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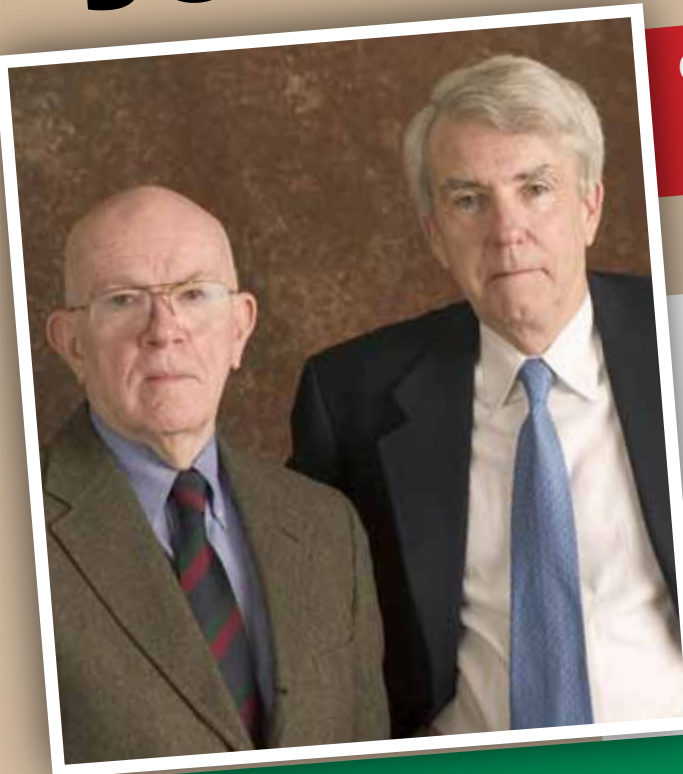
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- June 15, BOSTON: **Investigating Public Pensions**, with Barlett & Steele Gold Award winner Craig Harris of The Arizona Republic. During IRE.
- Oct. 6, MISSOULA, Mont.: **Be a Better Business Watchdog - CAR for Business Journalists**, with IRE Training Director Jaimi Dowdell.

Register at BusinessJournalism.org.

 Donald W. Reynolds
National Center for
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“Tell the readers
something they don't know.”

— Don Barlett and Jim Steele, two-time Pulitzer winners

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IRE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Enough already

BY MARK HORVIT

When I started working for IRE in January 2008, cutbacks in the news industry were the theme of the day. It wasn't long before I began getting what I started thinking of as The Call.

It came from a variety of sources: journalists working on stories for trade publications, academics working on research, students working on final papers. It started this way: "I'm working on an article/research project/class paper about the decline of investigative journalism. ..."

And they waited expectantly for me to start weeping, blubber about the End of Everything and fold into a fetal ball.

I understood, of course, why so many people wanted to have that conversation. Scores of jobs have been lost in our industry in the past few years, and investigative reporters accounted for plenty of those. So I talked about the losses. And I stressed that the problem went far beyond cuts to those with "investigative" or "projects" in their titles. We were also losing too many statehouse reporters, city hall reporters, business reporters, sports reporters, arts reporters, etc., and many of those losses had a dramatic impact on investigative and enterprise journalism. The cumulative effect of fewer watchdogs with notebooks and cameras is that more bad deeds go unreported.

But even in the worst of times, I'd refer those callers to our website and our Extra-Extra blog, which gives evidence every week of great investigative journalism being done around the country. And I'd refer them to the list of winners and finalists for the IRE Awards, for more evidence of the same. And I'd talk about the small but growing trend of nonprofit investigative journalism that was filling some of the gap and making a major difference in many communities.

For my first few years on the job, I expected those questions. But I'm still getting those calls – probably half-a-dozen in the past four months.

And really: Enough already.

It's time to move on. Past time, really.

I don't see much benefit in dwelling on what we've lost. Instead, we ought to be looking at what's working, the growing signs of renewal and the work that lies ahead.

While we certainly haven't turned the corner, we're headed in the right direction. Want some evidence?

- The nonprofit movement continues to grow and produce more high-impact journalism. Check out our website and the Investigative News Network's site for plenty of examples. In fact, at this year's IRE Conference, instead of multiple sessions on "alternative models" or the mere existence of "nonprofit investigative journalism," we made a deliberate decision to ask our colleagues at the nonprofit centers to focus on their journalism. And at the annual INN day at the conference, instead of talking about how to approach funders or how to start a center, we will discuss collaboration, risk management, digital tools – the kinds of things that established journalism organizations of all types should be thinking about.

- A number of large news organizations are refocusing on – and investing in – investigative and enterprise journalism. There are new I-Teams being created in key TV markets from coast to coast. Additional computer-assisted reporting positions are being created (or revived) in newsrooms large and small. Newspapers that slashed their investigative teams are at least adding a position or two, and some are going much farther.

- We're seeing a steady increase in demand for IRE's training. Gannett, McClatchy, Hearst and Scripps are just four examples of large media corporations that have made companywide investment in training, and many individual newsrooms, from small public radio stations to large metro newspapers, are bringing our trainers in.

I'm not saying everything is better now. It isn't.

I'm not saying the cutting and the furloughs are over. They're not.

I'm not saying we don't have a lot more work to do. We do.

But there's no point in dwelling on what we've lost. Our time is much better spent looking at those who are working to rebuild, and how we're refocusing on journalism that really matters.

There are plenty of examples out there.

Give me a call. I'll tell you all about them.

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.

IRE is pleased to welcome two new staff members

Megan Luther joined us as training director in February. Megan has worked in radio, TV and most recently, newspapers. Before she joined IRE, Megan was a government reporter for the Argus Leader in South Dakota and a computer-assisted reporting specialist for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Previously, she worked at IRE and NICAR in the Database Library while completing her master's degree at the University of Missouri.

Megan can be reached at megan@ire.org.

Elizabeth Lucas joined us in May as the new director of our National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR) Database Library. Liz comes to IRE from the Center for Public Integrity, where she analyzed data for investigative projects on political, environmental and health topics. She previously worked in the Database Library while getting her master's degree at the University of Missouri.

Liz can be reached at liz@ire.org.



Major collection of investigative reporting 'road maps' now online

A major new resource for journalists is available online for the first time. IRE contest questionnaires provide road maps to how many of the best investigative projects of the past three decades were done.

IRE members can now digitally search more than 15,000 of these valuable guides.

Each questionnaire provides detail on how projects, entered into the IRE Awards and later the Phil Meyer Awards, were done. Each one includes lists of sources, documents and data; advice to those who'd like to try similar work; description of any CAR analysis; and much more.

The collection – which has previously been available only by request through IRE's Resource Center – is now online thanks to James "Jay" Hamilton, Professor of Public Policy at Duke University.

Hamilton is working on a book that will use statistics and ideas from economics to explore the last 100 years of investigative reporting in the U.S. Hamilton says of the project: "In reading IRE publications from the 1980s, I came to realize that reporters had to fill out questionnaires to participate in IRE's annual contests. When I found out that you had the questionnaires in paper form, I was happy to sponsor their conversion to a digital format so that others could use the questionnaires to see how investigative reporters have pursued their story ideas in many different areas."

In addition to providing an unmatched resource for reporters, the collection documents more than 30 years of the history of accountability journalism.

"IRE has wanted to make these vital documents more accessible to journalists for many years," IRE Executive Director Mark Horvit said. "Thanks to Jay Hamilton's generosity and vision, all journalists, and journalism educators, now have an unparalleled resource instantly available."

IRE also has a large collection of investigative stories in our Resource Center. In many cases, the questionnaires match up with stories in that collection. The stories themselves are not available online but can be requested from the Resource Center. To search for a questionnaire, go to ire.org/resource-center/stories. In the search box, type your key word(s) and "questionnaire" (without quotes). Expand the results for a story, and you'll see a "contest questionnaire" PDF. To order any of the stories, call 573-882-3364 or email us at rescntr@ire.org. IRE will make the most recent stories available through the website in the coming months.

IRE members donate Pulitzer Prize money for training

Michael J. Berens and **Ken Armstrong** both had extraordinary resumes before winning the Pulitzer Prize last week. Both reporters for The Seattle Times had produced investigations that won a long list of prizes, including multiple IRE awards. The work honored by the Pulitzer judges – "Methadone and the Politics of Pain" – had already been honored many times.

So the fact that Berens and Armstrong won wasn't a surprise. What they're doing with the prize money, however, is extraordinary. They've dedicated the \$10,000 prize to pay for IRE training for fellow staffers in Seattle.

Armstrong said the decision was easy. "We just wanted to find a way to do something for the paper and something for IRE," he said. "IRE, more than any other organization you can think of, is the group that people turn to when they want to learn this craft and they want to be inspired. And to me, those two things are equally important."

Both Armstrong and Berens are longtime IRE members who have donated countless hours to speaking at regional and national events, contributing tipsheets and writing for The IRE Journal. They spoke at a regional IRE Watchdog Workshop only three days before winning the Pulitzer.

Berens said the training he's received through IRE has been invaluable and has helped many journalists gain the skills they need to hold the powerful accountable. "It really is the firestarter," he said.

IRE Board President Manny Garcia said the decision to pledge the prize money for investigative training is in character for both journalists.

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"Mike and Ken have always been unselfish with their time and talent," Garcia said. "They both exemplify what IRE is all about: equipping and training journalists worldwide to produce important investigative work. It speaks to their character and the quality news organization that is The Seattle Times."

Berens and Armstrong are the second major prizewinners in the past few years who have dedicated their award money to IRE training. Daniel Gilbert donated the money he won in the Scripps Howard National Journalism Awards to create an endowed fellowship that sends journalists who cover rural communities to IRE's Computer-Assisted Reporting Boot Camp. (The Scripps Howard Foundation subsequently donated an additional \$10,000).

"It's humbling," said IRE Executive Director Mark Horvit. "It also helps reinforce the importance of the training IRE provides and the value our members place in it."

Berens and Armstrong will both speak at the IRE Conference in Boston, where they and other IRE Award winners will be honored.

IRE members win Pulitzer Prizes

Congratulations to IRE members who won Pulitzer Prizes!

Members **Michael J. Berens** and **Ken Armstrong** of The Seattle Times were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting for their project, "Methadone and the Politics of Pain," which exposed Washington state's push of the cheap painkiller methadone. Berens and Armstrong were also awarded the Selden Ring Award and an IRE Award for this story. The two presented at IRE's Watchdog Workshop in Los Angeles April 20.

Matt Apuzzo, **Adam Goldman**, **Eileen Sullivan** and **Chris Hawley** of The Associated Press, all IRE members, were awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. The team's series found that the New York Police Department has secretly conducted widespread spying on Muslim communities. The series was also an IRE Award finalist.

Several IRE members were part of The Philadelphia Inquirer newsroom that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The team's series "Assault on Learning" demonstrated the school system under-reported violent incidents and routinely failed to protect teachers and students. They were also given an IRE Award earlier this month for the project. You can read how they did it in the Spring 2012 issue of The IRE Journal.

IRE member **Adam Jones** and his colleagues at The Tuscaloosa News won the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News for their continuing coverage of a deadly tornado.

IRE member **David Kocieniewski** of The New York Times earned the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting for his series spotlighting tax loopholes used by wealthy Americans and businesses.

Congratulations to these journalists and to all of the winners and finalists.

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IRE AWARD WINNERS

IRE MEDALS

The highest honor IRE can bestow for investigative reporting is the IRE Medal.

This year's medal winners are:

"Constable Corruption" – KTRK-TV, Houston; Wayne Dolcefino, Kevin Hirten and Colin McIntyre (Category: Broadcast/Video – Medium)

"On Shaky Ground" – California Watch and KQED, San Francisco; Corey G. Johnson, Erica Perez, Kendall Taggart, Agustin Armendariz, Michael Montgomery, Anna Werner, Chase Davis, Michael Corey, Carrie Ching, Ashley Alvarado, Krissy Clark (Category: Multiplatform – Medium)

IRE AWARDS

PRINT/ONLINE – LARGE

"Assault on Learning" – The Philadelphia Inquirer; John Sullivan, Susan Snyder, Kristen A. Graham, Dylan Purcell, Jeff Gammage, Mike Leary, Rose Ciotta

PRINT/ONLINE – MEDIUM

"Methadone and the Politics of Pain" – The Seattle Times; Michael J. Berens, Ken Armstrong

PRINT/ONLINE – SMALL

"Unfit for Duty" – Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune; Matthew Doig, Anthony Cormier

BROADCAST VIDEO – LARGE

"20/20 Peace Corps: A Trust Betrayed" – ABC News; Brian Ross, Anna Schecter, Angela M. Hill, Rhonda Schwartz, Mark Schone

BROADCAST/VIDEO – SMALL

"Hiding Behind the Badge" – WVUE-TV, New Orleans; Lee Zurik, Donny Pearce, Mikel Schaefer, Greg Phillips, Marcy Planer

MULTIPLATFORM – LARGE

"Post Mortem: Death Investigation in America" – ProPublica, NPR, "Frontline" (PBS); ProPublica: A.C. Thompson, Chisun Lee, Marshall Allen, Aarti Shahani, Mosi Secret, Krista Kjellman Schmidt, Al Shaw, Jennifer LaFleur, Robin Fields; NPR: Joe Shapiro, Sandra Bartlett, Coburn Dukeheart, John Poole, Susanne Reber; "Frontline": Lowell Bergman (University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism), Carl Byker, Andres Cediel, Arun Rath, Raney Aronson-Rath, David Fanning; Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism: Ryan Gabrielson

MULTIPLATFORM – SMALL

No Award

RADIO/AUDIO

"Rising Violence in California Psychiatric Hospitals" – NPR; Ina Jaffe, Quinn O'Toole

BOOK

"Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church" by Jason Berry

BREAKING NEWS

"Violent Felon Went Unnoticed" – The Palm (Fla.) Beach Post; Michael LaForgia, Cynthia Roldan, Adam Playford

STUDENT

"Million-Dollar Bust" – The (Lubbock, Texas) Daily Toreador, Texas Tech University; Ioanna Makris, April Cunningham, Caroline Courtney

IRE SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT

The Salt Lake Tribune's reporting, editorial stance and lobbying efforts helped to keep Utah's open record law intact – The Salt Lake Tribune; Salt Lake Tribune staff

SPECIAL AWARDS

Medals are also awarded to winners in two special award categories:

TOM RENNER AWARD

"Death in the Desert" – CNN; Frederik Pleitgen, Mohamed Fahmy, Sheri England, Tim Lister, Ian Lee, Simon Payne, Earl Nurse

FOI AWARD

"The Fed's Trillion-Dollar Secret" – Bloomberg News; Bradley Keoun, Phil Kuntz, Bob Ivry, Craig Torres, Scott Lanman, David Yanofsky, Donal Griffin, Greg Stohr, Christopher Condon

This year's awards will be presented at the 2012 IRE Conference in Boston.

The Philadelphia Inquirer



PRINT/ONLINE (WRITTEN WORD) - LARGE

IRE AWARD:

“Assault on Learning” – The Philadelphia Inquirer; John Sullivan, Susan Snyder, Kristen A. Graham, Dylan Purcell, Jeff Gammage, Mike Leary, Rose Ciotta

Judges’ comments: “Assault on Learning” is local reporting at its highest level. We all know anecdotally that urban schools are tough places to survive, let alone learn, but reporters at The Philadelphia Inquirer went so much further in quantifying the violence and personalizing it in an irrefutable way. The Inquirer demonstrated the school system underreported violent incidents and routinely failed to protect teachers and students. An intervention program was unmasked as nothing more than paper-shuffling. Following the project, the district has established a new protocol for reporting serious incidents and crime. For putting five reporters on this project for more than year, for overcoming the obstacles of closed environments and sealed records, and for putting a face on a violent school system and its victims, IRE honors The Inquirer for exemplary investigative work.

FINALISTS:

“Million-Dollar Wasteland” – The Washington Post; Debbie Cenziper, Jennifer Jenkins, John Mummolo, Meg Smith, Julie Tate

“Billions to Spend” – Los Angeles Times; Michael Finnegan, Gale Holland, Paul Pringle, Doug Smith, Ben Welsh

“Honor Tarnished” – McClatchy Newspapers; Jonathan S. Landay

“NYPD Spying” – The Associated Press; Matt Apuzzo, Adam Goldman, Eileen Sullivan, Chris Hawley

The Seattle Times



seattletimes.com



PRINT/ONLINE (WRITTEN WORD) - MEDIUM

IRE AWARD

“Methadone and the Politics of Pain” – The Seattle Times; Michael J. Berens, Ken Armstrong

Judges’ comments: Scrutiny of hundreds of thousands of documents and customized databases left no doubt that the decision by the state of Washington to use methadone as a narcotic pain killer was discriminatory and dangerous. Despite fierce opposition from officials, the paper was able to prove in a 10-month investigation that more than 2,000 people overdosed on the cheap but unpredictable drug the state was pushing to save money. Through exhaustive cross-referencing and shoe-leather reporting, the paper showed that while 8 percent of poor adults were on Medicaid, they represented 48 percent of the methadone deaths. In a swift reaction to the story, the state issued an emergency health advisory to more than 1,000 pharmacists and 17,000 licensed health care professionals, warning of methadone’s risk. For saving lives, IRE honors The Seattle Times and all the people who worked on this story.

FINALISTS:

“Side Effects” – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; John Fauber

“Patient Safety Crisis at Parkland” – The Dallas Morning News; Brooks Egerton, Miles Moffeit, Reese Dunklin, Ryan McNeil, Daniel Lathrop, Sue Goetinck Ambrose, Sherry Jacobson, Maud Beelman, Doug Swanson

“Deadly Force: When Las Vegas Police Shoot and Kill” – Las Vegas Review-Journal; Lawrence Mower, Alan Maimon, Brian Haynes, James G. Wright

“Washed Away” – The (Raleigh) News & Observer; Dan Kane, David Raynor

PRINT/ONLINE (WRITTEN WORD) – SMALL

IRE AWARD

“Unfit for Duty” – Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune; Matthew Doig, Anthony Cormier

Judges’ comments: In “Unfit for Duty,” the Sarasota Herald-Tribune exposed questionable backgrounds of hundreds of Florida police officers. Backed by database analysis and on-the-ground reporting, investigations editor Matthew Doig and crime beat reporter Anthony Cormier joined forces to find nearly one in 20 active law enforcement officers had egregious cases of misconduct but still managed to keep their badges. The newspaper’s story prompted results even before it ran. Florida’s governor ordered an inquiry into violations of law uncovered by the reporters, and two police officers became targets of an investigation. For exposing lack of police oversight that allowed a cadre of rogue cops to work in cities and towns throughout the state, IRE honors the Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

FINALISTS:

“Drugging Delinquents” – The Palm Beach Post; Michael LaForgia

“Rotten to the Core” – Miami (Fla.) New Times; Gus Garcia-Roberts

“The Case of Dr. Konasiewicz” – Duluth (Minn.) News Tribune; Brandon Stahl, Mark Stodghill



BROADCAST VIDEO – LARGE

IRE AWARD

“20/20 Peace Corps: A Trust Betrayed” – ABC News; Brian Ross, Anna Schecter, Angela M. Hill, Rhonda Schwartz, Mark Schone

Judges’ comments: ABC News had a hard-hitting report on the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps. After 10 months of work, it revealed a shocking story of hundreds of Peace Corps women being raped around the world. This report by Brian Ross and the ABC investigative team was in large part responsible for a new law, named after the victim in the ABC report, which is meant to protect Peace Corps volunteers and whistleblowers. Using internal Peace Corps reports, ABC was able to show a systematic failure within the agency and its practice of “hushing things up” and “blaming the victim.” ABC not only found many victims but also persuaded them to go public. IRE commends Ross and producer Anna Schecter for their on-the-ground investigation in Benin, West Africa, and honors them for their 20-plus follow-up stories and a very tough interview with the Peace Corps.

FINALISTS:

“Tamiflu – The Backstory of a Blockbuster” – CBC/Radio-Canada and RSI (Swiss Italian Television); Frédéric Zalac, Serena Tinari, Harry Häner, Reto Padrutt, Kris Fleerackers

“ESPN Outside the Lines: Gambling & Youth Football” – ESPN; Paula Lavigne, Greg Amante, Dwayne Bray, Chris Buckle

“60 Minutes: Armstrong” – CBS News; Jeff Fager, Bill Owens, Claudia Weinstein, Michael Radutzky, Scott Pelley, Tanya Simon, Oriana Zill, Keith Sharman, Flora Tartakovsky, Rich Koppel, Tom F. McEneny, Blake Hottle, Sam Painter, David Mitlyng, Scott Osterman, Sabrina Castelfranco, Katie Spikes, Tadd J. Lascari, Sara Kuzmarov, Kaylee Tully, Katie Kerbstat, Laura Kuhn

“IKEA – Made in Sweden” – Swedish TV; Magnus Svenungsson, Lars-Göran Svensson





BROADCAST/VIDEO - MEDIUM

IRE MEDAL

“Constable Corruption” – KTRK-TV, Houston; Wayne Dolcefino, Kevin Hirten, Colin McIntyre

Judges’ comments: In this textbook IRE investigation done in a nontraditional style, KTRK went after Houston-area law enforcement officials. Plowing through mountains of paperwork, data and sources, reporter Wayne Dolcefino and his team exposed a culture of corruption among the county’s entrenched constables that included appropriating charity and campaign funds for their own use and allowing employees to commit time sheet fraud. Dolcefino engages the viewer with his irreverent style and high production values, but beneath the entertainment is a rock-solid, water-tight, well-documented investigation. The station made extensive use of FOIA and fought back hard when denied. Its online presentation engaged the reader to follow the investigators as they pursued their targets. Several outside agencies are now investigating several constable offices. For the dogged and difficult pursuit of corruption in its hometown, KTRK’s “Constable Corruption” is awarded IRE’s highest honor, an IRE Medal.

FINALISTS:

“Judge Sylvia James: Access Denied, Chief Judge Under Fire” – WXYZ-TV, Detroit; Bill Proctor, Johnny Sartin, Ramon Rosario, Randy Lundquist

“UDC” – WTTG-TV, Washington, D.C.; Tisha Thompson, Rick Yarborough, Steve Jones

“Phoenix Kidnappings: Uncovering the Truth” – KNXV-TV, Phoenix; Gerard Watson, David Biscobing

“Show Me the Money: Housing Authority Investigation” – KCET-TV, Los Angeles; Karen Foshay, Rocio Zamora, Laurel Erickson, Miguel Contreras, Lata Pandya, Bret Marcus, Justine Schmidt



BROADCAST/VIDEO - SMALL

IRE AWARD

“Hiding Behind the Badge” – WVUE-TV, New Orleans; Lee Zurik, Donny Pearce, Mike Schaefer, Greg Phillips, Marcy Planer

Judges’ comments: A powerful sheriff and a businessman pleaded guilty to federal corruption charges after Lee Zurik and the WVUE team exposed and detailed their intricate scheme to defraud taxpayers. Through public records requests and scrutiny of thousands of pages of documents, the team built spreadsheets that proved how a local sheriff spent hundreds of thousands of dollars from his donors on a lavish lifestyle, falsified campaign documents and profited from the BP oil spill. Congratulations to WVUE for its eight-month rolling investigation and its stick-to-it attitude, which resulted in even bigger stories as the station continued to dig.

FINALISTS:

“Swiped” – WVUE-TV, New Orleans; Lee Zurik, Donny Pearce, Mikel Schaefer, Greg Phillips, Marcy Planer

“It Is What It Is” – WSMV-TV, Nashville; Jeremy Finley, Jason Finley

“State Fair Tragedy: The Investigation” – WTHR-TV, Indianapolis; Sandra Chapman, Cyndee Hebert, William C. Ditton, Joel Clausen, Steve Rhodes

“Carlos Boles Investigation” – KMOV-TV, St. Louis; Craig Cheatham, Jim Thomas

MULTIPLATFORM - LARGE

IRE AWARD

“Post Mortem: Death Investigation in America” – ProPublica, NPR, “Frontline” (PBS); ProPublica: A.C. Thompson, Chisun Lee, Marshall Allen, Aarti Shahani, Mosi Secret, Krista Kjellman Schmidt, Al Shaw, Jennifer LaFleur, Robin Fields; NPR: Joe Shapiro, Sandra Bartlett, Coburn Dukeheart, John Poole, Susanne Reber; “Frontline”: Lowell Bergman (University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism), Carl Byker, Andrés Cediél, Arun Rath, Raney Aronson-Rath, David Fanning; Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism: Ryan Gabrielson

Judges’ comments: Most Americans believe the nation’s morgues are filled with dedicated professionals who are equipped with high-tech, state-of-the-art tools and spend whatever time it takes to solve suspicious deaths and bring criminals to justice. ProPublica, NPR and “Frontline” showed us death investigations are a patchwork of different systems that bear little resemblance to the work seen on television shows such as “CSI.” Through this revealing multimedia package, we learned death investigations are often flawed and innocent people go to jail or the guilty are allowed to go free. For its hard-driving investigation into this little-understood part of the criminal justice system, IRE honors “Death Investigation in America.”

FINALISTS:

“Poisoned Places: Toxic Air, Neglected Communities” – The Center for Public Integrity: Jim Morris, Chris Hamby, Ronnie Greene, Elizabeth Lucas, Emma Schwartz, Corbin Hiar, Kristen Lombardi, Cole Goins, Ajani Winston, Sarah Whitmire, Erik Lincoln, Devorah Adler, Rachael Marucs, Paul Abowd, Alexandra Duszak, David Donald, Keith Epstein;

NPR: Howard Berkes, Sandra Bartlett, Elizabeth Shogren, Robert Benincasa, John Poole, David Gilkey, Alicia Cypress, Nelson Hsu, Barbara Van Woerkom, Quinn Ford, Susanne Reber

“Pension Games” – Chicago Tribune; Jason Grotto, Ray Long, Jodi Cohen, Marsha Bartel, Mark Suppelsa

“Solving a 1964 Cold Case: Mystery of Frank Morris” – Center for Investigative Reporting; Stanley Nelson, David Ridgen, Susanne Reber, Hank Klibanoff, David Paperny, Carrie Ching, Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

“Scout’s Honour” – CBC News: Diana Swain, Timothy Sawa, Angela Gilbert, Amber Hildebrandt, Stacy Cardigan Smith, Curt Petrovich, Lily Boisson, Samantha Lash; Los Angeles Times: Jason Felch, Kim Christensen



MULTIPLATFORM - MEDIUM

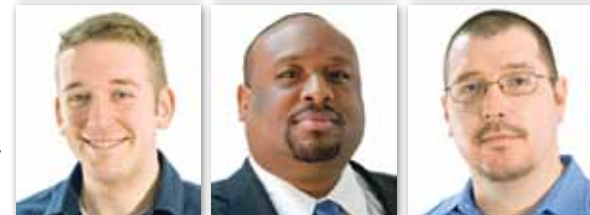
IRE MEDAL

“On Shaky Ground” – California Watch, KQED-San Francisco; Corey G. Johnson, Erica Perez, Kendall Taggart, Agustin Armendariz, Michael Montgomery, Anna Werner, Chase Davis, Michael Corey, Carrie Ching, Ashley Alvarado, Krissy Clark.

Judges’ comments: “On Shaky Ground” was an extraordinary effort examining seismic safeguards in place to protect California’s schoolchildren from earthquakes. Reporters dug through more than 30,000 pages of documents, created online maps and databases and visited schools throughout the state to get the story. It took 19 months, but the reporters found California officials abrogated their oversight duties and allowed more than 42,000 children to attend schools with serious safety issues. The project had astonishing breadth, depth and creativity. The stories were published in more than 150 news outlets and translated into four languages, and video segments appeared in every major California media market. California Watch created an iPhone app to show local residents their proximity to fault zones and even a coloring book explaining it all to schoolchildren. The hard work paid off: State lawmakers ordered audits and investigations, and new state standards were created to allow schools to more easily tap into a fund to repair seismic hazards. For its commitment to public service, use of documents and computer analysis, and its focus on reader engagement and interactivity, “On Shaky Ground” is awarded IRE’s highest honor, an IRE Medal.

FINALISTS:

“Decoding Prime” – California Watch; Lance Williams, Christina Jewett, Stephen K. Doig
“Deadly Force: When Las Vegas Police Shoot and Kill” – Las Vegas Review-Journal; Lawrence Mower, Alan Maimon, Brian Haynes, Justin Yurkanin, Shane Gammon



MULTIPLATFORM - SMALL

No Award



RADIO/AUDIO

IRE AWARD

“Rising Violence in California Psychiatric Hospitals,” – NPR; Ina Jaffe, Quinn O’Toole

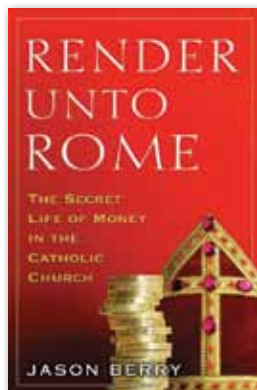
Judges’ comments: When a worker at a California psychiatric hospital was murdered by a patient last year, NPR reporter Ina Jaffe began looking into what appeared to be cases of rising violence against health care workers. The resulting reports showed that the death was not an isolated incident. In fact, NPR found widespread violence against workers by patients who were committed by the criminal justice system. But the reporting went beyond simply showing cases of assault: It linked the rise in violence to government policies and inaction by psychiatric hospitals, which rarely forwarded cases to the district attorneys for prosecution. The attention brought to this issue led to the passage of a bill to make it easier to medicate patients and the introduction of two other measures, one that could keep drug users who plead not guilty by reason of insanity out of the facilities, and another that would make it a felony for certain patients to assault hospital staff. The judges commend NPR for covering new ground on an important subject and helping keep a spotlight on a continuing problem in the mental health system – how to treat and house patients who are dangerous and mentally ill.

FINALISTS:

“Alleged Illegal Searches & Unlawful Marijuana Arrests by NYPD” – WNYC-New York; Ailsa Chang, Karen Frillmann, Paul Schneider, Wayne Shulmister, John Keefe

“The Five Percent Rule” – Independent; Sally Herships

“When Patents Attack” – NPR; Laura Sydell, Alex Blumberg



BOOK

IRE AWARD

“Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church” by Jason Berry

Judges’ comments: Author Jason Berry delves deeply into a topic few have examined – the secretive finances of the Roman Catholic Church. Using voluminous background research that takes the reader back centuries, Berry uncovers abuses of the trust of church members by influential bishops who diverted funds intended for philanthropic purposes into accounts used for plugging Vatican operating deficits or defending priests accused of pedophilia. Berry details how the modern church is systematically closing churches in poorer parishes while at the same time opening churches in affluent suburbs where the weekly “take” is greater. The author makes extensive use of public documents, leaked parish records, trial transcripts, interviews and a wide range of published reporting to paint a complete picture of a heretofore secret network of church financial dealings. For shining a bright light on the shenanigans and inner workings of the Catholic Church, IRE honors Jason Berry and “Render Unto Rome.”

FINALISTS:

“The Wizard of Lies: Bernie Madoff and the Death of Trust” by Diana B. Henriques

“Retirement Heist” by Ellen E. Schultz

SPECIAL CATEGORIES:

TOM RENNER AWARD

IRE MEDAL

“Death in the Desert” – CNN; Frederik Pleitgen, Mohamed Fahmy, Sheri England, Tim Lister, Ian Lee, Simon Payne, Earl Nurse

Judges’ comments: CNN’s team faced great personal risk in crossing the dangerous badlands of Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula to expose a network of human trafficking and organ sales in “Death in the Desert.” The team managed to persuade the hostile, clannish Bedouin tribesmen of the region to talk about their organized kidnapping for ransom and trafficking in African immigrants trying to cross from Egypt into Israel. The team also procured photographic evidence, reviewed by coroners, that suggested some immigrants had their organs harvested before being buried in the desert. The final scene of nameless immigrants buried in unmarked graves almost within sight of their final destination in Israel provided an emotional finish to a dramatic, difficult and important story.

FINALISTS:

“Looting the Seas II” – The Center for Public Integrity & The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists; Kate Willson, Mar Cabra, Marcos Garcia Rey, Fredrik Laurin, Nicky Hager, Marina Walker Guevara, David Donald

“Dangerous & Free” – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; John Diedrich

“Arrested Development” – Scripps Howard News Service; Isaac Wolf

FOI AWARD

IRE MEDAL

“The Fed’s Trillion-Dollar Secret” – Bloomberg News; Bradley Keoun, Phil Kuntz, Bob Ivry, Craig Torres, Scott Lanman, David Yanofsky, Donal Griffin, Greg Stohr, Christopher Condon

Judges’ comments: This is accountability reporting at its best. In the wake of the near collapse of the nation’s financial system, Bloomberg News sought important records from the Federal Reserve about loans made to some of the nation’s biggest banks. The Federal Reserve refused, and Bloomberg sued under the Freedom of Information Act. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which refused to overturn the lower court’s decision. IRE commends Bloomberg News for its efforts to provide a rare, behind-the-scenes look at one of the most powerful and secretive industries in American society.

FINALISTS:

“House of Horrors” – The Miami Herald; Carol Marbin Miller, Diana Moskowitz, David Ovalle

“Both Sides of the Law” – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Gina Barton

“Gauging FOI Worldwide” – The Associated Press; Martha Mendoza with AP journalists worldwide

“Bad Medicine” – The Kansas City Star; Alan Bavley



Bloomberg





The Salt Lake Tribune

AN IRE SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE FIRST AMENDMENT

IRE AWARD

The Salt Lake Tribune's reporting, editorial stance and lobbying efforts help keep Utah's open record law intact – The Salt Lake Tribune; Salt Lake Tribune staff

Judges' comments: For its superb and fair coverage and its rigorous editorial advocacy, The Salt Lake Tribune receives an IRE Special Recognition Award for Service to the First Amendment. The paper waged and won a battle over the Utah legislature's attempt to eviscerate Utah's open records law and citizens' rights to know. Lawmakers introduced and passed a bill late in the legislative session without much notice. But the paper fought back in two months of coverage on the content and impact of the bill. It offered its content to other newspapers around the state, and in a rare and unusual move ran strong editorials on the front page. Despite the governor's initial signing of the bill, the paper's efforts and public outcry forced him to reverse his position and call the legislature back into session. For extraordinary effort by newspaper managers and staff, IRE offers it congratulations and awards special recognition.

BREAKING NEWS

IRE AWARD

"Violent Felon Went Unnoticed" – The Palm Beach (Fla.) Post; Michael LaForgia, Cynthia Roldan, Adam Playford

Judges' comments: The Palm Beach Post raced the clock and the competition to unearth compelling details in the deaths of two children whose bodies were fished out of a South Florida canal. Reporters LaForgia, Roldan and Playford were able to flesh out details about the suspect and victims within days of the crime. Playford uncovered key court documents 30 minutes before the courthouse closed and, using his iPhone, snapped pictures of hundreds of pages of documents as clerks were shoving him out the door. The records showed how officials should and could have done more to protect the children from the violent felon who was engaged to their mother. IRE chose this entry as an exemplary case of how investigative reporters can dig deeply on deadline, and in this case their rapid-fire enterprise work revealed flaws in Florida's child welfare system.

FINALISTS:

"Cars for Congress" – WTTG-TV, Washington, D.C.; Tisha Thompson, Lance Ing, Steve Jones

"Wayne County Confidential" – WXYZ-TV, Detroit; Ross Jones, Heather Catallo, Ann Mullen, Johnny Sartin, Ramon Rosario, Randy Lundquist

"Tucson Tragedy" – The Arizona Republic; The Arizona Republic Staff

STUDENT

IRE AWARD

"Million-Dollar Bust" – The Daily Toreador, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas; Ioanna Makris, April Cunningham, Caroline Courtney

Judges' comments: Three student reporters took on powerful Texas Tech University alumni over a sweetheart deal to build and then lease back to the university a parking garage that wasn't needed. Their investigation probably saved the university \$1 million. The student reporters got the state's attorney general involved in forcing documents to be released under the Texas Public Information Act. They also used emails, tax records and other documents to show the cozy relationship between members of the same fraternity who built an unnecessary private parking garage and then leased it back under a contract that put the burden of renting the spaces on Texas Tech and its alumni association. The students showed great initiative and stood their ground in the face of public criticism of their reporting. For using that criticism to dig even deeper, IRE honors The Daily Toreador and its student journalists.

FINALISTS:

"Controversial Mass. School Depends on NY Student, Money" – CUNY Graduate School of Journalism; Hannah Rapple, Lisa Riordan Seville, Teresa Tomassoni, Khristina Narizhnaya

"Misleading Milk Marketing" – Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism; Amy Karon, Catherine Martin, Jessica Gressa, Andrew Golden, Eric Skvirsky, Andy Hall, Kate Golden

"TIFs in Chicago" – ChicagoTalks; Staff

"The High Price of Looking Like a Woman" – The New York Times; Laura Rena Murray

"A Shameful Low in Higher Education" – The Spectrum; Amanda Jonas



The Palm Beach Post



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San Antonio



Cara Catlin

Courtesy of Alexis Sanchez

Broward County sheriff's deputy Frank McCurrie broadsided a Honda Civic on Jan. 23, 2010, shearing the car in half and killing passenger Cara Catlin, a 14-year-old "Oakland Park, Fla., high school freshman. McCurrie, who investigators say was driving nearly 90 mph in a 45-mph zone, is awaiting trial on charges of vehicular homicide and reckless driving.

ABOVE THE LAW

Off-duty police
caught driving from
90 to 130 mph

BY SALLY KESTIN AND JOHN MAINES
SUN SENTINEL

We'd all seen it before – cops flying by with no emergency lights and no obvious reason to be speeding like a race car driver.

But a traffic stop in October brought it all to a head. A Florida state trooper clocked an off-duty Miami police officer driving in excess of 120 mph on his way to work.

Video of the trooper chasing and eventually handcuffing the uniformed officer went viral, and the stories drew hundreds of comments.

Nearly 800 cops from a dozen police agencies drove from 90 to 130 mph during the previous year, often while off-duty and commuting to or from work. Most did not appear to be fighting crime – they were city cops outside their jurisdictions.

We suspected plenty of other cops were routinely speeding, but how could we document it?

We considered GPS devices in police cruisers, but too few agencies used the technology, and those that did immediately put up a fight about releasing the data.

Then it dawned on us: Florida's toll system, SunPass, records the date, location and time down to the hundredth of a second when a car passes through a toll booth. If we got those records for police vehicles, we could calculate their speed based on the distance and time it took to go from one toll location to the next.

SunPass officials initially told us the data was not public, but ultimately agreed with our position and released 1.1 million toll transactions for 3,900 South Florida police transponders. Three months and many miles later, we published the results of our investigation ("Above the Law," sun-sentinel.com/speedingcops).

Nearly 800 officers from a dozen police agencies drove from 90 to 130 mph during the previous year, often while off-duty and commuting to or from work. Most did not appear to be fighting crime – they were city cops outside their jurisdictions.

The lead-foot officers drove the fastest late at night and before 6 a.m., when shifts changed and traffic was lightest.

The worst speeder in the bunch? The same Miami cop caught going 120 mph by the state trooper. Our analysis showed he commuted at

speeds above 100 mph on 114 days and only slowed down after his traffic stop hit the news.

We knew we'd find speeding, but the extent of the problem shocked us – and police brass. When we shared our findings with the Miami Police Department and dropped a 3-inch stack of printed spreadsheets on the table, the major doing the interview said: "All of those are ours? Wow! 120 mph? Wow!"

"We write speeding tickets," he said. "It's not very prudent to be out violating the very laws that we enforce."

On exclusive Miami Beach, where we found more than 50 cops driving well above 90 mph back and forth to work, the police chief's only consolation – at least they weren't as bad as Miami. The day after our meeting, the chief issued a memo to his staff: "This type of unwarranted behavior will not be tolerated, and officers will be held accountable."

Measuring Miles

The investigation combined technology and data with old-fashioned shoe-leather reporting. Obtaining the SunPass data was just the first step.

To determine how fast the cops were driving, we needed to know the distance between toll booths, and to our surprise, the state did not have precise mileages. We ruled out measuring distances with our car odometers, which can be off for a lot of reasons, and went with the suggestion of traffic engineers – a portable GPS device.

Garmin and other manufacturers make units for joggers and cyclists that fit into the palm of your hand and are accurate to within a few feet. We went with a Garmin Edge that you can pick up on Amazon for \$150.

With one person driving and another operating the GPS, we carefully measured each leg of our toll highways, logging a total of 2,500 miles over three counties.

We created a master spreadsheet in Excel with all of our routes and distances. That allowed us to quickly recalculate speeds if we found a mileage that needed tweaking. We'd make the change once and rerun a macro in Microsoft Access to fix it across all agencies. Excel and Access were also crucial in eliminating thousands of duplicate and bogus records that were produced in merging the data (trust us on this). We created a filtering process that got the data squeaky clean.

Special Treatment

About a month into the driving and number crunching, we realized we were onto something big and decided to expand the story, examining the consequences of police speeding and the culture of brotherhood that allows it to happen.

Database specialist Dana Williams analyzed seven years of accident reports and found that speeding cops in Florida had caused 320 crashes, killing and maiming at least 21 people. Only one officer went to jail – for 60 days.

The victims included a 14-year-old girl killed by a sheriff's deputy driving twice the speed limit to a routine traffic stop and a college student now severely brain damaged after a police officer slammed into him going 104 mph for no apparent reason.

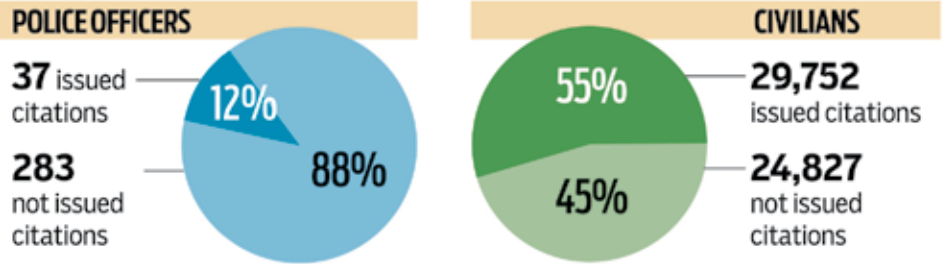
The crash data provided another angle – that police officers receive special treatment. Of the accidents blamed on police speeding, only 12 percent of the officers were ticketed. By contrast, 55 percent of other motorists who were speeding when they crashed received a citation.

To explore the culture and attitude toward speeding, we requested police internal affairs complaints and investigations. Those showed a clear pattern: speeding at many Florida police agencies wasn't taken seriously unless it resulted in tragedy, and punishment for driving at excessive speeds was as slight as a verbal or written reminder to obey the speed limit.

Interviews with former cops and state troopers helped fill in the gaps and confirm what we knew anecdotally – cops extended

Fewer tickets for police

Florida officers involved in crashes caused by their speeding were ticketed far less than civilians over a 7-year period.



Data from 2004 through 2010
Sources: Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles; Sun Sentinel: Dana Williams/research, Cindy Jones-Hulfachor, staff artist



Cop blazes through Broward County, Fla.

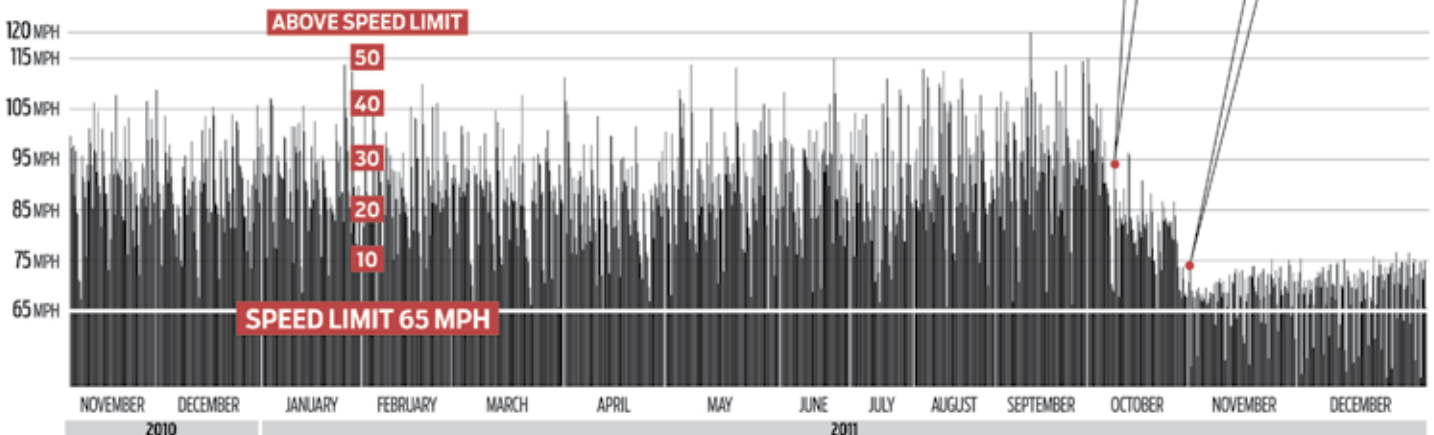
Miami Police Officer Fausto Lopez of Coconut Creek routinely blew through Broward County at speeds over 100 mph from November 2010 through December 2011. He slowed down after making headlines in October 2011, when a state trooper clocked him at 120 mph.

TOP SPEED BY MONTH Highest average speed between two toll plazas.



A YEAR OF SPEEDING

Each bar represents Officer Lopez' average speed between SunPass toll plazas. The speeds are based on the distance between the plazas and travel time.



SOURCES: SunPass, Sun Sentinel research * Lopez averaged 94 mph between two toll plazas just before the trooper began following him.

JOHN MAINES and SALLY KESTIN/SUN SENTINEL RESEARCH
CINDY JONES-HULFACHOR/SUN SENTINEL ARTIST

a “professional courtesy” to each other, rarely stopping or ticketing their own. Even in their personal vehicles, police officers routinely “badged their way out” of tickets.

Results

The series produced immediate results. All the police agencies began internal investigations of the speeding documented by the Sun Sentinel. As of mid-April, 23 officers from three departments had been disciplined after police chiefs confirmed the lead-footed cops weren’t rushing to fight crime – they were just going back and forth to work. One city began monitoring its officers’ driving with a device that activates whenever they exceed the speed limit, and another started using the same method the newspaper employed – checking officers’ toll records. Three other cities are exploring GPS or other technology to catch speeding cops.

Hundreds of readers wrote or called the Sun Sentinel, thanking us for highlighting a long-standing community danger with indisputable evidence. And the best result – the cops actually slowed down.

Investigators at the Miami Police Department set up radar stings on fellow officers beginning last fall and regularly caught speeders until word of the Sun Sentinel investigation spread, said the head of the internal affairs. “There is without a doubt a difference,” said Maj. Jorge Colina.

Tips

Here are some tips to consider, if you’re planning a similar project:

- Try to get the police transponder records from the toll agency. It will make your life much simpler than going to multiple police departments, where your request will not be greeted nicely or treated with urgency. One source will also ensure you receive data in a consistent format.
- Before you invest too much time and convince your editors to buy a GPS, check with the toll agency to be sure that the times at each toll location are synchronized. In Florida, they operate off of a computer that is tied to the U.S. Naval Observatory’s master clock.
- Also, find out where the cameras that read the transponders are located and whether there is any discrepancy between toll booths. For instance, do they always take the reading five feet before the car reaches the gantry? Consistency is what you’re looking for. And finally, ask if there are any significant maintenance problems or glitches that would create incorrect time readings in the toll records.
- If you have to do your own measuring, drive the most common routes more than once to ensure you get the same result, especially if the distance is short. We had two well-traveled highways with toll booths less than two miles apart. Being off even a little could dramatically alter the speeds.

- Measure each route in both directions. Entrance and exit ramps can vary – some are short, straight shots and others are large loops that can create differences of a half-mile or so.
- Google Maps is a good back-up to check distances or as an alternative to driving, if you don’t have the time or money to spend on a GPS. Go to “Maps Labs” at the bottom of the page and make sure you enable the distance measurement tool.

Find the toll booth on the satellite map, right-click and hit “Directions from here.” Go to your next toll location, and right click on ‘Directions to here.’ We found the distances to be very close to the GPS’s. When they were off at all, Google was higher but usually by no more than one-tenth of a mile.

- If you’re thinking of catching speeding cops by sitting on a highway with a radar gun, don’t waste your money. We tried that while we were waiting on the SunPass data, and all we got was wet – it rained.

The biggest problem with that method is that the cops, at least in South Florida, are reaching these excessive speeds at night and pre-dawn, and it’s too hard to identify cars in the dark. Even if you’re lucky enough to find a protected overpass like we did, you just can’t tell what’s approaching until it’s too late. Besides, the police agencies would no doubt poke holes in the accuracy of a radar device that isn’t calibrated or certified by law enforcement.

- If you find speeding through toll records or some other method that involves your own calculations, take the results to the police agencies well before you publish to give them time to comment and an opportunity to take issue with anything you’ve done. We first went to our police departments a month ahead and checked in again before publication to vet the results.
- Get the speeding policies for your police agencies. That will help you identify violations that may not be obvious.

Off-duty speeding was prohibited at all of our departments, but on-duty driving was murkier. The Miami-Dade Police Department set a cap on how fast cops could drive even in an emergency: no more than 20 miles over the speed limit. That meant that under no circumstances should Miami-Dade officers be going above 90 mph, yet we had more than 270 cops driving as fast as 115 mph.

“That is very disturbing,” said a major at the police department. “Speeding is a big problem. It’s a big problem not only for us but for every other police department.”

Sally Kestin, an investigative reporter, and John Maines, database editor, have investigated fraud in FEMA disaster aid, children missing from the child welfare agency and flaws in Florida’s background screening for day care and nursing home workers. Their work has won state and national awards.



Erskin and Phillipa Bell care for their son Erskin Jr., a college student brain-damaged by a police officer who was going 104 mph.

Covering the violence in Juárez: Challenges and tools

BY SANDRA RODRÍGUEZ
EL DIARIO DE JUÁREZ

In early 2008, when the number of homicides began to increase dramatically in Ciudad Juárez, it was difficult to gauge the magnitude of the violence that hung over the city.

Soon, we started to call it a “war” between the two organized crime groups that we knew were operating in the region. But the almost total lack of investigation by the state to clarify the murders left us at the beginning unable to understand the meaning of the dispute, who was fighting it and what made it so violent. Therefore, journalistic investigation of the phenomenon presented several challenges.

First of all, the clandestine and illegal nature of the drug trade makes it an elusive and hidden activity by definition.

The second challenge, and perhaps the most dangerous, is the power of corruption within the investigative institutions, which try to cover up the activities of criminals, making it risky to report them.

Additionally, the members of criminal organizations are not identified and are often hidden among the police forces, prosecutors’ offices and in various circles of government.

Under these conditions, and despite the number of murders with firearms’ reaching epidemic proportions, most journalists in Ciudad Juárez remained in our positions, reporting the violence in varying degrees of depth as much as we could, from reporting statistics and social devastation to covering the frailty of the state and the links between government institutions and drug traffickers that allowed such barbarism.

Risks

The task, however, involved several risks. Simply covering a crime scene, where you can gather the best profile of the victims and capture the pain caused by the offense, potentially exposes journalists to danger. Some fellow photographers said that sometimes suspicious men approached them while they photographed the victims, asking them to do close ups with the cameras to make sure they were actually dead. A TV photographer was wounded by the detonation of an explosive device on July 15, 2010.

The police forces and military present another danger. They are often reluctant to work under the observation of the media, and therefore they are aggressive toward photographers and reporters. On one occasion during the first days of military deployment in late January 2008, when I was questioning a military commander regarding allegations of human rights violations, he openly told me that I seemed “suspicious” asking such questions and that he thought I did not work “just for El Diario,” implying that I worked for a criminal organization.

An underlying message in that comment, which I had not understood before then, was that if we weren’t on the government’s side, we were against it. Another was that we actually were in the midst of an armed conflict. Without a clear idea of how to cover a war while at the same time being submerged in the vortex of violence, reporters didn’t have much time to think or find a way to care for our safety. Everything was happening at once.

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Journalist murdered

Thus came Nov. 13, 2008, when our friend and fellow reporter Armando Rodríguez – who had more than 10 years' experience covering the violence in Juárez and who was the lead researcher of the statistics by which the barbarism was measured – was murdered.

His death left not only an emotional void among his colleagues and friends, but a climate of uncertainty in which reporters did not know how to understand the crime: Who murdered him? Why? What about all the stories published in the last year, which revealed abuses by both military and officials with links to drug traffickers; did they cause his death? Was it a member of the cartels? Someone in the army? The state government?

The impunity – which still surrounds the case – raised the severity of the emergency, which we, as journalists, were going through. I remember in those days that a colleague lamented that with the death of Armando, we had also lost track of the victims of homicide. He was the one who compiled and classified these statistics daily.

Doing so is vitally important. Tracking and publicizing casualty figures shows the extent of the barbarism hovering over much of Mexico.

In those days of pain and loss I heard a comment by a national news anchor who suggested that the reporters in the border region were not covering the violence in depth and that we had not gone beyond the death toll. The comment infuriated me not only because of the lack of understanding of our situation.

New tools

The comment, however, contained a challenge that demanded that we augment the journalistic tools we had used until then in order to generate stories that would expand public awareness about the conflict.

So in 2009, armed with information about 900 of the more than 1,600 murders that had occurred in 2008, El Diario created a casualty database. It included such facts as the age of each victim, the location of the crime, the caliber of weapon used and more.

It allowed us to establish different patterns. For example, we could conclude that a large number of victims, approximately 56 percent of those for whom we had information, were young men under 35 years of age. Also, thanks to that database we were able to identify that while violence had occurred in all parts of the city, it was concentrated in peripheral areas, showing that the killings were especially targeting the poorest people of Ciudad Juárez. With the database, we could pinpoint which neighborhood had the largest number of homicides and even which was the most violent street of the most dangerous city in Mexico.

The systematization of information and the creation of databases was only one of the tools we used to document the violence. We also turned to information requests through both federal and state transparency laws, to find, for example, that the federal government had opened only 33 investigations of organized crime in two years and had achieved almost zero results regarding border protection, where officers, for example, confiscated only 148 guns in one year (2009).

Also, through the transparency law of the state of Chihuahua, we obtained in 2011 statistics indicating that in a group of more than 3,000 murders, firearms were found in only 59 cases. These numbers, according to experts consulted, challenged the official discourse that all who die are involved in drug trafficking.

We could also document cases of corruption, such as when El Diario had access to information from a former security chief who revealed how former Gov. José Reyes Baeza had ordered him to obey a leader of the Juárez cartel to coordinate various police actions. On another occasion, using data from the public records of ownership, we found out about the conflict of interest created by a former military chief, who, just after quitting his job in the army, opened a company to transact guns permissions for local people. In Mexico, only the Secretariat of National Defense gives this kind of gun permissions, so the general was using his influences and contacts in the Secretariat to make his business.

The task has not been easy. The possibilities of falling victim to an attack or that the normality of violence ends up numbing our sense of wonder are always latent risks. The events in Ciudad Juárez, however, constitute one of the most important social phenomena of recent years in Mexico, and the world is watching. Who better than us, the local journalists, to be the first to record them?

Sandra Rodriguez Nieto is an investigative reporter for El Diario de Juárez, Mexico. In 2011, she received a Knight International Journalism Award, and in 2010, the Spanish newspaper El Mundo presented her with the Reporteros Del Mundo award for her outstanding work covering a conflict zone. She previously worked for Proceso magazine and the newspaper Reforma.



Journalists should seek FOI reforms

BY CHARLES N. DAVIS
MISSOURI SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Each year, the legislative season sends shivers up the spines of FOI advocates nationwide. This year's agenda has offered a mix of reform and retreat, wisdom and folly, and reminds the watcher that at the end of the day, it remains journalism's job to defend the people's right to know.

From time to time, I have encountered excellent investigative reporters and editors who contend that FOI advocacy must be left to non-profit good government groups. Journalists naturally and correctly detest entanglements with political issues, and some refuse to get involved in the fight against government secrecy lest they be accused of partisanship.

With all due respect, this is an argument without merit.

To advocate on behalf of government openness – to oppose government secrecy – is to take a position in favor of democracy. There is nothing remotely compromising about taking sides on this issue, because where journalists are concerned, there is only one side to take.

It's worth noting that the origins of the freedom of information movement in the United States – a movement that culminated in the passage in 1966 of the federal Freedom of Information Act and sunshine laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia – began in the 1950s as a group of journalists, led by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (now the American Society of News Editors). Distraught over the vestiges of rampant World War II secrecy that hung around long after the war ended, the journalists turned their considerable muscle on the issue. They editorialized, sought allies in Congress and in statehouses across the country and began the long, laborious process of codifying the people's right to know.

Fifty years later, the FOI landscape is littered with problems. Statutes written for the era of paper files and manila folders work imperfectly in the digital age: so many obstacles to access these days could be solved with simple fixes to statutes recognizing the lower cost of providing electronic records in usable formats, but most FOI laws are silent on the issue. Exemptions expand in number annually,

and few FOI regimes across the country have any process for sunseting of exemptions.

In short, FOI is at a crossroads. Digital technology offers the promise of democratized governmental information as never before, but the gap between what is possible and what is required by the law grows wider every year. Without substantive FOI reform – reform that goes straight to the content of the statutes themselves, bringing them into the modern state of affairs – journalists will find that the promise of access has fallen victim to statutes written decades ago.

The infrastructure for reform has never been stronger: thanks to the visionary support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the National Freedom of Information Coalition and its member state coalitions have formed a national network of FOI advocates.

What the NFOIC needs is the support of every working journalist and access advocate in the country. Get started by joining your state group – you'll find a complete list at nfoic.org. Invest some of your time and money in the cause, and help us build an even stronger counterweight to the forces of secrecy.

Much attention rightly is being directed these days at creating a dizzying array of digital tools that promise to reinvent journalism. The excitement accompanying these new tools is palpable; the energy and innovation in digital circles is heady stuff.

We must not forget, though, that without meaningful access to government data, all of this innovation is for naught. Think of it using a transportation metaphor: journalism is building an incredible collection of high-speed, high-tech bullet trains, while neglecting at its peril the rails the trains must run on.

It is time for a renewed commitment by journalists nationwide, and by the institutions that employ them, to organize similarly industrious efforts aimed at modernizing those rusty old rails. Those gleaming new trains deserve nothing less.

We must not forget, though, that without meaningful access to government data, all of this innovation is for naught.

Charles N. Davis is an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism. He is co-author, with David Cuillier, of "The Art of Access."

Make It Your Business

Digging into companies and economic data

While covering the government, journalists have open meeting and public record laws on their side. Keeping tabs on the business community relies on a whole separate set of skills and creativity in digging.

Finding Local Data:

How to turn the numbers into meaningful stories

BY DAVID CAY JOHNSTON
REUTERS

The economy is one of the biggest stories of the past few years and is likely to remain so for some years to come as a major transformation of the economy continues. But too much coverage is about big national issues and not nearly enough about what it means in your market, your county, your town, or even in your neighborhood or at least zip code.

Some of the most compelling untold stories in America are right in the town you live in, no matter where that town is. These are the stories of the local economy, and the same data that tells the national story can also be used to tell how the story in your area parallels or departs from that story.

Learn how to dig deeper into data the government and industry collect and you can add immense value to your reports. Readers, listeners and viewers will notice.

What follows is an overview of the landscape of available data along with some tips on how to analyze the information to imbue it with meaning.

Of course, numbers are ultimately just numbers, and people learn from stories, not dry memos. Numbers from nowhere are everywhere. What people thirst for is news from where they live that tells them what they need to know, explains what they do not understand and reveals the forces buffeting (or buoying) them in these hard times.

So after collecting and crunching the numbers the next step is to find people whose circumstances give them a human touch. With simple analysis that anyone can do with basic spreadsheet skills, you develop telling details, replacing vague with valuable.

But let's get back to the numbers. To illustrate how to localize the economic story of our time, let's look at one county, the one I live in, Monroe County on the southern shore of Lake Ontario in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

Jobs and wages

At the federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics website, you can analyze county-level data on jobs.

At bls.gov/data, easy-to-use features let you create detailed tables so you can compare, say, average private-sector wages with average government wages in your county over a number of years.

Click on "Pay & Benefits" and you will drop down the page. Scroll down to "State and County Wages" and then "One-Screen Data Search." I picked New York, Monroe County, the total for all industries, privately owned businesses, all establishment sizes; select average annual pay; and click on "get data." Immediately a page opens with the wage figures from 2001 to 2010.

Click on the download .xls icon. Now let's assume you only want to compare the first and last years.

First you need to adjust all of the numbers to 2012 dollars so they are comparable. Go to <http://bit.ly/3ZAHm> and put 100 in the first box, the year 2001 and the year 2012.

Move the decimal two places to the left – 1.2953 – and multiply the 2001 figure by it to get the 2001 average wage in 2012 dollars. Note that the 2012 dollars are based on the monthly index, so you may get a slightly different number.

Now repeat these steps for 2010 to get 2012 dollars.

Now subtract the inflation-adjusted, or real, 2010 figure from the 2001 figure and you can see the change in average income in con-

stant 2012 dollars. Divide the difference by the 2001 figure and you get the percentage change.

For Monroe County it turns out average annual wages slipped by \$1,893, a decline of 3.966%.

A word of caution here – do not use such precise figures. All large numbers are estimates. Summary federal budget data are rounded to the nearest \$100 million. Exxon-Mobil's profit reports are rounded to the nearest million dollars. And you probably do not know to the dollar what will be in your checking account when today's transactions clear, but you have a rough idea.

In this example use "declined by about \$1,900," or minus 4 percent.

The BLS has all sorts of data on wages, hours worked, different industries, who is working and who is not, productivity and workplace injuries available down to the county level for a number of years.

There is even a nifty map-making feature at the county level. Using this link, <http://bit.ly/zxqM5p>, you can get state-level unemployment data month by month in graphic form.

Try this experiment to get an idea of the data you can find. In the BLS map tool, enter your state and the unemployment rate for the most recent month. Now change the year to 2000. What you will see is the dark blue areas, meaning high unemployment, turning noticeably lighter shades of blue. This change is especially noticeable in New Jersey. Put the map for every month since 1990 into a slide show and you have a revealing online tool.

Real estate

Then there is real estate, a story that readers want and that can tell a great deal about local economic conditions. As my friend David Crook, creator of The Wall Street Journal's Friday real estate feature, "Private Properties," and author of two WSJ real-estate books, says: "Local real-estate transactions are the best kind of gossip column – true, verifiable information that actually affects the public. Good real-estate coverage lets you look at a bit of what the local 1% are up to. And there's no better signal whether a local executive is in or out, up or down than following his house moves."

Many newspapers now report property sales each week, often in their real estate section. The database used to report these transactions can be a valuable source of insights if you query it for such things as who handled the most sales and properties adjacent to one another. In my town of 37,000 people I learned just from reading the real estate reports in the Saturday paper that someone was assembling

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Many states publish detailed tax statistics by income, type of income and county. You can use this data to make your stories rich with details, golden nuggets of fact that will add authority to your reports.

land at 12 Corners, the center of my town.

That is a story that would be carefully and widely read and could well lead to dozens more stories over the next few years. Sadly, I have not been able to get any local reporter to just report the assembly of parcels. But as Crook points out, when transactions like these get reported they prompt a lot of talk, which means reinforcing interest in your business – news.

Monroe County has the highest property tax rate in America, according to the Tax Foundation, a research group in Washington that favors reducing taxes always. But that No. 1 status is just a fact. The story is in the reasons for Monroe County's high property tax, what it means in terms of owning homes, jobs and the costs of local government and what taxpayers get for their money.

Property taxes are high because housing is so cheap – the market average prices are near the bottom nationally. In the California county where I grew up, Santa Cruz, it is a different story. Cheap housing and great weather drew so many old people that in 1960 Santa Cruz was known as God's Waiting Room West (the East room was St. Petersburg, Fla.). But today Santa Cruz has become a long-commute and a second-home mecca for Silicon Valley, making its housing among the most expensive housing in America.

The difference in lifestyle is huge, and not just because of the long winters in Rochester. A number of Monroe County schools are among the best in the country; the Santa Cruz schools where I and some of my children went, not so good.

In Santa Cruz – as in Manhattan, Washington, Southern California along the coast and San Francisco/Silicon Valley – a million dollar property often means a \$950,000 lot with a \$50,000 building. In Monroe County you get the reverse. And because a really nice house does not require \$950,000, the total values are quite low, hence the high property tax rate.

If you owned a \$300,000 house in Monroe County, it would be luxurious, while in Santa Cruz a million dollar house would just be nice. Each would have a property tax bill of about \$12,000 at the 4% rate in Monroe and the 1.25% rate in Santa Cruz. If each were fully mortgaged at the same interest rate, though, the Santa Cruz house's monthly payment would be 3.33 times larger.

Would you rather pay \$50,000 in annual mortgage interest or \$15,000? Would you rather pay \$62,500 in interest and taxes for a modest home or \$27,500 for a much nicer one, albeit in a climate not so lovely?

People who pay less in mortgage interest have more money for other spending and saving. But how much do they have?

Changes in income

You can get the deposits at every branch bank in America back to 1994 from the FDIC.. Want insight into which towns, zip codes or neighborhoods are prospering and which are fading? This will help show shifts. Just go to <http://bit.ly/JpFwc2> and put in the county, market or zip code you want to search and go back through time.

You can analyze deposits over time by city, county or zip code and compare the numbers to incomes, property taxes and other data.

And just how much do people make in your area? Many states publish detailed tax statistics by income, type of income and county. You can use this data to make your stories rich with details, golden nuggets of fact that will add authority to your reports.

Let's compare the data for 2000 and 2008, the latest available, in "Table 4: Income Tax Components of Full-Year Residents by Size of Income and County" (<http://bit.ly/J8yJX5>) for Monroe County. Cut and paste one year into a new spreadsheet and then put the second year a half-dozen lines below. This makes analysis both by going below the two sets of figures and to the right easy.

First you will see that the total number of taxpayers for all brackets – listed in the bottom row of column 3 (the column titled "Number") – was virtually unchanged.

To calculate the average income for all taxpayers in 2008, take the total adjusted gross income, \$16,469,896, and divide it by the total number of taxpayers, 335,835. Multiply the result by 1000. Do the same with year 2000 numbers.

Average income appeared to be up. However, a 2000 dollar and a 2008 dollar did not have the same value because of inflation, so you need to use that dandy inflation adjuster at <http://bit.ly/3ZAHm>.

A 2008 dollar is equal to \$1.25 in 2000.

Adjusting for inflation showed a very different picture than the nominal numbers:

Average Incomes in Monroe County, N.Y. in 2008\$

2000	\$56,376
2008	\$49,042
Change	-\$ 7,334
Percentage Change	-13%

That's a serious decline in incomes.

If you then convert the data to 2012 dollars, the percentage should remain unchanged, a way to check that you got the math right.

Look again at the two sets of numbers and you will see that the number of the poorest taxpayers, those with incomes under \$5,000, increased from 2000 to 2008 by more than 5 percent, from 49,515 to 52,202. Since 2000 was a peak year and 2008 was part of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, this was not surprising.

Now calculate the average by dividing the total adjusted gross income by the number of poor taxpayers and multiplying by 1,000 (because income data is often expressed in thousands or, like the ExxonMobil profits, in millions).

This analysis reveals a huge downward change in average incomes. The average plummeted from almost \$3,000 in 2000 (again, in 2008 dollars) to negative \$557 in 2008.

There is no such thing as negative wages, so the negative average tells you that a lot of small businesses failed and people took losses against their other income. Many poor people are self-employed or employ one or two other people in marginal enterprises that collapse when the economy does. Indeed, if you work through the more than 50 other statistics of income tables New York state provides, you will see evidence of failed businesses.

This telling detail about incomes turning negative can add value to articles about why so many more people are turning up at food banks, why free winter coat programs are swamped with parents the minute they open and why a host of other social problems increased in 2008 and beyond.

New York State does not adjust income brackets for inflation, but luckily a 2000 dollar was equal to \$1.25 in 2008. That means a \$40,000 income in 2000 was the same as a \$50,000 income in 2008, which are brackets in the state income tax data.

Adding the number of taxpayers and incomes above and below \$40,000 for 2000 and \$50,000 for 2008, adjusting to 2008 dollars and then dividing by the number of taxpayers in each group for the two years showed this:

Average Incomes in Monroe County, N.Y. in 2008\$

	Under \$40k/\$50k	Over \$40k/\$50k
2000	\$19,638	\$120,547
2008	\$18,059	\$117,835
Change	\$1,579	-\$2,712
Percentage Change	- 8%	- 2%

That looks like most of the pain was at the bottom. And indeed further analysis shows that it was, as the number with incomes under \$50,000 in 2008 dollars grew from 64 percent of county taxpayers in 2000 to 69 percent in 2008.

Keep in mind that you can get an exact, in this case, or rough measure to adjust if you look for periods of time that allow you to compare different fixed numbers for income groups.

Sales tax

One of the best indicators of local business conditions is sales tax data. New York is among the states that make county level data available. Washington state, which has no income tax, offers excellent detailed sales tax data online at <http://1.usa.gov/loqUZp>.

Cities, counties, school districts and other specialized local government agencies that rely on sales tax revenues prepare budgets projecting expected revenues and show actual revenues from years past. In addition the states all collect detailed data on automobile sales.

Budget analysts for the county, city and school districts all have to estimate sales tax data and for years past they have actual figures. When Walmart, Lowe's or some other big box retailer keeps the sales taxes collected at the register to pay the cost of building the store, there should be a report. If the government refuses to provide it, look for records of the municipal bonds sold to finance the deal. Detailed reports and updates are available from the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board at msrb.org.

Finally, there is corporate tax data. Massachusetts has superb data at <http://1.usa.gov/K6WYye>.

In Wisconsin any citizen, for \$4, can get a report on how much state income tax any corporation in the state paid. Jack Norman at Wisconsin's Future (wisconsinfuture.org) has posted revealing reports on many companies.

Here is a basic rule to remember, from the late Wallace Turner, the longtime West Coast bureau chief of The New York Times: If it's important enough to report, somebody has already written it down somewhere, and your job is to mine those mountains of bureaucratic paperwork to find your golden nugget of fact.

David Cay Johnston, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and best-selling author, is a columnist and television commentator for Reuters.



IKEA

Made in Sweden

BY MAGNUS SVENUNGSSON
SVT (SWEDISH TELEVISION)

For more than 30 years, the most admired businessman in Sweden and one of the richest men in the world, Ingvar Kamprad, masked the ownership of his creation, the furniture giant IKEA. He withheld information from company employees, customers and Swedish authorities. It turned out that not even the CEO of IKEA knew of Kamprad's ingenious use of laws and regulations to design the company structure. Why did he do this? And how did he keep it a secret for so long?

In 2005, we visited a conference about investigative journalism in Lausanne, Switzerland. Right there in the wonderful landscape

of water and mountains, we realized that this was where Ingvar Kamprad lived. The man was considered one of the most "Swedish" people of all and was founder of the Swedish company IKEA, with stores painted in blue and yellow, the colors of the Swedish flag, all over the world.

We decided then and there to investigate him and his business. Six years later my team of directors, researchers, and photographers and I had enough information to finally complete the story.

For many years Kamprad had managed to give the impression that he had given away IKEA and that his life's work no longer belonged to him. Instead, he had stated that the actual owner of IKEA was a charity foundation based in the Netherlands.

Kamprad had claimed that he didn't control the company and most importantly for Kamprad, that he no longer controlled the enormous assets of IKEA. This was an important part of the fairy tale he had spread about himself as the poor man starting a furniture company who conquers the world and then gives it away to a charity foundation.

Ownership

In fact, Kamprad had the veto of every new product. The challenge for us was to get beyond this point. If this man was still involved

in small details, how could he have given up control of IKEA?

We had to understand the company structure of IKEA, and to do that fully, we received assistance from economic experts. We also decided to work together with a local newspaper in Småland, where IKEA was founded and still has some important offices. During the investigation we obtained economic and historic intelligence from this partner.

There are hundreds of companies in the IKEA family. To find the owner, you have to follow the money. We bought annual reports for IKEA companies all over the world. In each report we could find the dividend paid to the owner, often another IKEA company, and in that company's annual report we were able to find another owner. We made a schedule of companies and owners from Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Curacao, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

While we were trying to make a detailed picture of all IKEA companies, we found interesting activity at one, I I Holding SA, in Luxembourg. The company was suddenly moved from Luxembourg to Curacao. After registering in Curacao, the company was liquidated. We found a new, strange owner behind the order to liquidate: something called the Interogo Foundation. The owner was registered at a solicitor's office in the most notorious tax haven in Europe, Liechtenstein. This was a breakthrough moment that would give us reason to cheer later in the investigation.

Inter IKEA

When we were visiting a lot of IKEA stores around Europe, we looked closely at the flag outside the stores. In a corner of the flag, we saw a small sign that said, "Copyright Inter Ikea."

We went into the store and found the same sign on every single thing, the same copyright sign.

IKEA didn't own a thing! Instead, it was "Inter Ikea." For every item sold by IKEA stores around the world, 3 percent of the revenue was channeled, untaxed, from IKEA to Inter Ikea as a royalty. Was the one who controlled Inter Ikea the real boss in the IKEA family?

We had a schedule of Kamprad's empire. There were three lines: IKEA, Inter Ikea and Ikano. IKEA had all the stores. Inter Ikea had the concept. Ikano was a bank, owned by Kamprad sons.

We set our sights on Inter Ikea. One reason to create a complex structure like this might be to hide the owner of IKEA. Another reason might, of course, be to avoid taxes. By living in Switzerland, Kamprad personally avoided a lot of taxes. By making this complicated structure, IKEA avoided even more taxes. With IKEA companies across the world, which tax office,



Torkel Wennman, Magnus Svenungsson and Stellan Bjork worked on the investigation. Other contributors not pictured are: Lars-Goran Svensson, director; Kenny Adersjo, director; Bosse Vikingsson, research; Carl von Schulzenheim, research; Erik Palm, research; Jan Eliasson, photo; Andreas Rydbacken, photo; Magnus Persson, photo.

in which country, could conduct a total investigation of IKEA? Probably no one.

Every company in the IKEA family has a specific reason to be located in each city and country. But were they real companies with real activities? To find out, we had to make a trip around those countries. We traveled by car to all of the key headquarters in seven European countries, and along the way we came to understand how important making in-person visits was: There were no real offices – just mailboxes and solicitor’s offices.

The headquarters of Inter Ikea was registered at an address in Luxembourg. When we arrived, we found an empty office, with no curtains and desks without papers.

Only one person, the legal officer of Inter Ikea, was there, taking care of the mailbox. Unexpectedly, she opened the door, let us in and told us the truth: that this was not the headquarters of Inter Ikea.

At another address in Luxembourg was no office at all – just a mailbox. We got the same view in Amsterdam.

Finally we arrived at Vaduz in Liechtenstein. Even in a country with an image of confidentiality and anonymity, we got some important information in Vaduz from Companies House, where businesses register.

The foundation

You can’t search by a person’s name or number at the Companies House. You have to know the exact name of the foundation. We couldn’t get any information connected to the name of Ingvar Kamprad, but the name of Interogo Foundation gave us the organization’s bylaws.

The bylaws told us that Interogo Foundation was administrated by two lawyers at the law firm Marxer and Partner. But they were prohibited from saying anything.

Finally we had to contact Kamprad to ask him about the foundation in Liechtenstein.

The answer was delayed, as it had to come from Kamprad himself. But in the end, we got an answer – a great answer. He confirmed the existence of the foundation in Liechtenstein, and he told us that he and his family sat on the board.

Contrary to what Kamprad had been telling everyone for at least 30 years, the truth was hidden in Liechtenstein. Not even the CEO of IKEA had the correct information.

Now we had to investigate the wealth of IKEA and Kamprad. How much was he worth? In the annual reports, we found how much money each IKEA company paid to stockholders in dividends.

We found that Interogo should have assets of at least 6 billion Euros. We had to check this number with Kamprad. In our question, we didn’t tell him what we knew. He gave us



The law office of Marxer & Partner, which is administering the Interogo Foundation.

an answer of 11 billion Euros!

Throughout this investigation, IKEA and Kamprad didn’t volunteer anything more than exactly what we asked about. When we knew about Interogo in Liechtenstein, IKEA confirmed. When we knew about the vast assets of Interogo, IKEA confirmed. It looked like we were playing a game, and Kamprad refused to grant us an interview.

Confronting Kamprad

Through the investigation, as a reporter, you experience different emotions. You are up in the sky and buried in the ground. It was won-



Magnus Svenungsson confronts IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad.

Economic facts

In all, IKEA companies and foundations possess assets of almost 38 billion euro.

Inter Ikea and Interogo Foundation: 11 billion euro
IKEA and the Ikea-foundation: 25 billion euro
IKANO (the bank of Ikea): 1.33 billion euro

Research

companieshouse.gov.uk
skyminder.com

- To get business information about IKEA in different countries
- To buy annual reports
- To learn the protocol for changing the board of the company

ebr.org

- European business center

infotorg.se

pipl.com

- Personal research

Swedish Tax Authorities

- For Ingvar Kamprad's personal revenue and taxes

riksarkivet.se (Sweden's national, regional and state archives)

- For research of Kamprad family

derful to find all the money in Liechtenstein, but at the same time we had our doubts about the story. Why did Kamprad worry about looking rich after making a success like IKEA?

Also, we were worried about public reaction to our work. Kamprad is considered a Swedish hero.

But we were naive. We didn't know we were going to be hated for doing this investigation.

We planned a way to catch Kamprad on camera. People would be angry if we surprised an 85-year-old man at his Swiss home. We had to interview him when he was working.

And there was a perfect time for this. Year after year Kamprad has a Christmas lunch for all the employees of IKEA in Älmhult, Småland, on Dec. 23. That would be the perfect time. But we would not get more than a minute with him.

We had to focus on one, just one, question. The question was: Why aren't you telling the truth about the foundation in Liechtenstein, where 11 billion Euros are hidden?

It was a very nervous moment. We waited outside the factory. Suddenly, he came

walking to the car with one press officer and one guard.

The exchange:

"My name is Magnus Svenungsson. I'm working for Swedish TV, 'Assignment Investigate.' Why aren't you telling the truth about the foundation in Liechtenstein, where 11 billion Euros are hidden?"

"What kind of question is that?"

"Why aren't you telling the truth about the foundation in Liechtenstein, where 11 billion Euros are hidden?"

"Why are you grubbing this?"

"Why aren't you telling the truth about the foundation in Liechtenstein, where 11 billion Euros are hidden?"

"How can you say something like that? Are you dizzy?"

"Am I dizzy?"

"Yes, you are damn dizzy!"

"You have hidden 11 billion Euros. Why?"

"How can you say something like that? 11 billion! You are sick in your head!"

"Am I sick in my head?"

The guard then interrupted the interview. Kamprad left in a Volvo.

Sweden and the rest of the world

Our investigation was broadcast on Jan. 26. The reaction was strong and instant. Five thousand comments were posted to our online chat in just an hour and 85 percent of them hated us. We had attacked a Swedish icon. We attacked an old man and tried to kill a fairy tale story.

In the rest of the world, there was an opposite reaction. News outlets showed Kamprad's attack on the reporter. Newspapers all over the world told the story about billions hidden in Liechtenstein.

In Sweden, it took some time to accept the investigation. Some still hate us. Other people were very surprised, especially the employees at IKEA. The union felt it had been fooled by Kamprad.

Kamprad tried to blame the reporting and claimed that this was nothing new, but months later, the CEO of IKEA explained in a newspaper interview that he didn't know anything about the foundation in Liechtenstein.

Four months after the broadcast, Kamprad said he had made mistakes and pledged to make the financial arrangement surrounding IKEA transparent.

Magnus Svenungsson is a producer at SVT (Swedish TV) and winner of Stora Journalistpriset, the Swedish equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize.



Vaduz, Liechtenstein is home to Interogo Foundation.

Investigating Private Companies

A quick and dirty guide

BY CHRIS ROUSH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Business journalists spend too much time focusing on public companies and ignore many of the private companies important to their local markets. That was true when I entered the world of business journalism back in 1989, and I believe that it remains true in 2012. Look at the front page of any business section, and you'll likely see that most stories are about public companies.

That's a big mistake, and here are the numbers to back it up: More than 99 percent of all businesses that operate in the United States are private companies whose stock is not traded on an exchange. They therefore do not have to disclose important information about their operations to the Securities and Exchange Commission. (Some private companies do disclose information with the SEC, but not many.)

In addition, more than half of the U.S. workforce is employed by a private business. Yet nowhere near 50 percent, or even 99 percent, of business news content is devoted to private companies.

Ask business journalists why this is the case, and many of them will tell you that the public companies have more prominence among readers. But I'd argue that the real reason is that many of them don't know how to investigate a private business to find stories.

I've spent most of the past decade trying to change that by teaching business journalists at workshops around the country and in Europe and Africa how to investigate private businesses. It's one of the greatest skills that business journalists can have, and it sets their coverage apart from that of other reporters, who focus on public companies.

I'd argue that my work of reporting on and investigating private companies took me from my first business-journalism job at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, where I covered small private businesses, to BusinessWeek magazine just four years later, where I wrote about some of the largest private companies in the country.

Where to look

Here are 10 easy places to look for information about a private company that might lead you to a great investigative story. Not all of these steps will result in your finding a good, or great, story about the business. But they will give you a better handle on what goes on at the company, who controls it, and whether it's in any trouble.

Best of all, you can do this reporting without ever having to talk to the company.

Let's get started:

1. State incorporation records. All businesses – private, nonprofit and public – are required to register with the Secretary of State's office in the state where they are incorporated. The incorporation records tell a company's owner and officers. With these names, you can often connect a business to another run by the same people. In addition, check the mailing address, also commonly found in these public documents. Are other companies at the same address? Most states provide an online database of this information for free, though some do charge.

2. The local courthouses. Looking for lawsuits should be a given when investigating a private business. But plenty of other documents at the courthouse can also help, such as fictitious-names licenses, or doing-business-as licenses. These documents filed with the clerk can tell you who owns the business that you're investigating. Don't forget to check out real estate records, too. I once discovered a grocery store company in Atlanta was buying homes for the CEO's favorite employees. And in Tampa, I ran across the workers compensation court and found how companies were trying to con hurt workers out of proper benefits. The judges were only too happy to point me to the files I needed to review – they had never seen a reporter at their hearings before!

3. Uniform Commercial Code documents. These filings are also stored at Secretary of State offices around the country, and virtually every state provides a UCC database online. These documents tell you when a company has borrowed money and from whom and what the company has put up as collateral in case it defaults on the loan. They also tell you when the debt is due. If you find a company that's borrowing a lot of money, it could be a sign it's in financial trouble – or a sign it's looking to expand aggressively. When USA Today researched former WorldCom CEO Bernie Ebbers, it found all the things he had purchased using what was now worthless WorldCom stock as collateral.

4. WARN Act filings. The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act requires companies to alert state agencies such as the Department of Labor when they plan to lay off 50 or more employees, or at least 33 percent of the workforce, at a location 60 days in advance of the layoff. Some states post these documents online, but I always found it was better to find the person in state government who received these filings and check with him or her regularly. When a company files a WARN Act notice, it often has not told the employees of its plans. In addition, large layoffs can be the first signal that a company is in trouble.

5. Licensing boards. Every business, no matter what business it's in, is regulated by some sort of state agency. Investigating a barber shop? Check the state beautician's board. In my home state of North Carolina, there's even a State Board of Examiners of Plumbing, Heating and Fire Sprinkler Contractors. There has got to be a story there somewhere, right? These state agencies can tell you whether consumers have filed complaints against specific companies and also whether a company's license has ever been suspended.

6. OSHA records. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigates workplace safety for businesses across the country. It has an online database (<http://1.usa.gov/7DqHpl>) where you can type in a company's name to determine if it has existing cases. The database also lets you look at closed cases to see when a company was fined and for what reasons. Have you heard about a company with a number of worker-related injuries that you want to investigate? This would be the place to go. I recently looked at Delta Air Lines' safety record and found 2 open cases and 18 closed cases on the OSHA site.

7. Small Business Administration database. The SBA has a great online database (<http://bit.ly/bDv6YF>) where you can search for all kinds of information about small, private businesses. If a company has ever had a federal government contract, you can get the amount and even the name and phone number of a contact at the government agency. If you're looking to verify that a private business has done government work, this is the place to go.

Backgrounding a business

Quick tips on finding public records and more

BY JAIMI DOWDELL
IRE TRAINING DIRECTOR

Unlike government agencies, businesses don't have to respond directly to open records requests. But that doesn't mean you can't find plenty of information about them.

Remember this: Any time a business interacts with the government, public records are created. Track down those records and you can start unraveling the mysteries of the business-reporting world.

If you're having difficulties finding information on a particular business, locate another company in the same line of work and ask someone there to tell you what documents the business has to file, how its facilities are inspected, what regulations it has to abide and other relevant questions.

In addition, here are some tips for backgrounding businesses on the Web and elsewhere:

- For publicly traded companies, check out Securities and Exchange Commission filings with EDGAR. The filings can help you uncover the directors of the company, salaries of executives, lawsuits and more: <http://1.usa.gov/2ieQbU>. Tipsheets 2495 and 2386, downloadable at IRE.org in the Resource Center, offer a guide to the different SEC filings and what you can discover within each.
- Property records can offer a wealth of information. Some county assessor offices allow online search by address or owner name. Use these searches to track down company property and more. Portico offers a list of online real estate assessors here: <http://bit.ly/HSVwyn>.
- Portico offers links to state lookups of business incorporation records: <http://bit.ly/HsnZRK>
- Get local with planning and zoning departments. Routinely inspect their records to find out what businesses are hoping to expand in your community.
- Locally, businesses also have to file for a city license. Request an electronic list that you can keep at hand from the city or county business office.
- Search the Federal Procurement Data System to see if a company has received contracts from federal agencies: <http://bit.ly/dbTbau>. In addition, you can find federal contracts and grants from the Office of Management and Budget's USAspending.gov or the nonprofit OMB Watch's project FedSpending.org.
- Don't neglect to look at a company's own website. Often it offers quite a bit of information about employees and the inner workings of the business. Also, make sure you check out historic versions of the site using the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine: archive.org/web/web.php.
- If a business operates under a name other than its registered business name, it's using a fictitious or "doing business as" name. The Small Business Administration has information about fictitious business names, including a list of agencies that register such names by state: <http://1.usa.gov/kJztYj>.
- If a profession is licensed, professionals can be sanctioned and good stories found about professional misconduct. Find a list of licensed professionals in your state from BRB Publications: <http://bit.ly/HEIGFz>.

Use social media to help you track down information on a business.

- Search for employees using Facebook's friend finder: facebook.com/find-friends/browser. (You must be logged in.)
- Go to LinkedIn and find the "Companies" menu. Then, search by a specific company. Along the right side you should see "Check out insightful statistics about Company XYZ's employees..." This will allow you to see where employees live, what companies they came from, which employees have recently left the company and more.
- See what's being said about the company on Twitter. Search for a company's Twitter handle and also search using the company name as a #hashtag. To save time, set up alerts with tweetbeep.com.

8. Credit unions. Credit unions are one of the great untold investigative business stories in the country today because they compete with for-profit banks and have had many of the same lending habits as their competitors, but when was the last time you read a story about a credit union? The National Credit Union Administration has a great database (<http://bit.ly/9VeGZK>) that includes financial information about every credit union operating in the country, including how its loan portfolio is performing. Want to see if the credit unions in your town or city are losing money? This is the place to look for that information, and your review of credit union financial statements could be the beginning of a great investigative story.

9. State insurance departments. I do not believe the insurance industry is covered enough, and when it is covered, it is often covered poorly. Yet in each state, millions of documents are filed each year by insurance companies with state insurance departments, and these filings range from the insurers' requests to raise rates to their financial performance. Such stories may sound boring to you, but Paige St. John of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune won a Pulitzer Prize in 2011 for writing about Florida's property and casualty insurance industry, and her stories were largely based on public records from that state's insurance regulator.

10. Patents and trademarks. If you have never spent four hours getting lost in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (uspto.gov) databases, then you really can't claim to be a business journalist. Here you can search by company name to see what invention it has recently come up with, or what product name it has registered. Patent and trademark applications often divulge a company's future plans long before a company wants to discuss those plans. If you really want to have fun with this database, type in the name of your town or city and check out the latest applications.

That's my 10 and I didn't even get around to mentioning some of my favorite ways of investigating a business, such as looking at whether its CEO and executives are making campaign contributions or checking out the Environmental Protection Agency database to determine whether a company has been fined for emitting toxic waste into the environment.

But if you do a quick and dirty investigation of a company by following the 10 strategies I've outlined here, I believe you're going to find a great story angle more often than not.

Chris Roush is the Walter E. Hussman Sr. Distinguished Scholar in business journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a former business journalist. He has spoken at multiple IRE events on investigating companies.

Which has more impact on people in your community? Business or government?

BY LINDA AUSTIN
DONALD W. REYNOLDS NATIONAL
CENTER FOR BUSINESS JOURNALISM

I'd argue that, especially given the recent economic meltdown, business has more influence than government on people's lives. Whether individuals have jobs, their houses are underwater, their health care and education are affordable and their local arts groups survive are all functions of business and the economy.

Look around your newsroom, however, and ask whether business or government gets more attention – and especially investigative time and energy? In most newsrooms, it's government. As several recent Pulitzer winners, including David Kocieniewski, Alexandra Berzon and Daniel Gilbert, can attest, however, business is fertile territory for investigation.

But where to get started? The Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism has plenty of free resources to get you going at BusinessJournalism.org. Here's a sampling:

- **Investigative Business Journalism**, a business-beat basics written by John Emshwiller, veteran WSJ reporter and co-author of "24 Days": <http://bit.ly/investigativebasics>
- 15 other **business-beat basics**, including one by IRE member Paige St. John, on digging into insurance: <http://bit.ly/bizbeatbasics>
- Self-guided training: **Investigating Private Companies and Nonprofits**, with IRE member Ron Campbell: <http://bit.ly/privatenonprofits>
- Self-guided training: **Investigative Business Journalism**, with Northwestern University Professor Alec Klein: <http://bit.ly/investigativebizj>
- Self-guided training: **Quick-Hit Business Investigations**, with Pulitzer winner Matt Apuzzo: <http://bit.ly/quickhitapuzzo>
- Self-guided training: Beyond Google – **Mining the Web for Company Intelligence**, with competitive-intelligence expert Sean Campbell: <http://bit.ly/miningweb>
- Upcoming **free webinars and workshops**: <http://bit.ly/bizjtraining>, including collaborations with IRE for the CAR for Business Journalists workshop in Missoula, Mont., on Oct. 6 (also, self-guided: <http://bit.ly/CARbizj>) and the pre-IRE workshop in Boston on Tracking Companies' Influence on Politics on June 13 (also, self-guided: <http://bit.ly/companiesinfluence>).
- All-expenses-paid **training in financials**: Jan. 2-5 in Phoenix. Apply by Nov. 1: <http://bit.ly/strictlyfinancials2013>
- Daily **tips from journalists** on how they did great business stories: <http://bit.ly/journalisttips>
- Daily tips on **business-story ideas**: <http://bit.ly/bizstoryidea>
- Where to **search for businesses** in all 50 states: <http://bit.ly/bizsearch>

Once you've produced your story, enter it by Aug. 1 in the Reynolds Center's **Barlett & Steele Awards** for Investigative Business Journalism at <http://bit.ly/barlettsteele2012>. Last year's top winner, Craig Harris, will teach a session at IRE on **Investigating Public Pensions** (<http://bit.ly/pensionsBoston>) on June 15 and a free webinar on the same topic Dec. 4.

To keep up with new, free training, sign up for our biweekly e-newsletter at <http://bit.ly/bjnewsletter> or follow us @bizjournalism or like us at facebook.com/bizjournalism.

We're always willing to help answer questions; just email linda.austin@businessjournalism.org or call 602-496-9187.

Linda Austin is the executive director of the Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication in Phoenix. For business-story ideas, follow her @LindaAustin.

RESOURCES

STORIES

No. 24839: Jesse Drucker, Bloomberg Business News. "Hidden Havens." Drucker investigates how U.S. multinational companies use hidden strategies and offshore havens to avoid paying the full corporate tax rate. Experts estimated the total in annual lost taxes to the U.S. is \$85 billion. Instead of 35%, Google's overseas tax rate was really 2.4%. (2010)

No. 24889: Laura Sullivan, Anne Hawke, Barbara Van Woerkom, Susanne Reber and Steve Drummond, NPR. "Prison Profiting: Behind Arizona's Immigration Law." NPR's report shows that private prison corporations helped to write Arizona 1070, its controversial immigration law. The story examines how the private prison companies' role in getting the law written and passed, starting with a private meeting at the Hyatt in Washington, D.C., and including extensive campaign contributions and political connections to lawmakers and the governor of Arizona. (2010)

TIPSHEETS

No. 3161: "Investigating Fraud: Schemes, Scoundrels, and Scams," Wayne Dolcefino, KTRK-TV, Houston; Peter Franceschina, South Florida Sun Sentinel; Matt Goldberg, KNBC-TV, Los Angeles. The authors give suggestions for documenting fraud, such as finding a paper trail or videotaping the scheme. Then, they discuss how to turn your findings into a well-organized, effective investigative piece. Finally, the tipsheet includes useful websites for finding court records, consumer information, corporations, property records, regulators and more

No. 2960: "Forensic Investigative Business Journalism: Finding the Story in the Filings," Michelle Leder, Footnoted.org; Curt Hazlett, Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism; John Emshwiller, The Wall Street Journal; Diana Henriques, The New York Times. The authors provide extensive tips for investigating the finances of corporations and writing and developing your story.

No. 2495: "The business beat: Investigating the corporation," Sharon Chan and David Heath, The Seattle Times. The authors offer several tips for digging up dirt on corporations. Advice includes "Find out who has sued the company" and "Find out who quit."

EXTRA! EXTRA!

"Playing with fire: Chemical companies, Big Tobacco and the toxic products in your home," Chicago Tribune. Sam Roe, Patricia Callahan and Michael Hawthorne of the Chicago Tribune found that flame retardants packed into couches, chairs and many other products are not working as promised. Furthermore, two powerful industries – Big Tobacco and chemical manufacturers have waged a misleading campaign that led to the proliferation of these chemicals in almost every home. The reporters used DocumentCloud to provide proof of the deception and its widespread effect. (Business, Consumer Safety, DocumentCloud, Health, Multimedia, May 11, 2012).

"Special Report: Chesapeake CEO took \$1.1 billion in shrouded personal loans," Reuters investigated how undisclosed loans to Chesapeake Energy Corp's co-founder and CEO Aubrey McClendon could put him at odds with the company's shareholders. (Business, Economy, April 18, 2012)

THE IRE JOURNAL

"9/11 Funds: Scrutiny of SBA database uncovers loans given to businesses that never wanted them." The Associated Press. Dirk Lammers describes how he examined the Small Business Administration's database of disaster loans and found that many small businesses were given loans tied to the 9/11 attacks. The businesses, ranging from a pet boutique in Utah to a gun dealer in Guam, were given loans from the Supplemental Terrorism Activity Relief program; many of the businesses did not even know that their loans were related to 9/11. (January/February 2006)

Doing great work requires focus



BY ROSE CIOTTA

During a recent visit to the Van Gogh “Up Close” exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, my attention focused on this notation near the end of the exhibit of nature paintings: “Detailed focus on near objects may have reminded the artist to concentrate on the constant things in the world around him to avoid becoming overwhelmed.”

Yes, I thought. That sounds familiar.

Doing great work requires a focus, an ability to block out the noise and anxiety surrounding us.

Regardless of where you work, you’ve undoubtedly been affected by the revolution underway in the media business. My newsroom – The Philadelphia Inquirer – seems to have had more than its share of trauma with multiple owners, editors and waves of layoffs and buyouts.

How, some are asking, were we able to produce “Assault on Learning,” the 2012 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service?

The investigation was greenlighted in 2010 by Editor Bill Marimow and delivered a year later under his successor, Stan Wischnowski. (Marimow has since returned.) To do it required a commitment of staffing and resources that did not waiver despite the fact that the daily and Sunday papers were missing the work of some of the paper’s heaviest hitters.

Everyone involved put aside worthy stories to keep the project moving forward and did a lot of juggling. Five reporters and two editors worked for a year before publication. Susan Snyder stayed on the project full-time even after publication working with her colleagues on follow-up stories. By the end of 2011, she had been off her higher education beat for 20 months, with others covering the news.

While we all knew that the problem of school violence was important and worthy of our time, there were many roadblocks to overcome, starting with the fact that the school district stalled our data request for six months. There were no guarantees that the investigation would succeed or that officials would pay any attention.

All we could do was stay focused and keep reminding each other: “Let’s move forward.”

Here are some nuggets gleaned from our experience:

Designing a winning team

Some investigations start from the news or a tip on the beat. Others get a more formal launch when the news organiza-

tion decides to examine an issue. Regardless of how an investigation gets started, whether it succeeds often depends on assembling the right team. Even if one reporter proposes the investigation or has the best sources to pursue the story, it’s critical to determine what other skills are needed to bring the project home.

Our “Assault on Learning” team is an example of a deliberate assemblage of reporters who brought different skills and strengths to the effort: John Sullivan, an I-team reporter who suggested a deeper dive after Asian students were beaten in late 2009 in a city high school; Snyder, who had covered the district for a decade and had written about serious school violence; Kristen A. Graham, the Philadelphia schools reporter; Dylan Purcell, database reporter; and Jeff Gammage, a strong writer who with Graham had produced award-winning stories on the Asian students’ beatings and their subsequent boycott and had sources in the Asian community.

Because we wanted to tell the stories using multimedia, the team included videographers and a multimedia editor. The project was overseen by two editors experienced in investigations, multimedia and schools coverage.

It began when Vernon Loeb, then deputy managing editor for news and investigations, recruited me (then deputy city editor) and we discussed whom we needed. He had already enlisted the support of editors like Metro Editor Gabe Escobar and City Editor Julie Busby since the city desk would have to make do with fewer reporters. Our staffing discussions included getting help with daily coverage. Education Reporter Martha Woodall, who has done groundbreaking investigations into charter schools, graciously agreed to fill in so her colleagues could work on the project. Mike Leary, investigations editor joined the team when Loeb left in Jan. 2011 to join The Washington Post.

Writing with passion

On any project, identifying writers is especially important. We’ve all read investigations chock full of information, data and findings that were bloodless and difficult to read. If your team doesn’t have a writer, bring one in. Ideally, your writer is also one of the lead reporters, or better still, your lead reporters are also strong writers. And if there are multiple parts, each can take the lead writing one of the parts

with the others contributing. That strategy worked for us.

This can become a management challenge if the reporters aren't able to work it out so the strongest writers do the writing. Everyone has to understand that in the end, it's best for the project to have a strong narrative with a story that enthralls the reader. The person who scores the gripping interview or who nails the stunning fact is just as important as the person who crafts the sentences. What no one should want is that a piece has to be rewritten in the editing process to give it some of the passion that it lacked when it first came in.

Keeping on track

We met weekly with reporters who updated everyone on developments. We also discussed next steps.

While you will find support for the weekly memo, the weekly talk sessions worked best for us. They also gave us an opportunity to talk through strategy, whether it was preparing for a key confrontational interview or accessing records. And always, we all discussed where else we should be looking and what other questions we should be asking.

Even with the meetings model, there may be times that a team member should circulate a memo. Timelines are especially valuable and revealing. And memos that explain laws or programs on which the investigation is focusing are especially useful.

Dealing with the data

Ideally, data analysis occurs as early as possible in an investigation. Knowing what the data says allows your reporting to probe deeper and your interviews to start on a higher plane. You don't need to ask whether something is happening. You already know that as well as how often and whether it has changed over time.

The "Assault on Learning" project had to overcome a data hurdle. For six months, the Philadelphia school district stalled our request for five years' of violence data. Officials relented only after the reporters convinced sources that we were entitled to the data and would sue to get it. In fact, we were reluctant to start a lawsuit for fear that we wouldn't get access to the records for years. We also deliberately limited our request to the kind of numeric data we had received in the past. We did not ask for anything linked to a child's identity to avoid a legal battle.

Ironically, it was while waiting for the data that the reporters uncovered just how limited the data would be. Sources

throughout the district were describing how violence was underreported, primarily by principals. And since the district had fired its safe schools advocate, there was no one who could ensure that reports were being filed. By obtaining paper records and poring through police reports and 911 calls, the reporters identified dozens of cases of violent crime that the district failed to report and documented how serious incidents were deliberately downgraded to illustrate the extent of the violence occurring in Philadelphia schools.

The courage of your ideas

Shrinking newsrooms, budget cuts and constant upheaval are creativity killers. Your first inclination may be to play it safe, lay low and keep your mouth shut.

Wrong.

This is also a time when our media companies need our best work more than ever. Making that happen requires strategic thinking, good ideas and making the right decisions. The courage to propose to do stories that some may think are too ambitious is what we really need. If your newsroom is limited in what it can do, then you want to do everything you can at the front end to make sure that resources are spent on producing a home run. A news organization that values producing stories that their readers can't get anywhere else must generate excitement for these stories and must find a way to devote time to reporting them.

One way is to make sacrifices – to cut back on coverage in some areas to shift resources to an investigation.

Another way is to set up some kind of rotation so that a reporter who comes up with a great proposal for an investigative story or project will be given time to do it. Every newsroom can find one person who can shift into a beat reporter's job so he can deliver a great story. Just having that possibility will encourage everyone to come up with the investigative story lead.

Too often the lament that there aren't enough reporters to do investigative stories fails to evaluate whether the stories the reporters are spending their time writing are really valuable to the newspaper, website or television station. Beyond filling the pages and air time – something that can't be ignored – the manager who wants more investigative stories needs to examine what she can live without.

Everyone wins in the end: the news organization gets more investigative stories and the reporters know that their efforts will be rewarded with what reporters never have enough of – time to pursue a great story.

Rose Ciotta co-edited the "Assault on Learning" investigation into violence in Philadelphia schools that won The Philadelphia Inquirer the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The series also won a 2012 IRE Award and other awards. She is the senior editor for digital/print projects at the Inquirer. An award-winning investigative reporter, she has also been the deputy city editor, education editor and computer-assisted reporting editor. She's a former board member of IRE and graduate of Syracuse University. She also studied at Stanford University as a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow and is the author of "Cruel Games," a murder mystery published by St. Martin's Press in 2009.

Snapshots from our blogs

From: “Dig deeper with historical census”

By Jaimi Dowdell

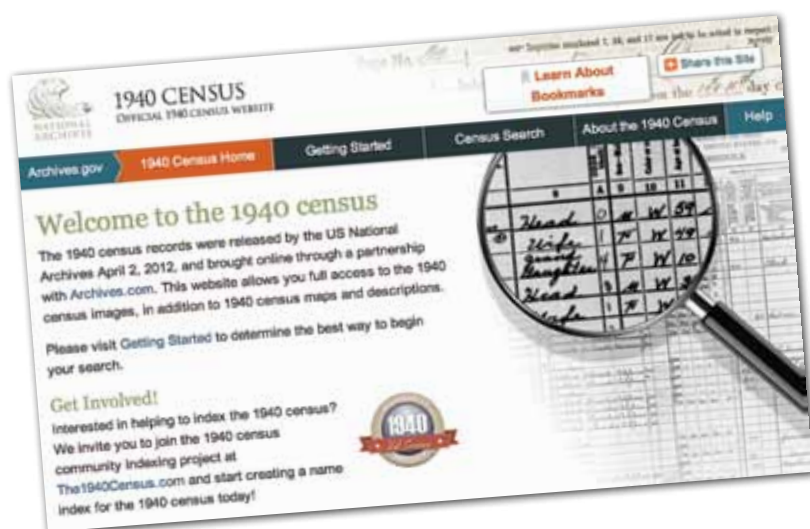
Look out social media, stand back hottest app of the day, I have a new research obsession: The 1940 census.

Thanks to the National Archives (1940census.archives.gov), you can now locate responses for individuals and families from the 1940 census. Details include age, gender, marital status, education, employment, residency in 1935 and more.

While there isn't a name search, there is a tool that allows you to search by location. The Washington Post also has a guide (<http://tinyurl.com/cazn29c>) to using the site.

The information is hand-written and a bit tricky to look at, but it's well worth the effort. Apart from stalking my grandmother, I've been contemplating potential journalistic uses of the records.

This data can put at our fingertips information about people from the 1940s that was previously unavailable. Use that information to beef up profiles, verify historical information, find leads for an investigation into the past and more. Additionally, the records are divided up by location, so each document, read as a whole, can offer a historical snapshot of communities you currently cover.



From: “Behind the Story: Multiple government websites help journalists get around FOIA requests”

By Johanna Somers

Not having access to the list of firms disqualified from the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business program didn't stop Dayton (Ohio) Daily News reporters from determining which companies were debarred from government contracts or from identifying some of the companies under investigation or disqualified from the program.

The article, “‘Rent-a-vet’ scam proves costly to taxpayers, businesses” (<http://bit.ly/HaMEaz>), gives readers a comprehensive look at the problems of the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business program and a specific look at businesses operating in Ohio.

Government watchdogs say hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds have gone to ineligible companies under the program, which calls upon all federal agencies to award at least 3 percent of the value of their contracts to disabled-vet businesses.

Reporters Andrew J. Tobias and Tom Beyerlein had about two months to write their story, so they used tools other than open records requests to determine which companies were under investigation.

You can “FOIA it and it takes three months or Google it and it might take 45 seconds,” Tobias said.

Tobias and Beyerlein used government websites, many of which Tobias got from the summer 2011 IRE Journal issue “Follow the Federal Money,” to draw their conclusions.

The meat of their story came from usaspending.gov, a database of federal contracting information going back to 2000, Tobias said. They used the website's filters to determine which firms received Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business contracts in Ohio and which firms received the contract in another state but did business in Ohio.

They took that information and using each company's D-U-N-S number, compared the companies that got contracts over the past five years to the companies listed on vetbiz.gov, which had to have passed new verification standards.

They found that half of the firms that received government contracts in the past were not currently verified as service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. This information gave them an idea of the level of previous mismanagement, but didn't exactly explain why those firms were no longer on the verified list.

There are a number of reasons firms might not make it on the new list, from firms' making procedural mistakes to their defrauding the government. Because government agencies have different vetting processes, a firm might be turned away from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs but get approved at the Department of Defense, Tobias said.

To determine this Tobias and Beyerlein needed the list of the 1,800 disqualified firms, which was hard to find and took time.

“It's an alphabet soup of federal agencies,” Tobias said, explaining how an appeal to retain Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business status might take different paths through multiple government agencies.

It was hard to figure out which departments to “shake down” for information, he said.

Once Tobias made the request he said, he got the “email

equivalent of a long sigh.” A public affairs representative told him it would be hard to find the list.

“We are patiently waiting but because it involves firms that might be under investigation it adds another layer of difficulty in obtaining what we want,” Tobias said.

Despite slow response from the government and reports with redacted information, Tobias and Beyerlein were able to drill down to specific companies with questionable activity by using multiple websites.

For example, they had access to a Department of Defense Inspector General report that mentioned a contract given to a questionable firm at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, but the name of the company and the date of the contract were redacted. So Tobias and Beyerlein tracked down the company name by using the contract dollar amount.

They plugged the contract dollar amount into a spreadsheet from usaspending.gov to locate the contract and the company name. Next they used the company name in the Central Contractor Registration*, to get the company’s D-U-N-S number and owner’s phone number.

They called the company’s owner to confirm that he had received the contract. To make sure the questionable company was no longer an approved Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business they went to vetbiz.gov and sure enough, the company, Piedmont Contracting & Design based in Mount Clemens, Mich., was no longer listed.

Another website that was helpful was the Excluded Parties List System*, which helped them find companies that had already been debarred.

*The Central Contractor Registration and Excluded Parties List System were scheduled to be consolidated into a new website, the System for Award Management (SAM.gov), as of May 29.

From: “Behind the Story: Firefighters disabling the city’s budget”

By Johanna Somers

Social media can be an individual’s nightmare and a reporter’s goldmine. In “Disability pensions allow some firefighters to collect while working elsewhere,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s reporters used an array of investigative tools to publicize a mismanaged disability pension system that is eating away the city’s funds. So how did investigative reporter Jeremy Kohler and city government reporter David Hunn collect data, documents and source material?

For starters they never underestimated the power of social media.

“I just used every free minute that I had when I wasn’t interviewing someone, just all the empty spaces in your day I basically filled with pushing and pushing on socialmedia, just searching for anything these guys had said online,” Kohler said.

In one instance, with a name in mind from the data he had collected, Kohler found one ex-firefighter who had posted YouTube videos of himself snowboarding. In a side story Kohler presented a photograph of the man snowboarding and laid out the details of the man’s disability pension. The retired firefighter was receiving an annual disability pension of \$53,000 for a knee injury he received on the job, he wrote.

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

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Contact: Lauren Grandestaff, lauren@ire.org, 573-882-3364

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

Contact: Elizabeth Lucas, liz@ire.org. To order data, call 573-884-7711.

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

Contact: Jaimi Dowdell, jaimi@ire.org, 314-402-3281 or Megan Luther, megan@ire.org, 605-996-3967

PUBLICATIONS:

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

Contact: Megan Luther, megan@ire.org, 605-996-3967

UPLINK – An online publication by IRE and NICAR on computer-assisted reporting. Uplink stories are written after reporters have had particular success using data to investigate stories. The columns include valuable information on advanced database techniques as well as success stories written by newly trained CAR reporters.

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