoholik of *The Columbus Dispatch* gives a step-by-step account of the Web sites and databases accessed in her investigation of the Ohio High School Athletic Association. (2002)
- **No. 1545.** "Making CAR part of the team." Rick Linsk, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, provides a list of records sources that proved instrumental in his coverage of the basketball academic fraud scandal at the University of Minnesota. (2002)
- **No. 1066.** "Investigating the home team." Mike McGraw of *The Kansas City Star* gives information useful in launching an investigation into college sports and athletic department deals. (1999)
- **No. 1065.** "Ten thoughts on covering stadium projects." Bill Muller of **The Arizona Republic** gives tips on covering stadium projects and deals. (1999)
- **No. 802.** "Sports: From the field to the stadium." Tom Witosky of *The Des Moines Register* provides a list of ideas by which to turn regular sports stories into in-depth investigations. He also looks at the essentials for covering the business of sports, such as estimating the value of a franchise and tracking a team's seasonal success. (1998)

INSIDE DEAL

Reporting leads to charges against mayor, associates in plan to profit from redevelopment of industrial site

BY PETER PANEPENTO AND KEVIN FLOWERS
ERIE (PA.) *TIMES-NEWS*

Reporters need to know how to distinguish a good tip from a bad one.

Good tips open the doors to stories that unearth secrets and prompt changes. Bad tips lead to dead ends, frustration and wasted time.

On a January morning in 2004, we received one of the best tips of our careers: a tip that prompted criminal investigations that eventually led to Erie Mayor Rick Filippi's criminal indictment on state public corruption charges.

A familiar source suggested we look into land sales near a shuttered paper mill on the city of Erie's east side. The paper mill was owned by International Paper Co., the global papermaking conglomerate that had shut down its century-old Erie papermaking plant in 2002, eliminating 775 jobs.

In the wake of IP's decision, Erie's political and economic development leaders – most notably the mayor – had stressed the need to redevelop the site, which covers more than 200 acres of property on Lake Erie.

But until October 2003, the public was not aware that MTR Gaming Group Inc. – a West Virginia horse racing and casino company – was in talks with city officials about building an $80 million horse racing track and entertainment complex on the vacant site.

Our source suggested there was something fishy lurking below the surface. Filippi, the source said, was part of an investment group that had been quietly buying property next to the paper mill – property that would likely skyrocket in value if MTR decided to build there.

The challenge, of course, was proving whether the tip was true, especially since our source did not know the name of the investment group, or what properties it had purchased.

Corporation filings

We started by checking Erie County's property and tax records Web site to obtain a list of properties within a block of the paper mill that had sold during the past two years. Once we had compiled a substantial list of properties from that database, we visited the Erie County Courthouse to have a more detailed look at property records.

We were looking for patterns. Specifically, whether anyone had bought multiple properties in the area during that time frame.

That courthouse visit proved our tip might have merit.

The records showed a company called Aiko Acquisition LLC had bought four properties adjacent to or near the paper mill site in 2003 – an abandoned gas station, a single-family home, a three-unit apartment house and a vacant lot.

> "That afternoon, the mayor issued a short press release saying he had spoken with Patberg and that Patberg had agreed to sell the properties to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest."

Another courthouse computer search, this time of the mortgages for those four properties, showed the same person –Rolf Patberg – had signed on Aiko's behalf for each sale.

Patberg's name rang familiar in the *Times-News* offices.

Patberg is the mayor's Pittsburgh-based law partner and a good friend and campaign contributor of the mayor. The two also were fraternity brothers at Erie's Gannon University in the late 1980s.

The records offered no direct connection to Filippi. But we had the genesis of a story that would explain to our readers that a friend and business partner of the mayor had been buying property near the abandoned mill.

After gathering all the information we could about Aiko, including checking the company's licensed limited corporation filings with the Pennsylvania Department of State, we questioned Filippi about his knowledge of Aiko.

In that initial interview, conducted in the mayor's City Hall office, Filippi said he was aware that Patberg was part of a small company that had been buying property in the city, but that he knew little about the details of Patberg's transactions.

The mayor also told us he had no connection to the company, that he wasn't aware if there were any other investors in the company, that he hadn't offered Patberg any information about MTR's interest in the site, and that he believed Patberg's investment was good for the city.

Patberg did not return our telephone calls. But along with our editors, executive editor Rick Sayers, managing editor Pat Howard and assigning editors Pat Cuneo and Doug Oathout, we decided we had enough for a story, especially with the property records and Filippi's explanation.

Key confidants

Our initial story ran on Friday, Jan. 16, 2004. Reaction from City Hall was immediate.

That afternoon, the mayor issued a short press release saying he had spoken with Patberg and that Patberg had agreed to sell the properties to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33 ➢

Rich Forsgren | Erie Times-News

This is the former paper mill site with the powerplant still standing. To the left are houses on Hess Avenue.

SEX SCANDAL

Rumors, document hints, interviews lead to long-held secret about former governor

By Nigel Jaquiss
Willamette Week (Portland, Ore.)

Breaking the story of former Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl required a lot of luck.

Of the three general-circulation newspapers in Portland, *Willamette Week* has by far the smallest editorial staff. We were also – now know – the last to hear the tip that Goldschmidt might have abused a city hall intern and babysitter for his children over three years in the mid-1970s, when he was Portland's mayor.

Reporting the story taught me several lessons I hope will help me in the future.

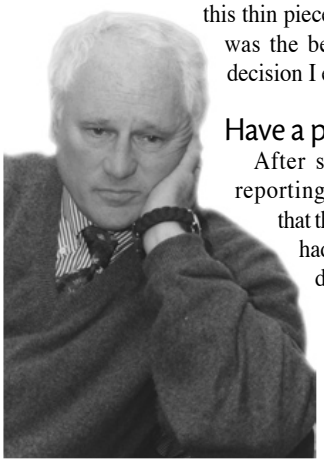
Be willing to suspend disbelief.

When I first heard the rumor that Goldschmidt might have abused a young girl 30 years earlier, my response was twofold: He wouldn't have risked his White House-sized potential that way; and, second, if he had, there's no way such behavior could have stayed secret for so long.

All reporters hear extraordinary rumors. We probably couldn't do our work if we pursued each one. But before dismissing them, it's worth asking that simplest of questions: Are there any documents available?

In Goldschmidt's case, I was fortunate enough to stumble upon part of a court record hinting that the sexual abuse was more than a rumor: four pages of a conservatorship established for a young woman who had suffered a "personal injury" in the mid-'70s, beginning when she was 14.

The document named the girl but didn't name Goldschmidt or specify sexual abuse. But following this thin piece of information was the best professional decision I ever made.


Former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt.

Have a plan.

After several days of reporting, I established that the alleged victim had grown up four doors from Goldschmidt and was the daughter of one of his mayoral aides. In other words, it appeared that there just might be something here.

Given the story's explosiveness, my editors and I decided not to make further calls until I knew as much as possible.

The first step was to locate every document with the girl's name on it. I requested school yearbooks, arrest reports, court records and property records, and began combing Goldschmidt's archives for any links to the woman.

The documents revealed this woman to be a tragic figure whose life had descended into substance abuse, mental illness and petty crime after the "personal injury."

The full conservatorship document showed that in 1994 she had reached an out-of-court settlement with someone that bound her and her family to silence.

> "The full conservatorship document showed that in 1994 she had reached an out-of-court settlement with someone that bound her and her family to silence."

In a stack of arrest reports I found the first piece of paper with the victim and Goldschmidt's name on it. After being arrested in 1986, she told police, "You can't touch me, Neil Goldschmidt is my best friend." While it proved nothing, the document established a connection.

Not long after, I drove to a rural courthouse. In the middle of an otherwise unremarkable DUI file, I found another connection. The victim had missed several court dates. In a filing, her lawyer explained that she was suffering post-traumatic stress disorder after being raped in Seattle a few years earlier. He included an excerpt from the Seattle trial to prove his point. The except proved to be a crucial thread.

Even solo stories are a team effort.

When I learned about the Seattle rape, I called Philip Dawdy, a former colleague now at the *Seattle Weekly*.

Dawdy dropped everything and went to the courthouse. After reviewing several hundred pages of records, he found passages in which the victim referred to prior sexual abuse at the hands of a family friend 21 years her senior.

Although Goldschmidt's name never appeared, the descriptions mapped perfectly to the conservatorship document, as did the age difference between him and the victim.

Others provided crucial assistance to me as well. Both *WW* editor Mark Zusman and news editor John Schrag conducted key interviews. Zusman talked several times with the victim's mother, who lives in Europe and with whom he shared many acquaintances. Early on, Schrag convinced one of the victim's former boyfriends to share what he knew.

Without the help of another colleague, Ellen Fagg, I probably never would have gotten to interview the victim. For weeks, I pushed to call her but Zusman restrained me until I had exhausted all documents and gotten confirmations of the abuse from half a dozen sources. Then he suggested that Fagg make the initial contact because the victim had been abused by men for most of her life and was unlikely to respond positively to an unexpected call from a male reporter.

Interview everybody you can in person.

Fagg and I flew to Las Vegas to interview the victim. Despite all the documents and the confirmations her friends provided, the victim swore Goldschmidt never touched her.

Her denial was crushing, though I came away more convinced than ever that the story was true. While the denial was a huge disappointment, the opportunity to meet the badly damaged woman whose life I'd been re-creating for a month increased my understanding how her life had taken an entirely opposite tack from Goldschmidt's.

Back in Portland with nothing to lose, I began dropping in unannounced at the offices and homes of hostile or unwilling sources. I was persistent but polite. The more I learned, the more I used that information to persuade others to open up and share with me the details of a secret that many of them had been keeping for decades. Those visits – even when I got thrown out – collectively provided confirmation beyond any reasonable doubt.

Let your sources set the rules – at least initially.

Some reporters refuse to let sources go off the record. When the subject is explosive, however, that kind of prohibition is self-defeating.

Many sources I located led marginal existences and felt justifiably vulnerable. Even a number of white-collar professionals feared Goldschmidt's influence.

But given the chance to speak off the record, a couple dozen sources told a remarkable and consistent story. As we approached publication, I re-interviewed many of them, asking people to reconsider going on the record, permit some level

of attribution or at least sign statements to be used in the event of litigation. I recorded many of those re-interviews.

The Web is the great equalizer.

With four staff news reporters, *Willamette Week* operates at a significant disadvantage to other local media. As we approached publication after two months of reporting, I lived in constant fear that competing reporters would learn what I was pursuing.

When my editor and our lawyer decided I had enough substantiation to proceed even with the victim and her mother's denials, I called Goldschmidt to ask for an interview. He ignored my calls, so I sent a letter to his lawyer summarizing my findings.

Rather than responding, Goldschmidt began a series of resignations from public positions and summoned *The Oregonian* (which had not been pursuing the story) to confess. At that stage, I had already written several drafts of the story but saw my scoop vaporizing. I was a wreck.

Fortunately, cooler heads in the newsroom suggested a solution to the fact that we would not publish again for six days: simply putting what we knew on our Web site. That strategy was less satisfying than breaking the news in print but just as effective. Other media picked up the story immediately, giving us full credit.

Mistakes.

When I interviewed the victim in Nevada, she recorded our conversation. Midway through, she stepped away from the table. My colleague asked me what I thought of her denials. Forgetting the tape recorder, I replied with some emphasis that I thought she was lying.

I was right. But hubris – especially on tape – is unlikely to endear a reporter to a source.

The other mistake I made was never attempting a drop-in interview with Goldschmidt. I might have failed to make contact, but any meeting with him would have added to my story.

Many people have asked whether it was a mistake to approach him a full week before publication. At the time, we did it out of respect. We knew this story would be a life-changing event for him and wanted to give him a chance to get his affairs in order. In retrospect, we may have given him too much time. It also has become clear, however, that he knew well in advance that the call was coming and had an exit strategy in place.

Nigel Jaquiss is a reporter at Willamette Week in Portland, Ore., where he has worked since 1998. He has won three national Education Writers Association First Place Awards, the 2004 IRE Award for weekly newspapers and the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. Prior to joining Willamette Week, Jaquiss traded oil for 11 years in New York and Singapore.

Land deal

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

The move appeared to quell the public's concerns until a few days later.

Pressure was mounting from the Erie City Council to ask the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission to look into the deals to see if Filippi might have had a conflict of interest.

Then, Patberg returned one of our many phone calls. During that phone interview, we received another crucial piece of information, one that would help further expand our probe.

Patberg called us to say that the Aiko land deals were above board and that the mayor had not revealed any secret information. But during the course of the interview, Patberg mentioned the name of another Aiko investor, Eric Purchase – a well-known Erie lawyer who had been Filippi's campaign manager.

Now, we had two of Filippi's key confidants involved in the land deals. We went back to Filippi with a slew of additional questions, including why he did not mention Purchase's involvement beforehand and whether he was associated with any of Aiko's other principals.

The mayor then admitted to us that he knew about Purchase's involvement for more than a year. It was the first in a series of credibility hits the mayor would take as we pursued the story over the next 11 months.

Between January and December 2004, we also:

- Persuaded an Erie contractor to go on the record with his claims that he was paid for work on Aiko properties and to produce a canceled check drawn on the account of a real-estate company partly owned by the mayor. The contractor also said the mayor's longtime friend and former chief of staff, Jeff Bucci, was involved with the Aiko land deals and had coordinated the contractor's work on the properties.
- Learned that Purchase had accompanied the mayor to a private negotiation session with the racetrack developers at a time when Purchase was an Aiko investor. Purchase's involvement in that meeting was confirmed by two others who had been involved in the negotiations.
- Combed through city bills and travel records to discover that Patberg had accompanied Filippi on a December 2003 chartered plane trip to the state capital in Harrisburg. Filippi was in Harrisburg to meet with a key official in Gov. Ed Rendell's administration.
- Researched state-mandated financial disclosure forms to show readers that Bucci had invested in Aiko.
- Filed more than a dozen Right-to-Know Act requests with the city, which yielded hundreds of pages of memos and other documents that helped us lay out the timeline of secret negotiations between MTR Gaming and the city regarding the proposed racetrack. In establishing our timeline, we found that Aiko was formed as a corporation in March 2002 – the same month that MTR approached the city about the paper plant property.

The timeline we developed through those documents contradicted one of Filippi's main explanations regarding the land deals. The mayor had contended that information about the prospects of redevelopment at IP had been widely reported in the news media and that anyone could have speculated on property in that area. MTR's interest in the IP site did not become public until October 2003, 18 months after MTR first approached the city. It was during that 18-month period that Aiko bought or made agreements to buy the four adjacent properties.

Our reporting prompted investigations by Pennsylvania's State Ethics Commission, the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In December 2004, after convening a grand jury to look into the case, the state Attorney General's Office filed felony corruption charges against Filippi, Patberg and Purchase. Bucci avoided charges as part of an immunity deal with investigators in exchange for his testimony.

The case is now before the courts and Filippi, who maintains his innocence, faces up to 25 years in jail if convicted on all counts.

Our investigation paid off through diligence, time management and a bit of luck. We were lucky to get such a good tip, but we worked sources and contacts while still covering our daily beats. We avoided using anonymous sources to give our work added credibility. We also quickly identified what documents we needed to move the story along and talked frequently about what we were finding out.

At a smaller newspaper such as ours, time is a precious commodity and it often prevents reporters from getting the chance to conduct complex investigations. Our investigation paid off because we were able to determine quickly that our lead had merit and that we could efficiently pursue the story while managing our regular beats. To do that, we needed to communicate constantly, to jump quickly on new leads and state a convincing case to our editors that we could continue to advance the story.

Kevin Flowers is the urban-issues reporter for the Erie Times-News, focusing on city government. Peter Panepento is the newspaper's business reporter. The pair won several investigative reporting honors this year, including an IRE Award, a National Headliner Award and the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association's Keystone Press Award.

BOND DEALS

Despite campaign reform, municipal bonding still tends to follow campaign contributions

BY DAVID DIETZ
BLOOMBERG MARKETS

Before 1994, it was anything goes in the world of campaign money and municipal bonds. Any Wall Street dealer who wanted bond business from a government agency could write a fat check to the officials who could see that they got the deal.

As always, the politicians were only too happy to accept the money – if they didn't actually solicit the donations in the first place.

This cozy world was broken up when federal regulators slapped severe limits on contributions and required public reporting of donations.

Or was it?

Two recent articles in *Bloomberg Markets* magazine show that "pay to play" – making contributions and winning bond deals – is hardly dead. The stories, published in January 2004 and February 2005, used campaign finance reports, regulatory records and local government documents to report how money is flowing around the rules in greater quantities than ever.

RESOURCES

Some resources to check if you're doing a similar story:

- Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board. Writes regulations governing municipal bond sales. www.msrb.org
- Securities and Exchange Commission. Enforces municipal bond sale rules. Its Office of Municipal Securities: www.sec.gov/info/municipal.shtml
- Government Finance Officers Association. Trade group for city and county treasurers, others. www.gfoa.org
- National Association of Independent Public Finance Advisers. Trade group of people who help governments with bond needs. www.naipfa.com
- Bond Market Association. Trade group of municipal bond underwriters. www.bondmarkets.com

Also, some worthwhile publications include: "Handbook for Muni-Bond Issuers," by Joe Mysak, Bloomberg Press, and the Bond Buyer Yearbook, which is an annual guide to underwriters and financial advisers and a statistical resource.

In one instance, a bank that underwrites billions of dollars in California bonds each year used loopholes in the regulations to give $39,100 to the campaign treasury and favorite charities of State Treasurer Philip Angelides, now a candidate for governor.

And this is what's visible on the surface. A recent federal trial in Philadelphia delved into how an underwriter slipped the city's treasurer $10,000 in cash and a $58,000 trip to the Super Bowl in exchange for bond work.

Giving has shifted

As huge as it is, municipal finance doesn't get the attention it deserves. About $2 trillion in municipal bonds are outstanding in the United States – enough to keep the state of Florida running for 32 years at present dollars. Money raised publicly from investors to pay for schools, roads and parks often doesn't receive the scrutiny that the everyday flow of government dollars does.

Taxpayers have to pony up if bankers get the upper hand, and they often do. About 81 percent of all municipal bonds are sold without competitive bidding today, meaning that banks have virtual carte blanche to set the sale price and their fees unless the local agency hires a financial adviser to watch over deals. Once banks buy bonds from a school or city, they're marked up and resold to investors.

Academic studies going back 25 years show that borrowing costs rise when there's no competition. Depending on the size of a deal, issuers can pay millions of dollars extra over the life of bonds by not getting the lowest interest rate possible through competitive bidding.

The 1994 rules, enacted by the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, a self-regulatory group, stopped some abuses. The board, whose rules are enforced by the Securities and Exchange Commission, set a $250 limit on contributions by municipal finance professionals for each election.

But much of the giving just shifted. Underwriters started paying consultants to help get business, and many consultants gave. Money flowed to officials through political party accounts. And the rules didn't keep others at an underwriting firm from giving.

That meant, for instance, that William Harrison, the chief executive of J.P. Morgan Chase, the sixth-largest underwriter of municipal bonds in the country, wasn't tied up by the rules in 2002 when he and nine subordinates gave $14,100 to Angelides' campaign treasury. J.P. Morgan says it abides by campaign-giving regulations.

The 1994 rules also didn't cover non-bankers, with the result that bond lawyers and financial consultants trolling for business aren't bound by the $250 ceiling. And the regulations haven't stopped huge amounts from flowing to bond referendum campaigns for new schools and civic improvements. MSRB rules don't cover such giving.

For bankers, that lapse is a wellspring. The *Bloomberg Markets* stories looked at California instances where bankers who gave large sums to bond campaigns won the right, if voters approved the issue, to sell the bonds on a no-bid basis.

Result: usually higher fees for the banks – and often-higher borrowing costs.

Enticing investors

The public record is a boon in municipal finance reporting. The most important document is the so-called Official Statement of a bond sale, the equivalent of a prospectus in the sale of corporate stock. The OS is expansive, detailing the purpose of the bonds and how they will be paid off, fees collected by banks and the identities of bond lawyers and other advisers.

The document, which is available from the issuing agency, has another valuable use. It contains extensive information on the economic health of the agency issuing the bonds and the community where it's situated. That makes it a must-read for a reporter whose beat takes in the agency.

You can use the OS to see whether a bank that has negotiated the deal without competitive bidding may have charged too much for its work. You have to be careful here. Bonds differ in many respects, and it's important to find a similar bond if you're going to make comparisons.

The size, structure and purpose should be similar, and look for bonds with equal credit ratings that were sold around the same time. That's not always easy, and you may need a municipal financial adviser to help you (see accompanying box).

Beyond differences in fees, a key to determining how an issuer fared in a no-bid deal is the interest rate set by the bank. Some no-bid deals will stack up favorably. Remember, though, that banks want the highest rate they can get because that will entice investors when the bank goes to resell the bonds.

Comparing yields on similar issues is possible through data in state treasurer's offices, which generally track bond issues. If you have access to a Bloomberg terminal, that's a ready avenue. You'll still likely need expert help in calculating how much more the agency you're looking at might have paid than another issuer with a comparable sale.

The overriding issue for us was, why are so many bonds sold without competition? After all, agencies sell many goods and services by competitive bid – why not bonds?

Former bankers who worked in municipal finance

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Kenny Kemp | Charleston Gazette

Former West Virginia legislator Jerry Mezzatesta, right, and his wife, Mary Lou, are joined in the courtroom by their Charleston lawyer. They pleaded no contest to a charge that they destroyed legislative computer records.

RECORD DECEIT

State passes sweeping ethics reform after legislator concocts stories, documents

BY ERIC EYRE
CHARLESTON (W.VA.) GAZETTE

I've had my share of bizarre stories as a reporter at the *Charleston Gazette* in West Virginia.

My colleague Scott Finn and I exposed how a guy named "Pork Chop" fleeced the state out of millions of dollars after floods ravaged the southern part of the state. I wrote about a disgruntled AK-47-toting school maintenance worker who calmly walked into a school board meeting I was covering and sprayed bullets into the crowd. There also was the time a local middle school principal thought it would be a neat idea to bring his dog to school, and the pooch mauled the face of a sixth-grader.

But perhaps the strangest tale of all came last year during my coverage of Jerry Mezzatesta, a nine-term legislator and one of the most powerful lawmakers in West Virginia. Who would have thought that a legislator would respond to my FOIA requests with phony documents? Who would have guessed that he would order his employees to download the entire state code related to education onto state capitol office computers to conceal electronic files I had requested under FOIA? Who would have thought that he would join his wife in the office in the middle of the night and wipe out the hard drives of state computers?

I wrote 70 stories about Mezzatesta over the past year, and filed a similar number of FOIA requests.

Ethics complaints filed

The Mezzatesta tale started in March 2004. A school official from southern West Virginia alerted me that Mezzatesta was the only legislator/school employee in the state who continued to collect a school job salary during legislative sessions. Mezzatesta worked as a "community specialist" for a school district in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. No other West Virginia school district had a community specialist on its payroll. It was unclear what Mezzatesta did to earn his $60,000 salary. (I later showed that he did virtually no work.)

So, I wrote a story about Mezzatesta's "double-dipping" – collecting his school job pay and legislative pay simultaneously.

From there, the tips poured in. Five years ago, Mezzatesta had signed an agreement with the West Virginia Ethics Commission not to use his powerful position as chairman of the West Virginia House of Delegate's Education Committee to solicit state Department of Education grants for his local school district. (Mezzatesta's legislative position essentially allowed him to control the department's budget from year to year.) But I found out that Mezzatesta had indeed requested several grants from the Department of Education. I also showed that Mezzatesta had diverted the bulk of one of those grants to volunteer fire departments in his home county. Mezzatesta passed out the checks during a Democratic party fundraiser.

Two ethics complaints were filed against Mezzatesta – for double dipping and breaking his promise not to solicit grants. But months later, the Ethics Commission cleared him of any wrongdoing, based in large part on an affidavit Mezzatesta gave the commission, saying he never solicited grants. His boss (the local school district superintendent) and West Virginia's state schools superintendent filed similar affidavits. The case was closed. But several weeks later, I obtained a copy of a letter in which Mezzatesta directly asked the state schools superintendent for a $100,000 grant. The superintendent failed to release the letter in response to my previous FOIA requests.

Mezzatesta had a quick answer for the letter to the state superintendent. He went on statewide talk radio. It was all a misunderstanding, he said. And he had his own letter to prove it. In the letter, Mezzatesta wrote that the state superintendent must have misunderstood him, that he never requested grant money for his school district. "I hope you realized I was not soliciting monies," Mezzatesta said in the letter.

After the radio show, I called the state superintendent and asked for a copy of the letter, which Mezzatesta's lawyer had delivered to the department and the Ethics Commission that afternoon. The superintendent said it was the first time he had ever seen the letter.

When I first examined it, I thought, "This is too good to be true" for Mezzatesta. Turns out it was.

I already had copies of Mezzatesta's correspondence to constituents from the same time period. I noticed the letter Mezzatesta gave the ethics agency was on stationery with letterhead that was different than the letterhead that existed at the time. It turned out that the stationery wasn't ordered until weeks later. The person who orders stationery confirmed this, and I got the purchase orders through FOIA. In other words, Mezzatesta's "too good to be true" letter was on stationery with letterhead that didn't exist at the time the letter was supposedly written.

Still, Mezzatesta concocted a whacky story about how the letter must have sat on his desk and wasn't printed on the new letterhead until a month later. And he produced another letter from the same time period to support his claim. But that letter, I later showed, was a fake, too. I found an original copy of the letter at the governor's office – with the correct letterhead – and the date had been changed. In all, six phony letters were created, all released in response to my FOIA requests, all designed to throw me off the trail.

When I requested electronic copies (Word files, which would show the date the letter was originally created, and when it was last changed) of the letters from the House education office computers, Mezzatesta went into complete cover-up mode.

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CHILD ABUSE

Disclosure laws passed after battle for records; compliance of law tested

BY GERRY LANOSGA AND ANGIE MORESCHI
WTHR-INDIANAPOLIS

Public records are the foundation for many, if not most, good investigative projects. But this is a story about a project for which many of the key records were not public – and about how our persistent reporting led to changes that opened a whole new category of records in our state.

It began with 4-year-old Anthony Bars. He died in January 2002, his little body battered and severely emaciated. He weighed just 24 pounds, half what a normal child his age should weigh. It was a horrific case of abuse by adoptive foster parents, but it received little notice in the media, garnering just a brief in the local paper. It took five months for prosecutors to file charges against the parents and a year and a half more for the case to come to trial.

All that time, there was a secret about the case waiting to be unearthed. We learned about it from a source while we were in the middle of an investigation into child abuse that occurs in state-licensed foster homes. It turned out the state hadn't done a proper background check before placing Anthony Bars into the home where he ended up getting killed. A proper check would have revealed a history of abuse by the adoptive father, including a battery conviction for tying his daughter to an exercise bike and whipping her with an extension cord.

The Bars case became the centerpiece of what would turn into 16 months of coverage of problems in Indiana's child welfare system. The first series showed how the state was failing to protect children it had removed from abusive homes and placed into foster care. In addition to the Anthony Bars example, we documented numerous instances of children abused in foster care. We were surprised to find the federal government actually has a standard for the number of such cases states are allowed to have while receiving federal funds – and we discovered that Indiana was 28 percent above that limit.

Put to the test

For that initial report, we had to rely on sources to provide us with internal documents on the case. In Indiana at the time, all Child Protective Services case reports were exempt from disclosure under the state's public records law.

After we brought our findings to state legislators, however, they responded by introducing a bill to open up those files in cases in which children died of abuse or neglect. We continued to push the issue with dozens of stories reporting developments and the progress of the proposed legislation. The bill was passed and signed in the spring of 2004, creating a new set of public records and paving the way for the next phase of our reporting.

When the law went into effect the following July, we promptly put it to the test. We wanted to be the first to attempt an exhaustive look at child deaths in the state, so we asked the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) for all abuse and neglect fatality files for the previous two years. It wasn't an easy road. We faced roadblocks from FSSA, which stalled and avoided our requests and forced us to get our lawyer involved, and from some county judges who interpreted the law extremely narrowly.

Under the law, the agency is required to forward the requested files to judges in the counties where the deaths occurred. The judges are charged with redacting any "non-relevant" information. The process took months. First, the state took an inordinate amount of time to release the records, allowing them to trickle out one or two at a time. Some judges, in turn, heavily redacted the files. Among the items blacked out on some files: victims' names; perpetrators' names; and even portions of published newspaper articles included in the files. Reconstructing the cases from the files became a major test of our shoe-leather skills.

As we pored over hundreds of pages of records, we identified many issues of poor compliance with the letter and spirit of the new disclosure requirements. In some instances, the names of caseworkers had been redacted – a direct violation of the law. We made another crucial discovery: We were not receiving records that showed when the state had contact with a child or child's family prior to the death. State officials argued that previous contacts were not always relevant to the death, but legislators we interviewed disagreed.

Ultimately, we decided to petition the judge in our home county – the state's largest – to force the agency to provide complete records on two specific cases. In a pointed order last December, juvenile court Judge James Payne rebuked FSSA, listing 11 categories of records not included in the documents the agency had originally submitted to the court.

"The error if any in providing these documents should be made to over provision and not under provision," Payne wrote. "To do otherwise leaves the impression that the records have been 'cleansed' and therefore confidence in the review process would cease."

Payne, who since has been tapped by the new governor to take over the division that oversees CPS, came down squarely on the side of disclosure when it comes to records of prior contact.

"The events of government involvement in the child's life, particularly through DFC or OFC involvement, are relevant in leading to the death of a child," he wrote.

The battle for the records dragged on for months and racked up major legal fees. In the end, we didn't get all the records we wanted, but we were able to piece together a story based on the records we did have and based on dozens of interviews with family members, police, prosecutors, judges, attorneys, legislators, social workers and state child welfare officials.

The result was a second series that aired in November. Among other findings, the stories revealed a significant number of deaths that happened despite pre-existing state intervention. In some instances, in fact, caseworkers had contact with families mere days before a child died.

We also did a segment exposing how FSSA had chosen not to comply completely with the new law, which prompted the authors of the legislation to seek amendments to make the language more forceful with regard to what records must be disclosed.

As the death files came in, we logged each one into a database we created to track the cases, including details such as the classification of death and whether the state had any previous contact with the child or the child's family. This allowed us to easily put together an in-depth online presentation of our research, including a description and details of each case.

Our stories increased the amount of information available to the public in the critical area of child protection. Especially with a new legal category of disclosure, we viewed it as our obligation to put forth a vigorous effort to enforce the right of public inspection of these records. We believe our persistence in pushing for these records, including our willingness to engage our First Amendment attorney, set an important precedent for members of the public or media who might seek these documents in the future.

Producer Gerry Lanosga joined WTHR's investigative unit in 1997 after a decade as a newspaper reporter in Indianapolis. Angie Moreschi has been an investigative reporter at WTHR since 2002. Coverage of this story won an IRE Medal.

Record deceit

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In early August, I checked state Capitol sign-in attendance sheets and noticed that only one person – a part-time secretary – was working at the House education office on the day the fake letter was created. That same day, a source at the Capitol called me and told me her friend, the secretary who worked for Mezzatesta, had just confessed to typing the fake letter, and that Mezzatesta's wife had directed her to do it. I filed a FOIA request for electronic copies of all letters on her computer. I also called and left a message at her home and office. I spoke to her briefly that night, but she declined to comment.

The next morning, she spoke to West Virginia's House speaker, who launched an investigation. The following morning, Mezzatesta checked himself into a hospital, complaining about chest pains. Three days later, the House speaker – who had defended Mezzatesta for months – removed his longtime ally as House Education Committee chairman.

The Ethics Commission also reopened its inquiry – the first time it had reopened a case in the agency's 15-year history.

Sweeping reforms

Last fall, the House speaker released a detailed report about the cover-up. My stories were included in the report, and I was cited throughout. Amid the cover-up, Mezzatesta lambasted me, telling his secretary who typed the phony document: "I'll have that son of a bitch this time." When investigators asked Mezzatesta's wife why she and her husband and state employees took part in the cover-up, Mrs. Mezzatesta responded, "We wanted to shut Eric Eyre up."

The most chilling statement, however, came from Mezzatesta's secretary. After she had typed the letter and initially lied to investigators and the House speaker about it, Mezzatesta called her at home late at night and told her, "Now, you are part of my family."

Last November, under the threat of a grand jury indictment, Mezzatesta and his wife struck a plea deal with county prosecutors. They pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge that they deleted and altered state legislative computer records. Mezzatesta's critics were outraged over the deal, but the prosecuting attorney cited Mezzatesta's health problems as a reason for the plea deal. (The day before the House speaker released the investigative report on the fake letter, Mezzatesta issued a press release, saying he had prostate cancer.)

In response to my stories, state legislators passed a sweeping governmental ethics reform bill last winter that puts teeth into the ethics act. The new ethics law bans double dipping, increases fines and penalties for public officials, and authorizes the Ethics Commission to initiate its own investigations. A month later, the West Virginia Board of Education declared a "state of emergency" in Mezzatesta's home school district, affirming that Mezzatesta and the local superintendent misused state education grants and took part in illegal hiring practices. That same month, the Ethics Commission publicly reprimanded Mezzatesta and fined him $2,000 – the agency's maximum fine – after determining that Mezzatesta broke state ethics laws. Mezzatesta has refused to pay his fine.

In late April, Mezzatesta was indicted on an additional charge in his home county. Local school board members – who had defended him for more than a year – fired him from his board office administrator job. He continues to insist that he did nothing wrong.

Eric Eyre covers education and state government for the Charleston Gazette. He has twice been an IRE Award finalist and won an IRE Medal this year for coverage of this story.

Bond deals

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told us there's no good reason for an exclusive sale unless the bonds are so intricate or questionable in credit that a competitive bidding wouldn't attract enough offers.

Besides the OS, you'll need other records to get inside deals and any ongoing relationship between a banker and an agency. Ask for documents on how the bank was hired in the first place. Was the process open and fair? If there's a contract for services, does it pose any conflicts and how often is the business opened to competition?

Ask for correspondence, including e-mails, on negotiations over deals. Check, of course, campaign contribution reports and officials' financial interest statements for possible conflicts in gifts, trips and holdings.

Many issuers will tell you they prefer so-called "negotiated" sales because their banker is taking good care of them and they see no evidence of anything improper. Trouble is, they've likely never done an independent review to see whether the person who really counts in all this – the taxpayer – is getting the best deal.

David Dietz specializes in investigative projects as a senior writer at Bloomberg Markets magazine. He is a former board president of IRE.

Tickets

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refused the deals. When I asked why they had rejected the opportunity to buy their way out of a ticket, they gave voice to the concerns I knew our readers would share.

"If you're rich, you can buy your way out of a speeding ticket and keep your insurance costs low," one man said. "That's not right."

One of the more interesting follow-up articles – at least from a reporter's perspective – dealt with the response to the series by Corwin Ritchie, a state lawyer who helps train county prosecutors in ethics. Several weeks after the initial series was published, the *Register* filed a formal request for Ritchie's e-mails.

The e-mails that were produced showed Ritchie had suggested to one county prosecutor that someone look into my own driving record, which consisted of two speeding violations, five seat-belt violations and one expired-registration ticket over a period of eight years.

"I have heard a few comments about Kauffman's driving record – I have refrained from searching it," Ritchie wrote to the prosecutor. "However, maybe someone other than a prosecutor should take a look at it … His middle initial, I think, is V."

The initial, three-day series took eight weeks to report and write – although much of that was "windshield time" spent traveling from one distant county courthouse to another.

Fallout from the series was swift, and has continued throughout the past year.

Gov. Tom Vilsack weighed in, saying the justice system shouldn't be based on "who you know or what you're capable of paying." The Iowa Supreme Court imposed a new system of oversight for Iowa's prosecutors and called for investigations by the Iowa County Attorneys Association and the Iowa Judicial Qualifications Commission.

State lawmakers proposed legislation to end court-ordered donations, and the state auditor asked the attorney general to investigate Barry, the Cass County prosecutor, for possible perjury in his handling of the plea deals.

Last fall, a group of Cass County citizens, frustrated with the attorney general's apparent reluctance to take action against Barry and Sheriff Jones, filed a lawsuit accusing the two of misconduct. After three weeks of testimony, the judge in the case tossed Barry and Jones out of office, saying they contributed to a system in which "justice was for sale."

Barry had been in office for 14 years; Jones for 22 years.

Clark Kauffman's series on traffic court plea bargains, "Beating The Rap," was a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. Before joining the Register in 2000, Kauffman worked at the Quad-City Times in Davenport, Iowa, for 13 years.

Member news

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

■ **Mike Fabey** is covering the Air Force, technology, the space command and Pentagon issues at *Defense News*. He was previously the military/national defense reporter for the *Savannah Morning News*. ■ **David S. Fallis**, an investigative reporter at *The Washington Post*, has won the Heywood Broun Award for his series about Virginia's state-assisted homes for disabled adults. ■ **Malcom Gay**, of the *Riverfront Times* (St. Louis, Mo.) has won a James Beard Journalism Award for Best Reporting on Nutrition or Food Related Consumer Issues for his story "Eat Me," about U.S. beef exports to Japan. ■ **Richard Geiger**, research director at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has received the Joseph F. Kwapil Memorial Award from the news division of the Special Libraries Association. ■ **Allie Johnson**, staff writer at *The* (Kansas City) *Pitch*, has won a Clarion award for "Heaven is Hell," about a suspected religious cult. She also won a James Beard Journalism Award for "Wine Makes Us Wet," about Kansas wine laws. ■ **Gerry Lanosga** and **Angie Moreschi** of WTHR-Indianapolis won a Casey Medal for "Cries for Help," their story about problems in a state child protection services agency. Bill Ditton was also part of the team. ■ **Dan Meyers** is host and producer of the interview and issues show "Colorado Matters" at Colorado Public Radio. He was previously national/foreign editor at *The Denver Post*. ■ **Ray Murray** has accepted a position as assistant professor at Oklahoma State University where he will teach editing and reporting. Murray most recently held editing positions at the *Columbia Missourian* and was an instructor at the Missouri School of Journalism. ■ **Charles Ornstein** and **Tracy Weber** of the *Los Angeles Times* have won several awards for their five-part series about a problematic medical center. The two were part of the team that won other awards, including the Ursula and Gilbert Farfel Prize for Excellence in Investigative Reporting, the Grand Prize at the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism awards, the Public Service award from Sigma Delta Chi and the Mark Twain Award for Excellence in Newswriting from the Associated Press News Executives Council. ■ *Sacramento Bee* business reporter **Lisa Rapaport** has been named a Knight-Wallace fellow for 2005-06. She will study the "Business of Healthcare for Immigrants and the Uninsured." ■ **Paul Riede** and Maureen Nolan and of *The* (Syracuse) *Post-Standard* won a Casey Medal for "School Slams Door on Dropouts," which uncovered a school's dubious record-keeping regarding dropouts. ■ **Denice Rios**, formerly education/social services editor at *The Sacramento Bee*, is now courts and transportation editor at the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*. ■ **Diane Rodgers** has joined The Associated Press in Dallas. She was previously a research and special projects editor at *The St. Augustine* (Fla.) *Record*. ■ **John Sullivan** has moved from the state capitol bureau to the city hall bureau at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. ■ **MaryJo Sylwester** has left *USA Today* to become database editor for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. She was database editor of the *USA Today* sports section, and was previously database library administrator at IRE and NICAR. ■ **Maurice Tamman** is now a special projects team writer at the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*. He was a database reporter on the special projects team at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. ■ **Jim Taricani,** an investigative reporter at WJAR-Providence, R.I., who was placed under house arrest last year for refusing to divulge confidential sources, has received a Presidential Citation from the Radio-Television News Directors Association. ■ **Marcela Toledo** has left her reporting position at *Diario La Estrella* in Dallas to take a reporter/editor position at *El Tiempo* (Santa Maria, Calif.).

Fugitive

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

and started culling through them. It listed Mike Winters as her common-law husband and said he worked construction. She was the sole owner of the home where they lived, and that address matched one from the AutoTrak records.

There were other addresses listed, all in the Corpus Christi area. I asked Minch to find neighbors of what appeared to be an earlier address and held my breath as I started calling. The last thing we wanted was someone to tell Annis we were looking for him.

As with all neighbor hits on AutoTrak, you never know if you are getting live numbers and names or old ones. I got both.

I dialed about 40 numbers before I found a neighbor who remembered Winters. I asked him to describe Winters. Looking at the prison's description from the escape, his description of Annis was dead-on except for hair color. Annis had helped repair their roof a few years ago, the neighbor said, and that triggered something in my head: The old articles referred to him as a roofer at one time.

The neighbor didn't own a computer, so we sent him a prison photo by Federal Express. His wife called me back the next day and said it was Winters.

Persistence pays off

We finally decided to meet with the head of the state police agency in Kentucky and turn over the information with the hope that they would let us tag along when they went to get him.

Knowing it was going to break fast once we did that, I was cleaning up loose ends and starting to write. The same day I finally got the baby's family to agree to talk to me, the police left me a voice mail message saying Annis had been arrested in Texas.

It turned out that the sister of Annis' second wife, whom I'd persistently tried to persuade to give me copies of documents she found in the early 1990s when she was looking for her sister, just got tired of me bugging her. She told the police she was calling in the tip to get rid of me.

After everything unfolded, it appeared she had been the source of the 1993 anonymous tip, too.

Doing something like this requires several things: great Internet sources such as LexisNexis and AutoTrak; time; patience; and a little luck. If I had I tried this a few years ago before Annis' third wife filed for bankruptcy, it would have been much, much harder.

Could I do it again? Who knows? But one thing is certain; police need better tools in this modern electronic era.

Linda J. Johnson, a Colorado native, is the computer-assisted reporting coordinator at the Herald-Leader in Lexington, Ky.

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.

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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.
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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.
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REQUIRED READING FOR YOUR NEWSROOM

HOME MORTGAGE LENDING:
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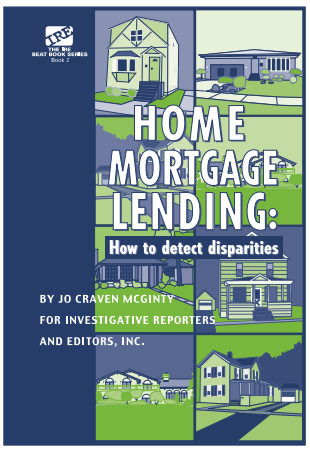
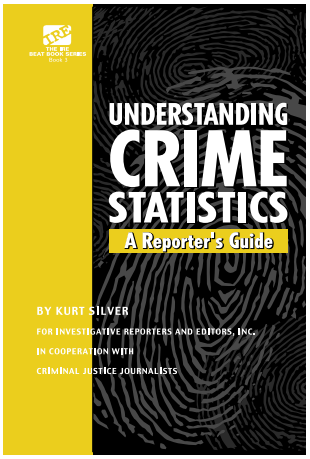
Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jo Craven McGinty guides reporters through understanding and using Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data. Included are specific story ideas and lists of tipsheets and stories available through IRE.



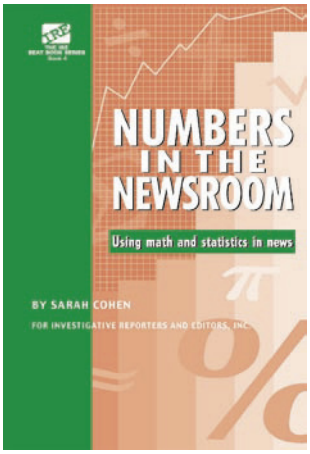
UNDERSTANDING CRIME STATISTICS:
A Reporter's Guide

Covers using Uniform Crime Reports, National Crime Victimization Survey, National Incident-Based Reporting System, other major statistical sources, writing the crime statistics story and database analysis of crime statistics. Includes law enforcement contact information and stories and tipsheets available from IRE.



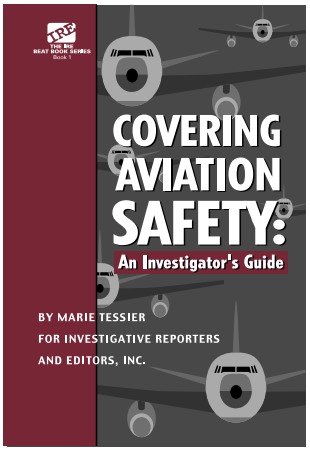
NUMBERS IN THE NEWSROOM:
Using Math and Statistics in News

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Sarah Cohen guides journalists through working with numbers, including fractions, rates, percents, per capitas, measuring change, making inflation adjustments, understanding averages, working with graphics, doing budget stories, questioning surveys and polls, and much more.



COVERING AVIATION SAFETY:
An Investigator's Guide

Learn to develop a crash plan for your newsroom, report from the scene of a crash, start an aviation beat, interpret aviation records, negotiate Web data and investigate planes and airlines on deadline. Includes related stories and tipsheets available from IRE, as well as FAA regional contact information and useful Web sites.



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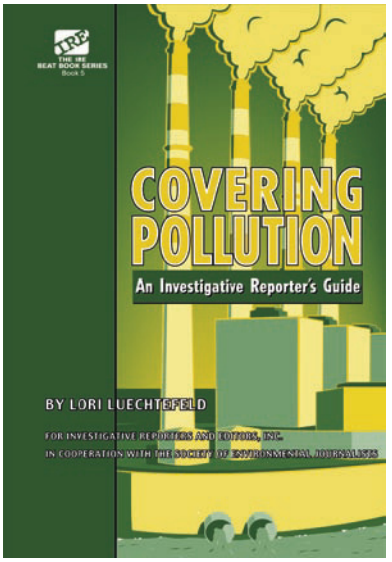

An Investigative Reporter's Guide

by IRE in cooperation with SEJ

This primer gives an overview of useful resources reporters can use for local investigations into environmental pollution. Its main focus is to show how to get to the heart of an investigation quickly and without waiting months for FOI requests to be fulfilled. Filled with examples and references to stories, tipsheets and other resources available from IRE and SEJ.

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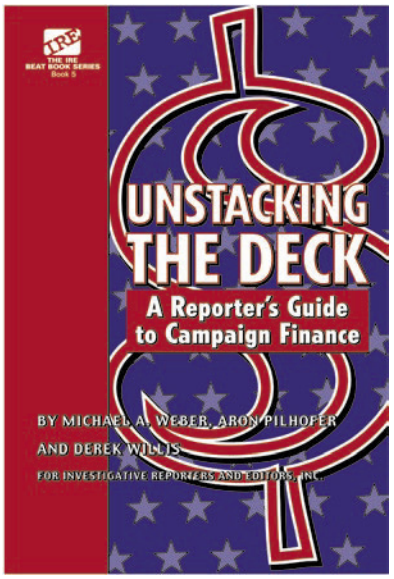

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