

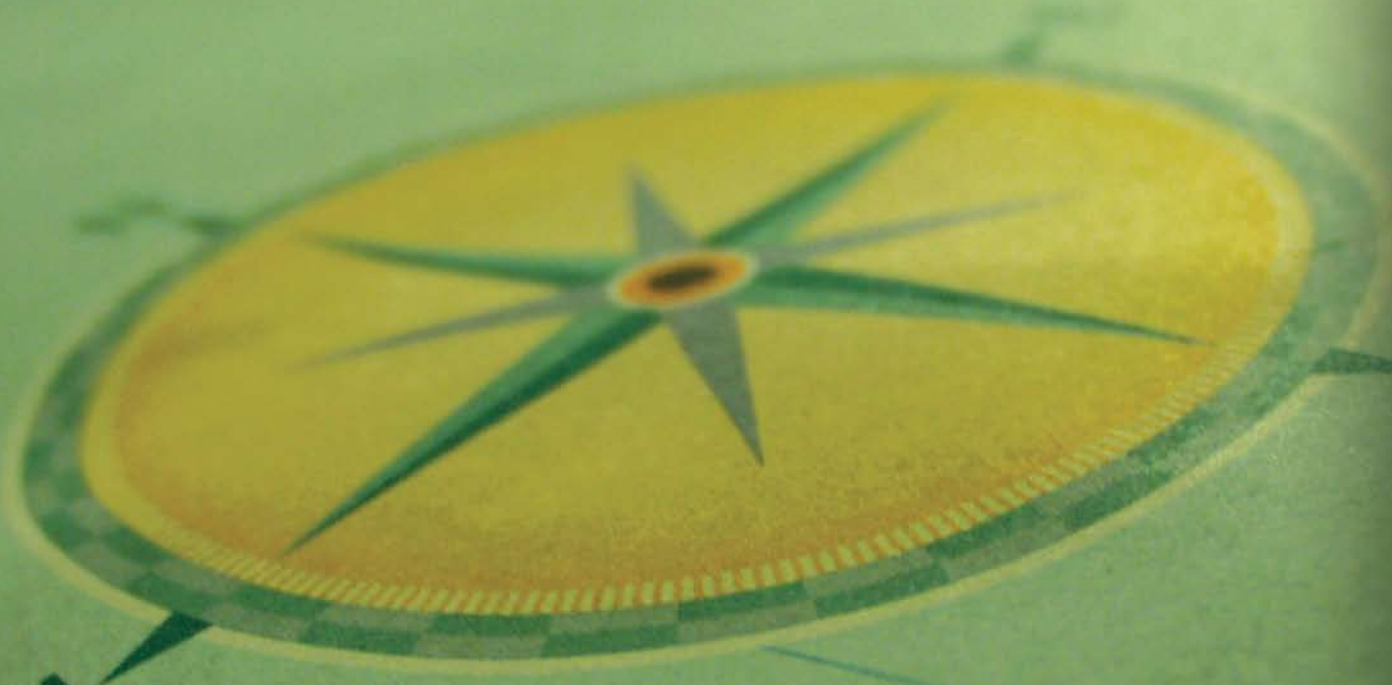
THE IRE JOURNAL

Winter 2009

Volume 32

Number 1

INVESTIGATIVE
BOOKS OF
'08



Navigating Global Investigations

DOCTORS' SURVEY

Newspaper poll
shows physicians
angry at insurers

CELL PHONE FEES

Trace the cash
to uncover
odd spending

PARKING PASSES

Spreadsheet work
reveals abuses of
downtown permits



A stellar group of investigative journalists is lining up to speak at the annual IRE Conference, June 11-14, in Baltimore.

Jon Klein, president of CNN-U.S., will deliver the keynote address. Other speakers participating in conference panels include Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post*, Jill Abramson and Dean Baquet of *The New York Times*, Brian Ross of ABC News, Armen Keteyian of CBS News, Donald Barlett and James Steele of *Vanity Fair*, Paul Steiger of ProPublica and David Simon, a veteran Baltimore journalist and television producer.

To see the latest speakers list, visit the conference Web site, www.ire.org/training/conference/baltimore09.

Save the Date!

The annual
IRE Conference
is coming to
Baltimore
June 11-14.

The 2009 annual conference, June 11-14, will deliver what you've come to expect from an IRE conference and more. We'll present dozens of panels offering tips and techniques from reporters, producers, editors and news directors. You'll not only leave with story ideas, but also with road maps detailing how to get those stories. You'll be able to take all of the practical advice you learn and apply it to everything from breaking news stories to enterprise pieces. And this year we'll be offering an expanded lineup of Web-focused panels to help you present that work to your online audience.

You'll have a chance to take hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting skills. And you'll have plenty of chances to network with the best in the business.

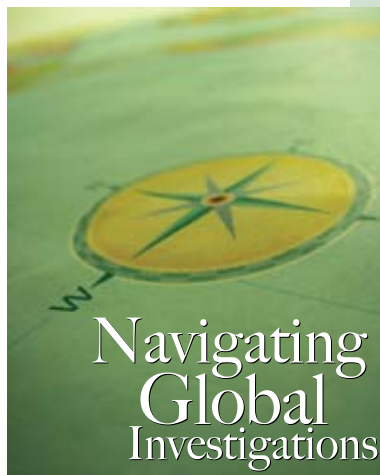
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Undercover work, data mining and public records enhance investigative journalism around the globe.

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Wendy Gray, *The IRE Journal*

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FROM THE IRE OFFICE

Seeds of hope for muckrakers

BY MARK HORVIT
IRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's entirely possible that the future of investigative reporting – or at least a small part of it – can be found in Andy Hall's basement.

That's where Hall, a veteran reporter and former IRE board member, started the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

His personal story echoes that of many investigative journalists – inspired by Watergate, jazzed by his first taste of project work (infiltrating the KKK as an intern at *The Arizona Republic*).

Hall was the first full-time investigative reporter at the *Wisconsin State Journal*, but, in another echo of the current economic climate, he was reassigned to a daily beat a couple of years ago. The work was fine, but it wasn't his passion. So he took a buyout and headed to the basement.

Hall's nascent effort – he has a strong five-person board of directors and a number of grant requests in the works – is part of a small but growing movement. He and his counterparts are forming nonprofit investigative reporting centers dedicated to providing in-depth regional coverage.

During the same week that Hall announced his center, the New England Center for Investigative Reporting was unveiled. Led by two longtime IRE members, Joe Bergantino and Maggie Mulvihill, the center is already up and running. It has a \$250,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and space and other resources from Boston University.

Mulvihill also has a story that echoes that of many journalists. She has worked on I-teams at both a newspaper and TV stations in the region, but recently lost her job thanks to cutbacks that decimated her investigative unit.

It is such cutbacks that the New England center was created to combat.

"Investigative reporting is still very rich on the national level," Mulvihill says. "That's not where the shortage is. It's (examining) the local school committee, or the fraudulent banker on Cape Cod, or the dishonest politician in Bristol, Rhode Island."

The center in New England and the one Hall is starting in Wisconsin have a number of similarities. Both have ties to colleges or universities; both plan partnerships with area media, mainstream and ethnic; both plan to involve students in their work. Both are built on the belief that the support – in readership and finances – exists for in-depth local coverage.

And both are mission-driven.

"I think it's imperative that we do what we can, during this period of pain and retrenchment, to preserve journalism's vital functions," says Hall, whose wife, Dee, helped develop the center while continuing to work at the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

His goals should sound familiar to every IRE member: to protect the vulnerable, expose wrongdoing and seek solutions to pressing problems. "Those are the traditional goals of investigative journalism," Hall says. "It's just that the economic model that we're developing in pursuit of that goal is what's new."

That economic model remains a work in progress for both centers, as it will for other efforts now in various stages of planning in several cities and states. IRE pledges to help these organizations build a network of strong regional investigative journalism teams. Plans are in the works for some sessions at our annual conference in Baltimore where leaders like Hall and Mulvihill can share their stories and brainstorm with others to work toward a sustainable model.

Mulvihill is optimistic.

"I'm completely hopeful, completely confident," she says. "The zeal and the passion that the reporters I know in this part of the country have for this kind of work is so intense that we're going to find a way to do it, and we're going to succeed at it. There are going to be some growing pains, but it's work that has to be done. ... It's what society needs us to do."

Hall, who initially funded his operation with his severance check, is similarly confident. The center has been notified it's receiving its first grant – \$100,000 from the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation – and the University of Wisconsin's journalism school is providing a small office. He also knows there is no better option.

"If I'm wrong," he says, "I'd rather go down swinging."

Mark Horvit is executive director of IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. He can be reached at mhorvit@ire.org or 573-882-2042.

Philip Meyer Award honors three investigations

Investigations by Scripps Howard News Service, *The Kansas City Star* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* have been named winners of the 2008 Philip Meyer Journalism Award.

Scripps Howard News Service took top honors for "Saving Babies: Exposing Sudden Infant Death." Reporters Thomas Hargrove, Lee Bowman and Lisa Hoffman found administrative inconsistencies in the state and local review boards that examine infant deaths.

Mike Casey and Rick Montgomery of *The Kansas City Star* took second place with an investigation into safety issues linked to airbag failures. They found that nearly 300 people die in the United States each year when airbags fail to deploy.

In third place, an investigation by Mark Fazlollah, Dylan Purcell, Melissa Dribben and Keith Herbert of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* revealed that black citizens were arrested in disproportionate numbers for minor crimes in suburban Philadelphia. Follow-up investigations found more cases of police misconduct.

The Meyer Award recognizes the best uses of social science methods in journalism. The awards will be presented on March 20 in Indianapolis at the 2009 CAR Conference. The first-place winner will receive \$500; second and third will receive \$300 and \$200, respectively.

The award is administered by the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (a joint program of Investigative Reporters and Editors and the Missouri School of Journalism) and the Knight Chair in Journalism at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University.

The Meyer Award is in honor of Philip Meyer, the Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Meyer is the author of "Precision Journalism," the seminal 1973 book and subsequent editions that encouraged journalists to incorporate social science methods in the pursuit of better journalism.

Here are details on the winners:

• **First Place:** Scripps Howard News Service for "Saving Babies: Exposing Sudden Infant Death," Thomas Hargrove, Lee Bowman, Lisa Hoffman

Scripps Howard national reporters Hargrove, Bowman and Hoffman did a masterful job in exposing bureaucratic lapses that hinder the search for causes of sudden infant death. Making good use of strong statistical tools, the team analyzed the sharp differences in cause-of-death diagnoses among the states and produced the first rigorous proof of the value of the local and state child death review boards that only some jurisdictions use. A few months after the project ran, then-U.S. Sen. Barack Obama introduced national legislation that would require medical examiners to conduct death scene investigations in all cases of unexpected infant death.

• **Second Place:** *The Kansas City Star* for "Fatal Failures," Mike Casey, Rick Montgomery

Reporters Casey and Montgomery analyzed 1.9 million records from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to uncover NHTSA's failure to consider nondeploying airbags as a significant safety issue. The work suggested that nearly 300 people are killed each year in accidents when airbags didn't inflate that should have. Initially, NHTSA strongly disputed the findings, but it finally did its own analysis and came to the same conclusions. This project combined the best of the techniques that Meyer has championed and the investigative mindset that refuses to take no for an answer when the stakes (in this case, life and death) are high.

• **Third Place:** *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for "Too Tough: Tactics in Suburban Policing," Mark Fazlollah, Dylan Purcell, Melissa Dribben, Keith Herbert

The Inquirer's team studied arrest and court data from police departments in the suburbs that surround Philadelphia and found towns where blacks were being arrested in extraordinary numbers for minor offenses such as loitering or jaywalking. Their follow-up reporting uncovered jails where thousands of illegal strip searches were conducted, police dogs were used to control black children walking home from school and traffic citations were filled out in advance of arrests.

The Meyer Award included work published or broadcast between October 2007 and October 2008. Entries were submitted from across the United States and represented work that utilized a variety of social science methods and data analysis. All entries will be archived in the IRE Resource Center.

The contest judges included journalism professors who have extensive experience with computer-assisted reporting techniques and social scientists who are experienced in working with reporters. The judges were:

- Ira Chinoy, professor at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism and former director of computer-assisted reporting for *The Washington Post*.
- Steve Doig, the Knight Chair in Computer-Assisted Reporting at Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism and formerly associate editor for research at *The Miami Herald*.
- Brant Houston, the Knight Chair for Investigative and Enterprise Reporting at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and formerly the executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors.
- Cindy Taeuber, a retired demographic researcher for the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Philip Meyer Journalism Award follows the rules of the IRE Awards in its efforts to avoid conflicts of interest. Work that included any significant role by a member of the IRE Board of Directors or Meyer Award contest judge may not be entered in the contest.

MEMBER NEWS

Roberta Baskin of WJLA-Washington, D.C., received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for "Drilling for Dollars: Children's Dentistry Investigation." The report exposed a Medicaid dental chain for children doing assembly line treatments and using a bonus system for dentists that led to unnecessary baby root canals.

Alison Bass is the author of "Side Effects: A Prosecutor, a Whistleblower and a Bestselling Antidepressant on Trial," which was published in 2008 by Algonquin Books.

Lorna Benson of Minnesota Public Radio was selected as an Association of Health Care Journalists-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Health Journalism Fellow.

Rose Ciotta was named deputy city editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. She also is the author of the recently published "Cruel Games," a true crime book published by St. Martin's Press.

Adam Davidson of National Public Radio received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award with Alex Blumberg for "This American Life: The Giant Pool of Money."

Luis Fabregas of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* was selected as an Association of Health Care Journalists-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Health Journalism Fellow. He recently co-authored an investigation about unnecessary liver transplants.

Byron Harris and **Brett Shipp** of WFAA-Dallas received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for "Money for Nothing: A Passing Offense, The Buried and the Dead." WFAA also became the first local station to be awarded the Gold Baton.

Mark Katches has been promoted to deputy managing editor at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, where he continues to oversee investigations and projects. Among his new duties, Katches will be responsible for planning major news events throughout the newsroom.

Christof Putzel of Current TV received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for "From Russia with Hate."

Laura Sullivan of National Public Radio received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for "All Things Considered: Sexual Abuse of Native American Women."

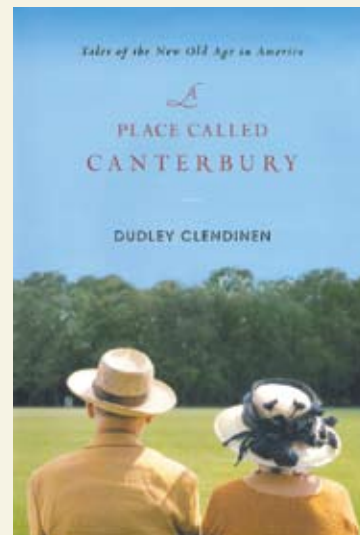
E-mail Member News items to Doug Haddix, doug@ire.org. Please include contact information for verification.

Investigative Books of 2008

Each year, Steve Weinberg compiles this exclusive list for *The IRE Journal*. It consists of books of investigative or explanatory journalism, broadly defined, that were published in English in the United States for the first time during 2008. The list is limited to authors who work as journalists for American media outlets and who are trying to reach general audiences through retail bookstore sales. If you know of a book unintentionally omitted from this list, please send an e-mail to weinbergs@missouri.edu.

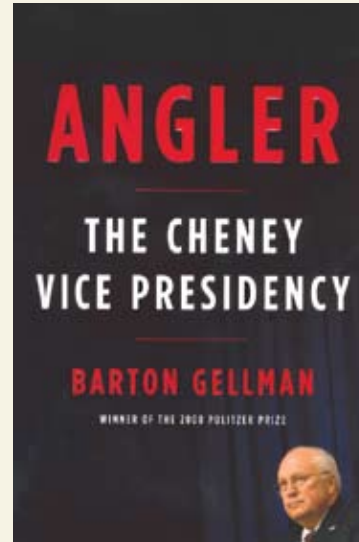
BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

- Acohido, Byron, and Jon Swartz
Zero Day Threat: The Shocking Truth of How Banks and Credit Bureaus Help Cyber Crooks Steal Your Money and Identity
(Union Square Press)
- Alden, Edward
The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration and Security Since 9/11
(HarperCollins)
- Alexander, Brian
America Unzipped: In Search of Sex and Satisfaction
(Harmony Books)
- Alexander, Paul
Machiavelli's Shadow: The Rise and Fall of Karl Rove
(Modern Times/Rodale)
- Alsop, Ron
The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation Is Shaking Up the Workplace
(Jossey-Bass)
- Alterman, Eric
Why We're Liberals: A Political Handbook for Post-Bush America
(Viking)
- Baker, Nena
The Body Toxic: How the Hazardous Chemistry of Everyday Things Threatens Our Health and Well-Being
(North Point Press)
- Baker, Stephen
The Numerati
(Houghton Mifflin)
- Bamford, James
The Shadow Factory: The Ultra-Secret NSA From 9/11 to the Eavesdropping on America
(Doubleday)
- Barcott, Bruce
The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw: One Woman's Fight to Save the World's Most Beautiful Bird
(Random House)
- Barer, Burl
Mom Said Kill
(Pinnacle)
- Bass, Alison
Side Effects: A Prosecutor, a Whistleblower, and a Bestselling Antidepressant on Trial
(Algonquin)
- Benson, Michael
Murder in Connecticut: The Shocking Crime That Destroyed a Family and United a Community
(Lyons)
- Binkley, Christina
Winner Takes All: Steve Wynn, Kirk Kerkorian, Gary Loveman and the Race to Own Las Vegas
(Hyperion)
- Bishop, Bill
The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Our Country Apart
(Houghton Mifflin)
- Blatchford, Chris
The Black Hand: The Bloody Rise and Redemption of "Boxer" Enriquez, a Mexican Mob Killer
(HarperCollins)
- Blechman, Andrew D.
Leisureville: Adventures in America's Retirement Utopias
(Atlantic Monthly)
- Bommersbach, Jana
Bones in the Desert: The True Story of a Mother's Murder and a Daughter's Search
(St. Martin's)
- Booth, Claire
The False Prophet: Conspiracy, Extortion and Murder in the Name of God
(Berkley)
- Brenner, Marie
Apples and Oranges: My Brother and Me, Lost and Found
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
- Breslin, Jimmy
The Good Rat
(HarperCollins)
- Brock, David, and Paul Waldman
Free Ride: John McCain and the Media
(Anchor Books)
- Bryce, Robert
Gusher of Lies: The Dangerous Delusions of "Energy Independence"
(PublicAffairs)
- Burleigh, Nina
Unholy Business: A True Tale of Faith, Greed and Forgery in the Holy Land
(Smithsonian)
- Burr, Chandler
The Perfect Scent: A Year Behind the Scenes of the Perfume Industry in Paris and New York
(Henry Holt)
- Buzenberg, Bill, and the Center for Public Integrity
The Buying of the President 2008: How and Why the Race for the Nation's Highest Office Has Moved From the Voting Booth to the Auction Block
(Gotham Books)
- Bzdek, Vincent
Woman of the House: The Rise of Nancy Pelosi
(Palgrave Macmillan)
- Cannon, Lou, and Carl M. Cannon
Reagan's Disciple: George W. Bush's Quest for a Presidential Legacy
(PublicAffairs)
- Capuzzo, Michael
The Murder Room: The Heirs of Sherlock Holmes Gather to Solve the World's Most Perplexing Cold Cases
(Gotham Books)
- Carr, David
The Night of the Gun: A Reporter Investigates the Darkest Story of His Life. His Own
(Simon & Schuster)
- Carr, Nicholas
The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, From Edison to Google
(Norton)
- Carter, Bill
Red Summer: The Danger, Madness and Exultation of Salmon Fishing in a Remote Alaskan Village
(Scribner)
- Chafetz, Gary S.
The Perfect Villain: John McCain and the Demonization of Lobbyist Jack Abramoff
(Martin & Lawrence Press)
- Chamberlain, Lisa
Slackonomics: Generation X in the Age of Creative Destruction
(Da Capo)
- Chang, Leslie T.
Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China
(Spiegel & Grau)
- Chen, Joanne
The Taste of Sweet: Our Complicated Love Affair With Our Favorite Treats
(Crown)
- Chinoy, Mike
Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis
(St. Martin's)
- Clarke, Liz
One Helluva Ride: How NASCAR Swept the Nation
(Villard)
- Clendinen, Dudley
A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America
(Viking)



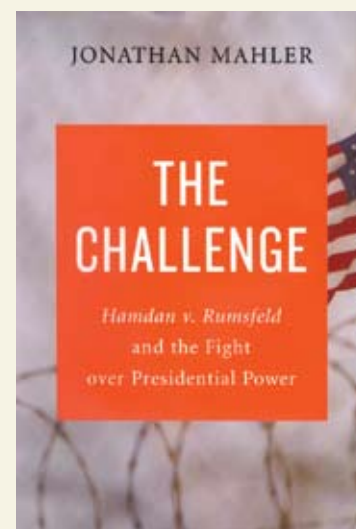
- Cockburn, Patrick
Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq
(Scribner)
- Cohen, Richard M.
Strong at the Broken Places: Voices of Illness, a Chorus of Hope
(HarperCollins)
- Coll, Steve
The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century
(Penguin)
- Conley, Lucas
Obsessive Branding Disorder: The Illusion of Business and the Business of Illusion
(PublicAffairs)
- Cooley, John
Currency Wars: How Forged Money Is the New Weapon of Mass Destruction
(Skyhorse)
- Cowell, Alan S.
The Terminal Spy: A True Story of Espionage, Betrayal and Murder
(Broadway Books)
- Curiel, Jonathan
Al' America: Travels Through America's Arab and Islamic Roots
(New Press)

- Danelo, David J.
The Border: Exploring the U.S.–Mexican Divide (Stackpole)
- Daniels, Lee A.
Last Chance: The Political Threat to Black America (PublicAffairs)
- Davis, Robert J.
The Healthy Skeptic: Cutting Through the Hype About Your Health (University of California Press)
- Dean, Stephen
Your Neighbor's Secret Life Online: Protecting Families From Internet Conmen, Scammers and Predators (New Horizon)
- Diamond, John
The CIA and the Culture of Failure: U.S. Intelligence From the End of the Cold War to the Invasion of Iraq (Stanford University Press)
- Dine, Philip M.
State of the Unions: How Labor Can Strengthen the Middle Class, Improve Our Economy, and Regain Political Influence (McGraw-Hill)
- Dionne, E.J. Jr.
Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right (Princeton University Press)
- Dirmann, Tina
Vanished at Sea: The True Story of a Child TV Actor and Double Murder (St. Martin's)
- Douglas, Geoffrey
The Classmates: Privilege, Chaos, and the End of an Era (Hyperion)
- Douthat, Ross, and Reihan Salam
Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream (Doubleday)
- Dumaine, Brian
The Plot to Save the Planet: How Visionary Entrepreneurs and Corporate Titans Are Creating Real Solutions to Global Warming (Crown)
- Durham, M. Gigi
The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It (Overlook Press)
- Earley, Pete
Comrade J: The Untold Story of Russia's Master Spy in America After the End of the Cold War (Putnam)
- Eastburn, Kathryn
Simon Says: A True Story of Boys, Guns and Murder (Da Capo)
- Ehrenreich, Barbara
This Land Is Their Land: Reports From a Divided Nation (Metropolitan Books)
- Engel, Richard
War Journal: My Five Years in Iraq (Simon & Schuster)
- Engler, Mark
How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy (Nation Books)
- Fainaru, Steve
Big Boy Rules: America's Mercenaries Fighting in Iraq (Da Capo)
- Fannin, Rebecca A.
Silicon Dragon: How China Is Winning the Tech Race (McGraw-Hill)
- Farrey, Tom
Game On: How the Pressure to Win at All Costs Endangers Youth Sports, and What Parents Can Do About It. (ESPN Books/Ballantine)
- Fassihi, Farnaz
Waiting for an Ordinary Day: The Unraveling of Life in Iraq (PublicAffairs)
- Felsenthal, Carol
Clinton in Exile: A President Out of the White House (Morrow)
- Filkins, Dexter
The Forever War (Knopf)
- Fine, Doug
Farewell, My Subaru: An Epic Adventure in Local Living (Villard)
- Fineman, Howard
The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates That Define and Inspire Our Country (Random House)
- Fingleton, Eamonn
The Jaws of the Dragon: America's Fate in the Coming Era of Chinese Hegemony (St. Martin's)
- Fisher, Robin Gaby
After the Fire: A True Story of Friendship and Survival (Little, Brown)
- Fletcher, Martin
Breaking News: A Stunning and Memorable Account of Reporting from Some of the Most Dangerous Places in the World (St. Martin's)
- Foege, Alec
Right of the Dial: The Rise of Clear Channel and the Fall of Commercial Radio (Faber and Faber)
- Foote, Donna
Relentless Pursuit: A Year in the Trenches With Teach for America (Knopf)
- Frank, Thomas
The Wrecking Crew: How Conservatives Rule (Metropolitan Books)
- Freddoso, David
The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate (Regnery)
- Friedman, Thomas L.
Hot, Flat and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution – and How It Can Renew America (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
- Fuller, Alexandra
The Legend of Colton H. Bryant (Penguin)
- Fund, John
Stealing Elections: How Voter Fraud Threatens Our Democracy (Encounter Books)
- Goodman, Amy, and David Goodman
Standing Up to the Madness: Ordinary Heroes in Extraordinary Times (Hyperion)
- Gordon, Meryl
Mrs. Astor Regrets: The Hidden Betrayals of a Family Beyond Reproach (Houghton Mifflin)
- Gordinier, Jeff
X Saves the World: How Generation X Got the Shaft but Can Still Keep Everything From Sucking (Viking)
- Gorenfeld, John
Bad Moon Rising: How Reverend Moon Created the Washington Times, Seduced the Religious Right and Built an American Kingdom (PolPoint)
- Gosselin, Peter
High Wire: The Precarious Financial Lives of American Families (Basic Books)
- Gourevitch, Philip, and Errol Morris
Standard Operating Procedure (Penguin)
- Gray, Tyler
The Hit Charade: Lou Pearlman, Boy Bands and the Biggest Ponzi Scheme in U.S. History (HarperCollins)
- Greene, Ronnie
Night Fire: Big Oil, Poison Air, and Margie Richard's Fight to Save Her Town (Amistad)
- Greenhouse, Steven
The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker (Knopf)
- Gutman, Roy
How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban and the Hijacking of Afghanistan (U.S. Institute of Peace)
- Harney, Alexandra
The China Price: The True Cost of Chinese Competitive Advantage (Penguin)
- Harris, David
The Genius: How Bill Walsh Reinvented Football and Created an NFL Dynasty (Random House)
- Harwood, John, and Gerald Seib
Pennsylvania Avenue: Profiles in Backroom Power (Random House)
- Hastings, Michael
I Lost My Love in Baghdad: A Modern War Story (Scribner)
- Hedges, Chris, and Laila Al-Arian
Collateral Damage: America's War Against Iraqi Civilians (Nation Books)
- Gellman, Barton
Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency (Penguin)
- George, Rose
The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters (Metropolitan)
- Gertz, Bill
The Failure Factory: How Unelected Bureaucrats, Liberal Democrats and Big Government Republicans Are Undermining America's Security and Leading Us to War (Crown)
- Gjelten, Tom
Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba: The Biography of a Cause (Viking)
- Gladwell, Malcolm
Outliers: The Story of Success (Little, Brown)
- Glatt, John
Forgive Me, Father: A True Story of a Priest, a Nun and a Brutal Murder (St. Martin's)
- Gollner, Adam Leith
The Fruit Hunters: A Story of Nature, Adventure, Commerce, and Obsession (Scribner)

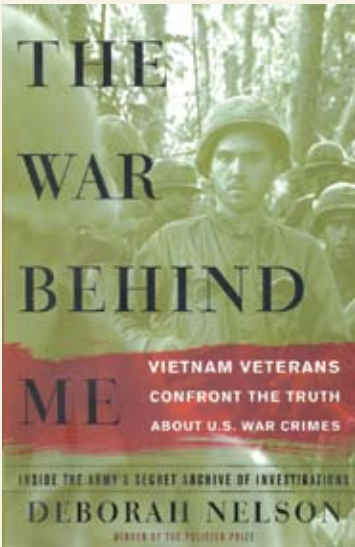


Investigative Books of 2008

- Heil, Nick
Dark Summit: The True Story of Everest's Most Controversial Season
(Henry Holt)
- Heilbrunn, Jacob
They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons
(Doubleday)
- Hodge, Nathan, and Sharon Weinberger
A Nuclear Family Vacation: Travels in the World of Atomic Weaponry
(Bloomsbury)
- Hoffmann, Joyce
On Their Own: Women Journalists and the American Experience in Vietnam
(DaCapo)
- Hosey, Joseph
Fatal Vows: The Tragic Wives of Sergeant Drew Peterson
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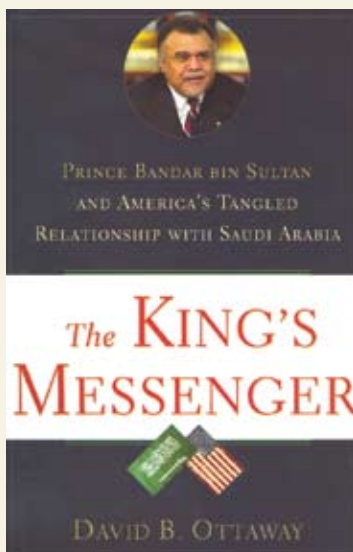


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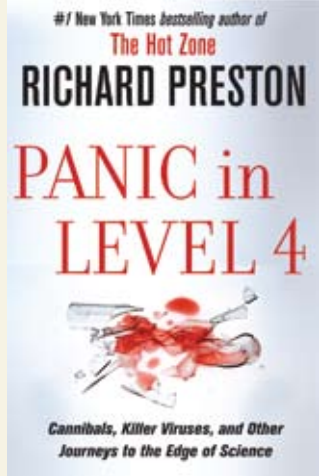


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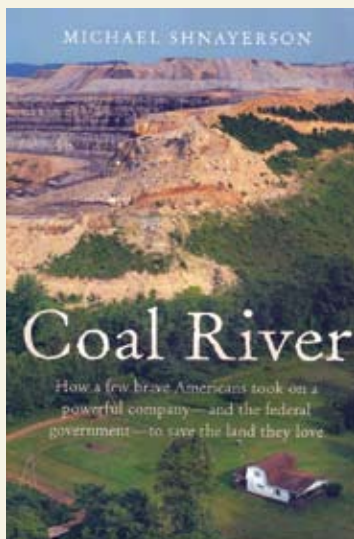
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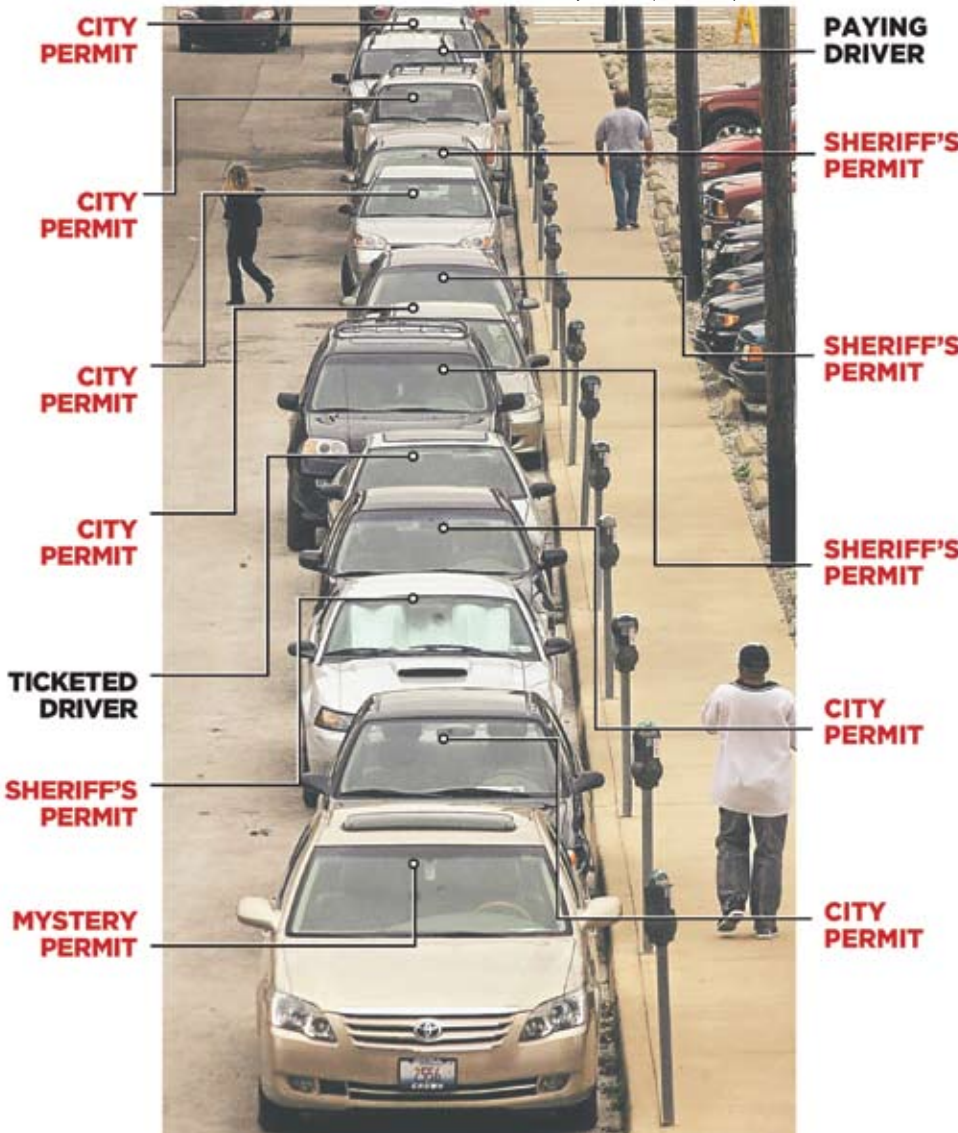


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Basic spreadsheet work helps identify workers abusing parking passes

BY TOM SPALDING AND HEATHER GILLERS
THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

Kelly Wilkinson | The Indianapolis Star



This creative graphic dissected one block of parked cars in downtown Indianapolis to show the abuse of government-issued parking permits.

This story ended with the city of Indianapolis confiscating hundreds of parking passes from its workers.

It started with an offhand comment.

A man who hoped to open a sandwich shop downtown complained to *Star* business reporter Tom Spalding that parking never seemed to be available near his storefront property. The parking spaces had meters, but there wasn't much turnover. Cars hogged the spaces for days at a time.

Stopping by, Spalding noticed that each car displayed a bumper sticker-sized colored placard on its dashboard that seemingly left it immune from parking tickets. He went back to his desk and picked up the phone. Spalding assumed he could clarify the situation with one or two calls.

Instead, each question led to another question. Spalding carved out time for interviews between other assignments and began to realize the scope of the problem.

The city and county had issued a combined 3,300 placards – more than the 2,600 parking spaces in Indianapolis' downtown Mile Square. Even the ombudsman charged with keeping an eye out for citizens' best interests had two placards. One administrative judge appeared to be using a homemade pass with impunity.

Officials said the placards were intended for short-term city business that would allow employees to dash in and out of downtown offices. But simple observation made it clear that workers parked in the morning and stayed all day. City ordinance stated some placards were valid only on certain streets. But employees – even those who worked in the prosecutor's office – ignored local law and parked outside the boundaries.

Meter enforcers – unable to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate placards – had been told not to ticket anyone who had one. Meanwhile, downtown shoppers drove around and around looking for places to park, and the city lost money as parking meters sat unused.

Spalding knew he had a story of abuse, but he also knew it would be a hard abuse to document. Sure, there was a minor city law being broken every time someone used a placard in the wrong place. However, the bigger issue was that the placards essentially were serving as a perk.

Editor Alvie Lindsay made sure we could get that story. He put it on the news budget and loaned metro general assignment reporter Heather Gillers to Spalding for a week.

We obtained spreadsheets listing the holders of the 3,300 passes: 850 given out by the city and 2,450 by the sheriff's department. When we sorted the spreadsheets alphabetically, we found that some people had two or three permits – often more than one issued by the same agency. We also found some people who didn't work for the government on the list, including a sports team owner, utility company CEO and the head of the county Republican Party. (Each one said they used the placards for government-related business.) We later posted the lists of placard holders online with the story.

We also kept a close eye on the streets. Nearly every morning, one or both of us walked areas of the Mile Square – usually the blocks around city and county buildings – that we had identified as hot spots for placard parkers. We marked locations of cars displaying the passes. Then, after two hours had elapsed – the maximum time a citizen driver can spend in a metered space – we returned to see which cars were still there.

At Lindsay's urging, we looked at parking meter revenues in several comparable cities. Without exception, those cities were making more money than Indianapolis.

We also spoke with businesspeople and customers. A local retiree described eyeing shoes in a downtown sneaker store but then skipping the shop and heading for the mall because she couldn't find a parking space. A dry cleaner complained that the same cars parked in front of his shop for hours at a time every day and kept people from patronizing a business that relies on quick in-and-out transactions. The director of a popular downtown market – the home base for a large cast of mom-and-pop vendors – said the lack of parking was hurting business.

We stopped one of the placard holders – an employee for the city's Information Services Agency – on the way to his car. He said his boss had never advised him that the passes were intended only for short-term use.

No one understood the extent of the problem better than parking meter enforcers, who had been told not to write tickets to anyone with a placard. We followed one around for a day and watched her bypass rows and rows of cars with placards peeking through their windows.

But we needed to show the impact of the abuses, not just quote sources describing them. From the second floor of a nearby building, photographer Kelly Wilkinson photographed a street constantly clogged with parking offenders. We then worked with news design director Ryan Hildebrandt to label each car in Wilkinson's photograph. We pointed out the retired investigator who was still using his placard even though he no longer worked for the county. We pointed out the administrative judge's "mystery permit," which we could not trace to any agency.

Hildebrandt also helped us create a map that showed the area where cars with placards designated for certain streets were allowed to park – and the places outside of those boundaries where they did park.

The graphics paired with the story to show that nonpaying cars were able to hog prime spaces simply because the drivers worked for or did business with the city or county.

Top officials thanked us for bringing the problem to their attention. In fact, city and county leaders sprung into action before we could finish the story, available online at www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080923/LOCAL18/809230380.

After the scope of the abuses was made clear to his staff in interviews, the director of the public safety department, which supervises parking meter enforcement, announced he wanted all 850 city employee parking passes on his desk in the next week. (The following day – the day the story ran – the sheriff said he would invalidate the 2,450 passes issued by his office and distribute new permits to a much smaller group.)

As we were hurrying the story to press, we visited the City-County Building for a last round of interviews. Waiting for the elevators, we heard a disgruntled city employee chatting with his coworkers. We thought we knew what he was angry about, but we butted in and asked him anyway. The city had told the man that the convenient meter spot he parked in every day was now off limits – unless he wanted to start paying in quarters.

Tom Spalding is a business reporter who also handles multimedia responsibilities for The Indianapolis Star. Heather Gillers is a general assignment reporter and a member of the Star's investigative team.

A crucial duty of a journalist is to serve the public interest by acting as a watchdog on government and business. This duty has become all the more important at a time when governments are restricting the flow of information. At such times, broadcast and print journalists must redouble their efforts to use freedom of information laws to obtain public documents and help the public appreciate the value of such laws.

IRE's Watchdog Journalism Training

The Watchdog Workshop series brings affordable training to cities around the U.S. Use the schedule below to find a session near you, or contact IRE if you're interested in bringing one to your area. IRE's staff teams up with veteran journalists to lead the training.

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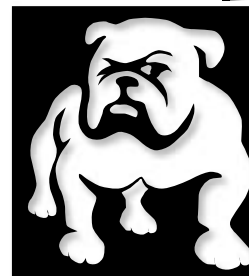
Most workshops also feature hands-on spreadsheet training.

And the price is right: typically \$40 for professionals, \$25 for students.

Jamie DeLoma, a news editor for WNBC.com in New York, described a Better Watchdog Workshop in Connecticut as well worth his time: "I was shocked at how quickly the day went by. It was really packed full of a very diverse and eclectic group of topics, ideas and insights."

Upcoming Training

- March 7-8 – Kent, Ohio
- April 25-26 – Detroit, in conjunction with the National Association of Black Journalists
- May 1-2 – Salt Lake City



Mapping software shows where logging and landslides collide

BY JUSTIN MAYO
THE SEATTLE TIMES

A massive winter storm pounded the Pacific Northwest with torrential rainfall and hurricane-force winds in December 2007. Lewis County, about 90 miles south of Seattle, was the hardest hit with some areas recording up to 20 inches of rain in 48 hours. The flooding buried some towns under 10 feet of water and caused tens of millions of dollars in property damage.

In the surrounding hills, the storm triggered landslides – adding mud, logs and debris to the destructive floodwaters that destroyed homes and farms in the valley below. *Seattle Times* reporter Hal Bernton had covered a similar storm in 1996 for *The Oregonian*. With so much mud and debris, he believed landslides would be a major part of this story.

Times photographer Steve Ringman, who covered the storm along with Bernton, took a helicopter ride to document the slides. He photographed dozens of landslides, many on recently clear-cut slopes. One photo in particular resonated with readers. It showed a 106-acre clear-cut on a steep mountain slope with a half-dozen landslides spilling into the river below.

Timber giant Weyerhaeuser owned the site and had logged it three years before. Bernton found that a company geologist had said the site contained “no potentially unstable areas” in the application submitted to the state prior to logging. But the site did contain steep and unstable slopes – some well above the 35-degree state threshold for potentially unstable slopes.

The photo raised concerns about Weyerhaeuser's logging practices and triggered reviews of how well the Washington Department of Natural Resources regulates the industry.

For Bernton, questions remained: Was this site an anomaly? Did Weyerhaeuser clear-cut steep, unstable slopes? If so, how many of these slopes had landslides during the storm? Was DNR providing adequate oversight?

Answering these questions proved challenging.

The majority of the landslides occurred on private timber lands, which were mostly owned by Weyerhaeuser. This area, the Chehalis River basin in southwest Washington, encompasses about 74,000 acres of mountainous terrain. The storm damaged many of the logging roads in and out of the area.

We turned to geographic information system mapping for help. Mapping was invaluable as it allowed us to analyze what happened on the ground. The story could not have been done without it.

The bulk of our analysis relied on DNR's own map layers and databases, most of which were freely available on the department's Web site. We began with a GIS layer of all forest practice applications in the state. Applications are submitted to

DNR when a landowner wants to cut trees, build roads, spray chemicals, etc.

In ESRI ArcView, we captured only those applications that were in the Chehalis River and Stillman Creek watersheds where the storm was most intense. Using a DNR map of all watersheds in the state, ArcView's Select By Location function allowed us to include only those applications within the Chehalis and Stillman drainages. We only included clear-cut sites, not applications for selective harvests or road-building.

The GIS data showed us the location and boundaries of the clear-cuts but little else. To find out who the landowner was, whether a geologist visited the site or what DNR did in their regulatory review, we had to look at the actual applications. Recent applications were available on DNR's Web site. For those prior to 2003, we filed public disclosure requests and built a database from the paper records.

A source at DNR gave us a shapefile with landslide data the department had gathered during aerial surveys in the days after the storm. More than 730 slides occurred in the Chehalis River basin. By overlaying the landslides with the application data, we found that nearly half of the slides were in recent clear-cuts.

This finding was to be expected. After all, decades of studies show logging can increase the risk of landslides. Because of this, Washington state forestry regulations are designed to restrict logging on potentially unstable slopes when public safety or public resources are at risk.

Instead of including all clear-cuts, we wanted to narrow the analysis to those logging sites with the most slide-prone terrain. To do this, we used a GIS layer of hazard zones. These zones were put in place in the mid-1990s by scientists at Weyerhaeuser and the state. The goal was to create an agreement between industry and regulators that would help guide logging in specific watersheds.

The hazard zones that came out of that plan assigned areas with a high, moderate or low potential for landslide risk based on factors including topography and steepness. We wanted to see if Weyerhaeuser's logging practices accounted for unstable slopes. Instead we found more examples similar to Ringman's initial photo.

By overlaying these zones on the clear-cuts, we focused on 87 logging sites that were in the most slide-prone terrain. To do this, we calculated how much of each clear-cut fell into the various hazard zones. We included only those clear-cuts where at least 50 percent or more of the acreage was in a moderate- or high-hazard zone. Out of those 87 logging sites, 42 had landslides from the storm. Despite making up only 8 percent of the total acreage in the Chehalis River basin, these sites accounted for 30 percent of the slides.

The applications submitted for these clear-cuts showed Weyerhaeuser downgraded certain slide risks, even though half of the acreage was in moderate- or high-hazard zones. (All but two of the 42 areas were owned by Weyerhaeuser.) Company geologists concluded that most sites had little or no potential for landslides in reviews prior to logging.

Furthermore, state forestry officials often noted unstable

Out of 87 logging sites, 42 had landslides from the storm. Despite making up only 8 percent of the total acreage in the Chehalis River basin, these sites accounted for 30 percent of the slides.



Landslides from this clear-cut mountain slope sent tons of mud and debris into the valley below. This photo, taken shortly after a December 2007 storm, helped ignite a debate in Washington state about the role of logging in the damage downstream.

slopes in checklists when reviewing these logging applications. Yet there was no record of any field visits by state geologists to review the logging plans in these sites. Although DNR officials can restrict logging on unstable slopes to protect public resources or public safety, we found they rarely used that power.

In addition to the clear-cuts, landslides and hazard zones, we used a number of other GIS layers to help report the story.

One was a slope stability model called SLPSTAB. Unlike a shapefile – made up of points, lines and polygons – SLPSTAB is a raster layer that divides the map into discrete squares or cells. The layer was created by the state to help identify unstable slopes when reviewing harvest applications. If the model showed potentially unstable terrain in a clear-cut application, DNR was supposed to do a field review to check for landslide risk. SLPSTAB allowed us to target sites where state regulators had evidence of instability prior to logging yet did nothing to restrict clear-cutting.

LIDAR (<http://lidar.cr.usgs.gov>) is another map layer that proved useful. Light Distance and Ranging (also known as airborne laser swath mapping) is an extremely powerful technology. An aircraft shoots laser beams to the ground that bounce back, and create highly detailed and accurate topographic maps. The files can get extremely large as thousands of data points are generated per second.

The University of Washington's Department of Earth and

Space Sciences sliced off the LIDAR data for the area we were studying. By overlaying these files with the DNR maps, we could see the steepness of the clear-cuts in our analysis. This became particularly important when showing that a slope exceeded 35 degrees – one of the key factors in stability.

Finally, we used aerial photos produced by the USDA's Farm Service Agency. These high-resolution orthophotos (<http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov/GatewayHome.html>) are available county-by-county and can be seamlessly brought into ArcGIS. An orthophoto is a uniform-scale photo that can be used as a map.

Mapping and analyzing all of these various data sources gave us an advantage when interviewing company officials and state regulators. When Weyerhaeuser took us out on the ground to look at some landslides, we had extensive background on the sites that helped us ask better questions for our story, which is at www.seattletimes.com/landslides, and evaluate their explanations. Our online package also included an interactive map showing landslides in the river basin.

Seattle Times staff reporter Hal Bernton contributed to this article.

Justin Mayo has been a reporter with the investigative team at The Seattle Times for 10 years. He specializes in computer-assisted reporting. Prior to that, he was the database administrator at the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting in Columbia, Mo.

Mapping and analyzing all of these various data sources gave us an advantage when interviewing company officials and state regulators.

Going global

Despite high hurdles,
investigative reporting
spreads internationally

By Brant Houston
University of Illinois

U.S. mainstream news organizations are closing the last of the remaining foreign bureaus, eliminating or cutting back investigative teams, and just trying to survive extraordinary and destructive financial pressures.

Internationally, journalists not only endure lack of funds but also physical threats, beatings and killings. Censorship is rampant, as are criminal trials. There is imprisonment and exile. There is a lack of access to some of the most basic local government and business documents. Even information from the Web can be cut off.

Yet international investigative reporting is thriving. The phenomenon is multifaceted, as shown in the stories in this issue of *The IRE Journal*. The work can be done by the mainstream press or through nonprofit investigative centers or in collaborations between the two.

Although the interest and activity have been heightened in the commercial newsrooms, the increase in nonprofit efforts has been especially dramatic.

Since 2000, the number of investigative centers and associations soared from 15 to nearly 40, according to a report done for the Center for International Media Assistance (www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Empowering_Independent_Media.pdf).

“Fueled by globalization, international aid, and the efforts of journalism groups, the worldwide practice of investigative reporting has grown dramatically since the fall of communism began in 1989,” the report said. “The field’s emphasis on accountability and targeting of crime and corruption has attracted millions of dollars in media development funding from international donors, who see it as an important force in promoting rule of law and democratization.”

The report, whose author was journalist David Kaplan (before he joined the Center for Public Integrity), had among its findings:

- Nonprofit investigative reporting centers have proved to be viable organizations that can provide unique training and reporting, while serving as models of excellence that help to professionalize local journalists.
- The centers are part of an expanding global network of training institutes, reporting organizations, journalism associations, grant-making groups and online networks that have great potential to effect change. Different programs will be appropriate for different regions and markets.



Navigating Global Investigations

Internationally, journalists not only endure lack of funds but also physical threats, beatings and killings. Censorship is rampant, as are criminal trials. There is imprisonment and exile. There is a lack of access to some of the most basic local government and business documents. Even information from the Web can be cut off.

Whether the investigative reporting is from commercial or non-profit organizations, the Web has played a critical role, of course. Reporters can swiftly and cheaply set up sites that publish stories inside or outside the countries in which they report. Resources and tips can be shared openly or in encrypted form. Documents can be scanned and e-mailed, and notes can be stored on servers outside the reach of a particular government.

At the same time, journalists can gather information from databases from international or domestic sites to use for stories on one country or several countries. U.S. data, in particular, can be used effectively for reports in any nation. Securities and Exchange Commission filings, foreign lobbyists' reports, airplane tail numbers, court records and trade data are databases that have been used internationally.

Probes of corruption

A quick tour of several continents shows the achievements made since the beginning of the 21st century.

For example, Sonali Samarasinghe, a reporter in Sri Lanka, received the Global Shining Light Award at an international investigative conference this past year for exposing the brutality and corruption of a top government official who threatened the reporter and the newspaper after the stories were published.

In China, despite censorship, physical and legal threats and imprisonment, investigative journalists continue to find ways to push the boundaries. Yuen-Ying Chan, a longtime journalist and IRE member at Hong Kong University, has spearheaded efforts throughout China to promote investigative reporting.

Although she has written about the limitations, she has been quick to point out their accomplishments.

Through ingenuity and courageous reporting, Chinese journalists have uncovered wrongdoing by government officials, charity scams, an AIDS epidemic caused by illegal blood banks and numerous other business scams and covered-up health issues.

In India, investigative journalism ranges from covering the local scams to child slavery to undercover operations that reveal bribery and extortion.

In Europe, Danish journalists Nils Mulvad and his colleagues have won awards for their continued and relentless cross-border Web reporting on farm subsidies going to politicians and corporations who undercut developing countries' agricultural markets (www.farmsubsidy.org).

Meanwhile, a collaboration of six reporters and two investigative centers won the Global Shining Light Award two years ago for their work into the causes behind an energy crisis that resulted in power outages across Eastern Europe. The "Power Brokers" series exposed questionable deals across the Balkans. The investigation found that power traders profited heavily but citizens suffered exorbitant electricity rates. One of the organizations was the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (www.cin.ba), in which former IRE staffer Drew Sullivan plays a key role.

The other organization in that award-winning investigation was the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism (crji.org), where one of the leaders is Paul Cristian Radu. That center also coordinated an investigative project on human trafficking in the Balkans that involved eight journalists from eight different countries. Radu recently finished a fellowship during which he created a database of resources for investigating businesses.

In Africa, journalists are forming investigative centers and

networks for work that is difficult to do alone or for one news organization. One of the most vibrant networks is the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (www.fairreporters.org).

Evelyn Groenink, who is executive director of the organization, said FAIR is an Internet-based membership association of 87 professional investigative journalists who work in 18 African countries. Its mission "is to improve journalism and media output quality on the continent, in the interests of the African public, transparency and democratic development."

FAIR works with the University of the Witwatersrand and Rhodes University, both in South Africa. It also participates in the Power Reporting Conference at Witwatersrand and the yearly Highway Africa Conference at Rhodes.

FAIR not only provides training, but also has carried out remarkable transnational investigations with print and radio reporters. The investigations include a project on the pharmaceutical industry's questionable practices in Africa and a project on human trafficking.

On its Web site, FAIR has published additional stories on overfishing, ritual infanticide, fake malaria medicines, mining pollution and misuse of debt relief funds in Africa.

Strength in numbers

Bringing together centers and networks from around the world has been the mission of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org).

The network was founded in 2000 to provide an online forum and conferences for investigative journalists throughout the world. The network held its first two conferences in Copenhagen in 2001 and 2003. Journalists from more than 40 countries attended the conferences, modeled on the successful ones run by Investigative Reporters and Editors in the United States.

Despite the increasing difficulty of international travel and obtaining funding for it, the biannual conferences continued with one in Amsterdam and then in Toronto, with more than 600 participants. This past year's conference in Lillehammer, Norway, attracted 500 participants from more than 80 countries.

Challenges obviously remain.

Intimidation, threats and murders are a fact of life for many investigative journalists, whether in Mexico and Latin America, Russia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East or China.

In some countries, standards of fairness and credibility are weak, and sometimes investigative journalists' targets must include corrupt colleagues and media owners.

Funding continues to be tenuous, especially now with the global financial meltdown. Issues of influence can arise whether from advertisers, foundations with a contrary agenda or the governments that give money to journalism projects.

But as these examples and the ones in the following stories demonstrate, the networking and collaborations among investigative journalists are well-suited to circumvent these challenges because the knowledge and reporting are not limited to one reporter or one organization or one country.

Brant Houston, a former executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors, is the Knight Chair in Investigative and Enterprise Reporting at the University of Illinois. A co-founder of the Global Investigative Journalism Network, Houston also serves on advisory boards of several investigative centers in the United States.

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Solomon K. Adebayo | Federal Radio Corp. of Nigeria



This unidentified federal police officer helps guard detainees at the illegal detention centers.

Secret Cells

Undercover work reveals illegal detention centers

By Solomon K. Adebayo
Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria

Undercover investigative work and audio recordings helped me prove the existence of illegal, secret detention centers operated by a government agency in Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital city.

The investigation focused on the Abuja Environmental Protection Board. The agency used a task force of fierce-looking men employed as casual workers and paid them according to the number of people they captured and slammed into detention centers for allegedly violating the board's regulations. The men targeted petty traders, vendors and artisans.

The federal government created the environmental board to try to ensure clean conditions and development of the new capital city. The influx of peasants and traders to the new capital led to the mushrooming of satellite settlements around the city. The board's mission was to make Abuja look like London and other capital cities in developed countries.

The new capital was conceived during the military administration in 1976 to serve as a solution to the perennial traffic gridlock, hustle and bustle of Lagos, the previous capital. Abuja also is expected to serve as a model city of unity, where all Nigerians would have equal opportunity of land ownership and other rights.

The city's master plan called for Abuja to be developed in phases, to accommodate all Nigerians, rich and poor. However, that plan was violated by the sudden movement of the seat of government from Lagos to the partly developed capital city in 1992 by the military administration of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida following attempts to topple his government. No attempt was made to control the development of the satellite towns around the new capital, where workers flocked to try to make a living. Low-income workers couldn't afford to live in the central city.

In the course of reporting what became a three-part radio package, I discovered three detention cells: two for male detainees and one for the females, including nursing mothers. To gain entrance to the high-security detention centers, I posed as a relative of a detainee. This gave me the opportunity to have a clearer picture of the subhuman conditions.

With my hidden voice recorder, I was able to interview detainees, one of whom was arrested for "obstructing justice" and had spent three days in a room packed with more than 30 men – with one window. The detainees included an unemployed university graduate whose offense was challenging the task force's

Solomon K. Adebayo | Federal Radio Corp. of Nigeria



Authorities use intimidation as they question and harass traders, vendors and artisans in the federal capital of Abuja.

inhumane methods. The detainees told of their experiences, which included having to urinate and defecate in the room where they were detained.

Aside from their arrest and detention, most of the victims had their property seized and shared among the task force members. Others whose motorbikes were seized had to pay a bribe of about \$100 to get them back.

One interesting puzzle I had to unravel was the role of the police. In the course of my investigation, I discovered that a few policemen, including a superior officer, guarded and held the keys of the illegal cells.

A magistrate and a lawyer presided over what can best be described as a kangaroo court. The lawyer coerced the detainees to pay him a fee of about \$50 to represent them before the magistrate. Later, the lawyer wrongly advised the detainees to plead guilty to any charges.

The victims, including children as young as 14, often were marched in a group of about 15 to 18 before the magistrate. He read the charges, and the detainees typically pleaded guilty as earlier directed by the lawyer. The magistrate convicted them and ordered them to pay a fine of \$70. Those who could not raise the money were normally ordered to prison.

Posing as a client, I was able to get information from the lawyer on how he operated.

After these findings, I did thorough research on the board: its formation, laws guiding its operations and its responsibilities. My findings revealed that the board has no power under the law to operate the way it did. I confronted the board chairman, who during an interview initially denied the existence of the detention centers. When I put my information on the table, she said that the people detained under subhuman conditions deserved such treatment. Most importantly, she vehemently denied collecting money from victims whose motorbikes were seized.

Puncturing this lie was vital to my report, so I went undercover and posed as the owner of a seized motorbike. I collected the particulars of the bike from its owner and pretended as if I wanted to secure its release, with my hidden recorder on. I was asked to pay a bribe before securing the release of the bike. Although the chairman denied collecting a penny on seized bikes, I had audio of her staff asking me to pay for its release.

I questioned the police high authority on their role in the operation of the illegal cells, but as expected the high command denied sending men to serve as guards.

The first part of my report attracted the attention of human rights activists: the National Human Rights Commission, Nigeria Bar Association and other groups. The commission petitioned the attorney general and the minister of justice, who in turn wrote the minister of the federal capital territory (the parent ministry of the board) to institute a probe into the illegal detention centers.

The board swiftly closed down the centers, cleaned up the rooms and denied the existence of the detainment cells. But the probe instituted by the minister led to the sacking of the chairman, the disbandment of the task force and elimination of the special court.

The Abuja branch of the Nigeria Bar Association also investigated the roles of the magistrate and lawyer. Most importantly, the National Human Rights Commission took the board to court and succeeded in getting a judgment that rendered the activities of the task force unconstitutional.

Solomon K. Adebayo | Federal Radio Corp. of Nigeria



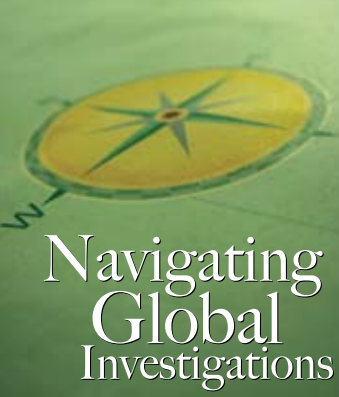
A hidden camera phone captured this image of detainees in one of two cells where men were locked up for allegedly violating Environmental Protection Board rules.

The board swiftly closed down the centers, cleaned up the rooms and denied the existence of the detainment cells.

In preparing the investigative reports, I went to great lengths to get incontrovertible evidence by going undercover with my tape recorder. Reporters working on human rights stories should endeavor to nail down their facts and get indisputable evidence with voice recordings, video or photos.

Above all, you have to be determined and fearless and refuse to compromise – no matter the pressures.

Solomon K. Adebayo is an environment editor and investigative reporter for the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria. He won the Wole Soyinka Award for investigative reporting for 2007 and 2008 and was named 2008 Radio Reporter of the Year in the Diamond Awards for Media Excellence. He was a runner-up for the 2008 Global Shining Light International Investigative Journalism Award.



Navigating
Global
Investigations

Managing 14 reporters in 10 far-flung countries

Insights from the Tobacco Underground project

By David E. Kaplan
Center for Public Integrity

In a world that's increasingly globalized, the crooks cross borders, transfer money and shift identities with ease, while the cops and reporters too often are several steps behind. Few journalism organizations can field the resources to take on sophisticated multinational targets. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists was created for precisely this purpose – to provide an institutional base for complex cross-border investigations.

ICIJ is a network of 100 leading investigative journalists in 50 countries whose members come together to work on specific projects. Let me emphasize the word *network*. We are linked together by cell phones, e-mail and occasional newsletters and conferences – and not much more. Two editors – myself and Marina Walker Guevara – oversee the consortium from Washington, D.C.

ICIJ was formed in 1997 and is the brainchild of Charles Lewis, founder of the parent Center for Public Integrity. (Lewis is now at

American University's innovative Investigative Reporting Workshop.) The center had distinguished itself with hundreds of hard-hitting, albeit mostly domestic, investigative reports, and Lewis saw the need to expand the center's style of watchdog journalism overseas. In a world of Internet access and open borders, ICIJ seemed like an idea whose time had come. Here was a nonprofit group that could link together top-notch journalists from Moscow and Manila, London and Lagos.

I joined ICIJ in 1999 and served for years as the group's liaison with IRE. Before becoming ICIJ's third director in April 2008, I'd watched in admiration as the network had taken on the international arms industry, U.S. foreign aid to human rights abusers, and, most ambitiously, the tobacco industry. Starting in 2000, ICIJ launched a groundbreaking series of investigations that exposed how big tobacco companies worked with organized crime to smuggle cigarettes around the world. Under the leadership of then-ICIJ director Maud Beelman (now still fighting the good fight as projects editor of *The Dallas Morning News*), ICIJ fielded a six-country team that pored through thousands of internal industry documents made public through litigation against tobacco companies in the 1990s. The group combined that research with dogged reporting and pieced together how smuggling played a key role in Big Tobacco's strategy to boost sales and increase market share. Those revelations – and others that followed – helped prompt lawsuits and government inquiries and forced big tobacco companies to curtail their involvement in smuggling.

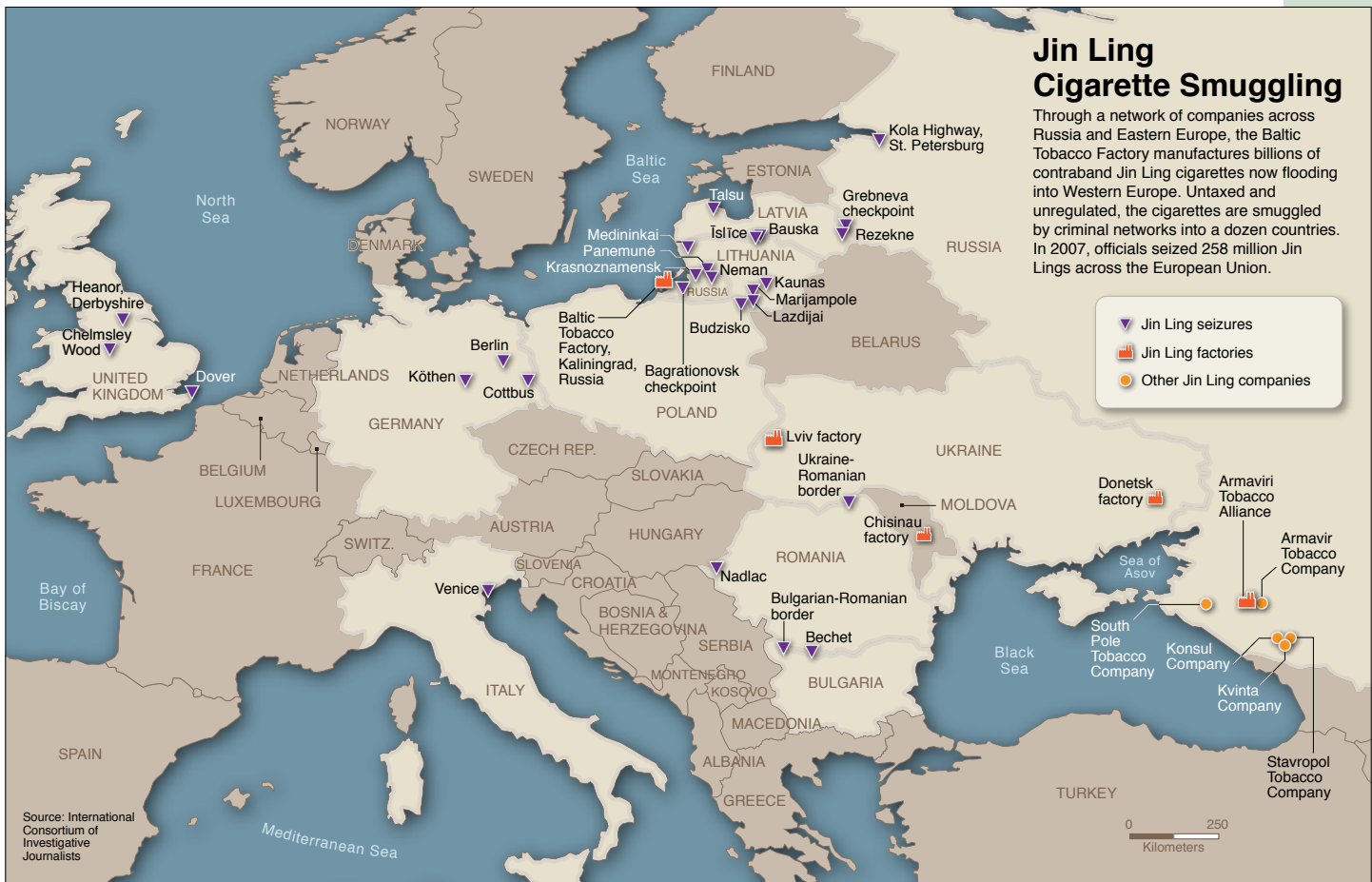
By 2008, however, much had changed. Once dominated by Western multinational companies, cigarette smuggling is as big as ever, but with new players, new routes and new techniques. Today, this multibillion-dollar underground industry includes everything from Chinese counterfeiters to Russian-owned factories and American Indian smoke shops. In Canada alone, the involvement of criminal gangs and Indian tribes pushed seizures of contraband tobacco up 16-fold between 2001 and 2006. So lucrative is the business that tobacco is the world's most widely smuggled licit substance – and its impact remains high. The illicit trafficking of tobacco fuels organized crime and corruption, robs governments of needed tax money and spurs addiction to a deadly product.

In early 2008, ICIJ received a grant from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to revisit the illicit trade, and in May our team began work on the project we dubbed "Tobacco Underground." We assembled a new team, including veterans of the previous investigation; eventually, our ranks encompassed 14 reporters based in 10 countries. This time we also reached outside



Resourceful smugglers hide contraband cigarettes in an industrial-size yogurt mixer.

Guardia di Finanza



ICIJ to work with journalists overseas with expertise in covering organized crime and the tobacco industry, including the Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting and Russia's muckraking weekly *Novaya Gazeta*.

The challenges in crafting such a multinational investigation are many, but the payoff can be huge. Here's a quick rundown:

Marshaling resources

Like other investigative reporting nonprofits, ICIJ and the Center for Public Integrity raise money from foundations and other donors to fund long-term projects. Although good international reporting can be done on the fly, this kind of systematic investigation needs a dedicated staff, plenty of travel money and significant contract payments to reporters in other countries.

For "Tobacco Underground," that has meant a budget in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Still, our spending is modest compared to what mainstream media routinely shell out to cover presidential elections or the Iraq War (or buy photos of Angelina Jolie's twins, for which *People* magazine and a British tabloid reportedly paid \$14 million). At a time when the news media are closing foreign bureaus, ICIJ's brand of network-based, project-oriented reporting may prove increasingly cost-effective.

Dealing with culture, language

As any editor who has managed international staff can attest, cross-cultural reporting poses its own unique challenges. These issues were often present in "Tobacco Underground," which involved journalists spread across a dozen time zones who were dealing

At a time when the news media are closing foreign bureaus, ICIJ's brand of network-based, project-oriented reporting may prove increasingly cost-effective.

Stefan Candea



The factory and offices of Baltic Tobacco in Kaliningrad, Russia, have no addresses or signs.

with organized crime, large corporations and societies as diverse as China, Russia, Cyprus and Romania.

Differences in language and culture are the most obvious. ICIJ reporters all speak English, but misunderstandings can arise even among fluent speakers of a second language. Written communications in clear English, free of idioms and slang, are important.

Following paper trails

The diversity of our team gave us access to an extraordinary array of public records. Our reporters obtained court records from cases in Canada, Cyprus, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy – including indictments, affidavits, judgments and exhibits.

One enterprising member tracked a key tobacco company through the United Nations' World Trademark Registry in Geneva. Our team located incorporation and property records in a half-dozen countries, using – among other sources – the Russian language databases Radarix, SKRIN and EGRUL.

The Americans contributed searches of tobacco industry documents released through litigation in U.S. courts (available through repositories in London and San Francisco), and used Lexis-Nexis, Pacer and PIERS (Port Import Export Reporting Service), an invaluable database for ocean-borne shipping records.

In addition, we ran computer-assisted analyses of UN trade data and of tax filings by tobacco wholesalers to the state of New York. One issue that arose involved Radarix, a widely used database for company records and other data in former Soviet countries. Radarix, it turned out, is not entirely legal; the database is packed with pirated information that officials have sold on the black market. The data are widely thought to be accurate, but, in the end, we used it only as a secondary source.

Finding human sources

ICIJ's team dealt with smugglers, tobacco industry representatives and former executives, health experts and activists, and every kind of cop imaginable.

Our reporters met with some 20 law enforcement agencies in 10 countries, including officials from Europe's Anti-Fraud Office, Italy's Guardia di Finanza, Germany's Bundeskriminalamt, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and many other federal police, border control officers and customs officials, as well as

local cops, prosecutors, judges and tax investigators.

Using local reporters, experts in their own language and culture, can make a big difference. When ICIJ's Leo Sisti, a veteran reporter with *L'Espresso*, does interviews with Italy's Guardia di Finanza, he has access that a parachuting American reporter can only dream of.

Keeping it secure

Communicating within the team posed challenges, particularly with regard to sensitive material and sources. To share notes and files, our team made use of Groove, an encrypted, collaborative online workspace. Groove, however, has presented a number of technical challenges, particularly for sharing large files and in countries with uneven or slow broadband access.

We also made use of communications through Skype, an online phone service, and other techniques to securely share information.

Handling legal issues

Because ICIJ's work appears worldwide, we can face legal challenges in any number of jurisdictions, some with criminal libel statutes and others equally hostile to a free press. Our bottom line reflects that old adage: The best defense against libel is the truth.

ICIJ stories not only are thoroughly researched and heavily documented but are also subject to several layers of editing, rigorous fact-checking and legal review before publication. We have to ensure that our reporting – in multiple languages and countries – is accurate in every respect. This at times has meant translating key passages as many as three times. The intensive pre-publication review can be surprising to some of our members, but in the end, everyone understands its value.

Enforcing professional standards

In dealing with a network that spans 50 countries, there can be differences in standards of how sources and undercover work are used, particularly in relatively closed societies. Some reporters are quick to go undercover; others are accustomed to paying for information.

ICIJ's rules are quite explicit in both instances: We do not pay our sources, and undercover work is considered only after other reporting avenues have been exhausted.

Rolling out the investigation

Between October and December, the ICIJ team published a series of nine stories. On the center's Web site, we presented a multimedia project with undercover footage; audio and video interviews with experts, smugglers and undercover agents; maps and charts; and links to resources.

Our lead story, "Made To Be Smuggled: Russian Contraband Cigarettes 'Flooding' EU," exposed how a renegade network of Russian and East European factories was pouring at least \$1 billion worth of contraband Jin Ling brand cigarettes into Europe annually, becoming within two years one of the largest smuggling operations on the continent. Jin Ling, the investigation found, was the world's first cigarette designed and manufactured solely for smuggling. ICIJ reporters located the company's headquarters in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, took undercover video inside the plant and revealed how the firm's billions of cigarettes are smuggled across the continent.

Guardia di Finanza



Italian authorities seize contraband LM and Marlboro cigarettes, which were found hidden in a truck bed.



Ptolomeos Tlais, pictured in his Cyprus office, says some large tobacco companies use distributors to smuggle their products.

ICIJ's October series also reported on China's massive cigarette counterfeiting, including the story of a couple whose network helped move a billion counterfeit cigarettes from China into the United States, as well as the tale of an El Paso quadriplegic who masterminded one of the nation's largest tobacco smuggling rings. And although tobacco companies claim to have stopped trafficking, our series showed how top U.K. cigarette maker Gallaher engaged in a worldwide smuggling and dumping strategy. In December, the team followed up with new stories on out-of-control Internet sales and how Big Tobacco has fueled a billion-dollar black market in New York through Indian reservations.

The results of the project have been gratifying. ICIJ released its findings at a press conference at the Palais des Nations, the UN's European headquarters in Geneva, and the Jin Ling story made worldwide news. The series was covered by The Associated Press, Reuters and other wires, published by major newspapers across Europe, and ultimately cited in more than 60 media outlets and blogs in 10 languages.

Tobacco control activists credit the series with helping prompt the passage of tougher controls on cigarette smuggling at the October negotiation of the World Health Organization-sponsored Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the world's first global public health treaty. ICIJ's findings also resulted in the European Union's Anti-Fraud Office, the lead agency investigating cigarette smuggling in Europe, dramatically boosting its estimate of the Jin Ling trade. In the United Kingdom, the series sparked a parliamentary hearing and a major investigation by law enforcement.

Our team remains at work on a dozen other stories. Got a tip on tobacco? E-mail us at icijtobacco@icij.org.

David E. Kaplan, a longtime international trainer for IRE, is editorial director of the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C. Previously, he worked as chief investigative correspondent for U.S. News & World Report and as one of two senior editors at the San Francisco-based Center for Investigative Reporting.

RELATED WEB SITES:

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www.publicintegrity.org/investigations/icij

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Center for Public Integrity

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www.investigativereportingworkshop.org

"Tobacco Underground"

www.publicintegrity.org/investigations/tobacco

Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting

www.cin.ba

Novaya Gazeta

<http://en.novayagazeta.ru>

"Web site to provide pirated personal data"

www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=25805

"Tracing links in Russia"

www.gijc2008.no/handouts/412/information_shleynov.doc

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

www.fctc.org

Prize-winning CAR

Computer skills help snag key Latin American awards

By José Roberto de Toledo
Brazilian Association for Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalists in Latin America have uncovered bribes to former presidents, dissected organized crime, analyzed campaign contributions and spotlighted political corruption by using spreadsheets, databases and advanced Internet skills.

Stories made possible only through computer-assisted reporting have won many of the most prestigious journalism awards in various countries and in international competitions. Prizes from Prêmio Esso (Brazil), the Press and Society Institute (IPYS in Peru), International Rey de España (King of Spain), Inter American Press Association and Fundacion Nuevo Periodismo (Colombia) have helped encourage many reporters and editors to invest time to learn and improve their CAR skills.

The world economic crisis and financial challenges facing news media could put at risk the little that has been done so far. Some newspapers already have cut their training budgets and are starting to lay off workers, too. Investigative journalism, more expensive than just turning on a tape recorder, could be the first victim.

Ten years ago, few reporters in Latin America used spreadsheets and databases. Now, CAR skills are widely taught in seminars and classes across the region, with thousands of journalists trained during the past decade.

Investigative Reporters and Editors helped lead the first CAR courses in Latin America in the late 1990s. With the help of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, new journalism associations patterned after IRE have been formed. They include Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism, Argentinean Forum of Journalists, Paraguayan Journalists Forum and Consejo de Redaccion in Colombia. The professional organizations have played an important role in deploying computers as tools to acquire, organize and analyze information.

The appetite for CAR courses has grown since U.S. journalist Lise Olsen (now at *The Houston Chronicle*) and Mexican journalist Pedro Almeyda disembarked in São Paulo, Brazil, in the late 1990s to talk to a few journalists at the *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper about Excel, Access and a new thing called Google. The seed they helped plant was later nourished through a few courses by IRE's former executive director Brant Houston and Argentinean reporter Sandra Crucianelli. Since it was created in 2002, ABRAJI has trained more than 3,000 journalists in CAR techniques in Brazil. The organization also has led CAR training in Argentina, Chile and Paraguay.

At the same time, a new culture of creating Web sites to disclose and provide access to public information has grown in Latin America, especially in Brazil. Private groups such as Contas Abertas (Open Accounts) and Transparência Brasil (Brazil Transparency) developed databases for their Web sites to give journalists and the public better access to information on government expenditures and campaign finances.

However, traditional journalism culture dies hard. Not one university has made CAR part of its journalism curriculum, and most newsrooms do not have Excel (or any spreadsheet software) installed. Unfortunately, many journalists still believe that crunching numbers is something best left to economists.

The world economic crisis and financial challenges facing news media could put at risk the little that has been done so far. Some newspapers already have cut their training budgets and are starting to lay off workers, too. Investigative journalism, more expensive than just turning on a tape recorder, could be the first victim.

The track record of hard-hitting investigations using CAR might have helped news media owners and the public see the value of such work.

A query in the IPYS prize database, probably the most important journalistic award in Latin America about political corruption, shows that at least 21 finalists' stories in the past six years used CAR tools in a major way. The investigations came from Puerto Rico and eight countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru.

Daily newspapers and other print media dominated the finalists, making up 20 of the CAR-driven stories. The list included only one TV news investigation ("La Ventana Indiscreta," which borrowed its name from the Alfred Hitchcock movie "Rear Window"). A Peruvian news program used data analysis to reveal a corrupt system to build roads that involved ghost companies.

Most investigations in Latin America are done by newspapers

and magazines. TV news shows are more popular, but only a few conduct investigations and even fewer have journalists familiar with CAR techniques. Internet news sites rarely do investigative work. However, there are signs this may change as media companies start to face the economic crisis and the growing audience on the Internet.

An examination of the 21 CAR finalists shows that most of the journalists used spreadsheets and databases to build their investigative stories. Other tools included e-mail messages, specialized search engines and Orkut, a social networking Web site run by Google.

The stories spanned a broad spectrum of topics and countries. In 2002, Fabio Castillo, working for the magazine *El Espectador* in Colombia, exposed how organized crime syndicates used e-mail messages to offer exceptionally lucrative, fake business opportunities in Africa. In 2004, three journalists from *La Nación* newspaper used databases and spreadsheets to track the money and document the bribes to two ex-presidents of Costa Rica. And in 2006, Mabel Rehnfeldt of the Paraguayan newspaper *ABC Color* found "lost" pages on the Internet with the help of search engines Twingine and Copernic. Those pages contained documents and information linking the enrichment of a board member of Itaipú Binacional, the biggest company of Paraguay, to his connections with the country's president.

Among the six Brazilian finalists, at least two extensively used CAR techniques. Working for Brasilia's main newspaper, *Correio Braziliense*, Lucio Vaz and a team of reporters used Excel to examine more than a million financial transactions connected to the 2006 Brazilian elections. It took a huge effort by the journalists to filter and analyze the information to discover that most of the money used by candidates for president, governor, senator and member of congress came from 200 companies, most of them federal and local public contractors.

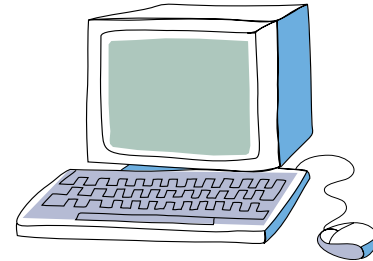
Brazil's most celebrated use of CAR skills came in 2004 from seven journalists at *O Globo*, the major newspaper in Rio de Janeiro. The journalists tracked and documented how 27 state lawmakers used their political and business connections to enrich themselves soon after taking office. Under the leadership of Angelina Nunes (who would become ABRAJI's board president a few years later), the reporters and editors used their free time to dig into many public databases, asset declarations by 113 legislators, Brazilian and U.S. Web sites, and social networks to follow the money and trace the connections. They put their data into Excel worksheets and calculated how much each lawmaker's assets had grown after winning election.

The series probably won the most prizes in Brazilian journalism history.

In addition, the series changed the newspaper's approach to investigative work, Nunes recalled. Reporters learned the value of sharing information with their coworkers (for example, through Web bookmarks), working as a team and investing time in CAR courses. The company learned that a few bucks spent in training and software licenses could result in massive doses of prestige and credibility for the newspaper.

José Roberto de Toledo has been teaching CAR techniques for ABRAJI for seven years in Brazil and abroad. Previously, he took many IRE courses during the 1990s while working as a reporter for the Folha de S.Paulo newspaper.

CAR Boot Camp



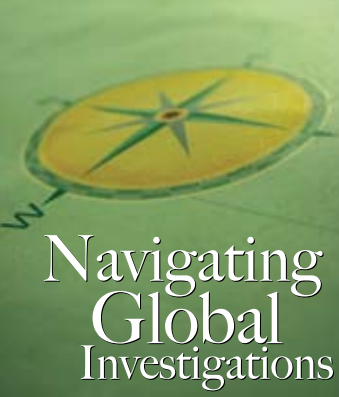
These unique seminars train journalists to acquire electronic information, use spreadsheets and databases to analyze the information and translate that information into high-impact stories. In addition, the institute then provides follow-up help when participants return to their news organizations.

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www.ire.org/training/bootcamps**



Resources

By Gretchen Pressley
The IRE Journal

Stories

- **Story No. 18687:** "Drama in three acts," Witold Krasucki, Gregorz Nawrocki, Polish Public Television. An investigative report exposes the scams of corrupt Polish politicians in the beginning of the 1990s. The major finding: with the support of those in power, huge amounts of public money have been illegally transferred to private pockets and enterprises. (2001)
- **Story No. 22528:** "The Mafia of Illegal Immigration in England," Giovanni Grizotti, Saulo De La Rue, Paulo Pimentel, RBS-TV/Globo TV. The authors investigated the falsification of documents and the marriages of convenience organized by an international gang to allow Brazilians to stay and work in England. (2005)
- **Story No. 19961:** "Chinese women seek American husbands online," Peter Zhong, Jennifer Chou, Radio Free Asia. Some Chinese women are using Internet services to find husbands in America. This is partly fueled by a desire for a better life and also by the rise in Web use in Chinese cities. (2002)
- **Story No. 22388:** "Waiting for Justice," Mirsad Brkic, Svjetlana Celic, Ida Donlagic, Zeljka Gutalj, Eldina Pleho, Zoran Popovic, Renata Radic, Lidija Pisker, Collin Haba, Center for Investigative Reporting - Bosnia Herzegovina. After the ethnic slaughter in the Balkans, Bosnia-Herzegovina's state court was going to take over trying people charged with genocide, mass rape and torture. It has not happened. Millions of euros were spent to build a War Crimes Chamber, but not a single trial has been held. Hundreds of suspects live free among the same people they are charged with terrorizing. (2005)
- **Story No. 18877:** "Philips in Africa," Mark Phillips, Sarah Carter, Ashley Velie, Jim Murphy, CBS News. The first part of this CBS News report on the Congo civil war found that the efforts to stop the war have failed, "in part because Western companies are helping pay for it." The second segment reports on a land dispute in Zimbabwe that has caused racial conflicts. (2001)
- **Story No. 18655:** "A Taste of Slavery," Sumana Chatterjee, Sudarsan Raghavan, Knight-Ridder Washington Bureau. An investigation finds that boys are enslaved on Ivory Coast farms to harvest cocoa used to make chocolate that Americans consume. (2001)

Tipsheets

- **No. 1040:** "International Reporter's Rights," Bruce E. H. Johnson, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP. This guide covers three areas of interest regarding U.S. law and international journalists' rights: libel, privacy and access. Other topics include reporter's privilege and newsgathering liability.
- **No. 2732:** "Women journalists doing international investigations," Vivienne Walt, *Time*. Walt offers crucial advice for female journalists working in Middle Eastern and other Islamic countries. Her suggestions emphasize safety and adherence to

cultural norms, as well as guidelines for interacting with local service providers and freelancers.

- **No. 2582:** "Investigative Journalism in Russia," Yevgenia Albats. The author, drawing from her years of experience as an investigative journalist in the Soviet Union, offers advice for journalists operating in countries with restrictions on the news media. The author discusses ways to find information, as well as how to work with an editor who might be afraid of possible litigation.
- **No. 1948:** "Borders: An insider's guide to international trafficking," Walter Roche, Willoughby Mariano, *The Baltimore Sun, Orlando Sentinel*. Roche and Mariano provide this guide to covering the international trafficking of laborers. Specific headings to their guide are the government, the employer, the middle-man and the laborers. Also included are hints on finding relevant public records.
- **No. 2482:** "Finding Partners in Europe," Nils Mulvad, Danish International Centre for Analytical Reporting. Reporters interested in making contacts in Europe will find Mulvad's tipsheet on EU journalism organizations and other IRE-like European groups helpful. He also describes key Web sites.
- **No. 2465:** "Some of the usual suspects in Mexico and Latin America," Pedro Enrique Armendares, Centro de Periodistas de Investigacion. Armendares gives several resources for finding allies in reporting investigations overseas. He lists Web sites for journalism organizations in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and many specialty groups in Mexico.
- **No. 2466:** "Networking in Southeast Asia," Luz Rimban, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. This tipsheet lists many Web sites for making journalism contacts in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

The IRE Journal

- "Spanish press digs deep once again," Carlos Berbell, *Panorama Magazine*. He writes about investigative reporting in Spain and the beginnings of an IRE-like organization. (Spring 1990)
- "The truth can kill you in Haiti," Yves Colon, Missouri School of Journalism. The story highlights the dangers of being a journalist in Haiti. (Jan./Feb. 1991)
- "Training journalists abroad poses special challenges," Drew Sullivan, *The IRE Journal*. Sullivan writes about the challenges of training foreign journalists to do American-style investigative reporting. He says that few foreign journalists come from nations with a tradition of independent journalism or muckraking. (March/April 2001)

Extra! Extra!

- "Our Hungry Planet series," Matt McKinney, Chris Serres, Richard Meryhew, *Star Tribune*. In a seven-part multimedia series, the newspaper examines the global food market through the eyes of farmers and consumers from Cambodia to Papua New Guinea to southern Minnesota. The series explores the powerful and conflicting forces around the world influencing the supply and price of food. (International: Dec. 5, 2008)
- "Labor exploitation rampant in Chinese-owned mining companies," Simon Clark, Michael Smith, Franz Wild, *Bloomberg Markets*. The two articles, "China lets child workers die digging in Congo mines for copper" and "China defies Peru rescue of miners afflicted with lung disease," reveal the exploitation of indigenous peoples by Chinese-owned mining companies in

Africa, Asia and Latin America. The authors report that, “hundreds of workers have been injured or killed since 2005 working for Chinese companies.” The investigations examine the companies’ lack of health and safety standards and abuse of child labor. (Business, International, Workplace: Aug. 11, 2008)

- “Crime and Punishment series,” Sandro Contenta, Robyn Doolittle, Betsy Powell, Jim Rankin, Patty Winsa, *The (Toronto) Star*. A new law increasing mandatory minimum sentencing was passed even though Canada’s crime rate has dropped more than 25 percent during the past 15 years. The series looks at the monetary and social costs of the tougher approach to crime, including how U.S. mandatory minimum sentences have failed to curb crime. Three never-before-released data sets formed the foundation of the investigation. (CAR, First Amendment & FOIA, Government (federal/state/local), International, Justice (courts/crime/law): July 21, 2008)
- “Child slavery problem plagues Haiti,” Dan Harris, “Nightline.” Harris went undercover to investigate the problem of child slavery in Haiti. Within 10 hours of leaving New York City, he was able to negotiate the purchase of a young girl for \$150 from a man who claimed to be a former member of parliament. (Broadcast, International, Justice (courts/crime/law), Social Issues: July 9, 2008)

Uplink

- “Farmsubsidy.org opens access to EU farm payments,” Brigitte Alfter, Farmsubsidy.org. The organization is the driving force in bringing Europe’s farm subsidies into the public eye. Brigitte

Alfter, Tommy Kaas and Nils Mulvad recount the history of this network organization, which uses freedom of information laws and computer-assisted reporting to gather and distribute subsidy data from European Union nations. (March/April 2007)

- “No boundaries,” Jennifer LaFleur, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. LaFleur discusses how journalists overseas, specifically in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, are developing mapping skills and making certain projects a lot easier. (Sept. 2000)
- “Finding data,” Noemi Ramirez. This article explains some problems faced by reporters in another country when trying to obtain data, and Ramirez gives some solutions. (March 2000)

Online

- The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (www.publicintegrity.org/investigations/icij). The ICIJ is a collaboration of the world’s pre-eminent investigative reporters. Launched in 1997 as a project of the Center for Public Integrity, ICIJ globally extends the Center’s style of watchdog journalism and works with 100 journalists in 50 countries to produce long-term, transnational investigations.
- Global Investigative Journalism (www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org). An IRE-created network, GIJ has conferences, member lists and many resources for international investigative journalists.
- International Center for Journalists (www.icfj.org). ICFJ, a non-profit, professional organization, promotes quality journalism worldwide in the belief that independent, vigorous media are crucial in improving the human condition.

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For more information, see www.cartercenter.org

FEE FORWARDING

Service charge for 911 bolsters other agencies

BY MICHELLE BREIDENBACH
THE (SYRACUSE, N.Y.) POST-STANDARD

If you have cell phone service in New York, then you pay \$1.20 every month to the state government for a fine-print charge that says “911 Service Fee.”

But only 6 cents ends up at a county 911 center.

The *Post-Standard* reported in September that the state keeps most of that money and spends it on salaries, overtime, travel, cars, boots, sunblock, groceries and snowshoes at everything from the state prisons to the parks department.

The state first started collecting the money to buy new equipment for dispatchers to be able to find people who called 911 from cell phones. But once cell phone customers got used to paying a little more for their bills each month, the state started sweeping the steady revenue stream into its general fund and other accounts.

If your state is like New York, then there could be many similar stories buried in the fine print on your receipts for new tires or concert tickets. In New York, for example, the state charges small fees each time you register a snowmobile or buy a dog license. You can look up the original intent of these fees and ask the state how it spends the money.

Notice the tipoff

State leaders drew attention to the cell phone fee when they decided that the money intended for 911 centers would be a good way to finance a new \$2 billion statewide wireless communication system. The vendor could not get the system to work, so first responders such as police and firefighters were quickly losing confidence in it.

The \$2 billion expense involved emergency services, but it was a stretch from the original purpose of the cell phone fee. How could the state take money from cell phone users who thought they were funding new 911 equipment?

To report this story, I turned first to the people who write the checks.

Former state comptroller H. Carl McCall audited the fund in 2002 and criticized the state police for using the money to have their uniforms dry cleaned. I asked staff of new comptroller Thomas DiNapoli what had happened to the fund in the past five years.

They provided a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that showed broad categories for spending by agency. It showed state spending on travel, conferences, dry cleaning and fringe benefits, among other things. But it only raised more questions. Why, for instance, was the Department of Agriculture and Markets spending 911 money?

I asked the comptroller’s office for more detail. I wanted the name of each vendor, each agency, the amount spent and the purpose. I discovered expenses at pizza shops, convenience stores, laundry services and cell phone providers.

The comptroller’s office provided this information quickly at no cost and without requiring a Freedom of Information request. For specific contracts, the staff required an FOI request. That took longer but still resulted in free electronic copies of documents.

Make an investment

The comptroller’s records raised enough questions for me to make a pitch to my editor to continue the investigation. I then turned to the agencies that spend the money.

The Department of State is responsible for distributing the cell phone revenue to the counties. That agency faxed to me a list of payments to each county for the past five years. When I asked for copies of grant applications as well, the agency said it would cost \$2,250. I withdrew that request because I knew I could look at applications from the counties if I needed them.

As it often does, New York state leveraged the 911 revenue into a loan.

When the state Legislature and the governor want to borrow money without the required voter approval, they turn to a public authority originally set up to finance the construction of college dorms. The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York acts as the state’s offshore bank. That public authority issued \$100 million in bonds for the counties to buy equipment. I asked the Dormitory Authority for a list of grant amounts to each county and for information about the terms of the bonds.

Instead of using its steady and growing stream of cash to buy new equipment, the state agreed to borrow money at 3 to 5 percent interest and committed cell phone customers to the fee until at least 2016.

Follow the money

I did the math. Of the \$204.1 million the state would collect from cell phone customers in 2008, \$10 million would go to a local 911 center. That amounted to 6 cents of the \$1.20 charged every month.

I called David Koon, a Rochester-area legislator who advocated for the state to charge this fee. Dispatchers listened helplessly to the last 20 minutes of his daughter’s life when she dialed 911 from her cell phone and they couldn’t find her. Jennifer Koon was abducted from a suburban shopping mall, raped and shot in 1993.

Koon said the fee had become just another revenue stream for the state. “People are so used to paying that \$1.20 to the state every month that nobody really pays too much attention to it,” he said.

Of course, one option is for the state to remove the fee from cell phone bills. The people who run the county 911 centers said dispatchers now have enough basic equipment to find people who dial 911 from cell phones. But they said there is always new equipment to buy and staff to be trained.

While the state raids the cell phone fund, the local governments that run 911 centers turn to property taxpayers to pay the bills.

About 50 cents of the \$1.20 goes straight into the state’s general fund to be spent on anything. Twenty cents pays for the Statewide Wireless Network, which so far does not work. Michael Balboni, the state’s Homeland Security chief, was prepared to

Gary Walts | *The Post-Standard*



The National Guard spent almost \$1 million at Oswego’s Best Western Captain’s Quarters hotel and restaurant and at the Econo Lodge Riverfront Inn. The money, which originated from a 911 service fee tax, was paid to house and feed soldiers patrolling nuclear power plants.



Jay Jacuk, supervisor of dispatch operation at the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications, handles a call inside the communications control center.

discuss the technical problems with the Statewide Wireless Network, but he had little to say about how it would be financed or how else the state had been spending the money.

Congress has started to punish states that divert their 911 cell phone collections. In the future, they will not be eligible for federal grants.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office surveyed the states most recently in 2006 and found that nearly all states require the wireless carriers to collect surcharges to cover the costs of implementing a wireless 911 service. Some admitted that they were moving the money into the general fund to help balance their state budgets. (New York did not respond.) The GAO report (GAO-06-338), which includes a state-by-state chart, is available online at www.gao.gov/new.items/d06338.pdf.

The National Emergency Number Association has more recent information, including a chart that shows the fee in each state, at www.nena.org.

Work on presentation

When it came time to organize a story, I had to make choices. I had information on the state buying snowshoes with the cell phone fee, buying a statewide wireless system that didn't work and charging local taxpayers more than once for new 911 equipment. Almost \$1 million went to a small-town steak and seafood restaurant and two hotels on Lake Ontario for National Guard soldiers on patrol around the state's privately owned nuclear power plants, a mission that ended under a new governor.

This small but abused tax seemed to have all of the elements of a civics lesson in the way New York often does business.

Projects editor John Lammers and I worked with the newspaper's artists to design a presentation that we thought would help readers into a story about fees and government bonds and

wireless emergency communication technology.

I wrote, "The fee may have started out as a well-meaning temporary tax. But in typical New York state government style, the fee continues to pump into a 911 fund that is raided, borrowed against, increased and perpetuated after its job is done."

Readers were outraged.

Confidential letters came in from 911 coordinators around the state who were hesitant to criticize the state government they are lobbying for help.

One said, "We struggle daily with the changing technology required to perform our 911 mission, especially in the less populated counties ... where funding is scarce. It certainly would be a great advantage to the general public to have this funding directed to the people actually doing the work and paying the bills. Again, thank you for your efforts, you have become the unsung hero of us in the field."

Another wrote, "It is discouraging, but hopefully this article will raise a few eyebrows and the public will begin to challenge the state raiding these funds for using it for everything but what the monies were designated for."

In the following days, however, Gov. David Paterson told WGRZ-Buffalo, "We're looking to maintain any source of revenue, and that's why we left it there."

Paterson intends to use \$40 million of the 911 money to help balance the budget for the next two years.

The story can be found online at www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2008/09/the_cell_phone_bill_says.html.

Michelle Breidenbach is a reporter on the enterprise team at The Post-Standard in Syracuse, N.Y., where she has covered government and politics for 11 years. She is a 2007 Gerald Loeb Award winner, and her work on public authorities has been recognized by IRE.

[Gov. David] Paterson intends to use \$40 million of the 911 money to help balance the budget for the next two years.



Dr. Kathy LaVorgna, front, reviews a patient's X-rays in Norwalk, Conn., as radiologist Rob Sandhu watches. LaVorgna, the vice president of the Connecticut State Medical Society, says that some insurance companies build barriers for patients.

IGNORING THE DOCTORS' ORDERS

Survey shows physician concerns about insurance company tactics

BY STEVE EDER
THE (TOLEDO, OHIO) BLADE

Our mission was to show readers – through stories, photographs, videos and interactive graphics – what happens when they leave doctors' offices and why so often insurance companies reject physicians' plans.

Millions of Americans with health insurance find that when disease strikes or a new treatment arrives, their insurance lets them down – denying or delaying treatment prescribed by their doctors.

While politicians, policymakers and academics debate ways to expand insurance coverage to those without it, most have overlooked the problem of the “allegedly insured.” Their plight became the focus of “Not What the Doctor Ordered,” a 2008 investigation by *The Blade*. Our mission was to show readers – through stories, photographs, videos and interactive graphics – what happens when they leave doctors' offices and why so often insurance companies reject physicians' plans.

The project began in late 2007 after sources with ties to the health care industry laid out claims that insurers were increasingly using new and aggressive methods to interfere with the doctor-patient relationship. Some physicians and patients must now deal with mountains of denials, delays and red tape.

In August 2008 we published a four-part series showing how doctors are routinely stymied in treating patients because insurers stand in the way. And most importantly, we showed how men, women and children across the country are being harmed when insurers block decisions made by medical professionals.

Surveying the doctors

The investigation, co-authored by *Blade* health reporter Julie M. McKinnon, included interviews with about 100 doctors in a dozen states and a nationwide online survey of physicians that garnered 920 responses.

The interviews with doctors often led us to patients who, along with their families, illustrated how people are harmed when insurers interfere with doctors' treatment plans.

The Blade introduced readers to Randy Steele, a 64-year-old man from Oak Harbor, Ohio, with hepatitis C who waited weeks to learn whether his insurer would cover a potentially life-saving kidney–liver transplant.

We met children in Ashland, Ohio, suffering from behavioral disorders who terrorized their families and classmates when their Medicaid insurers wouldn't pay for their prescriptions.

And Peter Tsiknis, an 18-year-old from Bridgeport, Conn., shared his story about waiting nearly a year before his insurer would cover a surgical procedure to remove his abnormally large breasts that resulted from a hormone disorder. His surgeon had insisted that his condition wouldn't change without an operation.

Doctors shared their frustrations of knowing how to heal patients but being unable to get them the medicine or treatment that they needed. Some doctors were reduced to tears as they spoke about the struggle.

Aside from dramatic life or death stories, doctors spoke about

the difficulties in ordering common tests such as colonoscopies and MRIs for patients who they believe would benefit.

Doctors repeatedly said the insurance company intrusions into the exam room were eroding the doctor–patient relationship.

The sentiments shared in interviews mirrored the results of the online survey, which was sent electronically to members of the Ohio State Medical Association and later to members of the American Medical Association. Although not scientific, it provided a glimpse into the scope of the frustration and problems.

The survey revealed grave concerns among doctors about their ability to effectively treat their patients:

- Ninety-five percent of respondents said insurers interfered with decisions about prescriptions, 91 percent with testing, 74 percent with referrals and 69 percent with hospitalization.
- Eighty-six percent said interference compromised patient care, 76 percent said it adversely affected their patients, and 65 percent said they were unable to successfully protest denials.
- Seventy percent noted that they experience interference at least once a week, with 92 percent saying that interference has increased during the past five years.
- Fourteen percent believed interference from an insurer had contributed to the death or serious injury of a patient.

Building the investigation

In the initial stages of reporting, I set out to interview as many physicians as possible, looking to tap into the stories of doctors in all demographics: urban and rural, solo practitioners and members of groups, specialists and primary-care physicians, new doctors and experienced ones.

Regardless of where I went, I started with a variation on one question: What's the biggest problem facing your practice? The responses shared a familiar theme as doctors again and again said they repeatedly found themselves at odds with insurers.

Along with *Blade* investigative editor Dave Murray, we decided then that it would be prudent to find a way to quantify doctors' feelings about insurers. We settled on a survey.

To reach the largest number of doctors, we took a unique step and decided to cooperate with the Ohio State Medical Association, an interest group that lobbies for physicians in Ohio, to electronically send the survey to its members.

Our joint agreement made it clear that *The Blade* would write the questions and have unfettered access to the responses. We would conduct our own analysis and publish the results regardless of the findings.

The survey, which took doctors about five minutes to complete, struck a nerve: We received hundreds of responses soon after the questionnaire was sent out in April. Because of the interest, we expanded it to include members of the American Medical Association in other states.

When we completed our survey late in the summer, we had a pool of 920 respondents from nearly all 50 states.

Overcoming challenges

The series took a great deal of shoe-leather reporting and posed a multitude of challenges.

Doctors have long been known for their reluctance to speak about their patients. Gently coaxing doctors to move beyond the



Randy Steele, 64, of Oak Harbor, Ohio, recovers from having a defective defibrillator replaced at the University of Toledo Medical Center. He waited weeks to learn that his insurer would cover a second-opinion on a kidney-liver transplant and questions whether the delay cost him his chance at the operation. "I had some opportunities, maybe for transplants, that are gone and they are not ever going to be able to be replaced."

generalities and share specific stories about patients was difficult, but doing the bulk of our interviews in person and spending several hours with our subjects helped us understand the roots of the problem.

We found doctors willing to contact their patients and ask them to share their stories with us. Once the patients signed privacy release waivers, the doctors could then discuss their cases. It was often a time-consuming task just to assure that a doctor could speak freely about a patient.

Before the story even ran, *The Blade's* survey drew the ire of the insurance industry in Ohio, which questioned its objectivity in a letter to top *Blade* editors. The newspaper, in advance of the survey, contacted an ethics expert with the Poynter Institute to discuss the concerns of cooperating with an interest group in conducting a survey. The paper was told that the arrangement was ethically sound, as long as it was transparent with its sources and readers.

Before publication, Kelly McGivern, CEO of the Ohio Association of Health Plans, wrote the newspaper's top editors, questioning the decision to pair with OSMA and challenging the objectivity of the questionnaire. Ron Royhab, *The Blade's* executive editor and vice president, responded to McGivern in a letter, explaining that *The Blade* has not "committed in advance to telling a story from a single perspective."

Acknowledging the points made by the association, *The Blade* pressed on with the survey and assured the



Dr. Joe Assenmacher of Toledo says he's become frustrated by battling insurance companies. "On a daily basis, I have to change what I do because of insurance companies telling me what I can and cannot do," he says. "It's all about money. That's what it is."



Dr. Robin Oshman, a dermatologist, says that she has more flexibility in treating patients than other physicians because she largely works outside of insurance plans. Her practice, in the affluent community of Westport, Conn., enables her to work with patients who can afford to go outside their insurance network for treatment.

Within hours, popular blogging sites such as DailyKos had threads devoted to our series that featured our videos.

insurance industry that it would have an opportunity to respond before publication.

In total, the series was composed of four main stories and six sidebars. The sidebars gave us room to delve into issues such as the growing concerns about the role of pharmacy benefit managers, defensive medicine and doctor ranking systems.

The series, designed and produced in the print edition by news editor Doug Koerner, included a display of graphics and photographs that helped readers understand the processes that must take place before treatment is approved by an insurance company – and the problems that ensue when insurers intercept treatment plans.

Blade photographer Jeremy Wadsworth spent months shooting the subjects of the story and focused his time on the patients we featured.

From the start, *The Blade* saw the series as an opportunity to push ourselves in terms of Web content. Web editors Kevin Cesarz and Kristi Young built a Flash presentation that incorporated all aspects of the investigation and included slideshows, videos, photo galleries, patient files and interactive maps, which included state-by-state results of questions from the survey. The series can be found online at www.toledoblade.com/healthcare.

Handling the aftermath

Response to the series was enormous, especially to our online presentation.

Within hours, popular blogging sites such as DailyKos had threads devoted to our series that featured our videos. The series was picked up on the front page of Digg.com, a site that measures the interest of the online world.

It was clear, too, that politicians intent on considering the plight of the uninsured were again considering what should be done about people who have health insurance but don't get much from it.

Not since the fruitless debates over a federal patients' bill of rights had the nation engaged in a serious discussion about patient protections, the roles of insurance companies and employers in treatment decisions, and the autonomy of doctors when it comes to healing their patients.

Before publication and against the backdrop of a heated presidential race, Barack Obama issued a statement to *The Blade* about the investigative series that spoke to the importance of looking at these issues. John McCain did the same.

Now that the election is over, members of Congress who reacted to our investigation say that they not only are committed to putting health care coverage within reach of more people but also making sure that people who have insurance are getting what they paid for when they need it most.

Steve Eder is an investigative reporter with The Blade. He has written on government corruption, politics, health care, plant closings and the automobile industry in India.



Randy Steele undergoes dialysis as his son Jonathan, 17, sits with him at the Maumee Bay Dialysis Center in Oregon, Ohio.

ILLEGAL CONTACT

Exhaustive report links 185 pro football players to steroids

BY BRENT SCHROTENBOER
THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

Major League Baseball spent an estimated \$20 million on its Mitchell Report, which named 85 players who had used steroids and other banned substances since 1993.

Shortly after the report's release in December 2007, I posed a question to my editor, Chuck Scott. Suppose we did a Mitchell Report on the NFL?

I thought I could do it for a lot less than \$20 million. I might not have the same resources that such money could buy, but I told Scott that I could probably come up with more names linked to such drug use in the NFL through the years.

But it wasn't easy.

Although the Mitchell Report criticized the effectiveness of baseball's drug-testing program, the NFL, to its credit, has been testing its players longer than any other professional sports league in America. It also announces suspensions of players who violate its policy for steroids and related substances. But these announcements have come in dribs and drabs over a period of decades – maybe a half dozen per year that were individually released. Publicizing the information this way is in the league's interest because it makes each incident seem isolated.

Our goal was to provide the macro view over time – to assemble a list of players who not only were suspended for steroids but also admitted using them or were directly linked to such drug usage in other ways, such as in public records or media reports. Once we compiled a list, we wanted to make it as accessible for readers as possible, along with providing some historical context and interpretation.

But first came the hard part: compiling the list.

Because such information only has come out individually over a span of decades, rounding it up turned out to be painstaking. It existed in no single source. I ended up pulling old newspapers from as far back as 1974, calling former players from the 1980s and checking old public records for details.

I also plunged into newspaper article databases and archives for hours on end and used various word formulas for searches based on Boolean logic. It was like fishing in the Pacific. Sometimes I'd run a search that would turn up a bunch of new names. Sometimes I'd run a search that would turn up a thousand articles but only a few new names.

Those last few obscure names among those thousand articles were the sweetest. I knew that if this project were going to be worthwhile for readers, it wouldn't be easy to compile. It

couldn't be something you could do even with a thousand Google searches.

I ended up with a list of 185 names which was made up of players at every position and from virtually every year during the past three decades. (That, in fact, constituted the lede to the introductory story.) The list contained 52 former Pro Bowl players and four pro football Hall of Famers.

We knew it never could be comprehensive, but the list was enough of a snapshot to examine the issue from a variety of story angles.

One angle was the list itself. We knew it would draw the most reader interest because people identify with and recognize teams and players. The list also represented a compilation of individual stories and a giant overarching history.

One problem, though, was that the list of 185 names, with detailed capsules on each case, measured 140 column inches. Scott told me we wouldn't be able to get it all in the paper, not to mention the accompanying stories that put the list into perspective.

What to do? We settled on just running the list of names in print with no detailed capsules. Scott and I turned to a multimedia specialist in sports, Nicole Vargas, to create an interactive database on the Web site to hold all of the individual information sortable by team.

Additionally, we also would run a full-text version of the list with the individual case details online to make it as accessible as possible for readers.

Another big challenge was giving the list context and interpreting it.

Information is more accessible than ever. But perhaps the most compelling reason for keeping journalists employed these days is that despite the plethora of information surrounding us, we still need somebody to find it, pull it all together, synthesize



CRISTINA MARTINEZ BYVIK / Union-Tribune

The San Diego Union-Tribune

PLAYERS OF SUBSTANCE

The San Diego Union-Tribune investigates performance-enhancing drug use in the National Football League.

The San Diego Union-Tribune sought to compile the most comprehensive list to date of NFL players linked to performance-enhancing drugs. It is the NFL equivalent of the Mitchell Report, the much-publicized assessment of performance-enhancing drug use in baseball released last December by former Sen. George Mitchell.

TIMELINE
View notable dates from 1962-2008.

FULL STORY
Access the complete story online.

BACKSTORY
Learn more about the project.

Chargers linebacker Stephen Cooper (in white) makes Patriots quarterback Tom Brady in the 2008 AFC Championship Game. Photo by SEAN M. HAFEEY / Union-Tribune

The San Diego Chargers kicked off the 2008 season without inside linebacker Stephen Cooper after the starter tested positive for a substance banned by the NFL last April.

Cooper's name is one of 185 detailed in The San Diego Union-Tribune's own "Mitchell Report" of sorts on performance-enhancing drugs in professional football.

To view the breakdown of the offenders by team, click the start button below.

BY THE NUMBERS

185	52	1	46	13
Total number of players included	No. selected to the Pro Bowl	First U.S. pro sports league to test	No. of years PEDs known to be in pro football	Suspended in first year of enforcement (1989)

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When it was published, the list of names was the most viewed story on our newspaper's Web site for several weeks. But there were no hearings in Washington or any mass outrage we could detect among fans. We didn't expect much, which is why we did a sidebar explaining why football fans didn't seem to care.

it, break new ground with it and explain why it's relevant.

That was the trick here.

So what did the list really say? That was one story. The list showed that the league's performance-enhancing drug problem dated to the 1960s, involved players of all talent levels and could be traced back to several championship teams. It also showed that although the NFL had been ahead of the curve in addressing the problem, serious issues and perceived loopholes remained.

The final package for the newspaper ended up with five components: the list, a timeline and three stories. It's available online at www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080921/news_1s21nflmai.html.

The sidebar stories were generated in the course of digging up the names. One originated with a question: Why does the problem of performance-enhancing drugs in the NFL not seem to spark the same level of public outrage as with baseball and Barry Bonds? Here we had a list of 185 names and 52 Pro Bowlers, far more names than the Mitchell Report on baseball, but did anybody care? That sidebar theorized that steroid use was considered acceptable in the NFL because it didn't provide an obvious cheating advantage and players were expected to be big and strong to make it, no matter how.

One former player, Philadelphia Eagles offensive lineman Ron Solt, summed it up: "I would do whatever it takes to make a million [dollars] a year, and most people would."

Solt was one of 13 players suspended in 1989, which was the first time the league suspended players for a positive steroids test.

In compiling the list, I noticed that not only did this group of 13 players represent the biggest steroids scandal in NFL history, but it also represented a watershed moment. There have never been that many suspended in one year since. Before this happened, some considered pro football to be a Wild West for

steroid use. So when the NFL started suspending players for it, why were only 13 busted?

It didn't seem to jibe with what I had learned. I tracked down several of the 13 suspended players. Many felt made into scapegoats and singled out because they weren't household names. They said they knew there were several other players who also had used steroids at the time. I reached the NFL's former drug adviser, Forrest Tennant, who said, "The 13 that had to be suspended were a small number compared to the people we were aware had used steroids."

Through a source, I also obtained a document from 1988 that showed that of the nearly 2,600 steroid tests in the league, 12 percent were either positive or questionable. This was testing conducted not with the intent to punish but to gauge the extent of use.

So how could the number of positive tests dwindle to just 13 a year later?

We determined through interviews that the NFL had effectively managed down the number by using these tests to identify steroid users and get them to stop – to warn players and reduce the problem. Many of the 13 players who were suspended then were relatively new and hadn't gotten the message.

More importantly, a key drug-testing threshold for steroid use was higher than it is now. Since 2005, a 4-to-1 ratio of testosterone to epitestosterone has been considered a positive steroid test. The normal ratio is considered to be 1-to-1. Though natural ratios can vary, anything more than 3-to-1 can raise suspicion. In 1989, the ratio was 6-to-1. Tennant said there probably were at least 200 others who were slightly under the 6-to-1 threshold or who had other irregularities.

At the time, the unrefined testing produced negative results that might be labeled positive with today's technology.

Back then, players union boss Gene Upshaw said, "The fact that so few players have been suspended for alleged steroid use indicates that the public perception of the steroid problem in the NFL is greatly exaggerated."

Our research showed he was wrong. The NFL has had a steroid problem for a long time.

Although the issue never has been a secret, the names and the context we provided helped bring the problem to life and make it accessible for readers via the Web.

But did anybody care?

When it was published, the list of names was the most viewed story on our newspaper's Web site for several weeks. But there were no hearings in Washington or any mass outrage we could detect among fans. We didn't expect much, which is why we did a sidebar explaining why football fans didn't seem to care.

A columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* followed up by pondering why there was no outrage about the NFL's drug history.

The NFL responded with a letter printed in the *Journal* that downplayed our reporting by calling it a "Google report," not a Mitchell Report.

The irony is that such a list never before could be found with Google. It can now.

Brent Schrotenboer is an enterprise sports reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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www.ire.org/training/fellowships



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