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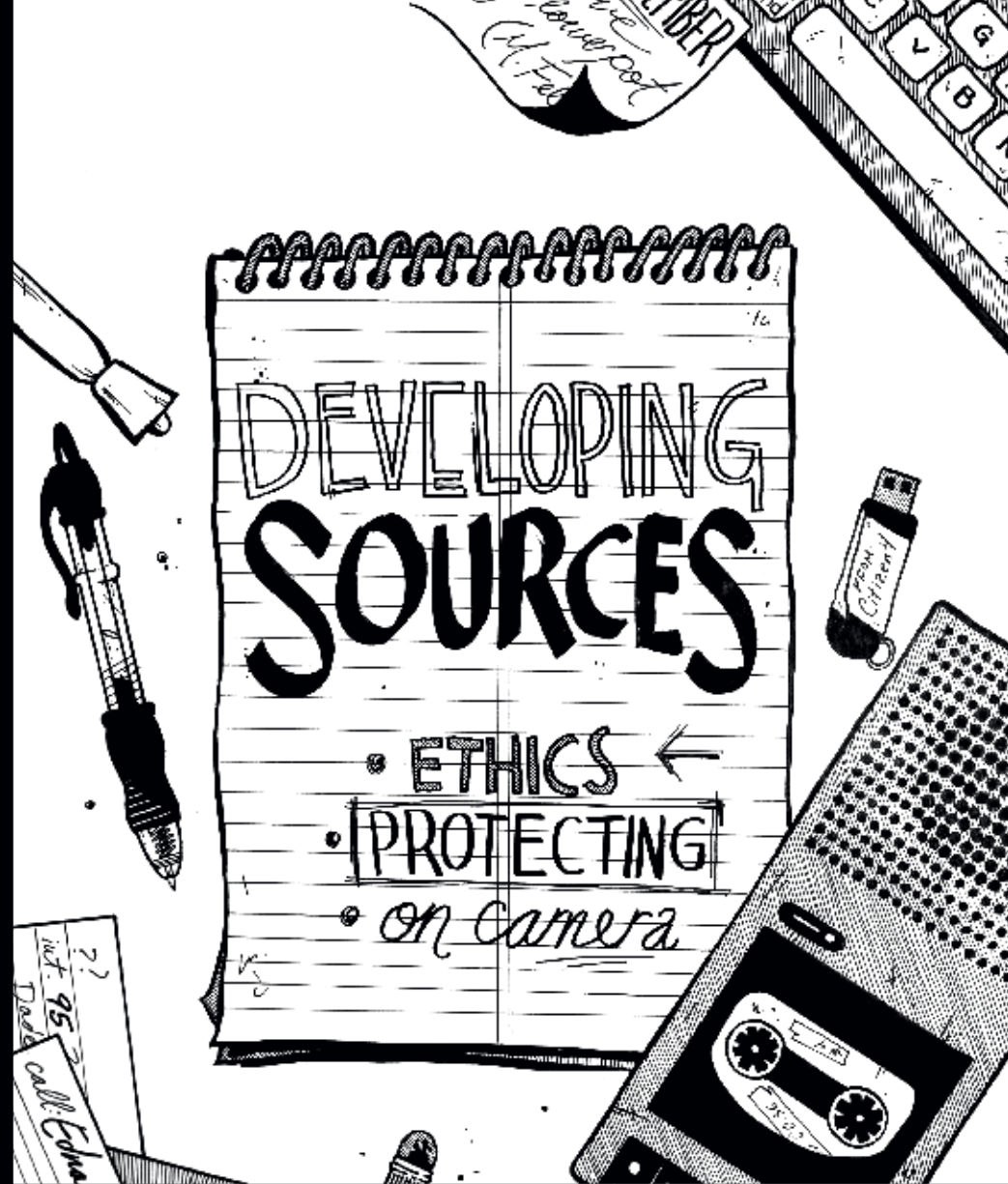
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The room rate is \$189 per night (single/double) plus tax, which is currently 15 percent plus a \$3 per night occupancy tax. Reservations will be accepted until Tuesday, May 24, 2016 or until the block is full (whichever comes first).

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Volunteer for IRE

BY MARK HORVIT

For many years in my reporting and editing career, I was scared to join IRE. I didn't think I belonged. I wasn't an investigative reporter, and I was certain that if I attempted to attend an IRE Conference, it would be immediately obvious to everyone in attendance that I was a fraud. It felt like simply joining would be tantamount to making some sort of statement that I considered myself the equal of the journalists I'd followed and admired for years, and that wasn't gonna happen.

So I didn't join or attend a conference until I was promoted to the investigative team at the (late, great) Houston Post in the early '90s. After attending my first conference, I realized how wrong I'd been and how much I'd held myself back by not joining sooner.

So when I was hired to work at IRE a few years ago, one of my priorities was to make sure that journalists understood that IRE was not just a group of investigative reporters, but an organization with a mission to spread the skills of investigative reporting to everyone who wanted to deploy those skills for the greater good. I felt that the organization's name was hurting us in some ways, and at my first meeting with the Board of Directors, I proposed that we start to use the acronym instead of the full name on our marketing materials. (I got smacked down for that one pretty quickly.)

Whenever I, or any of the IRE trainers, go into newsrooms or hold workshops, we always make it clear that everyone is welcome. That message, and the support we've gotten from a number of big news organizations that have embraced IRE as a key component of their professional advancement efforts, has helped our image evolve.

Why am I telling you this now?

Because I'm hoping that some of you will consider becoming much more involved in our organization, even if at first blush you're not sure you're ready.

On the facing page, you'll see that next month the process of running for the IRE Board of Directors begins. Serving on the board is a great way to get more involved in the organization and to help us find innovative ways to meet the needs of our industry. We're also seeking candidates to run for the Contest Committee, which gives you a chance to judge the finalists in each of our contest categories. It's a great way to survey the best work being done in newsrooms of all sizes and to provide a vital service to IRE.

If you're not sure you're ready for the board, and if the Contest Committee isn't your thing, please consider volunteering to serve on another committee. We have a number of committees that play important roles in the operation of IRE, from membership to the conferences. Our committees have been responsible for many of our most important initiatives over the past few years, including our work to diversify our membership and to improve the range of sessions at the IRE Conference. And serving on a committee can be a great first step in eventually joining the Board of Directors.

If you'd like to learn more about volunteering for IRE or running for the board or Contest Committee, don't hesitate to contact me at mark@ire.org. Board President Sarah Cohen is also a great resource to learn more about what board service involves, and you can reach her at sarah.cohen@nytimes.com.

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

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2016 Board Election

Starting April 18, IRE will begin accepting applications for candidates for the IRE Board of Directors. This year, seven of the board's 13 seats are up for election.

The initial filing period for candidates is April 18 – May 20. All candidates filing by this time will appear on the initial ballot when voting begins on May 31.

Electronic online voting will be open both before and during the IRE Conference this summer. Those coming to the conference will have a chance to hear from the candidates, and we encourage all those attending the conference to wait to vote until after hearing the candidates speak. Information about each candidate will also be posted online.

As in the past, candidates may join the election after the initial filing period. However, voting will have already begun, which could diminish a late-filing candidate's chances of being elected.

You'll also be voting for two members of IRE's Contest Committee, which judges the IRE Awards. Those interested in judging will apply using the same procedure as IRE Board candidates, and will be selected on the same ballot. Contest Committee candidates' information will also be available on the IRE website, but they will not make speeches at the conference.

Learn more about candidacy and IRE's electronic voting system here: ire.org/about/board-directors/election/

2015 Philip Meyer Award winners announced

The National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting, a joint program of IRE and the Missouri School of Journalism; the Knight Chair at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication; and IRE are proud to present the 2015 Philip Meyer Journalism Award, a contest that recognizes the best journalism done using social research methods.

First place is awarded to "Failure Factories" by Cara Fitzpatrick, Michael LaForgia, Lisa Gartner,



Nathaniel Lash and Connie Humburg of the Tampa Bay Times. The team used statistical analysis and linear regression of data from dozens of records requests to document how steady resegregation of Pinellas County schools left black children to fail at increasingly higher rates than anywhere else in Florida. The series focused on failures of school district officials to give the schools the support necessary for success. The judges praised the reporters for dogged work on a project that took 18 months to report and write, and noted that the results underscored what decades of sociological research has shown happens in racially segregated schools.

Second place is awarded to "The Changing Face of America" by Paul Overberg, Sarah Frostenson, Marisol Bello, Greg Toppo and Jodi Upton of USA TODAY. The project was built around measurements across time of the racial and ethnic diversity of each of America's more than 3,100 counties, going back to 1960 and projected ahead to 2060. The reporters used the results to reveal that high levels of diversity, once found only in a few southern states and along the border with Mexico, had bloomed out into large areas of the upper Midwest and the Appalachians, for instance. Those results informed the assignments of reporters to find the local stories that illustrated those changes, with the results running in more than 100 Gannett papers and broadcast stations.

Third place is awarded to "The Echo Chamber" by Joan Biskupic, Janet Roberts and John Shiffman of Reuters. The Reuters team analyzed the characteristics of more than 14,400 U.S. Supreme Court records from nine years worth of petitions seeking review by the Court. The analysis showed that 43 percent of cases eventually heard by the court came from a tiny pool of a few dozen lawyers who represent less than 1 percent of the more than 17,000 lawyers seeking such review. Further reporting showed that these elite lawyers, mostly representing large corporations, had strong personal connections with the justices, with about half of them having served as clerks to the justices.

The awards are in honor of Philip Meyer, professor emeritus and former Knight Chair of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Meyer is the author of "Precision Journalism," the seminal 1972 book (and subsequent editions) that focused on the idea of using social science methods to do better journalism.

Donate an IRE membership, help support the next generation of investigative journalists

Our student sponsorship program is back by popular demand! Last year, about 260 of you sponsored memberships for nearly 400 students. For just \$25, you helped us connect with the next generation of investigative reporters. You shared the spirit of IRE — encouraging journalists to grow through training and helping each other.

We ask for your support again this year as we aim to introduce more students to IRE. Please consider sponsoring a \$25 student membership on behalf of your alma mater, college media or for an intern at your news organization. You don't have to know a student — we can help with that. You can also direct your \$25 sponsorship to help IRE build a more ethnically and racially diverse organization. Check out our sponsorship site (<http://ire.org/membership/student-sponsorships/>) for more details, and please spread the word. (Use the hashtag #SponsorIRE.)

Several IRE members win 2016 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Awards

IRE is proud to congratulate several IRE members who were honored with 2016 duPont-Columbia Awards. Their hard work and dedication to good investigative journalism help keep the public informed and educated on important topics that affect their communities.

Jacquee Petchel, Mark Lodato, Erin Patrick O'Connor, Jessica Boehm and Dominick DiFurio and the team at Cronkite News | Arizona PBS for "Hooked: Tracking Heroin's Hold on Arizona."

Josh Fine along with colleagues at HBO Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel for "The Price of Glory."

Craig Cheatham along with colleagues at KMOV-TV in St. Louis for "The Injustice System: Cops, Courts and Greedy Politicians."

Noah Veltman, John Keefe and the team at WNYC for "NYPD Bruised."

Kelly Hinchcliffe and colleagues at WRAL-TV in Raleigh for "Journey Alone."

FINDING ERRORS IN TEXAS DATA

Troopers recording minority drivers as white

Brian Collister
KXAN-AUSTIN

“You were right, and we were wrong.” It was a stunning reversal by Steven McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, who couldn’t deny what KXAN spent months documenting: His troopers were inaccurately reporting the race of minority motorists, mostly Hispanic, as “white” and skewing crucial racial profiling data.

For months, the state’s top cop had used statistics collected by his agency to defend against allegations of racial profiling following the controversial arrest of Sandra Bland, a black driver who was found hanged in her cell in a Texas jail. In the wake of that case, several news organizations and academics analyzed the agency’s racial statistics which showed a dramatic rise in the number of stops involving Hispanic drivers.

During this same time, another reporter in our investigative unit mentioned seeing some Hispanics listed as white on court affidavits. I had seen this before back in 2004 while reporting in San Antonio where I uncovered San Antonio police doing the same. So we decided to find out how the DPS was collecting its racial profiling data. What we uncovered revealed that the number of Hispanic drivers being stopped was actually being underreported.

16 million records reviewed

A Texas law aimed at preventing racial profiling requires officers to determine and document the race of every driver they arrest or give a warning or citation to. The state’s racial profiling statute requires they report “the person’s race or ethnicity, as stated by the person or, if the person does not state the person’s race or ethnicity, as determined by the officer to the best of the officer’s ability.” The law requires race and ethnicity be treated the same, and officers must differentiate between white and Hispanic.

Our analysis of statewide traffic stop data from the past five years uncovered troopers inaccurately recording the race of minority drivers as white. We reviewed more than 16 million records — data obtained under the Texas



Photos courtesy KXAN-Austin

Brian Collister of KXAN-Austin interviews Sergio Raul Mejia, who was reported as white in a traffic violation in Georgetown, Texas.

Public Information Act.

First, we filtered out the records of more than eight million drivers reported as white. After sorting the data by last name it didn’t take long before we saw large numbers of Hispanic names. Next we ran a count query and found the most common surnames for drivers documented as white, after Smith, are Garcia, Martinez, Hernandez, Gonzalez and Rodriguez. Although not everyone with a Hispanic last name is of Hispanic descent, our analysis shows approximately 1.6 million drivers with Hispanic last names were recorded as white — including thousands with home addresses in Mexico.

Through several more public information requests, we obtained copies of about 150 citations issued by troopers to make sure there were not data entry errors. Another series of requests yielded about 50 dashcam videos that allowed viewers to see what the troopers saw, how the drivers looked and the fact that many drivers only spoke Spanish. Both proved that the race entry of white was incorrect.

We searched online court records and jail records for mug shots of those in the sample with criminal histories. We made contact with

many of them through social media and went knocking on doors to make contact with those we were otherwise unable to reach.

Sergio Raul Mejia received a traffic citation in Georgetown. The trooper wrote down his race as white on the ticket.

“That’s bad,” Mejia said in broken English. “I’m Hispanic. He was not supposed to put white people.”

Richard Kai-Tzung Chang is from Taiwan. But when a trooper stopped him in Austin, he reported Chang as white.

“It’s almost incomprehensible that I could be mistaken for a white male because I don’t look anything like a white male,” Chang said, speaking with a Taiwanese accent.

Racial profiling reports unreliable

Experts in racial profiling told us that what KXAN found shows DPS data is flawed, if not possibly manipulated.

“I think there could be accidents every now and then, but the sheer number of the reports that you found, where it looks like the people who are not white are being classified as white, means there is something else going on here,”

said Professor Ranjana Natarajan, director of the Civil Rights Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law. “What it shows is there either seems to be a complete lack of training on the part of DPS officers...or there is deliberate, sort of trying to not follow the policy.”

We also showed our findings to lawmakers, including state Sen. José Rodríguez, D-El Paso.

“We’ve got to stop playing these kinds of games,” Rodríguez said. “I mean, people want to know why Hispanics are being singled out. That’s a simple question, and you can’t go around saying, ‘Well, they’re white.’”

Rodríguez had already asked the DPS director to explain the reason behind the rise in traffic stops of Hispanic drivers shown in his agency’s data. McCraw replied in a letter to the legislator, claiming the increase is partly because troopers are doing a better job of documenting race after a change to the racial profiling law in 2009 requiring officers to report if they knew the race of the driver prior to a stop.

McCraw wrote: “In implementing this new requirement, troopers received additional training on the collection of racial profiling data, which emphasized the importance of accurately reporting the race and ethnicity.”

KXAN requested DPS records showing that additional training. The agency provided a slide from a presentation used to teach troopers to choose from the categories named in the law, including Hispanic, and determine what “most closely represents race.”

Hitting roadblocks

We anticipated trying to get answers and interviews from the DPS would be difficult. After all, there is a good reason why the agency was a finalist last year for IRE’s Golden Padlock Award, which recognizes the most secretive publicly-funded agency. KXAN requested an interview with McCraw, but the DPS declined. We contacted every member of the Texas Public Safety Commission, which oversees the DPS. They each declined our requests, as well.

So we caught up with McCraw at a commission meeting. As several troopers and public relations staff hovered over us, we finally got our chance to show the director what we had uncovered.

“With so many minorities being put down as white, how can you say that the data is still accurate?” I asked McCraw.

“Your point could be valid,” McCraw told me, blaming the inaccurate reporting on a problem with the in-car computer system used by troopers. But when I pressed him, McCraw confirmed troopers are aware of the system’s limitations and trained to determine and report the race of each driver, as required by the law.

“I don’t doubt that there may be mistakes made on occasion, but I don’t know the details of that, until I see the data and I sit down with

my experts,” he added. “And I’d like to see how wrong we are.”

Reaction and results

Within days, state Rep. Garnet Coleman, D-Houston, called a hearing of the Texas House Committee on County Affairs. McCraw was called to testify and said his agency is working to correct the problem KXAN uncovered.

“What we can do better — and we should have been doing better — is collect the data accurately, as it relates to Hispanics,” McCraw said. “Plain and simple, [we’re] guilty. That should have been done better, and we’ve got an obligation to fix that.”

State Rep. Ramon Romero, D-Fort Worth, the lone Hispanic member of the committee, said he planned to request an independent audit of DPS’ collection of racial data.

“I was disappointed by (McCraw’s) lack of urgency,” Romero said. “The fact that he continued to defend the numbers.”

The DPS director told lawmakers he had ordered troopers to start asking drivers to identify their race. We followed up with a story in which the state’s leading expert in racial profiling criticized the move, saying it might lead to costly lawsuits and put officers in a difficult position.

A month later the director did an about-face and rescinded the order. He issued a new directive instructing troopers to record what they believe is the race of the driver and give each motorist the chance to confirm or object to the race category selected when they sign the citation. DPS is also instituting new audit procedures to regularly test the accuracy of the data and agreed to hire third-party experts to audit the agency’s data collection in order to recommend further improvements.

Some viewers expressed concerns over the difference between race and ethnicity. So in subsequent reports, we emphasized the law requires race and ethnicity must be treated the same to gather the data, and troopers must select from the categories listed in the statute — “Caucasian, African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Middle Eastern descent.”

“People might disagree about racial categories, whether they apply, whether they are real and whether Hispanics should be included as white or not,” said Natarajan. “People can argue about that all day long, but when the state chooses a method then the state officers must follow that method.”

Investigating in your city or state

Texas is one of 30 states with racial profiling laws and reporting requirements. Find out when the law in your own state took effect, and use that as a starting point for the time frame of the data you collect.

Even if your state has no law, you can still see if your state or city’s traffic stop data could

DATE		TICKET #	
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yield a story on whether police are stopping a disproportionate number of minorities or inaccurately recording drivers’ races.

KXAN also uncovered the same problem in the Austin Police Department, which has ordered an independent audit of its collection of racial profiling data.

Before you request traffic stop or citation data from police, get an understanding of the fields of data they maintain, how they maintain them and how they can provide them to you. In some cities, the data comes from municipal courts. If your state’s open records laws do not apply to courts, as is the case with Texas, then they can provide information at their discretion.

Make sure to request the actual citations, and never assume what the data shows is what the officer actually wrote on the ticket.

And check the retention schedule for all the records you need. How long do police agencies have to keep dashcam video footage on file? In Texas, only 90 days after a case is closed.

Lastly, get an expert in racial profiling to review and interpret your data, regardless of what you think it shows.

Joe Ellis and Josh Hinkle contributed to this article.

Brian Collister is an IRE Award and Emmy award-winning investigative reporter with KXAN, specializing in uncovering fraud, corruption, and government waste. Brian’s reporting has resulted in the criminal convictions of public officials, passage of new laws and the return of embezzled public funds to taxpayers. He is also a licensed private investigator and a board member of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas.

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS 2015

“Ghettoside” leaves lasting impression

Steve Weinberg
University of Missouri

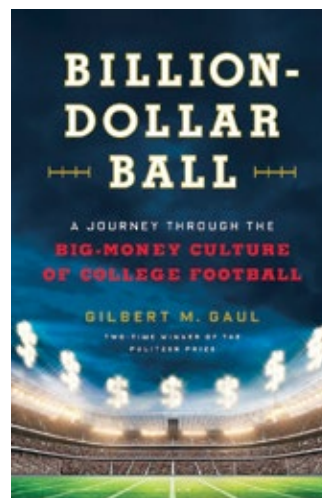
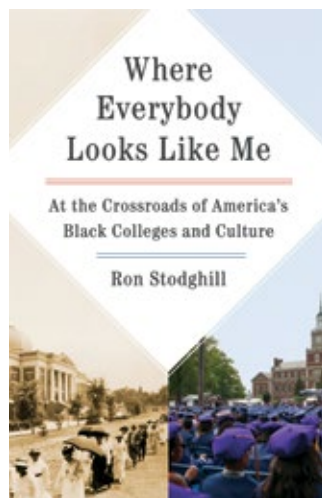
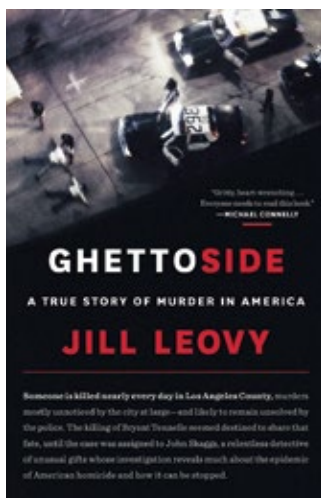
With so many superb investigative/explanatory books published by U.S. journalists during 2015, singling out just a few to this year’s IRE investigative book list feels daunting. That is true every year, but for reasons I cannot decipher precisely, the year 2015 felt more that way. Certainly, the impressive quality and quantity of investigative/explanatory books signify a positive trend for our craft.

As a result, this year I have decided to mention a few that stayed with me the most vividly weeks or months after I reached the final page. I realize that this approach is especially subjective, because it reveals as much about my particular subject matter preferences. And, as you must have already realized, I could not read every book on the book list (ire.org/publications/book-list/). So if the book you published during 2015 is not mentioned among the few in this brief essay, I hope you will understand.

The book from this compilation that stuck with me most vividly throughout the year is “Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America,” written by Jill Leovy of the Los Angeles Times, published by Spiegel & Grau, a division of Random House. Parts of the book focus on a “routine” murder in Los Angeles, the death of an 18-year-old black man shot while walking on a street, apparently because the style of hat he wore suggested a gang affiliation.

The exploration of that homicide relates how a squad of detectives is trying to reckon with the pandemic, which, in their division, involves so many black men killing so many other black men. The vast majority of those murders never result in anyone going to prison, and the cases go cold.

To some readers, the situation might seem superficially like an ugly cliché, but Leovy avoids that trap, in large part because of her empathy grounded in being embedded with detectives during their workdays. The detective who becomes Leovy’s primary character for narrative purposes grew up as the son of a homicide detective and is extremely demanding of himself, as well as his colleagues.



Leovy’s insights are frequently stunning. For example: “The state’s inability to catch and punish even a bare majority of murderers in black enclaves such as Watts was itself a root cause of violence ... The system’s failure to catch killers effectively made black lives cheap.”

In a bizarre way, the anarchy of violence stops being anarchy and looks something like a systematic approach to existence, with the establishment criminal justice system beside the point. Leovy shows that when a dedicated, persistent detective cares deeply about solving a murder most folks barely seem to notice, justice can prevail.

Leovy told Walter Heymann, who featured her in the magazine Kirkus Reviews, “I never think of myself as a nonfiction writer. I don’t even think of myself as a writer. I think of myself as a homicide person. That’s my thing. I’ve just been into homicide.”

Other books from the list that have stayed with me month after month include some that are predictably, and importantly, topical, including:

- “Objective Troy: A Terrorist, a President, and the Rise of the Drone” by Scott Shane, Tim Duggan Books.
- “Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS” by Joby Warrick, Doubleday.
- “Where Everybody Looks Like Me: At the Crossroads of America’s Black

Colleges and Culture” by Ron Stodghill, Amistad.

- “Michelle Obama: A Life” by Peter B. Slevin, Knopf.
- “Billion Dollar Ball: A Journey Through the Big Money Culture of College Football” by Gilbert M. Gaul, Viking.
- “Weed the People: The Future of Legal Marijuana in America” by Bruce Barcott, Time Home Entertainment.
- “The Story: A Reporter’s Journey” by Judith Miller, Simon & Schuster.
- “Shots on the Bridge: Police Violence and Cover-Up in the Wake of Katrina” by Ronnie Greene, Beacon.

Tracking investigative/explanatory books becomes more difficult every year due to the rise of self-publishing and boutique trade publishers. If you know of a book (including your own) that should have a place on this list, please contact me: weinbergs@missouri.edu. Although I dislike circumscribing the list, please realize that it is limited for practicality to books with a 2015 publication year, published as a hard copy version.

Steve Weinberg served as IRE executive director from 1983-1990. Now he writes books, magazine articles and newspaper features as a full-time freelancer.

DISPATCHES FROM THE DISABILITY FRONTLINES

By Chris Serres
Minneapolis Star Tribune

In the spring of 2015, my colleagues and I at the Minneapolis Star Tribune embarked on a six-month journey to immerse ourselves in the lives of Minnesotans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We had no preconceived notions, just a desire to describe lives as they are actually lived, and to understand the forces that had pushed so many vulnerable people to the margins of society.

The following is an account of experiences that influenced our reporting as we pursued a five-part investigative report, "A Matter of Dignity," on the dehumanizing effects of segregating and isolating people with disabilities (<http://strib.mn/1Sma6o7>).

Stories Never Told

"You realize that you're violating the law, don't you? Don't you?" I yelled.

"Sir, you are going to have to leave," replied a police officer.

"But look here," I said, handing the officer a piece of paper. "They are clearly breaking the law!"

"Sir, I am not going to ask you again..." he said.

It was my fourth unsuccessful attempt at an interview with Thomas, a middle-aged man with a brain injury living in a group home in northern Minnesota.

Just days earlier, he had opened up to me on a long-distance telephone call about how he was unable to see his two children because the group home lacked enough staff to take him on family visits. I wanted to see for myself, but that meant getting past the manager who blocked the front door and insisted that I get permission from Thomas's court-appointed guardian, who ignored my many phone calls and emails.

The group home manager called the police when I insisted that Thomas had consented to a face-to-face interview and I should be allowed inside the home.

"Is this a prison?" I yelled as the door closed.

Desperate, I sought refuge in the law. That night, I asked the desk clerk at the La Quinta Inn in Duluth to make six copies of Minnesota Statute 245D, governing state-licensed facilities. On each copy (one for all the staff, residents and police in the home), I underlined with heavy ink the section asserting that clients of group homes have a right to "associate with other persons of the person's choice" and to "engage in chosen activities."

Since I was a visitor and Thomas had consented to an interview with me — clearly an activity of his choosing — I was convinced that I was on solid legal ground.

Years earlier, a veteran photographer at the Star Tribune had lectured me on the importance of always bringing copies of the relevant state law to places where one might face resistance.

But the law is meaningless to the willfully ignorant. And on this hot August afternoon, no one cared about the document that I waved in the air.

"You see, it says right here..." I pointed to the text. "A right to have visitors!"



Photo by David Joles, Star Tribune.

Star Tribune reporter Chris Serres interviews a man with a developmental disability in his Minnesota home.

In the eyes of the local police, I was trespassing on private property, though I had not taken a single step beyond a front porch littered with cigarette butts.

I never did get that interview with Thomas.

Over the course of a summer, we had six more incidents like this, in which homes and workshops for people with disabilities illegally prevented us from meeting their clients, even though all had consented to interviews.

The world may never know their stories, and that strikes me as terribly unjust.

Romance under the Bridge

The evening began innocently.

Rachel and Nicholas, two young sweethearts with developmental disabilities, held hands and giggled as they walked through a leafy suburban neighborhood to their favorite romantic getaway — which they described only as “a bridge over a stream.”

I imagined them embracing and tossing pebbles into the current, a perfect photographic moment for our emerging story about people with disabilities battling barriers to forming loving and intimate relationships.

But Rachel and Nicholas had other plans that night. They desired physical intimacy, and they seemed to have forgotten — or possibly did not care — that they had invited a reporter and photographer to accompany them on their date.

As they reached the bridge, Rachel grabbed Nicholas by the hand and

led him down a weedy embankment. With their bodies pressed against a graffiti-covered pillar, they tore at each other’s clothing and exposed their bare chests to the mosquito-filled air.

Standing nearby, I exchanged nervous glances with David Joles, the photographer on the project, who had stopped snapping photos.

“So do you think they will actually let us use any of this?” I asked, quietly.

On the long walk home, Nicholas suddenly broke away from Rachel and came rushing toward me with a look of urgency.

“Chris! Can I tell you something?” he asked.

“Of course, what is it?” I replied.

“I just want you to know that Rachel is a really wonderful kisser.”

And I have heard it said, by those who choose to ignore the other half, that people with developmental disabilities lack sexual desire.

A Letter Never Sent

The weight of the humid, mid-summer evening piled heavier and heavier on our already sweat-drenched bodies as David and I clambered our way upriver along the St. Croix River.

Our mission was to find the spot where Troy, a father and schizophrenic, was last seen alive, after wandering several miles away from his group home and drowning in a fast-moving current, a bucket of his personal belongings still attached to his body. It had somehow seemed vitally important, after listening to his mother Valinda wail in grief over the telephone, to visualize the exact spot of his apparent suicide.

Our only guide was a perfunctory police report that placed his last sighting two miles upstream from a small boat launch. But there was no road or trail to lead us through the dense buckthorn.

For years, I have stuck to the habit of wearing the same journalistic uniform — white shirt, dress slacks and thin notebook with pen — no matter what the environment. I have found it is beneficial to stand out in unfamiliar territory; the locals will detect that you are “not from around here” and will be more likely to proffer helpful information.

This habit proved useful on this evening.

“You fellas lookin’ for something?” came a young man’s voice from a fishing boat.

“As a matter of fact, we are,” I said. “We’re with the Star Tribune newspaper and we’re investigating a drowning upriver from here.”

“You mean Troy? I might be able to help you,” he said. “I’m the last guy who saw him alive.”

We could not believe our good fortune as we climbed into the back of his 14-foot bass boat. Moments later we were speeding against a fast-moving current, past silvery sandbanks and mobs of reedy islands.

But the stillness of the evening did not in any way resemble peace as the fisherman scanned the banks for the spot where he last saw Troy alive.

As the sun faded, the fisherman tossed a small anchor near a steep embankment.

“He was up there,” he said, pointing to a ridge line. “He was standing there, confused.”

I clambered up the muddy embankment, pulled by an overwhelming curiosity to see the world as Troy might have seen it in his final moments alive. There, at the base of a large oak tree, I found a faded envelope and what appeared to be a letter with bright-colored markings. I could not decipher its meaning, but I carefully placed it in a sandwich bag given to me by the fisherman.

The next day, I called Troy’s mother to inform her of my discovery.

“I can’t say for certain, but I think this may be a letter for you,” I said.

Sobbing, she told me to keep it. “I can’t bear this any longer,” she said, hanging up.

I still have the letter.

Disability Hits Home

They say that disability is a club that anyone can join at any time — 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I discovered this truth early last year when my 76-year-old father suffered a traumatic brain injury after slipping and falling from an ice-covered roof. He was helicoptered out of the Mount Hood National Forest in Oregon and spent five days in a coma with a hemorrhage in his brain and a broken back.

His recovery — or resurrection — was nothing short of remarkable. As I crisscrossed Minnesota interviewing people with disabilities, my seven siblings texted me photos of his victorious first steps outside his hospital room. Within weeks, he was already barking orders, like a field general, to the family members who rushed to his support and helped on the farm.

Early in the project, I took a weeklong break from interviewing people with disabilities to help my disabled father — whose personality had undergone profound changes since I last saw him. Under his manic

gaze, I split wood, tilled the soil, pruned trees and fed sheep, while lending emotional support to my grieving mother.

As he walked the pastures with a cane, it was easy to forget this was a man who had his head opened and jarred, with blood spilling into the brain tissue where it does not belong.

But recovery from a brain injury is like chasing the horizon. It keeps moving. The physical difficulties are the first to go, but the psyche takes much longer.

On the afternoon of my return to Minneapolis, my father raged over the death of a newborn lamb, gesturing frantically and demanding that no one venture near the barn where his body had been found. “Ignore your father,” my mother pleaded. “He’s not the same person anymore.”

It occurred to me that countless others in my father’s position require as much love and affection, and support and security as the world can possibly offer.

A Search for Dignity

A young journalism student once asked me about my “process” for pursuing projects.

“Process?” I asked, perplexed. “I don’t have a process. You just have to take the plunge.” You can talk about process all you want, but it’s meaningless until you confront reality and the blank page.

David and I took this approach in Vermont, plunging headlong into its quaint towns clustered amid narrow river valleys. We came seeking an answer to a simple question: How did Vermont come to be known as the most livable state in the nation for people with disabilities?

Policy experts had recommended we visit the state if we wanted to understand an alternative to Minnesota’s segregated system of sheltered workshops and isolated group homes.

We arrived in Burlington late on the summer solstice, more than a little anxious that the “Vermont model” of integration would prove to be a mirage.

My fears proved groundless. Over the next five days, we would interview more than 40 people with disabilities, their advocates and a battalion of state-funded social workers, who all spoke the same language of inclusion. We met people with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities who ran businesses, owned homes and earned enough to save for retirement.

Had they lived in Minnesota, many of the people we interviewed would have been consigned to dead-end jobs, sorting widgets on segregated assembly lines or collecting trash. Vermont was evidence that integration is about more than just access to buses and buildings. It’s about self-actualization and the right to pursue a meaningful and dignified life.

“People talk about the importance of community but they don’t even know what the term ‘community’ means,” explained Al Vecchione, a Vermont social worker. “We are here to build relationships, not community.”



Chris Serres, a Star Tribune reporter, traveled to Vermont, a leader in the civil rights movement for inclusion for people with disabilities. He interviews a resident who now works a regular job and makes more than the minimum wage.

Dialogue, Not Conversation

Does writing have any meaning?

The question weighed on my mind in late summer as I tried to synthesize hundreds of pages of notes and more than 100 interviews into a comprehensible series of articles.

At its best, writing forces us to recognize a life that is not our own, and to turn history on its head by redirecting the dominant discourse away from the traditional winners.

We journalists become hunters of words, of a dialogue that creates life. I am not referring to spoken facts or mere conversation, but to the sort of powerful dialogue that hits the air and hangs there, suspended, forcing you to reckon with its meaning.

There was such a moment on the outskirts of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, when Bradley, a 41-year-old man with a cognitive disability, snapped at

me when I asked why it was so important for him to spend an intimate night with his girlfriend. His group home would only give the couple 90 minutes of private time to spend together..

“You have someone, right? Right?” he said, pointing at me angrily. “Well, I want that. I want to wake up in the morning and have someone there by my side and feel happy — just like everyone else.”

Chris Serres is a reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, where he writes about issues affecting society’s most vulnerable populations. He got started in journalism as a political reporter for Western Report, a regional magazine in Canada. Serres has won numerous state and national awards during his 23 years as a newspaper and magazine reporter



Tips for protecting your communications from prying eyes

Julia Angwin
ProPublica

It's easy to feel hopeless about privacy these days.

In the post-Snowden era, we have learned that nearly every form of communication — from emails to phone calls and text messages — can leave a digital trace that can, and likely will, be analyzed by commercial data gatherers and governments.

Here are some ways to keep those communications private. While these tips were designed for journalists and confidential sources, they're just as useful for protecting any private communications, such as a conversation between family members or a confidential business dealing.

Some tactics are more difficult than others, but the good news is that not all of them require technical skills. The key is to figure out your communication strategy. First, decide if you are trying to hide WHO you are talking to (metadata), WHAT you are talking about (content), or BOTH.

In each case, there are both high-tech and low-tech ways to evade surveillance.

WHO

If you are trying to mask WHO you are talking to, consider three tactics that I call ACE: "Add noise, Cloak or Evade."

Add noise means fuzzing the metadata by adding false connections or false content to the communications.

A high-tech way to add noise online is to use Tor Web browser, which bounces your Internet traffic around to a bunch of locations so that the website you visit doesn't know where you are coming from.

You could also add noise in a low-tech way. If, for instance, you are a journalist calling a source in the mayor's office, you could call everyone else in the office too. That protects the source from being the only one with a record of a call with you. (However, you should talk for a short time and set up another means of communication to avoid creating a data trail of a long conversation.)

Cloak means using alternate identities.

One way to cloak who you are talking to is to set up new accounts — whether through email, instant messaging or a cellphone — using alternate identities.

For these disposable online accounts, it's best to use Tor when setting up a disposable email (bit.ly/1sPLpVN) or an instant messaging account (bit.ly/1W8rlep) so that your location is not revealed during the setup and use of the account.

For disposable cellphones, also known as burner phones, the best practice is to buy them in cash in a location not close to your usual work and home (because your location is a very distinctive giveaway). Give one to your correspondent and set up a time when you will each go to a location far from your usual route in order to make the call.

Evade means avoiding metadata collection.

This usually means meeting in person and turning off your phones (or, even better, leaving your phone at home) so there is no record of your phones being in the same place. The challenge is to avoid using digital forms of communication to arrange the in-person meeting.

WHAT

If you are trying to mask WHAT you are talking about, I suggest three strategies that I call HEM — which stands for "Hide, Encrypt or Mask."

Hide means hiding the existence of the content, by placing it in a secret compartment either physically or digitally.

Hiding content can be as low-tech as hiding a USB stick in your pocket, as long as you are not going through a border or airline inspection.

Or it can be as high-tech as creating a hidden volume of encrypted content on your computer (a program called TrueCrypt offers this feature) that is undetectable to a person inspecting your computer.

Encrypt means making content unreadable to outsiders using cryptographic techniques.

Encryption scrambles your messages in ways that are extremely difficult for even the most powerful computers to break.

In the post-Snowden era, new encryption services seem to be sprouting every month. To sort out the best services, we ranked many of them last year in a joint project with the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

For encrypted communications to work, both parties must install the same software — whether it is the encrypted iPhone app Signal for text messages and voice calls or the widely used GPG software for email encryption.

Mask means disguising the content as an innocuous, different type of content.

This is known as steganography, or the art of hiding a message in plain sight. For example, a teenager may post a song lyric to her Facebook page that conveys a certain meaning to her friends, but the lyric is impenetrable to her parents.

For this to work, both parties must agree on the meaning of their messages in advance — whether that's by using code words or physical symbols — such as the famous flowerpot on the balcony that "Deep Throat" apparently moved when he wanted to request a meeting with journalist Bob Woodward.

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Developing sources



The human piece

BY BERNICE YEUNG • REVEAL | THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

There are many lessons about journalism to be learned from “Spotlight,” the film that chronicles The Boston Globe’s investigation into the Boston Archdiocese’s systemic cover-up of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests.

As the story behind the story, “Spotlight” highlights themes that are especially instructive to investigative reporters: That there’s the unspoken complicity among institutions — including, at times, the news media — to look the other way when vulnerable people are being harmed. That there’s a need for bold editors to back big-picture and long-term projects. And that there are inevitable internal conflicts that reporters experience in the process of doing their job.

In laying out the general contours of an impressive investigation, “Spotlight” also drives home an obvious but overlooked point: We cannot do our work without human sources.

This was, after all, a story for which no data was available, where cases were hidden by private and confidential legal settlements, and where key documents were either under court seal or had been — as shocking as it is to believe — removed from public access by the Catholic Church.

How do you excavate a story that is so deeply buried? The Boston Globe reporters turned to human sources: lawyers, victims, law enforcement, researchers and church insiders. They did the hard and sensitive work of developing trust with sources, knocking on doors, pushing hesitant sources to confirm information and confronting the accused. Crucial turning points in the reporting came when people offered testimony of abuse, a revelation about the scope of the problem or a tip about where to find documents. Then bit by bit, the reporting team pieced things together. The picture that emerged was a damning one of intentional obfuscation of widespread sexual abuse.

The reporting team did not rely on interviews alone. They methodically pored over years of Catholic Church directories to



pinpoint potentially errant priests. The newspaper fought to have court documents unsealed, which ultimately proved that the Boston Diocese had known about a priest's transgressions for decades and had failed to act. But without the cooperation and the courage of human sources, the size and severity of the problem would have gone undetected and unproven.



This is an especially important moment to remind ourselves that an investigative story cannot succeed without excellent sourcing. As investigative reporters seek to provide the public with evidence of wrongdoing, the recent emphasis on data and documents is undisputedly necessary. In the era of big data, we're able to dig deeper into darker corners than ever before.

But in the absence of human insight, we would continue to fumble around in the dark for answers. Regardless of new technologies or increased computing power, we will always need human sources to provide critical information, to tell us where to look, to offer context and to extract us from confusion. Sources are our sherpas through complicated material, wonky science or a seemingly incomprehensible set of facts.

And as journalists, we write and produce stories, not white papers. Our work does not have impact and relevance if we fail to connect the facts to the power of lived experience. Journalism requires human testimony to illustrate why, beyond the abstract, the public should care and why the problems we have identified demand reform.

Investigative reporters also have a special responsibility and opportunity to seek out sources that others have ignored. As Martin Baron, the then-editor of the Boston Globe who oversaw the 2002 Boston Archdiocese investigation, told *The New Yorker*: "I hope that 'Spotlight' will cause us all to listen to people who are essentially voiceless, and listen to them closely."



As crucial as sources are, we don't talk nearly enough about their role in contemporary investigative journalism. And this means we often don't think deeply enough about our relationships with — and impact on — the people who lend us their stories and who lead us to our most critical findings.

I remember taking an anthropology course in graduate school, where I learned that it is standard practice for a researcher to think through their "positionality" to the research subject. I had never heard the term before, but as a reporter, I understood intuitively what it meant: There's an inherent power dynamic between journalists and their sources.

We know instinctively that this dynamic exists. We play on it every time we seek strategies to encourage someone — whether they're an elected official, a whistleblower or a sexual abuse victim — to share information that they'd prefer not to disclose. Making demands on people for information is part of our job. But it doesn't mean we have to do it thoughtlessly. This is especially true with sources who are not public figures, and who never set out to be martyrs or heroes.

There are many ways to work with sources, and each scenario requires its own approach. But in my time covering topics such as domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual assault, I'm guided by three practices when asking sources to discuss sensitive and potentially traumatic topics:

Apply the Golden Rule. I start by asking myself, "How would I want to be treated by another reporter who is asking me to speak

But she explained that she had eventually agreed to tell her story because she wanted other women to know that they were not the only ones. And while it was difficult, talking about the rape had also been cathartic for her.

publicly about the most difficult thing that's ever happened to me?" I use that mindset to guide my interactions with sources.

To reach a source about a painful topic, I try to put myself in his or her place. It's unlikely that I would agree to do an interview on a sensitive subject with someone who cold-called me or who I'd never met before. So I try to contact an intermediary that they trust — a lawyer, social worker or family member — to ask for help arranging an in-person introductory meeting with the source. Some sources are ready to tell their stories right away, but for those who are more hesitant, these meetings are a chance to explain what the reporting is about and an opportunity for the source to get to know me. I've found that showing up and meeting people in their own spaces can be persuasive in and of itself. Sometimes the source even agrees to begin the interview process at what was supposed to be the introductory meeting.

By putting myself on the other side of the table, I've also learned that there are a few things I can do to make sure the source is making an informed choice about telling their story publicly. Unsurprisingly, most of it has to do with direct and clear communication. If the source is hesitant, it's helpful to recognize their concerns — and then talk through creative solutions that responds to their worries and allows you to get what you need for the story. Sometimes the detail that holds a source back from participating is not a journalistic deal breaker, but you won't know it unless you have the discussion. A source-journalist relationship is ultimately a two-way street, and in exchange for the source's candor, you can offer clarity and transparency about your journalistic objective and the reporting question you are trying to answer. One way to do that is by putting your work in context by explaining why you are asking for painful or personal information.

Be patient. Dealing with vulnerable sources takes time so don't be surprised by it. Instead, plan for it. Set the right expectations with yourself and your bosses from the outset by creating realistic timetables and deadlines. When checking in with a non-responsive source, be courteous and persistent — what I call the "polite full-court press" — but not overly aggressive. I've rarely found sources who have been victimized to respond favorably to tactics that are too pushy or desperate.

And don't give up on your sources. While we do need to guard against excuses, keep in mind that you are not the number-one priority in a source's life, which might involve multiple jobs, family illnesses or other challenges. Find ways to make it easy for them to

interact with you by showing up where they already are. Remind them of the public interest reasons that they should work with you on the story. But at the same time, don't make promises that you can't keep.

Think about the future. It's a lot to ask someone to recount a harrowing and traumatic experience, and we shouldn't forget that in the push to meet a deadline. Be sensitive to the fact that after you've packed up your recording equipment or published your story, it's the source who will feel the ripple effects most profoundly. But there are some ways to minimize negative effects: When interviewing someone about a traumatic event, rely on documentation whenever possible to avoid asking upsetting questions that are unnecessary.

Wind up and down from the traumatic event through the arc of your questions. Ask the source if they would like to have a confidant in the room during the interview who can stay with the source after you've left. Most importantly, after the story runs, stick with your source if and when there's blowback. We may not be able to resolve a source's post-publication problems, but we can still check in occasionally and listen to what they are going through.

The importance of approaching sources thoughtfully was driven home to me most recently by a woman named Maricruz Ladino, a former farmworker who used to wake up before dawn to pick lettuce in the agricultural town of Salinas, California.

I met her in 2013 because I was on a reporting team — where The Center for Investigative Reporting collaborated with UC Berkeley's Investigative Reporting Program, PBS Frontline, Univision and KQED-FM and investigated the sexual assault of agricultural workers — a phenomenon that has been described as an "open secret" in the fields.

Ladino said she had been raped on the job by her supervisor, and she had taken the rare step of making her case public by filing a lawsuit. It would take months before she would agree to talk to us — partially because it was a hard decision and partially because unbeknownst to us, she had changed her cellphone number and she hadn't received a number of our voicemails. But she eventually became the face of the documentary produced by my reporting colleagues and a crucial voice for the entire project.

Soon after publication and air date, she told us that terrible things were happening to her. People were calling her and leaving hateful messages

— some were calling her an "unfit woman." And Ladino's fiancé was caught off guard by how public her story had become and broke up with her. He would come around a few months later and propose to her again. (She said yes.)

Throughout all of this, she said that she never regretted telling her story.

A few months after the story broke, I asked her why. We were in her second-floor apartment, decorated with family photos and religious trinkets. She started to explain how hard the process had been for her, and to make her point, she went into her bedroom and came back with a journal. In it, she had written letters to her deceased father — her way of dealing with the painful process of talking about the sexual assault. But she explained that she had eventually agreed to tell her story because she wanted other women to know that they were not the only ones. And while it was difficult, talking about the rape had also been cathartic for her. "Now it's part of the medicine I take," she told me. "It's like I have a cancer, and I remove a little bit ... (with) this medicine."

There are a million potential ethical pitfalls when journalists deal with human sources. As journalists, we can't make any promises. We can never fully know in advance how our work will affect people — in potentially righteous or unjust ways. In the end, the only thing we can offer a source is an honest explanation of our journalistic objectives and an opportunity for them to give us their truly informed consent.

Because Ladino made her decision to participate with intention, she was capable of weathering the blowback. And while she was driven to tell her story in part to help herself, she also came with an altruistic purpose.

To me, Ladino is the model for what a source can be. She knowingly accepted the potential consequences of talking to reporters, and she shared our belief that telling the story could serve the public interest.

Bernice Yeung is a reporter for Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting and a Knight-Wallace Fellow at the University of Michigan. She was part of the Rape in the Fields reporting team, a project that won a 2014 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award and Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, and was a finalist for the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting. Most recently, she was on the reporting team that produced Rape on the Night Shift, which resulted in text, radio and TV documentaries.



Ethical source development

Questions for journalists to answer

BY AIDAN WHITE • THE ETHICAL JOURNALISM NETWORK

The relationship between journalists and their sources is complex and full of ethical pitfalls. In the provocative opening to her splendid 1983 book on the subject, “The Journalist and the Murderer,” Janet Malcolm targets deceptive journalism:

“Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people’s vanity, ignorance or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse.”

But not all journalists are confidence tricksters. Some journalists are flawed and occasionally incompetent, but most strive for journalism rooted in transparency, fair-dealing and humanity. Our work is morally defensible, but few will deny that if the measure of good journalism is how we treat sources, then we are not always up to the mark.

Establishing the Ground Rules

Journalists need to be as transparent as possible in their relations with sources. The news media have great power, and people can be flattered when they are approached by reporters without fully understanding the risks to themselves and to others when they come into the public eye. This is particularly true of people affected by humanitarian disasters, war or other traumatic events.

Journalists have to assess the vulnerability of sources as well as their value as providers of information. They must explain the process of their journalism and why they are covering the story. They should not, except in the most extraordinary circumstances, use subterfuge.

Of paramount importance is the need for journalists to reassure sources that their identity will be protected. But often this is easier said than done.

Some questions that the ethical journalist should ask in establishing good relations with a source include:

Have I clarified with my source the basis of our relationship and have I been fully transparent about my intentions?

Have I taken care to protect the sources — for instance, a young person or someone in vulnerable circumstances — to ensure that they are aware of the potential consequences of publication of the information they give?

Am I confident the source fully understands the conditions of our interview, and what I mean by off-the-record, on background, not-for-attribution, or other labels?

If a source asks for conditions before agreeing to an interview, what are my limits?

Would I pay for a source’s expenses related to an interview?

What might be legitimate costs that could be paid?

Would I agree to provide legal representation for a source?

Protection of sources is well recognized in international law as a key principle underpinning press freedom. It has been specifically recognized by the United Nations and the Council of Europe. In the U.S. there is no federal shield law. State shield laws vary in scope, but the best of them uphold the right of reporters to resist demands to reveal their source.

Over the years there have been hundreds of cases when courts and public authorities order journalists to hand over material or information that will reveal a source of information. In most cases, the ethical reporter will instinctively demur.

A good example is Jonathan Randal of The Washington Post who famously refused to answer a subpoena in 2002 ordering him to appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was prosecuting war crimes. Randal, who had covered the war, fought the subpoena with the backing of his paper and won. This action, which was supported by press freedom groups around the world, established some limited legal protection for war correspondents against being forced to give testimony.

Cases like this highlight why journalists and news media need to establish guidelines and internal rules that help protect their sources. Reporters may benefit from a clause in their contracts or their agreements that clearly state their duties and obligations in this area. NPR has a clause in its guidelines that spells it out:

“NPR journalists must not turn over any notes, audio or working materials from their stories or productions, nor provide information they have observed in the course of their production activities to government officials or parties involved in or considering litigation.”

Getting Too Close to the Source

Sometimes journalists make the mistake of getting too close to their source. They create cozy, ambiguous relations that undermine the ethical base of their work. Powerful sources have their own agendas, and when reporters accept what they say without question, they cross an ethical line. They also run the risk of being used as convenient vessels for the leaking of information.

Source Review of Content

The questions journalists should ask before allowing a source to review copy:

Are there potential benefits to the accuracy of the story in allowing a source to review portions or all of it in advance of publication? In particular, are there technical aspects that might be clarified if incorrect?

Are there potential pitfalls in doing so? Might the source respond in a manner harmful to the story or to others involved?

If the source wants to change something in the story, such as a quote, how will I respond?

Sean Penn’s interview with Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, the Mexican narcotics gangster, on the run and accused of murder, was a world exclusive, but some journalists questioned why Rolling Stone allowed Guzmán to approve what would ultimately be published.

Steve Coll, the dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, told The New York Times he was concerned by the decision to give Guzmán access to the article. But ultimately, he said, “scoring an exclusive interview with a wanted criminal is legitimate journalism no matter who the reporter is.”

An interview with one of the world’s most wanted men is certainly a scoop, but can it ever justify abandoning editorial control over a journalist’s work?

The issue of who controls the story — the source or the reporter — comes up whenever copy approval is demanded by high profile and powerful figures.

Anonymous Sources

Anonymity is a right that should be enjoyed by those who need it: people who may lose their job for whistleblowing or others at risk from exposure. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed by people who are self-seeking and who directly benefit from anonymity.

Questions to ask before granting anonymity:

What is the motivation of the source for demanding anonymity? Does that potentially compromise me and my publication?

Are there methods I can employ to increase credibility while granting anonymity?

Is there no other way to get and publish this information? Have I exhausted all other potential sources?

Have I maximized the level of identification that can be published without revealing the source’s personal identity?

Social Media and User-Generated Content

In today’s digital environment, rumor and speculation circulate freely, and knowing what is real and how to verify news and information is essential. Digital age sourcing is a major challenge, particularly in breaking coverage where rumor and falsehood can add to tension and uncertainty surrounding traumatic events.

But help is at hand. Craig Silverman, editor of Regret the Error at the Poynter Institute, has collaborated with the European Journalism Centre to produce the useful “Verification Handbook” (verificationhandbook.com).

And in all of this, there is a final but essential question. When using other people’s words, images or content, make sure to give credit where it is due.

The failure to assign the ownership and origin of the information

In the case of social media:

Have I corroborated the origin, including location, date and time of images of the content that I am using?

Have I confirmed that this material is the original piece of content?

Have I verified the source's social media profiles to avoid use of fake information?

Is the account holder known, and has he or she been a reliable source in the past?

Have I asked direct questions of the content provider to verify the provenance of the information?

Are there similar posts or content elsewhere online?

Have I obtained permission to use the material?

Have I collaborated with others to confirm the authenticity of content?

In the case of user-generated content:

What do I know about the actual origin of this content? Can I verify the source?

Are there copyright or legal issues around using the content?

Am I confident that there have been no reality-altering programs (e.g., Photoshop) used?

In the case of sourcing breaking news:

Before I report or retweet someone else's content, am I confident it is accurate?

Would I potentially cause harm if I reported something before it is established with 100 percent certainty? Is there potential harm in not reporting it?

Have I been careful to question firsthand accounts that can be inaccurate and manipulative, emotional or shaped by faulty memory, and limited in perspective?

Have I triangulated the information provided with other credible sources?



we use is a common failing of students in the age of copy-and-paste, but it's unforgivable for journalists to plagiarize the work of others. The temptations of the digital age pose a mountain of fresh moral dilemmas for users and media alike, but reporters across all platforms will do well to avoid playing fast and loose with the core values of journalism.

Their treatment of sources and their handling of other people's work are benchmarks by which our professionalism is measured, and when we fall short it's not just a personal betrayal of trust, it damages all of us.

Aidan White is director of the Ethical Journalism Network. Many of the questions and tips set out here were compiled by him and his fellow panelists at last year's IRE Conference in Philadelphia: David Boardman, Dean, School of Media and Communication, Temple University; Margaret Sullivan, Public Editor, The New York Times; and Wendy Ruderman, Reporter, Philadelphia Daily News.

Backgrounding

Make search engines work for you

BY HENK VAN ESS • EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION

Part of the source development process should be backgrounding your sources. Whether they are the subject of an embezzlement case or the victim of a crime, knowing who you are relying on to tell the story is important. There are several tools and sites that can help. I will take you through some of my favorites. Let's start by putting three famous journalistic questions (who, where and what) in a search engine.

1. Who

a. Finding the right person

Did Mark Zuckerberg meet Barack Obama? The problem with a classic search is that you get sources that mention both people, but not in the way you want.

Filter your targets with AROUND.

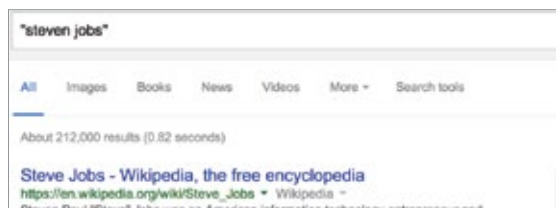
It can greatly reduce clutter. The AROUND(...) operator must be uppercase. It sets the maximum distance in words between the two terms.

And the results will show that Obama and Zuckerberg really met.

If your target is similar to a common or well-known name, use AROUND(0). If you don't want Tim Cook, but Tom Cook, go for "tom" AROUND(0) "cook"

This helps you to get rid of all Tim Cooks.

You are probably asking, "What about just typing that name between quotes, like 'Tom Cook'?" That will do fine here. But not always. Search for Steven Jobs:

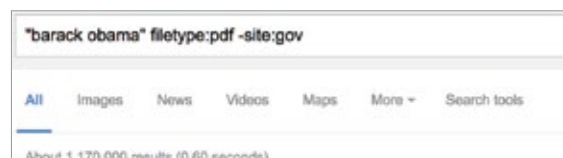


Google doesn't respect the order of these two words. It doesn't show only results with "steven" right next to "jobs" and erroneously assumes we are looking for the famous Steve Jobs. Now fire all cylinders to solve that problem with "steven jobs" -"steve jobs."

I used the minus to exclude the famous person and Verbatim (click on "Search tools") to get rid of the Google algorithm that thinks I'm looking for the Apple founder.

b. What do others say?

If you want official documents about your source, but not from his workplace, (like documents about Obama, but not from the federal government) try this:



And the search "ben van beurden" filetype:pdf -site:shell:*.* is equivalent to "Show me PDF documents with the name of the CEO of Shell in it, but exclude documents from Shell's website."

I used -site:shell.* to exclude all the .coms and -site:shell.*.* to exclude shell.co.uk or other variations.

This approach helps you to see what opponents, competitors or opinionated people say about your source. Currently, Google has some problems with finding PDFs with filetype:pdf because it doesn't include files generated by content management systems. You can solve this problem by searching for the word PDF in the URL with:

inurl:pdf "ben van beurden" -site:shell.* -site:shell.*.*

because you will also find PDFs that are not visible with filetype.

c. Official databases

The search **inurl:gov "stefan raab"** tries to find worldwide official documents about a person. It searches for .gov.uk (United Kingdom) but also .gov.au (Australia), .gov.cn (China), .gov (U.S.) and other governmental websites in the world. If you don't have a .gov website in your country, use the local word for it with the site: operator. Examples would be site:bund.de (Germany) or site:overheid.nl (The Netherlands).



d. International Organizations

By searching **site:int** you will only be searching international organizations related to the United Nations, such as World Health Organization. You are now searching in any United Nations-related organization, based on bilateral or multilateral agreements. We find a German TV-presenter popping up as an owner of his own airline.

e. Find the variations of the name

"tim ** cook" apple

With this formula you can find results that use different spellings of the name. Try one asterisk and two asterisks both to see if a person has one or two more names than you expected. With this, you will find out that Tim Cook is also referred to as Timothy Donald Cook. Now repeat steps 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d with this new name.

2. Where

a. Use the photo search in Twitter

How do you find photos from a certain person visiting a certain place now that topsy.com, a tweet search engine, is gone? Fire up Twitter and type your wishes.

Who? Put the name between quotes.

Where? Enter **near:** "(place)"

When? Enter **until:** (date)

In order to find photos of Obama in New York before Feb. 18, 2013 type: "barack obama" near: "New York, NY" within: 15 mi until: 2013-02-18

For more elaborate searches, visit <https://twitter.com/search-advanced>.

b. Use Echosec or Geofeedia

With Echosec, you can search social media for free. In this example, I entered the address of (1) Shell HQ in hopes of finding (2) recent postings from (3) people who work there. If you can afford it, go for the paid source www.geofeedia.com which has many extras, like who is talking about a certain person (Obama) and where.

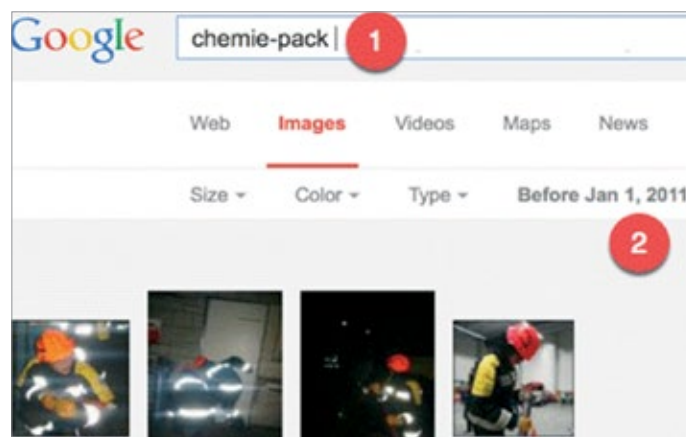
Free tools that cover Twitter and Instagram are Ban.jo and Yomaptic.



3. When

a. Date search

Most of the research you do is not based on today, but on an earlier period. Always tell your search engine to go back in time.



Let's investigate a fire in a Dutch chemical plant called Chemie-Pack. The fire happened on Jan. 5, 2011. Perhaps you want to investigate if dangerous chemicals were stored at the plant. Go to images.google.com, (1) type in Chemie-pack and (2) just search before January 2011. The results in 2011 offered hundreds of photos from a youth fire department that visited the company days before the fire. In some photos, you can see barrels with names of chemicals on them. We used this to establish which chemicals were stored in the plant days before the fire.

b. Find old data with archive.org

Websites often cease to exist. There is a chance you can still view them by using archive.org. This tool can do its work only if you know the URL of the webpage you want to see. The problem is that often the link is gone and you don't know it. So how do you find a seemingly disappeared URL?

Let's assume we want to find the home page of a dead actress called Lana Clarkson.

Step One: Find a source about the missing page. In this case, we can use her Wikipedia page.

Step Two: Go to archive.org and enter the URL of her Wikipedia page, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lana_Clarkson. Choose the oldest available version, March 10, 2004. There it says the home page was <http://www.lanaclarkson.com>.

Step Three: Find the original website.

Now type the link in archive.org, but add a backslash and an asterisk to the URL: https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.lanaclarkson.com/*.

All filed links are now visible. Unfortunately, in this case, you won't find that much. Clarkson became famous only after her death. She was shot and killed by music producer Phil Spector in February 2003.

Henk van Ess travels around the world to train media professionals in social media, Google, the Internet and information overload ("Kill the cats, not curiosity"). Current projects include "fact-checking the web," (verificationhandbook.com), Facebook graph search (see graph.tips) and data journalism. He works for the European Broadcasting Union, Schibsted, Axel Springer Akademie and eight European universities. He is @henkvaness on Twitter.

On air

How to get reluctant sources to talk

BY VICKY NGUYEN • NBC BAY AREA

After 15 years of reporting general assignment news, special projects and investigative stories, I'm still finding new ways to get to the heart of a story through sources who often don't want to go on camera. But if I follow my general guide for do's and don'ts in convincing them to speak, I don't have to worry about persuading them to do something for which they aren't ready. I can then focus on putting together an accurate and compelling story, which is ultimately why we want these sources to trust us and talk to us: so we can shine a light on crucial issues.

Be human

We get into reporter mode and sometimes forget that what's all in a day's work for us is quite possibly a once in a lifetime experience for our sources. It gets even trickier when TV is the medium, because it's not just a quote or a voice; it's lights, cameras and a pretty unnatural experience for anyone. I always take a step back to remember this is a big deal. The person I'm trying to convince to go on camera is someone with a family, a job, a community and a life outside of my report. That helps me to frame my request, so they know I don't view them as a commodity, but that I'm interested in their unique experience and truth. People can smell a fake a mile away. The goal is to develop trust and a rapport that will lead to information and an interview.

Assess the risks and be upfront

If I can help my sources weigh the risks and think through different scenarios and outcomes, then they can see I've thought about their position and I'm being transparent. Often we have more experience than our sources in understanding what can happen after someone goes on camera. Don't hide the ball. Sources will respect the fact you're looking out for them and empowering them to make their own decisions about the level of risk they're willing to take.

Understand the source's motivation

Does this person want to protect others? Does he want to expose corruption? Is he blowing the whistle on a broken system? Does he feel like a victim who's been ignored? Usually people turn to the media because they have a wrong they want righted. Our job is to figure out if we can help them, and in turn, help the community. Understanding their motivation helps you explain what you can do to help them reach that goal.

Promise anonymity sparingly

It can be tempting to guarantee someone you'll blur her face or hide her identity because she has juicy information and she seems reluctant to go on camera. But that's a huge crutch. It undermines her credibility, and in turn, yours. And it sets a bad precedent. The more often viewers see you relying on anonymous sources, the more likely future sources will ask to be disguised. And often people just ask for that because it seems like the easiest way to criticize an organization or raise allegations. Reserve anonymity for someone who would be in a life-threatening situation if they spoke out, or if they would risk losing their job or face retaliation. If they won't speak on the record, they should at least be able to provide proof of their allegation. Look for retired people from the agency or other sources who can go on camera.

Explain their value

Did this person witness problems firsthand? Is he the only one who can testify to why something is wrong? Was he wrongly scapegoated? Is he in a position where it's safe to be critical and raise concerns? I try to explain to sources why their voice is essential. We had several parents come to us with concerns about a principal they suspected of stealing from students. They didn't want to go on

camera, worried about their children at the school. But we helped the PTA president understand why she could be a voice on behalf of those parents, and that as the president, she could speak not only as a parent, but, more importantly, as a representative of the parents and teachers in her organization.

Don't overpromise

Your story could get someone fired. It could result in a major fine or lead to prosecution. When you're honest about the various outcomes of the report, it builds trust and sets expectations for your source if he or she goes on camera.

Be patient and persistent

Meet your source in person. Have an agenda to keep the meeting efficient and focused. Let your source know you're willing to invest time and energy in telling their story, but be clear about your expectations and time constraints. It keeps everyone on the same page about the goals for both sides.

Provide examples

Show your source you're legit. Explain how you worked with previous sources to tell their stories.

Know when to back off

If you've been upfront, honest and respectful, it's OK to let your source know you're going to give them some time, but that you also need to move other projects forward. Put a reminder in your calendar to check back in.

Follow up

Send links to the story, ask for feedback and thank your source.

Vicky Nguyen is an investigative reporter and anchor at NBC Bay Area. Her work has been recognized with a National Emmy, Gracie, Scripps Howard, National Press Club, Murrow, and multiple Emmy and SPJ awards. She's honored to be a 2014 IRE finalist for her series exposing 911 policy failures at the USPS.



Whistleblowers

Tips for working with someone who has insider knowledge

BY JOSH MEYER • MEDILL NATIONAL SECURITY JOURNALISM INITIATIVE | NBC NEWS

Ask an investigative reporter what they think of whistleblowers and you are likely to get one of two answers. One is that they are an invaluable source of information that can mean the difference between a good story and a truly extraordinary one.

The other response is that most whistleblowers have an ax to grind, need to be treated with extreme caution and, in some cases, are borderline crazy.

It turns out there is an element of truth to all of these descriptions. Whistleblowers have been an essential part of good accountability journalism since the first beat reporter began nosing around a government agency or corporation. And over the years, they have been the impetus for many a muckraker as they launched their campaigns to speak truth to power.

It's impossible to boil down into one neatly prescribed article all of the variables that come into play when dealing with whistleblowers.

But here is some general guidance on how to find whistleblowers, how to protect them and how to protect yourself and your media organization from the inevitable pitfalls that come with using them.

One helpful hint I learned early on — especially when covering city and county government — is to use the term whistleblower loosely and expansively.

By that I mean not every reporter will have the good fortune to come across one of those truly aggrieved government employees who has initiated a formal whistleblower complaint, lawsuit or smoking gun memo or email. But you don't need to.

For every one of those, there are literally dozens of other potentially great sources who also are privy to particularly valuable information and problems that are being ignored or covered up, but who haven't yet acted or have done so in smaller or more informal ways.

Some Do's and Don'ts

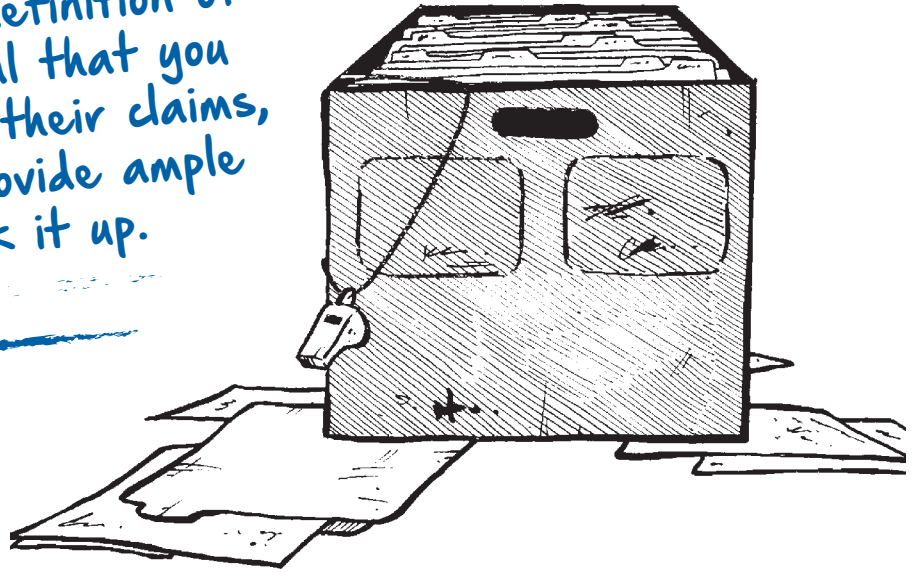
Make sure you take the time to get to know the whistleblowers and understand their motives. Is it frustration? Outrage? Something more personal? Or is this simply a standup citizen or employee who doesn't like what she or he sees and feels the public should know?

Make sure you acknowledge the significance of what they are doing, but be careful to not cross the line and be a cheerleader for what they are doing. To the whistleblower, their information is very important, and so is the sacrifice that they are making — whether they know it or not. Some are risking their careers and even possibly their lives by coming forward. So it's OK to show compassion and understanding, as long as you don't let your judgment be clouded by becoming their advocate or champion, or worse, their friend. Maintain a strict professional relationship as you would with other sources.

Always establish mutually agreed upon and clearly laid out ground rules at the very outset of the process. That includes how exactly you are going to quote them (background vs. off the record), how you will refer to them and the lengths to which you can, and will, go to protect them.

Never promise more than you can deliver. This is especially the case when it comes to legal protections such as never giving up their names if subpoenaed. Your editors may back you up, but the corporate overseers might not. And these days, such promises can be undermined by technology; the government might find out who your sources are by obtaining your emails or other electronic media and through other means.

Given that so many whistleblowers have an agenda (see the definition of disgruntled), it is essential that you spend a lot of time vetting their claims, especially if they don't provide ample documentation to back it up.



The earlier you find them in the process, the better. Why? The sooner you speak to them, the less likely it is that another journalist will also find them.

And as one network producer learned the hard way, even going to great lengths to alter a whistleblower's voice and appearance on camera can provide false assurances, as experts with the right technological skills can still find out who that person is.

What you can do, however, is lay out what specific steps you will take for your sources and who else in your chain of command is — or isn't — in on the arrangement. Make them aware of whistleblower lawyers and advocacy groups that advise and protect whistleblowers.

How to find whistleblowers

Some, like VICE News' Jason Leopold, have mastered the art of finding whistleblowers through skillful exploitation of documents.

Leopold said the best way to track down whistleblowers and to gain insight into allegations of waste, fraud and abuse is by submitting FOIAs to the inspectors general at government agencies. He requests their documents on an investigation or within a particular time period.

These final reports, closing reports and memos, and referral memos and letters often provide detail into how government watchdogs have looked into a wide range of claims leveled by whistleblowers and whether their complaints did or did not have merit.

They show that whistleblowers do, indeed, use the tools at their disposal, such as hotlines and complaint referrals, in an effort to expose problems.

Deborah Nelson of Reuters and the University of Maryland, by contrast, likes to work the person-to-person angle. She is always on the lookout for government employees who might be outraged by colleagues acting improperly for political or personal gain.

"They may not think of themselves as whistleblowers per se, but given the opportunity, many will find a way to help us expose problems. Our challenge is to create opportunities for them to do so," said Nelson, who, like some others interviewed for this piece, won a coveted Pulitzer Prize for exposing wrongdoing.

Meeting Whistleblowers

Make yourself as accessible as possible, online and in person.

Get yourself out there — to meetings, government offices and conferences — and don't be shy about saying you want to meet people who can help you understand whatever it is you're reporting on. Talking to people in person helps them feel comfortable with you, and it helps you look for the telltale body language and other cues that indicate they may have something to talk about.

Be active on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

Use your email signature and byline to provide ways for prospective sources to check you out and contact you.

Authenticating

Given that so many whistleblowers have an agenda (see the definition of disgruntled), it is essential that you spend a lot of time vetting their claims, especially if they don't provide ample documentation to back it up.

Make sure to level with them, and tell them that you have to aggressively vet their claims — and them personally — as a matter of due diligence. Tell them they need to come clean with any kind of information, professional but also personal, because it needs to be assessed as part of your editorial process.

At every step, ask them if there is anything you need to know but that they might have forgotten to tell you. Often it's just an honest mistake, but whistleblowers often have issues that can undermine their credibility, especially if you don't know about them until it's too late to take them into account.

Joe Stephens of The Washington Post said independent verification of claims is key, and the best way to do that is through documents.

"The reporter has a responsibility to look after the whistleblower's well-being on all levels, to make sure he stays safe, sane and free from both harm and excessive worry. That's simply the human and right thing to do."

"Download the whistleblower's claims and then ask, 'How can I prove that? What documents do you have? What emails do you have? What databases do you have?'" Stephens said. "It matters little whether a whistleblower has an ax to grind — or even if he or she is certifiable — if the facts check out."

Stephens cited the case of a former "professional conman" who ended up becoming the foundational source for a project on how organized crime had infiltrated the charitable gaming industry.

Also helpful: Use other sources to confirm a whistleblower's story, especially by having them walk you through the information independently, as opposed to confirming what you already have.

Evaluating the consequences

It is critically important to game out the consequences of whistleblowers' actions — for their sake and for yours. What kind of reaction will it cause? Will they suffer professionally or personally? If so, are they going to accuse you of hanging them out to dry, or will they backpedal?

David Corn of Mother Jones spent a lot of time with Scott Prouty talking about the potential consequences of his coming forward with the now-infamous "47 percent" video that helped derail Mitt Romney's presidential campaign.

"I was very clear and candid with Scott about the costs and benefits of this act of whistleblowing," said Corn, who tracked down Prouty. "I reviewed with him what consequences he might face. We went over the possible legal issues. I wanted him to make as informed a decision as possible — to know all that was knowable going into the story."

Corn succeeded in his goal of keeping Prouty anonymous.

"But I wanted to make damn sure he had an idea what might happen if his identity became known — before he gave final permission for me to use the video."

Prouty outed himself half a year later when he went on a national cable show.

Taking pains to prepare the whistleblower is also a good way to help prevent them from getting cold feet right before publication, according to Stephens, who is now a Ferris professor in residence in journalism at Princeton University, where he teaches accountability reporting.

And while you have to maintain a professional distance with the whistleblower, it is also important to protect them given their vulnerability.

"The reporter has a responsibility to look after the whistleblower's well-being on all levels, to make sure he stays safe, sane and free from both harm and excessive worry. That's simply the human and right thing to do," Stephens said. "Coincidentally, I've found it also often is the best way to persuade a whistleblower to open up and be completely honest."

Protecting a source often goes beyond the obvious. Some are polygraphed or have to sign disclosure forms if they even so much as talk to a journalist. Think of ways to ask questions that don't require them to provide you with specific information that could get them in trouble. Ask them where you can find it yourself, and who else you can talk to. Point to information already in the public record and ask them for their opinion of it. And, in certain situations, tell them they can provide information to an intermediary, or put it in a document that you can then FOIA.

Knowing protection laws

This one could fill a book. The laws and protections change often and from state to state. Find out who are the experts in your area, both for local statutes and regulations, but also for how federal law applies.

Although much has been written about the various federal whistleblower protections efforts — both passed and pending — this report from the independent research arm of Congress, the Congressional Research Service, is a good place to start: bit.ly/1XwbGad. In general, it states that claims for relief under the 18 federal statutes follow a similar pattern, but vary significantly in how they are applied and what they cover.

Josh Meyer, executive member of the IRE Board, is the director of education and outreach for the Medill National Security Journalism Initiative in Washington, D.C., as well as a senior investigative reporter for NBC News Investigations Unit. He is also the co-author of the 2012 book, "The Hunt For KSM, Inside the Pursuit and Takedown of the Real 9/11 Mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed."



Privacy

Protecting sources in the post-Snowden era

BY JAMES BALL • BUZZFEED NEWS

It's one of journalism's oldest and most widely-held tenets, not to mention the spur of thousands of student essays: A journalist should be willing to go to jail rather than give up a source.

Once reporters promise confidentiality, as the ethics lesson goes, that promise should be absolute, or at least very close to it. Debates on this issue used to circle around when the offer of confidentiality should be made, or how far news organizations should go in protecting their reporters.

None of those issues are moot — you need look no further than New York Times reporter James Risen's seven-year fight to avoid being subpoenaed in a case which would have required him to reveal confidential source information to see that even in modern America such tussles take place.

More common now, however, is a far less tangible, yet just as real, threat of anonymity of sources: the huge digital trails each of us leave behind when communicating online or by phone, and the ability of U.S. government officials, employers and others to access masses of it through intercept.

The revelations by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden in the Guardian, The Washington Post and other outlets highlighted much of the potential risk to source anonymity from U.S.-led surveillance programs.

One Guardian story showed that just six minutes of email interception by the Government Communications Headquarters, a U.K. intelligence agency, picked up communications from journalists at The New York Times, Reuters, NBC, BBC and the Guardian, among many others — and that this information had been retained by the agency.

With journalists' communications being caught up in bulk collection dragnets, as well as being purposely

targeted in FBI and police probes, it's tempting to see government as the main or only risk to sources. Such a view misses the far more common threat to sources speaking off-the-record about their employer or a local institution. Their primary risk is being fired, not arrested.

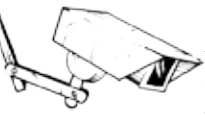
These distinctions are vital to understand, as too much focus on the former — very rare instances in the life of most working journalists — can mean we ignore the less glamorous but more common latter threat. And the types of precautions that need to be taken vary substantially from case to case.

Take first a national security journalist communicating with a high-level intelligence source, potentially outside of the U.S. If the source is sensitive enough, the U.S. or other intelligence agencies may try any number of tactics to get access to their information.

This can include accessing bulk-intercept data to see if unencrypted information crossed U.S. networks; using expedited means such as PRISM to access information hosted in U.S.-owned tech companies; introducing a targeted hack against the journalist's computer to track their keylogs and contacts or possibly to infect their target's computer.

By contrast, that journalist's colleague on the business desk may be receiving unflattering information about a company they cover from a source who has never contacted them before. This source emails them cold, from a personal account, but uses a work computer to do it. The journalist publishes, the company decides to track the leak, and — in many cases — already has enough information to do so.

Both scenarios have the potential to cause severe consequences to the source, without any witting cooperation from the journalist with authorities. But the steps needed to





tackle each situation are substantially different and require different degrees of thought and approach.

It is tempting to think of digital source protection as a purely technical one: If we all simply use PGP email encryption, the SecureDrop confidential document submission system, or the secure and private Tails operating system, then the problems will be tackled.

This approach would be a mistake. Instead, we need to think more widely and consider four main areas.

The first area to consider — in any given source relationship — is whom we are protecting the source's anonymity from. Is it someone at a small business or a major multinational? Or maybe someone who might be of interest to the local police department, the FBI, or even an intelligence agency?

Each will have differing abilities to track information on the source and a different willingness to do so. Most stories dealing with company material need only simple precautions: Communicating only by the source's private phone, personal email address, or a home computer — never one owned by their employer — should suffice in all but the most extreme of cases.

Other than this, there is the matter of simple logic: How many people were in the meeting the source is telling you about? How many copies are there of the document you're looking at? What level of risk is your source comfortable with?

The next thing to consider for a source from any background is his or her own level of technical competence — and your own. Encryption software is getting better, but it's still hard to use correctly. One late-night mistake can be enough to ruin months of careful work to remain anonymous. In the rare instances where a large intelligence agency may be trying to unmask your source, all but the most elaborate of protections will be totally insufficient — encrypted messaging apps on your mobile phone might be easy to use and quite secure against bulk interception, but they will do nothing against keylogging software installed onto your phone.

Products have been developed to try to give some measure of protection for such scenarios, particularly the Tails operating system and SecureDrop. But to use them either as a journalist or a source is complex, and many sources will lack the basic ability to do so. When considering how to try to set up private communications with a source, it's worth

trying to gauge their confidence with such tools and judge how appropriate the tools are accordingly.

It is also worth noting that sometimes anonymity is defeated before you ever exchange a word with a source. If their first contact to you was from their work email, it may not matter that every subsequent

communication was sent by encrypted instant message from a personal phone — if their first email to you is later seen by their employer, the game may be up. The only honest approach here is to inform a source of this potential risk and see if they are willing to take it.

This brings us to issue three: Sources and potential sources need to know as much as we can tell them about how to communicate with us long before they ever first get in touch. Leaving a PGP key on your bio page is a good start, but not nearly enough — what if they have no idea what a PGP key is, or how to use it? What if they've never read about the different ways communications can be picked up?

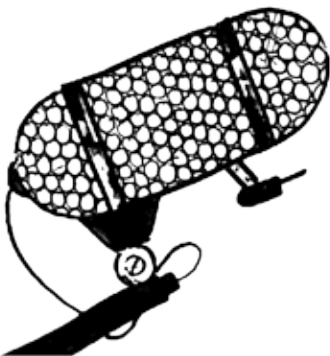
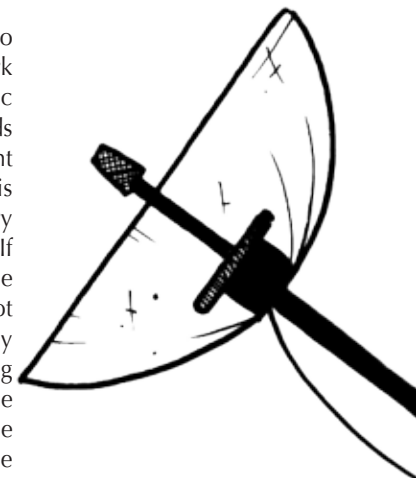
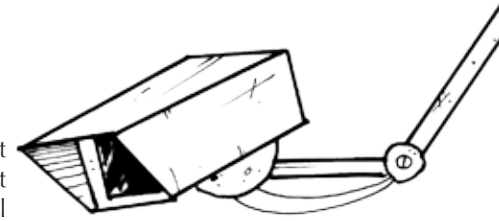
This issue should be among the easier ones for news organizations to tackle: It simply requires an effort to explain these issues clearly to a general audience — rather than just surveillance nerds — in news coverage, and to sharply increase the tutorial and explanatory content on “contact us” pages.

The fourth and final issue to consider is the legal framework and protections for journalistic sources and whether safeguards in the current law are sufficient in the digital era, even if this is perhaps less comfortable territory for U.S. news organizations. If news organizations judge that the current legal framework is not sufficient, they should seriously consider actively campaigning to have them reformed. Source protection is not a partisan issue — watchdog journalism from the right and from the left relies on confidential sourcing — and so may merit what should be rare political intervention.

Ultimately, intelligence and law enforcement agencies are likely to remain several steps ahead of even the savviest reporters on the technological front. Setting limits on what source information can be obtained without recourse to a public court battle is perhaps the only long-term way to maintain journalistic confidentiality.

If polled, journalists would overwhelmingly agree that they would go to prison to protect a source. Today, usually, we wouldn't get the chance to: The source would be identified long before. Tackling the practical, editorial and legal issues around digital source protection is the modern equivalent of that mantra. It's just a shame it's not so pithy.

James Ball is a special correspondent for BuzzFeed News and is based in London.



Conflict zones

A way to handle sensitive sourcing abroad

BY ANA ARANA • MEPI FOUNDATION

There is a tradition in American journalism to identify sources to maintain credibility. This tradition is hard to carry on in many foreign countries, where identifying people could cause them problems and even physical harm.

Last year, the MEPI Foundation, a binational investigative project based in Mexico City, completed a six-month investigation that took a look at the violence that ravaged the city of Ciudad Juarez on the U.S.-Mexico border from 2007 to 2011.

Our partners in the investigation were Carlos Huerta, Hericka Martinez and Beatriz Corral, three Juarez reporters with extensive reporting experience in the city. Our investigation wanted to describe how and why Juarez became the world's murder capital and saw its monthly homicides climb to 300 a month in 2010 — a staggering statistic for a city of 1.3 million inhabitants.

When Juarez faced its worst moments, other parts of Mexico also endured incredible rates of violence. It was the result of a tough anti-drug push against powerful drug gangs during the government of President Felipe Calderon.

In 2010, when the violence had reached its highest point, a coalition of civic leaders was formed and helped guide a plan of action funded by Mexico's federal government that cleaned up the police. Within two years the violence had been reduced to 50 murders a month.

In many Mexican cities, few reporters go back and get a historical perspective on what triggered the violence, why it continued, and what were the lessons learned. Juarez has been billed as a success story by Mexico, so we wanted to highlight what happened there and if peace is holding.

Huerta said most residents in Juarez were exhausted by the violence and had a hard time reexamining what happened at the time. When MEPI approached Huerta, he

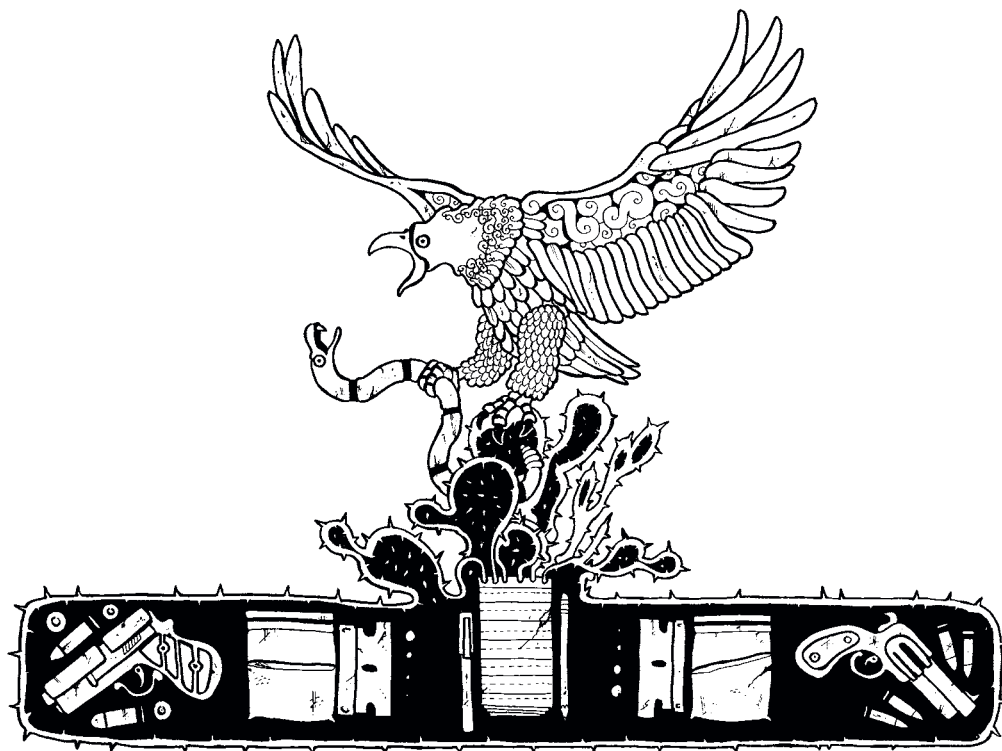
If the story is on a sensitive subject or deals with violence in violent countries, I automatically do not identify the victim.

jumped at the idea of taking a look back that could give him a different perspective. Martinez and Corral also shared his enthusiasm.

To retell the story in Juarez, our partners and MEPI went back and talked to various sources: representatives of the business, medical and non-governmental sectors who played a key role in solving the crisis; former and current police officials; and survivors of violence.

We decided to start our investigation on January 2010, focusing on the massacre of 15 high school and college students and their chaperones. The students were murdered because the initials of their American football team—AA—were confused by gumen as representing the tag ID of a competing drug gang. The mother of two of the victims was our most important source because she had confronted then-President Felipe Calderon for lack of interest in solving the violence.

Interestingly, victims were the most willing to talk as the violence subsided. Those more reticent to talk for publication were the police and government investigators, who insisted on speaking off the record.



We could trust their version of events because the Juarez-based reporters knew them and their trajectory. If MEPI had done the story without the reporters' support, it would have been difficult to grant the sources anonymity.

This is the reason why partnering with local reporters is important for foreign reporters. MEPI is an experimental project that has worked in Mexico and Central America completing stories through partnerships with local dailies and reporters. Our interest is to complete investigations that cross borders.

U.S. foreign reporters have used native reporters with local knowledge and good sources as fixers. But by giving local journalists bylines and the right to weigh in on how the story should be told, MEPI and its partners can complete stories with a better sense of place and more reliable sources. The local reporters with whom we work have a vested interest in completing a sound and truthful journalistic account.

Another way MEPI has dealt with the lack of sources wanting to be identified in Mexico and Central America is to rely on data. In the five years MEPI has been in operation out of Mexico City, we have used data as our most important source.

In the Juarez story, we combined the information we gathered from unidentified sources with U.S. and Mexican court documents, as well as with data we crunched on existent murder trends in Juarez during the violent period.

For an investigation in 2010 that measured self-censorship by news media, we completed a content analysis of 10 Mexican regional newspapers. We found interesting data that proved self-censorship in many areas was extreme because of attacks by drug cartels. Instead of begging editors to talk, we had the data speak. For example, we found in eight of the 10 cities studied, the media only reported one of every 10 drug-related acts of violence. The newspapers' crime pages were not empty, but filled with stories on minor crimes not related to the drug conflict.

The task of protecting sources in potentially dangerous situations is part of getting the job done when working outside the United States, although there are also situations in the United States where one also has to be careful.

In 1987, when I was a younger reporter and worked as foreign correspondent covering the war in El Salvador, I interviewed a peasant who spoke openly about his views on land reform. He lived in a small village, and I quoted him by his full name. A few days later, a local landowner sent goons to beat him up. I never knew if the landlord had read my story which appeared in the Miami Herald. But the thought that I should have changed his name stayed with me throughout the period I covered that civil war.

If the story is on a sensitive subject or deals with violence in violent countries, I automatically ask the source if he feels safe if I identify him. In the Juarez story, the victims had no fear of being named and we felt that putting out their names prominently was a way of paying homage for all they endured during the violent period.

Sometimes I am beyond careful. During a recent story about a healer in a low-income community in Mexico, I changed the names and specific details of residents who visited the healer for protection potions.

The clients told me they wanted their identities protected because it was a private choice to visit a healer. A reporter working overseas should always ask sources if there would be repercussions for what they say on the record.

Ana Arana is an investigative journalist with extensive international experience. A former U.S. foreign correspondent who reported on Central America and Colombia, she is currently based in Mexico City where she is director of MEPI, an investigative journalism project that promotes binational and regional investigative projects.

IRE Resources

The IRE Resource Center is a major research library containing more than 26,000 investigative stories – across all platforms – and thousands of tip sheets available at ire.org/resource-center or by contacting the Resource Center directly, 573-882-3364 or rescntr@ire.org.

STORIES

No. 27188: "The Whistleblowers" — Full Measure.

Full Measure, an investigative broadcast program, produced a series of original reports using whistleblowers as primary sources on important topics ranging from civil rights violations to the government's unprecedented and bizarre treatment of a whistleblower who helped the U.S. recover billions of tax dollars. (2015)

No. 26247: "The NSA Files" — The Guardian.

This is the original series of investigative reports from documents leaked by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden to Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill and Laura Poitras. The stories revealed the vast scale and scope of domestic and international surveillance programs, the close relationships between technology companies and intelligence agencies, and how technology led to widespread, indiscriminate and routine mass collection of telephone and Internet data of millions of Americans. (2013)

No. 26065: "Children are Dying" — Washingtonian.

Reporter Alexandra Robbins was tipped off by the spouse of a hospital staff member about infants at the NICU getting sick. Robbins persuaded hospital staff, patient families and drug manufacturing personnel to speak, and found a nationwide shortage of IV nutrients so drastic that hospitals were hoarding, rationing and bartering them in order to keep patients from dying. (2013)

TIPSHEETS

No. 4606: "Art of the interview."

Veteran broadcaster Nicole Vap lists the best ways to approach sources and prepare for interviews. Includes advice on conducting video interviews for your website. Plenty of tips and strategies for handling tough situations and ethical trouble spots. Also includes tips for who to get on camera, how to convince people to talk, how to write questions and how to follow up after the interview. (2015)

No. 4476: "Whistleblowers."

Dennis Wagner of The Arizona Republic discusses how to work with whistleblowers. He explains how to get in contact with a whistleblower and establish ground rules, how to obtain useful information from the source and what to look out for. (2015)

No. 4468: "Convincing people to talk."

Scott Friedman, Keli Rabon and Scott Zamost offer techniques on getting reluctant sources to talk and convincing sources to speak on camera. (2015)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

"The assassination complex: secret military documents expose the inner workings of Obama's drone wars" — The Intercept.

An anonymous source provided The Intercept with secret slides

that provide detail of the U.S. military's kill/capture operations during the development of the drone wars. The slides shine light on how the U.S. decides who gets placed on kill lists and assassinated by order of the U.S. government. (2015)

Read the full investigation here: bit.ly/1jqsrW8

"Cock fight: Meet the farmer blowing the whistle on big chicken" — Fusion.

Craig Watts is a chicken farmer — and now, a whistleblower. Fusion documented Watts' journey, from his struggle to speak out to the reaction of his employers: Perdue Farms. Two months after going public with his grievances, Watts says he has been visited 26 times by company representatives and even placed on a "performance improvement plan." Meanwhile, the majority of chicken farmers live at or below the poverty line, four companies control more than half of the industry and animals are subjected to insufferable living conditions. (2015)

Read the full investigation here: fus.in/1AvTofU

IRE AUDIO

"Building sources and overcoming the spin" — Naples Daily News.

Editor Manny Garcia and attorney Jorge Lopez, a veteran political consultant, offer insight into developing sources on the government beat, mining campaign workers for intelligence and cutting through the spin to get the story that politicians don't want you to find. (2016)

Listen to the full audio here: bit.ly/1X8ZxY7

"Cultivating Sources" — Watchdog Workshop.

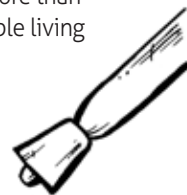
Identify who you need to know and how to get them to talk. Ryan Gabrielson and Bernice Yeung cover how to get the best information and interviews through source development and interviewing techniques, and how to build and keep key sources while navigating sensitive issues. (2015)

Listen to the full audio here: bit.ly/23XoRW4

"True Believers" — IRE Radio Podcast.

This IRE podcast is about how to find crucial sources and get them to talk. Corey Johnson of The Center for Investigative Reporting talks about how he found "true believers" as he reported on unsafe schools for California Watch; Michael Isikoff explains how he got whistleblower Thomas Tamm to talk for his 2008 Newsweek story; and Shawn Boburg of The Record in northern New Jersey discusses how he sourced his award-winning coverage of the George Washington Bridge scandal. (2014)

Listen to the episode here: bit.ly/1st95SN



No surprises: Be upfront with subjects



Shawn McIntosh
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

In the film “Spotlight,” an actress playing reporter Sacha Pfeiffer knocks on the door of a former priest. She confronts him with questions about whether he molested boys in two Boston parishes more than a decade earlier.

The scene depicts the toughest moment in any investigative reporter’s work — and perhaps the most important.

Unfortunately, not all journalists are as skilled and sensitive as the Pfeiffer character at directly confronting those accused of wrongdoing.

I was so glad to see that in the movie she did not mislead him with softball questions to try and get in the door, or describe some vague storyline such as saying that she was looking into the ways priests were moved from parish to parish.

We can’t build trust with story subjects or audiences if we are not upfront about what we are investigating. Finding out the truth demands a rigorous and empathetic effort to understand the motivations and actions of anyone accused of wrongdoing. That means fully disclosing what we are investigating early enough in the process so the truth has the best shot of emerging.

In our newsroom, I’m a passionate advocate of not surprising anyone who becomes the subject of our investigative reporting. This “No Surprises” guideline means, as much as possible in a deadline-driven news world, subjects of our writing should know precisely what they are accused of — even if they don’t want to talk to us about it. No one should be confronted right before deadline with a story we’ve been working on for weeks. And certainly no one should learn that he or she is accused of serious wrongdoing, or what those allegations are, by reading the newspaper.

As a long-time investigations editor, I’ve encountered plenty of resistance to this idea. I know all the arguments — chiefly,

that showing our cards can allow someone to shape the story more favorably by taking preemptive steps before publication.

I think most newsrooms make that argument less frequently these days. We’ve become more committed to fairness as our industry’s credibility has eroded. But too often in other newsrooms and occasionally in ours, I see journalists give only lip service or a cursory embrace to “No Surprises.”

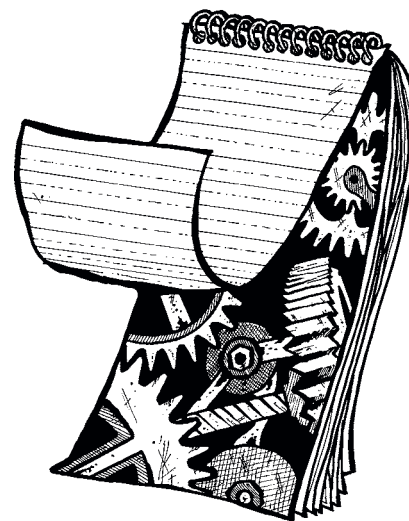
What does a cursory embrace look like? I can think of at least four common practices:

- Waiting until very late in a lengthy reporting process to contact key players in a story.
- Accepting a “no comment” from someone facing serious allegations without doing the extensive work needed to familiarize the person with the allegations.
- Assuming unnamed bit players in a story don’t need to be contacted for a response because they are not named.
- Holding back tough criticism to the end of an interview or being vague about the nature of a story.

I won’t say these tactics are never appropriate. But I will say they are rarely effective.

Instead, we should attempt to engage deeply with anyone who can illuminate the story — including the story’s least sympathetic characters. We should reveal what we are investigating and why. (A corollary to that is we should avoid “locking in” on a specific storyline until the reporting is complete. So describing what we are investigating takes some care and caution.)

Some journalists believe that a “decline to comment” absolves us of our responsibility to detail our findings before publishing. I disagree. Whenever possible, we should let subjects of our stories know that we will pursue and possibly publish a story regardless of whether they cooperate,



and we should outline the allegations even if they won’t agree to go on the record.

Is it tricky and difficult? Of course. What if the story subject says some facts in the story are wrong but won’t agree to be quoted?

That’s a dilemma I’d rather face before publication.

I tell reporters that if a person featured in a story is going to criticize the story, dispute the facts or argue that we used material incorrectly, I’d rather find that out before the story is published. That’s why we do extensive callbacks and fact-checking on our investigations prior to publication. We’ll even read back quotes to describe the context in which they are used.

All of this is in pursuit of accuracy. It has a side benefit of building trust in our profession. After all, we require transparency every day. Why would we be less than transparent about our own questions and findings before we publish?

Shawn McIntosh is an Atlanta Journal-Constitution deputy managing editor, overseeing investigative reporting.

FOI Power Tools: Digital hammers and saws for acquiring government records



David Cuillier
University of Arizona School of Journalism

When you have a tough records job ahead, it pays to find the right tool.

Here are some online resources and gadgets that can aid the process of finding, requesting, tracking and fighting for government information, whether it's a paper document or database. Suit up, drill down and hammer away!

Doc finders

Google Advanced Search can help you find public records specific to a certain file type and public agency. It's a bit like fishing, but sometimes you catch something pan-sized. Enter the agency's domain (e.g., www.cityofchicago.org) in the "site or domain" box and then search by different file types, such as "pdf," "doc," "xls," or "ppt." For example, if you enter "crash" as the search term for PDFs at Chicago's domain, results show analysis of bicycle crashes, pedestrian crashes and car crash statistics.

Similarly, if you just go to the Chicago website and enter "form" into the main search box, a variety of forms come up that can lead to records and databases, such as an amusement tax form and inspection forms. Or look for a list of records maintained by an agency, such as Chicago's list of records by department, or the retention schedule that lists when certain records can be destroyed.

Crowd-sharing platforms enable anyone to upload their datasets and records for people to view. For example, search Socrata's Open Data Network (www.opendatanetwork.com) by keyword for your specific city or topic of interest.

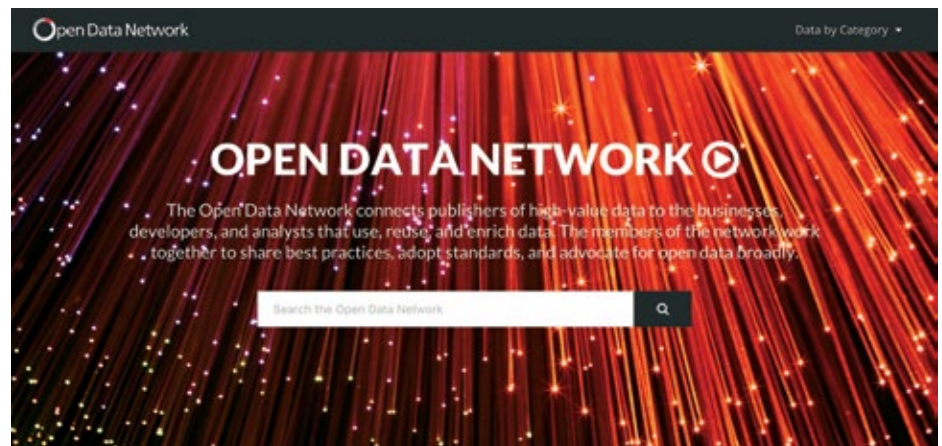


Photo courtesy of Socrata

I entered "Tucson" to find 27 databases, including files about gun crimes, police incidents and officer-involved shootings. Their blog provides a lot of ideas for data and how they are used by government, nonprofits and journalists.

Google Fusion Tables (research.google.com/tables) allows people to make their data public. A search for "Tucson" resulted in about 5,000 tables, including nursing home incidents, bike thefts and hospital inspections. Once you see something that looks promising, request the original records independently for your reporting project.

Online legal help

So you have an idea of some records you want to get — now it's time to get a sense of the law in your state. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press' Open Government Guide (www.rcfp.org/open-government-guide) provides a detailed explanation of each state law, as well as a separate guide for federal law.



Photo courtesy of SPLC

When submitting a public records request in your state, check out the online request letter generator that inserts all the legal language you would need to sound authoritative, provided by the Student Press Law Center (www.splc.org/page/legalrequest). Enter the pieces of information in the boxes, click "Create Letter" and paste the results into a Word document for finessing.

The Reporters Committee provides a great guide to appealing FOIA denials, including sample forms, at www.rcfp.org/federal-foia-appeals-guide.

And if you get in a bind, feel free to talk

to a real person at the Reporters Committee legal hotline (800-336-4243), the Student Press Law Center legal request for students (www.splc.org/page/legalrequest), or your state press association legal hotline.

Request trackers and apps

The latest rage is the development of online trackers and mobile apps for records requests. The technology is still being perfected, and tracking requests in Excel or a notebook might work best for some document hunters. But the new trackers are worth looking at.

Some government agencies have started developing their own online request trackers, such as Chicago's effort since 2010 to list all requests online, including the name and organization of the requester, description of the request and date requested (www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/progs/foia.html). Montgomery County in Maryland has started a similar effort to list request logs online and provide a tracking system for requests. The Department of Homeland Security created a mobile app for submitting

The technology is still being perfected, and tracking requests in Excel or a notebook might work best for some document hunters. But the new trackers are worth looking at.

records requests, but reviews have been mixed and it's easier to just do it online.

Two better methods for online tracking of requests, which can be used for any government agency, have been set up by MuckRock and Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. The iFOIA project by Reporters Committee (iFOIA.org) allows you to create request letters, find agency contacts, track correspondence with agencies, create appeals, organize multiple requests and share projects with others.

MuckRock (www.muckrock.com) has been helping people submit public records requests for six years, processing more than 20,000 requests to 5,000 agencies, resulting in 6,000 successful responses with nearly a million pages of documents released. They charge a nominal fee, depending on number of requests, but staff can help with requests and they often work to synthesize the records into reporting projects. They post records and data online, which also provide great ideas for future projects.

In the end, technology can't substitute for dogged tenacity in pursuing government information, but any tool that can make the process a little more streamlined will help in building better reporting — and better stories.

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



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Snapshots from our blogs

Luxury businesses default on SBA loans

BY MADISON FELLER | IRE

When Small Business Administration lenders determine they will not be able to collect repayment on a loan, the loan is said to be charged off. According to an SBA database obtained by Watchdog.org, SBA lenders have charged off loans backed partly by taxpayer dollars since 2009. These have included millions of dollars in loans to liquor stores, bars, car dealerships, country clubs, boat dealers and wineries.

Due to such processes, National Taxpayers Union President Pete Sepp has asked Congress to eliminate the SBA or “crack down on its guarantee practices.”

Watchdog.org has also published two other stories about SBA loan defaults, including one about a Sonoma wine maker (bit.ly/20WfnrK) and another about a Colorado bar (bit.ly/1PO77X5).

IRE Radio Podcast | The Journalists and the Death Squad

BY AARON PELLISH | IRE

On this episode, reporter A.C. Thompson discusses his investigation into the deaths of five Vietnamese-American journalists between 1981 and 1990. Officials seemed to think that an anti-Communist group called the National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam had been behind the slayings, but law enforcement agencies never charged anyone and the cases went cold. Thompson reopened the investigation for ProPublica and FRONTLINE, tracking down former members of the Front to try and find out who silenced the press more than 30 years ago.

Listen to the full podcast here: bit.ly/1X0VrSk

You can find us on Soundcloud, iTunes and Stitcher. If you have a story you think we should feature on the show, drop us a note at web@ire.org. We'd love to hear from you.



Add context to stories on car crashes, seat belt safety and drunk driving using FARS data

BY LIZ LUCAS | IRE

How many people die in car accidents?

Sometimes you'll see the answer to that question flashing on a billboard on the highway. It's also in the DOT's Fatality

Analysis Reporting System (FARS) database, a census of fatality accidents on public roads in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. You can use the data to find out where accidents occurred and answer questions such as: How many people were involved? Were they wearing seat belts? How many hit-and-runs occurred in my area? Were drugs or alcohol involved? Did the driver have a history of traffic offenses or license suspensions?

The FARS database consists of 18 tables and more than 500 fields that include a wealth of detail about all the vehicles and persons involved (not only drivers and passengers, but also cyclists and pedestrians), and the conditions that led to the accident (as reported by the police on scene). Crashes involving trucks and trailers are also included.

The NICAR Data Library has updated FARS to include reports through 2014, the most recent year available, going back to 1975, when FARS was first established. IRE members can purchase the data online: bit.ly/1o48uqs

Non-members should contact the Data Library staff at datalib@ire.org or (573) 884-7711.

UPLINK: Watchdogs over higher education rarely bite

BY ANDREA FULLER | THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

College accreditation might sound like a wonky subject — the kind of thing that only interests policy makers and people at think tanks. But accreditors have tremendous power. Colleges have to be accredited in order to get federal student aid. This system is the main thing standing between colleges and billions of dollars — \$134 billion to be exact.

My colleague Doug Belkin and I got interested in exploring this system after wondering how so many schools with really low graduation rates and high loan default rates get accredited.

From covering higher education, we knew that the Department of Education entrusts accreditation to non-profit groups that review colleges. But we didn't really know much about the inner workings of these groups.

I had an inkling from previous reporting that accreditation had a lot more to do with making sure a college was financially solvent than its quality. So I proposed a simple data question: How do accredited colleges stack up against schools that were denied? If colleges still in the system were much lower performing than those that had been stripped of their accreditation, then we had our story. Were the gatekeepers of billions of dollars focused on weeding out low performers, or on something else entirely?

Read the full blog post: bit.ly/1KGcGqD

IRE Radio Podcast | BONUS: Spotlight

BY ADAM ATON | IRE

If you attended an IRE Conference in the early 2000s, the plot of the movie "Spotlight" might have sounded familiar. That's because the Hollywood depiction of the Boston Globe's investigation into the clergy sex abuse scandal stayed surprisingly true to the real behind-the-scenes story. How do we know? A few of the journalists depicted in the film — Walter Robinson, Marty Baron and Sacha Pfeiffer — discussed the reporting process at conferences in 2002 and 2003. We're sharing some of that archival audio on this special bonus episode.



Listen to the full podcast here: bit.ly/1O79RdV

Behind the Story: How a small daily paper investigated Florida's lax sentencing laws – one case at a time

BY RILEY BEGGIN | IRE

In December 2013, 21-year-old Michael Bargo became the youngest person on Florida's death row for the brutal murder of a teenage boy. Of the 12-person jury that put him there, only 10 agreed that Bargo deserved to die, and none of them were required to explain why.

In most other states, a unanimous vote is required to sentence people to death. All crimes in Florida, from petty theft to murder, require a unanimous vote to determine guilt. Sentencing, however, is a different story. Florida has the least stringent capital punishment requirements in the nation: A simple majority vote of 7-5 would have resulted in a recommendation for execution. Even if the jury voted to spare the prisoner from the death penalty, a judge can choose to ignore their recommendation and send the prisoner to death row.

Read the full blog post here: bit.ly/1pnZMuV

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

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

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

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

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

Contact: Jaimi Dowdell, jaimi@ire.org, 314-402-3281 or 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

NICAR-LEARN: NICAR-Learn is an on-demand video gallery designed for journalists to learn and share computer-assisted reporting techniques. Videos are taught by IRE trainers as well as leading data journalists, allowing you to pick and choose the programs and skills you want to learn. NICAR-Learn also includes Uplink, our computer-assisted reporting blog.

Contact: Sarah Hutchins, learn@ire.org, 573-882-8969

PUBLICATIONS:

THE IRE JOURNAL – Published four times a year. Contains journalist profiles, how-to stories, reviews, investigative ideas and backgrounding tips.

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

PODCAST: Go behind the story with some of the country's best journalists on the IRE Radio Podcast. Sit in on conversations with award-winning reporters, editors and producers to hear how they broke some of the biggest stories of the year. Available on iTunes and SoundCloud.

Contact: Sarah Hutchins, sarah@ire.org, 573-882-8969

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