The IRE Journal

SUMMER 2013

BEYOND BOX SCORES

INVESTIGATING SPORTS

HAIL THE INK-STAINED WRETCHES

The reporters, those tireless tradesmen
Who claw at the TRUTH
buried under the sound bite
Who sweat not from SPOTLIGHTS, but deadlines
Who devote their lives to the
ENDLESS TASK of PUSHING and
PUSHING and PUSHING
Not just sources, but understanding

Not just for WHO and WHAT,
but for WHY
Wrist-deep in raw fact
and Quick-scribbled INSIGHT

They work for the NEWS
but answer to the TRUTH

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What's an IRE membership worth?

BY MARK HORVIT

This is a question we're constantly asking ourselves here at the Home Office. We want to make sure that when you pay your annual dues, you're getting value that far exceeds what you spend.

For many of us, joining IRE is about more than getting access to a vast array of material that helps us do our work – it's about supporting the mission to provide training and resources that leads to better, deeper journalism that serves the public.

Part of that mission is making sure that our members have the tools they need to serve as watchdogs for their communities.

Hopefully, you're familiar with the range of great stuff available, but just in case, here's a quick look at some of the highlights:

- Our tipsheet library has about 4,000 entries, with detailed advice and directions on how to dig into a host of topics from expert journalists.
- Our investigative story library now exceeds 25,500 entries, and not long ago we made all 14,000 "How I did the story" questionnaires submitted with IRE Award entries available online.
- Audio of the past three IRE conferences can be streamed from our website, and audio of sessions going back more than two decades can be ordered from the Resource Center.
- We're building a library of video resources. Currently, it includes some Conference sessions, as well as a growing series of online sessions that we're offering at IRE.org.

And there's much more, including practice data sets (and accompanying how-to handouts) and our growing collection of "Behind the Story" and "Transparency Watch" blog posts. Thanks to the generosity of our members and the hard work of the IRE staff, the list keeps growing.

We've also added some resources through partnerships with organizations that believe strongly in the value of watchdog journalism:

- IRE members can now get a desktop copy of Tableau software – a value of almost $2,000 – for free. Tableau has for several years offered training in its free online service at IRE's conferences. Tableau puts tools in your hands that greatly increase your ability to visualize data if you don't have advanced programming skills, or even if you do but have some projects where the investment of a staff programmer's time isn't possible.
- PDFs are an evil delivered upon journalists by many government agencies. Getting data in PDF form renders it all but useless for significant analysis. One of the tools that can be used for converting those PDFs into usable text is Cometdocs. We've been demonstrating the free online version at our workshops, and recently Cometdocs made its premium service available free to IRE members, a value of more than $100 a year. The fancier version can tackle more types of PDFs, allows for processing of more documents and includes more online storage.
- Esri, the maker of ArcGIS mapping software, has for several years made its desktop software available to those who attend IRE's annual mapping boot camp. The software sells for about $1,500. This year, Esri also allowed those who took a series of mapping classes at our annual CAR Conference to get the software for free.

To get Tableau software or a Cometdocs account, contact IRE's membership coordinator John Green at jgreen@ire.org. For more information about our mapping training, contact David Herzog at dherzog@ire.org.

These latest developments fall in a long line of services IRE has made available to members from Google, Caspio and others.

We'd like to know what other essential tools you'd like us to help add to your arsenals. If there's something you're interested in getting that seems out of reach, send me an email at mark@ire.org and we'll see what we can do.

And just as importantly, if you work for a company that is willing to make available tools or services that benefit journalists, please get in touch.

I won't speak for the companies that are working with us already. But I believe a key reason they're willing to make their products available to IRE members is because they know that you'll use those resources for the public good. Communities are better when the journalists who serve them are better-equipped and better-trained. Making that happen has always been at the heart of IRE's mission, and our ability to do so grows as we add generous partners who share that passion.

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.

New IRE Webinars

Search strategies, sites and databases for investigative reporting

Google's not the only search game in town. Learn about search sites that provide different pools of information and unique features. Discover resources to help with finding people, fact-checking and social search in the surface and the deep Web.

Barbara Gray, distinguished lecturer and interim chief librarian at the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism and a former director of news research at The New York Times, explains advanced techniques to get the most out of your search, including getting around the "filter bubble" to find the results you really need.

Spycraft for journalists

Keep your sources and your secrets safe from prying eyes. In IRE's latest webinar, Steve Doig, Knight Chair in Journalism at Arizona State University, explains spycraft for journalists.

This webinar covers the use of cryptography, spoofing caller ID, anonymous email, throwaway phones, steganography and other covert techniques for communicating with sources without leaving a trail. Doig gave this presentation to an overflow crowd at the June IRE Conference in San Antonio.

Find webinars from IRE at ire.org/webinars.

When nerds and words collide

In 1999, Nora Paul organized a gathering at The Poynter Institute of a group of journalists who were on the cutting edge of computer-assisted reporting.

The result was a short book titled "When Nerds and Words Collide," featuring chapters from many leaders in data-driven journalism. It also details the beginning of what is now the National Institute of Computer-Assisted Reporting.

1989 was a watershed moment for CAR, Paul writes, but a decade later progress on some fronts had stalled. The issues raised by these journalists nearly 15 years ago are many of the same ones facing journalists today:

- Defining what we do in terms of objectives instead of tools, clarifying the vision and figuring out how to brand and sell it.
- Promoting social science principles into daily practice of journalism.
- Incorporating CAR into all beats.
- Getting buy-in from top editors and overcoming the cultural lag in the newsroom.
- Creating a structure to collect/analyze data and share it with reporters, making CAR tools easier to use for reporters.
- Rethinking education: What should we expect from new journalists?

Download the free PDF from the IRE store.

Global Investigative Journalism Network launches crowd funding campaign

The Global Investigative Journalism Network launched a new crowd funding campaign, raising funds to bring promising journalists from developing countries to the Global Investigative Journalism Conference and provide them with state-of-the-art training in investigative reporting, data journalism and cross-border collaboration.

The crowd funding campaign is done through Indiegogo, and the campaign video features reporters in Kenya, Macedonia, Pakistan and Tunisia.

For more information, go to gijn.org.

Rose Ciotta has joined WIVB-Buffalo, N.Y., as an investigative producer leading the investigative team. She formerly worked at The Philadelphia Inquirer as a senior projects editor and co-edited the paper's 2012 Pulitzer prize-winning project on school violence.

Alan Scher Zagier, an Associated Press reporter who has focused on higher education and crime coverage from mid-Missouri since 2005, transferred to the AP's St. Louis bureau in August.

Coulter Jones, formerly of California Watch and The Center for Investigative Reporting, joined the WNYC-New York Data News Team.

Chase Davis, formerly of California Watch and The Center for Investigative Reporting, joined The New York Times as assistant editor in interactive news.

Doug Haddix was promoted to assistant vice president of editorial communications at The Ohio State University. He also serves as director of the Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism at Ohio State.

Alison Young and **Peter Eisler** were awarded the Hillman Prize for Web Journalism for the USA Today investigation "Ghost Factories," which found that state and federal regulators left thousands of families and children in harm's way, doing little to check out the dangerously lead-contaminated sites where factories once operated.

Please submit Member News items at ire.org/publications/ire-journal/member-news/submit-membernews. Read updates online at ire.org/publications/ire-journal/member-news.

Bad Alternative

D.C. teen criminals avoid jail; program fails to rehabilitate them

By Ben Eisler

Around suppertime last summer, I drove an old white Ford Focus across the Anacostia River. It was just a stone's throw from Washington, D.C.'s monuments and memorials but couldn't have been more different. The air smelled like burning rubber. Insects buzzed noisily through overgrown weeds. The buildings were worn down.

I pulled around the back of a small white two-story home. A new wooden ramp stuck out from the door, awkwardly distinct from the old structure it led to. An abandoned car sat in the back of the dirt driveway.

Inside, 17-year-old Maurice's wheelchair hauntingly occupied a dark corner. His 40-year-old mother, Latonia, sat at her dining room table in a red polka-dot shirt. That day her work colleagues had said she looked like Betty Boop. She had just cleaned the entire ground floor to prepare for a television interview.

I felt a little embarrassed as an inexperienced 26-year-old. I had no photographer, lighting crew, producer or editor. I was it. So I lugged my tripod, camera and microphone inside (sweating profusely), focused the picture, hit record and took my seat. Latonia looked exasperated. She inhaled deeply and began her story.

Maurice always loved to steal cars, she said. Her friends were constantly calling her. "He's driving a van…just zoomed past me, almost hit somebody!"

Eventually, he was arrested and became a ward of the city's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS). The agency enrolled him in DC YouthLink, a new program designed to turn young offenders around without locking them up. While living at home, Maurice was promised a mentor, tutor and behavioral health services, but only the mentor ever came by. Meanwhile, he continued to steal cars. His mother begged the city to lock him up, but no one listened.

Maurice's story was one of hundreds. I was so angered by what I kept hearing that I worked for eight months to expose it. I did much of the reporting on my own time while turning several daily stories a week for the evening newscast.

What we found

It's important to understand that the idea behind DC YouthLink was a good one. Research has shown that treating young offenders in the community with mentoring, tutoring and other services is far more effective (and less expensive) than incarceration. But if you're going to release dangerous teens into the community, it has to be done right. In this case, the program was mismanaged and abused. The city let the teens return to their neighborhoods and then didn't provide many with support, our investigation found. In the time that followed, they took the lives of others and themselves.

A third of the program's participants were rearrested over just six months. From 2010 to 2011 (our report aired in 2012), 15 were charged with murder and 15 more were killed. Moreover, of the more than 750 youths served by the program, the city could point to only 13 who graduated from high school.

In addition to the poor outcomes, we shined a light on what went wrong. An internal letter revealed almost 30 percent of youths west of the river had no services in place whatsoever in 2011. Of those who did get services, many faced shortages. Confidential records showed extra supervision was requested for one young man with an extensive history of gun charges. The request was denied.

One nonprofit received more than $500,000 in DC YouthLink expenditures, but was adequately documenting only 15 percent of its work for the program, records showed. The top mentoring provider was spending precious hours playing video games with youths and taking them to Burger King. A leading tutoring provider lacked something as basic as having qualified teachers, and one of its high-level staffers was fired after allegedly having sex with a student. These were just some of our findings.

How we investigated

We had significant obstacles to overcome. The city agency (DYRS) had a history of hiding behind juvenile confidentiality laws. We didn't do anything fancy to get around this. It came down to developing a lot of sources. We started with activists and community groups that worked with the kids, asking what they thought DYRS was doing right and what it wasn't. Many said

the problem was DC YouthLink, but none knew just how bad things were.

Those sources introduced us to others, until eventually we had deep contacts at various nonprofit service providers and DYRS. We got to know a lot of parents and youths, engaged the DYRS union and tried to get as much as possible out of the agency's press office. Our sources gave us confidential emails, youth rosters and invoices. They were also able to confirm (and reconfirm) various details that we could not get documentation for. It was one of these sources who connected me with Maurice and his mother.

This may seem obvious, but I can't emphasize enough how important it is for your sources to understand why you do what you do. I explained to almost everyone I spoke to that my goal was to do a balanced story that benefitted the public. I wanted to explore what was working and what wasn't, and bring about real change that improved things for people. That's the only reason I do what I do, and once they understood that, they were infinitely more willing to help.

It's also worth noting that the parents are crucial to reporting personal stories. Due to confidentiality laws, they and the youths are the only ones legally able to share their experiences. Find them through the nonprofits working with them and government sources. If you know they've been through a lot, consider bringing them flowers (if they won't talk to you, leave them at their door). Works like a charm.

In addition to sourcing, we filed an extensive FOIA request. After the deadline passed, we badgered DYRS every few days until they responded. We also sent a threatening legal letter. The FOIA provided us with inspection reports and spending figures that confirmed much of what we had been hearing from sources. Our request was broad but targeted. We had our sources identify suspicious nonprofits and then asked for all documents that showed any deficiency or potential deficiency on the part of those groups. My apartment was buried by stacks of audits, quarterly and annual reports, inspection reports and budgets. Much of it was useless, but I annotated and cataloged everything in case it might come in handy.

The other challenge was that our story targeted a number of ex-cons who now headed nonprofits but still associated with violent groups. I found myself alone in high-crime neighborhoods, face to face with a teen offender or the teen's family. My wife scolded me on multiple occasions for going at night. Always go with someone else if you can.

This area is really ripe for investigative work in other cities. It involves not just public money but public safety – of the teens as well as all other residents. The stakes are huge, and it is extremely difficult to rehabilitate these youths, so even small mistakes can become big problems. As a result, I got the impression that many of those working with them have become cynical and feel their efforts are futile, which adds to the dysfunction.

Latonia Hall's son, a teen offender, was enrolled in the DC YouthLink program. It gave him little support, and he continued to steal cars.

The city let the teens return to their neighborhoods and then didn't provide many with support, our investigation found.

Confronting the mayor

This story would not have been what it was without the guidance of my supervisors Bill Lord and Doug Culver and the web layout by Justin Karp.

Our interest in the subject was sparked by reports in The Washington Times about individual crimes by these youths. Prior to our report, DC YouthLink had gone entirely uncovered by the media. Shortly after we published it, DC YouthLink assembled a new pool of service providers, selected through a competitive process. Previously, there was no such thing – there weren't even contracts. There was also an office established to advocate for parents. City council and government agency sources said the changes were a direct result of our work.

Over the course of our reporting, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray and DYRS Director Neil Stanley repeatedly refused our interview requests. So one summer morning, we went to the mayor's weekly press briefing. The focus was taxis – not remotely related to DYRS – but Gray knew we were coming, so he asked Stanley to attend. He kept us waiting until the end, calling on every other reporter with a hand raised first. My heart was racing. It wasn't that I hadn't prepared – I had lived and breathed this material for eight months. No one knew it better. I just hate confrontations.

I told the mayor that DYRS had released hundreds of its youths into the community and not supported many of them at all, and dozens were killed or charged with murder. When I asked for his response, he called Stanley to the podium. Stanley claimed they had vastly improved the program and as a result, no participants were victims or suspects in a homicide in 2012.

I knew that to provide the additional oversight Stanley was touting, the city hired a former nonprofit director who himself had been accused of misusing city funds, despite the fact that the investigation into those allegations was never completed. I posed this point during the press briefing.

The mayor pulled Stanley from the podium and told me that they would be happy for me to provide additional information that would help them improve the program.

After the press conference, the mayor called for an investigation by the attorney general into misspent funds. Unfortunately for Maurice and many others, it was too late. The city never locked him up or gave him the support it promised. One night he was riding in the back of a stolen car when someone started shooting. He took a bullet to the spine, and will never walk again.

Ben Eisler is a former reporter, photographer and editor for WJLA-Washington, D.C. He is now a health care producer for "CBS This Morning."

To view this story, visit http://wj.la/RuHZZ8.

Can investigative journalism save news?

Market research shows strong consumer interest

By Earle Jones
Audience Research & Development, LLC

The results are in. Consumers and media executives have spoken in one of the largest, most comprehensive studies on investigative journalism in the last decade, and guess what? Investigative is HOT!

AR&D, in conjunction with IRE, recently conducted a nationwide, online survey of 1,000 news consumers (adults 25-64), and 76 media executives – corporate officers, general managers, news directors, editors and publishers. The survey compared consumer interest in and perception of investigative journalism with media professionals' commitment to the field and their understanding of news consumers.

Consumer interest is high and on the rise

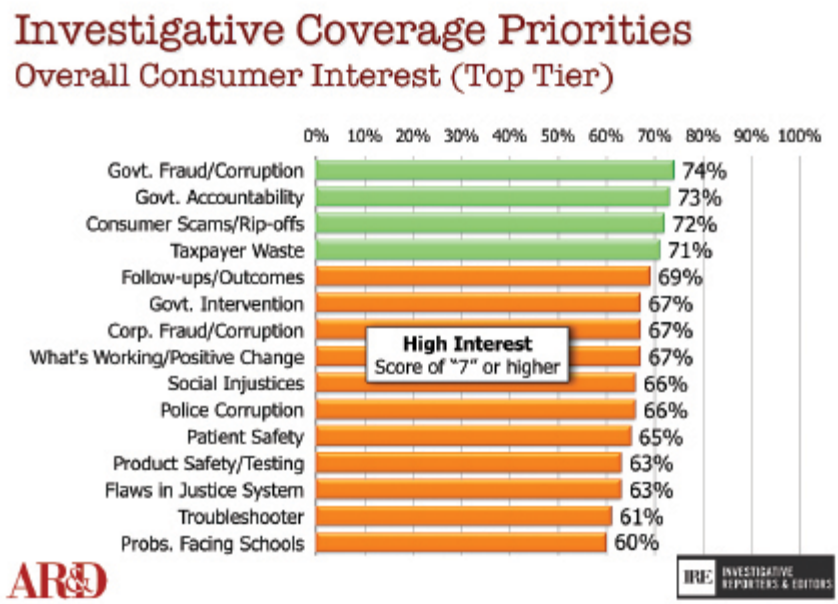
More than half (54%) of the news consumers surveyed have high interest in investigative journalism, ranking it second only to weather among the 15 news content categories tested.

Survey results show interest at all levels – national, state and local. "Consumers continue to place emphasis on the media's role as a government watchdog – a trend we've been seeing across the country, regardless of political affiliation," said Rory Ellender, AR&D's senior vice president of research. Tracking fraud and corruption, accountability, and taxpayer waste tested in the top 5 out of 24 investigative content areas probed.

The study also revealed that many news organizations tend to overlook the relative importance consumers place on regular follow-ups and "what's working" stories. Almost 7 out of 10 news consumers have high interest in these key areas, yet they're being underserved.

Unfortunately, most news organizations tend to shy away from these types of stories because they're considered too soft. "This is not about what many in the industry define as ratings-killing, 'good news' stories," said Hollis Grizzard Jr., senior strategist at AR&D. "These are significant changes and meaningful outcomes that impact a community in a positive way as a result of an investigative effort."

Psychographic and temperament testing continues to show a nation that is worried and concerned but is holding out hope that things will get better. Many respondents point to investigative as a means to effect positive change – and to follow up and showcase what's working.



In a survey of 1,000 news consumers, nearly three-fourths had a high interest in government fraud investigations.

Seven out of 10 media executives say their organization is very committed to investigative reporting and that it's a vital part of their organization's future.

However, almost half of the executives surveyed say their organization is not supporting those efforts in the fullest possible way, particularly when it comes to staffing and training. These are the biggest roadblocks to commitment and the greatest needs among news organizations right now.

The next great frontier for investigative

This survey identified many opportunities, but one finding particularly stood out. Media dramatically underestimate the value of fact checking. Essentially, investigative journalism has evolved from consumer reporting to accountability journalism to more recently, fact checking. Of the three, fact checking is currently the most preferred among news consumers.

It should be noted that consumers' definition of fact checking is not about perceived inaccuracies in reporting but rather cutting through the spin to help separate fact from fiction, truth from rumor and reality from myth.

There's plenty more in the online presentation available at bit.ly/1d361EZ, but suffice it to say the results are clear that investigative journalism is high-value content that can impact competitive dynamics.

"We have helped a number of local news organizations grow market share and revenue in a very short period of time through a strong, strategic investigative effort," said Jerry Gumbert, AR&D president & CEO. It's about gaining consumer confidence one story at a time on a consistent basis. "We've literally had clients that were considered forgotten properties in their marketplace, that are now beloved by the community," said Gumbert.

As one respondent so eloquently defined investigative journalism: "It is the area of journalism that provides unique, lasting and maximum value to society. It connects the dots, follows information and uncovers new information outside the purview or ability of other individuals or organizations."

Earle Jones directs the development of strategic research initiatives and oversees research innovation and brand development as principal / president of research strategies at AR&D. For more than 20 years, Jones has designed and managed hundreds of media studies for a variety of clients including NBCUniversal, CBS Television and more than 60 local and regional news operations throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Drone Journalism Lab

Ben Kreimer, a Drone Journalism Lab student and recent graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, adjusts the settings of a quad-copter under development.

Drone Journalism

Legal issues keep new tool mostly grounded for now

By Matthew Waite
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Three things you need to know about drone journalism:

1. It's controversial, even though it's not hard to imagine how it will be useful.

2. It's illegal and will be for a few more years.

3. It's coming to a newsroom near you … about the time Nos. 1 and 2 get worked out.

Let's take them one by one.

Imagine for a moment, an oil pipeline has just burst in a small town in Arkansas and the oil company has convinced the government to block media from the area. Or, you just got a tip that a meat packing plant is illegally dumping waste blood into a stream that leads to a major river.

Both of those things have happened. And being a reporter with a small, remotely piloted aircraft capable of gathering photos or video or data from those events would be very useful. Indeed, in the case of the meatpacking plant, a hobbyist flying a remote-controlled airplane took pictures of the illegal dumping and alerted authorities.

He might not see himself as an investigative journalist, but what he did was in the highest orders of the calling.

So it's not hard to see how a drone might be useful to journalism. But it's not that easy.

Let's talk about the word drone. What do you think of when you read the word drone? Probably a Predator with Hellfire missiles, right? This isn't about those.

The word drone has been abused so badly that it's almost meaningless. Does it mean autonomous vehicles? First, none of the things people call drones are fully autonomous. There's a pilot somewhere, just not on the plane. But if autonomous flight makes something a drone, it can be had for a few hundred dollars on the Internet. So does it mean unmanned vehicles, remotely piloted? If so, I have a $30 quadcopter in my office – that I flew during a NICAR conference panel this year – that's the size of my hand. Is that a drone? Is the $300 Parrot AR Drone, piloted over my iPhone, a drone? If so, that means everything

from a $30 toy to a $4 million military aircraft is a drone. Seems kind of silly, doesn't it?

Just as silly is another argument about the word drone. The industry making them hates that word, for a variety of reasons. They prefer unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or unmanned aerial systems (UAS, preferred by the Federal Aviation Administration). Another is pilotless aircraft. So goes the controversy over them, so goes the fight over the name.

So before we even get started, no one agrees what to call these things.

Future rules

And beyond the name, there's a huge controversy. Again, this isn't about Predators dropping Hellfires on foreign lands. There's plenty of controversy over that to be had, but if all you know is that controversy, you might not know there's plenty of controversy over drones in domestic airspace.

This isn't the place to cover it all, but here's what you need to know: Congress, in 2012, passed the FAA Modernization and Reauthorization Act, which ordered the FAA to come up with rules for UAVs in domestic airspace by September 2015. In other words, make using drones for commercial purposes legal by then. Controversy erupted, and there is now a pitched battle going on between privacy advocates who see drones in domestic airspace as a potential threat to privacy and civil rights and UAV advocates who see a multi-billion dollar industry helping everyone from farmers to golf course owners to search and rescue officials.

The battle has reached such a level that the FAA has said they'll include privacy rules in their regulations. The FAA is already behind on implementing the 2012 law, and most legal experts believe that even when those regulations are introduced, lawsuits will slow things down further. And 43 states introduced legislation this year to limit drones in some way, most to simply require law enforcement to get a warrant to use them. But in some states, like Oregon, Missouri and Texas, bills could severely impact journalists' abilities to use them.

Suffice it to say, what the future holds for regulating drones in domestic airspace is anything but clear.

But even privacy advocates foresee a day when they will fly in domestic skies. So what can journalists do with them now?

Economic factors

According to the FAA, very little.

As much as I'd like to say otherwise, if you are doing journalism for pay, the FAA says it's illegal for you to go buy a drone off the Internet and start using it for reporting. And before you ask, the FAA will stop you if you're at a nonprofit, even if you don't have ads on the page. If there's a subscribe link or a donate button, that's enough.

The short version is that FAA rules bar using a UAV for money (and the agency defines that as direct or indirect revenue, which includes advertising, subscriptions and donations). It bars using a UAV for money under hobby rules, it bars using a UAV with an experimental airworthiness certificate, and it bans it under a certificate of authorization. Those are the three main regulatory frameworks UAVs have to live under.

Drone Journalism Lab

University of Nebraska-Lincoln professors Matt Waite (left) and Carrick Detweiler inspect an Ascending Technologies Falcon-8 before flying over the Platte River in October. The footage from the UAV was used for a proof-of-concept story on the impact of a historic drought in Nebraska.

All this said, I believe drones are coming to your newsroom. Maybe not soon, certainly not as soon as some might want, but they are coming.

The FAA also restricts UAV use for research. I know this because in July I received a letter from the FAA informing me that since I worked for a public entitiy -- a university -- I was required to get a certificate of authorization, or COA. Get one or quit, they said. It's too soon to quit, so I'm getting a COA.

And that COA is anathema to journalism. It will take months to get, and I have to apply for a specific area, far from people and in unrestricted airspace. So the kinds of experimental stories I'll be able to do from a drone are going to be very limited. But I can still do them, and it's worth the paperwork.

All this said, I believe drones are coming to your newsroom. Maybe not soon, certainly not as soon as some might want, but they are coming.

Right now, you could go online and buy a pretty good multi-rotor helicopter, a gimbal and controller for about $1,000. That would get you autonomous capabilities – it'll fly a GPS controlled route without your having to control it – and about 15 minutes of flight time, all in a pretty affordable package. Want a better camera and better gear? You can spend up to $100,000 on a small multi-rotor. Problem? Best flight times I've seen have been around 20 minutes.

If money is no object, there's a miniaturized helicopter that runs on gas that has a full movie-grade camera rig on the front from a company called Schiebel. It can fly faster than 100 miles per hour and will run you better than a half million dollars.

But compare that to the $4-to-6 million those helicopters local TV news stations have (or used to have in the case of most markets). That's before the insurance, maintenance, fuel and pilot. And renting one? Day rates in most places are around a thousand dollars per hour.

So you need look no further than economics for the argument on if they'll be coming to newsrooms.

Potential uses

But what can we do with them? We're exploring that question now in the Drone Journalism Lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as well as others at the University of Missouri and the University of Illinois. Given the legal restrictions, experiments have been small scale, but so far researchers have used UAVs to cover stories about drought and controlled burns. Others have started laying the groundwork for aerial photography to be paired with geographic information systems.

So the rest is a game of what if.

With multi-rotors and fixed-wing aircraft, journalists could do damage assessments after

Drone Journalism Lab

Carrick Detweiler, a professor of computer science and engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, pilots an Ascending Technologies Falcon-8 over the Platte River near Yutan, Neb. The Falcon-8 was used in reporting a story about the impacts of a record drought in Nebraska.

natural disasters. Currently, journalists wait for satellite companies to provide an image of the news event, which relies on clear skies over the affected area. Imagine cutting the time to map a natural disaster to a day, or even hours.

Journalists could one day use UAVs paired with radiological sensors to independently verify information coming from the government after a meltdown at a nuclear power plant.

And one day, journalists could use UAVs to cover pollution, mass protests, land development, agriculture and pretty much anything else that would be improved by eyes in the sky.

Ethical issues

But one more word of warning: Journalists are just now starting to grapple with the ethical implications of using drones for journalism. While it may seem frustrating that the FAA won't let journalists use UAVs for several years, I view it as a gift. We have time to talk about the ethics of using a technology before we start using that technology. And while journalists have used aircraft for decades, the low cost of drones means there'll be more of them. Instead of a few helicopters over a major news event, imagine 30. Imagine instead of managers saying no to requests for a helicopter to cover an event,

While it may seem frustrating that the FAA won't let journalists use UAVs for several years, I view it as a gift. We have time to talk about the ethics of using a technology before we start using that technology.

there's no economic reason to say no.

So if everyone can get a camera in the air, what changes? What are the ethics of using a drone?

The honest truth is that we already know the answer to most of the easy questions. Fly up to a celebrity's windows? It's no more ethical now than it was with a telephoto lens, and it many states it's just as illegal (already).

But what about using high-resolution digital cameras to survey our communities, inadvertently photographing people who may not know they were being photographed in the process? Photographing people on the ground at public events is one thing. Photographing an entire city and publishing those photos in a news app is another. Google had to start blurring faces in Street View after complaints. Its Maps and Earth products regularly are criticized for revealing people sunbathing (or worse. You can, uh, Google it). And those are even somewhat obvious issues we'll have to face when we can start using drones.

The simple fact is because of UAVs we're going to bump up against new ethical issues, issues we've never faced before. We're going to face unfamiliar regulations and novel legal issues. We're also going to face a public discomfort with the technology. But we're also going to be able to do stories we can't do, or can't afford to do, now. Done right, drones will someday be a useful tool for investigative reporters. But that day is a ways off.

Matt Waite is a professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, founder of the Drone Journalism Lab and co-founder of Hot Type Consulting LLC, a web development firm. From 2007 to 2011, he was a programmer/journalist for the St. Petersburg Times, where he developed the Pulitzer Prize-winning PolitiFact. Before that, he was an award-winning investigative reporter for the Times and co-author of "Paving Paradise: Florida's Vanishing Wetlands and the Failure of No Net Loss."

La Nacion Data

Argentine news site publishes data projects in an example of the growing movement for transparency in Latin America

By Gastón Roitberg
La Nacion (Argentina)

Data is the starting point of a new specialty that is changing not only the way we do journalism but also the training of media professionals.

Argentina and the rest of the world are witnessing a growing movement in which governments, institutions, nonprofit organizations and the media are promoting access to databases, public or otherwise, with a high level of openness and transparency. Governments seeking to get closer to their citizens and make their management more transparent are joining the movement called Open Government or Government 2.0, and groups of countries are leading with practical innovations. Countries such as Brazil and Mexico have taken the lead in Latin America.

Work with systematic and displayed data is not new. The big news is that now the digital platform and online media allow everyone to see the same data; store, interact, explore or build something new with it; and post it without spatial or geographic limitations.

Civic hacking, groups of programmers/journalists, and database journalism, which incorporates visualization tools, are movements that do not stop growing. Added to the mix is the world of graphic design, interactive design of interfaces and infographics.

This movement has no turning back, no time limits or boundaries. The data is our raw material, a meeting point of many disciplines. The people can do something useful with it, or kill it with indifference. That is the root of this adventure.

La Nacion Data's investigation of bidding irregularities for a public transportation project led to the cancellation of the contract and the trial of the then-secretary of transportation.

A country without open data

In 2003, Argentina's then-president, Nestor Kirchner, signed a decree that, together with the Argentine Constitution, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, make up Argentina's only legislation on requesting public information, a right that should be guaranteed.

The access regime currently in force, established by the 2003 decree, has proved insufficient to protect and promote this fundamental right, seriously setting back the right to access public information between 2008 and 2011, according to a report by the groups Association for Civil Rights and Article 19.

Among other reasons, the administrative enforcement body has proved incapable of promoting the transparency policies necessary to end the culture of secrecy that persists in many areas of the Argentine state.

The study "Corruption Perceptions 2011" by International Transparency rated countries and territories according to their "perceived levels of public sector corruption." On a scale of 1 ("highly corrupt") to 10 ("very clean"), Argentina was rated 3.

When discussing the lack of transparency and open data in Argentina, it is worth mentioning the lack of resolution in different areas of public administration, the delivery of illegible versions or paper formats that hinder the rapid processing of information, the concealment or falsification of information on official websites, the lack of updates and the indexes that do not reflect the everyday reality of the citizens.

Moving toward transparency

Last year, the meeting of the Open Government Partnership, in Brazil, brought together 800 representatives from more than 60 countries and 200 civil society organizations. The main objectives were the release of public data to increase government transparency and the creation of applications to improve the lives of citizens.

In Argentina, a growing movement of nonprofit organizations and activists are fighting for a law guaranteeing access to public information. NGOs, such as Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power), Civil Association for Equality and Justice (ACIJ), and Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) have been pushing for the passage of a law in campaigns like "Saber es un derecho" ("Knowing is a right").

And programmers together with specialists in other disciplines have come together in "hackathons" of public data since August 2010.

With regard to the actions of transparency and open government promoted by some local and provincial administrations, some national official proj-

ects provide more clarity about government acts and the numbers associated with an administration. According to Rudi Bormann, director of Buenos Aires Data (data.buenosaires.gob.ar), an official site of the Buenos Aires city government, "…we launched Buenos Aires Data, the platform that facilitates to citizens access to public information through a data catalog and which is a key component to this entire process [of opening data management to citizens] because without real and precise information, social participation would be blind."

Another example connected to the Argentine government is that of the Centro de Información Judicial (Judicial Information Center), the News Agency of Argentina's Supreme Court of Justice. Besides arising as a media specialist on legal news, it has a search engine for sentences and allows users to download complete judicial decisions.

In recent months, the president of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, presented a series of initiatives by the name of "democratization of justice" that illustrate the advancement of executive power over the judiciary, something the constitution expressly forbids. Of the six bills the president sent to Congress, one is related to a so-called transparency of public power and the need to publish on the Internet the affidavits of the members of all branches of government. But some say its disguised purpose is to advance on the independence of other powers within the state.

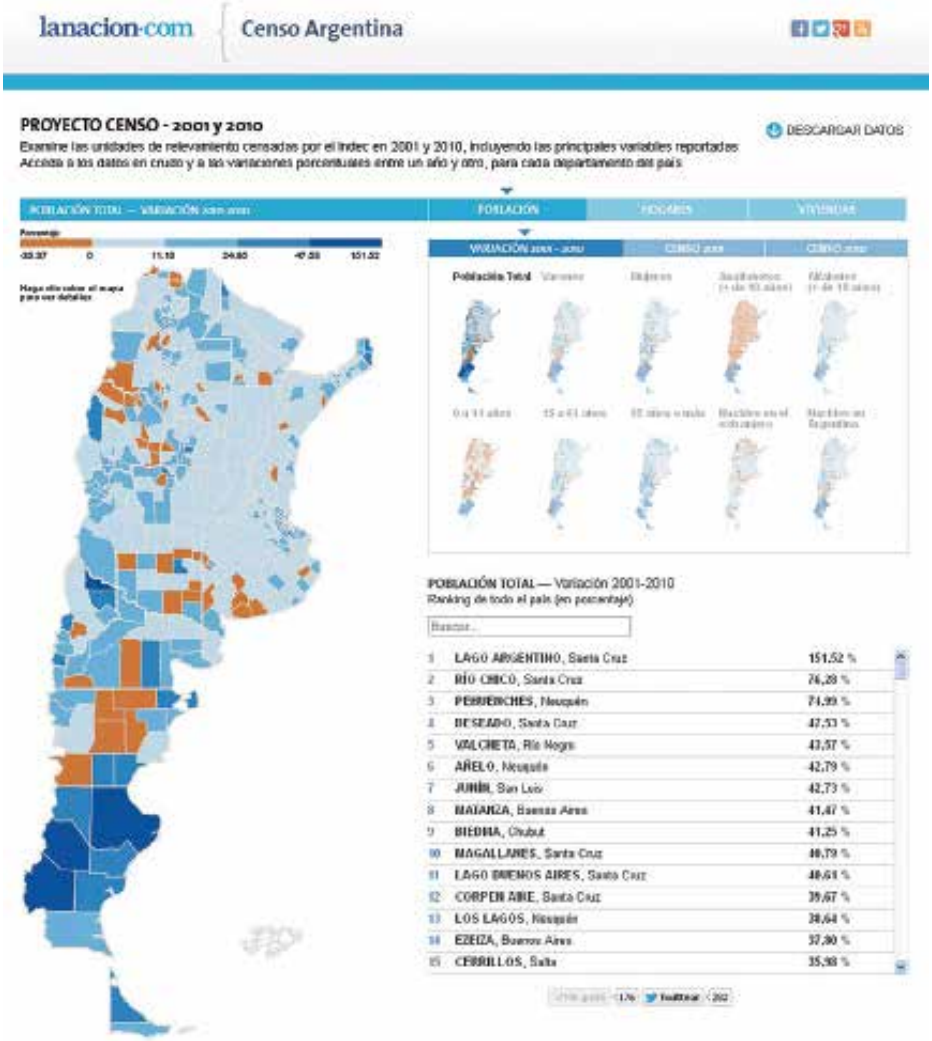
The La Nacion Data project

A multidisciplinary team at the Argentine newspaper La Nacion has the goal of releasing data and making it transparent to citizens. The team has started to search, extract and collect data. It also proposed to transform closed into open information and build interactive visualizations on relevant areas of daily life.

La Nacion is among media that have pioneered projects supported by public and open databases. Through the platform called Junar, developed by Argentine individuals in Chile and the U.S., users may access a range of topics, download data and publish it on their own online spaces.

In March 2012, Junar and La Nacion launched a new pilot project called "Data" (bit.ly/w64bDm), which displays different subjects. Much of the data available is used by journalists at La Nacion in their articles or special reports. Navigation is simple and the user may utilize the data in different ways: download it for use in spreadsheets; share it on social networks; embed it in websites.

In addition to this open data platform, La Nacion is developing a project of database journalism (bit.ly/12BPYE5) based on the work of a multidisciplinary team of journalists, technologists and others. It also has a Twitter account (@LNData), a blog (blogs.lanacion.com.ar/data), a Facebook fan page (facebook.com/naciondata), a series of interactive visualizations (lanacion.com.ar/dataviz-t48787) integrated with its content and developed with the use of Tableau, and direct relationships with the local open-data community (journalists, programmers, engineers, activists).



La Nacion Data launched a comparison of the 2001 and 2010 Argentine censuses.

In addition, there are three other recent efforts affecting media in Latin America. To create digital tools for managing data that help journalists to tell more relevant stories, the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C., appointed fellows in South America. One is Sandra Crucianelli, who worked as a consultant at La Nacion and trained a team of journalists in database journalism techniques.

The second initiative was the organization, with the Universidad Austral de Buenos Aires, of the first DataFest (datafest.org.ar) in Latin America, a gathering of journalists, programmers, designers, data analysts and other specialists who worked together for two days to solve problems surrounding huge volumes of information in areas such as national budget, the environment, government advertising and transparency of the state, among others. The second annual conference will be in November.

The third project is Knight-Mozilla Open News, an enterprise associated with the Knight Foundation, the Mozilla Foundation and big media organizations. Grants were given to developers to apply their creative and innovative activities in different media and help journalists to develop news applications as a new way of storytelling. In 2012, grants were given at multiple news organizations worldwide including La Nacion.

Since its launch as a project in late 2011, La Nacion Data (lanacion.com.ar/data) has developed news application projects of great impact. For example, "Subsidies to public bus transport in Argentina" received special mention in the data journalism awards given every year by the Global Editors Network and Google. Furthermore, LN Data is launching an application project that works with comparative data obtained from the population censuses of 2001 and 2010 in Argentina and another new platform that allows the viewing and analysis of the affidavits of officials in the three branches of government.

We continue to collect new data and all data currently available from La Nacion Data will be automatically updated as it is modified.

Gastón Roitberg is currently secretary of multimedia at La Nacion and is responsible for the digital lanacion.com sites. Roitberg is the head professor of the program for multimedia in the Master's of Journalism of La Nacion and the University Torcuato Di Tella, visiting lecturer in the School of Communication at the Universidad Austral and visiting professor at the College of Journalism of Córdoba.

KINDER-CAR

Newspaper uses data reporting to publish school inspection reports

By John Bones
Verdens Gang (Norway)

It started like an ordinary news story last October. One of our reporters, Frank Haugsbo, made Freedom of Information Act requests to the five biggest cities in Norway to get access to the kindergarten inspection reports. While reading them, he saw a pattern of violation of law.

This gave Verdens Gang the idea to investigate the whole country. The inspections are done by the different municipalities, so Haugsbo had to make 429 FOIA requests, asking for the reports from 2010, 2011 and 2012. One municipality answered in four hours; one in four months.

Rather than a traditional front page, VG created this cover, which reads, "Mom and Dad think I am safe in the kindergarten, but is it true?"

From text to numbers

When Haugsbo started to receive the reports, some of them as PDF files, some as Word files and some in paper format, he saw that he had to find a way to handle the text data, which we later counted to 31,000 pages. At the beginning of December, two colleagues with data skills were asked to join the project. We had to figure out a solution for four main tasks:

- What kind of database are we going to build?
- Which is the easiest way of reading the documents?
- How are we going to classify the documents?
- Is there a way to convert text to quantitative data?

Several techniques and programs were discussed. Our first idea was to combine Abbyy Fine Reader, Copernic Desktop Search, Adobe Acrobat Pro and Google Refine in one way or another. We made several tests, and after a few days we concluded that it would not work as we wanted.

Then, inspired by the ProPublica project "Free the Files" using DocumentCloud, we came up with a solution based upon that project's techniques.

However, the kindergarten documents had a few more difficulties. Each municipality had its own way of conducting inspections, and the municipalities used different methods of reporting when and how the different laws were broken. In some reports it was difficult for us to determine whether the inspector had found a violation of law or had just left a note.

The reading

After some discussion, we came up with the idea to tag each document with keywords, the same way blog posts are tagged. We also created 10 standard tags to classify the violations of law. We tested this technique by reading and tagging 50 documents, we made some minor changes, and then we began the hard work.

We started in the middle of January, five reporters reading 4,484 inspection reports.

We were manually filling out the different forms, sitting in the same room, and could ask each other if we wondered about something. The close contact, the continuous small talk, helped us pinpoint the most important cases later.

Geolocation

We took almost four weeks reading all the documents, and then, in the middle of February, we began to structure and analyze the data. All tags, together with the kindergarten ID, municipality, county and ownership, were stored in a MySQL database. We developed the kindergarten ID by joining two files: a list showing all Norwegian kindergartens, which we got from the government, and information from a central business register. Then we could geolocate all kindergartens and make an interactive mapping solution when we were ready to publish the reports.

As we were five reporters reading 4,500 documents from around 400 municipalities,

there had to be different kinds of tagging. In the end we listed more than 2,000 different tags, which we manually added into seven main files.

Findings

When this was done, we saw the main news in the material:

- There were violations of law in about half of the kindergartens.
- Security dangers in one out of six.
- Critical hygiene violations in one out of five.
- Too few adults in one out of 10.
- One of 10 reports was prepared by the kindergarten itself.
- 55 municipalities had not had any inspections at all.

We also found that about half of the kindergartens had not been visited by the inspection authorities.

We published the stories in the paper edition VG, Web edition VG Nett, mobile edition VG Mobile and our web-TV channel VGTV. (See a translated version of the web database at bit.ly/14pDtzq.)

We experimented with different front pages for the paper edition, and instead of making a classic news front, we made the one adjacent to this story. The text means: "Mom and Dad think I am safe in the kindergarten, but is it true?"

The inside stories were classic tabloid. The title is "1 of 2 kindergartens were breaking the law," and the picture shows a young girl who died in the kindergarten. All together we made 32 print pages, in addition to the Web, mobile and web-TV publications.

Questions

There is some uncertainty in the material we have been publishing:

- Nobody knows exactly how many kindergartens are in Norway. When checking the latest file we received from the government, in February, we found some kindergartens that no longer exist.
- We also know that some kindergartens are not on the list.
- As the inspections were done in quite different ways, we do not know exactly how many times there were violations of law.
- We converted text to numbers manually, and where human beings are involved, there will be mistakes.

That is why we have not made tables and graphs and compared the different parts of the country. We know the main results, but we think it is risky to publish the result for each municipality.


BARNEHAGE GRANSKINGEN

Delta på Twitter: #vgbarnehage

1 AV 2 BARNE-HAGER BRØT LOVEN

– Du forventer å få barnet levende og trygt tilbake

■ LOVBRUDD BLIR IKKE RAPPORTERT INN

■ HALVPARTEN IKKE SJEKKET SISTE TRE ÅR

■ KOMMUNENE DRIVER TILSYN MED SEG SELV

The headline of an inside story is "1 of 2 kindergartens were breaking the law." The picture depicts a girl who died in kindergarten.

However, and this is one of the major innovations in this project, we made a searchable database containing all inspection reports from the kindergartens. Readers could search the database, and in the first 11 days following publication, the word "Kindergarten" was the most used. To date, we have had more than one million database searches. (Norway has five million inhabitants.)

The database

One of the main goals of this project was to present all our reports in a database where our readers could find their own kindergarten and check the conditions for themselves. We also wanted to make a small community for every kindergarten, where employees and parents could discuss and share their experiences.

When presenting 6,000 kindergartens at once, we had to make it easy for our readers to use and navigate. To find a kindergarten, readers could either search through our autocomplete search field or find every kindergarten in a municipality, listed county by county and in a separate map. In the right column we also provided links to articles explaining our method and why we decided to publish the reports.

We also geotagged all kindergartens and displayed them in a map powered by Leaflet and Cloudmade.

We listed every kindergarten in Norway, even though we had reports on only half of them. But by every kindergarten we had a comment field where our readers could share their experience with it. With a total of 6,000 kindergartens in Norway, we also had to moderate 6,000 different debates.

The database was built from scratch, using HTML, CSS, Javascript and PHP/MySQL.

Moderation tool

Our comment field is built around a tool called "Protokoll," developed at VG Nett many years ago. Moderating was one of the biggest challenges of this project. In the first week after launch we had up to five moderators approving and declining comments. By now we have published more than 4,300 comments in our database. We´re also very strict in our moderation, which has led to more than 1,500 unpublished comments.

Lesson learned

A work like this had never been done in our country, so we had to invent the methods ourselves. We had some trouble because we did not have all documents when we started the data work, and we faced new problems when we were doing the GIS work. We were uncertain about the identity and geolocation of 300 kindergartens, so we had to identify these one by one by hard work. If we were to do a job like this again, we would want access to all documents before we started to handle the data.

John Bones is a senior staff reporter at Verdens Gang, Norway's largest daily newspaper.

Erica Mendez Babcock | IRE

BEYOND BOX SCORES

INVESTIGATING SPORTS

The Friday night high school football game under blazing lights.

An afternoon at the ballpark with 30,000 fans catching a game.

The playoff series that captivates the community.

Sports provide some of the highest profile events in many cities and towns.

But sports programs – from youth leagues run by questionable characters to college programs swimming in booster cash to pro leagues with 330-pound players running like gazelles – often receive little or no scrutiny from the media. As the Orange County Register's Scott Reid summarizes in his article on Page 17: a sports journalist's foremost responsibility is to the audience, from the little league player who idolizes the pros to the fans who buy the tickets and the taxpayers who pay for the new stadium.

On the following pages, we look at some examples of local, regional and national journalists who have gone beyond the box scores.

A SPORTS REPORTER'S OBLIGATION

Watchdogging the teams you cover

BY SCOTT M. REID
Orange County Register

Former Iowa prosecutor J. Patrick White spent his career asking tough questions. One of the Johnson County attorney's most controversial cases was the 2002 felony sexual-assault case against University of Iowa basketball star Pierre Pierce, which White and many others maintain was undermined by then-Iowa coach Steve Alford's repeated public proclamations of Pierce's innocence. Even after significant contradictory evidence in the case was made available to him, Alford continued to insist on Pierce's innocence.

Alford's unrelenting advocacy of Pierce and the public support of the Hawkeye star it whipped up had a chilling effect on the victim, who told White and law enforcement officials she was concerned about testifying, White said. White eventually settled for a plea-bargain deal with Pierce, who, initially charged with felony sexual assault, agreed to plead guilty to assault causing injury – a serious misdemeanor.

A few hours after Alford was hired at the University of California, Los Angeles last April, taking over college basketball's most storied program, White spent much of a morning going over the Pierce case in an interview with the Orange County Register. At the end of the interview the former prosecutor had a question of his own. "Do you know if the UCLA athletic director knew about any of this?"

A series of Register stories in the days following Alford's hiring raised serious questions about his handling of the Pierce case and the thoroughness of UCLA's background check of a coach the public university agreed to pay at least $18.2 million over the next seven seasons. Pierce returned to the Iowa team a few days after the plea deal was reached and after redshirting for the 2002-03 season, was on the court for the Hawkeyes until February 2005, when he was arrested and charged with intent to commit sexual abuse, false imprisonment, burglary and domestic abuse assault. Interviews with university and law enforcement officials and university, police and court documents obtained by the Register directly contradicted Alford's continued insistence that in publicly defending Pierce in the 2002 case he had been following university instructions. Alford eventually apologized for his conduct in the Pierce case but the controversy continues to hound Alford and the UCLA Bruins program.

The morning the Register published a second piece on the Alford-Pierce affair, a top UCLA athletic department official called me.

"Is there anything else we should know about?" he said.

Orange County Register | Armando Brown

Steve Alford speaks at a press conference introducing him as the new head coach of the UCLA men's basketball team at Pauley Pavillion on the school's campus in Westwood, Calif., April 2.

THERE'S A NEED TO INVESTIGATE

Perhaps more than ever there is a need for watchdog reporting in sports. From sexually and physically abusive coaches to the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs to incompetence at the NCAA to all kinds of off-the-field issues involving star athletes and coaches, there are plenty of stories that need to be told. There is also an obligation for newspapers and other media outlets to their readers and viewers to apply the same scrutiny they do to city hall, the state legislature or a local corporation. Sports federations, leagues and bowl games

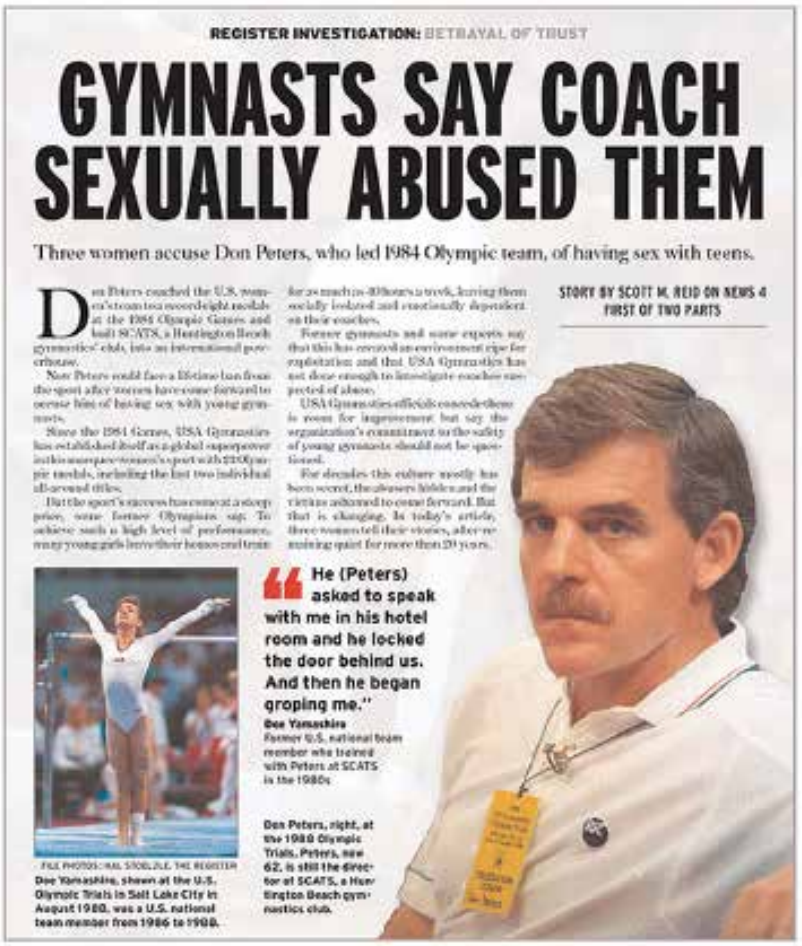
generate millions of dollars annually yet receive nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service. University athletic departments and professional sports franchises also receive millions in public funding, tax breaks and stadiums built and subsidized by the taxpayer. The readers – the fans – deserve to know if the game they're watching or horse race they're betting on is being influenced by performance-enhancing drugs. And those same readers, many of them parents, deserve to know if the men and women coaching their children have a history of abuse.

This need comes when many newspapers are unable (or unwilling) to commit resources to investigative sports reporting. Even with recent cutbacks papers can still provide their readers with the appropriate watchdog scrutiny through beat reporting. Just as a news outlet would not ignore corruption involving public officials or environmental violations by a local company, journalists have the same obligation to hold sports teams, athletes, coaches and officials accountable.

Since 1999, the Orange County Register has won 10 Associated Press Sports Editors Top 5 awards for investigative reporting. During that time the Register's reporting has led to investigations by the International Olympic Committee, U.S. Olympic Committee, NCAA, U.S. Department of Education and several other national governing sports bodies and prompted legislation in California. Eight of those 10 APSE winners were the result of reporting on the Olympic or college beats.

BELOW: The Register story that ran on Sept. 25, 2011, where gymnasts claimed coach Don Peters sexually abused them.

Orange County Register



REGISTER INVESTIGATION: BETRAYAL OF TRUST

GYMNASTS SAY COACH SEXUALLY ABUSED THEM

Three women accuse Don Peters, who led 1984 Olympic team, of having sex with teens.

STORY BY SCOTT M. REID ON NEWS 4
FIRST OF TWO PARTS

"He (Peters) asked to speak with me in his hotel room and he locked the door behind us. And then he began groping me."
Dee Yamashiro
Former U.S. national team member who trained with Peters at SCATS in the 1980s

FILE PHOTOS: HAL STOELZLE, THE REGISTER
Dee Yamashiro, shown at the U.S. Olympic Trials in Salt Lake City in August 1988, was a U.S. national team member from 1986 to 1988.

Don Peters, right, at the 1988 Olympic Trials. Peters, now 62, is still the director at SCATS, a Huntington Beach gymnastics club.

LEARNING FROM THE BEST

My first job out of college was with the Dallas Times Herald in the mid-80s in the midst of the Dallas newspaper war. For a young sports reporter with an interest in investigative and watchdog reporting, it was the equivalent of going to Harvard Law School and remains the most influential period of my career. The relentless reporting of the Times Herald's Danny Robbins, Jack Sheppard and Dan Langendorf resulted in several Southwest Conference schools' being placed on NCAA probation. The reporter than I am today was largely shaped by Sheppard, who later as a sports editor encouraged watchdog reporting on the beat.

For me as a young reporter, Sheppard and Langendorf were ideal models of how to balance award-winning watchdog reporting with beat coverage. More recently, the work of Mark Zeigler at The San Diego Union-Tribune and Elliott Almond of the San Jose Mercury News have also been prime examples of how to do in-depth investigation and enterprise work while dealing with a beat. Like Sheppard and Langendorf, Zeigler and Almond have followed a simple formula: be fair and upfront with the people you're covering, be persistent in your daily coverage, develop multiple sources on the beat, and be creative. If an athlete or coach is upset about your watchdog reporting, hear them out no matter how uncomfortable it is. But the bottom line is that a reporter's obligation to the reader outweighs the journalist's concerns about getting a quote after practice.

Young Times Herald reporters in all departments also benefited from periodic seminars or clinics by longtime news side investigative reporter Jack Taylor, an expert on document searches. Taylor's tips have proved beneficial throughout my career and are relevant for today's beat reporters.

Routine open records requests while I covered the University of Georgia for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution revealed outside income for Bulldog coaches, Title IX and NCAA violations and scheduling conflicts with rival schools. Private universities don't have to reveal coaches' salaries. But in one case, bankruptcy court filings and other public records showed not only a coach's financial package but that he had received loans from former NBA teammates and even been forced to sell his NBA World Championship ring.

Using IRS nonprofit filings and university financial documents obtained through open records, the Register in 2007 was able to publish a groundbreaking series on how college football's bowl system became a billion-dollar-a-year industry operated primarily by tax-exempt bowl committees. These committees spent decades and millions of dollars nurturing relationships with influential friends at university campuses, conference headquarters, state houses and the halls of power in Washington. Besides mind-boggling numbers, the documents also provided details like the Sugar Bowl paying a consultant $11,000 annually to "monitor legislative developments," and officials for Nashville's Music City Bowl spending $7,203 on hosting an office miniature golf tournament.

DIGGING DEEP ON THE OLYMPIC BEAT

For more than a half-century Orange County's sporting identity has been defined by and inexorably linked to the record-setting success of OC-based athletes on the Olympic stage. If Orange County were a country, it would have ranked among the top 10 nations in gold medals won at each of the last three Summer Olympic Games.

While the Register covered the triumphs and heartbreaks, the paper has applied the same scrutiny to the Olympic beat as it does local governments, police and companies.

One of the men who was critical to Orange County's emergence as an Olympic superpower was gymnastics coach Don Peters. He built an international dynasty at the SCATS gym in Huntington Beach, Calif. Peters coached nearly 60 U.S. national team members during his 32-year tenure at SCATS.

But Peters, along with other coaches, has been a subject of Register watchdog reporting in recent years.

For years the Register had heard rumblings of Peters' womanizing and that it might involve sexual conduct with teenage female gymnasts. Periodically the paper chased rumors that each time led nowhere. A mystery woman reached out to us in 2004 and again in 2011, urging us to dig deeper. Through interviews, social media, old SCATS rosters and documents and LexisNexis, I was able to track down the woman, who gave me other sources willing to talk.

Three women were eventually willing to go on record about Peters' sexual conduct with young gymnasts in the 1980s. Their accounts were supported by interviews with friends and family. The women also signed sworn statements that the material they had provided to the Register was true.

In 2011, the Register published their accounts, which focused not only on Peters' misconduct but the sport's exploitative culture and USA Gymnastics' failure to pursue allegations of sexual misconduct more aggressively.

THREAT OF NO ACCESS

Throughout the Register's reporting on the sexual and physical abuse within gymnastics and swimming, I have been repeatedly asked by colleagues, friends, readers and even some of the victims I've interviewed if I wasn't concerned about losing access on the Olympic beat. My response has been that the paper has always known that was a possibility. Indeed, some longtime sources – coaches, athletes and officials – no longer return my calls and emails. But the paper's foremost responsibility is to its readers, especially those parents who each day take their children, along with their dreams of being the next Olympian, to the gyms, pools and fields of Orange County.

I'm also reminded of an interview I had with a gymnast whom Peters had sexual intercourse with.

"I wasn't sure what to say," she said, recalling her reaction to my initial phone call. "Because I thought you were going to do some story on what a great coach Don is, and I thought, 'Should I tell him what really happened?'"

Scott M. Reid is a staff writer at the Orange County Register. He has won nine Associated Press Sports Editors Top 5 awards for investigative reporting and is a two-time IRE Award finalist. Prior to coming to the Register he worked at the Dallas Times Herald and Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

...a reporter's obligation to the reader outweighs the journalist's concerns about getting a quote after practice.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COACHES KEEP JOBS DESPITE ACCUSATIONS
Caseload grows for probation
A love triangle tied by blood
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Orange County Register

‘UNFAIR GAME’

Stories examine problematic recruiting in Dallas high school sports

BY JASON TRAHAN
WFAA-TV

On the afternoon of Aug. 29, 2012, there was a commotion in the newsroom.

WFAA investigative reporter Brett Shipp had called in, saying he needed some help. Members of a high school football team were following him.

Shipp, armed with the I-Team’s minicam, was shooting video of NFL Hall of Famer Deion Sanders leading a practice of his new charter school football team, Prime Prep Academy. One of Sanders’ assistant coaches, former Dallas Cowboys lineman George Hegamin, told Shipp to stop recording the practice, which was being held at a public park. Shipp, under protest but by himself, retreated across the street, but kept rolling. As Sanders stood by and watched, his players mobilized. More than two dozen players in full pads stopped traffic, crossed a busy street and surrounded Shipp, shouting at him.

“Why are you messing with us?” hollered one player.

WFAA

Kimball Knights basketball coach Royce Johnson celebrates one of his team’s two state championship titles. WFAA and internal school investigators determined that he improperly recruited some members of his team.

THE BEGINNING

It had been an intense few weeks in Dallas high school athletics. All summer, WFAA-Dallas/Fort Worth had been airing stories exposing the underground world of improper recruiting. “Unfair Game,” as the series came to be known, began with a tip in the spring of 2012 from a concerned coach, who told Shipp that a number of athletes on Dallas’ Kimball Knights basketball team were recruited from other schools against state rules. Kimball had just won its second straight state basketball title, and people were talking. Sportsmanship, championships and scholarships were all at stake.

Sports investigations are familiar ground for WFAA. In 2009, Dallas’ South Oak Cliff lost two state titles after Shipp showed how administrators there changed grades to keep kids eligible to play.

Recruiting was a whole new arena, however. First, we had to understand state athletics rules. In short, they said that coaches are supposed to assemble teams with students who live in their attendance zones. Kids who transfer from one campus to another cannot play for their new school’s team if it is determined that they moved for athletic purposes.

Kimball’s star guard was a transfer player, as was most of the school’s roster, WFAA found. Nailing down the reasons for the transfers and sorting out where each player actually lived were not easy. Some kids, WFAA found, moved in with relatives who lived near the new school. Some didn’t really move at all and commuted.

Ultimately the station’s investigation showed that at least nine players moved into Kimball’s attendance zone for athletic purposes.

The star guard’s mother claimed her rent went up at her Irving home and she was forced to move to Dallas. She was getting government housing assistance, so Shipp filed open records requests for her lease documents. After much bureaucratic wrangling, the documents finally revealed that her rent was locked in, and she had broken her lease. When confronted, she denied this.

What about the other kids on the team? Figuring out their individual living arrangements was tough. Running

teens through traditional databases such as Accurint or LexisNexis was fruitless; they weren't old enough to have much of a paper trail.

Social media, though, proved to be a boon. Using Twitter, we were able to glean enough to learn who lived where, who had recently moved, and where everyone was hanging out. After that, Shipp and I went to the homes and talked to friends to figure out living arrangements of players.

The key questions became who signed off on the transfers to Kimball? Why were no red flags raised? Answering those led to the root of the recruiting problem.

In Texas, the University Interscholastic League, or UIL, oversees high school athletics. The UIL lets school districts police one another's transfers through groups called District Executive Committees, or DECs. These are made up of coaches and administrators from clusters of schools that compete against one another athletically. These committees meet, review documentation purporting to explain why a student is moving to a new school and ultimately vote on athletic transfers. No media outlets regularly cover these meetings, even though their decisions are in effect athletic drafts that can make or break a team's chances at success. It became evident that questionable transfers were rarely questioned, even though some were blatantly based on athletics and not academics. For instance, the star basketball player left Irving to come to Kimball, located in a blighted section of southern Dallas and rated "academically unacceptable" by the state based on low test scores.

Coaches on the DECs approved each other's transfers and expected little scrutiny in return, WFAA found. That changed when Shipp and WFAA I-Team photographer Billy Bryant began attending DEC meetings and putting them on TV. Under scrutiny, committees were suddenly in the mood to question transfers.

INVESTIGATION EXPANDS

Enter Prime Prep Academy.

Deion Sanders made headlines in 2011 when the Texas State Board of Education approved the application of his longtime business partner, D.L. Wallace, to start a charter school. Deion was the school's public pitch man and was a paid coach. Many wondered how wise it was to give Sanders and Wallace, neither of whom finished college, permission to receive millions in taxpayer funding to run a school.

After securing a charter, Sanders set about creating an athletic powerhouse. When he and his staff petitioned the local DEC for approval of their football and basketball rosters, the committee balked.

Of particular concern, the committee noted, was Sanders' request to have a group of championship basketball players, all from the same school, transfer to Prime Prep. Prime Prep also hired their coach.

Shipp continued to press state officials about whether Prime Prep should be allowed to field athletic teams. That led to Shipp's August showdown with the football team.

In the end, the DEC and state athletics officials in Austin both ruled Prime Prep's athletes ineligible.

'Unfair Game' won a 2013 IRE Award in the category "Broadcast/Video – Medium." View the series at bit.ly/15NxzGY.

WFAA

THE BLOWBACK

Sanders lashed out publicly. He criticized WFAA, calling the station's series on improper recruiting unfair, biased and racist.

"First of all, this all started mainly by a Caucasian reporter from a news station, Channel 8, you know who I'm talking about, and he seems like he's the African-American killer. It's always something against a brother," Sanders said in a radio interview (cbsloc.al/12k2DiC).

Sanders denied cheating and promised to sue the DEC. No suit was filed. Ultimately, Sanders dropped out of state-sanctioned play and took his basketball team on the road. They played an exhibition schedule and beat some of the best teams in the country.

NUTS AND BOLTS

"Unfair Game" was based mostly on traditional sources. After our installments aired, more concerned coaches and parents came forward, giving us examples of recruiting. In particular, coaches who had had kids unfairly lured away provided tips and background on how the system worked. None wanted to go on camera, however, for fear of ostracism by their coaching peers. While they wouldn't sit for an interview, many coaches used the DEC meetings as public forums for their frustrations. After we began showing up and putting them on TV, other media soon followed, which brought more scrutiny of the process.

Through our sources, we learned that summer league

TOP: WFAA reporter Brett Shipp and I-Team photographer Billy Bryant confronted mother Sherry Pulliam about why she moved her son to Kimball High School.

BOTTOM: Sherry Pulliam tweeted this about the time her son transferred to Kimball High School. She has denied her son moved for athletic purposes.

programs were where many of the recruiting deals were made. Public school coaches and summer league coaches have strong ties and foster the recruiting process. (Note: Reporters elsewhere interested in getting inside sources about their local high school sports programs – be it for stories on recruiting, performance-enhancing drugs or improper corporate sponsorships – would be well served by visiting summer league offices and ferreting out whistleblowers.)

To piece together current and former addresses of students and examine why they showed up in Kimball's attendance zone, WFAA used a variety of sources: public housing rental documents; deed and county tax records; social media postings; countless Google searches; and queries on Pipl, Spokeo and for background on parents and guardians, commercial databases such as LexisNexis, Accurint and Publicdata.

THE FALLOUT

As a result of our investigation, which so far has included nearly two dozen stories rolled out over about six months, the Dallas Independent School District's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) launched an internal investigation. It substantiated our reporting.

"The issues raised in WFAA's investigative report regarding athletics last night are indeed serious and I want to assure the public that they are being taken very seriously by both me and the administration," District Superintendent Mike Miles said in a statement last fall. "It should be noted that several of the individuals who had direct involvement in previous incidents are no longer working for the school district as a result of investigations regarding athletics."

The internal review also found that as many as 28 coaches at 18 schools had falsified time cards to show that they were doing their teaching jobs when in reality they were spending much of their time each day coaching – a possible misuse of federal funds. Superintendent Miles ordered coaches to comply with the law or risk termination.

Miles also ordered that future DEC meetings take place at the Dallas schools administration building to "hopefully lend more weight to the proceedings," he said.

He also ordered that the district's athletics rules coordinator attend the DEC meetings. She told OPR investigators that she had been barred from some of the meetings prior to WFAA's stories' airing.

What has not changed is Kimball's head coach, whose father is a top official in the Dallas Independent School District's athletic department. Both remain in their current positions.

Jason Trahan is the investigative producer for WFAA-Dallas. He spent 12 years as a Dallas Morning News reporter covering federal courts, law enforcement and public safety. Trahan also worked on WFAA's investigation of Medicaid dental fraud, which won a National Edward R. Murrow and a Gerald Loeb Award, among others. The WFAA I-Team's Twitter feed is @wfaaiteam.

The Associated Press | Jeff Chiu

A security guard checks the bags of fans entering O.co Coliseum before a game between the Oakland Athletics and the Houston Astros on April 17 in Oakland, Calif.

QUICK HIT

Investigating sports security after Boston bombing

BY BRENT SCHROTENBOER
USA TODAY Sports

Looking at the video footage of the Boston Marathon bombings, I noticed a curious scene that didn't get much attention at the time. As the first bomb exploded near the finish line, a number of yellow-jacketed personnel stood lining the marathon route with their backs to the crowd and the bomb.

These were volunteers working in a security role, so why were their backs turned to potential dangers? Shouldn't they have been watching the crowd?

While nobody was blaming them for the tragedy, these questions became part of a larger topic that my editor, David Meeks, and I wanted to explore.

Such security guards are ubiquitous at sporting events across the nation. They search your bags at the stadium gates and perform other important functions at events, including crowd control, ushering and taking tickets. As such, they form a critical line of defense against a potential terrorist attack.

But who are they? Who is training them? Who determines if they are qualified? Are they even licensed by public agencies?

The subject previously entered my radar screen when I covered the bankruptcy case of a security-guard business in San Diego, a company accused of keeping ticket revenue it collected from local high schools. Many times as a sports writer, I also noticed how uninterested some of these guards appeared in their jobs. They were part-time employees earning a low wage while working irregular hours on weekends.

After the Boston bombings, we decided it was a good time to give this industry a deep look and find out how safe – or not – sporting events really were with these workers guarding the gates. And we wanted to turn the story around quickly, while Boston was still fresh on the public's mind.

STATE REQUIREMENTS VARY

I started by checking the licensing requirements in California, where I live. I found that the state does license security guards through its Bureau of Security and Investiga-

The Associated Press | Elise Amendola

Shalane Flanagan approaches the finish line to finish fourth in the women's division of the 2013 Boston Marathon in Boston on April 15, 2013.

tive Services, part of the state's Department of Consumer Affairs. That bureau has a website that lists enforcement decisions, such as license suspensions and revocations. The website also allows the user to look up individual licensees to find out if their licenses are valid, and if not, why they were revoked.

We found that 154 security guard licenses were revoked in 2013 for various violations, often because of criminal activity.

This raised more questions: What about other states? How effectively do they conduct background checks?

To find the answers, I went state-to-state to find out how each approached licensing security guards. This was the most time-consuming part of the project. Some state requirements were easy to find with a single Google search, while others proved to be more elusive, often because the states didn't have any requirements. In the end, the effort revealed a hodgepodge of approaches that showed several potential holes in security. Several states required no licensing, and 23 required no training.

SECURITY EXECUTIVES POINT TO COMPROMISES

To give this information some perspective, I spoke with executives at security guard companies that operated in several states. These companies know the ins and outs of the field and work in a competitive market, often bidding to get contracts. So the executives were eager to share how they believed their industry's business model leads some competitors to cut corners – and safety – to make money.

If companies get contracts from teams based on low bids, as they often do, then those companies feel pressure to cut costs as much as possible to make a profit. That means less pay for labor and even using unqualified workers to serve in key security roles at stadiums across the country.

The experts cited some examples of subpar security at big events: At the Super Bowl in February, two students filmed themselves appearing to sneak into the Superdome virtually unchecked and unquestioned.

Last year, a television reporter tested stadium security in Denver, where the state of Colorado requires no training to get a license. She and a colleague were able to sneak in a real pistol and a fake gun at stadiums.

The experts also said the Boston bombings could have been avoided. Though it might not have prevented the bombs from going off, the experts said the risk could have been reduced if the security guards had been watching the crowd instead of the race. In Massachusetts, no training is required of security guards, and the security personnel at the marathon finish line were volunteers who also were tasked with assisting runners.

THE ISRAELI MODEL

My editor made a key suggestion here, too. In his experience working national security stories at the Los Angeles Times, Meeks learned that Israeli security experts often have a much different perspective on security procedures than American experts. Their country has faced terror threats for decades, which leads to a different way of viewing the problem.

Their view from the outside helped give the story a new way of looking at Boston and the way security is conducted at U.S. stadiums – with bag searches, pat-downs and

electronic wands. How often have you heard of a security guard at a U.S. stadium finding anything dangerous?

"Security in the United States is all about bells and whistles," said Rafi Sela, a former official with the Israel Defense Forces. "You see the guards standing at stadiums and bus stations. It's not even considerable deterrence anymore."

But "you cannot leave a bag unattended (in Israel) for more than 10 seconds before someone will ask questions," he said.

In Israel, security is "all about people and not their belongings," Sela said. This means a heavy reliance on individual profiling and intelligence. He said there isn't enough emphasis on these approaches in the U.S. because of the cost and because it doesn't help politicians get re-elected.

PUBLICATION AND PUSHBACK

The story first was published online on May 2, a little more than two weeks after the Boston bombings on April 15. I spent about a week working on it – a fairly quick turnaround for a story like this. It helped that the story had a narrow focus and that I was able to locate some issues right away that helped frame the broader picture, particularly the hodgepodge of security requirements from state to state. When the story idea is narrow and the supporting documents and data are fairly accessible online, the time needed to write and report decreases.

We did run into some roadblocks, though. Universities denied our open records requests for documentation of stadium security assessments they had recently received from a contractor at the University of Southern Mississippi, the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4). The Department of Homeland Security wasn't very helpful with specific details, either.

We had hoped that the assessments would give detailed examples of security issues that had been found and corrected, shedding even more light on the issues involved. But the schools cited security as a reason for not having to comply with open records laws. If they gave us this information and it was published, they argued, it would make them vulnerable to terrorists.

It's the age-old debate between the public's right to know and the need to keep things secret for public safety. While the story received very positive reader feedback and generated a number of radio and TV requests, we also heard from a handful of readers who argued the story was providing terrorists with a road map for their next attack. It's an argument we find absurd. Shining light on problems helps them get fixed. If anything, terrorists were probably upset at our story because it meant that such weaknesses were going to be harder to exploit now that the public was more aware of them.

It's an issue that's not going away any time soon, either. In the absence of uniform state regulations, NCS4 is working on filling the gaps by assessing stadiums and certifying that they meet security standards.

STORIES YOU CAN DO

Meanwhile, the story can be easily localized. As mentioned, KDVR in Denver last year brazenly tested stadium security in that city. How safe is your local stadium, and how is it being checked?

Other issues are worth exploring: What are the licensing requirements for security guards in your state? If security guards are licensed, what records are kept by your state on these guards? How many of those licenses were revoked or suspended, and why?

I found that California, Florida and Texas were among the best at having accessible security guard license records on the Internet.

Keep in mind it's not just stadiums that use security guards. They're also at shopping malls, banks, concerts and other large public events. Except for their brightly colored jackets or uniforms, they're easy to forget. When attending a game or a concert, most people just want to get past these guards as soon as they can so they can get to their seats and enjoy the show.

Only when these guards fail at their jobs do they seem to get much public attention. For the sake of public safety, it's worth giving them a closer look now, before that happens.

Brent Schrotenboer works as investigative and enterprise reporter for USA TODAY Sports. He previously worked in a similar role for The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Tools and tips for covering stadium security

By Brent Schrotenboer | USA TODAY Sports

Contracts: Universities and stadiums often hire contractors for stadium security, often through a bidding process. Those contracts should be available through open records requests for public universities and publicly owned stadiums. They can tell you what the security company is being paid and what they will provide.

Licenses: Many states require security guards to be licensed though training and standards vary widely. Those licenses and standards often are available on state websites. Some states, such as California, keep detailed license enforcement information, such as why a security guard's license was revoked and how many licenses were revoked in the past year.

Standards: Many schools in the South have elected to have their stadium security standards certified by the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at the University of Southern Mississippi. In the absence of uniform standards, this could be a growing business to watch in this field. NCS4 has a checklist of standards for schools that pay for certification. Who determines standards at your local stadium?

Records: Security guard companies often employ part-time labor at a relatively low wage. Issues with these companies might show up in court records or other public agencies.

FOOTBALL FELONS

Reporters find pattern of violent crimes, improper recruiting

BY KATE MCGINTY

When a sheriff's deputy pulled up to the site of a middle-of-the-night home robbery, he spotted three men wearing dark clothing running from the scene.

The deputy started chasing the men, who split into different directions amid their flight from the Palm Desert apartment complex. He lost them for a few seconds while two rounded the corner of a building.

When the deputy turned the corner, he would later say, he was attacked by one of the robbers – a man who was 6 feet, 6 inches tall and weighed more than 400 pounds.

The man punched the deputy in the shoulder, dislocating his shoulder, and dragged the deputy to the ground, police would later say. The man then tried to steal the deputy's gun from his holster.

Dwarfed by his assailant, the deputy managed to grab the gun, pointed it to the man's chest and pulled the trigger.

It was after midnight on Feb. 23, 2012.

When sparse details were released and posted to The Desert Sun's website later that morning, we fielded a call on our breaking news line that the man who was killed was named Frank Tanuvasa.

Tanuvasa was a student at the local community college, we were told – and a Google search showed us he was on the football team.

So was one of the other men who fled the robbery scene.

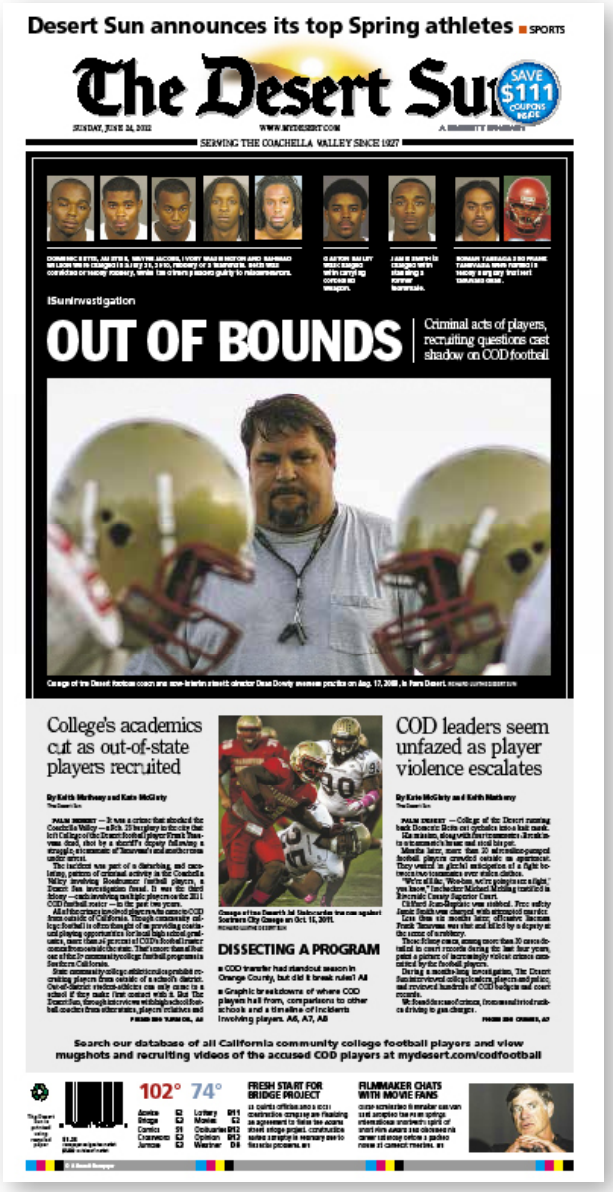
I remembered almost immediately: This wasn't the first time we had written about a violent crime involving football players on that team.

Early in the season, a player from the same team had been arrested and charged with attempted murder, accused of stabbing his teammate during a fight as nearly two dozen teammates cheered them on.

When I pointed this out to the enterprise editor, he sent me to reporter Keith Matheny – who had, months before, wondered why so many players on that community college team were from out of state.

With that, Matheny and I launched a four-month investigation into the football program at College of the Desert in Palm Desert, Calif.

We began investigating the football players. We ended up investigating the school.



Desert Sun announces its top Spring athletes ■ SPORTS

The Desert Sun

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OUT OF BOUNDS

Criminal acts of players, recruiting questions cast shadow on COD football

College's academics cut as out-of-state players recruited

COD leaders seem unfazed as player violence escalates

DISSECTING A PROGRAM

Search our database of all California community college football players and view mugshots and recruiting videos of the accused COD players at mydesert.com/codfootball

102° 74°

FRESH START FOR BRIDGE PROJECT

FILMMAKER CHATS WITH MOVIE FANS

The Desert Sun

The Sunday front-page package from the investigation.

WHAT WE FOUND

In all, we found more than 30 criminal cases in five years, from assaults to drunken driving to concealed weapons charges. There were three felony cases, each involving multiple players on the 2011 roster.

COD leadership repeatedly failed to enforce its own student-athlete policies and back up its rhetoric of having a zero-tolerance policy. Instead, it allowed the players to continue playing.

Matheny worked on that second thread, finding that more than 56 percent of COD's football roster came from outside the state, even as local students were being rejected from classes due to overcrowding.

That's more than all but one of the 37 community college football programs in Southern California, Matheny found, after creating a database of every roster in the region.

State community college athletic rules prohibit recruiting players from outside of a school's district. Out-of-district student-athletes can come to a school only if they make first contact with it.

We were on to something.

HOW WE DID IT

Matheny and I – both of us watchdog reporters with no history of sports coverage, him as a general assignment and environmental reporter and me in public safety – tackled the story like we would any news investigation: We hunted down data and records.

We first pulled the court records of every player on the roster for the last five years, submitting records requests to police agencies for more details and following up with attorneys.

I called the jail to request the mug shots of every football player charged and tracked each of them online, many of them via their social media accounts. Most of them ignored me. I handed off my notes about the criminal charges to graphic designer Fred Figueroa, who designed a timeline graphic that illustrated the pattern of violent crimes the players were charged with committing.

Meanwhile, Matheny pulled rosters of all of California's 71 community college football programs to see how our college compared in terms of out-of-state recruits, and we studied the state's laws on recruiting those college athletes.

Matheny diligently created spreadsheets from the rosters – later passing them off to colleagues James Meier and Nick Bolland, who turned them into two databases. We would analyze the data and make sense of it for our readers, but we also wanted them to be able to search the raw data themselves.

One database showed all California community colleges and how many out-of-state players they recruited, and the second tracked all the state's community college football players and their home towns.

We started cold-calling current and former COD staff members, agreeing to speak on background to candidly discuss our findings, to wrap our heads around what we should ask and whom else we should speak with.

We called out-of-state high school coaches, players' parents and some current and former players, who all confirmed that COD did not follow state athletic rules in recruiting out-of-state football players.

We visited the apartment complex where most football players rented, knocking on doors to find the athletes and their neighbors. That was how we found the few players who would speak to us.

Throughout the process, we kept a running list of all the records we wanted from the college.

By early June, we began drafting the stories so that we could go to publication with or without the college's cooperation.

That's when we finally filed a Public Records Act request with the community college. We focused primarily on budgets, codes of conduct and records of disciplinary actions.

Then – after receiving the first round of documents without much delay – we called the college spokeswoman and asked for a sit-down interview with the top administrators.

We met first with the college president, the dean in charge of discipline and the dean in charge of academic standards – announcing our findings for the first time and documenting their response.

They did not deny the appearance of passive leadership and dismissed any serious concern over the severity of the crimes. So we wrote that into our drafts.

When we left the board room that day, we asked for a second round of documents, most of them with numbers or policies referenced during that interview – and for a second interview.

It was a week later that the football coach, who also served as interim athletic director, finally agreed to meet with us.

That was only four days before our stories ran.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Our investigation landed on doorsteps June 24, 2012 – covering the entire front page of the Sunday edition. (See graphic, page 26.) It prominently featured the mug shots of the nine athletes who had been charged with felonies.

During the next six months, we wrote more than a dozen follow-up stories, pressuring members of the college board of trustees to respond publicly to our findings. Most of them refused.

Eventually, commissioners of the Southern California Football Association and the Foothill Athletic Conference agreed to conduct an inquiry into whether the college's football team broke recruiting or other rules.

In November, nearly five months after our investigation was published, the Southern California Football Association sanctioned the COD football team with two years of probation and a postseason ban.

COD's football team forfeited two of its three victories after determining one of its players lied about his eligibility status.

The college's internal review also recommended developing a "formal team-level disciplinary process that will include training workshops for coaches and student athletes."

The school's athletics counselor announced plans to develop workshops "that address student success, student behavior and acculturation to the local community."

The two other men who were caught fleeing the scene of the robbery back in February 2012 both pleaded guilty to felony robbery earlier this year.

Roman Tausaga, who was on the football roster at the time, was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

All of the coverage can be found at mydesert.com/cod-football.

Kate McGinty is now audience and engagement editor at The Cincinnati Enquirer. Keith Matheny is now environmental reporter for the Detroit Free Press.

What we learned

By Kate McGinty | The Desert Sun

Follow your gut.
The entire project was based purely on informed curiosity – because of two reporters who looked at pieces of information and asked why something was the way it was.

Make a plan – and then be willing to deviate from it.
While we initially started looking into players' crimes, one of our key findings came from a parent who casually mentioned that his family donated furniture to players – a clear recruiting violation.

Know when to talk on background – and when not to.
We agreed to talk to current and former staff on background, simply to wrap our heads around the issues and questions we needed to ask. During key interviews, though, we recorded the entire conversation.

Keep detailed notes.
We scanned documents to make sure we maintained clean PDFs – but then marked up copies with notes about our findings, questions to follow up and sources of our information.

Think of database opportunities.
Keep your notes in clean spreadsheets. We pored over the data and made sense of it – but wanted to give our readers the chance to do that, too.

Follow up.
Even after our initial package, it took five months – and more than a dozen follow-up stories – before we saw anyone take action to fix the problems we exposed.

IRE RESOURCES

The IRE Resource Center is a major research library containing more than 25,500 investigative stories – both print and broadcast – and about 4,000 tipsheets available at ire.org/resource-center or by contacting the Resource Center directly, 573-882-3364 or rescntr@ire.org.

TIPSHEETS

No. 3547: "The Unsung Documents of College Athletics." Veteran reporter Jill Riepenhoff of The Columbus Dispatch (Ohio) gives tips you can apply to uncover the payoffs, bribes and incentives used to get into college athletic games. She talks about football coaches receiving new cars, players putting bookies on their will call ticket lists and much more. (2011)

No. 3501: "Investigating Sports." John Barr of ESPN teaches you how to write great sports stories and how to get the most out of your sports investigations. (2011)

No. 3271: "Sports business: Investigating teams and companies that own them." Jodi Upton of USA Today provides a detailed resource on covering the business of sports – from professional teams to the Olympics to high school athletics. (2009)

No. 3199: "Statistics." Wayne Wilcox of Indiana University discusses how math is used by sports teams and how to evaluate sports using statistics. He breaks it down by sport: baseball, basketball and football. (2009)

No. 3173: "Investigating Sports." Duff Wilson of The New York Times lists popular sources and significant documents for reporters on the sports beat. He also suggests visiting reporter.org to use the "who is John Doe?" feature. The tipsheet includes reprints of some of Wilson's sports investigations. (2008)

STORIES

No. 25674: HBO. In "NCAA Head Games," a six-month "Real Sports" investigation finds that over the course of a year, the average college football player is exposed to 70% more hits to the head than an NFL player. And once these athletes leave college they're on their own to deal with the potential consequences. The NFL provides long-term medical care for its football players. The NCAA does not. (2012)

No. 25581: WFAA-Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. In "Unfair Game," Brett Shipp shows how improper recruiting helped Texas high school teams assemble state championship-caliber squads as part of an underground recruiting system that put athletics over academics. (2012)

No. 24277: Sports Illustrated. In "How (And Why) Athletes Go Broke," Pablo S. Torre investigates how professional athletes squander their high salaries on "lavish spending," failed business attempts and corrupt "money managers." He also reveals illegal activities by a "Texas investment firm" with prominent sports affiliations. (2009)

THE IRE JOURNAL

"Foul Food," ESPN. Paula Lavigne and other ESPN reporters tackle the food-safety issue at sports arenas all over the nation. By issuing numerous public records requests and pulling information from websites, they reveal a serious lack of stadium sanitation and sketchy standards in place for food inspectors. (Fall 2010)

"Fatal Play: NFL athletes dying at alarming rate, weight-related problems at issue," Scripps Howard News Service. Thomas Hargrove discusses his investigation into the high rate of obesity-related deaths among professional athletes. He explains how he used computer-assisted reporting to do the project. (July/August 2006)

"Drug Scandal: Major League Baseball and 'juicing' of athletes the subject of three books." Steve Weinberg reviews three books about the use of steroids in professional sports. The books are "Juicing the Game," by Howard Bryant; "Love Me, Hate Me," by Jeff Pearlman; and "Game of Shadows," by Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams. (July/August 2006)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

"Painkillers not always the solution for gymnasts," The Salt Lake Tribune. Lya Wodraska reports that experts are paying attention not only to the large number of injuries young gymnasts experience, but also to the growing amounts of anti-inflammatory medication they take. (Tagged: drugs, health, sports; April 15, 2013).

Working for an Underdog

WW | Kurt Armstrong

BY NIGEL JAQUISS
WILLAMETTE WEEK

I work for an alternative weekly, where we have just three full-time reporters. Even with the local daily newspaper's shrinking, we're often outgunned. It's challenging competing with a paper that publishes more often, enjoys better access and has far more resources.

But there are benefits: We're forced to run faster and make smarter story choices. I've learned to operate in a state of constant paranoia and to be efficient and strategic. As a result, my colleagues and I regularly break major stories the daily misses.

Here's what working at an alt-weekly has taught me.

Sources are everything

Sources are like oil wells: valuable but hard to find. So where do you look? In his book "The Tipping Point," Malcolm Gladwell writes about people he calls "connectors."

Connectors know a disproportionate number of people and possess a disproportionate amount of information. There are two million people in metro Portland, but a couple dozen connectors know most of what's worth knowing. Some probable connectors in any city are obvious: the mayor's and governor's chiefs of staff, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, top lobbyists and political consultants, for example.

Because our staff is small, I jump around a lot. On any story, I try to identify connectors by asking basic questions about the beat or organization I'm covering: How does the money flow? How do decisions get made? And where are the points of conflict? Connectors line those routes.

Information is currency

Once you've discovered an oil well, you want to keep it pumping. That means you want "connectors" to call you first. It's important to establish a relationship through face-to-face meetings and regular contact. Unlike tapping an oil well, a relationship with a key source should be an exchange, not just an extraction of what you need on deadline. Prepare before you call. Be ready to demonstrate that you've been paying attention to your source's world. If you've gathered information your publication doesn't need, share it. Sources are curious, just as reporters are. And like most people, they are going to be most interested in talking with those who do not waste their time.

If something's important, it's probably written down

Robert Penn Warren's novel "All The King's Men" is a bible on politics, human nature and investigative reporting. Although Jack Burden, the book's narrator, quit journalism for politics, his document-finding skills allow him to uncover the crucial record that destroys his boss's enemy.

The boss, Willie Stark, a fictionalized Huey Long, tells Burden, "There's always something." And there almost always is a document somewhere that can help your story. Almost 70 years after "All The King's Men" was written, the explosion of public records and the ease of retrieving them is a boon to reporters.

I've learned to operate in a state of constant paranoia and to be efficient and strategic. As a result, my colleagues and I regularly break major stories the daily misses.

I have records requests pending at all times. When I requested audits of a local nonprofit last year, I discovered plane tickets to China and payments for hair extensions in expense reports. The director lost his job. When reporting on the Portland fire bureau, I requested all drafts of a key consultant's report and discovered damning findings that city officials had buried.

When documents arrive, it's important to read every page. Last year, I made a routine request for the Oregon attorney general's calendar. One entry consisted of a two-word notation: "legislator investigation." Those words prompted my request for documents that ended a powerful lawmaker's career. I later learned another reporter had requested the calendar weeks before me but had somehow missed that page.

You need a system

Because I am a document hoarder, my desk resembles a recycling center on a windy day. But I have an organizational system that works for me. I set up a paper file for any tip or story of any substance and I keep them, because many stories never really end. Recently, for instance, I used emails from a records request made nine years ago. I take notes on all phone calls and use a headset so I can type them into a searchable file. All phone numbers go into my electronic Rolodex. After a while, Portland and Oregon have come to seem like a web, connected by the documents, interviews and phone numbers in my computer.

You must manage your editor

An editor can be an enemy or a partner. Some reporters waste time and energy fighting with and complaining about editors. I'd rather have my editors doing part of my job. What I really care about is what goes into print under my byline. So anything that's not making my story better is a waste of resources. I try to map out my time by talking frequently to my editors about what we should go after next, what reporting I need to do, and how I might ultimately tell the story. At a weekly, you get more time with editors and get to write more drafts of stories. Both are opportunities to get my editors to share the workload and to make my work better.

Nigel Jaquiss is an investigative reporter and has worked at Willamette Week in Portland, Ore. for 15 years. He has won two IRE awards and the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting.

Referee Madness

PIOs increasingly thwart access to government information

BY DAVID CUILLIER
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Ever have a public information officer insist on sitting in on interviews with government employees?

How about requirements that you submit questions to an agency before an interview?

Or have you had PIOs say you couldn't interview employees at all?

If so, you aren't alone, and it appears to be getting worse.

Carolyn Carlson, a journalism professor at Kennesaw State University, has conducted several surveys of journalists and public information officers to find out what is going on in the trenches. In 2012 she surveyed 146 reporters who cover federal agencies, and then followed it up with a survey of 154 members of the National Association of Government Communicators.

Her findings are downright scary:

- Three-quarters of journalists who cover federal agencies said they have to get approval from PIOs before interviewing agency employees.
- Half the reporters said they have been told they can't interview agency employees at all.
- About 80 percent of reporters said their interviews have been monitored by PIOs.

What is more frightening, though, is what the PIOs say:

- Ninety-eight percent said they have a better idea than reporters of who is the best person to be interviewed.
- Two-thirds said it is necessary to monitor journalists' interviews with agency employees.
- About half said they have criteria for determining who should be allowed to interview employees and who should be banned. About 40 percent said they prohibit employees from talking to certain reporters "due to problems with their stories in the past."

Now, this probably isn't a big surprise to most journalists, especially those who cover federal agencies routinely. But this is something we cannot tolerate.

Three-quarters of the journalists said they consider heavy-handed PIO tactics as a form of censorship, and about 85 percent said the practices are preventing important information from getting to the public.

They are correct – this is a form of censorship. Blocking information ultimately has the same effect as prior restraint. As the Supreme Court noted in Branzburg v. Hayes, "… without some protection for seeking out the news, freedom of the press could be eviscerated."

Carlson said this is likely going to get worse as PIOs become increasingly savvy at protecting their agencies.

"It will be harder than ever to get lower level employees to talk because of the controls PIOs are exercising internally," Carlson said. "Given that investigative reporters are often about revealing damaging information, they are likely to find themselves shut out. They are likely to find themselves blacklisted."

This angers Kathryn Foxhall, a freelance health care journalist in Washington, D.C., who often covers the Food and Drug Administration.

"Forcing reporters to go through public information offices to talk to anyone is authoritarian-style censorship that's become a cultural norm," Foxhall said. "People in all levels of government and in private organizations are prohibited from ever communicating with us – sometimes at all, or sometimes only if they are under surveillance at the bosses' behest."

Foxhall is so fired up about this that she created a blog about the issue, profficecensorship.blogspot.com. Also, Foxhall, Carlson, Society of Professional Journalists FOI Chair Linda Petersen and John Verrico, president-elect of the National Association of Government Communicators, spoke on a panel about the topic at the National Press Club in D.C. in August.

So what do we do about it?

1. Circumnavigate. Half the reporters surveyed said they simply work around the PIOs, going straight to agency employees. That means half don't.

2. Expostulate. Complain to the agency head and the governing body in charge (city council, school board, legislators, Congress).

3. Explicate. Tell the American public how the government is controlling information. Write about it. This is not inside baseball; it's democracy.

4. Investigate. It seems that the agencies that work hardest to control the message have the most to hide. Dig, uncover, expose.

5. Advocate. Reporters usually can't advocate against agencies they cover, but journalism organizations can. Join organizations such as IRE, SPJ, the Society of Environmental Journalists and others. Help them help you.

Whatever you do, don't capitulate.

"Journalists can't continue hoping we are making up for the silence or the manipulated statements with our skill or hard work," Foxhall said. "We have an absolute ethical obligation to fight this directly."

David Cuillier is director of the University of Arizona School of Journalism and president of the Society of Professional Journalists. He is co-author, with Charles Davis, of "The Art of Access." Cuillier assisted Carlson with the initial reporter survey in 2012.

Resources

PR Office Censorship Blog
profficecensorship.blogspot.com

Mediated Access Report
spj.org/pdf/reporters-survey-on-federal-PAOs.pdf

National Press Club panel information
bit.ly/1e0P0Xf

A substitute teacher reads a story to kindergarten students during a lesson on words that rhyme on December 14, 2012, in McAnnulty Elementary School in the Baldwin-Whitehall School District.

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review | Keith Hodan

Analysis shows cost of teacher absences

BY AMANDA DOLASINSKI, JEWELS PHRANER AND ROSSILYNNE SKENA
TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

It didn't take many records for us to realize that teacher absenteeism was a problem in western Pennsylvania public school districts. Districts were paying millions of dollars every year to place substitute teachers in classes, sometimes outside their specialties, while paying teachers for taking time off for reasons that ranged from field trips to maternity leave, professional training to family sickness.

We needed to show them a comparison among local districts and across the nation, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions.

To gather the data needed for this project, we submitted state Right-to-Know Law requests to 73 school districts in seven counties.

One of the first challenges we faced was simply obtaining the requested public records.

In Pennsylvania, public agencies can postpone releasing public records for up to 95 days if officials go through every channel to deny a request. Once a request is received, officials have five days to respond to a request and then an additional 30 days to relinquish the information or deny the request. Requesters are allowed to appeal a denial within 15 calendar days of receiving a it. The state Office of Open Records rules within 30 days on appeals, but in its decisions often asks for extensions. If the OOR issues a favorable decision, the entity has another 30 days to surrender the records.

Most school districts opted for a 30-day extension for "legal review," while 20 districts denied our requests, citing a variety of excuses such as employees' right to privacy or HIPAA. We appealed those 20 denials with the OOR. Often the act of filing an appeal was enough to persuade districts to hand over the records, but seven districts held out until the OOR ruled in our favor.

We estimate that the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review spent more than $500 on records for this project, although most districts provided us the records for free.

The data we received for 17,000 teachers for the 2011-12 school year was seldom in a sortable format and had to be entered by hand.

We built the database from scratch using a Google Drive spreadsheet, which allowed us to enter data at the same time, with the document updating in real time. We later moved the file to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

We wanted to incorporate all our requested data in the spreadsheet, which included:

- The district's name and county.
- Number of teachers.
- Number of paid-time-off days awarded to teachers each year.
- Number of substitute teachers.
- Number of days substitutes were paid to cover.
- Amount of money the district spent on substitutes.
- Total 2011-12 district budget.
- Amount one mill (state tax rate) equals in dollars.
- Total income in real estate taxes.
- Total teacher absences.

We also created a second database for each district that assigned each teacher a number and listed how many absences that individual took during the 2011-12 school year.

Often the checks and balances we provided in our requests found inaccuracies in the data districts sent. For example, a district might have provided a document that reflected 105 full-time teachers, but the individual absence reports showed 110 teachers. Every time we noticed an inaccuracy we went back to the school district to get the right information. Several districts had to send us a handful of datasets before we received the most accurate information.

In our analysis, we wanted to determine an absence rate for each district so smaller ones – such as Duquesne City School District, with 66 teachers – wouldn't be unfairly compared to larger districts – such as Pittsburgh Public Schools, with nearly 1,700 teachers.

In our estimation, the fairest way to compare school districts was to divide the total number of absences districtwide (column P) by the number of teachers (column D) multiplied by 180 possible school days (a Pennsylvania standard that reflected the total number of possible days worked districtwide). For example, row 2:

=P2/(D2*180)

In addition, the teacher-by-teacher breakdown we created for each district enabled us to sort all the teachers into ranges of absences (0-5, 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, etc.), which allowed us to identify any outliers in a particular district.

These numbers were particularly useful when we interviewed school directors and superintendents who attributed higher teacher-absence rates to unusually large numbers of teachers taking maternity leaves or sabbaticals. Our teacher-by-teacher breakdowns could show whether officials were telling the truth about their staff absences.

To sort the data in ranges, we used the =COUNTIFS function in Excel that counts the number of cells with absences in a range. For example, to count the number of teachers that had 6-10 absences (column D) we used:

=COUNTIFS(D:D,">=6",D:D,"<11")

We also wanted to look at the cost of teacher absences to western Pennsylvania taxpayers. We divided the total amount a district paid substitutes (column H) by its income in real-estate taxes (column K). This allowed us to show readers what percentage of their tax bills was equivalent to district money earmarked toward financing substitute teachers in their district. For example, for row 2:

=H2/K2

After analyzing the data and having a clear idea that most western Pennsylvania school districts had a teacher absence rate higher than the national average, we double-checked all of our records. Another reporter (other than the one who originally entered the data) double-checked every entry in our database to ensure accuracy.

This double-checking process was integral to the process as it helped us fix some misplaced decimal points that would have seriously skewed our data analysis.

Our story was built on our data analysis to find the number of days teachers were paid for being out of the classroom and compare that to other local districts and to national figures. Simply listing the figures wouldn't have served our readers. We needed to show them a comparison among local districts and across the nation, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions.

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review | Brian F. Henry

A substitute teacher at Norwin High School conducts class on December 6, 2012.

But additional reporting was needed to tell the whole story. We interviewed superintendents, students, substitute teachers, school directors, national experts on teacher absenteeism, union officials, government officials and retired teachers. These interviews allowed us to fill in the blanks about why specific districts had such a high rate of teacher absenteeism, giving districts a chance to tell their side of the story. On the other hand, it brought to light some of the frustrations of local school board officials about bargaining with the unions for teachers to have fewer days off.

It also brought to light the human side of the story, showing students who felt substitute teachers affected their learning negatively and teachers who felt they were more likely to be exposed to illness than the rest of the population.

Throughout the information-gathering, reporting and writing process, we were guided by editors Sue McFarland and Rick Monti.

In addition to using our data as the foundation for the story (see bit.ly/196R7bC), we incorporated it into an interactive Google map (see bit.ly/10BgmRF). Readers could use the map to locate the numbers for their own districts and easily compare their districts to others.

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Snapshots from our blogs

Transparency Watch: MuckRock finds 27 percent of FOIA requests unfulfilled after three months

BY TONY SCHICK, IRE

MuckRock, a public records service that files and tracks requests on behalf of journalists, researchers, activists and historians, recently analyzed 907 requests completed by its users.

The analysis found about 42 percent of federal Freedom of Information Act requests were completed on time, and 27 percent of those 907 requests are still without a response after their first three months. MuckRock reported that many state and local agencies didn't fare much better by its measure.

Read the full report at muckrock.com.

Analyzing the relationship of lengthy FOI laws and corruption throughout the world

BY EDSON TANDOC

Freedom of Information Act advocates have consistently claimed that institutionalizing the right to information will benefit countries, particularly in addressing corruption.

They are not lying.

By comparing indices of corruption, human development and years of having an FOI law across 168 countries, I found support for the assumption that having an FOI law leads to lower levels of perceived corruption.

Also, countries with older FOI laws tend to have higher levels of human development than countries with younger FOI laws or countries without them.

An intriguing link, however, exists between ratings of FOI-law effectiveness and the perceived level of corruption in a country.

The Centre for Law and Democracy rates the implementation of right-to-information laws across countries based on seven categories: right of access, scope, requesting procedures, exceptions and refusals, appeals, sanctions and protections, and promotional measures. I compared their ratings with corruption ratings from Transparency International.

I did not expect what I found: Countries with effective implementation of right-to-information laws, according to the ratings, were also perceived as corrupt.

This relationship initially baffled me, considering the positive relationship between how long a country has had an FOI law and being corruption-free.

However, this intriguing link started to make sense as I reflected about how the right to information is supposed to function in a democratic society.

By guaranteeing the right to information to citizens, governments ensure transparency and allow themselves to be accountable to the people whom they serve.

Journalists should not stop at exercising our right to information as members of the public. We should also help in ensuring that everyone is aware of this right, journalist or not, and that all people are equipped with the information they need to exercise this right if they want to.

In this way, we do not just inform the citizens we serve. We also engage and empower them.

Edson Tandoc is a Ph.D. candidate at the Missouri School of Journalism.

On the Road: Falling in love with Excel during IRE training

BY MUGAMBI MUTEGI

Editor's Note: In July, IRE hosted the 2013 class of Alfred Friendly Fellows for training in computer-assisted and investigative reporting, covering Excel spreadsheets and more. One of the fellows, Mugambi Mutegi, wrote about his experience using Excel for the Alfred Friendly Press Partners, republished below.

In the short time I have been alive, I had not until recently come across anybody who, upon using Microsoft Excel for the first time, instantly fell in love with the program. I'm sure such people exist, but I can hazard that they do not exceed six – worldwide.

I managed to steer clear of Excel and its evil cells and columns for a long time, until I was employed at Business Daily in Nairobi, Kenya.

There was no escape this time, I thought. I just had to get used to it – to process data and plot graphs, among other uses. I, sadly and – retrospectively – regrettably, had never taken time to learn any new stuff over and above what was required to (barely) survive.

Therefore, when I skimmed through the AFPP midterm seminar program, I was far from excited to find the word ''spreadsheets'' listed therein.

I was finally getting to meet two of the six people who love Excel. We flew to Columbia, Mo., and when the appointed day and hour arrived, Mark Horvit introduced himself and his colleague, Jaimi Dowdell.

"Two out of six? In the same room? At the same time?" That was me mentally wrestling with the concept of probabilities.

Mark is the executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors, where Jaimi has been a training director since 2008.

The two laid out a tag-team training outline for us, and when they were done Jaimi took the floor.

Like a thirsty dog, I lapped it all up. Inwardly, I dreaded the moment when the lesson would be abruptly ended by the mention of "spreadsheets"!

Jaimi seemed just as passionate about what she was teaching as she was lively.

When Mark came on, I was relieved that he matched (if not surpassed) Jaimi's energy. Remember, at this point, I was already biased against one of his topics and the least he could do was to bore me in the most energetic way possible.

Boy, was I in for a shock!

In no time, I was grouping and crunching random data and offering suggestions on stories that could be pursued.

I felt happy that I had learned something invaluable, but I also ended up feeling like a refined dummy.

I have always prided myself on being a technologically savvy individual. Therefore, I felt terrible that I had allowed my prejudices toward Excel to prevent me from exploring its versatility.

A friend just read this blog and told me, "I am glad you have seen the light. Excel is the very fiber that runs this world."

I now know of four Excel lovers – including myself, a new recruit.

Where are the other two?

Boating accident data for 2012 now available

BY LIZ LUCAS, IRE/NICAR

The NICAR Database Library has released the latest year (2012) of the Coast Guard's U.S. Recreational Boat Accident Database.

This database includes accident reports from 1969 through 2012. Accidents involving death, serious injury, the disappearance of a person under circumstances that indicate death or injury, total vessel loss or vessel damage of more than $2,000 are reported. The data include information on the nature of the accident, the vessels involved, plus any injuries and/or deaths. See the record layouts for each of the four tables for more detailed information.

The data are submitted annually by state; however, some states have declined to allow the Coast Guard to release their information in recent years. Please check the state listing by year.

The tables in the Boat Accident Database come in .dbf (dBase) format, easily imported into Access and other database managers. If you'd like something different, contact us and we'll do our best to help you out. Email datalib@ire.org or call (573) 884-7711.

The Recreational Boat Accident Database allows reporters to find information about the vessels, people and conditions involved in the accident. For example: where was the accident, what caused it, what was the total damage, how many boats were involved, how many people were injured, etc. Because of the simplicity of this database, it is a good one for beginning CAR reporters to use.

To order the full data online, visit the online store at http://ire.org/nicar/database-library/databases/boating-accidents/ or contact the library at datalib@ire.org or (573) 884-7711.

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

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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.

Contact: David Herzog, dherzog@ire.org, 573-882-2127

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SAVE THE DATE

Oct. 3-4, 2013

Association of Health Care Journalists
Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism

Journalists are invited to tap into health data at a special workshop coming this fall. This AHCJ workshop offers something for both data newcomers and veterans — from spreadsheet basics to visualizing data online. You'll come away with skills and ideas for teasing stories out of datasets and tools for presenting these stories.

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