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IRE

JOURNAL

SECOND QUARTER 2015

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40 YEARS

1975 – 2015

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ABOUT THE COVER

The cover was inspired by an illustration by Kee Rash. Rash was in the art department at the Arizona Republic, and drew the cartoon for a t-shirt for the IRE members that came to Phoenix in 1976.

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Young at heart

BY MARK HORVIT

I remember when I turned 40.

My wife planned a surprise party. Relatives came in from out of town, friends from work and the neighborhood showed up and my brother-in-law made margaritas.

It was a nice party. But I was just one more guy turning one year older. Nothing remotely remarkable about it.

The birthday we celebrate with this issue is the polar opposite. When IRE was started by a small group of investigative reporters, I doubt any of them had an inkling that their creation would still be around in 2015, much less enjoying the tremendous international reach and influence that IRE has today.

I'm not going to go into the details. Journal Managing Editor Megan Luther has done a fantastic job putting together this commemoration of our organization's first four decades. She's had great help from designer Erica Mendez Babcock and three graduate students — our copy editors Alexa Ahern, Geoff West, and guest writer/editor Kasia Kovacs.

Kasia was able to join us because of a special fellowship offered at the University of Missouri, where IRE is based. It's the Brent Johnson Memorial Fellowship, created to honor the memory of another grad student who worked in our office in the late 1990s.

I never knew Brent, but everyone who did talks of his passion for the work he did on behalf of IRE. He died much too young at 27. And his parents and friends believed that a fitting way to honor his memory was to create a fund that would forever link him with the organization.

Stories like Brent's are a constant reminder to me of the legacy I was handed when I came to work at IRE in 2008. This organization has a powerful impact not only on those who join or who learn from our training, but on the staff and volunteers who are the heart and soul of the place.

IRE has had a ridiculously impressive list of people who have worked here, as trainers, in the data library, in the resource center, in the front office. They have gone on to do great things in the industry — producing award-winning work that has saved lives, changed dangerous policies and brought comfort and justice to victims.

And most have never stopped giving on behalf of IRE. The list of people who stand ready to volunteer when called upon is as lengthy as it is impressive. It is made up of not only former employees, but journalists who know that they owe a big chunk of their success in the industry to the training and guidance they received over the years.

That's the history that can't be contained in a magazine. We kid about the "Hotel California" nature of IRE as we bring former staffers back to speak at workshops and conferences ("You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.") But it's no joke. The deep bond that so many of our members feel to the organization is something I couldn't have understood until I came to work here.

It was baked into the DNA when IRE was founded by a group of investigative reporters who needed the support of each other to pursue the tough career paths they'd carved out for themselves. It was cemented when many of those journalists gathered in Phoenix, Arizona to continue the work of one of their own when he was murdered for doing the very thing IRE was founded to foster – bringing wrongdoing to light.

And it continues every time a journalist finds the tools — and the strength — to expose one more injustice, thanks to the training they receive through this organization.

It's a legacy that would make any 40-year-old proud.

**As we celebrate this anniversary, here are the other people who are working to make sure that IRE celebrates many more to come: Director of Training Jaimi Dowdell; Director of Events Stephanie Sinn; Trainer Alex Richards; Membership Coordinator Amy Johnston; Data Library Director Liz Lucas; Resource Center Director Lauren Grandestaff; Web Editor Sarah Hutchins; Fiscal Officer Heather Feldman Henry; System Administrator Ted Peterson; NICAR Academic Advisor David Herzog; IRE/INN Director of Data Services Denise Malan; and the DocumentCloud crew, Anthony DeBarros, Ted Han and Justin Reese. And a fond thanks to recently retired Membership Coordinator John Green.*

Mark Horvit is executive director of IRE and NICAR. He can be reached at mhorvit@ire.org or 573-882-1984.

IRE members recognized in 2015 Pulitzer Prizes

Several IRE members were among journalists recognized in the 2015 Pulitzer Prizes in April (bit.ly/1D6EOrT):

- **The Post and Courier of Charleston, South Carolina,** won the Public Service award for "Till Death Do Us Part," a series on a deadly trend of domestic violence against women. IRE members Doug Pardue, Glenn Smith and Natalie Caula Hauff contributed to the investigation.
- **The Seattle Times** won the Breaking News Reporting award for their coverage of a landslide that killed 43 people. IRE members Mike Baker, Ken Armstrong, Hal Bernton, Justin Mayo, Jim Neff, Cheryl Phillips and Katrina Barlow contributed to the series.
- **Eric Lipton of The New York Times** won one of two awards for Investigative Reporting. His reporting revealed how lobbyists swayed congressional leaders and state attorney generals.
- **The Wall Street Journal** won the second award for Investigative Reporting for "Medicare Unmasked." The project provided an unprecedented look at confidential data on healthcare providers. IRE members John Carreyrou, Chris Stewart, Rob Barry, Tom McGinty, Martin Burch, Jon Keegan and Stuart Thompson contributed to the story.
- **Rebecca Kimitch of the Daily Breeze** in Torrance, California, was one of three reporters from the paper to win the Local Reporting award. Kimitch and her colleagues looked into widespread corruption in a small school district.

Several IRE members were among Pulitzer Prize finalists as well (bit.ly/1lywgz4):

- **The Boston Globe** was a finalist for the Public Service award for its multimedia coverage of a poorly regulated, profit-driven college housing system. IRE members Jenn Abelson and Todd Wallack contributed to the investigation.
- **The Wall Street Journal** was also a finalist for the Public Service award for its reporting in "Deadly Medicine," which revealed that women undergoing a common surgery face a significant cancer risk. IRE members Jennifer Levitz, Jon Kamp and Joseph Walker contributed to the work.
- **David Jackson of the Chicago Tribune** was a finalist for the Investigative Reporting award. Jackson and two other colleagues exposed the perils faced by abused children in the state's residential treatment centers.
- **Janet Roberts and John Shiffman of Reuters** were finalists for the Explanatory Reporting award. Roberts, Shiffman and another colleague used data to reveal how a group of lawyers get special access to the U.S. Supreme Court.
- **Joe Mahr of the Chicago Tribune** was a finalist for the Local Reporting award. Mahr and his colleagues used public records and human sources to investigate government corruption in a Chicago suburb.
- **Ziva Branstetter and Cary Aspinwall of the Tulsa World** were finalists for Local Reporting for their courageous coverage of a botched execution in Oklahoma.
- **Marisa Taylor of McClatchy Newspapers** was a finalist for the National Reporting award along with two colleagues for their coverage of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA torture.
- **Richard Marosi of the Los Angeles Times** was a finalist for the International Reporting award. Marosi revealed the horrific conditions facing Mexican workers supplying vegetables to American supermarkets.
- **Walt Bogdanich of The New York Times** was a finalist for the National Reporting prize. Bogdanich and a colleague exposed the flawed rape investigation of involving a star Florida State University quarterback and the preferential police treatment given to football players accused in other crimes.

IRE members honored with Peabody Awards

Several IRE members were named 2014 Peabody Award winners (bit.ly/1CP2kLh):

- **Madeleine Baran of Minnesota Public Radio (MPR News)** for "Betrayed by Silence," an investigative documentary on the child sexual abuse scandal in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.
- **Andrea Bernstein of WNYC-New York** for "Chris Christie, White House Ambitions and the Abuse of Power," a series of reports on the "Bridgegate" scandal.
- **Andy Pierrotti of KVUE-TV** for "The Cost of Troubled Minds," a document-heavy investigation into Texas' mental health services.
- **Scott Bronstein and Nelli Black of CNN** for "Crisis at the VA," a high-impact piece on delays in care at U.S. Veteran Affairs hospitals.
- **Mark Greenblatt of Scripps Washington Bureau** for "Under the Radar," an investigative review of court martial cases that found more than 240 convicted rapists, child molesters and other sex offenders who slipped through the cracks.

Missouri student chosen for memorial fellowship

Photo by Cody Lohse

This special anniversary Journal issue was made possible by the friends and family of Brent Johnson.

Johnson, an MU graduate student and IRE employee, died in 1999 from a heart condition. Donations from IRE members, Johnson's family and friends created the Brent Johnson Memorial Fellowship, which allows a graduate student in the School of Journalism to work on IRE publications. This year's recipient, Kasia Kovacs, dedicated the semester to finding historical files, interviewing founders and writing about the roots of IRE for this 40th anniversary issue. Kovacs is earning her master's degree in news reporting and has written for the Columbia Missourian and the Jefferson City News Tribune.

IRE awards free training to 10 newsrooms, announces new fellowship

A record number of 10 newsrooms were chosen for IRE's Total Newsroom Training (TNT) this year. TNT provides intense, in-house training for small and medium-sized newsrooms dedicated to watchdog journalism. This is the third year IRE has offered the free program.

New this year are TNT Boot Camp Fellowships. Nine TNT alumni will be awarded free training to IRE's data analysis boot camp.

TNT training is customized and includes two days of sessions ranging from public records battles to hands-on data analysis.

"TNT is one of the most important initiatives IRE has launched in the past few years," IRE Executive Director Mark Horvit said. "It gives our trainers an opportunity to work with highly motivated news organizations. The projects and stories that have been done by the journalists we've had the opportunity to work with has been inspiring."

Congratulations to the following newsrooms:

- Cape Cod Times – Hyannis, Mass.
- Iowa Public Radio – Des Moines, Iowa
- Jackson Hole News&Guide – Jackson, Wyo.
- Journal-News – Liberty Township, Ohio
- KCTV5 – Fairway, Kan.
- KOLN-TV – Lincoln, Neb.
- San Angelo Standard-Times – San Angelo, Texas
- The Texas Tribune – Austin, Texas
- Tribune-Star – Terre Haute, Ind.
- WIS-TV – Columbia, S.C.

Four decades of collaboration

IRE develops as investigative reporting advances

BY LEONARD DOWNIE JR. » ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Forty years after the founding of Investigative Reporters and Editors, investigative journalism, once sporadic, is entrenched in American news media and spreading around the world. The trajectory of its growth follows the pioneering work of the new muckrakers of the 1960s and 1970s to the widespread investigative reporting in news organizations today. The proliferation of investigative reporting mirrors the development of IRE, from its relative handful of founders banding together in 1975 to its current thousands of members, extensive peer training, deep digital archives and packed national conferences that IRE founder Myrta Pulliam has compared to "getting a master's degree in journalism."

Before IRE, local investigative reporters doing meaningful work were mostly lone wolves in newsrooms scattered around the country. Gene Miller of The Miami Herald helped free innocent black men from death row in Florida. Donald Barlett and James B. Steele of The Philadelphia Inquirer investigated Philadelphia's malfunctioning local court system. David Burnham of The New York Times, Bill Marimow and Jonathan Newman of The Philadelphia Inquirer, and an Indianapolis Star investigative team that included Myrta Pulliam and Harley Bierce each exposed law enforcement abuses and corruption in their cities. Bob Greene and his Newsday investigative team revealed secret land deals on Long Island.

Then, after the Watergate stories of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post and the resignation of President Nixon in August 1974, investigative reporting exploded in the United States. Four Pulitzer Prizes in various categories were awarded to newspaper investigations in 1974, which Time Magazine dubbed "The Year of the Muckraker." Rapidly increasing numbers of reporters and news organizations were attracted to investigative reporting, although most of them still had little or no experience doing it, which worried the pioneering investigative reporters and editors.

So, on Feb. 22, 1975, Myrta Pulliam, Harvey Bierce, Ron Koziol of the Chicago Tribune, and Paul Williams, a journalism professor and former investigative editor at the Sun Newspapers in Omaha, invited a group of investigative journalists to a meeting at Reston, Virginia. The group also included, among others, David Burnham, Jack Landau of Newhouse, syndicated investigative columnists Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, and me, then a Washington Post editor who had been a local investigative reporter and one of the editors on the Watergate stories. They decided to form a national organization embodying the mission of investigative reporting and its values and best practices. "It dawned on people that they don't have to re-invent the wheel," Myrta remembered. "They could help themselves and each other" by sharing information and techniques.

After Les Whitten talked about how most investigative journalists shared "a sense of outrage," the founders chose the name Investigative Reporters and Editors, with the acronym IRE. Over the years, that sense of outrage sometimes affected IRE itself, as its leaders and members debated membership eligibility, governance issues, budget priorities and operational goals. For example, members wanted the group to

grow, but they did not want IRE to be dominated by academics, editors or news organizations that might encroach on their investigative independence. They needed donations and grants to support IRE and its training, but they did not want money from sources that might create conflicts of interest. Budget crises came and went. Yet, in fits and starts over four decades, IRE grew far beyond the ambitions of its founders, maintained its independence, stayed true to its mission and, through its training, resources and mutual support, played a major, continuing role in the expansion and impact of investigative reporting in the United States and elsewhere.

In June 1976, more than 200 investigative journalists from 35 states paid to attend the first of what would become annual IRE national conferences, and they immediately launched an unprecedented investigative project that would help shape IRE's identity. Just days before the conference, Arizona Republic investigative reporter Don Bolles died after a bomb planted under his car exploded outside a Phoenix hotel. The IRE board voted to continue Bolles' investigation of organized crime in Arizona. Led by Bob Greene, dozens of newspaper and broadcast reporters, researchers and writers and journalism professors and students from around the country produced two dozen stories exploring a web of connections among organized crime, businesses, politicians and law enforcement in Arizona. The project was costly and controversial, and the journalism fell short of being definitive. But, if the murder of Bolles was intended as a threat to investigative reporters, what became known as IRE's Arizona Project itself amounted to a warning to anyone else tempted to intimidate them. It was also likely the first time that reporters from competing news organizations had worked together on a single investigative project, something that now occurs regularly in digital age journalistic collaboration.

IRE established its home base in 1978 at the University of Missouri, with which it has had a close cooperative relationship. It added regional training workshops to its national conference training that same year. The first Computer-Assisted Reporting boot camp was held in 1989. The first national CAR Conference was staged in 1993 by MICAR, the organization that would be renamed NICAR and become associated with IRE shortly after. Their instruction in investigative reporting and data journalism techniques steadily expanded over the years to include traveling Watchdog Workshops, Boot Camps and Total Newsroom Training, plus online instruction and webinars. In 1979, IRE published its first Investigative Reporter's Handbook, which has been regularly updated and expanded. Similar instruction books for specialized investigative reporting for such subjects as crime, campaign finance, religion, pollution and mortgage finance have since been published as well. IRE and NICAR also maintain a collection of key government databases and an archive of more than 25,000 print and broadcast investigative stories. In addition to the researchers, archivists and training directors on IRE's staff, countless IRE journalist members over the years have contributed to the training of their peers, described their work at conferences, helped write handbooks and contributed thousands of tipsheets to the digital IRE Resource Center for members.

Although IRE's founders could not have imagined all of this 40 years ago, it represents just the kind of sharing and mutual support among investigative journalists they had sought. They also could not have anticipated IRE membership of over 5,000 journalists and journalism students; attendance at annual IRE conferences of more than 1,000 each, plus the many thousands more attendees at various training events; or annual print, broadcast and digital investigative reporting awards, begun in 1980, that have become among the most coveted in journalism.

This expansion of IRE's role has contributed considerably to the expansion of investigative reporting over that time. Accountability journalism now examines every aspect of society – from national security, government, politics, business and finance to the environment, education, health, social welfare, culture, sports and the media itself. As I wrote in the introduction to IRE's recently published Collected Wisdom essays by IRE members, more than ever, investigative reporting gives voice to the voiceless and holds accountable those with power and influence over the rest of us. Its range and impact was notable, for example, in the 2008 Pulitzer Prizes, when six were awarded in various categories for investigative reporting: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for illegal pension fund deals; The New York Times for toxic ingredients in products exported by China; the Chicago Tribune for faulty government regulation of dangerous toys and other children's products; and The Washington Post for negligent treatment of wounded veterans at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, profiteering by private war contractors in Iraq and the influence of Vice President Dick Cheney in the administration of George W. Bush.

> After Les Whitten talked about how most investigative journalists shared "a sense of outrage," the founders chose the name Investigative Reporters and Editors, with the acronym IRE.

At the same time, the digital revolution has been profoundly reshaping American journalism. It has helped make the best investigative reporting today more sophisticated and impactful. But it also has disrupted news media economics, shrinking newsrooms and their resources

IRE TIMELINE

The nonprofit has evolved in the past four decades. The following timeline offers memorable milestones.

FEB 1975

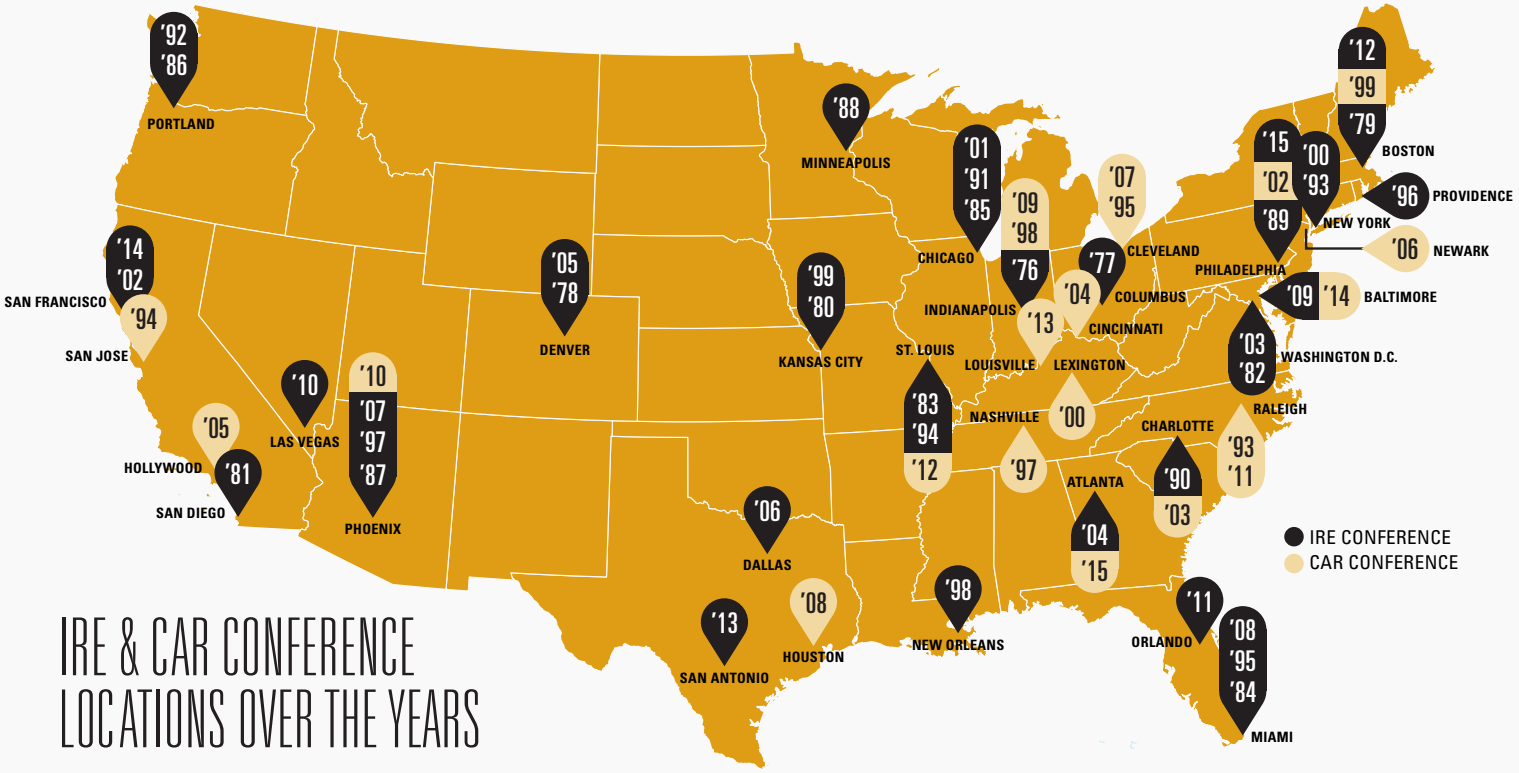
THE INITIAL MEETING

Journalists meet in Reston, Virginia, to discuss whether an organization to improve investigative journalism is feasible. The Lilly Endowment, an Indianapolis philanthropy, donates a $3,100 planning grant with support from the Disciples of Christ church. A church staff member designed IRE's logo.

JUNE 1976

THE FIRST CONFERENCE

On June 2, Arizona Republic reporter Don Bolles is seriously injured by a car bomb in connection with an investigation. He dies 11 days later. The first Investigative Reporters and Editors national conference is held in Indianapolis. More than 200 journalists from 35 states attend. In the wake of Bolles' murder, IRE begins to organize the Arizona Project.



Erica Mendez Babcock

IRE & CAR CONFERENCE LOCATIONS OVER THE YEARS

for investigative reporting. This makes IRE training of the remaining journalists and recognition of their best work more important than ever. Despite the fact that journalists and the news media, as always, rank little better than politicians and used-car sales people in public opinion poll popularity, those same surveys show a strong demand for investigative or watchdog journalism. So, a number of newspaper, broadcast station and website owners have turned to IRE to help increase investigative reporting skills in down-sized newsrooms.

The digital revolution also has given birth to online-only startups specializing in investigative reporting, many of them nonprofits, without the expenses of paper and ink, printing presses and newspaper delivery, broadcasting studios and transmission towers. Necessity has fostered mutually beneficial collaboration among nonprofits with relatively small budgets and digital audiences with commercial and public news media seeking more investigative reporting for their larger audiences. Many of the nonprofits have joined the Institute for Nonprofit News, founded in 2009, to share content, resources and efforts to achieve sustainability. IRE has played an important role in this movement with training, information-sharing at its conferences and cooperation with INN.

One of IRE's newest services for investigative journalism is DocumentCloud, a membership-accessed catalogue of primary source documents and tool for posting, annotating, organizing and reporting on them. DocumentCloud was started as a nonprofit Knight News Challenge grantee in 2009 and became part of IRE in 2011. Journalists, news media, researchers and archivists from throughout the country utilize this resource.

IRE also plays a significant role in the global spread of investigative reporting. In a recent report, the Center for International Media Assistance counted more than 100 investigative startups in 47 countries. IRE has provided training for some of them and their journalists; it has a growing number of international investigative journalists as members, and it has been the model for organizations similar to IRE in other countries.

Like most of the still financially fragile nonprofit digital investigative startups in the United States, IRE is dependent on philanthropy and foundation grants, in addition to its membership dues and fees for training and other services. Forty years after its founding, IRE is on firm financial footing these days. But new initiatives, services for its members and its long-term sustainability require new foundation grants, a steady stream of donations from IRE members and others, and an expansion of its endowment. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of investigative reporting in the ongoing reconstruction of American journalism depends in significant part on the future of IRE.

Leonard Downie Jr., a founder and director of IRE, is a professor at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and vice president at large and former executive editor of The Washington Post.

MARCH 1977

THE ARIZONA PROJECT FINISHES REPORTING, GETS SUED FOR LIBEL

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

JUNE 1977

CONFERENCE BECOMES ANNUAL EVENT

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

JUNE 1978

THE TIPSHEET IS BORN

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

"Deep and Dirty": The Roots of IRE

How the origin supported 40 years of growth

BY KASIA KOVACS » IRE

Chapter One: Desert Rats

PHOENIX, AZ; JUNE 1976

Reporter Don Bolles was invited to speak on a panel at the first IRE Conference in Indianapolis.

Bolles was an investigative reporter, the lone-wolf type, the kind who would attach a piece of Scotch tape to the hood of his blue Datsun to make sure that nobody had tampered with his engine.

By 1976, he'd left the investigative beat and become a state capitol reporter. Fellow reporters at The Arizona Republic noticed that his days were less stressful and his drinking less intense.

DON BOLLES

Bolles photo by UPI

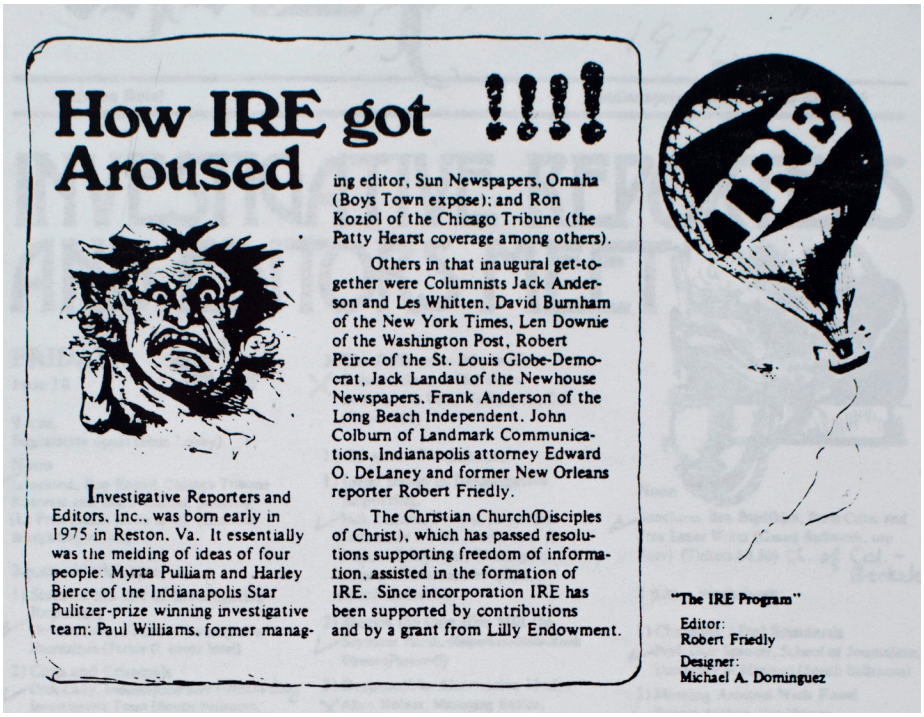
But Bolles' investigative itch never quite subsided. When he received a telephone call from a man named John Adamson who claimed to have a tip connecting Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater and prominent state GOP figure Harry Rosenzweig to mafia-associated land fraud, Bolles agreed to meet.

"John Adamson … Lobby at 11:25 … Clarendon House … 4th and Clarendon," Bolles wrote in his office calendar.

On June 2, Bolles walked into the Clarendon House lobby. After he waited for 15 minutes, Adamson called to say the source fell through. Bolles headed back to his car.

When he entered his car, a bomb planted underneath detonated.

Bolles lasted 11 days in the hospital before he passed away. He died days before the first IRE Conference.



How IRE got Aroused !!!!

Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., was born early in 1975 in Reston, Va. It essentially was the melding of ideas of four people: Myrta Pulliam and Harley Bierce of the Indianapolis Star Pulitzer-prize winning investigative team; Paul Williams, former managing editor, Sun Newspapers, Omaha (Boys Town expose); and Ron Koziol of the Chicago Tribune (the Patty Hearst coverage among others).

Others in that inaugural get-together were Columnists Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, David Burnham of the New York Times, Len Downie of the Washington Post, Robert Peirce of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Jack Landau of the Newhouse Newspapers, Frank Anderson of the Long Beach Independent, John Colburn of Landmark Communications, Indianapolis attorney Edward O. DeLaney and former New Orleans reporter Robert Friedly.

The Christian Church(Disciples of Christ), which has passed resolutions supporting freedom of information, assisted in the formation of IRE. Since incorporation IRE has been supported by contributions and by a grant from Lilly Endowment.

"The IRE Program"
Editor:
Robert Friedly
Designer:
Michael A. Dominguez

This illustration was featured in the program for the first IRE Conference in Indianapolis, June 18-20, 1976. It lists the founding members of IRE who attended the initial meeting in Reston, Va. It also acknowledges the Lilly Endowment, which donated a $3,100 planning grant to IRE.

INDIANAPOLIS; JUNE 1976

In the late '60s and early '70s, reporters in different cities had been scrutinizing illegality and corruption. IRE was the brainchild of a group of journalists that gathered in Indianapolis.

"There was a lot of ferment going on at the time, a lot of people becoming aware of investigative reporting," said Jim Steele, an IRE member since the beginning. "A lot of people pin it to Watergate, but the impetus really came from the Vietnam War and the critical journalism that came up in the coverage of the war."

In February 1975, that nationwide effervescence of investigative reporting was condensed into IRE during an organizational meeting in Reston, Virginia.

"It was exciting, it was fun, it was interesting," Myrta Pulliam, IRE cofounder, said of the Reston meeting. "Everybody had their own idea of what that is, and we had to mush all of that into something that would work."

JULY 1978

IRE CANADIAN COUNTERPART FORMS

The Centre for Investigative Journalism, patterned in part after IRE, opens its headquarters at Carleton University, Ottawa — one of many centers around the world that used IRE as inspiration.

AUG 1978

IRE FINDS A HOME AT THE MISSOURI SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

The journalism school in Columbia wins the bid to house IRE.

SEPT 1978

REGIONAL WORKSHOPS BEGIN

To supplement the national conferences, IRE organizes two-day regional conferences, including its first Far West regional attended by 399 in Palm Springs, Calif.

OCT 1978

THE FIRST IRE JOURNAL APPEARS

First IRE Journal is published. IRE establishes the Resource Center.

JAN 1979

MEMBERSHIP MILESTONE

IRE paid membership reaches 1,000.

Investigative reporters often felt the unhealthy side effects of their craft — being isolated from other journalists and hovering above the line between diligent and paranoid. IRE was an effort to pool together resources from investigative reporters across the country and create a network of information and collaboration.

The first conference in 1976 drew more than 200 journalists eager to share tips, strategies and drinks.

"There was tremendous excitement about the possibilities at that first meeting," Steele said.

But even with the simmering excitement that accompanies the beginning of a movement, a dark undercurrent shaded conversations in hallways between panels and lectures.

Bolles' absence had a palpable presence in that Indianapolis hotel. A fake tip and a car bomb — that could have been any conference attendee's fate.

After a growing number of conversations about their Arizona colleague, the IRE journalists made an unprecedented decision. They would go to Phoenix and finish Bolles' reporting.

The reporters didn't descend upon Phoenix to solve Bolles' murder. Rather, they went to prove a point and buy an investigative reporting insurance policy: You can't kill a story by killing a reporter.

Newsday

Bob Greene, Newsday journalist, led the Arizona Project. Greene was known for his dedication to hard work and appreciation for good spirits.

ARIZONA; 1976

Arizona was different then, and so was Phoenix.

There was a desolate feeling to the city, with an underdeveloped, industrial downtown and spread-out buildings.

The city sweltered, but mobsters came to cool down from cities with more powerful political forces, such as Las Vegas and Chicago. Phoenix was low-key and altogether more permissive than other mafia hot spots.

Beyond Phoenix and Tucson, the rest of the state was largely uninhabited. It was the Wild West of the 1970s, a Martian landscape where the law-abiding majority moved right on through, which left the others to stick around and play with the rules as they wished. An Arizonan's climb to power could be made with the handshake of a mobster.

U.S. Senator, failed presidential candidate and native Arizonan Barry Goldwater knew how the state's political games were played. If Barry was one of Arizona's most potent political forces, his brother Bob was its business behemoth. The Goldwaters and Rosenzweig were suspected of having ties with Arizona's mobsters, but nobody had connected them to their alleged crimes.

That's what Bolles was curious to find out, said Chuck Kelly, who was a 30-year-old reporter at The Arizona Republic when the news of Bolles' injuries reached the paper.

"It was pretty clear what had happened and why," Kelly said. "We all had the suspicion it was the mafia. I wasn't great friends with Bolles, but I was his colleague. My reaction was a professional one. I wanted to find out what had happened."

So Kelly signed on to work with IRE for two weeks, which was typical of most reporters. The Phoenix Project, as it was originally called, was a five-month feat of interviewing high-profile businessmen, politicians and mobsters; tracking down land-fraud documents as far away as Las Vegas; and cross-indexing and verifying findings. Thirty-eight reporters and editors left their respective news organizations — sometimes voluntarily, sometimes on paid leave — for a few weeks at a time.

PHOENIX, AZ; OCTOBER 1976

The contributors came from across the nation and included Harry Jones, a veteran investigative reporter for the Kansas City Star.

Jones was in his mid-40s when he heard about Bolles' death. He wasn't terribly close with Bolles, but he remembered working at a college newspaper with Bolles' younger sister. Jones had been an investigative reporter for The Kansas City Star for years, and he knew his way around records on organized crime and political corruption.

When Jones arrived for his first three-week commitment in October at IRE's temporary headquarters, the Adams Hotel, he was surprised to walk into a room entirely repurposed for the sake of the project. Bedroom furniture had been removed, and in its place were file cabinets, some large filled with documents, and others small, stuffed with cross-indexed memos on 3 x 5 notecards.

FEB 1979

FIRST CONFERENCE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

IRE holds its first conference designed primarily for college students in Columbia, Mo.

JAN 1980

BRANCHING INTO BROADCAST

IRE holds its first conference designed for broadcast journalists in Louisville.

JUNE 1980

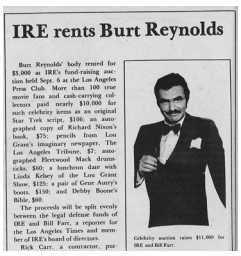
ANNUAL IRE AWARDS BEGIN

IRE presents its annual awards for the first time. The six categories yield more than 300 entries.

SEPT 1980

LEGAL DEFENSE FOR JOURNALISTS

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


IRE rents Burt Reynolds

Burt Reynolds' body rented for $3,000 at IRE's fund-raising auction held Sept. 6 at the Los Angeles Press Club. More than 100 true movie fans and cash-carrying collectors paid nearly $10,000 for such celebrity items as an original Star Trek script, $106; an autographed copy of Richard Nixon's book, $75; pencils from Lou Grant's imaginary newspaper, The Los Angeles Tribune, $7; autographed Fleetwood Mack drumsticks, $60; a luncheon date with Linda Kelsey of the Lou Grant Show, $125; a pair of Gene Autry's boots, $150; and Debby Boone's Bible, $60.

The proceeds will be split evenly between the legal defense funds of IRE and Bill Farr, a reporter for the Los Angeles Times and member of IRE's board of directors.

Rick Carr, a contractor, pur-

Celebrity auction raises $41,000 for IRE and Bill Farr.

Jones also found the man undeniably in charge of the project, Bob Greene, sitting at his corner desk and sifting through memos with cigarette in hand.

If Jones was a soft-spoken man, Greene was his opposite.

A dogged Newsday editor who had already won two Pulitzers, Greene had an imposing presence. He was tall and heavy, with a mane of graying hair. As Milwaukee Journal reporter and Arizona Project contributor Dave Offer recalls, he was a "giant bean bag chair" of a man with a narcoleptic habit that would cause him to fall asleep mid-conversation, but he would always wake up with a perfectly logical response.

Greene didn't waste any time in handing Jones his first assignment. He sent Jones out to Arrowhead Ranch, a citrus farm rumored to hire undocumented immigrants and owned in part by the well-off Martori family. Bob Goldwater was the co-owner. IRE reporters had been tipped off by a former United Farm Workers union leader who told them about undocumented workers living on the ranch without homes.

The team left Phoenix in two cars and drove toward the foothills of the desert mountains.

The citrus farm was a half-hour drive north of Phoenix, but Jones could see it from far away. Hundreds of acres of 15-foot trees formed a vast green oasis, out of place within the dry landscape.

Jones and the reporters dodged armed security guards and a monitoring helicopter overhead as they walked deeper into the citrus groves in search of laborers.

When Jones finally came upon a group, he found them sleeping in shelters made from orange crates. A pregnant woman lay under one of these crates, next to three young children and a six-month-old baby with dirt smudged on his face. The people lived with their own excrement on the ground — no toilets at Arrowhead — and flies swarmed in the air. One child swallowed his soup, which was spiked with dead flies.

The reporters asked for the laborers' identification. What they found, though, weren't legitimate social security cards at all, but false cards with scribbled numbers. The reporters soon deduced that the undocumented workers had no idea they'd been duped; they had been given these cards by the coyotes, or guides that helped them cross the desert border from Mexico to Arizona. Despite having perfect knowledge that these cards were fake, Arrowhead hired the undocumented immigrants.

In April 1972, during a gathering at the Scottsdale Diner Club, a farm union member asked Barry Goldwater why Bob was hiring "illegal labor."

"My brother is over 21, and he knows what he is doing," Barry said. "If you people would get off your butts and go to work, he wouldn't have to hire (Mexican) nationals."

It was an alarming finding, but only one of several published in The Arizona Project. The reporters found evidence of widespread land fraud, dealings between politicians and mobsters and inadequate law enforcement resources. Arizona was the last vestige of the Wild West, and by pooling together their time and skills, the IRE reporters were able to expose corruption in the state. Both Barry and Bob Goldwater, now deceased, were accused of questionable associations, but neither were ever convicted or charged with crimes.

"Deep and dirty was one of our sayings," said Pulliam, referring to the sometimes unsavory figures interviewed for the project.

Pulliam was the "glue that held everything together" as Jim Polk, IRE's third president and former NBC investigative reporter, called her.

The daughter of Eugene Pulliam, publisher of The Indianapolis Star, Myrta had proven her acumen and assertiveness by sharing a Pulitzer Prize in her late 20s for a team investigation on police corruption.

Myrta was cunning, too.

One day in the Adams Hotel, when the two women secretaries were out running errands, the reporters found themselves with empty coffee cups. So they instructed Myrta to make a new pot of coffee.

Myrta grimaced. She had work to do. She didn't complain, though; instead, she took a careful look at the coffeemaker instructions. The coffeemaker called for two scoops of coffee. She added a lot more.

"They never asked me to make coffee again," Myrta said.

Not everyone in the reporting community supported IRE's project; newspaper giants The New York Times and The Washington Post both questioned its legitimacy and called the project out on claims of sensationalism and vigilante journalism. They refused to send reporters to work with IRE. Although The Arizona Republic allowed reporters like Kelly to participate, it didn't print the project's 23-part series, which debuted March 13, 1977.

And yet, The Arizona Project exposed widespread corruption pervasive in the state and was one of the first nation-wide efforts to bring together competitive investigative journalists to work as a team.

"The Arizona Project strengthened IRE," Offer said, "gave it a great deal of legitimacy."

Now it was time to find funding and a home.

Chapter Two: Looking for Solid Ground

After The Arizona Project was published, a wealthy rancher with a mafia connection sued IRE for libel. The jury awarded him $15,000 for emotional distress but decided that the Project had not libeled him, nor had his privacy been invaded.

Nonetheless, five others named in the Arizona Project followed suit, and the debt racked up.

By 1980, IRE "had no more than two or three hundred dollars in the bank," according to a letter from then-president Jerry Uhrhammer. "Financially, we are hanging on by our fingernails."

But money wasn't IRE's only problem. It also needed a home.

In 1977, in the basement at the University of Missouri in Columbia, graduate student John Ullmann bumped into journalism school Dean Roy Fisher. Ullmann showed him a short article in Editor and Publisher Magazine — IRE was looking for a location for its headquarters.

IRE had been considering cities on the East Coast — Boston, maybe College Park,

FEB 1981

IRE FOUND NOT GUILTY IN ARIZONA PROJECT LIBEL SUIT

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

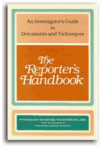
AUG 1981

SURVEY OF IRE MEMBERS

A survey of IRE members shows 72 percent are reporters, 60 percent work at newspapers, 79 percent are male, and 22 percent spend three-quarters or more of their time on investigative projects.

JUNE 1983

THE REPORTER'S HANDBOOK



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

JUNE 1985

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Two months after the IRE national conference in Chicago, IRE offers a conference on a specialized topic, covering agriculture. IRE also sponsors a conference on investigating sports in Jacksonville, Fla.

Maryland. But Ullmann wondered if the University of Missouri should add its name to the pot and fight for IRE to be based in the Midwest, a more central location. Fisher agreed and told Ullmann to ring up Bob Greene to toss Missouri's name in the hat.

"Wait, you want me to call Bob Greene?" asked Ullmann.

Ullmann did just that, and Missouri was officially a contender.

TENNESSEE, 1978

Later that year, Ullmann was off the grid. It was time to take a break from school, and he was hiking through the green ferns and arching trees of the Appalachian Trail.

Ullmann had fallen into a pattern. Each week, he'd trek along the trail with his 45-pound backpack. The weekends were for hiking down to whatever village was nearby and stocking up on supplies.

When Ullmann visited the villages on the weekends, he'd also check the post. His sister knew approximately where he would be on the weekends, so she sent him his mail.

One day in southern Virginia, Ullmann found that his sister had forwarded a letter to him from Jim Polk, then president of IRE. The letter informed Ullmann that IRE would be based in Missouri, and furthermore, he was elected executive director.

"Congratulations or condolences—I'm not sure which is in order," Polk's letter began.

Well, this took Ullmann by surprise.

Ullmann found the phone at the post office, fed it a few quarters and called Polk.

"If you're going to be the executive director, and Bob Greene says you are, so I say you are," Ullmann remembered Polk saying, "you've got to come out of there and work."

"You know where Thornton's Gap, Virgina is?" Ullmann remembers asking. "Meet me there in two weeks."

Thornton's Gap is not a town, nor a rest stop, but a literal gap in the Appalachian Trail. Sure enough, two weeks later, Ullmann arrived at this gap in the trail. He sat down in the grass by the road and was ready to be greeted by Jim Polk. He waited. The sun began to set. The sky became dark.

IRE Archives

Some members of The Arizona Project gather. From left, clockwise: George Weisz, Dave Offer, Jack Wimer, Jack McFarren, John Winters, Dave Overton, Tom Renner, John Rawlinson, Diane Hayes, Steve Goldin, Alex Drehsler, Ross Becker, Dan Noyes, Mike Wendland, Dick Cady, Carol Jackson, Kay Nash, Ron Koziol, Susan Irby, Steve Wick, Myrta Pulliam.

Finally, a car pulled up. There was Polk. He had just gotten off work and was still dressed in a TV-ready suit; although "he had loosened his tie," Ullmann recalled.

A scruffy-bearded Ullmann and clean-cut Polk grabbed thin steaks "to make sure he got one good square meal after his Dan'l-Boone-in-the-Wilderness weeks-long self-survival ego trip," Polk said.

At this point in its infancy, IRE still only had a little money in the bank. The University of Missouri offered it a home, some funding and a couple of graduate assistantships to help with staffing. Ullmann's role as executive director was also part of this package deal.

When Ullmann accepted the position — after all, it paid a whole $13,000 a year — Polk already had his first task lined up.

"His first job was to take a shower," Polk said, "because he hadn't bathed in two months."

COLUMBIA, MO; 1978

The first IRE office was, more or less, Ullmann's office. It was in a small room on the third floor of Walter Williams Hall, and it was stuffed with books and stacks of newspapers.

George Kennedy, a professor at the University of Missouri who eventually became editor of the IRE Journal, remembered the office always being crowded with a stream of students wandering in and out.

Kennedy edited the Journal, but Ullmann physically put it together. Dean Fisher allowed him to use the empty Columbia Missourian offices late at night and into the early hours of the morning to paste up pages before sending them off to the printer. Kennedy and Ullmann aimed for the Journal to be a resource for IRE readers, so early issues discussed FOIA laws, offered how-to guides (including "Tracking a Trail by Telephone" and "Defending your Investigation in Court") and had book reviews.

In addition, IRE connected journalists through its national and regional conferences. The organization's plan to rotate cities allowed journalists from across the country to attend the conferences, which generally grew in popularity every year.

Chapter Three: Heading Toward the Future

When Ullmann stepped down from his post in 1983, he passed the torch to Steve

JUNE 1988

LONG-TERM STABILITY

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

AUG 1989

INSTITUTE FOR COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING BEGINS

IRE member Elliot Jaspin is hired by the Missouri School of Journalism and opens the Missouri Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting.

NOV 1989

THE FIRST CAR BOOT CAMP

MICAR holds first boot camp.

MARCH 1990

IRE HOSTS CONFERENCE FOR ADVANCED INVESTIGATIVE METHODS (CAR)

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

Weinberg, a professor at the University of Missouri journalism school. The IRE office moved from Ullmann's tiny third-floor office to a slightly larger, but much dingier, room in the basement of the journalism school.

During Weinberg's tenure as executive director, a debate was brewing among members of IRE and the journalism community at large about the definition of investigative reporting. At IRE's conception, many assumed that the craft was limited to probing illegal activities. But Weinberg was among those who insisted that investigative journalism could be much more than that.

"It didn't have to just look into illegality," Weinberg said. "Quality investigative reporting could be in-depth, explanatory reporting."

He and others argued that the work of veteran investigative reporters and longtime IRE members Don Barlett and Jim Steele should be considered for the IRE awards, even though their reporting on the failures of the American Dream had little to do with investigations into illegal undertakings.

In essence, during the 1980s, IRE played a role in the evolving definition of investigative reporting.

When Brant Houston arrived in 1992, he took over what was then known as MICAR, or the Missouri Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. Houston, a no-nonsense man who had had years of database reporting under his belt, was ready to share his expertise.

In 1997, Houston became the executive director of IRE in addition to running MICAR, which expanded nationally to become NICAR. For all intents and purposes, the marriage of IRE and NICAR was a perfect match.

"Databases and journalism go hand in hand," Houston said. "Once you blend these things together, investigative reporting can have a much greater impact."

All of IRE's leaps and bounds into the digital age, however, were put in danger by one major threat — water.

The IRE and NICAR offices were located in the journalism school's basement, catty-corner to the quad where students lounged on bright spring days. But the IRE staff was kept underground, devoid of windows and subjected to periodic flooding.

The flooding happened not once or twice, but about every time it rained. During particularly bad storms, the water rose more than six inches. It was uncomfortable for staff, but the real threat was to the computers that stored IRE's precious databases.

So, Houston decided it was time to move to higher ground.

After receiving permission to temporarily move to the Missourian's old offices, IRE and NICAR emerged from the windowless basement room.

"Basically, IRE and NICAR were squatters," Houston said.

The IRE offices remain there today.

Epilogue: It Continues

Before IRE's beginning, investigative journalists were a sharp but stubborn breed, happy to bury (and effectively isolate) themselves under documents and data.

Don Bolles suspected that the sparks of corruption were burning in Arizona, but he had neither the resources nor the camaraderie to reveal it.

The Arizona Project reporters defended the freedom of the press. They proved that the news was larger than a lone reporter, and it could not be killed.

IRE members abroad, though, still face dangerous conditions. At least 66 reporters were killed in 2014, according to Reporters Without Borders. More than 140 were imprisoned.

But IRE has motivated the sort of reporting strengthened by solidarity the world over. Since reporter Khadija Ismahilova was arrested and jailed in Azerbaijan on charges that she incited her disgruntled ex-boyfriend to commit suicide, her fellow journalists have continued her reporting. The similarities to The Arizona Project are no accident; her colleagues' decision to finish her stories was inspired by the project.

More than anything else, IRE has created a network in which more than 5,000 members are happy to pool together resources, documents and techniques for the sake of the public good. Forty years after that small group of reporters met in Reston, and 39 years after IRE's first conference in Indianapolis, investigative reporters are more empowered to put out fires together.

"IRE works to promote the role and responsibility of the free press," Ullmann said. "Nobody's doing anything more important."

Kasia Kovacs is a graduate student at the University of Missouri and Brent Johnson Fellow with Investigative Reporters and Editors. She has written for the Columbia Missourian and the Jefferson City News Tribune.

IRE MEMBERS AT THE ORIGINAL IRE MEETING IN RESTON, VA.

FRANK ANDERSON
Then with the Long Beach Independent

JACK ANDERSON
Washington, D.C., columnist

HARLEY BIERCE
The Indianapolis Star

DAVID BURNHAM
The New York Times, Washington Bureau

JOHN COLBURN
Landmark Communications, Norfolk, Va.

EDWARD O. DELANEY
Indianapolis Attorney

ROBERT FRIEDLY
Indianapolis, director of communications for Christian Church, Disciples of Christ

LEONARD DOWNIE JR.
The Washington Post

JACK LANDAU
Newhouse News Service, Washington, D.C.

MYRTA PULLIAM
The Indianapolis Star

LES WHITTEN
Washington, D.C., J. Anderson associate

PAUL WILLIAMS
Ohio State University

ROBERT PIERCE
St. Louis Globe-Democrat

Not in attendance, but a founding member:

RON KOZIOL
Chicago Tribune

JUNE 1990
HANDS-ON CAR SESSIONS AT IRE CONFERENCE
For the first time, an entire day is devoted to computer-assisted reporting at an IRE national conference in Portland, Ore.

OCT 1990
UPLINK BEGINS
MICAR begins publishing Uplink, a computer-assisted reporting newsletter.

JAN 1991
IRE JOURNAL BECOMES A MAGAZINE
The IRE Journal changes format from newsprint, tabloid size to regular, magazine size on higher quality paper. The frequency returns from four times a year to six times.

JAN 1993
PARTNERSHIP WITH NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
IRE joins with the National Press Club to offer a conference on conceiving, reporting and writing investigations from a Washington, D.C., perspective.

40th Anniversary

The History of CAR

IRE adds computer-assisted reporting arm as journalists find data

BY JENNIFER LAFLEUR » THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING | REVEAL

At a glance, the program from the computer-assisted reporting conference held in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1993 might seem quaint: "FoxPro versus Paradox," "databases versus spreadsheets," the "mystery and power of Internet."

But much of the work produced with those tools is the foundation for today's data-based journalism. Many of the folks who first grabbed on to data tools were hard-hitting investigative reporters who saw data as a way to do otherwise impossible stories.

The ability to analyze data also meant that reporters no longer had to rely on government reports. They could do their own analyses.

Penny Loeb, as a reporter at Newsday in 1991, found that $275 million in property tax refunds were not paid to New York City property owners.

"An offhand comment at lunch with a tax department official and a computer tape were the keys," she said.

"Back then, data journalism was the new frontier," Loeb said. "We didn't even have the World Wide Web, just a DOS prompt. Exciting times."

Bill Dedman, who won a 1989 Pulitzer Prize for a data-based investigation revealing racial disparities in home lending in Atlanta, predicted that by the turn of the 20th century the term computer-assisted reporting would be obsolete. "It would be like saying pen-and-paper-assisted reporting."

WAY, WAY BACK

In the annals of data journalism history, the earliest chapters start way before the early 1990s. In fact, they predate computers.

ProPublica's Scott Klein recently pointed to a chart Horace Greeley published in the New-York Tribune in 1848 that listed members of Congress and their mileage reimbursements (bit.ly/1EZvX1M). The Tribune also posted what they would have received for mileage based on postal routes, along with the difference. Although it appeared in agate type, rather than a searchable database, it was an early example of data-based journalism.

What is considered one of the first times computers aided in data-based journalism came more than 100 years later, in 1952. CBS used one of the first mainframe computers to call the election for Dwight D. Eisenhower before the voting closed, despite polling that indicated Illinois Gov. Adlai Stevenson was ahead.

During the 1967 Detroit race riots, reporter Philip Meyer (bit.ly/1zwJc8Y) upped the ante, doing something few journalists had done before. He adopted the techniques of social scientists to show the underlying causes of the riots. When the Detroit Free Press won a Pulitzer Prize for Local General or Spot News Reporting in 1968, the newspaper cited Meyer's analysis of survey data. Meyer went on to write "Precision Journalism" (later renamed "The New Precision Journalism"), considered the bible of computer-assisted reporting.

Despite the difficulty of managing large databases back in those days, more reporters started using them to do stories that no one else could do.

In 1986, Providence Journal-Bulletin reporter Elliot Jaspin matched databases to show the high rate of felony convictions and bad driving records among school bus drivers.

MICAR AND NICAR

Jaspin later did two things that would give CAR a boost. During a fellowship at Gannett Center for Media Studies, he, along with his graduate assistant Dan Woods, developed software that would allow reporters to easily read data from government tapes. He also founded the Missouri Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (MICAR) at the Missouri School of Journalism in 1989.

"Reporters will have a substantially different set of skills," Jaspin said in a 1991 interview with American Journalism Review.

Jaspin's week-long MICAR boot camps were lessons in tough love. Students would get a 9-track tape and be assigned to a tape reader. Step one: thread the tape through the machine and extract its contents.

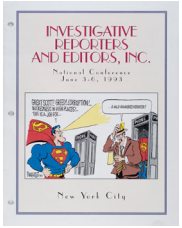
Dozens of reporters attended those workshops and returned to their newsrooms armed with new skills and requests for 9-track tape readers. Around that time, the Indiana University School of Journalism also held CAR conferences in collaboration with IRE.

Four years after MICAR started, funding from the Freedom Forum gave the organization a boost to do training in newsrooms around the country. It became the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting and joined with IRE. Brant Houston was hired as its director. He went on to be the IRE executive director and now is a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I became training director, and a group of graduate students helped with everything from data acquisition to boot camps. We all squeezed into a tiny room in the basement of the University of Missouri journalism school, across a musty hallway from the main IRE office.

JUNE 1993

SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED FOR MINORITY STUDENTS

IRE offers scholarships for minority student journalists to work at the organization and grants for minority journalists to attend the annual national conference — a priority that increased over time.

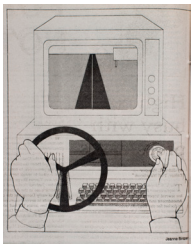


'93 IRE Conference program

JULY 1993

FREEDOM FORUM FOR CAR

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



OCT 1993

IRE HOLDS FIRST CAR CONFERENCE

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

We hit the road with a dozen Gateway laptops and 2400 baud modems to teach the wonders of data to newsrooms around the country. NICAR also began building a database library to make federal data sets more accessible to newsrooms. We continued to teach the week-long boot camps, but ditched the 9-track readers.

Our hands-on training relied on programs, such as Quattro Pro, a spreadsheet program, and database programs such as FoxPro and Paradox. But the concepts were always the same: understand the data, interview the data, report the data.

About every 18 months, IRE held a NICAR Conference focused on data. Usually a few hundred people attended. A bit of a controversy ensued when some IRE members didn't see the point of having a separate conference focused on data journalism.

The conference later became an annual event, and by 2014, it had an attendance of about 1,000.

Attendees waited in lines outside hands-on training rooms to make sure they got seats.

During the conference each year, IRE presents the Philip Meyer Award. The prize was started in 2005 to recognize the year's best data-based investigations. This year, the Center for Public Integrity took top honors for its reporting on Medicare. ProPublica's Michael Grabell and his colleagues took second place for stories about the lack of protections for temp workers.

When he became a reporter, Grabell said he didn't intend to use data. "I was going to be a 'writer,'" he said. "But I quickly learned that to be a good writer, I needed to be a good reporter. So I learned about public records. But never was I going to be a CAR reporter, whatever that was. Then I learned that to be a good reporter, I needed to know about data."

Grabell's first data project was to track city records on panhandling citations in Dallas when he worked for The Dallas Morning News.

"I quickly learned how data can not only provide the bulwark behind your reporting but can also lead you to great narratives," he said.

CAR GOES GLOBAL

The spread of data wasn't limited to U.S. newsrooms. Pioneering journalists brought CAR techniques to their countries where, despite some additional barriers, data journalism is now thriving. NICAR has trained thousands of journalists outside the United States in data journalism techniques. International journalism organizations have continued that work.

Early on, however, investigative journalists in other countries didn't think they would be able to get access to data.

"I was blown away then by the possibilities," said Fred Vallance-Jones, who now teaches journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. But he was nervous. "I had heard from some folks in Canada that, 'you can't do CAR here because we can't get any data,'" he said.

But he did get data and began investigating a federal infrastructure spending program.

Other reporters jumped in as well. CAR had sprouted in Canada. In 1999, Vallance-Jones led an effort to create a CAR award as part of the Canadian Association of Journalists' annual awards program.

"That award helped to spur interest at a time when doing CAR meant being lonely and often misunderstood or even shunned by newsroom colleagues," he said.

Danish journalist Nils Mulvad attended a NICAR boot camp in 1996 but shared Vallance-Jones' concerns.

"I pretty much saw it as you had much better access rules — and data — and it would be very hard to implement in Denmark," Mulvad said.

But he went back after being encouraged to try to get data. He and a colleague started to request data and slowly began to get it.

"There is an enormous potential for more data journalism. Hopefully it will explode in the coming years," said Mulvad, who brings a group of Danish journalists to the NICAR Conference each year.

As demand increased, NICAR began doing training overseas. In 1997, NICAR went to Sweden, and Helena Bengtsson was hooked. The next year, her company, Swedish Television, sent her to the NICAR Conference in Indianapolis. There, an Associated Press reporter took time to show her how to solve a problem in Access.

"So, thank you, Drew Sullivan, both for solving the problem and for showing me the spirit of NICAR and IRE," she said.

"The big surge in data journalism and CAR didn't happen until three or four years ago," said

TESTIMONIALS

If I wasn't the world's dumbest 18-year-old, IRE might not be part of my life.

The summer before I started school at the University of Missouri, I wandered into a bit of legal trouble. It could have been worse. I lost some money, but I gained some jail cell stories. Had that been the end of it, I'd call it a fair deal.

Unfortunately, I also had to do community service.

Attorneys pointed me to the usual suspects: Salvation Army. Food Bank. Some Sort of Center for the Aging.

I immediately started looking for a loophole.

"So it can be any nonprofit?" I asked. Indeed, it could.

I already had the journalism bug. I knew IRE (I crashed the Chicago conference in high school!). But that judge's order is ultimately what led me to wander into the IRE Resource Center, hat in hand, and self-consciously ask if I could volunteer for a few months.

Those few months turned into some semblance of a paid gig. That paid gig led me to ask about NICAR. And NICAR fed me in college, molded my career and gave me lifelong friendships.

So Officer Quimby, if this finds you, let me buy you a drink. I may well owe you my career.

Matt Wynn is a reporter at Omaha World-Herald.

In 2009 I was working with two spreadsheets. One showed natural gas production in Virginia. The other showed royalties collected for thousands of wells. I could see there were discrepancies, but I didn't know how to systematically identify them. I learned how to query data after a week at IRE. The spreadsheets spoke. They helped show how Virginia's system of paying natural gas royalties was broken. The reporting prompted changes in state law to pay landowners their due. Today I'm honored to partner with IRE to provide the same kind of training to other journalists.

Daniel Gilbert is a staff writer at The Wall Street Journal and founder of The Fund for Rural Computer-Assisted Reporting.

FEB 1994

MICAR BECOMES NICAR

MICAR is renamed the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting.

'94 IRE Conference program

JULY 1994

IRE PARTICIPATES IN JOINT CONVENTION

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

UNITY

JAN 1995

A FUND FOR TRAINING MINORITY JOURNALISTS

IRE receives a grant from the Freedom Forum to establish a minority journalists training program as part of IRE's initiative to increase diversity in investigative journalism.

TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED ...

Steve Doig and I co-taught seven IRE workshops in 2000 to prep for Census 2000. One sticks in mind: Portland, Ore. It drizzled all weekend. The hotel, somewhere near the airport, was damp and smelly. The sole Internet connection was iffy. None of this mattered to the 50 journalists who packed one room. Nine hours of training in geographical hierarchies and multi-race categories weren't enough. We talked through a box lunch and deep into the night about stories. At 9 a.m. Sunday, every notebook was open again. We ran until noon, but questions kept coming, even riding to the airport. It was inspiring.

Paul Overberg is a data journalist and instructor.

I agreed to extend a reporting contract at a former station on the sole condition that they send me to an IRE Conference in Boston. I convinced my boss' boss that the investment would be worth it. A short time later, I made the transition to investigative reporting full time – disappearing for days to collaborate on a single project in the hopes that it would pay off. What success I've had in the past few years, I owe in large part to those that I've met, listened to and learned from at IRE.

David Iversen is the Chief Investigative Reporter at WTNH-TV in New Haven, Connecticut.

In fall 2010, I attended a daylong computer-assisted reporting class led by trainer Jaimi Dowdell in Milwaukee, and I've been hooked on IRE events ever since. IRE conferences are irresistible because they're focused on teaching skills to working journalists; they don't waste attendees' time by giving the stage to politicians or businessmen. As for that first Excel class: between that training – and what might be a record number of refresher courses taken through IRE – I've been able to find local stories in national databases involving everything from bank bailout programs to credit card complaints to data breaches.

Becky Yerak is a Chicago Tribune reporter.

Continued on page 19

Bengtsson, who now works for The Guardian in London. "Up until that time I usually was the only Swede at NICAR, but this year we had 10 to 15 people — all there of their own interest."

The "spirit of NICAR" that Bengtsson remembers is how many journalists learned or honed their craft. I spent years pestering Steve Doig, then a Miami Herald editor, when I was learning to analyze census data. Former New York Times reporter Tom Torok taught me ASP, a tool for making interactive web pages, on a cocktail napkin during a NICAR conference.

GROWTH SPURT

With the development of news websites, the terms for this thing we did — CAR, data journalism, computational journalism — expanded to include online databases and interactive applications. Now a significant portion of the NICAR conference is devoted to programming and apps development.

"Clearly data journalism is on the ascendency," said David Donald, data journalist in-residence at American University and a former IRE training director. "As news organizations shift from traditional delivery models on paper and on air to online, they instinctively seem to understand that data is a necessary element of storytelling."

But Donald said he worries about the quality of some data journalism projects.

"In their rush to adopt data journalism, newsrooms that overlook the rigor of data cleaning and extracting meaning from data are the ones that may regret their actions," Donald said. "We've always said that good investigative reporting can be expensive and time-consuming. We have to acknowledge that data journalism done well shares those traits. Newsrooms must remind themselves there are no shortcuts to doing data journalism right."

Doig, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his work covering Hurricane Andrew for the Herald, is now a professor at Arizona State University. He said the focus on interactives has meant that some newsrooms have cut back on data analysis training.

"I think there is a danger in this current imbalance of there being a triumph of form over content," he said.

The rush to exciting new tools and focus on technology has been a recurring pattern for years, Houston said.

"At first, you're enamored with how new tools work. Then, you apply them to content," he said. "There was a time when a group of us was obsessed with SQL [a programming language] and were criticized for not talking about journalism enough."

In recent years, a new crop of data journalists have come into newsrooms from computer science. They've brought sophisticated programming techniques but also have had to learn the culture of journalism.

"You need to pick up the phone and call people to get answers to questions that may not be in a data set published to the Internet," Erin Kissane, editor of Source, a publication of Knight-Mozilla OpenNews, told the NiemanLab (bit.ly/1y6ghW9). "That may not be the first thing you think of if you don't come from a reporting culture."

In spite of many down years in newsrooms, the future for data journalists seems bright. Newsrooms are having a difficult time filling data journalist positions. And new tools are upping the game.

Institutes and other programs focusing on data and journalism have popped up at universities around the country. Columbia University's Tow Center for Digital Journalism opened in 2010 to serve as a research and development center. In 2014, Stanford University launched a computational journalism program, which plans to explore ways to integrate so-called big data into journalism.

"It's hard for me to conceive of an investigation worth doing that doesn't have data as its foundation," said Maud Beelman of The Associated Press, who has edited investigations for many years.

"Building an investigation on data allows you, in essence, to create a new reality," Beelman said. "Analyzing, understanding data helps reveal — and perhaps understand — problems and issues that we might not otherwise be able to see."

Note: Thanks to the many people who sent me stories, tip sheets and anecdotes. You all are great examples of the NICAR spirit.

Jennifer LaFleur is senior editor for data journalism at The Center for Investigative Reporting and Reveal.

MARCH 1995

INTERNATIONAL REACH GROWS

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

AUG 1995

THE BIRTH OF NICAR-L

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

JUNE 1996

IRE REMAINS AT UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AFTER RECEIVING OTHER PROPOSALS

IRE receives proposals from five universities to provide an IRE headquarters. The IRE board of directors considers offers from the University of Maryland, Columbia University, Northwestern University and American University. After months of debate, the IRE board of directors votes 7-4 to stay at Missouri rather than go to the University of Maryland. Elected members on the IRE board of directors increase from 11 to 13.

COLLECTED WISDOM

Listen up now, you hear?

In 1977 at the first national conference that I ran as a board member for IRE, the registration fee was only $25, and yet we were able to cover the cost for four meals — lunches and dinners on both Friday and Saturday — with four keynote speakers: Jack Anderson, Carl Bernstein, Seymour Hersh and Joe Murray.

Yes, Joe Murray. He was the editor of the Lufkin (TX) News. His paper won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service that year — one of the very few small-town dailies ever to do so.

JIM POLK

As Joe told it, when he walked into the newsroom one Monday morning, the switchboard operator said a local businessman was waiting to see him. Joe thought, "Ohmigosh, we must have run his ad upside down again." Joe sat down with his first cup of coffee, only half-listening, until the man said something that sent chills up his spine: "They beat that boy to death." "Right there, I knew we had a big story," Joe told the crowd. He motioned to one of his reporters who had joined him at the conference. "I assigned a third of my staff to it. He's sitting at the other end of the table here."

The businessman's nephew, a mentally challenged Marine recruit from Lufkin, had been assigned to a disciplinary unit in boot camp and subjected to physical reprisals that led to his death. Even back in 1977, we had Q-and-A opportunities with all speakers, and someone in the back of the room asked Joe how long it took them to do the story.

"One day," said Joe. "You ask questions, you write it down, you put it in the paper."

And that is the core of what we do in journalism. It was true then, and it's true now. It hasn't changed. It's the same formula:

1. Ask questions.
2. Find answers.
3. Tell the public.

Yes, our delivery systems for telling the news have evolved. But our methods in pursuit of truth are simple and eternal.

My alma mater has just done away with its independent School of Journalism and folded it into a multi-purpose Media School. The university president said, "There's no point in saving a school that trains people to manage fleets of horses if the motorcar has overtaken horse-drawn transportation."

He's wrong. It's content that counts most, not the mechanics of delivery. In my 50-plus years in journalism, I've worked for The Associated Press, a Washington newspaper, and two news networks. I've written for magazines, done some radio, worked on CNN's website. And I still report the same way as when I started on a small-city daily back in 1960 — I try to figure out the questions, find out who knows, and try to get them to talk with me.

This is a people profession. You get stories from people. You tell stories about people. You always want to find the person who knows ***first-hand*** what did happen. Anything else is hearsay and not necessarily reliable.

I ask people for help, to help me understand. That's just being honest. Shucks, if I knew all the answers, I wouldn't be there. And it works more often than not. People do want to be heard, to be understood. Being a good listener is the secret to being a good interviewer. If you listen, people will tell you their stories, and surprisingly, in the worst of circumstances, sometimes feel better for it.

I learned this from a mother who was meant to be a murder victim.

She had married her high school sweetheart on the rebound, long after graduation. Between them, they brought four sons, ages 14 to 22, into their new family. On Valentine's Day night in 1977, four young gunmen entered their rural double-wide trailer home while her husband was at work an hour away on the overnight shift. They made the mother and four sons lie on the floor, face down. They killed the boys with shotgun blasts. The mother's wig was blown off, her head was bloody, the gunmen assumed she was dead, and they laughed as they left with their loot — a few watches and a camera.

The parents were not well-off. They repaired the shotgun holes in the living room floor and were living in the same house when I interviewed the mother there in 1981 for an NBC News series focusing on insanity pleas in murder cases. At the end of the interview, she said to me, "I don't know why I cried. I haven't cried for a long time." And I said to myself, "Polk, you sonuvabitch, you did your job."

But after the NBC story aired, she called me to thank me. She said her relatives had never really understood what she had gone through, what she was living with, not until they saw the story on TV.

People want someone to listen and to understand. You help each other in this regard. It is not as cold and cruel and callous as others might assume. The key is to listen — really, really listen.

Some of my favorite questions are: "How so? Why? Huh? Then what?" Or simply a raised eyebrow. And the universal fallback: "I'm not quite sure I understand." Let them keep talking.

Yes, today there are computer printouts to parse and documents to be digested. But you still need people to help you. The late Jack Nelson of the Los Angeles Times has said his favorite question was, "No sh-t, you don't expect me to believe that."

"Oh, yes, I've got the document right here in this drawer."

At a panel at the 2008 IRE Conference in Miami, the question was asked, "What is the secret to investigative reporting?" The New York Times' Walt Bogdanich said, "Good files." That certainly helps. But my answer was, "Making a source out of someone you're meeting for the first time."

So remember, a good listener is a good reporter. Good luck to each of you, even if you're writing tomorrow's story on a new pattern of electrons which I can't even fathom.

James Polk was one of the earliest presidents of IRE in 1978-80. He received the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting on Watergate campaign finance shenanigans while at the Washington Star, then spent the next four decades as an NBC News correspondent, then senior producer at CNN. He finally retired not long ago at the age of 76.

Photo by Susan Pollack

JUNE 1996

IRE BEGINS TRAINING IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

With a three-year grant of $540,000 from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation providing the bulk of the funding, IRE begins operating IRE Mexico, and training quickly broadens to operate a similar organization in Central and South America, with a Mexico City headquarters.

'97 CAR Conference program

MAY 1997

IRE BUDGET REACHES $1 MILLION

With so much expansion, IRE operates with a budget of approximately $1 million.

NOV 1997

A GATHERING AT THE BORDER

IRE and its Mexican project, Periodistas de Investigación, organize the first "border gathering" aimed primarily at journalists in the El Paso and Juárez area.

Progress of investigative reporting overseas

Global efforts at investigative journalism are imperative in keeping governments and other powerful parties in check. But reporting is also a risky — even life-threatening — career choice for journalists in volatile parts of the world. Each country and region faces its unique hurdles when it comes to freedom of information and the press, and those challenges evolve every day. IRE and other international journalism organizations provide support, education and resources to reporters across geographic borders. In fact, nearly 10 percent of IRE members are based in 69 countries outside the U.S. Here, four journalists from around the world share their perspectives on how investigative reporting has transformed over the past 40 years.

Journalism in Asia moving beyond government control

BY SHEILA CORONEL

Forty years ago, the term "investigative reporting" was little known in Asia. Pliant newspapers and insipid TV news programs dominated the media landscape. The leading journalists were mouthpieces of government. Today, journalists in many parts of Asia are using freedom of information laws, data analysis, social media, collaborative tools and the latest in digital technology. They are writing about corruption, human trafficking, dirty money and environmental problems.

Since the 1980s and '90s, new freedoms, new technologies, new markets and new laws have empowered journalists like never before. Twenty-five years ago, Asia had one investigative reporting center, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) based in Manila. Today, there are centers in Nepal, Korea, Pakistan, India and two in Thailand. Investigative units in newspapers and broadcast networks are no longer a novelty. There are investigative magazines — notably Tempo in Indonesia and Caixin in China. In many countries, there are TV news programs that label themselves investigative.

The fall of Asian strongmen in the 1980s and '90s was followed by the explosion of new news organizations that queried officials, investigated malfeasance and reported events with unprecedented vigor to a public thirsty for news and information. In other places, China being the notable example, the changes were brought about not by the fall of regimes but the opening of markets. The removal of state subsidies on the media, part of the Deng Xiaoping-era reforms, meant that news organizations had to fund themselves. In order to do so, they had to take on advertisers and build audiences. Exposure was an audience-building and revenue-generating strategy.

Before 1980, there was hardly any negative news in Chinese media. Since then, journalists have been waging a guerrilla war against government censors. The current moment is not a good one: The government of Xi Jinping has cracked down on critical reporting. The little there is has been done mostly online by citizens and journalists through platforms like Weibo, the Chinese counterpart of Twitter.

For Asian muckrakers, the excesses of corrupt officials are staple fare. Environmental destruction, including the cutting down of rainforests and the pollution of the air and water supply, are important investigative subjects, as are human rights abuses and the poor state of public services. There is a paucity of investigations on business and the economy, even though the business press has expanded with economic growth.

Many challenges remain, including state censorship, the safety and security of journalists, and commercial media that often put profits above public service.

Sheila Coronel is dean of academic affairs and director of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

Constant change in investigative reporting in Africa

BY DAYO AIYETAN

Investigative journalism in Africa is, unarguably, in a state of flux. This special genre of journalism holds so much potential to have an impact on good governance and the sustenance of democracy and development, but it is confronted by an equal measure of challenges.

One of the biggest challenges is capacity — there is a huge need to train and retrain newsroom reporters in new skills and techniques of investigative journalism. Computer-assisted reporting and data journalism, as well as other technical areas that enhance the quality of investigative reporting in today's newsroom, are still new to many reporters.

As in other parts of the world, investigative reporting in the continent is also a casualty of poor funding. Most newsrooms are so cash-strapped that they have virtually phased out time-consuming, money-guzzling investigative projects.

Even then, investigative journalism still thrives, and there are committed individuals and institutions driving it from South Africa to Nigeria, Kenya to Senegal, The Gambia to Namibia.

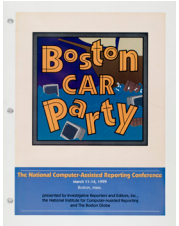
At the forefront of efforts to sustain investigative reporting work in Africa is the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (FAIR), an association of professionals on the continent. It offers grants for cross-border investigations and has done some quite incisive reporting on a number of issues.

'98 CAR Conference program

JUNE 1998

IRE GETS GRANT TO TRAIN SMALL NEWS VENUES

The Open Society Institute awards IRE money to conduct conferences on investigative reporting for small- and medium-sized news organizations.



'99 CAR Conference program

JAN 2000

IRE MEMBERSHIP REACHES 4,000

Membership tops 4,000 journalists. Dues increase to $50 annually.

'99 IRE Conference program

The African Media Initiative based in Kenya has also, through its African Story Challenge series among other programs, funded several investigative projects in many countries, particularly in the areas of agriculture, health and business.

Last year, Justin Arenstein, a South African journalist, and other investigative reporters around the continent founded the African Network of Centers for Investigative Reporting (ANCIR) to provide a common platform for producing quality investigative reporting content.

It is still a long way from making the impact it can make on governance, but certainly in many African countries, investigative reporters are contributing to create more transparent and accountable governments. And it can only get better.

Dayo Aiyetan is the executive director of the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, an independent, nonprofit news agency based in Nigeria. He is an investigative reporter, media trainer and newsroom mentor with over 25 years of experience.

40 years of investigative journalism in Europe — a fast trip

BY NILS MULVAD

BEFORE 1975

Lone journalists and a few news organizations in many cases investigated specific stories, but few media practiced this kind of journalism. There was no education in investigation journalism. The Watergate scandal in the 1970s inspired many young people to want a career as a journalist.

In Europe, only Sweden had a freedom of information (FOI) law from 1766, followed by Finland in 1951, Norway in 1970 and Denmark in 1970. Half of Europe was behind the Iron Curtain with no press freedom.

AROUND 1990

The former socialist countries turned into democratic states and began to establish FOI laws. Slowly, we saw a change in journalistic methods in these countries, adopting some investigative methods rather than writing long explanatory pieces. In the beginning, almost no journalists used the new FOI laws. In Sweden, Europe's first association of investigative journalists, Grävände Journalister, is formed in 1989, soon followed by Foreningen for Undersøgende Journalistik (FUJ) in Denmark and Stiftelsen for en Kritisk og Undersøkende Presse (SKUP) in Norway. Their aim is to share methods, often with the help of speakers from foreign countries.

A lot of news media in Scandinavia established investigative teams. We see only a handful of projects in the 1990s where journalists from two countries and different media work together.

AROUND 2000

Western aid moves into former communist countries in Eastern Europe, supporting the founding of investigative journalism nonprofits in Armenia (2001), Romania (2001), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004) and elsewhere.

The first global investigative journalism conference is held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2001, which develops two years later into the Global Investigative Journalism Network, and now serves as a meeting point for investigative journalists worldwide.

Other European countries form associations for investigative journalists, including Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Around this time, the region also exploded with FOI laws. Today, 40 European countries have FOI laws, and there are many centers actively using and documenting how they work. In 2013, Spain became the latest European country to adopt an FOI law.

The European Union (EU) also now has a regulation on access to documents and files, but there is only a small amount of investigative journalism covering EU stories.

In 2003, the Denmark-based SCOOP was formed as a network for supporting and conducting investigative journalism in Southeast Europe and Ukraine and now includes many other countries.

In 2005, FarmSubsidy.org was created as the first European network of journalists and activists to share data on EU farm subsidies.

TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED ...

In 10 years, so many things can change. But when I came back to Columbia, Missouri, to study journalism during the summer of 2013 as a college freshman, it looked almost exactly like what I remember from about a decade ago when I lived here in 2005. My father was one of the first generations of the IRE visiting Korean scholars, and I was lucky enough to stay here with him for one year. The 10-year-old me had no idea what great investigative reporters I was hanging out and having dinners with. And now I'm back here, 10 years later, taking the exact same computer-assisted reporting class that my father took, working at the IRE Resource Center and taking a step toward becoming an investigative journalist myself. I'm excited to be a part of the next generation of IRE and investigative journalism.

Soorin Kim is a sophomore at University of Missouri and a volunteer at IRE Resource Center.

In 1994, I saved enough from my first reporting job in Tampa to get to the IRE Conference in St. Louis. I had no idea what to expect. It was overwhelming and exhilarating – and a little lonely. I struck up a conversation with Ron Campbell, a business reporter from California. He asked about my work. I complained about an investment fraud story that was stalled. Prosecutors were ignoring the case after regulators shut the scheme down, despite a history of similar cases in other states. He lit up: That's your story!

Soon, the O.J. Simpson chase began on TV. Any talk of work ended.

I went back and reported the story the way Ron suggested. We were about to publish when the principal players were charged with threatening to blow up a federal judge's house. The "pro se" activists were in jail when we published the story – it said, as Ron had predicted, that regulators and law enforcement agents suspected they'd never have been arrested had it not been for that threat.

Thanks to IRE, I've been getting great advice on stories ever since.

Sarah Cohen is a database editor for The New York Times and IRE Board President.

MAY 2000

IRE PUBLISHES FIRST BEAT BOOK

The first of IRE's seven beat books, "Covering Aviation Safety: An Investigator's Guide," is published.

JUNE 2000

IRE CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

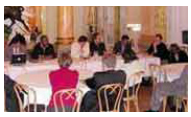
IRE celebrates 25 years at the national conference in New York City.

'00 CAR Conference program

APRIL 2001

IRE COLLABORATES WITH DANISH JOURNALISTS

IRE and DICAR, a Danish journalism organization, collaborate on the first four-day Global Investigative Journalism Conference. More than 300 journalists from 40 countries participate in the conference in Copenhagen.



TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED ...

IRE and I began our love affair the night I was reporting in the middle of a corn field in rural Kentucky. Hundreds of bugs were flying around my head, drawn to the only light source for miles, when I swallowed a gnat on live television.

That's when I decided to start putting away $100 from every paycheck and using up all my precious vacation to go to the IRE and NICAR conferences. I came back home after those conferences and turned a story on the rotting and crumbling bridges of Western Kentucky using NICAR's bridge data.

A few months later I had a new job as a full-time investigative reporter that allowed me to do the journalism I really wanted to do.

For every story I've told and every law I've helped change, I can point to a NICAR dataset or an IRE panel on which I relied on to make it happen. Investigations involving hidden cameras, interactive data, interviewing techniques, confrontations, FOIA fights - all of it comes from IRE and its gracious members who are always willing to share their hard-earned knowledge for free.

IRE is the ultimate support network. IRE is a dedicated and passionate group of people who understand you, know what you're trying to do and understand how many obstacles, big and small, you face every day. They will never let you down. From answering basic questions via the listserv to banding together to finish your untold story, they will be there for you, no matter how hard it gets. They were and continue to be there for me. And I will always be there for IRE.

Tisha Thompson is an investigative reporter at NBC4 Washington.

I have learned so much from being part of IRE over the past decade. I remember who taught me specific writing tips, how I learned to do data analysis and who bothered to talk with me at that first conference when I knew no one. I've met mentors, bosses and of course, tons of friends. It's amazing that a group of journalists, 40 years ago, could spark something so incredible. I'm hugely grateful for their work and to everyone who has spent their time building this organization.

Ellen Gabler is an IRE Board member and investigative reporter for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Continued on page 23

2015

There are a growing number of centers for investigative journalism working across Europe, but it is a challenge for them to find funding. Coordinating cross-border projects is only in its infancy. The Journalismfund.eu supports some cross-border reporting, while groups like the Washington-based International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), and the Sarajevo-based Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCP) work with various news media on big projects.

Nils Mulvad was among a handful of Danish journalists who formed FUJ, Denmark's association of investigative journalists, in 1989. Together with former IRE director Brant Houston, Mulvad organized the first two global conferences and founded the Global Investigative Journalism Network in 2003. He was also a co-founder of SCOOP and FarmSubsidy.org. In 2006, he was awarded European journalist of the year by European Voice and in 2007, received an IRE award for his work on freedom of information. He now works as editor at Kaas & Mulvad, a data journalism consulting firm.

Brazilian investigative journalism and the 'Tequila Effect'

BY JOSE ROBERTO DE TOLEDO

Many years ago, when Latin America was in a financial crisis, there was this popular TV ad in Brazil. As a guy in black tie prepares to drink a "caipirinha" at a bar, someone who looks just like him, but wearing pajamas, grabs the drink from his hands and asks the bartender for another one — this time, made with a more expensive brand of vodka. The black-tie guy asks the pajama guy who is he. The answer became a catch phrase for Brazilian economists: "I'm you tomorrow" — because the Argentinian economic crisis that day would result in the Brazilian hangover the day after.

This hangover became known as the "Orloff effect," after the vodka brand from the TV ad. By comparison, Brazilian journalism is in a kind of a "tequila effect": Any phenomenon that happens in the U.S. journalism industry today repeats itself in Brazil's industry tomorrow. This is especially true for the rapid decline of print news. All major Brazilian newspapers and magazines are suffering from an unprecedented loss of ad revenue, which produced a succession of cuts in newsrooms and lots of job losses.

Some of those who lost their jobs were among the best reporters and editors — and were higher on the pay scale. While print journalism still is the foundation of investigative journalism in Brazil, there's an "Orloff effect" up and down the food chain, contaminating the quality of investigative journalism in TV and radio broadcasts, even on the Internet.

As newsrooms are less populated and sometimes lack experience, some major stories that need deep coverage — such as the many political scandals happening in Brazil — don't receive a proper investigation. The journalists are too dependent on police and prosecutors' leaks — in the best scenario. There's too much influence on the narrative from outside the newsroom, and few investigative reporters dig their own stories from first-hand sources, not from police reports.

The good side of the "tequila effect" is that there are many young journalists experimenting with data journalism, DataViz and Vox-like explanatory journalism. It seems like every month there's a new nonprofit journo outlet launching its own operation — although many of them don't have the necessary funding to last. Mimicking the goals of IRE, we created Abraji (the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism) 13 years ago (no complaints about any side effects until now).

So, Brazilian journalism is struggling, but we're hoping that the tequila effect brings us some light at the end of the tunnel — or, at least, good medicine for the hangover.

Jose Roberto de Toledo has been a journalist since 1986. He specializes in data journalism and writes a political column for major Brazilian newspapers. He is currently the president of Abraji.

SEPT 2001

CAR CONFERENCE POSTPONED

IRE reschedules a CAR Conference for Philadelphia in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Jan/Feb 2002

SEPT 2001

KNIGHT FOUNDATION EXPANDS FUNDING OF IRE

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation awards IRE up to $2 million for operations and endowment.

APRIL 2002

IRE, SPJ COLLABORATE ON WATCHDOG WORKSHOPS

IRE and The Society of Professional Journalists begin a three-year collaboration on one-day "Better Watchdog Workshops" with an initial grant from the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. The number of workshops quickly grows to more than a dozen a year and continues with grants from other foundations and newsrooms.

Ebb and Flow of Access

Forty years later IRE still fights for transparency

BY GEOFF WEST » UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

The battle for open records began long before the founding of IRE.

But relinquishing governments' grasp on public information has been a fundamental fight for investigative reporters since IRE's birth four decades ago, a story well documented in the IRE Journal since the late 1970s.

In the U.S., the Watergate, Cold War and post-9/11 eras each helped shape important federal and state legislation, court decisions and executive orders that have empowered or revoked "openness" since passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 1966.

Yet, the U.S. law has been slow to mature as it lags behind countries with stronger access-to-information rights, including 16 former communist countries and others with developing economies, according to a global FOI ranking by Access Info Europe and the Centre for Law and Democracy.

It's a story of wins and losses for open records advocates and a reminder of how fragile public access is.

As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito wrote in 2013, little is promised: "The Constitution does not guarantee the existence of FOIA laws. Moreover, no such right was recognized at common law or in the early Republic."

Alito's words appeared as part of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling to allow the state of Virginia the right to ignore public records requests from nonresidents, a provision adopted by several states.

But the fact that open government isn't specifically outlined in the Constitution as an inherent right is also a testament to the will of those who fought and succeeded in making

the idea of transparency the next best thing — an expectation.

BIRTH OF FOIA

In 1997, a New York Times obituary credited former U.S. Congressman John E. Moss as the "Father of Anti-Secrecy Law."

Moss, a 13-term congressman from Sacramento, not only authored the Freedom of Information Act, but he championed the bill through three presidential administrations until it was passed and begrudgingly signed by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966. (According to a 2002 National Public Radio series on the history of FOIA, it took "some last-minute calls to LBJ from a handful of newspaper editors" for Johnson to sign.)

The U.S. was exactly 200 years behind. In 1766, Sweden passed the world's first right-to-access law, making official documents available to the public at no charge. In 1888, Colombia enacted similar legislation. Finland, once a Swedish territory, adopted its FOI law in 1951.

More than 100 countries now have FOI laws or constitutional provisions promoting open government, and according to a 2012 IRE Journal article by Martha Mendoza of The Associated Press, 85 percent of the world's population had access-to-information rights by the end of 2010.

Simply having a FOI law doesn't guarantee transparency in government, however, David Cuillier, director of the University of Arizona School of Journalism and chair of the Society of Professional Journalists' Freedom of Information Committee, said.

"FOI laws can actually be worse because it gives governments the legal right to delay, deny or charge exorbitant fees for public records," Cuillier said. "If we're not going to have laws with teeth, it's better to have no laws at all."

Citing national security concerns during the height of the Cold War, President Ronald Reagan and his administration repeatedly tried to curtail the flow of information, according to IRE Journal entries by its former executive editor John Ullmann and others during the 1980s.

Angry at a Washington Post story that disclosed defense spending could go wildly over budget — a possibility discussed in a closed Department of Defense budget meeting — Reagan drafted a letter to National Security Advisor William P. Clark outlining new protocols for handling communication with the media.

The administration's goal of curtailing leaks cooled relationships between reporters

March/April 2002

JAN 2003

NICAR DATABASE COLLECTION REACHES 40 IN NUMBER

The IRE and NICAR Database Library continues to expand its collection of government databases, which now reaches about 40 databases.

FEB 2003

EXTRA! EXTRA! BLOG DEBUTS

IRE debuts daily Extra! Extra! feature on its website to recognize the latest investigative and computer-assisted work.

Jan/Feb 2005

FEB 2005

ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE FUNDS IRE

The Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation continues its support of the Better Watchdog Workshop series.

and sources, Pentagon beat reporters told the IRE Journal at the time. News that Pentagon officials were being subject to lie detector tests and rumors of in-house wiretapping led to long-time sources abruptly canceling interviews, declining to talk or forwarding basic questions to press agents.

"A climate of terror was being generated," Walter Mossberg, a Pentagon reporter for The Wall Street Journal, told the IRE Journal in 1982.

Federal employees weren't the only ones targeted. In May 1986, CIA Director William Casey threatened to prosecute media outlets that broadcast or published information about U.S. covert intelligence activities — essentially equating leaks with espionage. No news outlets were ever prosecuted.

Each president, even Richard Nixon, has played lip service to the value of open government, Cuillier said. "It doesn't matter who the president is, they all suck."

FEE WAIVERS

The Reagan administration had other ways of keeping reporters at bay.

In 1974, Congress added a fee waiver provision to FOIA, which allowed federal agencies to release records at no charge if the information would primarily benefit the public good.

The fee waiver provision was tightened, however, in new guidelines issued by Jonathan C. Rose, Reagan's assistant attorney general.

Under the revisions, requesters would have to meet new thresholds to qualify for a waiver, such as proving they had the expertise to understand the subject material.

Richard Huff of the Justice Department's Office of Information Law and Policy told the Journal that the revisions were necessary to ensure waivers weren't granted to a "high school senior writing a term paper on the Kennedy Administration."

COMPUTER PROBLEMS

In the 1980s and 1990s, state and federal agencies began storing information in computer databases. This shift simultaneously provided reporters with new opportunity and further challenges.

Since open records laws were drafted to assume that records appear on paper instead of a computer screen, FOIA's technological transformation sparked a debate over whether electronic records were subject to the same laws.

In a 1987 Journal article, John R. Bender, then editor of the FOI Notebook, shared the story of an Arkansas judge who "refused to declare a computerized voting list a public record. The judge said the tapes were more like office equipment than records."

The debate ended with the passage of the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996, which officially recognized electronic records and paper records as one in the same.

Another challenge for journalists in the early days of computer-assisted reporting centered on the cost to extract electronic records from an agency's database.

For open records advocates, the "arbitrary and prohibitively high fees" assessed by state agencies were a convenient tactic to prevent disclosure, according to Bendor, who provided the example of a Boston news outlet being quoted a computer programming fee of $600 per minute.

Fees to secure electronic records are still an issue for reporters. With emails, text messages and other digital information now subject to open records law, state legislators are responding with legislation that adds exemptions and increases fees for those records, Daniel Bevarly, National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) interim executive director, said.

NEW OPTIMISM

In 1993, newly sworn-in U.S. President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno issued a memo to all executive agencies declaring, "openness in government is essential to accountability … the existence of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles has no place in its implementation."

That wasn't surprising. Each president, even Richard Nixon, has played lip service to the value of open government, Cuillier said. "It doesn't matter who the president is, they all suck."

Despite his "openness" pledge, Clinton signed two pieces of noteworthy legislation that limited access to information: The Driver's Privacy Protection Act restricts access to state motor vehicle records, while the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, known as HIPAA, limits how much patient information hospitals could share with reporters.

On the bright side, the 1990s also spawned the birth of open records audits by state and regional newspapers, an idea hatched by a group of students and a public policy professor at Brown University in 1997, according to a 2000 Journal entry by former NFOIC executive director Charles Davis.

A year later, seven Indiana newspapers sent reporters to all 92 counties in the state to document their search for basic public records data, which resulted in an exposé on the failings of open government that earned IRE's first FOI Award.

CHALLENGES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The Homeland Security Act — or the "most severe weakening of the Freedom of Information Act in its 36-year history," Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said at the time — provided new hurdles to transparency in the wake of 9/11, including provisions that blocked access to infrastructure data and exempted from FOIA certain information provided voluntarily by businesses to government agencies.

Citing national security concerns, several federal agencies also quickly removed records and documents related to infrastructure from their websites. General John Ashcroft backed the move and sent a memo to agencies expressing support

JUNE 2005

IRE CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Nearly 900 journalists attend IRE's annual conference in Denver. IRE launched a new part of the website, IRE Español, aimed at providing resources to Spanish-speaking journalists.

FEB 2007

FOUNDATION FUNDS TRAINING

IRE launches an initiative to provide training to journalists from ethnic media funded by the McCormick Foundation.

JUNE 2008

FREELANCE JOURNALISTS AWARDED FELLOWSHIP

IRE announces the first winners of an endowed fellowship that provides support for freelance journalists working on investigative projects.

Spring 2009

SEPT 2009

IRE COLLABORATES ON CAMPUS COVERAGE PROJECT

IRE, in partnership with Education Writers Association and the Student Press Law Center, launches a program to share investigative reporting skills with college and university students funded by the Lumina Foundation.

for decisions to withhold information under FOIA, according to Jennifer LaFleur, now a senior editor at The Center for Investigative Reporting, writing in 2002 for the Journal.

As new state and federal legislation eroded access to information, the news industry responded to financial problems by laying off journalists and cutting resources. Dwindling manpower and supplies affected the "level and intensity of FOI work," according to a 2010 NFOIC survey, which found a downward trend in the number of news outlets making FOI requests, appealing denied requests and filing lawsuits.

FAILED PROMISE

On his second day in office in 2009, President Barack Obama said transparency would be one of the "touchstones of this presidency" — a phrase that has turned into a punch line for investigative reporters.

As Katie Townsend for Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press explained in the Journal's fall 2014 issue, "Increased government secrecy, subpoenas, search warrants targeting journalists and the ongoing threat of government surveillance have made sources harder to come by and have obstructed the flow of information to reporters and, in turn, to the public."

Similar to the Reagan era, government employees are discouraged from speaking with the media, calls from reporters are increasingly forwarded to a media spokesman and federal agencies are denying a growing number of FOIA requests under the Obama Administration, Townsend explained, citing an Associated Press report.

Meanwhile, the Free Flow of Information Act, a proposed federal shield law to protect journalists, has been repeatedly debated, but consistently defeated. The FOIA Improvement Act, a bill to reduce the exemptions used by federal agencies to deny FOIA requests, has bipartisan support in Congress, but House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) tabled a House vote in December.

Geoff West is a graduate student in investigative reporting at the University of Missouri. Previously, he was a reporter for newspapers in central Texas.

TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED ...

IRE taught me data skills so powerful that they quite literally armed me with a deadly weapon to question Missouri officials about failing bridges. As a student I knew right where to find the worst bridges in the state, including one dropping large chunks of concrete into highway traffic. The confronted official never expected a 21-year-old student to have statistics and the heavy concrete with him in his backpack when he claimed on camera bridges were safe. The official had to admit, reluctantly, that he "hoped" people wouldn't die. The legislature responded with $25 million for the state's worst bridges. Thanks IRE!

Mark Greenblatt is a national investigative correspondent at the Scripps D.C. Bureau.

I owe basically my entire career to IRE and NICAR. It's been a place where my mentors and idols have quickly become my colleagues and friends. I love IRE and NICAR so much, I got a tattoo that included the two organizations in the design along with a quote from Walter Williams' Journalist's Creed. It's a hit at conferences and happy hours in DC. It's the least I could do to show my love and support for an organization that for years has helped me and many other journalists comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

Steven Rich is a Washington Post database editor and former IRE/NICAR graduate student.

My life was in turmoil when I first discovered IRE. It was the summer of 2003, and I was a young post-graduate with a psychology degree and bills racking up. I had dreams of living a life of service. But I was career-less, and I lacked direction. I struggled with frustration and with doubt. Yet, as soon as I sat down at my first IRE Conference, the light bulb turned on. I didn't know how I was going to do it, but for the first time the path became clear: I wanted to become a journalist. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to be just like those amazing IRE reporters I saw giving workshops and sharing knowledge.

A year later, thanks to IRE members, magic struck and I landed my first journalism position. Twelve years, two IRE mentors and hundreds of tipsheet study sessions later, my wildest dreams have been fulfilled. I now routinely pester bureaucrats, obtain secret documents, tell vital stories and, most importantly, foster positive change through the power of sound, careful, contextual journalism. I now reach back to help others discover the IRE magic for themselves.

Corey G. Johnson is an award-winning investigative reporter at The Marshall Project, a newly formed nonprofit news organization focused on covering the nation's criminal justice system.

My first IRE Conference was in Phoenix in 1997. I was the Miami Herald's rookie City Hall reporter. I had no clue what I was doing. I attended panels featuring top-shelf beat reporters, Pulitzer Prize and IRE Award winners – great journalists who invested in me. I returned to Miami to a massive public corruption scandal, better prepared to tackle bid rigging and even voter fraud.

My story is not unique. That's what makes IRE great. Members help each other, which in return makes our world better: we expose corruption, protect taxpayers, oust politicians, change laws, save lives – and we have fun doing it.

Manny Garcia is executive editor of the Naples Daily News and former IRE President.

I don't even know why my boss sent me to NICAR, and I was scared. This conference turned my whole career around. At the "Introduction to CAR session," Ron Nixon fielded the first question from me, and I begged him to help me understand how this weekend would help my work. Ron gently assured me everything was going to be good, and he put me in touch with the energetic Tisha Thompson. Both set me on the right path and now everything I do is driven by data. I'm not a great journalist yet, but thanks to NICAR I'll get there.

Chad Petri is a data journalist at WKRG-TV in Mobile, Alabama.

Continued on page 25

FEB 2011

CAR CONFERENCE EXPANDS

The CAR Conference in Raleigh expands sessions and hands-on classes designed for programmers.

JUNE 2011

DOCUMENTCLOUD JOINS IRE

DocumentCloud, funded through a grant from the Knight News Challenge, becomes part of IRE. Launched in 2009, the service at the time was used by more than 250 news organizations and was home to more than 80,000 documents.

JUNE 2011

IRE LAUNCHES CENSUS DATA SERVICE

IRE launches online Census data service census.ire.org. Journalists from The Chicago Tribune, The New York Times, USA TODAY, CNN, the Spokesman-Review and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln worked on the project, which was funded by the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism.

Winter 2011

What's next for investigative journalism?

Making data journalism more visual

BY ALBERTO CAIRO

I'm not very good at making predictions, but I'm certainly good at voicing hopes, so here it goes: I hope that investigative reporters and news designers and developers will embrace the power of visualization not just to tell stories, but to explore their own data.

It has been almost four decades since the famous statistician John W. Tukey wrote his book "Exploratory Data Analysis," in which he described how to systematically use visualization to discover interesting stories in data sets of any size. This is a powerful technique that, unfortunately, has been overlooked by many programs teaching data journalism, visualization and infographics.

In the past, those of us teaching in these areas have focused a bit too much on databases, programming languages and traditional, math-based statistics and social science concepts. The result has been that many of our students are scared to death because they believe (wrongly) that data analysis and statistics are obscure, difficult-to-understand disciplines. In journalism education, data is still seen as a knowledge domain that belongs to a special group of geeky students and faculty rather than something that must permeate the entire program.

Exploratory data analysis can help us solve these challenges because it's visual, a bit casual and fun — also, because it's based on simple arithmetic and basic design. Is it the only tool that we should teach and that data journalists should use to analyze data? Obviously not. Classic confirmatory analysis and collaborating with specialists familiar with specific kinds of data are still paramount. Sources matter.

Exploratory data analysis is just a good starting point. Beginning a data journalism and visualization class by explaining, for instance, how to reveal potential stories in data through charts and maps can be an excellent way to get more students and faculty interested in what we do.

It might also help them understand, at last, that this stuff isn't unicorn wizardry.

Alberto Cairo is the Knight Chair in Visual Journalism at the School of Communication at the University of Miami, where he teaches infographics and data visualization. He's also director of the visualization program of UM's Center for Computational Science. He's the author of the book "The Functional Art" (2012) and is working on a follow-up, titled "The Truthful Art" (March 2016), which will focus on data analysis and visualization techniques for journalists and designers.

Growing security threats for reporters

BY STEVE DOIG

Protecting the identities of confidential sources has always been a mandate for investigative reporters. But it's apparent that many of us need to step up our spycraft skills, thanks to the revelations of Edward Snowden's NSA leaks and the proliferation of off-the-shelf surveillance tools available to anyone who wants to snoop.

Here are three growing threats to consider even by reporters who aren't on the national security beat:

STINGRAY: This portable spying device creates a fake cell tower to grab the digital stream of any cellphones being used nearby. Sold to law enforcement agencies in the U.S., these should be of concern to reporters getting information from agency whistleblowers; actually, there's little reason other targets couldn't get similar devices, too. I know of i-teams now using Black Phone encrypted cell phones for voice and messaging out of suspicion that a StingRay unit is being used on them.

GPS TRACKERS: Long a staple of spy novels, these inconspicuous gadgets can be surreptitiously attached to a reporter's car and reveal in real time anywhere the vehicle goes. They're sold openly for anything from locating lost pets to keeping tabs on straying spouses. Reporters shouldn't forget that their cellphones can pinpoint their location, too. The most effective countermeasure against GPS trackers is to avoid taking your own car — or your cellphone — to that meeting in the parking garage at midnight.

TRAITOR-TRACING WATERMARKS: If your whistleblower source is feeding you documents possessed only by a few in the organization, beware that the files might have been invisibly watermarked with unique identifiers. It's always tempting to openly post documents on IRE's DocumentCloud, which is great for adding evidentiary weight to an investigative project. But don't do it if you suspect that your target organization might have watermarked some files.

Steve Doig, a former IRE board member and investigative reporter for the Miami Herald, has done data-aided projects that have won the Pulitzer for Public Service, the IRE Award and the George Polk Award. He now teaches data reporting at the Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University.

Looking ahead in FOI

BY DAVID CUILLIER

Since Investigative Reporters and Editors was founded, the state of freedom of information in the United States has steadily declined, and unless citizens and journalists push back, it will continue to do so in

OCT 2012
IRE LAUNCHES DATA JOURNALISM FUND
IRE launches data journalism fund after a donation from Google Ideas. Eight newsrooms were awarded grants in early 2013.

JAN 2013
TOTAL NEWSROOM TRAINING LAUNCHED
IRE launched Total Newsroom Training — free, customized watchdog training in small and medium-sized newsrooms.

SEPT 2013
IRE LAUNCHES STUDENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

FEB 2014
NICAR CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE BREAKS RECORD
Record-breaking attendance at NICAR Conference in Baltimore. Just under 1,000 people attended, making it the largest NICAR Conference to date.

MAY 2014
IRE RADIO PODCAST LAUNCHES

the future. Three things to look for ahead in freedom of information:

1. Continued decay of public record laws through exemptions, charges for search and redaction and public officials gaming the system. The continued gradual demise of access through paper cuts while freedom of information is bolstered in other nations all around the world. Also, government agencies will continue to become more effective at stonewalling and applying overly zealous tactics at controlling the message — unless journalists push back and don't go along.

2. Potential pushback that could result in penalties and fines being added to public record laws. If the laws are going to work, then they need teeth. This means giving the federal Office of Government Information Services the power to force agencies to cough up records, as well as impose hefty fines on state and federal agencies that flagrantly violate the law. Penalties have been effective in Washington, Florida and other states. They need to be imposed everywhere — and with punch.

3. Stronger access to electronic records, particularly public officials' emails and social media. Consensus is building among the courts that the public's business should be public, even if transacted on officials' private email accounts, personal cellphones and Facebook pages. In the future, the Hillary Clintons and Sarah Palins of politics should be held accountable for hiding their business in private electronic accounts.

David Cuillier is director of the University of Arizona School of Journalism and Freedom of Information Committee chair for the Society of Professional Journalists. He is co-author, with Charles Davis, of "The Art of Access: Strategies for Acquiring Public Records."

Business models: Next up

BY BRANT HOUSTON

The search goes on for the right business models for journalism, especially investigative reporting.

There are already successes that might be replicated:

- The Bloomberg data box that finances the company's editorial efforts.
- The subscription to an electronic newsletter that is expert on a specific topic.
- The nonprofit mix of donations and earned revenue that has kept Mother Jones going for decades and is fueling The Texas Tribune.

But over the next few years, new business models will aggressively adapt to the digital ways people get and share their news. They will take advantage of the power of collaboration across platforms and the different ways to stream stories and content. They will rely on algorithms to customize stories and data for different parts of their audiences, much the way social media does now.

In the short term, the natural bonding of the nonprofit startups and public broadcasting most likely will grow into a generally accepted model. The startups bring experience and new content to NPR and PBS newsrooms, which offer in return to the centers broadcast skills, greater community engagement and wider distribution of stories.

In the longer term, both for-profit and nonprofit newsrooms will develop ways to connect directly to the audience through mobile devices and social media — and create the opportunity for crowdfunding and microtransactions.

But for investigative journalism, the most attractive strategy will be to remain credible and trustworthy and clearly not be a mouthpiece for governments or a front for companies that are currently creating their own newsrooms.

Consumer Reports has shown that people will pay for and donate to a newsroom that looks out for them. In the end, it's an enduring business model, but the key will be for those kinds of newsrooms to figure out how to make sure people know they are there.

Brant Houston is the Knight Chair of Investigative Reporting at the University of Illinois. He also works with startup nonprofit centers that do investigative journalism. He formerly was executive director of IRE and is author of "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide" and co-author of "The Investigative Reporter's Handbook."

TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED ...

I am where I am because of IRE. This organization and its members have supported me every step of the way. IRE gave me training I'd have a hard time getting anywhere else.Through conferences and workshops, many of its members got to know me as a journalist and a person. They hung out with me. Read my colleagues' and my work. Encouraged me. Taught me. Recommended me. Hired me. If you are committed to investigative journalism, I believe IRE and its members can do the same for you. Your first step: Decide, "I want to do this."

Griff Palmer is a 35-year career journalist.

My first IRE Conference was in Las Vegas in 2010. As a recent J-school grad and a foreigner, I was completely shocked by how much information journalists shared with the crowd — even if they were competitors. In my native Spain, scenes like that are rare, and we don't have an investigative reporters association. I was inspired to change that. In 2012, I co-created the first ever master's degree in investigative reporting, data journalism and visualization. In 2013, I co-organized the national data journalism conference, which now attracts around 500 journalists every year. I'm very happy that what happened in Vegas didn't stay in Vegas.

Mar Cabra is a Spanish investigative reporter and data journalism trainer who is currently the editor of the Data & Research Unit at the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

My first memory of IRE, and of Mizzou, reaches back to my arrival for CAR Boot Camp in 1997. A new professor at Southern Methodist University, I came eager to learn more about the emerging form of data-driven journalism I had heard about from my friend Shawn McIntosh at the Dallas Morning News. On her advice, I applied and was accepted. Little did I know how that week would change my life. I recall working twelve hours a day under the tutelage of Brant Houston, marveling as new doors were thrown open into the ways that documents could help inform journalism, and then and there, I vowed to somehow, some way, lend a hand through what little I knew about freedom of information law. A moonlight stroll through the Quad ended with a call to my wife. "This place is journalism Mecca," I told her. "If I could work here…"

Charles N. Davis, dean of the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, has served for years on the FOI Committee of IRE.

MAY 2014

DOCUMENTCLOUD RECEIVES GRANT

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation awards a $1.4 million grant to DocumentCloud. The grant goes toward improvements and sustainability.

JUNE 2014

IRE CONFERENCE BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORD

Record-breaking attendance at the IRE Conference in San Francisco. Approximately 1,664 people attended, making it the largest IRE Conference to date.

JUNE 2014

NICAR COURSES LAUNCH

NICAR Courses, a hands-on course package for instructors, launches.

Winter 2014

MARCH 2015

STUDENTS GAIN RIGHT TO VOTE

Students are given the right to vote in IRE elections. The IRE membership approved the change at the CAR Conference in Atlanta.

APRIL 2015

IRE MEMBERSHIP REACHES ALL-TIME HIGH OF 5,473

2014 IRE AWARD WINNERS

THE 2014 WINNERS of the IRE Awards is an incredible list that demonstrates the power of investigative reporting and its crucial role in society. "This year's entries show groundbreaking investigative journalism is being produced at all levels, from a small Oregon weekly to the nation's largest newspapers, nonprofits and broadcasters," said Ziva Branstetter, chair of the IRE Contest Committee. "The entries had impact in their communities and across the country, prompting campaign finance reforms, investigations and resignations as well as better care for veterans."

"The entries also show several important trends continue to grow," Branstetter said. "Journalists are finding inventive ways to tell stories on multiple platforms and collaborating with other media outlets to produce ambitious projects for a variety of audiences."

"The next time you hear someone lamenting the loss of great investigative journalism, show them this list."

This year's winners were selected from among more than 550 entries. One organization — ProPublica — is a multiple award winner, in both the Multiplatform and the Gannett Award for Innovation in Watchdog Journalism categories, for two separate projects.

Established at the June 7, 1979 IRE Conference in Boston, the IRE Awards recognize the most outstanding watchdog journalism of the year. The contest began with six categories in newspapers, television, radio, books and magazines. Today, it covers 16 categories across media platforms and a range of market sizes. Though several things have changed since the 1979 contest, the winning criteria has stayed the same throughout the years: reporting on one's own initiative; a story's importance; fair and accurate reporting; the mount of difficulty; elements of peril, work and sacrifice; and a story's impact.

IRE MEDALS

The highest honor IRE can bestow for investigative reporting is the IRE Medal. This year's medal winners are:


GILDERMAN


GRANATSTEIN


KATZ


WIGGIN


CARLOS FREY


KAPLAN


FALCON


VENEGAS


EFRAN


KIEFFER

"The Real Death Valley / Muriendo por Cruzar,"

The Weather Channel, The Investigative Fund, Telemundo and Efran Films (Category: Broadcast/Video – Large)

The Weather Channel: Gregory Gilderman, Solly Granatstein, Neil Katz and Katie Wiggin
The Investigative Fund: John Carlos Frey and Esther Kaplan
Telemundo: Alina Falcon and Marisa Venegas
Efran Films: Shawn Efran and Brandon Kieffer

Judges' comments: This masterful production takes a fresh and human approach to issues surrounding immigration enforcement and reframes the debate by focusing on the deaths of hundreds of migrants in one rural Texas county. Reporting in English and Spanish, the team uses interviews and 911 emergency call tapes to tell a gripping and complex tale of human striving and hard choices. The reporters used radio logs and other records to find that migrants stranded in the desert who called 911 waited more than two hours on average for help from the Border Patrol. In vivid detail, the reporters told the story of the Palomo brothers, undocumented immigrants from El Salvador who tried to cross through the county. One of the brothers fell ill while the other repeatedly called 911 for help. Over the course of nine hours and five 911 calls, Border Patrol agents failed to arrive at the scene as the ill brother died. Video crews hiked through searing heat and traveled to El Salvador to put a human face on the tale.

"First Lady Inc.,"

Willamette Week (Category: Print/Online – Small), Nigel Jaquiss

Judges' comments: This small news organization punched way above its weight, taking on a powerful governor and his fiancée. Reporter Nigel Jaquiss' reporting exposed the secret deals made by Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber's fiancée, Cylvia Hayes, who secured lucrative consulting contracts with special interests seeking to influence the governor. Jaquiss' work stood out due to his clear and fair writing style, persistent legal advocacy for records and unflinching reporting. Kitzhaber, at the time the longest serving governor in Oregon's history, resigned in February 2015.


JAQUISS

SPECIAL AWARDS

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


HEATH

Tom Renner Award

"Fugitives Next Door,"

USA TODAY, Brad Heath

With contributions from dozens of journalists at Gannett community newspapers, TV stations and Gannett Digital.

Judges' comments: "Fugitives Next Door" is an ambitious project that reveals a nationwide problem hiding in plain sight — tens of thousands of criminals escaping justice because law enforcement agencies nationwide refused to pursue them. Imaginative, exhaustive reporting that required more than a hundred public records requests and scraping millions of records online led to important conclusions law enforcement agencies did not want us to know and strong results that include reforms in several states. Leveraging Gannett's network of newspapers and TV stations proved critical to ensuring this story had national scope. The interactive presentation was excellent and leveraged the depth of the reporting. This was a complex story to put together and the reporter did it with grace, humanizing the problem.

Finalists:

"Revenge Beatdown," Alabama Media Group, Challen Stephens

"For Jared Remy, Leniency Was the Rule Until One Lethal Night," The Boston Globe, Eric Moskowitz

"Crime in Punishment," WSMV-Nashville, Jeremy Finley, Brittany Freeman and Jason Finley

"Unholy Alliances," Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Miranda Patrucic, Dejan Milovac, Stevan Dojcinovic, Lejla Camdzic, Drew Sullivan, Jody McPhillips and Rosemary Armao

FOI Award

"Medicare Unmasked," *The Wall Street Journal*

John Carreyrou, Christopher Weaver, Christopher S. Stewart, Rob Barry, Anna Wilde Mathews, Tom McGinty, Michael Siconolfi, Janet Adamy, Martin Burch, Chris Canipe, Madeline Farbman, Jon Keegan, Palani Kumanan and Stuart A. Thompson

Judges' comments: With a sustained, aggressive legal battle, staff at The Wall Street Journal pried open an opaque — and often times corrupt — pillar of the U.S. health system: Medicare billing. The resulting release of court-ordered data last year gave the nation an unprecedented look at why taxpayers are funding $60 billion in unnecessary Medicare payments each year. Their public release of the data also allowed hundreds of other media outlets and the public to examine Medicare billing data.

Finalists:

"Diplomatic Drivers," NBC4 Washington, Tisha Thompson, Steve Jones, Rick Yarborough and Mike Goldrick

"Crossing Alone," Houston Chronicle, Susan Carroll, Connor Radnovich, Vernon Loeb, Maria Carrillo and Mizanur Rahman

"Fatally Flawed," The Charlotte Observer, Ames Alexander, Gavin Off, Fred Clasen-Kelly, Elizabeth Leland, Jim Walser, Doug Miller, Tony Lone Fight, Kathy Sheldon, Dee-Dee Strickland, David Puckett, Rob Adams, Stephanie Swanson, Eric Edwards, Diedra Laird, John Simmons, Todd Sumlin, Ortega Gaines, Jeff Willhelm and Bert Fox

"The Business of Dying," The Washington Post, Peter Whoriskey, Dan Keating, Darla Cameron, Cristina Rivero and Shelly Tan

"Protecting the Players — How Safe Are Your School's Helmets?" Gannett TV, WXIA, KUSA, WCSH, KENS, KTHV, KVUE, KHOU, WVEC, WTLV, WZZM, WKYC, WUSA, KPNX, WLTX, KARE, WVUE and KSDK


CARREYROU


WEAVER


STEWART


BARRY


WILDE MATHEWS


MCGINTY


SICONOLFI


ADAMY


BURCH


CANIPE


FARBMAN


KEEGAN


KUMANAN


THOMPSON

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

2014 AWARD WINNERS AND FINALISTS BY CATEGORY:

PRINT/ONLINE

Print/Online – Small

"First Lady Inc.,"

Willamette Week (medal winner)
Nigel Jaquiss


JAQUISS

Finalists:

"Gaming the Lottery," The Palm Beach Post, Lawrence Mower, Fedor Zarkhin, Pat Beall, Michelle Quigley, Melanie Mena and Niels Heimeriks

"Till Death Do Us Part," The Post and Courier, Doug Pardue, Glenn Smith, Jennifer Berry Hawes and Natalie Caula Hauff

"Juvenile Justice?" The Florida Times-Union, Topher Sanders and Meredith Rutland

"Dying for Care," The Palm Beach Post, Pat Beall

"West Virginia Water Crisis," The Charleston Gazette, Ken Ward Jr., David Gutman and the Charleston Gazette staff

Print/Online – Medium

"VA Scandal,"

Arizona Republic; Dennis Wagner, Craig Harris, Rob O'Dell and Paul Giblin


WAGNER


HARRIS


O'DELL


GIBLIN

ARIZONA REPUBLIC
azcentral.com

Judges' comments: While the story of poor care for veterans has been told well by media outlets across the country, reporting by The Arizona Republic propelled this story into a national scandal with sweeping results. The team's stories revealed that veterans were dying while waiting for basic health care services within the Phoenix VA Health Care System. Meanwhile, officials were manipulating records to hide the long wait times. Writing more than 100 stories during the year, the reporters told the stories of individual veterans whose pleas for treatment were ignored until it was too late. This skillfully reported series helped lead to national reform, investigations and resignations, including U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. The project demonstrates the benefits of solid beat reporting and not letting go of a story once the national media jumps in.

Finalists:

"Unguarded," The Columbus Dispatch, Mike Wagner, Lucas Sullivan, Josh Jarman and Jill Riepenhoff

"Innocents Lost," Miami Herald, Carol Marbin Miller and Audra D.S. Burch

"Undue Force," The Baltimore Sun, Mark Puente, Dave Rosenthal and Algerina Perna

"Prison Scandal," Omaha World-Herald, Todd Cooper, Matt Wynn, Alissa Skelton, Paul Hammel and Cate Folsom

Print/Online – Large

"Courting Favor,"

The New York Times, Eric Lipton

LIPTON

The New York Times

Judges' comments: "Courting Favor" offers a disturbing journey into the world of state attorneys general who increasingly are targeted by corporate and plaintiffs' lawyers for lavish lobbying efforts and campaign cash. The investigation was meticulously built on public records gathered from 25 states and through on-the-ground reporting. "Courting Favor" found that attorneys general have halted investigations at the behest of lobbying efforts; taken material written by industry representatives or private lawyers and used it verbatim in lawsuits, legislation and official letters; and entered into contracts with private firms seeking contingency fees after those firms made campaign contributions. The reporting sparked investigations in four states and legislation to restrict gifts and contributions.

Finalists:

"Medicare Unmasked," The Wall Street Journal, John Carreyrou, Christopher Weaver, Christopher S. Stewart, Rob Barry, Anna Wilde Mathews, Tom McGinty, Michael Siconolfi, Janet Adamy, Martin Burch, Chris Canipe, Madeline Farbman, Jon Keegan, Palani Kumanan and Stuart A. Thompson

"Shadow Campus," The Boston Globe, Jenn Abelson, Jonathan Saltzman, Thomas Farragher, Casey Ross, Todd Wallack and Scott LaPierre

"Unfit for Flight," USA TODAY, Thomas Frank with contributors, Terry Byrne, Morgan Fecto, Leigh Giangreco, Shannon Green, Mark Hannan, John Hillkirk, Kelly Jordan, John Kelly, Lauren Kirkwood, Tim Loehrke and Allison Wrabel

"Product of Mexico," Los Angeles Times, Richard Marosi and Don Bartletti

MULTIPLATFORM

inewsource.org

Multiplatform – Small

"An Impossible Choice,"

inewsource, Joanne Faryon, Brad Racino and Lorie Hearn

FARYON

RACINO

HEARN

Judges' comments: inewsource exposed and documented a world where thousands of people, tethered to tubes and machines, are kept alive in places called "vent farms." The state of California pays for all of their care, more than $600 million in 2013. A reporter and videographer secured unprecedented access to one of these units, producing an unvarnished portrayal of a system that keeps people alive at all costs. "An Impossible Choice" was presented in written narratives, radio stories, video vignettes, graphics, a survey, a Q&A with medical experts, a 10-minute mini-documentary and an animated storybook that could easily be shared on social media. The project sparked discussion throughout the community about the importance of making critical end-of-life choices.

Finalists:

"Louisiana Purchased," WVUE-New Orleans and NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune
For WVUE: Lee Zurik, Tom Wright, Jon Turnipseed, Mikel Schaefer, Greg Phillips and E.Q. Vance

For NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune: Manuel Torres, Heather Nolan, Lauren McGaughy, Dmitriy Pritykin, Ted Jackson, Dan Swenson and Tim Morris

"The Scajaquada is a Crippled Creek," Investigative Post and WGRZ-Buffalo
For Investigative Post: Dan Telvock and Jim Heaney
For WGRZ-Buffalo: Andy DeSantis, Franco Ardito and Athan Kompos

"State of Confusion," Arizona Daily Star, Perla Trevizo, Carli Brosseau and Jill Jorden Spitz

Multiplatform – Medium

"Drugging Our Kids,"

San Jose Mercury News, Karen de Sá and Dai Sugano

DE SÁ

SUGANO

The Mercury News

Judges' comments: The San Jose Mercury News series dove into the disturbing use of pharmaceuticals to control the behavior of foster youth. After fighting the California Department of Health Care Services for months, the newspaper obtained Medicaid claim data on prescriptions administered to the state's thousands of foster kids. The five-part series combined exclusive data analysis, powerful narratives, interactive online graphics, poignant photos and a 40-minute documentary video to uncover how foster care providers are relying on a risky but convenient remedy to control the behavior of thousands of troubled kids: numbing them with drugs that are untested and often not approved for children. The series prompted an investigation by the state medical board and promises of legislation to curb the practice.

Finalists:

"Trouble with Taxes," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Raquel Rutledge, Kevin Crowe and Allan James Vestal

"Questionable Drugs," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and MedPage Today
For Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: John Fauber
For MedPage Today: Elbert Chu and Coulter Jones

"Betrayed by Silence," Minnesota Public Radio News, Madeleine Baran, Sasha Aslanian, Tom Scheck, Laura Yuen, Mike Cronin, Chris Worthington, Mike Edgerly, Bill Wareham, Eric Ringham, Regina McCombs, Jeffrey Thompson, Jennifer Simonson, Amanda Snyder, Meg Martin, William Lager and Justin Heideman

Multiplatform – Large

"Firestone and the Warlord,"

PBS FRONTLINE, ProPublica and Rain Media

Marcela Gaviria, Will Cohen, Maeve O'Boyle, Jonathan Jones, T. Christian Miller, Nesa Azimi, Abel Welwean, Leah Bartos, Daisy Squires, Hannah Birch, June Thomas, Ashley Gilbertson, Timothy Grucza and Rachel Anderson; Martin Foster, Tesun Oh, Clair MacDougall, Erasmus Tweh, Ben Ezeamalu, Emmanuel Ogala, David Sleight, Matt Rota, Terry Parris Jr., David Fanning, Raney Aronson and Andrew Metz

Judges' comments: This reporting collaboration told a gripping story of how Firestone managed to continue operating during the brutal Liberian Civil War, a tale informed by diplomatic cables, court documents and accounts from Americans who ran a rubber plantation as Liberia descended into chaos. The team excelled in one of the world's most difficult reporting spots and made viewers care about issues often neglected. The sources of the revelations were all on camera and detailed in documents. The result is a concise history of a disturbing episode that the public largely overlooked and a rare window into the interrelationships of corporations that supply our consumer goods and regimes linked to crimes against humanity.

Finalists:

"Subsidized Squalor," The Center for Investigative Reporting, San Francisco


GAVIRIA


COHEN


O'BOYLE


JONES


MILLER


BIRCH


GILBERTSON


ANDERSON


MACDOUGALL


FANNING

BROADCAST/VIDEO

Broadcast/Video – Small

"Louisiana Purchased,"

WVUE-New Orleans and NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune

For WVUE: Lee Zurik, Tom Wright, Jon Turnipseed, Mikel Schaefer, Greg Phillips and E.Q. Vance

For NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune: Manuel Torres, Heather Nolan, Lauren McGaughy, Dmitriy Pritykin, Ted Jackson, Dan Swenson and Tim Morris

Judges' comments: "Louisiana Purchased" — a comprehensive investigation into the big business of the state's campaign financing — exposed illegal activities, questionable practices and toothless ethics enforcement. The reporting team uncovered volumes of data from campaign finance records that show direct influence peddling going on across the state. In the wake of the series, state lawmakers passed five campaign finance reform laws, 10 politicians returned money to taxpayers, state and federal authorities launched investigations, and politicians returned more than $300,000 in illegal contributions.

Finalists:

"SCDSS: The System Failed," WLTX-Columbia, Clark Fouraker, Jennifer Bellamy, Darci Strickland and Marybeth Jacoby

"Holding Officials Accountable," WVUE-New Orleans, Lee Zurik, Tom Wright, Jon Turnipseed, Mikel Schaefer and Greg Phillips

"**Policing for Profit,"** WTVF-Nashville, Phil Williams, Bryan Staples and Kevin Wisniewski

"Crime in Punishment," WSMV-Nashville, Jeremy Finley, Brittany Freeman and Jason Finley


ZURIK


PHILLIPS


PRITYKIN


WRIGHT


VANCE


JACKSON


TURNIPSEED


TORRES


SWENSON


SCHAEFER


NOLAN


MORRIS


MCGAUGHY

Chronicle, KQED News, RAW Talent, the Off/Page Project

For The Center for Investigative Reporting: Amy Julia Harris; Corey G. Johnson, Aaron Williams, LaToya Tooles, Andrew Donohue, Mark Katches and Robert Salladay

For the San Francisco Chronicle: Lacy Atkins

For KQED News: Julia McEvoy

For RAW Talent: William Hartfield-Peoples, Donte Clark and Deandre Evans

For The Off/Page Project: José Vadi

"Product of Mexico," Los Angeles Times, Richard Marosi and Don Bartletti

"Big Oil, Bad Air," InsideClimate News, The Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel

For InsideClimate News: Lisa Song, David Hasemyer, Susan White, Zahra Hirji, Paul Horn, Lance Rosenfield, Sabrina Shankman, Marcus Stern, John Bolger and Hannah Robbins

For The Center for Public Integrity: Jim Morris, Jamie Smith Hopkins, Talia Buford, Rosalind Adams, Ben Wieder, Alan Suderman, Eleanor Bell, Alexander Cohen, Chris Zubak-Skees, Peter Smith and David Heath

For The Weather Channel: Gregory Gilderman, Neil Katz, Faisal Azam, Eric Jankstrom, Shawn Efran and Katie Wiggin

"Losing Ground," ProPublica and The Lens, Al Shaw and Brian Jacobs of ProPublica and Bob Marshall of The Lens


ARONSON


METZ


SLEIGHT


ROTA


PARRIS JR.

FRONTLINE

PRO PUBLICA
Journalism in the public interest

Broadcast/Video – Medium

"Ticket-Rigging Traffic Enforcement,"

KHOU-Houston, Jeremy Rogalski and Keith Tomshe


ROGALSKI


TOMSHE

KHOU 11 NEWS I-TEAM

Judges' comments: You can't be in two places at once. KHOU used extensive data analysis to prove that members of the Houston Police Department's traffic enforcement division were falsifying tickets so they could collect more overtime money in court. A group of officers listed each other as witnesses on traffic tickets, even though KHOU proved they were somewhere else, writing a different ticket at the same time. Rogalski used traffic ticket data to find suspicious tickets, and then cross-referenced the tickets with GPS data from the officers' locations. The investigation led prosecutors to dismiss more than 6,000 tickets. Three officers quit and were indicted on felony charges.

Finalists:

"Broken Bond," WXIA-Atlanta, Shawn Hoder and Catherine Beck

"How to Call 911 at the USPS," NBC Bay Area, Liz Wagner, Vicky Nguyen and Felipe Escamilla

"The Human Toll of Hanford's Dirty Secrets," KING-Seattle, Susannah Frame, Steve Douglas, Doug Burgess, Russ Walker and Mark Ginther

"Recruit's Death," WSB-Atlanta, Erica Byfield, Terah Boyd, LeVar James and Matt Serafin

Broadcast/Video – Large

"The Real Death Valley/ Muriendo por Cruzar,"

The Weather Channel, The Investigative Fund, Telemundo and Efran Films

For Telemundo: Alina Falcon and Marisa Venegas

For The Investigative Fund: John Carlos Frey and Esther Kaplan

For The Weather Channel: Gregory Gilderman, Solly Granatstein, Neil Katz and Katie Wiggin

Efran Films: Shawn Efran and Brandon Kieffer

Finalists:

"Broken Dreams: The Boeing 787," Al Jazeera, Will Jordan, Kevin Hirten, Colin McIntyre and Marc Shaffer

"United States of Secrets," PBS FRONTLINE, Kirk Documentary Group, Rain Media, Michael Kirk, Mike Wiser, Jim Gilmore, Barton Gellman, Martin Smith, Linda Hirsch, Ben Gold, Raney Aronson-Rath and David Fanning

"Failure to Recall: Investigating GM," CNBC, Nik Deogun, Phil LeBeau, Mitch Weitzner, Wally Griffith, Mary Noonan Robichaux, Deborah Camiel, Rich Gardella, Meghan Lisson, Jeff Pohlman, Meghan Reeder, James Segelstein, Mike Beyman and Christie Gripenburg

"Crisis at the VA," CNN, Drew Griffin, Nelli Black, Scott Bronstein, Patricia DiCarlo, Curt Devine, Charlie Moore and Terence Burke

"Mission Investigate: The Swedish Nazis," SVT, Axel Gordh Humlesjö, Janne Josefsson, Henrik Bergsten, Lisa Jonsson, Frans Huhta Karlsson and Nils Hanson


GILDERMAN


GRANATSTEIN


KATZ


WIGGIN


CARLOS FREY


KAPLAN


FALCON


VENEGAS


EFRAN


KIEFFER

The Weather Channel

TELEMUNDO

the investigative fund

EFRAN FILMS

RADIO/AUDIO

"Delinquent Mines,"

National Public Radio and Mine Safety and Health News

NPR: Howard Berkes, Robert Little, Anna Boiko-Weyrauch, Robert Benincasa and Nicole Beemsterboer

Mine Safety and Health News: Ellen Smith

Judges' comments: "Delinquent Mines" used innovative data analysis to find that 2,700 American coal and mineral mining companies had failed to pay nearly $70 million in delinquent mine safety penalties for years or even decades. These mining companies operated more than 4,000 mines and while they were delinquent committed 131,000 violations, exposing a loophole in federal regulation and enforcement that places miners at risk. The collaboration found human stories to illustrate the data, from anguished families whose relatives were killed in mining accidents to one billionaire owner whose mines had large unpaid fines. The stories led the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration to cite a major delinquent mining company for failure to pay its fines and then shut down the mine when the operator failed to meet a deadline for payment. The agency also said it was considering an "early warning system" for delinquent mines so that it could begin court action against them sooner.

Finalists:

"The Insider," Swedish Radio, Daniel Öhman and Bo-Göran Bodin

"L.A. Schools iPad Debacle," KPCC-FM 89.3, Annie Gilbertson

"WBEZ Probe Leads to Indictment of Chicago Police Commander," WBEZ Public Radio, Chip Mitchell and Derek John

"Betrayed by Silence," Minnesota Public Radio News, Madeleine Baran, Sasha Aslanian, Mike Edgerly, Meg Martin and Chris Worthington


BERKES


LITTLE


BOIKO-WEYRAUCH


BENINCASA


BEEMSTERBOER


SMITH

STUDENT

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

"Payday Nation,"

The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University, Julia Harte, Joanna Zuckerman Bernstein and Nicholas Nehamas


HARTE


NEHAMAS


BERNSTEIN

Judges' comments: In "Payday Nation," reporters at Columbia University's Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism detailed the rise of a new money-making venture among Native American tribes: online payday lending. Reporters visited tribes in California and South Dakota. The stories used government data and interviews with reluctant sources to reveal a system of exploitation, both at the individual level for poor Native American consumers and for tribal leaders chasing false promises of economic prosperity. The project was published by Al Jazeera America.

Finalists:

"The State Where Giving Birth Can Be Criminal," The CUNY Graduate School of Journalism (in partnership with The Nation magazine and The Investigative Fund), Rosa Goldensohn and Rachael Levy

"The Costs and Benefits of an Elite College Chess Team," Webster University, Dan Bauman and Megan Favignano

"Gun Wars: A News21 Investigation of Rights and Regulations in America," ASU-News21. This project was produced by 29 journalism students from 16 universities working under the direction of Jacquee Petchel, Leonard Downie Jr. and Peter Bhatia

The multimedia investigative student journalists were: Claudia Balthazar (Hofstra University), Jacob Byk (Kent State University), Jessica Boehm (Arizona State University), Marlena Chertock (University of Maryland), Jacqueline Delpilar (University of Tennessee), Emilie Eaton (Arizona State University), Sarah Ferris (George Washington University), Carmen Forman (University of Oklahoma), Allison Griner (University of British Columbia), Kristen Hwang (Arizona State University), Kelsey Jukam (University of Texas-Austin), Robby Korth (University of Nebraska), Natalie Krebs (University of Texas-Austin), Jon LaFlamme (Arizona State University), Alex Lancial (Arizona State University), Lauren Loftus (Arizona State University), Erin Patrick O'Connor (Arizona State University), Jacy Marmaduke (University of Nebraska), Aaron Maybin (Marquette University), Wade Millward (University of Florida), Justine McDaniel (University of Maryland), Brittany Elena Morris (Arizona State University), Kate Murphy (Elon University), Jordan Rubio (Texas Christian University), Amy Slanchik (University of Oklahoma), Morgan Spiehs (University of Nebraska), Sydney Stavinoha (University of Oklahoma), Sam Stites (University of Oregon) and Jim Tuttle (Syracuse University).

INVESTIGATIONS TRIGGERED BY BREAKING NEWS

"A Deadly Slope: Examining the Oso, Washington Disaster,"

The Seattle Times,
Mike Baker, Ken Armstrong, Justin Mayo, Mike Carter, Hal Bernton and Craig Welch

Judges' comments: This investigation uncovered in a short period of time state negligence and cover-ups in the wake of the deadly landslide that killed 43 people. Despite officials' claims the landslide "came out of nowhere," The Seattle Times revealed how there had been a litany of warnings, going back seven decades. The team had to master the scientific knowledge to accurately report what it was discovering, and then present the findings in a way readers could digest using everyday language as well as informative, easy-to-understand graphics. Reporting that would have taken others months produced five deep stories in just days. The state has adopted new rules for timber companies and procedures for evaluating unstable slopes.

Finalists:

"Mexico Violence," The Associated Press, Mark Stevenson, Eduardo Castillo and Katherine Corcoran

"GM Recall Investigation," CBS News, Jeff Glor, Kimberly Godwin, Dan Ruetenik, Charlie Brooks, Matt Joseloff, Steve Capus, Jim McGlinchy and Patricia Shevlin

"Dan River Coal Ash Spill," The Associated Press, Michael Biesecker and Mitch Weiss

"Fatal Leak," Houston Chronicle, Lise Olsen, Mark Collette, Karen Chen, Matthew Tresaugue, Anita Hassan, Craig Hlavaty, Mike Morris, St. John Barned-Smith, Michelle Iracheta and Marie D. De Jesús


BAKER


ARMSTRONG


MAYO


CARTER

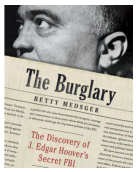

BERNTON


WELCH

The Seattle Times

BOOK


MEDSGER



"The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI,"

Betty Medsger

Judges' comments: The break-in took place in 1971 and over ensuing years has largely faded from public memory. But Betty Medsger never stopped searching for the true origin of the revelations that marked the beginning of J. Edgar Hoover's long slide from his perch as perhaps the most admired man in America. Medsger succeeds where the FBI failed, identifying the average-citizen burglars who stole evidence of the FBI's surveillance of law-abiding citizens. Her book painstakingly documents how the burglary moved the public and Congress, long intimidated by Hoover, to finally turn against the bureau's extra-legal activities. "The Burglary" fills a hole in our collective history and — for the first time — pulls the complete story of the Media, Pennsylvania burglary together in one place.

Finalists:

"American Catch: The Fight for Our Local Seafood," Paul Greenberg

"The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat & Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet," Nina Teicholz

GANNETT AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN WATCHDOG JOURNALISM

"Losing Ground,"

ProPublica and The Lens

ProPublica: Al Shaw and Brian Jacobs
The Lens: Bob Marshall

Judges' comments: "Losing Ground" told a story we have seen before, but in a completely novel way with a custom, user-tested interface for browsing maps. The judges were impressed by the effort as well as the careful, innovative thinking the team put into image collection and matching for the maps. In addition to using high-resolution satellite imagery from typical commercial and government sources, the reporters worked with experts to create their own low-cost solution for adding spectral depth to their images — a crucial layer of data needed to fully tell the story. Not only did "Losing Ground" apply innovative techniques coupled with extensive shoe-leather reporting, it furthered The Lens' ability to be a watchdog for its community. This is a masterful piece of reporting and one of the best examples we've seen of how journalism and technology can work hand-in-hand to tell stories.


SHAW


JACOBS


MARSHALL

PROPUBLICA
Journalism in the public interest

THE LENS
FOCUSED ON NEW ORLEANS AND THE GULF COAST

Snapshots from our blogs

IRE Awards winners take us behind the story in blog posts, podcasts

BY SARAH HUTCHINS, IRE

Over the last year we've talked to many of the journalists now honored with 2014 IRE Awards. They've taken us behind their award-winning stories, shared tips and provided valuable insight into the reporting process. We combed our archives to put together a list of all the behind-the-scenes interviews we've gathered over the last 12 months. You can find them here: bit.ly/1GIRRCa

"First Lady Inc." by Nigel Jaquiss, Willamette Week (Won: IRE Medal winner and Print/Online Small)

- Podcast episode: "The Reporter Who Took Down the Governor"

"Fugitives Next Door" by Brad Heath, USA TODAY (Won: Tom Renner Award)

- Behind the Story: How USA TODAY pieced together a confidential FBI database to count fugitives who go free
- Uplink: Multiple data sets used to track fugitives who go free

"VA Scandal" by Dennis Wagner, Craig Harris, Rob O'Dell and Paul Giblin, Arizona Republic (Won: Print/Online Medium)

- Podcast interview with Dennis Wagner for "Scandals at the VA"

"Product of Mexico" by Richard Marosi and Don Bartletti, Los Angeles Times (Finalist: Print/Online Large and Multiplatform Large)

- Podcast episode "Product of Mexico" goes behind the series

"Losing Ground" by Al Shaw and Brian Jacobs of ProPublica and Bob Marshall of The Lens (Won: Gannett Award for Innovation in Watchdog Journalism; Finalist: Multiplatform Large)

- Podcast interview with Bob Marshall of The Lens was part of the episode "The Dark Side of the Oil & Gas Boom"

"Fatally Flawed," The Charlotte Observer (Finalist: FOI Award)

- Uplink: Medical examiner databases shed light on North Carolina's death investigation system

Kansas AG: Private emails on public topics protected

BY SHAWN SHINNEMAN, IRE

Kansas' attorney general said in April that emails sent by state employees through private accounts aren't public records, even when they deal with public business.

Attorney General Derek Schmidt was responding to a question from state Sen. Anthony Hensley about whether such an email would constitute a public record. Schmidt, who interpreted "private email" to be an email sent not only through a private account but also on a private device, replied: "In short, we think the answer is 'no.'"

Schmidt had already established in a different opinion that emails in the possession of public agencies are open records, his opinion said. But Schmidt wrote that individual state employees don't constitute a "public agency" as defined by the Kansas Open Records Act.

Hensley's inquiry was in response to reporting that showed Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's budget director had sent a draft of the state budget via private email weeks before it was publicly revealed.

Read more here: bit.ly/1EZIHGA

Texas sends poor teens to adult jail for skipping school

BY SHAWN SHINNEMAN, IRE

Teenagers in Texas are being sent to adult jail over charges stemming from their truancy, according to a BuzzFeed News investigation.

More than 1,000 teens have done jail time in the last three years, the investigation found. The students are sentenced after failing to follow court orders associated with truancy charges, often because their families can't afford to pay the fines the charges bring.

Texas' truancy system is meant to keep students on the path to graduate, but often has the opposite effect — driving students out of school for good, the investigation found.

Read the investigation here: bzfd.it/1JKIuIn

Updated inspection data available on the nation's bridges

BY LIZ LUCAS, IRE

Now updated for 2014, the National Bridge Inventory database can help you assess the soundness of bridges in your area. Journalists can use the data to investigate bridges by identifying those with structural problems, or those haven't been recently inspected. Other key fields include average daily traffic and overall sufficiency rating. The records represent information from the most recent inspection for each bridge (which could be several years ago or the current year).

NICAR gets this data from the Federal Highway Administration website and converts some fields to make them easier to use, including converting latitude and longitude to decimal degrees. Previous years of data also are provided in a standard text format, and we include an importing guide for various database managers.

We provide bridge data going back to 2004; you can contact us for previous years going back to 1994.

Read more here: bit.ly/1DXHNo4

Federal agencies fail FOIA test conducted by Syracuse University

BY SARAH HUTCHINS, IRE

If you report on the government, it may not surprise you to read that only seven of the 21 federal agencies recently FOIAed by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) have provided records more than two months after the requests went out.

TRAC, a research center that administers the FOIA Project out of Syracuse University, has been trying to gather infor-

mation on FOIA backlogs and processing times. In late January, TRAC sent identical records requests to a group of federal agencies — including the CIA, FBI, Bureau of Prisons, several divisions of the Department of Justice and many others.

To avoid running into issues like redaction, TRAC tried to keep the requests as simple as possible: copies of the electronic files the FOIA offices use to keep track of FOIA requests, including the tracking number, the date the request was received and the date it was closed.

Read more here: bit.ly/1Jjzw1n

Parking permit data leads to stories, new reporting tool

BY TODD WALLACK, BOSTON GLOBE, UPLINK

Overall, more than 300 Boston households had snapped up five or more parking permits, potentially making a difficult parking situation even worse. Nearly 1,200 household had four or more permits.

Why so many? It turns out that unlike some other major cities, Boston offers residents an unlimited number of residential parking permits for free – one for every car they own. So there's little deterrent against signing up for as many as possible.

To be sure, the permits don't guarantee residents a spot – just the right to park if they can find one. But the more permits the city grants, the harder it has become for residents to find parking.

Indeed, I found the number of parking permits had climbed nearly one-quarter over the past decade. That meant even more cars were playing a game of musical chairs, circling the block looking for spaces.

The story didn't come from a tip. It didn't come from an editor. It came from looking through city data.

I originally requested the residential parking permit database because our newspaper's chief librarian, Lisa Tuite, suggested it could be an excellent source of names, addresses, and phone numbers to track down residents.

She was right. In addition to phone numbers and addresses, the database also contained other valuable information, including the make, year and license plate number for every vehicle with a permit. Overall, it had nearly 94,000 rows.

Read more at bit.ly/1QiP2Pi

Freddie Gray not the first to come out of Baltimore police van with serious injuries

FROM THE EXTRA! EXTRA! BLOG

Freddie Gray was not the first person to get seriously injured during a ride in a Baltimore police van.

Gray, 25, died from a spinal injury in April after he was handcuffed and placed in a police van. The Baltimore Sun found that others have been injured during "rough rides," a term used to describe the unsanctioned technique of driving a police van to cause injury or pain to unbuckled and handcuffed detainees.

In 2005 a man was left a paraplegic after riding in a police van. His family won a $7.4 million verdict against the cops. Another man was awarded $39 million after he became paralyzed during a van ride.

Read the full investigation here: bsun.md/1aZA9RS

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.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

IRE RESOURCE CENTER – A rich reserve of print and broadcast stories, tipsheets and guides to help you start and complete the best work of your career. This unique library is the starting point of any piece you're working on. You can search through abstracts of more than 25,500 investigative-reporting stories through our website.

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, Megan Luther, megan@ire.org, 605-996-3967 or Alex Richards, alex@ire.org, 702-606-4519

DOCUMENTCLOUD -- A platform to organize, research, annotate, and publish the documents you gather while reporting. Collaborate on documents across your newsroom, extract entities from text, and use powerful visualization and search tools. Visit www.documentcloud.org.

Contact: Lauren Grandestaff, support@documentcloud.org, 202-505-1010

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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