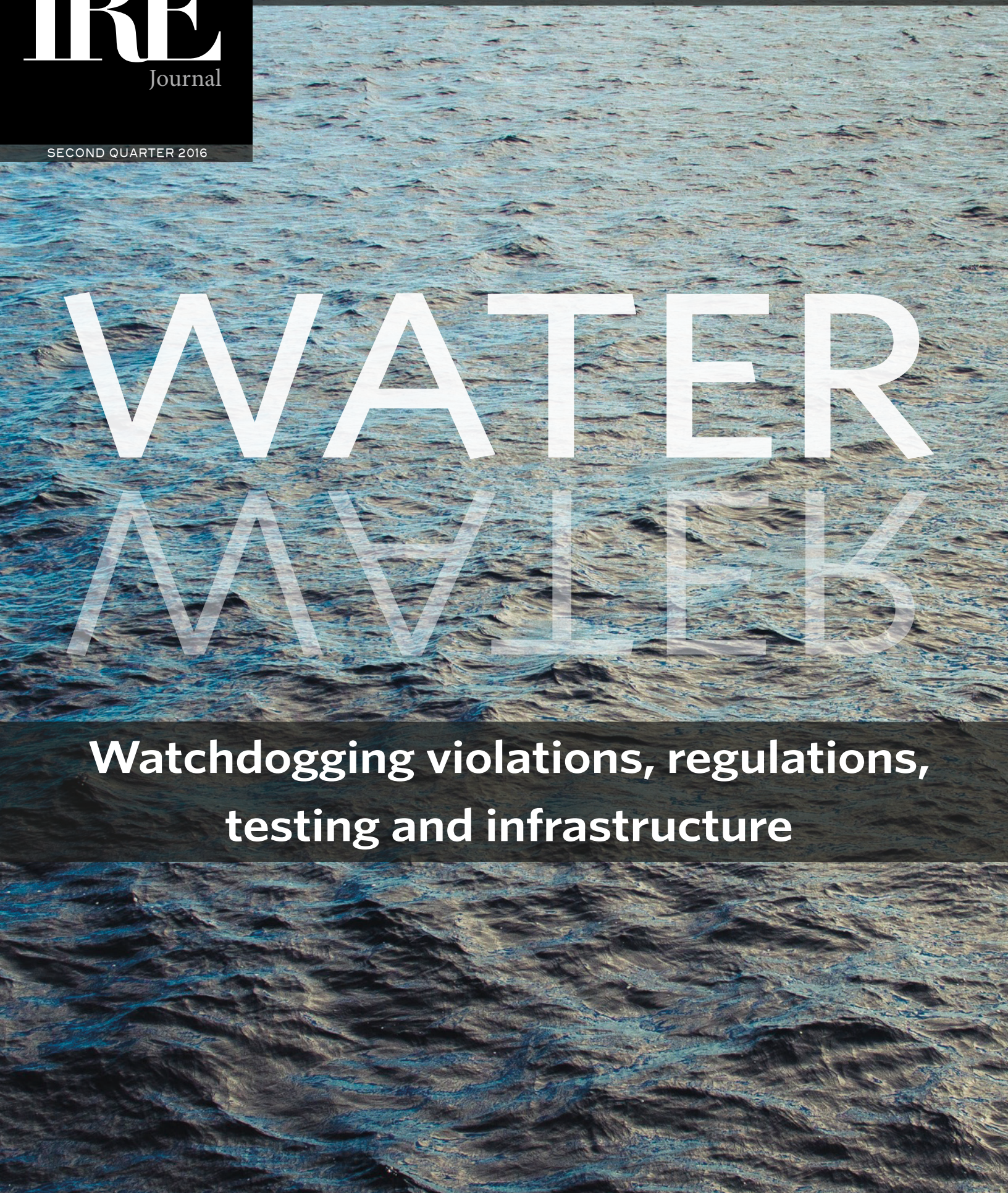
The IRE Journal

SECOND QUARTER 2016



WATER WEB

Watchdogging violations, regulations, testing and infrastructure

Fund for Investigative Journalism

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM SINCE 1969

Who:
THE FUND FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM, a proud sponsor of the 2016 IRE Conference

What:
Grants to cover the costs of investigative reporting

When:
Awarded each winter, spring and fall

Where:
For reporting in the U.S. and around the world

Why:
To support independent reporters who have tips, ideas and sources, but lack the resources to pursue investigative stories

To apply, visit www.fij.org.

Questions? Email fundfij@gmail.com

FUNDING & FELLOWSHIPS

The Fund for Investigative Journalism

&

The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University

We've joined forces to increase diversity in investigative reporting, by expanding opportunities for U.S. journalists of color & women journalists.

Our NEW project provides:

- Grants up to $9,000 from the Fund for Investigative Journalism
- Fellowships with the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism

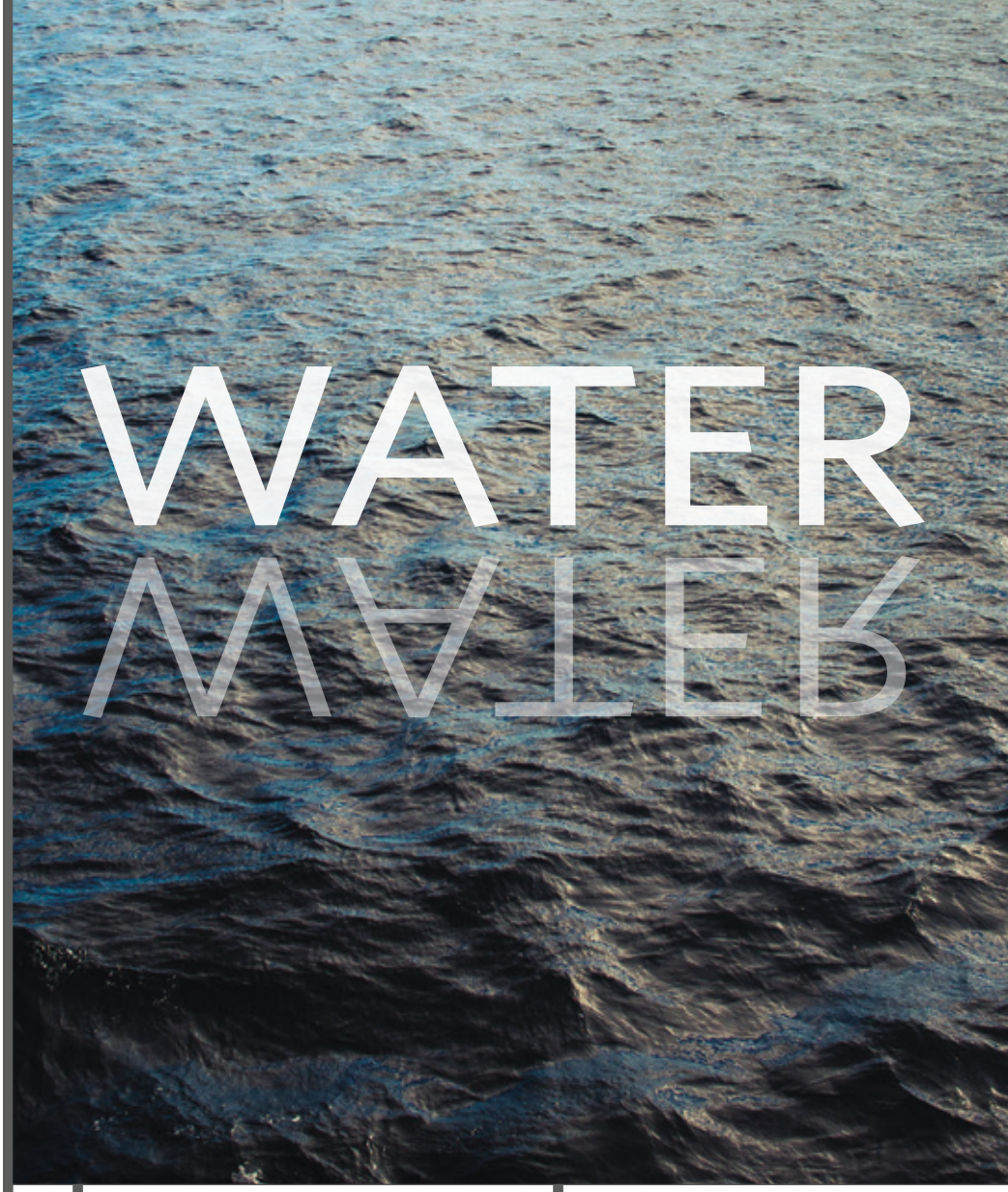
APPLY TODAY!

- Proposals accepted June 1 – Oct. 1, 2016
- For more info or to apply, visit: https://investigate.submittable.com/submit

The Fund for Investigative Journalism – Schuster Institute program for journalists of color & women journalists is underwritten by the Ford Foundation.

The IRE Journal

SECOND QUARTER 2016



The IRE Journal

SECOND QUARTER 2016

Volume 39 | Number 2

The IRE Journal (ISSN0164-7016) is published four times a year by Investigative Reporters & Editors, Inc., 141 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211, 573-882-2042. Email: megan@ire.org. U.S. subscriptions are $70 for individuals, $85 for libraries and $125 for institutions/businesses. International subscriptions are $90 for individuals and $150 for all others. Periodical postage paid at Columbia, MO. Postmaster: Please send address changes to IRE. USPS#451-670

You make it hard to plan the IRE Conference

BY MARK HORVIT

I love the IRE Conference.

Planning for it? Not so much.

The conference, IRE's single largest event each year, is a small miracle of coordination and consternation. That's because we put together more than 200 panels and hands-on sessions, involving more than 400 speakers.

But that's not the hard part.

Nope. The difficulty arises because IRE's members are so good at what they do.

You'd think with all those sessions and speaking slots that our challenge would be finding enough stuff to fill the schedule. Instead, we agonize over whom — and what — to include, because there's just so much spectacular journalism being done every year.

We want the IRE Conference to represent the full spectrum of enterprise and accountability reporting taking place in any given year. And all of you make that really hard to do.

I realize that doesn't mesh with the current popular narrative about the state of journalism. We all know the public perception: The days of great journalism, never mind investigative reporting, are long gone. We are mired in a headache-inducing morass of loudly stated opinion and cute cat clickbait. In public opinion polls, journalists fall somewhere south of the IRS, ISIS and presidential candidates.

And yet.

I've said this before, but one of the best things about working at IRE is that I have a front-row seat to all the great work being done by journalists throughout the world. And nothing that we do serves as better evidence of the current state of journalism than the IRE Conference.

In addition to all the fantastic in-depth projects that we review, we are introduced to scores of beat reporters who are serving as front-line watchdogs for their communities every day. We are reminded of the impact of all the work being published across platforms — broadcast, radio, print and online. We review some of the highlights of the great data work taking place in newsrooms of all sizes (though the CAR Conference gives us the deeper dive into data).

Nonjournalists typically can't attend our conference. But we invite some speakers from other careers, and it's pretty common for them to tell us that they're blown away by the depth and breadth of investigative and enterprise reporting that they had no idea was occurring.

There are signs that public opinion about our work might be primed to change, even if ever so slightly. "Spotlight" presented investigative journalists as heroes for doing actual journalism. The Panama Papers project has captured public attention and served as notice that great work is taking place around the globe.

But those of us here at IRE already know that.

To get an idea of what I'm talking about, take a look at the IRE Conference schedule on our website. Even if you can't make it to the conference, you can experience it virtually. We record panel sessions and make the audio available to members online. Scores of tipsheets and presentations will be available for download.

I think you'll agree that great journalism is alive and well.

You'll be inspired and invigorated.

You'll be a little overwhelmed by what to check out next.

And you'll be really glad you didn't have to plan the thing.

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

IRE members win 2016 Pulitzer Prizes

Several members of Investigative Reporters and Editors were among journalists recognized in the 2016 Pulitzer Prizes:

The Associated Press won the Public Service Pulitzer for "Seafood from Slaves," a story that freed 2,000 slaves.

The staff of the Los Angeles Times won the Pulitzer for Breaking News Reporting for its coverage of the San Bernardino shootings.

Michael Braga of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, along with reporters from the Tampa Bay Times, won the Investigative Reporting prize for reporting on violence and neglect in Florida's mental hospitals.

T. Christian Miller of ProPublica and Ken Armstrong of The Marshall Project won the award for Explanatory Reporting for "An Unbelievable Story of Rape."

Michael LaForgia, along with colleagues from the Tampa Bay Times, won the award for Local Reporting for "Failure Factories."

The staff of The Washington Post won the National Reporting Pulitzer for creating a national database tracking police shootings.

Behind the prize: IRE Award winners take us behind the story in articles, podcasts

Want to know how those IRE Award-winning investigations came together? Throughout the year, journalists have taken us behind the story in podcasts and articles. We've compiled a list of some of our favorite pieces.

WINNERS

"Seafood from Slaves" by the Associated Press

Listen to "The Story That Freed Hundreds of Slaves" on the IRE Radio Podcast. Martha Mendoza, Margie Mason and Robin McDowell discuss how they chased the story: bit.ly/22gm5cq

"Failure Factories" by the Tampa Bay Times

Read a Q&A with Nathaniel Lash, a data journalist at the Tampa Bay Times and a member of the Failure Factories team: bit.ly/27AwS5l

"The Khadija Project" by The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and many collaborators

Igor Spaic and Michael Mattson explained the project in the IRE Journal. We re-published their article online the day investigative reporter Khadija Ismayilova was sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in prison in the country of Azerbaijan: bit.ly/25bm52L

"Rape on the Night Shift" by FRONTLINE, Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting, The Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley, KQED Public Radio and Univision

Bernice Yeung of Reveal wrote an article for the IRE Journal about how she develops sources: bit.ly/1TZqz0J

"Racial Profiling Whitewash," KXAN-Austin

Brian Collister of KXAN wrote a piece for the IRE Journal about the reporting and document analysis involved in the station's investigation into racial profiling: bit.ly/1THVor5

"The Red Cross' Secret Disaster" by ProPublica and NPR

Listen to Justin Elliott of ProPublica talk about investigating the American Red Cross' Superstorm Sandy relief efforts on the IRE Radio Podcast: bit.ly/1rUlKzK

You can also read about the reporting process on IRE's Behind the Story blog: bit.ly/1qApe8X

A letter from IRE's Board President

Dear Friends:

I'm sorry to have to tell you that Mark Horvit has decided to take an exciting new job at the University of Missouri and will be stepping down as IRE's executive director at the end of the summer.

While this represents a huge loss to IRE, the board is hopeful that we'll still get to work with Mark from time to time through the university. Mizzou has been our home and partner for 40 years, and Mark will be just down the hall training the next generation of IRE members.

We have established a search committee and have posted the application. Please contact me directly with any questions or concerns.

I can't let this moment go by without reviewing some of Mark's accomplishments at IRE.

In the last eight years, Mark built on the strong foundation he inherited from Brant Houston, leading the organization through a deep recession and industry crises that devastated our membership and finances.

Now IRE may be the world's largest support system for investigative reporters who are working to make a difference in their communities. Our membership stands at an all-time high of more than 5,000 world-wide with a full-time staff of 16 and an annual budget of more than $2 million. Conferences in the last two years have been the largest and most diverse in IRE's history, thanks largely to Mark's leadership and the entire staff, with training directed by Jaimi Dowdell and events by Stephanie Sinn.

Our international reach has been expanding. Student involvement in IRE has skyrocketed through initiatives like the Campus Coverage Project, student membership drives and more. Mark has personally trained journalists in at least 15 countries during his tenure at IRE and has continued great partnerships with our longtime foundation supporters while adding new ones. While we have a long way to go, Mark has created programs like the fellowship for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and partnerships with sister organizations like the Asian American Journalists Association to help diversify our membership and leadership.

Past executive directors have been among IRE's biggest cheerleaders and supporters. I know Mark will join that alumni association with the same spirit.

IRE's annual meeting in New Orleans will be the 18th national conference that he'll have helped oversee. We'll say a more formal farewell there. For now, I hope you'll join me in offering Mark our gratitude and good wishes.

Sarah Cohen

President of IRE's Board of Directors

IRE en Español: Access Spanish-language tipsheets, podcasts and listservs

We're excited to announce that you can now browse more than 50 tipsheets written entirely in Spanish. The translated tipsheets cover a wide variety of topics and skills, including web scraping, using Excel, interviewing children, investigating education and much more.

You can find the Spanish-language tipsheets on the Resource Center page, under IRE en Español (bit.ly/1ss68U0). That page also contains information on signing up for NICAR-ESP-L, our Spanish version of the NICAR-L data journalism listserv.

In May, we published our first dual-language episode of the IRE Radio Podcast. On "Los Desaparecidos," we talk with Daniela Guazo of El Universal about her reporting on disappeared people in Mexico and Colombia. We also have an English version ("The Disappeared") of the episode and a blog post with some of the highlights from the interview (bit.ly/1YhMrsp).

A huge thanks to our many members who took time to translate, edit and otherwise contribute to these efforts. If you have ideas for more Spanish-language resources you'd like to see, or you'd like to volunteer to help, please email us at web@ire.org.

IT

Incorporating automation into your newsroom

Ariana Giorgi
The Dallas Morning News

Automation is a hot topic in newsrooms as large-scale scrapers and alert systems are garnering more attention and becoming easier to use. While large open source projects can be inspiring, it can be difficult for newsroom developers to figure out where to begin.

First, it's important that we're on the same page with what we mean by "automation." I'll speak about automation as the act of writing scripts or programs in code in order to streamline a story process and increase overall productivity. In general, there are four major criteria to consider when determining if a task is suitable for automation.

Basic Criteria

1. You will have to repeat this action in the future.

Is someone performing this task weekly or biweekly? Then automating this task could give them more flexibility.

2. What you're looking for is clear and straightforward.

If you don't have a clear grasp of what answer or solution you're trying to return, then any program that you code surely isn't going to either.

3. It doesn't involve much interpretation.

The best automation efforts don't require any human discretion and are relatively mindless tasks. If what you're looking for is buried within paragraphs of text, this probably is not the best candidate for a quick automation project.

4. The information is consistently presented the same way.

Part of being able to quickly and efficiently parse a document or website comes from the ability to anticipate how the information will be presented to you so that you can write your code accordingly. That way, time won't be lost in making tweaks to code when new data is published.

If you're having trouble thinking of tasks that would fit into those descriptions, think about the steps that you take to create a story, and automation can be integrated in any level: finding story ideas, collecting data for stories and writing the articles.

Finding Story Ideas

Automation can notify reporters instantly of breaking stories through different kinds of alerts. When organizations upload new documents or when news starts to break on Twitter, chances are there's an opportunity to take advantage of automation services.

The app If This Then That (IFTTT) is a great introduction to setting up these kind of alerts, allowing you to create "recipes" that determine when you should be notified of a change in one of their preselected websites or apps. A more advanced version of IFTTT is Huginn, which allows the user to apply this notification system to any website or a vast variety of other possibilities.

For instance, perhaps you are interested in an annual report that's released by the IRS around a certain time of year, but you're not exactly sure when. You set up an alert so that whenever the page changes, you're notified. And now, you no longer have to remember to check the site daily.

Or you're a beat reporter, and you follow five experts from your beat on Twitter. You can set up a program to get an alert when all of those experts are tweeting the same hashtag.

Collecting Data

Let's say you already have the story idea that you want, but now you need to gather the data from a site. Rather than transfer data by hand, write a parser for the data that is easily scrapeable — that is, data that's laid out in a clear format on the page.

Some advice based on my own experience: Don't bother trying to parse data that's not relatively straightforward! Anything that benefits from human interpretation, like long paragraphs from which you want to summarize a yes or no answer, is not worth your time to build a parser for.

Machine learning techniques are wonderful and continue to play a greater role in journalism. However, unless your story highly depends on it, trying to incorporate your machine learning skills into a simple parser isn't worth your time. Most likely, in the time it takes write a parser and train it to interpret your data to some degree of acceptable accuracy — which will probably never be 100 percent — you could read it all and correctly record all the data yourself (depending on how large your dataset is).

Writing Stories

Any story that you write with automation is not going to have a lot of personality, at least when we're talking about stories with a quick turnaround. The best thing to focus on is the facts that you can provide and getting them to your audience quickly in a readable format.

A great example of this is QuakeBot, created by Ken Schwencke while at the Los Angeles Times. Schwencke used alerts from the U.S. Geological Survey Earthquake Notification Service and collected the information from these posts to make quick stories.

The process for collecting the data was consistent, and Schwencke effectively eliminated the time it previously took to gather the information manually and type it up as a story. The reporter who was previously doing this by hand was free to follow up on other details of the earthquake not available through the USGS alerts or continue to work uninterrupted on another project.

So now is a great time to revisit the criteria that I suggested earlier. Do you have tasks in your newsroom that are repeated often and are simple and consistent enough to be automated?

Ariana Giorgi is a computational journalist at The Dallas Morning News, where she focuses on data visualization and developing news apps. Last year, she graduated from Columbia University's dual-degree Masters program in Journalism and Computer Science. @ArianaNGiorgi

WATER POLLUTION

A surefire story in your community

By Robert McClure | InvestigateWest

Investigating pollution of waterways in your part of the world gives you almost-certain entrée to two classic aims of investigative reporting: exposing scandals involving violations of regulations and laws, and revealing how the system itself is scandalous — outrages that are legal under those same laws and regulations, in other words.

Both kinds of stories crop up bountifully when you start poking into water pollution in your community. We're not talking about the drinking-water stories we've heard recently out of Flint, Michigan, but rather about the widespread fouling of beaches, bays and rivers where so many readers, listeners and viewers swim and fish. Or at least, where they would like to.

There is likely a powerful story in your community about how these waterways were supposed to be cleaned up under a theoretically forceful federal law, the Clean Water Act, which was never fully carried out. The result today: Beaches, streams and bays across the country are not being protected enough for people to safely swim and fish there. This is despite the fact that Congress declared the following the law of the land in 1972:

"It is the national goal that the discharge of pollutants into the navigable waters be eliminated by 1985 …"

"It is the national policy that the discharge of toxic pollutants in toxic amounts be prohibited …"

"It is the national policy that programs for the control of nonpoint sources of pollution be developed and implemented in an expeditious manner …"

While the law did not accomplish its perhaps overly ambitious goal of ending water pollution in the space of 13 years, it did bring about vast improvements in water quality nationally. Yet something like one-third of the nation's waterways remain in violation of water quality standards. Whether you are interested in stories at the national, state, local or even hyperlocal scale, water pollution is a surefire story, and one that's important to public health and environmental protection.

A statewide look

A statewide investigation of water pollution starts with obtaining the database your environmental state agency (or, in New Mexico and Idaho, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) keeps regarding compliance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, aka NPDES (pronounced NIP-deez.)

This will show all the factories, sewage treatment plants and other facilities that are dumping polluted water into waterways.

Katie Campbell

Stormwater outfalls like this one carry a variety of pollutants to Seattle's Duwamish River, including heavy metals, PCBs, phthalates and petroleum hydrocarbons.

Periodically — usually monthly but in some cases quarterly — the regulated entities file a "discharge monitoring report," a DMR, showing the quantities discharged and the concentrations of pollutants.

By manipulating that data from Washington state, reporter Lise Olsen was able to inform readers of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer that millions of pounds of toxic chemicals were being dumped annually into Puget Sound, Washington's beautiful but troubled inland sea. And a lot of that was coming from the government in the form of high-volume sewage treatment plant discharges, the Post-Intelligencer reported in the "Our Troubled Sound" series in 2002. (This was followed by 2006's "The Sound of Broken Promises.")

In addition, there were nearly 1,000 mostly smaller facilities such as boatyards, paper mills and gravel mines dumping directly into the Sound or its tributaries despite a state government program to restore the Sound.

All of that is legal. Facilities just need a permit for their pollution. As long as they are within those limits, they are not breaking the law.

That 2002 series also identified about 400 facilities that had violated their limits and showed that they were often not being called to account by environmental regulators. A decade later, the same thing was happening across Washington, Oregon and Idaho, which we found in producing "Clean Water: The Next Act" with InvestigateWest and EarthFix on the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act.

The 2012 investigation identified violations at about a third of the regulated facilities in the Pacific Northwest. It's a dirty secret of the Clean Water Act: Significant fractions of the universe of facilities are violating the act on a semi-regular basis and do not get into trouble. EarthFix and InvestigateWest found that whole classes of polluters aren't even being scrutinized and were routinely violating their permits.

That investigation turned up some compelling anecdotes, such as the Idaho state prison that was consistently violating federal pollution control rules by dumping lawbreakers' waste into a stream called Lawyer Creek.

Once you determine where violations have occurred, follow up to see if the facilities faced any punishment. Quite frequently environmental regulators tolerate ongoing violations.

Call them on that. Usually the regulators say they are "trying to work with" the facility, to assist the regulated party rather than taking a punitive stance. But that can go on laughably long in some cases.

To trace those kinds of stories, you can start with the EPA's Environmental Compliance and History Online database, or ECHO, which includes enforcement histories that can be searched by facility name, industry, geography and so forth. It shows the number of inspections, how many violation notices were issued and fines paid.

ECHO is a great place to start your research, but a lousy place to end it. ECHO is, as reporter Kate Golden noted a few years ago, "your two-faced best friend," because it's frequently out of date and in some cases just wrong. It's great for spotting trends and identifying (most) of the biggest violators. But confirm any specific findings independently. Also, be aware that ECHO goes beyond the Clean Water Act to encompass enforcement of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the national hazardous-waste law.

Your state environmental agency's database is likely to be more accurate, but we found over the course of several Clean Water Act stories that these sources also need to be carefully checked. In our 2002 investigation, spot checks showed some significant inaccuracies; we ended up calling dozens of facilities to double-check the data.

"Impaired" waterways

One result of all that pollution: About a third of the nation's waterways are not meeting the goals of the Clean Water Act. When that happens, the waterway is classified as "impaired," and it's placed on a list of those water bodies called the 303(d) list (after the section of the Clean Water Act requiring this).

Nowadays the 303(d) list is combined with what's known as the 305(b) list, which assesses — or at least tries to assess — the health of all water bodies and highlights actions required to rescue them. Together the two lists are known as the Integrated Report, which is due from each state to the EPA on April 1 of every even-numbered year.

I've found it helpful to compare modern-day Integrated Reports with those going back 10 years or more. For both current and past reports, take note of what percentage of your water bodies are even monitored. That's likely to be quite low, the basis for a fairly straightforward story right out of the box. Is the proportion going up or down over time? In some cases, states have increasingly raised the bar for what they consider high-quality data. The perverse result: Fewer water bodies are considered "fully assessed."

Going local

Local water pollution stories can start by looking at the water bodies in your area identified as "impaired" in the biennial Integrated Report. For any impaired water body, find out if a Total Maximum Daily Load has been set. That's effectively a cleanup plan. It calculates how much pollution can come from various sectors without violating water quality standards. Then it sets out how much each sector can pollute.

There's a big problem with this approach, though: Only some of the pollution sources are actually under the control of environmental regulators. Those are the facilities with the NPDES permits (the frequently violated ones we spoke of previously). They can be ordered to cut back on their pollution when their permits are up for renewal (theoretically every five years).

But remember, the "nonpoint pollution sources" that Congress declared in 1972 were to be controlled "in an expeditious manner." "Nonpoint" is water pollution that does not come out of a pipe (a "point" source) but rather flows off the landscape as rainwater or snowmelt runoff. Forty-four years after the law was passed, the so-called "stormwater runoff" remains the most pervasive urban water pollutant. It is a culprit in about one-third of all the impaired water bodies.

Outside cities, the biggest pollution source is agriculture. It's the top reason for lakes, streams and bays not meeting the goals of the Clean Water Act. Congress largely exempted agriculture from the Clean Water Act, ostensibly because farms can vary so much from state to state, but in fact as an acquiescence to get the votes of farm-state lawmakers.

KATIE CAMPBELL

Stormwater runoff carries an assortment of litter and unseen pollutants into rivers, lakes, and marine waters, including Puget Sound.

Some states are trying to do what they can, though, particularly when it comes to Confined Animal Feed Operations, or CAFOs, which produce such intense amounts of manure in a relatively small place that they have been identified as "point sources" in environmentalists' litigation.

Other potential stories:

•Just mapping the regulated facilities can prove eye-opening for readers or viewers.

•Various local governments are responsible for "combined sewer overflows," or CSOs, that dump raw sewage in periods of heavy rain when treatment facilities are overloaded. CSOs have gotten a fair amount of attention over the last decade from the EPA, which has negotiated a series of consent agreements to bring them under control. Check how long are these going to be allowed to continue in your area. In some cases, it's decades. That's legal.

•How many facilities are not filing the required Discharge Monitoring Reports? We've seen cases where this went on for years, masking pollution. Facilities call this a "paperwork violation," but it undermines the integrity of the whole system. Overworked regulators may not notice.

•In many communities, there's a story about delayed maintenance and upgrades on sewage-treatment plans. A wave of new plants was built in the 1970s and 1980s to bring local governments into compliance with the Clean Water Act. Now many are aging. Are sewage-treatment plants routinely violating standards? And what about rate hikes in your town — are rates being kept artificially low by failing to stop pollution as required under federal law?

KATIE CAMPBELL

Researchers gathered runoff from a highway in Seattle to study the impacts of and possible solutions to stormwater runoff. The darker colored carboys contain straight highway runoff. The lighter ones contain runoff filtered through soil columns.

•How many facilities are far past the deadline for a renewed permit? It sounds wonky, but it's important. The theory of the Clean Water Act was that, as permits were renewed, usually every five years, pollution limits would be reduced as technology improved. So an unrenewed permit in many cases equals additional pollution that should not be allowed.

Remember that at IRE we are all here to help each other. So if you decide to jump into the pool on this story, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Robert McClure is executive director of InvestigateWest, a nonprofit newsroom in Seattle with a focus on the environment, public health, government accountability, and a track record of change-making journalism. A veteran newspaper reporter with a quarter of a century on the environment beat, McClure has been a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize and winner of the John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism. He joined IRE in the late 1980s.

DON'T DRINK THE WATER

What Michigan Radio learned covering the Flint water crisis

By Vincent Duffy | Michigan Radio

Steve Carmody/Michigan Radio

People in Flint, Michigan still cannot safely drink their water two years after a state-appointed emergency manager approved switching the water source from Detroit's system to the Flint River. The health and financial cost of this "cost saving measure" will be multiple times higher than the money officials hoped to save.

Background

In 2014, Flint was under emergency management, a situation unique to Michigan that allows the state to remove power from local officials in cities and school districts in financial distress and give that power to the manager. Flint was in the process of building a new pipe to Lake Huron to get water on its own instead of from Detroit. The emergency manager decided to save money by leaving the Detroit system early and drawing water from the Flint River in the meantime.

Problems started immediately. First E. coli, followed by too many chemicals, possibly Legionella bacteria and the biggest problem: high levels of lead. River water is more corrosive than lake water, but environmental regulators saw no need to use corrosion control, and the water ate away at the lead pipes. Early warnings of high lead levels in the drinking water were dismissed, ignored or covered up.

Flint has since switched back to the Detroit water system, but the damage to lead service lines was so severe the system remains above the federal action level. It may still be months before the water is safe to drink.

The successes and frustrations of Michigan Radio's investigative efforts taught us many lessons.

Don't dismiss information that seems wrong — follow up.

Our first clue that there were lead problems with Flint's water came from the work of another investigative reporter, Curt Guyette of the Michigan ACLU. Flint resident Lee-Anne Walters had given him a leaked draft report from the EPA. In the report, independent researchers from Virginia Tech had found lead levels in the water at 13,200 ppb (parts per billion), more than twice the amount to classify it as hazardous waste. The EPA action level for lead in water is 15 ppb.

Guyette shared the document with our newsroom, but we didn't report on it the first day. Our reporters with years of experience covering the environment could not believe the numbers. The newsroom spent that first afternoon arguing about it. The lead level numbers were unbelievably high, and some reporters kept pushing back. They said the numbers couldn't be right, that residential lead levels couldn't be this high from a city water system.

We spent a day reporting and confirming, and then we went with the story, which still seemed unbelievable.

Teamwork, communication and archives are crucial.

This story was too big for one reporter. We put together a five-person team, and the project nearly consumed all their waking hours for months. We had a daily assignment reporter in Flint to cover events, an investigative reporter for FOIA and research, a web producer for data stories, an environmental reporter for beat knowledge and sources, and an editor.

We created a Google document to keep track of our stories, what we knew and questions that remained unanswered. We created a Slack channel for ongoing discussions and sharing material. We continue to have weekly team meetings to brainstorm story ideas and confirm deadlines.

Our practice of keeping an archive of past audio, photographs and stories proved invaluable when we produced a documentary. Being able to draw upon a wealth of archive tape and visual images, dating back to long before the crisis was apparent, helped with the sound of our stories and the depth of the documentary.

As news director, I was the main contact with our network (NPR) that developed an insatiable thirst for Flint water stories. I was also the point of contact for national and international outlets wanting to interview our reporters.

It was tough to balance the focus on Flint with other news we had to cover. Members of the Flint team put in many unpaid overtime hours, and other members of the newsroom also logged several unpaid overtime hours picking up stories that typically would have gone to other reporters. Even with all of that, we have allowed coverage of some issues and geographic areas to suffer while attention remains on Flint.

STEVE CARMODY/MICHIGAN RADIO

Virginia Tech Environmental Engineer Marc Edwards analyzed Flint's water treatment data and helped Michigan Radio with its reporting.

Research the subject matter.

One reason our coverage was so successful was that the Flint team studied this issue like they were going to be tested on it. We frequently knew more about the rules, laws and science than state spokespeople and regulators.

For example, we read the federal Lead and Copper Rule. That sounds simple, but it wasn't. It's long and complex, and there's a whole set of state regulations that go along with the federal ones that state regulators use to help guide their enforcement. We understood the LCR, and it helped us catch officials who clearly did not understand how it worked. Deep knowledge of the laws, regulations and policies also helped us determine where there were gray areas in how the state was operating.

Ask good questions and demand answers.

When something is confusing, we work to understand it. At a Flint press conference, then Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant claimed Flint was using corrosion control. We thought this was untrue, so our reporter stayed to ask exactly what the MDEQ meant by that claim. After a lengthy huddle in a back room, a spokesman emerged to say they were using lime. We wrote to Marc Edwards at Virginia Tech to find out if

JOYCE ZHU / FLINTWATERSTUDY.ORG

Tap water in a Flint hospital on Oct. 16, 2015.

lime, as Flint was using it, was considered a corrosion control and he said no, as did other water experts.

Our questions prompted Edwards to analyze Flint's publicly available water treatment data, and he stated adding lime to soften the water likely made things worse.

When we presented all this information to the MDEQ, they admitted that Flint was not, in fact, using corrosion controls: bit.ly/1GB5kgu

Develop good source relationships with people who have the data.

We tried not to spend time gathering information our sources already had. If a source had already acquired important documents through FOIA, rather than go through that cumbersome and often expensive process again, we just asked if they would share. (They almost always did.)

Since the team had studied the issue and developed focused questions, we often

Sarah Hulett/Michigan Radio

Lee-Anne Walters stands in front of her former Flint home with her son Garrett. Lead levels in her water were more than twice the amount to classify it as hazardous waste.

found connections and story ideas in the documents that others had missed or weren't looking to find.

In documents Guyette had obtained through FOIA, we determined that Flint did not sample for lead from high-risk homes as it should have. We realized through the same document and our understanding of the LCR that the city's lead levels only complied with federal standards because state officials intentionally invalidated two samples that tested high for lead.

If these two samples had not been dropped, the city would've been out of compliance with the regulations. It would've required the city to take major steps to educate the public on how to protect themselves from dangerous lead exposure.

This particular level, called the "action level," requires a city to calculate the 90th percentile of lead levels. We got a math professor at Eastern Michigan University to do the math for us on video, and he did the calculations on a whiteboard to demonstrate what the state had done and why invalidating two samples was so significant. The three-minute video (bit.ly/1SvUof0) let our audience clearly see how numbers were manipulated so the water appeared to be safe under federal regulation when in fact it wasn't.

Timelines are awesome.

We created a timeline on our website (bit.ly/1S8B3hE) that served two purposes. First, it helped sort out exactly what happened when, who made which decisions and how they all fit together.

It also helped inform our audience and became a reference for other publications. When the governor's office later published its own timeline, we cross-referenced it with ours and were able to point to major holes in the administration's timeline as it tried to spin accountability away from state government.

Challenges

The FOIA laws in Michigan are ridiculous. The governor and legislature are not subject to FOIA. But the governor's office was pressured to release relevant emails, and typically did so by releasing thousands of pages after hours, especially on Friday nights.

We had difficulty dealing with the email and FOIA dumps, whether they were ones we requested or were the ones issued voluntarily from the governor's office.

We just didn't have the time or the staff to go through these as fast as the newspapers did. We tried dividing them up with each

person taking a few thousand pages overnight, but it was slow going and we were getting beat on stories.

We've since discovered Adobe Acrobat XI Pro that can make massive PDFs of emails searchable, and we're committed to learning how to do that.

Successes

A big success has been what we've been able to do with massive amounts of data from lead water samples across the state. We're up to more than 17,000 data points, and the state releases more every day.

Our web producer partnered with an address validation company to check the addresses and plot them on a map. We used our knowledge of the LCR to make sense of the numerical value of the lead in the water sample. Those addresses with high concentrations got purple and red dots, while those with lead below the federal action level showed up in green.

We update the map with the latest information each month: bit.ly/1YHmB0A

This map helped dispel a common myth in Flint, which is that lead was only a problem in certain neighborhoods. We could show from the map that it was totally random. We used the map to contact people at homes with high lead levels for interviews.

The map also helped us identify another problem. There are extremely high, seemingly random spikes in lead levels throughout Flint. These high levels are found when tiny particles or flakes from lead pipes break off and end up in the tap water. We followed up with a story on why this happens, why it's dangerous and why it matters in the long run as Flint's water distribution system recovers.

Another success came when we started asking questions about where lead service lines are in other cities. We knew part of the reason Flint violated the LCR was that it didn't sample only homes with lead service lines. We discovered part of the reason Flint didn't sample the right homes was because the city's records were horrible.

The EPA requires cities to know where their lead service lines are, but industry leaders and outside water experts have varying interpretations of this.

When we asked the state's environmental regulators if they knew how many lead service lines were in the state and where they were located, they didn't know. But the state regulators suggested individual water systems probably did.

There are more than 1,400 water systems in Michigan. So we contacted the 65 largest ones (and a few other old systems, which were more likely to have lead lines) to see if they could answer those two basic questions.

The answers were much more complicated than we imagined. Some cities had no idea how many lead lines they have. Others said there were no lead lines, but admitted they did not keep track of lead lines that might be on private property. Some had estimates based on the year the service line was installed, but no clear records. Others had very accurate records with digital databases.

STEVE CARMODY/MICHIGAN RADIO

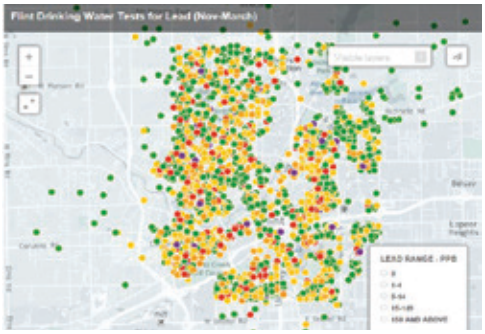
We were able to get answers for 50 communities and illustrate that Flint was not an outlier.

The results of this story — the problem being admitted, the people of Flint getting help, the state and federal officials who resigned or were fired or reassigned, the renewed interest in lead poisoning and water systems around the country — would not have happened if it were not for local journalism.

We sometimes treat local journalism as if it's not as big a deal or as important as the national networks. But in the communities we cover that is not the case. This story would not have come to light without local journalists.

These types of stories are probably in your community too; maybe not undrinkable water, but other equally important stories. Whether your staff is bigger or smaller than Michigan Radio's, you can really serve your audience and do important journalism by finding these stories and sticking to them. Don't just believe what you're told by officials, and question things even when they seem crazy like the first reported lead levels we saw.

There's been a lot of criticism over the past few years about local news and its lack of quality journalism. People complain local journalists are just stenographers of the daily mayhem, a parade of bodies and fires. They say we rely too much on pre-produced, pre-packaged, PR-friendly content. They feel we are more concerned with hits, social media likes and retweets than good journalism.



MICHIGAN RADIO

Mapping the lead tests throughout the city showed there was no real pattern or concentrated area for high lead levels.

I know that's not entirely true, and to the extent that the criticism is true, it doesn't have to be. Whether you're in a big shop or a small one, being in your community every day and paying attention to what's going on and asking questions and challenging authority and not buying the narrative offered by the powerful — that will result in quality journalism.

Vincent Duffy has been news director at Michigan Radio since May 2007. The news team has won scores of national, regional and state awards including Murrow Awards and Sigma Delta Chi awards. Duffy is the Chair-elect of the Radio/Television/Digital News Association (RTDNA), the world's largest organization representing electronic journalists.

WATER ON THE GREEN

Transparency and regulation of golf course water use in California

By Sammy Roth | The Desert Sun

JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN

Sometimes, finding the big story is hard. Once in a while, it's staring you in the face — and you just need to do the legwork to substantiate it.

Lots and lots of legwork.

When California Gov. Jerry Brown announced in April 2015 that he would require cities to reduce their water use by 25 percent in response to the drought, the big question was how those savings would be apportioned across the state — in other words, how much would each urban area actually be required to save? So it was with great fanfare that the State Water Resources Control Board developed a more specific game plan over the next few weeks.

The board ultimately gave each of the state's 400-plus water agencies an individualized target, based on its customers' average consumption. Residents of water-guzzling regions like the Coachella Valley — where my newspaper, The Desert Sun, is based — would need to cut back as much as 36 percent; other areas would have targets as low as 4 percent. Water savings would be measured relative to consumption in 2013.

There was one catch: Those targets wouldn't affect "commercial, industrial and institutional properties" that pump water from private wells, including universities,

cemeteries and golf courses. Instead, those water users would have two options: limit outdoor watering to two days per week, or reduce their consumption by 25 percent.

That was a big deal in the Coachella Valley, which is home to about 120 golf courses. My colleague Ian James had previously determined that the golf industry accounts for about one-quarter of the groundwater withdrawn from our over-pumped aquifer. So while the "commercial, industrial and institutional properties" provision wouldn't mean much in many parts of the state, it would be critical here.

We set out to find if golf courses would follow the rules. It was an impossible question to answer. With uneven transparency from the golf industry and no enforcement from the state, water use at many golf courses remains shrouded in mystery.

When we asked state water officials how they would enforce the golf course rules, we were surprised by their answer: Basically, they wouldn't. They said that while golf courses and other "commercial, industrial and institutional properties" would be expected to track their consumption relative to 2013, state officials wouldn't keep track. The reason, they said, is because they're already stretched thin policing water agencies.

"We're not the highway patrol," said a scientist with the state water board.

We asked the local water agencies whether they planned to enforce the rules; they said that the state board hadn't asked them to, and that private pumpers weren't really their responsibility anyway. So the golf course mandate would be toothless.

That was in April.

The water-saving rules took effect in June. By late July, I was chomping at the bit for information about whether local golf courses were complying, but I had no easy way to find out. So I decided I'd better do it the hard way: Ask them all myself.

With about 120 golf courses in the valley, that was a daunting task, so I started by narrowing the list. I asked our local water agencies — there are several — for information about which golf courses irrigate with groundwater exclusively. I eventually determined that 56 golf facilities, comprising 69 actual courses, were unambiguously covered by the mandate. I put them into a spreadsheet, then started calling them, one by one.

In an effort to be as fair as possible, I called each golf facility twice. I made a note in the spreadsheet of every phone call, and of what the result was — whether I left a message, whether I talked to someone, whether they answered my questions.

When golf course representatives told me they had cut their water use by 25 percent, I asked them for the actual consumption numbers to back it up. When they told me they were implementing steps that would eventually get them to 25 percent, I asked how much progress they'd made so far, after the first two months of the mandate. (Nobody I spoke to said they'd cut watering to two days per week.) It was a tiring process, full of repetitive days working the phone, making notes in the spreadsheet and asking for information from people who had little interest in talking to me.

In the end, it was worth it.

Of the 53 golf facilities I was able to contact, representatives for 33 of them didn't respond to multiple requests for comment or declined to be interviewed. This was the main finding of the investigation: In the absence of enforcement from the state, it was impossible to know whether most golf courses, the Coachella Valley's largest groundwater pumpers, were following the rules like everyone else.

Homes and businesses were being fined for not cutting back, and the water agencies themselves faced the threat of fines from the state. But golf courses had carte blanche. We'd assumed that would be the case after the state had admitted it wouldn't enforce the rules; I had proven the point by working the phone and creating my own data set.

Representatives for 20 golf facilities who did talk to me described the steps they were taking to cut back by 25 percent. I visited several of those facilities to see water conservation in action and to show our readers that some courses were doing their best to conserve a public resource. But of those 20 courses, only a handful were willing to provide data comparing their consumption in June and July of 2015 to June and July of 2013. Some representatives didn't know the numbers, or they offered different comparisons. Others acknowledged the changes they were making hadn't gotten them to 25 percent yet. That was another key finding: It was likely only a handful of local golf courses, if any, were actually in compliance with the rules.

The key to this investigation was realizing that in the absence of state enforcement, we could hold the golf courses accountable ourselves. While we didn't have the power to compel them to produce water use data, we showed that most of them weren't willing to be transparent, a finding that called into question both their compliance with the rules and the effectiveness of the state mandate. All it took was the willingness to do the legwork state officials apparently weren't willing to do.

The investigation didn't have quite the impact I hoped it would. While it's possible we shamed some of the golf courses into doing a better job at conservation, the state water board still doesn't seem to be enforcing the rules for golf courses. I haven't heard of a single course being asked to produce water consumption data, either. It might be time for me to start making another round of phone calls.

Sammy Roth writes about energy and the environment for The Desert Sun in Palm Springs, California. You can follow him on Twitter @Sammy_Roth.

JAY CALDERON/THE DESERT SUN

Grass is allowed to go brown on some parts of the golf course at Desert Princess Country Club in Cathedral City on Aug. 4, 2015.

THE COST OF WATER

Investigating how the water infrastructure works in your city

By Matthew Schuerman | WNYC

Adi Talwar/CityLimits.org

The shaft leading to an underground construction site along the Delaware Aqueduct.

In early 2015, the American West entered its fourth consecutive year of drought. The governor of California trudged up into the Sierra Nevada mountains to demonstrate the lack of snow cap and announced the state's first-ever water restrictions.

Meanwhile, the water supply in the Northeast continued to be robust. In fact, researchers at Columbia University projected that climate change would bring New York City more rain, not less. Despite the abundance, New York City faced its own type of water crisis. Its water rates had tripled over the past 15 years. A much-needed filtration plant cost four times as much as early estimates and took nearly 30 years to plan and build. Leaks in one of the city's aqueducts were pouring up to 35 million gallons of water a day into the Hudson River and people's basements — enough to supply 350,000 Californians before they even bothered to cut back.

And yet, amazingly, the city's water and sewer system had rarely been subjected to the type of journalistic scrutiny that befits a $5 billion-a-year enterprise. To rectify that situation, CityLimits.org, an online news organization, approached WNYC, the nation's largest public radio station, about a potential collaboration. The subject, it turned out, had much to do with a theme we had just received a Rockefeller Foundation grant to explore.

Neither WNYC nor City Limits necessarily thought there was some damning secret that needed to be uncovered. But the editor of City Limits, Jarrett Murphy, had identified a few key ways in which a substance as simple as water interacted with issues as diverse as affordable housing, land use and access to recreational opportunities. Our task, as we saw it, was to make these connections more visible.

The collaboration allowed both organizations to cover more ground than they could have alone. City Limits had a lot of subject matter expertise because of its previous coverage of the issue; WNYC had a larger megaphone, with about 1.1 million listeners a week. We also pulled people off their regular duties to pitch in: Our enterprise editor, Karen Frillmann, volunteered to take on the story about the aqueduct leak.

As we brainstormed, it looked more and more like we had a four- or five-day series on our hands. WNYC wanted to make sure that it could deliver that much content in an

engaging, listener-friendly way. Our executive editor, Sean Bowditch, came up with the idea to organize the stories in the same order in which water flows from the reservoirs upstate to the city. (You can find the series here: www.wnyc.org/series/water/)

So, we would open on Monday with a story about friction between residents who lived near the upstate reservoirs and city officials. Then we'd move downstream to the aqueduct and the extravagantly expensive filtration plant. Then came a story located in the city itself, exploring the impact of water costs on property owners. Finally, we would follow the water as it left the city — as sewage, sometimes untreated.

In the early planning stages, we were already thinking about how to present the stories. If we started with sheep bleating in the Catskill Mountains, where the city's biggest reservoirs are located, we knew urban listeners would have a hard time relating. (Not that those bleats, captured by reporter Tracie Hunte, didn't make it into the series. They ended up being one of the most memorable audio moments of the whole week.)

So we asked a staff member, Amy Pearl, to give us an audio overview of how the entire water system worked. In the following weeks, Pearl gathered all the sounds she could to explain the 100-mile-long water system: a burbling stream, a rushing waterfall, the hum of the ultra-violet lights that kill parasites, the clang of workers repairing a water tower. We knew that details like this were key to bringing life to what otherwise might be taken as a series about that dreaded concept: infrastructure.

At first, the city's Department of Environmental Protection was accommodating to our requests for information. It set up a busy two-day itinerary to show off the water supply system in the Catskills. Top officials gave interviews to defend their relationship to upstate communities and explain how they would fix the leaks in the aqueduct.

But when it came to the downstream stories, the DEP clammed up. It was as if they were happy to show off the beautiful reservoirs they owned, but reluctant to get into the nitty gritty on issues that directly affect their customers. It took repeated emails, phone messages and explaining to get the press office to agree to be helpful. And then they wouldn't be. We submitted an extensive freedom of information request, which prompted an angry response, as if we had crossed some line of no return by exercising our legal options.

The DEP shut off any hope for further interviews, but promised to fulfill our information request. (Actually, they didn't even do that.) Fortunately, the former DEP commissioner who oversaw the filtration plant project was willing to come to our studio and sit down for a full hour. Under questioning by reporters Stephen Nessen, for WNYC, and Adam Wisnieski, for City Limits, he candidly admitted that a big reason the project came in over budget was that early cost estimates had been unrealistically low, "because there's a human tendency to go low because you want it to be low."

Isaak Lipitzin/WNYC

Maria Muñoz, a condominium owner in the Bronx, went on a payment plan for her water bill but is still facing foreclosure.

We ended by getting some, though not all, of our questions answered by going directly to the mayor's office. The DEP's reluctance to participate in the series was mysterious. Our line of questioning, while rigorous, was not out of line for what a public agency should expect. We also recognized that the new mayor, Bill de Blasio, was trying to address many of the problems we had identified, including lowering the "rental payment," or the amount that the water system subsidized the city's general budget. Unlike public schools or police protection, water is paid for by user fees rather than an income or property tax. As a result, it is income neutral, if not outright regressive. Kat Aaron, a data news reporter for WNYC, found a low-income homeowner who was facing foreclosure because of her water bills and chronicled her story.

We also discovered that in rental buildings, water has a perverse economic effect: In low-income areas, where four or five people might cram into a two-bedroom apartment, landlords have to pay a larger proportion of their rental income for water than do owners of buildings with a lot of single, unmarried tenants in one-bedroom apartments. That left landlords in low-income areas with even less money to do necessary maintenance and repairs on their properties.

Our series, "The Cost of Our Water," rolled out over airwaves and on the City Limits website last June. The reception was enthusiastic: We were able to place an op-ed in the New York Daily News by Murphy, the City Limits editor, highlighting the main takeaways, which reached an even broader audience.

Listeners remarked on how they would never again take water for granted. Our coverage had clearly elucidated the phenomenal resilience of the water system, and had also shown the dangers it faced.

For an encore, we decided to turn the package into an hour-long special to play over a weekend in early August. To knit the six main pieces together, we invited in special guests, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional administrator and a Cooper Union professor who had researched the water system extensively. They helped answer some of the questions we hadn't addressed, such as why we should strive to conserve water if we live in the wet Northeast, and how we should pay for infrastructure improvements without burdening the city's poor.

In the months since, WNYC has branched out. The water crisis in Flint, Michigan, has turned the nation's attention from water supply to water quality. In March, across the river in Newark, New Jersey, the school system announced that at least some of the water in about half of its public schools was tainted with lead. But it turned out they were not alone.

We looked back across the river to the largest public school system in the country, and prodded New York City to publicize its lead testing results. The education department set up a special portal where parents could look up their children's school results. By using this portal, one of our data news producers, Jenny Ye, was able to figure out that the city had failed to test the drinking water in most of its public schools over the previous 10 years. We are now monitoring the city's efforts to test its buildings as well as Newark's plan to address its lead issues in a comprehensive way. Meanwhile, Mayor de Blasio announced the lowest increase in water rates in 16 years.

Matthew Schuerman is an editor at WNYC. When he was a reporter, he covered repeated financial crises at the MTA, the most severe transit cuts in decades, as well as the World Trade Center redevelopment and Hurricane Sandy.

TESTING OLYMPIC WATERS

Water testing and investigation into the Rio filth

By Brad Brooks

AP Photo/Felipe Dana, File

Athletes train in the Rodrigo de Freitas Lake, surrounded by dead small silvery fish, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

What else was in the water?

In late 2013 The Associated Press obtained and analyzed a decade's worth of testing data from the Rio de Janeiro state government of the sewage-laden waters — home of the 2016 Olympic Games.

We found that bacterial pollution levels from raw sewage in some spots were 180 times what would be considered safe in the U.S. That led to the first big story in late 2013 and prompted government officials to become more combative about releasing their data. It also led to a pressing question: If the government's own testing showed such high levels of pollution, what might we find if we tried to test the waters ourselves?

When Brazil won its Olympic bid in 2009, organizers promised that cleaning up Rio de Janeiro's waterways would be the crowning legacy of the 2016 Games. The waters in Rio were so badly polluted because the government had not built out a sewage system for the metropolitan area of 12 million people — despite untold billions being spent since the early 1990s supposedly to do just that.

But that cleanup did not happen. Officials tried to tamp down the subject by simply admitting right away that they would not meet the goal of reducing the amount of raw sewage dumped into Olympic waterways by 80 percent — but that they were instead making steady, but vague, progress.

It was essential to fully report why officials missed their Olympic pollution goal, but it was also important to explain what dangers the water posed for athletes and the citizens of Rio de Janeiro who live with the filth permanently.

In deciding how we would carry out our own water testing, we interviewed several water experts in Brazil, the U.S. and Europe. It became clear that to move the story forward, we could not simply replicate the Brazilian government's testing that measured levels of bacterial pathogens — specifically fecal coliforms, the cheapest and most standard "marker" for sewage pollution.

Scientific advances in the last 15 years, I was told, had made it easier and cheaper to check polluted water for lurking viruses by using DNA-based methods such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) lab testing.

This is vital, as most illnesses that humans get from exposure to contaminated water are viral

— not bacterial based. Searching for viruses related to human sewage contamination also provided a far more comprehensive understanding of the level of pollution in a water body. Bacterial pathogens break down far quicker in water — especially in salty and sunny conditions, exactly what we faced in Rio. Viruses related to sewage pollution, on the other hand, stick around for months and even years, some studies have found.

Thanks to a 1979 report from the World Health Organization, government regulatory agencies have known for decades that there is usually no correlation between bacterial and viral pathogens in sewage-polluted water. But until about 15 years ago, it simply was not possible to easily — nor relatively cheaply — test for viruses to prove that the water was still polluted and remained a danger for anyone coming into contact with it.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro, this made perfect sense. We had a government that admitted to the problem; the lack of a proper sewage system meant that each day an estimated 700,000 million liters of raw sewage flowed into Rio's Guanabara Bay, where Olympic events will be held. Yet in some of the specific spots where sailing, rowing and open water swimming events will be located, the bacterial levels fell within Brazilian government regulation levels (a limit of 4,000 fecal coliforms per 100 ml water sample for secondary contact sports like sailing, and a limit of 1,000 fecal coliforms per 100 ml sample for primary contact sports like swimming) and were deemed safe.

In talking to water experts, it quickly became apparent that I had to focus my interviews and research on virologists, the scientists on the cutting edge of monitoring water quality through the more rigorous testing for viruses.

When I approached four international firms that test water for viruses, all declined. Two simply said they were uninterested, and two candidly indicated they did not want to put lucrative contracts with the Brazilian government or corporations at risk by tackling what they knew would become a political hot button of a story.

I next moved to virologists associated with Brazilian universities. Again, dead ends. While the scientists expressed deep interest, they said they could not participate — Brazil's universities are typically funded by state or federal governments, and all scientists feared the political backlash.

Finally, I was discretely directed by one of Brazil's top virologists working at a government lab to a young scientist whom he said would be perfect for the project. This was primarily because the young scientist ran one of the handful of labs in the country that could carry out the viral testing of the water, and it was the only one located at a private university.

Within minutes of sending an email to Fernando Spilki at Feevale University in southern Brazil to ask if he was interested, he replied: "Of course, please call me."

Spilki guided us in determining what we should look for in terms of viruses. He also suggested that, for argument's sake, we should conduct additional testing that mirrored the government's own testing of bacterial pathogens.

As Spilki gave me a crash course in water quality assessment, I explained to him what was needed for the journalism side of the project: data, interviews and images. Together we visited the venues where Olympic water events would be held. He determined where the ideal points to test for water pollution might be. I made sure that his suggested sampling points would not become closed to the public as they became construction sites for Olympic venues.

Beginning in March 2015, we began carrying out monthly sampling of Rio's Olympic waterways — sampling that continues and will be published up to and through the Olympic Games.

By the end of July, we had enough samples that we felt we could release the first story, in which we detailed how the worst of the Olympic venues had some viral levels that were 1.7 million times higher than what would be considered alarming for recreational waters in southern California.

It was challenging to team with a scientist for what we believed to be an unprecedented journalism project to create our own database on the viral sewage pollution in water. Spilki helped us out without being paid, and the total cost of the 18-month project was less than a two-week trip to the Amazon.

Journalists and scientists work at entirely different paces. In my experience, I found most water experts not to be incredibly interested in participating in media projects, which most confessed they feared would be superficial looks at complex topics. But as reporting on environmental issues, especially those impacting public health, become more vital and difficult with dwindling industry resources, it's vital that journalists build bridges to experts in academia and get them involved with groundbreaking studies.

The best advice is to research and study whatever topic you are going after like a master's student before even engaging a scientist. If you can speak the scientists' language upon approaching, your chances of convincing them to work with you are far greater.

For this project, that meant that during the year-long search for a scientist, I read upward of 100 studies dating back decades and conducted countless interviews with experts — talks that I knew would never be for print, but were simply to help me master the topic. All that in between covering the regular spot news that being an AP bureau chief overseas demanded.

The AP study — before and after it was designed, and as the monthly results came in — was subjected to rigorous peer reviews from several of the world's top virologists. I told each virologist that other scientists were also examining and providing analysis of the project, both its methodology and results. But I did not release any of the scientists' names to make sure they didn't talk among themselves and, perhaps, influence one another's opinion about the project. We organized all of this by using Excel.

Importantly, the AP also published not just a story that a non-scientist reader could understand, but also the scientific methodology and (nearly) full results so that scientists from around the world could examine our work. We didn't want to overwhelm our readers, so we decided not to publish every reading from every sample.

To date, no scientist has questioned the manner in which the project was carried out — no scientist has come forward to indicate any error.

That did not mean we were exempt from intense criticism from the International Olympic Committee, the local Rio de Janeiro Olympic Committee and others.

Now, Brazil's Federal Police are carrying out an investigation into water pollution in Rio de Janeiro. Cedae, the state-government run utility, is being probed to see if it lied about the amount of sewage it was treating. The Federal Police are also examining what happened to taxpayers' monies that were meant to create basic sanitation, but have instead done little to improve what health experts label as an "endemic" health crisis related to the population's exposure to sewage-polluted waters.

At the time of this writing, the results of that investigation are not yet known.

Brad Brooks has reported from the U.S., Iraq and Latin America for The Associated Press. He served as the AP's Rio de Janeiro correspondent from 2008 to 2010 and then as the Brazil bureau chief from 2010 to 2015. Since January 2015, Brooks has served as Reuters' chief correspondent in Brazil. Follow Brad @bradleybrooks.

Reinventing Journalism

In the Heart of New York City

- Master of Arts in Journalism
- Master of Arts in Entrepreneurial Journalism
- Master of Arts in Social Journalism
- Advanced Certificate in Entrepreneurial Journalism
- Spanish Bilingual Concentration
- Professional Development Courses

@cunyjschool

www.journalism.cuny.edu

The City University of New York

CUNY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

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. 27632: "Sonora River: Massive mine spill continues impact to Sonora River Basin" — Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting.
One year after the Buenavista del Cobre copper mine spilled 11 million gallons of toxic chemicals into the Sonora River in Mexico, polluting nearly 200 miles of river and threatening the health and livelihood of its residents, the Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting highlighted the consequences of an inadequate government response and illegal operations at the mine that led to the spill. Deep reporting illuminates farmers and families still sick from contact with the contaminated water, a government slow to take meaningful action to protect its residents and outdated water quality standards that allow 2.5 times more arsenic than acceptable international norms. (2015)

No. 27248: "Surviving the drought: We investigate California's water crisis" — NBC Bay Area.
The NBC Bay Area team investigated California's drought to find out why a state that leads the world in innovation, technology, science and progressive policy can't seem to figure out how to solve a water crisis when other countries around the world can. They asked a simple question: If other countries can do it, why can't California? Their investigation revealed that the problem of record drought in California isn't as much about lack of rain and snow but about lack of vision and stalemate because of entrenched and intractable policy and history. (2015)

TIPSHEETS

No. 4563: "Got milk? Got manure!"
Andrea Rogers from the Western Environmental Law Center outlines how manure lagoons are causing environmental problems such as water pollution. Those consequences include nitrates and pathogens in water, as well as fish kills. (2015)

No. 4511: "Time reporting on rising sea levels"
Climate change isn't a future threat. It is happening now. Whether drought, increased rainfall, higher average temperatures, greater extremes, look for ways to document the changes and impact of what already has occurred. Deborah Nelson, Ryan McNeill and Duff Wilson from Reuters offer tips focused on finding evidence in your community of the effects rising sea levels have had on the shoreline. (2015)

No. 4072: "Census III: Water begone"
John Keefe of WNYC New York Public Radio explains how to use the Census Bureau's water shapefiles to make accurate population maps. He walks through how to subtract the water areas from the tracts, leaving only land. (2014)

No. 27456: "The global crisis of vanishing groundwater" — Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.
The historic agreement reached in Paris in December that will curb carbon emissions is heartening, but oil isn't the only resource being pumped out of the ground at an alarming rate — with catastrophic consequences for the planet. In a series for USA TODAY, The Desert Sun of Palm Springs, California, and other Gannett newspapers, Pulitzer Center grantees Ian James and Steve Elfers investigate the consequences of groundwater depletion, an overlooked global crisis. (2015)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

"How San Diego's vision for a world-class waterfront vanished" — inewsource.
The waterfront along downtown San Diego's North Harbor Drive is some of the most valuable property in Southern California, and in 2001, the waterfront was supposed to be be turned into large parks and public spaces. Today, however, the waterfront is filled with piers reserved for cruise ships and tourists, parking lots and hotels. In an investigation, inewsource looked into how the plan changed so dramatically. (2016)

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

"Water systems across the country contain high levels of lead" — USA TODAY NETWORK.
Flint, Michigan is not alone in its drinking water crisis. A USA TODAY NETWORK investigation identified almost 2,000 water systems across the country that showed excessive levels of lead contamination over the past four years. These systems reported lead levels that exceed Environmental Protection Agency standards. About 350 of the systems provide drinking water to schools or daycares, and, collectively, the systems supply water to 6 million people. The investigation also found that at least 180 of the systems did not notify consumers about the high levels of lead, which is a federal requirement. (2016)

Read the full investigation here: usat.ly/1Lhs90w

IRE AUDIO

"The parched west" — Society of Environmental Journalists.
Drought. It's one of the biggest stories in California, as the Golden State takes its turn as a national poster state for dry times. At this session, Andrew Fahlund, Matt Weiser, Lauren Sommer and Peter Gleick discuss how California and other states are coping with the drought and rethinking water policies. (2014)

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

"Investigating infrastructure: The National Inventory of Dams" — IRE and Society of Environmental Journalists.
Critical infrastructure keeps high waters and dangerous chemicals at bay, but what happens when the infrastructure fails? Liz Lucas and Joseph Davis talk broadly about the importance of investigating infrastructure, including tips for stories and data sources. They drill down into the elusive National Inventory of Dams, which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stopped releasing shortly after 9/11. (2014)

Listen to the full audio here: bit.ly/24vrSzU

A must have for newsroom leaders: an agile mindset

Paul Cheung
The Associated Press

I recently co-directed Asian American Journalists Association's Executive Leadership Program in New York. Since its inception in 1995, more than 500 journalists and media professionals have completed the program. It has equipped graduates with the tools and necessary framework to tackle a variety of challenges, including mastering leadership skills that help transcend cultural barriers and fighting bias in decision-making and office politics.

A key component of the program focuses on understanding the difference between managing and leading.

A manager is an authority figure while a leader is an authoritative figure. A manager enacts culture while a leader shapes the culture.

Co-directing the ELP this year reminded me of the importance of having a leader with an agile mindset.

It's about continuously learning and being able to adjust assumptions and practices to deliver the desired outcome. I believe this is an important attribute for newsroom leaders since our entire industry's assumptions and practices are being challenged. Without it, our ability to innovate and to adapt will stall — and that inability to change could be damaging.

The velocity of change has increased exponentially because of seismic shifts in demographics and in technology.

The existing audience we serve, largely dominated by white men, will no longer be a majority.

By 2060, the U.S. will become a minority-majority country. According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, no single racial or ethnic group will have a majority share of the U.S. population.

Content is no longer just available from a very few platforms; it can be accessed in so many forms using a growing array of devices. As technology becomes more integrated into all aspects of our lives, we will have better access to information and data from handheld devices — wherever we may be.

Interaction with our audience is no longer unidirectional. Long gone are the days when we push out stories and expect the audience to just listen. We comment, share, like, favorite or "heart" online content. There are now so many ways audiences can engage with our stories and provide immediate feedback.

Here are some tips I learned over the years of developing an agile mindset:

Cultivate an understanding of your bias and control it. This can be difficult when bias is unconscious or unintentional. When a decision is influenced by a "gut feeling," it's wise to explore how your unconscious bias might have led to your decision. Different cultures have different norms; don't assume that a different way of doing things is wrong merely because it is not how you'd approach things.

Embrace diversity. While this seems obvious, it's also difficult to do on a regular basis. Diversity goes beyond race and ethnicity. When was the last time you invited a person with opposing views or who specializes in a different format to participate in brainstorming sessions, or solicited their advice and feedback about a story? Having differences of opinion can be a good thing — a diversity of approaches can open up possibilities and lead to higher levels of creativity. In the end, you still get to decide what works best for you. There is no harm in getting other viewpoints.

Just listen. When was the last time you simply listened to feedback without feeling compelled to defend your decision? While a spirited conversation is always welcomed, sometimes you need to remain quiet. And just listen. The act of listening gives you time to process the different points of view. Feedback is a gift. Accept it graciously.

Start with the outcome and then consider the solutions. I often sit in meetings listening to folks who offer solutions or ideas but who seldom detail what is the ideal outcome to the problems they identify. Defining the preferred outcome first helps identify the different paths to reaching that goal.

Democratize decision-making and be OK with it. The person who is expected to make most of the decisions might not always be the most informed. Create a decision tree and make sure your team knows what decisions they should take ownership of, and which decisions they may need to escalate upward. Once a decision is made, be OK with it. Second-guessing and reversing decisions can be damaging to your team's morale.

Use "and" instead of "but." How often do you hear a manager's positive feedback followed by a "but"? That tiny word often negates any goodwill or positive reinforcement you build. "But" puts the person in a defensive position. A healthier approach is to use "and" to amplify an idea.

Failing is not losing. No one likes failing, and things don't always work out as hoped. An advantage in the news business is that we get to do things all over again the next news cycle or on the following day. When something doesn't work out, it's important to understand why and apply that lesson the next day. We have a prized rarity: jobs that give us a blank slate every day.

These tips helped strengthen my agile mindset so that I can be a better leader at the AP and at AAJA. As I learned and relearned, I quickly realized it's not about repeating what works but about repeating the quest to learn what works. Successful leaders know when to deviate from those patterns. The process helped recommit my passion for journalism on a regular basis.

Paul Cheung is AP's Director of Interactives and Digital News Production. He has been AAJA's national president since 2013 and also a 2016 Columbia Punch Sulzberger Fellow.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AAJA

2015 IRE AWARD WINNERS

Journalists who helped free enslaved laborers, improved the safety net for injured workers and brought about reforms for failing schools serving mostly black youth, are among the winners of the 2015 Investigative Reporters & Editors Awards.

This year's winners come from a mix of new and established media, with many of the winning entries involving collaborations between teams of reporters from a wide range of news organizations.

More than 550 entries were submitted and three projects were singled out for IRE Medals, the highest honor the organization bestows.

The awards, given by Investigative Reporters & Editors, Inc. since 1979, recognize the most outstanding watchdog journalism of the year. The contest covers 17 categories across media platforms and a range of market sizes.

Here's a complete list of the winners: bit.ly/21xgrSX

IRE MEDALS

The highest honor IRE can bestow for investigative reporting is the IRE Medal. This year, there are three medal winners.


Mason


McDowell


Mendoza


Htusan

Associated Press

"Seafood from Slaves"

The Associated Press

Margie Mason, Robin McDowell, Martha Mendoza and Esther Htusan

Judges' comments: This piece excelled in nearly every way an investigative story can. AP reporters discovered an island home to thousands of enslaved laborers at work in Thailand's multi-billion-dollar seafood export industry. Not content to merely document the plight of these workers, the AP traced the fruits of this slave labor all the way to the seafood counters in U.S. cities. Judges awarded it an IRE Medal for its moving execution and life-changing results. For years, the industry had insisted conditions had improved, but the AP's story proved conclusively that thousands of laborers remained trapped in modern slavery. This project helped lead to freedom for approximately 2,000 slaves.


Grabell


Berkes


Groeger


Qiu


Wei

PRO PUBLICA

npr

"Insult to Injury: America's Vanishing Worker Protections"

ProPublica and NPR

Michael Grabell (ProPublica), Howard Berkes (NPR), Lena Groeger (ProPublica), Yue Qiu (ProPublica) and Sisi Wei (ProPublica)

Judges' comments: This project masterfully details how states across the nation have dismantled their workers' comp programs, cutting benefits and sticking taxpayers with a growing bill for injured workers. Their work paid off in legislative changes in several states, investigations and a wider discussion about needed changes. We are awarding this project an IRE Medal for its wide impact and its fresh approach to showing how employers continue to benefit at the expense of workers.


Fitzpatrick


Gartner


LaForgia


Lash

Tampa Bay Times

"Failure Factories"

Tampa Bay Times

Cara Fitzpatrick, Lisa Gartner, Michael LaForgia and Nathaniel Lash

Judges' comments: With its deep reporting, clear writing and detailed data analysis, the Tampa Bay Times shamed and embarrassed Pinellas County school leaders for completely failing black children in the district. This story is the epitome of why desegregation was ordered in 1954 — to level the educational playing field for black children. Reforms are now underway because of the impressive commitment by the newspaper to right an alarming wrong.

SPECIAL AWARDS

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

FOI Award


Leopold


Henderson

VICE NEWS

"CIA Torture, a Senate Investigation, and the Google Search That Launched a Spying Scandal"

VICE News

Jason Leopold and Ky Henderson

Judges' comments: The CIA and other national security agencies have long resisted openness and transparency about their operations. But through a series of FOIA requests and federal lawsuits, VICE News pushed the CIA and the Department of Justice to declassify hundreds of pages of documents and turn them over. The resulting series of investigative reports revealed new details about the CIA's use of torture, as well as spying the agency conducted on U.S. Senate investigators. The VICE News team was not afraid to sue when it felt it was being stonewalled, keeping agencies accountable at a time of unprecedented FOIA obstruction by the Obama administration.

Finalists:

"Private University Police Powers," KPRC-Houston, Robert Arnold, Aaron Wische, John Barone, Jon Hill and Scott Sherman

"Perimeter Breaches at US airports," The Associated Press, Martha Mendoza, Justin Pritchard, Raghuram Vadarevu, Pauline Arrillaga and Frank Baker

"Biolabs in Your Backyard," USA TODAY, Alison Young, with Nick Penzenstadler, Tom Vanden Brook and a team from USA TODAY NETWORK local newsrooms. Editing by John Hillkirk and John Kelly

"Battle to Preserve Access to Open Records," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Patrick Marley, Jason Stein and Mary Spicuzza

Tom Renner Award

"The Khadija Project"

Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project in collaboration with Radio Free Europe, Meydan TV, Sveriges Television, TT News Agency, Investigative Reporting Center of Italy, Bellingcat and other journalists.

Reporters: Miranda Patrucic (OCCRP), Joachim Dyfvermark (SVT), Ola Westerberg (TT), Sven Bergman (SVT), Paul Radu (OCCRP), Iggy Ostanin (Bellingcat), Eleanor Rose (OCCRP), Karim Secker, Olesya Shmagun (OCCRP), Lorenzo Di Pietro (IRPI), Lejla Camdzic (OCCRP), Boris Kartheuser (freelance), Sylke Gruhnwald (SRF), Julian Schmidli (SRF), Lovisa Moller (Factwise), Sofia Hultqvist (Factwise), Tolga Tanis (Hurriyet), Habib Abdullayev (Meydan TV), Lejla Sarcevic (OCCRP), Don Ray and Khadija Ismayilova

Editors: Drew Sullivan, Jody McPhillips, Rosemary Armao, Deborah Nelson and Dave Bloss

Note that reporters from Azerbaijan cannot be named because of fear of arrest of family members. Azerbaijani reporters wrote under the pseudonym of their arrested colleague, Khadija Ismayilova.

Judges' comments: This project honors the spirit of IRE's Arizona Project in a powerful and uplifting way. With Khadija Ismayilova, a reporter for Radio Free Europe and OCCRP, still in prison on politically motivated charges by Azerbaijani authorities, colleagues from several nations banded together to continue her reporting on corruption among the governing elites of Azerbaijan. The resulting reports — many filed under the assumed name "Azerbaijani journalists" — decoded a maze-like series of ownership structures that revealed the nation's president and his family control powerful business interests, despite national law prohibiting the president or first lady from holding ownership stakes in private firms.

Finalists:

"Plundering America," South Florida Sun Sentinel, Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, John Maines, Tracey Eaton and Taimy Alvarez

"Lumber Liquidators," 60 Minutes, Jeff Fager, Bill Owens, Anderson Cooper, Katherine Davis, Sam Hornblower and Terry Manning

"Over the Line: Police Shootings in Georgia," WSB-Atlanta and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Jodie Fleischer, Brad Schrade, Jennifer Peebles, Patti DiVincenzo, LeVar James, Ken Foskett, Jeff Ernsthausen and Ashlyn Still

2015 AWARD WINNERS AND FINALISTS BY CATEGORY:

PRINT/ONLINE

Print/Online – Small

"The Louisiana State Penitentiary: Where inmates aren't the only scoundrels"

The Advocate, Maya Lau, Gordon Russell and Steve Hardy


Lau


Russell


Hardy

THE ADVOCATE

Judges' comments: The warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola ruled with an iron fist and developed a reputation for transforming what had been America's most violent jail through "moral rehabilitation." But an investigation by The Advocate found that for two decades, warden Burl Cain profited from his position. After the newspaper reported that he engaged in real estate deals with two men tied to inmates, the warden stepped down. The newspaper's reporting continued, however, documenting the warden's long history of questionable side deals tied to the prison, his cashing in on lucrative retirement deals despite continuing to work and how he has exaggerated and lied about his role in transforming Angola. Criminal investigations are now underway.

Finalists:

"Opening the Black Box of Egypt's Slush Funds," Africa Confidential and The Angaza Foundation for Africa Reporting (TAFAR), Nizar Manek and Jeremy Hodge

"State Workers' Boss Busted," The News & Observer, Joseph Neff

"Destroying the Center for Building Hope," Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Jessica Floum

Print/Online – Medium

"Failure Factories"

Tampa Bay Times (medal winner), Cara Fitzpatrick, Lisa Gartner, Michael LaForgia and Nathaniel Lash


Fitzpatrick


Gartner


LaForgia


Lash

Tampa Bay Times

Finalists:

"Hidden Errors," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Ellen Gabler

"Insane. Invisible. In Danger," Tampa Bay Times and Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Leonora LaPeter Anton, Anthony Cormier, Michael Braga and Chris Davis

"License to Launder: Cash, cops and cartels," Miami Herald, Michael Sallah, Joanna Zuckerman-Bernstein and Antonio Delgado

"Suspect Shootings," The Philadelphia Inquirer, Mark Fazlollah, Dylan Purcell and Daniel Rubin

Print/Online – Large

"Insult to Injury: America's Vanishing Worker Protections"

Grabell Berkes Groeger Qiu Wei

ProPublica and NPR (medal winner), Michael Grabell (ProPublica), Howard Berkes (NPR), Lena Groeger (ProPublica), Yue Qiu (ProPublica) and Sisi Wei (ProPublica)

Finalists:

"Dysfunction in Drug Prices," The Wall Street Journal, Jonathan D. Rockoff, Joseph Walker, Jeanne Whalen, Peter Loftus and Ed Silverman

"Testing Theranos," The Wall Street Journal, John Carreyrou with Mike Siconolfi, Christopher Weaver and Rolfe Winkler

"The Mobile Home Trap," The Seattle Times, The Center for Public Integrity and BuzzFeed News, Mike Baker and Daniel Wagner

"America's Broken Guest Worker Program," BuzzFeed News, Ken Bensinger, Jessica Garrison and Jeremy Singer-Vine

BROADCAST/VIDEO

Broadcast/Video – Small

"Racial Profiling Whitewash"

KXAN-Austin

Brian Collister, Joe Ellis, Ben Friberg, Josh Hinkle and Chad Cross

Collister Ellis Friberg Hinkle Cross

Judges' comments: Texas law requires police officers to list the race of each driver pulled over for an apparent traffic violation in order to avoid any pattern of racial profiling. In a massive research effort involving 16 million state records of traffic stops going back five years, KXAN discovered and documented that state troopers were dodging any problems by writing down "white" for too many drivers, particularly Hispanics. Officials at first tried to blame a flaw in their computer system before acknowledging the obvious. As a result of the reporting, troopers were ordered to show drivers which race was written on a ticket and give them an opportunity to confirm or correct that information.

Finalists:

"Burning Questions," WTAE-Pittsburgh, Paul Van Osdol, Andy Benesh, Brian Caldwell, Dave Carulli, Kendall Cross, Andy Cunningham, T.J. Haught, Eric Hinnebusch, Dave O'Neil, Steve Pierce, Cary Toaso, Michael Lazorko, Patti Pantalone, Kevin Kalia, Alex Marcelewski, Sally Wiggin, Jim Parsons, Justin Antoniotti and Charles W. Wolfertz III

"Crumbling Foundations," WVIT-New Britain, George Colli, David Michnowicz, Jon Wardle, Sharon Butterworth, Matthew Piacente and Garrett Allison

"Speaking Up for Special Needs," WITI-Milwaukee, Meghan Dwyer, David Michuda and the WITI photojournalist staff

"Swiped: Financial Mismanagement," WVUE-New Orleans, Lee Zurik, Tom Wright, Jon Turnipseed, Mikel Schaefer and Greg Phillips

Broadcast/Video – Medium

"Invisible Wounds" *KARE-Minneapolis/St. Paul*

A.J. Lagoe, Gary Knox, Bill Middeke, Steve Eckert, Stacey Nogy, Jane Helmke and Laura Stokes

Lagoe Knox Middeke

Eckert Nogy Helmke

Stokes

Judges' comments: KARE 11 television spent a year investigating how unqualified doctors denied treatment and benefits to patients with traumatic brain injuries at the Minneapolis Veterans Administration hospital. The VA's own websites included false and misleading information about doctor's licenses and certifications. The VA responded to pressure from the reports and notified hundreds of vets that they were entitled to new exams. Members of Congress launched investigations and the VA's Office of Inspector General opened a nationwide review.

Finalists:

"LA's Nuclear Secret," KNBC-Southern California, Joel Grover, Matthew Glasser, Matt Goldberg, Andres Pruna, Jose Hernandez, Mike Cervantes and James Wulff

"Over the Line: Police Shootings in Georgia," WSB-Atlanta and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Jodie Fleischer, Brad Schrade, Jennifer Peebles, Patti DiVincenzo, LeVar James, Ken Foskett, Jeff Ernsthausen and Ashlyn Still

Broadcast/Video – Large

"Rape on the Night Shift"/"Violación de un sueño: Jornada nocturna"

FRONTLINE, Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting, The Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley, KQED Public Radio and Univision

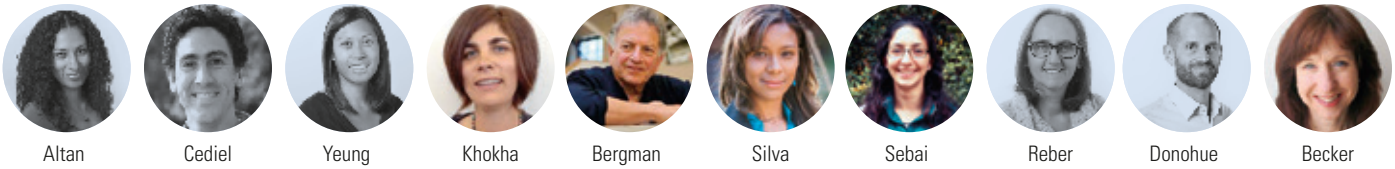
Daffodil Altan (Reveal/CIR), Andrés Cediel (IRP), Bernice Yeung (Reveal/CIR), Sasha Khokha (KQED), Lowell Bergman (IRP), Debora Silva (FRONTLINE), Nadine Sebai (IRP), Susanne Reber (Reveal/CIR), Andrew Donohue (CIR), Ingrid Becker (KQED), Isaac Lee (Univision), Daniel Coronell (Univision), Juan Rendon (Univision), Andrew Metz (FRONTLINE) and Raney Aronson-Rath (FRONTLINE)

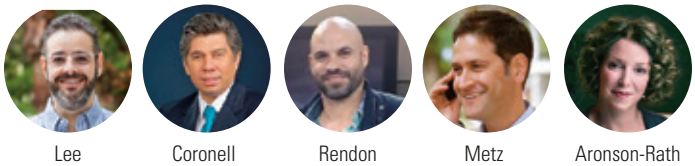
Judges' comments: Night shift janitors are being raped on the job. It is so common that the workers whisper about who to avoid while cleaning offices. This documentary brought needed attention to this issue. The reporting team used lawsuits as a launchpad for the project that included scouring OSHA inspections and U.S. Department of Labor and law enforcement records. In all, the journalists interviewed more than 200 sources. Importantly, the story was presented in both English and Spanish online and on the air.

Finalists:

"A Crime Against Humanity," 60 Minutes-CBS News, Jeff Fager, Bill Owens, Scott Pelley, Nicole Young, Katie Kerbstat, Amjad Tadros, Jorge Garcia, Ali Rawaf, Ayman Qudi, Ian Robbie, Chris Everson, Dan Bussell, Anton van der Merwe and Everett Wong

"Outbreak," FRONTLINE, WGBH/PBS, Dan Edge, Sasha Achilli, Andrew Metz, Raney Aronson-Rath and David Fanning





INNOVATION IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Innovation – Small

"Missed Signs, Fatal Consequences"

Austin American-Statesman

Andrea Ball, Eric Dexheimer, Jeremy Schwartz, Laura Skelding, Kelly West, Andrew Chavez, Scott Ladd, Gabrielle Muñoz, Chloe Gonzales, Eric Webb and Christian McDonald

Judges' comments: In a powerful indictment of a critical state agency, reporters Andrea Ball and Eric Dexheimer uncovered hundreds of previously unreported deaths of children who were supposed to be monitored by Child Protective Services. The reporters mined data the state had been collecting for years but had neglected to analyze. Their project revealed that about half of the children who died from abuse or neglect were visited by CPS at least once before their death and nearly 20 percent had received three visits. As a result, state officials opened more child death records to the public and added $40 million to improve protection for children and their families.

Finalists:

"Violation of Trust," Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer, George Pawlaczyk and Zia Nizami

"Our Financial Mess," The Commercial Appeal, Marc Perrusquia, Grant Smith, Beth Warren and Kyle Veazey

Austin American-Statesman

Innovation – Medium

"Over The Line: Police Shootings in Georgia"

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and WSB-Atlanta

Brad Schrade (AJC), Jodie Fleischer (WSB), Jennifer Peebles (AJC), Patti DiVincenzo (WSB), Ken Foskett (AJC), Jeff Ernsthausen (AJC), LeVar James (WSB) and Ashlyn Still (AJC)


Schrade


Fleischer


Peebles


DiVincenzo


Foskett


Ernsthausen


James


Still

Judges' comments: Atlanta's major newspaper and its affiliated TV station published and aired more than two dozen stories over an eight-month period examining 184 fatal shootings by Georgia police officers over a decade. Their teamwork produced an impressive database with names, dates, locations and photos of each person shot and details of what happened. Their revelations led to a reform in Georgia's laws this spring, a revocation of the unique privileges granted to police to sit inside a grand jury room during all proceedings involving them.

Finalists:

"The 45-Minute Mystery of Freddie Gray's Death," The Baltimore Sun, Kevin Rector, Greg Kohn, Adam Marton, Catherine Rentz, Amy Davis, Kenneth K. Lam and Christopher T. Assaf

"Clash in the Name of Care," The Boston Globe, Jenn Abelson, Jonathan Saltzman, Liz Kowalczyk, Scott Allen, Russell Goldenberg, Elaina Natario, Gabriel Florit, Scott LaPierre and David Butler

"Unprepared," Oregon Public Broadcasting, Ed Jahn and the Oregon Public Broadcasting staff

Innovation – Large

"Seafood from Slaves"

The Associated Press (medal winner)

Margie Mason, Robin McDowell, Martha Mendoza and Esther Htusan

Finalists:

"Insult to Injury: America's Vanishing Worker Protections," ProPublica and NPR, Michael Grabell, Howard Berkes, Lena Groeger, Yue Qiu and Sisi Wei

"Left for Dead," The Center for Investigative Reporting/Reveal, G.W. Schulz, Michael Corey, Emmanuel Martinez, Allison McCartney, Julia Smith, Fernando Diaz, Jennifer LaFleur, Michael Montgomery, Deborah George, Susanne Reber and Kevin Sullivan

"Fatal Shootings by Police," The Washington Post staff

"Evicted and Abandoned: The World Bank's Broken Promise to the Poor," The Center for Public Integrity's International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, The Huffington Post, The Investigative Fund, The GroundTruth Project, The Food & Environment Reporting Network, Fusion and other media partners

RADIO/AUDIO

Radio/Audio – Small

"Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails"

WFPL's Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting

R.G. Dunlop and Jacob Ryan


Dunlop


Ryan

Judges' comments: More than a third of Kentucky's counties have no jails, and yet all 41 of these nevertheless have elected jailers. These jailers' salaries, and the pay for their deputies, cost Kentucky taxpayers about $2 million a year. Reporters here traveled the state to interview all but two of these jailers, and found that they all had plenty of time on their hands. In place after place, the reporters found that jailers are required to do little or no work in return for salaries and benefits.

Finalists:

"Trouble Behind Bars," Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting, R.G. Dunlop and Brendan McCarthy

"Investigations into Hartford's Treasurer," WNPR, Jeff Cohen

"Climate Change Ban," Florida Center for Investigative Reporting and WLRN Miami Herald News, Tristram Korten and Alicia Zuckerman

Radio/Audio – Large

"The Red Cross' Secret Disasters"

NPR and ProPublica

Laura Sullivan (NPR) and Justin Elliott (ProPublica)


Sullivan


Elliott

Judges' comments: NPR and ProPublica discovered that America's largest disaster recovery charity collected hundreds of millions of dollars after an earthquake devastated Haiti, but the charity failed to deliver the massive recovery it promised. The charity's vision of Red Cross-constructed communities never materialized, while other charities found ways to build thousands of homes for needy Haitians. Congressmen called for investigations while the charity itself withholds details of how it spent the money that donors contributed.

Finalists:

"Incredible Cops," WNYC, Robert Lewis, Noah Veltman, Xander Landen and David Lewis

"Missed Treatment: Soldiers With Mental Health Issues Dismissed For Misconduct," NPR and Colorado Public Radio, Daniel Zwerdling, Michael de Yoanna, Robert Little, Barbara Van Woerkom, Robert Benincasa, Smokey Baer, Jani Actman and Courtney Mabeus

STUDENT

Student – Small

"Tax evasion in Princeton's eating clubs"

The Daily Princetonian

Marcelo Rochabrun

Rochabrun

Judges' comments: Marcelo Rochabrun mined thousands of pages of 990s to show how lavish social "eating" clubs at Princeton University raised $20 million to renovate taprooms, lounges and dining halls in their extravagant facilities. Leaders of these clubs, similar to sororities/fraternities, set up educational foundations to hand out tax breaks to their donors, which is a violation of IRS guidelines.

Finalists:

"Code of Silence," Columbia University Journalism School, Scilla Alecci and George Steptoe

"Driving with suspended license top crime in Menlo Park, many lose cars," Peninsula Press, Farida Jhabvala Romero

Student – Large

"Robin Hood in Reverse"

CityBeat, University of Cincinnati

Morgan Batanian, Katie Coburn, Fernanda Crescente, Taylor Jackson, Tyler Kuhnash, Camri Nelson, Taylor Hayden, Talis Linauts, Kayleigh Murch, Matt Nichols, Malia Pitts and Lauren Smith

Judges' comments: CityBeat documented how more than $20 million a year in student fees and tuition money helps subsidize football and other sports at the University of Cincinnati. The CityBeat team showed how students were

INVESTIGATIONS TRIGGERED BY BREAKING NEWS

"The Death of Freddie Gray"

The Baltimore Sun

Meredith Cohn, Doug Donovan, Justin George, Jean Marbella, Mark Puente, Kevin Rector, Scott Dance, Justin Fenton, Greg Kohn, Adam Marton, Patrick Maynard, Catherine Rentz, Amy Davis, Karl Merton Ferron, Kenneth K. Lam and Christopher T. Assaf

Judges' comments: Beyond covering this explosive story in a traditional breaking news style, the staff of The Baltimore Sun brought meaning to the chaos that followed the death of Freddie Gray in police custody. In addition to excellent breaking news coverage in the weeks after Gray's death, reporters from The Sun produced investigative pieces revealing the crucial timeline of Gray's ride in the back of a police van, the fact that police often failed to seek medical care for detainees and that others had been fatally injured in the city's police transport vans. The stories raised important issues that became central to the prosecution of six officers in Gray's death.

Finalists:

"Sandra Bland jail suicide," The Houston Chronicle, St. John Barned-Smith, Leah Binkovitz, Jayme Fraser, Matt Dempsey, Mike Tolson, Dane Schiller, Lauren McGaughy and Madlin Mekelburg

"Black Out in the Black Belt," AL.com, John Archibald, Kyle Whitmire, Lee Roop, Mike Cason and Adam Ganucheau

Cohn

Donovan

George

Marbella

Puente

Rector

Dance

Fenton

Kohn

Marton

Maynard

Rentz

Davis

Merton Ferron

Lam

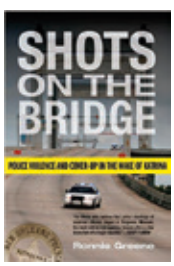
Assaf

BOOK

"Shots on the Bridge: Police Violence and Cover-Up in the Wake of Katrina"

By Ronnie Greene

Judges' comments: Ronnie Greene, Washington Enterprise Editor at Reuters, reveals the toxic mix of confusion, fear, racism and politics that led to the shooting by New Orleans police of six poor, black refugees from Hurricane Katrina, and — over the next decade — a cover-up and botched prosecution that still denies justice to the victims.



Finalists:

"Power Wars: Inside Obama's Post-9/11 Presidency," by Charlie Savage

"Objective Troy: A Terrorist, a President, and the Rise of the Drone," by Scott Shane

CityBeat – (left to right): Linauts, Hayden, Nelson, Crescente, Pitts, Jackson, Coburn, Kuhnash and Batanian. Not pictured: Murch, Nichols and Smith.

each paying, unwittingly, more than $1,000 a year to help with the cost of improving the football stadium and other sports expenditures. At the same time, spending-per-student on undergraduate education had dropped almost 25 percent in recent years. The CityBeat team used various open records requests to survey all other public universities in Ohio and found four more schools were charging students roughly $1,000 a year and up.

Finalists:

"America's Weed Rush," Arizona State University, Alexa Ard, Rilwan Balogun, Josh Benson, Tom Blanton, Michael Bodley, Kathryn Boyd Batstone, Katie Campbell, Jayson Chesler, Clarissa Cooper, Lauren del Valle, Dom DiFurio, Quint Forgey, Brianna Gurciullo, Brittan Jenkins, Kelcie Johnson, Calah Kelley, Sean Logan, Karen Mawdsley, Montinique Monroe, Martin do Nascimento, Matias J. Ocner, Emi Sasagawa, Anne M. Shearer, Nick Swyter, Lex Talamo, Shawn Weismiller and Jessie Wardarski

"The Brothel Next Door," University of Maryland Capital News Service, Katelyn Secret, Jin Kim, Jessica Evans, Courtney Mabeus, Jon Banister, Lisa Driscoll, Natalie Tomlin, Ana Mulero, Naomi Eide, Carly Morales, James Levin and Alexis Jenkins

GANNETT AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN WATCHDOG JOURNALISM

"Seafood from Slaves"

The Associated Press
Margie Mason, Robin McDowell, Martha Mendoza and Esther Htusan


Mason


McDowell


Mendoza


Htusan

AP Associated Press

THANK YOU JUDGES

Serving on the Contest Committee represents a significant sacrifice on the part of the individual contest judge — and often an entire newsroom — that may have done outstanding investigative work. For example, some work from the The Frontier, The Columbus Dispatch, ProPublica, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times was ineligible for entry in this year's contest. Each year members elect contest judges at the annual IRE Conference.

This year's judges:

Ziva Branstetter, *The Frontier (contest chair)*

Michael Lindenberger, *The Dallas Morning News*

Charles Ornstein, *ProPublica*

James Polk, *retired (CNN)*

Jill Riepenhoff, *The Columbus Dispatch*

Al Tompkins, *Poynter*

TO READ THE WINNING STORIES, GO TO IRE.ORG/AWARDS

Fix FOIA by 50

David Cuillier
University of Arizona School of Journalism

It's not every year we have the opportunity to make substantial improvements to the federal Freedom of Information Act.

This is one of those years.

As of mid-May, members of Congress were haggling over a final version of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, which could help journalists do their jobs better. Here are some of the key provisions:

• **Presumes openness**. The act codifies the requirement that agencies shall presume records are open to the public unless there is a specific exemption that would allow for secrecy. That is currently how the Obama administration recommends agencies view FOIA, but it isn't law and therefore future presidents could recommend the opposite — to assume it's secret unless someone proves it should be public, as George W. Bush's administration did. Also, by adding this to the law, and not just relying on presidential encouragement, requesters have more leverage in appealing and suing.

•**Limits an exploited exemption.** One of the most abused catch-all exemptions in FOIA is Exemption 5, which allows agencies to keep internal deliberations secret. Exemption 5 is intended to allow for a free, open discussion within federal agencies while proposals are in preliminary stages. The act would clarify that the exemption could not be applied to records older than 25 years. After all, we know that government works slowly, but it shouldn't take more than a quarter century to hash out an issue internally.

• **Creates a single online request portal.** The law would require a single e-portal for people to submit FOIA requests and track their requests to streamline and simplify the process. Agencies could still accept FOIA requests directly. No doubt journalists would maintain their own channels of FOIA requests, as well.

•**Strengthen the federal FOIA ombudsman.** Currently, the Office of Government Information Services has to run its testimony and recommendations past affected agencies and get approval from the Office of Management and Budget. That is not cool — really, it's a form of prior restraint. The amendment would clarify that OGIS can — and should — speak without interference.

• **Helps report on FOIA performance.** The amendment would require agencies to report their FOIA performance statistics by March 1 of each year instead of April 1. Why the switch? This would allow transparency groups and journalists to analyze the statistics and report their findings in time for national Sunshine Week, which is typically held in mid-March. Congressional legislation that accounts for journalists' deadlines!

As of mid-May, the House and Senate were hashing out a final bill version to be signed by the president. Obama has said he will sign the Senate version as written. It's unlikely that the House version will fly. Too bad, because the House version has some good ideas.

For example, the House bill would require training of federal employees in FOIA; require that requesters receive the name, title and contact information of an employee who denies a request; provide for suspension or firing of federal employees who violate FOIA; require attorney fees and court costs be reimbursed for anyone who prevails in court against the government; require more audits of agencies' FOIA performance by the Government Accountability Office; and clarify that the name and title of a federal employee does not constitute an invasion of privacy and therefore cannot be redacted from a document. Very cool.

We are probably better off getting the Senate version signed into law, and then tackling the other issues in the next FOIA a few years from now. The Senate version is still progress — particularly in codifying the presumption of openness, allowing the FOIA ombudsman (OGIS) to speak with the independent voice that Congress intended and the limits on Exemption 5.

House FOIA champions should not feel they are settling if they choose to approve the Senate version and send it to the president. That's a big win. A decade ago the presumption of openness — a cornerstone of this bill — was too controversial and had to be dropped from the 2007 FOIA amendments. And when House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz of Utah pushed the bill to win quick passage in the House, this spurred Senate sponsors to fight off objections from powerful committees and win Senate approval during Sunshine Week. That's no easy feat.

So what can journalists do to help? Urge the House and Senate to work out a final bill and get it to the president to sign,

ideally by July 4, the 50th anniversary of FOIA. Journalists should write about their FOIA woes, cover the legislation and editorialize. Reach out to your congressional members and tell them this is important. Share your FOIA stories on Twitter using the #FOIA hashtag.

Journalists sometimes balk at advocacy, saying they can't lobby for legislation because they are journalists. Bull pucky. Nothing in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics prohibits advocating for FOIA, except, perhaps, for reporters actually covering members of Congress. Advocating for FOIA is not a political activity that compromises impartiality or damages credibility. Indeed, the SPJ code actually urges journalists to act, that they "recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all." In a way, not speaking out is unethical!

"Journalists sometimes balk at advocacy, saying they can't lobby for legislation because they are journalists. Bull pucky."

Media groups have for the last decade locked arms pushing FOIA reforms as part of the Sunshine in Government Initiative. That effort collects our FOIA problems and successes (see their Without FOIA Tumblr at withoutfoia.tumblr.com) and opens doors in Congress to hear transparency voices. Journalists lobby for changes to the law in the judicial branch all the time by filing lawsuits and amicus briefs. So why not lobby for changes to the law in the legislative branch?

Patrice McDermott, executive director of OpenTheGovernment.org, said access organizations are sometimes frustrated that journalists are reluctant to push for transparency legislation unless it's an op-ed piece.

"One of our frustrations is that journalists don't write about it, except during Sunshine Week," McDermott told me. "The Senate bill is good. It moves the ball forward."

So take a stand on something that matters, that could create real change to help journalists do their jobs better and help all citizens stay better informed and hold their leaders accountable.

Fix FOIA by 50!

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

Snapshots from our blogs

Secrecy and defense concerns surround cell phone trackers used by Maryland police

BY MADISON FELLER | IRE

Police agencies across Maryland are using cell site simulators, a controversial intelligence device that allows them to track cell phones. Police agencies in seven counties closest to the Washington and Baltimore regions have spent at least $2.8 million on this type of equipment, according to an investigation by Capital News Service.

Records and documents show that law enforcement use the simulators to locate missing persons; investigate robberies, assaults and homicides; and set up wiretap cases. However, most local law enforcement agencies refuse to answer questions about what happens to the data found using these simulators.

Read the full investigation here: bit.ly/1TLm8tk

IRE Radio Podcast | The Fairbanks Four

BY AARON PELLISH | IRE

For nearly 15 years, a journalism professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks has been investigating the case of the Fairbanks Four, a group of men convicted in the 1997 beating death of a teenager. And he hasn't been working alone. Each year, students in Brian O'Donoghue's investigative reporting class picked up the case. Their work had a huge impact: In December 2015, the Fairbanks Four were exonerated, freed after nearly two decades behind bars. On this episode, Brian takes us through the investigation.

Listen to the full episode here: bit.ly/1Nl399Q

IRE Radio Podcast | Chicago's Secret Cash Machine

BY AARON PELLISH | IRE

Chicago drivers have forked over more than $600 million for traffic fines captured by red light cameras. But an investigation by the Chicago Tribune found that the largest robotic camera system in the country hasn't done much to make the streets safer. Instead, city officials have used Chicago drivers like a network of cash machines. Reporter David Kidwell takes us behind the story: bit.ly/1Oj4oXe

As always, 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.

How Reuters investigated the preventable deaths of drug-addicted babies

BY RILEY BEGGIN | IRE

Any good reporter knows that keeping your eyes and ears open to the world can spark an idea for an original investigation.

That was the case for Duff Wilson, an investigative reporter for Reuters. Wilson came up with the idea for the project "Helpless and Hooked" after reading an article in a Massachusetts newspaper about gaps in the reporting system for newborns going through drug withdrawal. Over the course of the next year, Wilson and his team submitted hundreds of FOIA requests, reviewed more than 50,000 pages of documents and interviewed more than 300 people to learn about the impact of opioids on newborn babies.

The final result was a three-part series detailing the widespread failures of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which was amended in 2003 to ensure that hospitals alert child protective services when infants are born addicted to drugs. The law also requires that protective services follow up with families that take home drug-addicted babies.

Wilson's investigation uncovered systemic failures at two junctures: Hospitals failing to report newborns in drug withdrawal to children's services, and children's services failing to protect the baby once it leaves the hospital. "Helpless and Hooked" illustrates these failures by telling the stories of some of the 110 babies who were sent home with opioid-dependent mothers and later died preventable deaths.

Read the full post here: bit.ly/1UTDiIv

Investigate safety trends around college and university campuses

BY LIZ LUCAS | IRE

The most recent reports on alleged campus crime, arrests, discipline and hate crimes reported for 2014 are now available in the NICAR data library.

What's in it?

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is a federal law that requires colleges and universities to disclose certain timely and annual information about campus crime and security policies. All public and private institutions of postsecondary education participating in federal student aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 are subject to it. The information contained in each report is based on the calendar year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31) in which the crime was reported to campus officials. We've

compiled and cleaned the data.

Data is available for 2001 through 2014. For more information, check out the NICAR Readme file and the record layouts (.xls format) for the data tables.

For more on the data, visit here: bit.ly/1SRZSLQ

IRE Radio Podcast | The Sounds of NICAR16

JACK HOWARD | UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

There are certain pieces of advice you hear over and over again at our annual computer-assisted reporting conference: Get out there, take risks and experiment. So at our recent conference in Denver, we sent University of Missouri journalism student Jack Howard to do just that. On this bonus episode, you'll hear his five-minute experiment: capturing the NICAR experience and turning it into audible data.

Listen to the full podcast here: bit.ly/26XSybf

I built my first news app, and so can you!

DANIELA SIRTORI-CORTINA | UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

Doubt quickly took over me when the "Build Your First News App" session at the 2016 CAR Conference.

During the six-hour class — split into two three-hour seminars — Derek Willis from ProPublica and Ben Welsh from the Los Angeles Times guided the group through the process of building a website about the victims of the 1992 LA riots. I'd been assigned to write a first-person blog post about the session, and I was excited to get started.

Some class attendees had some experience with web development and others were coding novices. I was among the latter group. So, upon hearing phrases such as "command line" and "terminal," I thought about packing up my stuff, leaving the room and telling IRE: "I can't do this. I think I accidentally signed up for a session that deals with concepts way beyond my skill level. This is going to go way over my head."

To find out how Daniela faced her fear and made an app, read here: bit.ly/1WDsL4X

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

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

IRE RESOURCE CENTER – A rich reserve of print and broadcast stories, tipsheets and guides to help you start and complete the best work of your career. This unique library is the starting point of any piece you're working on.

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

FOR INFORMATION ON:

ADVERTISING – Stephanie Sinn, stephanie@ire.org, 901-286-7549

CONFERENCES – Stephanie Sinn, stephanie@ire.org, 901-286-7549

CONFERENCE REGISTRATIONS – Amy Johnston, amy@ire.org, 573-884-1444

DONATIONS – Heather Feldmann Henry, heather@ire.org, 573-884-7902

BOOT CAMPS AND EVENT REGISTRATIONS – Tricia Morgan, tricia@ire.org, 573-884-7556

LISTSERVS, MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS – Amy Johnston, amy@ire.org, 573-884-1444

MAILING ADDRESS:

IRE, 141 Neff Annex , Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211

Investigative Reporters & Editors, Inc.
Missouri School of Journalism
141 Neff Annex
Columbia, MO 65211
www.ire.org