

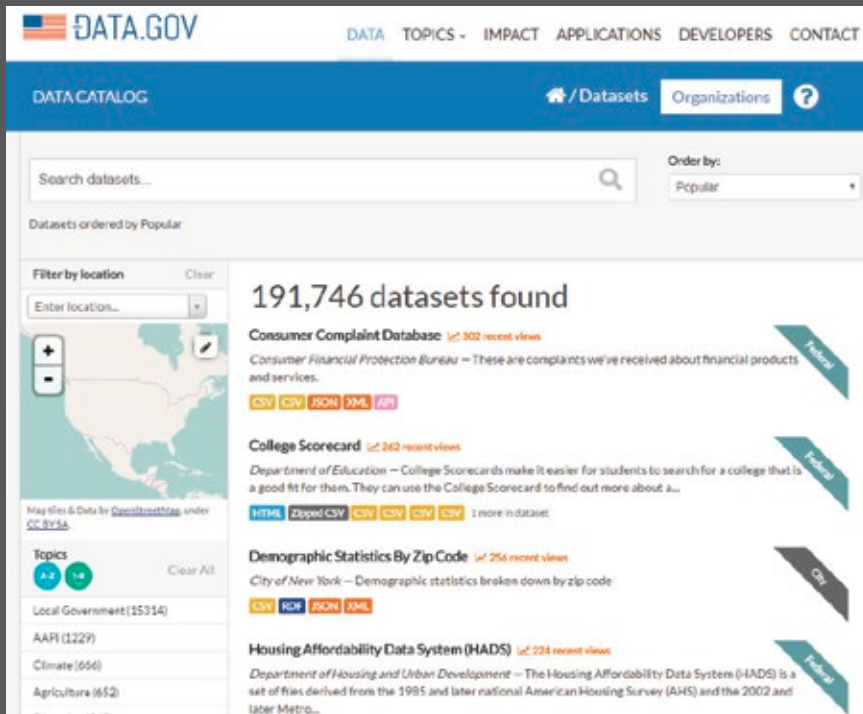


COVERING

TRUMP



We're helping protect at-risk federal data — and we need your help!



Our hope is to help organize the efforts currently underway by journalists and concerned citizens. IRE and NICAR will host a central directory on our website, displaying details on rescued data and where it's kept. Our hope is to prevent duplicate efforts and provide transparency.

Learn more about our efforts and get involved at bit.ly/iredata

IRE FOREVER

Want to help ensure that IRE has a solid foundation for the future?

Some members are now making IRE a part of their long-term financial planning.

You can:

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- Set up a stock transfer

To make IRE part of your personal legacy, contact your financial adviser. For other information on donating to IRE, please contact our financial officer Heather Feldmann Henry, at 573-884-7902 or via email heather@ire.org.

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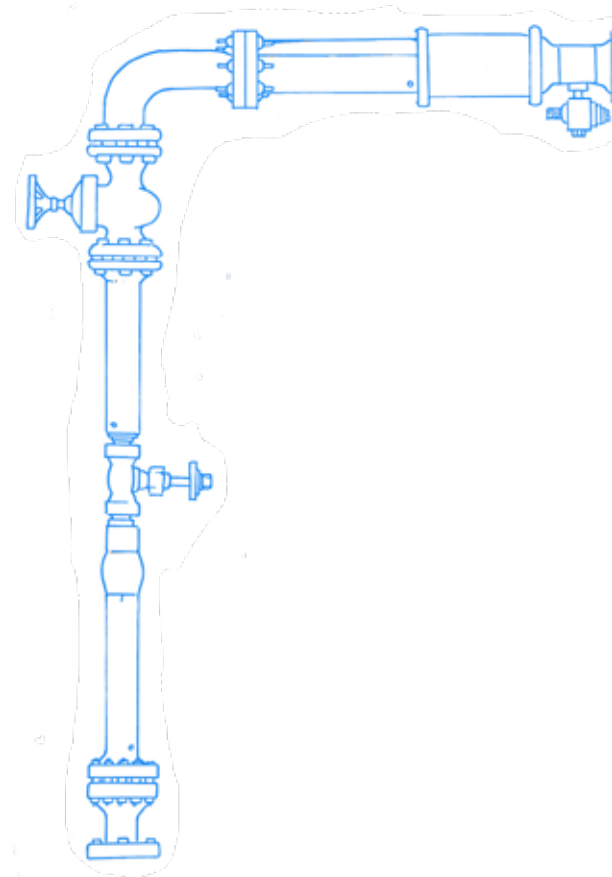
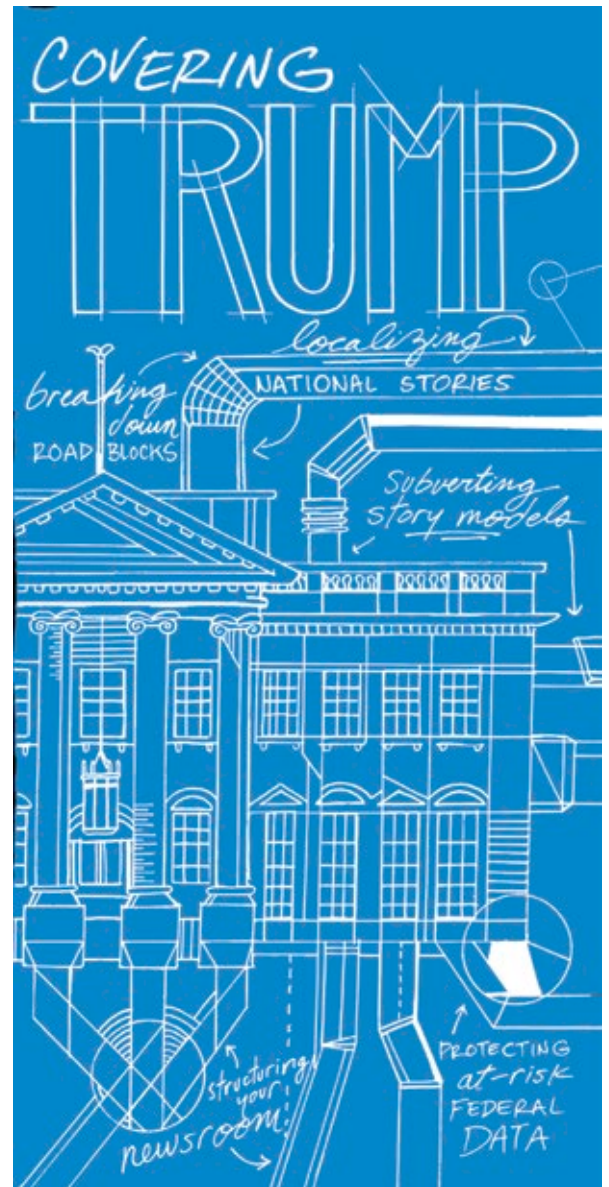
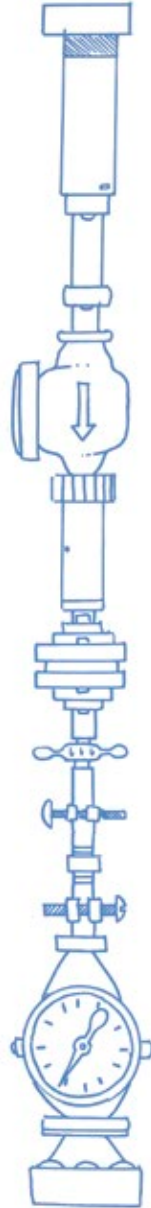
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Lessons from IRE award winners



BY DOUG HADDIX

Nuggets of advice and humor intermingle with practical tips and tools on the IRE Awards questionnaire. This year, I read all the questionnaires submitted with the winning entries. You can, too, because IRE posts this treasure trove of stories online (bit.ly/IREStories) for members. Our ever-growing collection contains about 20,000 entries — all stories submitted to our annual contest. Each entry is a detailed blueprint on how to investigate a topic.

This year's batch of questionnaires surprised me on one major subject: data analysis.

I expected to read about innovative, sophisticated software tools and algorithms deployed in the cause of journalism. The entries didn't disappoint. Standouts included the remarkable digital tools created for the "Panama Papers" global collaboration and machine-learning programs that proved key to unlocking the "Doctors & Sex Abuse" project by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

However, I was struck by the number of winning investigations powered simply by spreadsheets and database software. The Houston Chronicle, this year's FOI Award winner for its insightful investigation of special education, did nearly all the data analysis with Microsoft Excel and Access. The newspaper filed more than 350 public records requests.

In some cases, the mighty spreadsheet alone provided all the data analysis needed to produce compelling journalism that got results, such as NPR's "Advanced Black Lung Cases Surge in Appalachia." The team shared another data lesson: Always ask, "How do you know that?" It turns out that government testing for black lung disease among coal miners has been voluntary and limited to working miners — missing thousands more who avoided tests, or were retired or laid off.

Most journalists will not become skilled computer coders. So, it's heartening to see how easier-to-learn spreadsheet and database tools still provide plenty of horsepower for crunching, tracking and visualizing data in newsrooms of all sizes.

The contest questionnaires contain loads of practical advice on all sorts of datasets and software. My favorite response came from The Indianapolis Star entry for "Out of Balance," an investigation of USA Gymnastics. How did the project team overcome data problems? "Just the unavoidable tedium of some of the research and data entry. Coffee, Mountain Dew, Diet Pepsi and Diet Coke."

The forms also pull back the curtain on the genesis of winning stories. Typically, stories emerge from routine beat coverage, an intriguing detail in an otherwise mundane report, tips from sources, or from questions raised after a breaking news event.

At the Chicago Tribune, the "Suffering in Secret" investigation into private group homes for vulnerable adults began when a reporter noticed a "remarkable nugget" in a routine state report: "Illinois licensed more than 3,000 group homes that sheltered nearly 12,000 low-income adults with disabilities. But when the reporter asked for home addresses and enforcement histories, Illinois declared the information confidential under law. This prompted a deeper examination."

A lawsuit by the Pennsylvania attorney general against a nursing home chain for deceptive business practices prompted PennLive.com/The Patriot-News to spend eight months digging deeper into major failures in nursing homes statewide, leading to "Failing the Frail."

Three University of Oregon students alerted the Oregon Daily Emerald to unreported violent acts by a star football player. The student journalists offered this advice for reporters handling similar stories: "Start on the outside ... and work your way in. Talk to former players first; current players are less willing to talk in fear of jeopardizing their playing time, and they were more likely to tip off the players and coaches about the investigation. Don't show your hand too soon."

Beyond tips on reporting and data analysis, the award winners often provide valuable advice on how to present stories for maximum impact.

WVUE-New Orleans found that "digital materials should be tools, not just a repository of extra information." In its "Medical Waste" investigation, the station credited robust digital coverage for "the most widespread reaction we have ever received for one of our investigations." The investigation uncovered a secretive practice known as "clawbacks" by major health insurance companies that cost consumers hundreds or thousands of dollars in unnecessary and potentially illegal fees. "By having interactive tools where people could explore examples of 'clawbacks' and even find cheaper prices for their medications, it allowed consumers to do their own research. That information eventually made its way to our investigative team and generated multiple stories in our series."

I invite you to explore our collection, which you can search by keyword, a journalist's name and news organization.

One bit of caution: Like me, you too may find these forms to be addictive.

Doug Haddix is executive director of IRE and NICAR. You may reach him at doug@ire.org, 573-882-1984 or [@DougHaddix](https://twitter.com/DougHaddix) on Twitter.

IRE members win 2017 Pulitzer Prizes

Several IRE members were among the journalists recognized in the 2017 Pulitzer Prizes (bit.ly/IREPulitzer17):

Sarah Ryley, along with the New York Daily News and ProPublica, won the Pulitzer for Public Service for exposing the NYPD's abuse of eviction rules and eviction of hundreds of people.

The East Bay Times won the Breaking News Reporting prize for its coverage of the Oakland "Ghost Ship" fire and the government missteps in preventing the tragedy.

Eric Eyre of the Charleston Gazette-Mail won the Investigative Reporting award for his reporting on the massive flow of opioids into West Virginia counties at the center of the epidemic.

Reporters from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, McClatchy and The Miami Herald won the prize for Explanatory Reporting for their work on the "Panama Papers" series. They were also named a finalist in the International Reporting category.

The Salt Lake Tribune won the Local Reporting Pulitzer for its reporting on the unfair and harsh treatment of sexual assault victims at Brigham Young University.

The New York Times won the award for International Reporting for its work exposing Vladimir Putin's attempts to exert Russian influence abroad.

Several members were also recognized as finalists:

The Chicago Tribune was a finalist for the Public Service award for its innovative reporting on unsafe pharmacy practices that lead to the sale of drugs in dangerous combinations.

The Houston Chronicle was a finalist for the Public Service award for its investigation into the denial of special education services for tens of thousands of children in Texas.

The Dallas Morning News was a finalist for the Pulitzer in Breaking News Reporting for its coverage of the deadly Dallas shooting spree that claimed the lives of five police officers and injured nine others.

The Orlando Sentinel was also a finalist for the Pulitzer for Breaking News Reporting for its coverage of the Pulse nightclub massacre.

Michael J. Berens and Patricia Callahan of the Chicago Tribune were finalists for the

Investigative Reporting prize for revealing abuse, neglect and death at Illinois group homes for developmentally disabled adults.

Steve Reilly of the USA TODAY Network was also an Investigative Reporting prize finalist for his data-heavy project that revealed thousands of teachers across the nation should have been flagged for past disciplinary offenses but were not.

Jeff Larson and Terry Parris Jr., along with colleagues from ProPublica, were finalists for the Pulitzer in Explanatory Reporting for their work explaining the impact algorithms have in shaping criminal justice, social media and online shopping.

Jenna Russell and Todd Wallack, along with colleagues from the Boston Globe, were finalists for the Local Reporting award for their examination of psychiatric hospital closures leading to dangers for mentally ill people and their loved ones, and lethal encounters with police.

Robert Gebeloff, along with colleagues from The New York Times, was also a Local Reporting award finalist for exposing the disparity between minority and white inmate punishment rates in New York state prisons.

Steve Stecklow and Irene Jay Liu, along with colleagues from Reuters, were finalists for the National Reporting Pulitzer for uncovering that American officials were welcoming full-tuition foreign students despite standardized test cheating in Asia.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution was also a National Reporting Pulitzer finalist for its series exposing widespread, unpunished sexual misconduct by doctors in Georgia and across the U.S.

Chris Hamby of BuzzFeed News was a finalist for the prize in International Reporting for his exposé on how multinational corporations use a secretive dispute-settlement process to defy domestic and environmental regulations.

The Wall Street Journal was an International Reporting prize finalist for its coverage of Turkey's governmental turmoil.

Cody Winchester joins IRE as training director

Cody Winchester joined IRE on April 3 as its newest training director.

He filled a vacancy created by the departure of former IRE senior training director Jaimi

Dowdell.

IRE training director Megan Luther has been promoted to senior training director. In her new role, Megan supervises Winchester, training director Denise Malan and data services director Charles Minshew.

Winchester brings six years of reporting experience plus advanced computer coding skills to the position. Previously at the Austin American-Statesman, he worked on a team at the newspaper that develops, tests and deploys interactive graphics, applications and other web products. Before joining the Austin American-Statesman, he worked at the Omaha World-Herald as a reporter and web developer and at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader as a watchdog reporter.

You can read more about IRE's newest staff member here: bit.ly/CodyWinchester

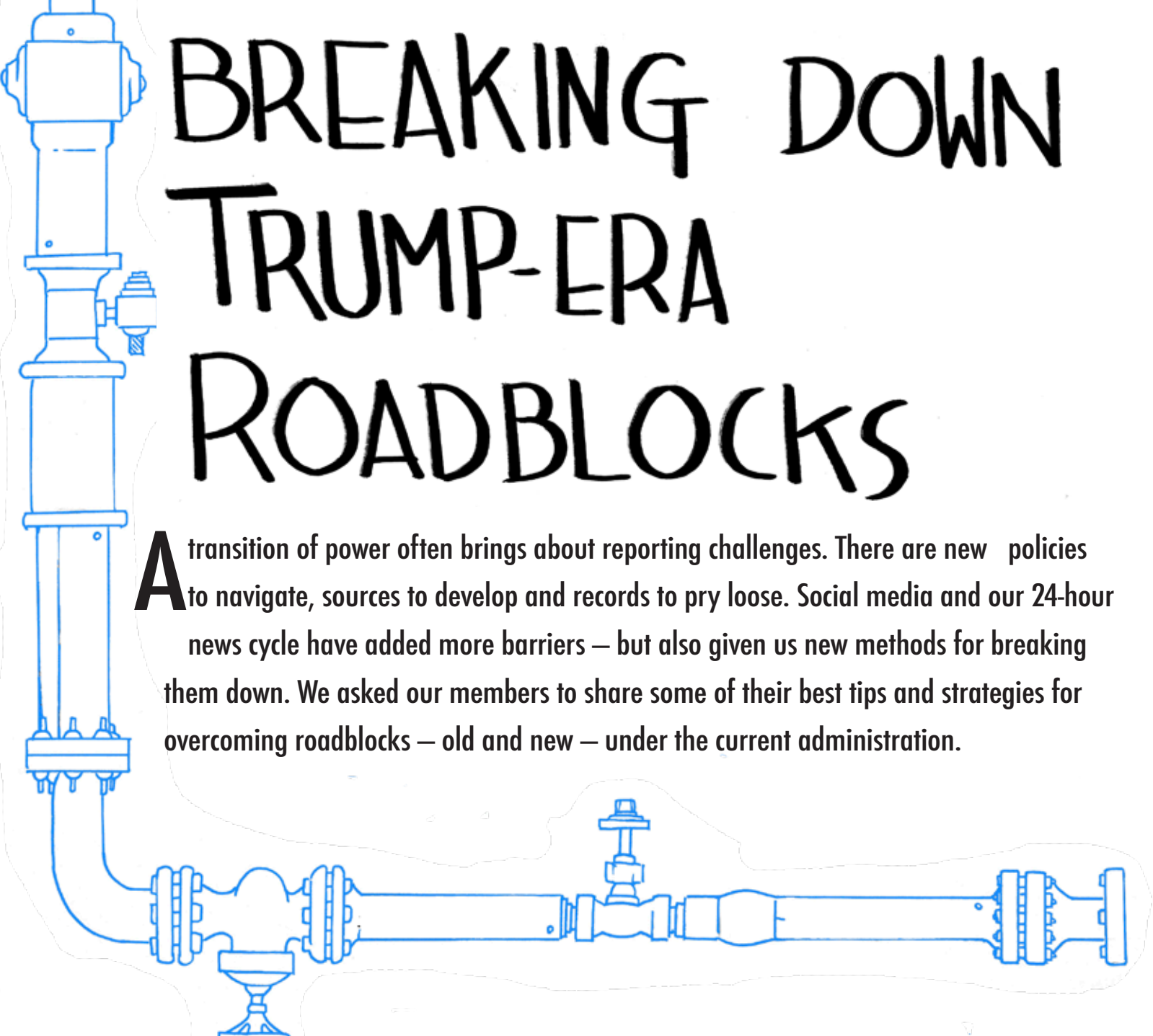
Napoli Management Group creates IRE scholarship

Napoli Management Group, one of the largest news talent representation firms in the country, has established and will fund an IRE scholarship to benefit young television journalists interested in investigative reporting (bit.ly/NapoliScholarship). The scholarship is designed to help aspiring watchdog journalists, early in their careers, who otherwise would not have the financial means to attend the national IRE Conference.

"We want to help young TV journalists become inspired and develop tools, at a national IRE conference, that will set them on a lifelong path to producing investigative stories that truly make a difference," said Mendes J. Napoli. He founded the firm in 1993 after more than 23 years of experience and expertise in the broadcast industry as a general manager, news director and corporate executive.

Napoli Management Group represents close to 600 broadcasters, including TV news anchors, reporters, weathercasters and sportscasters in all of the major television markets in the country. In addition, the firm represents journalists and hosts at the television networks, as well as on the major cable news networks.

The scholarship is expected to be in place for the 2018 IRE national conference in Orlando.



BREAKING DOWN TRUMP-ERA ROADBLOCKS

A transition of power often brings about reporting challenges. There are new policies to navigate, sources to develop and records to pry loose. Social media and our 24-hour news cycle have added more barriers — but also given us new methods for breaking them down. We asked our members to share some of their best tips and strategies for overcoming roadblocks — old and new — under the current administration.

ROADBLOCK:

The Trump administration is constantly making news — and it's impossible to keep up

SOLUTION:

Report what Trump does, not what he says

By David Cay Johnston

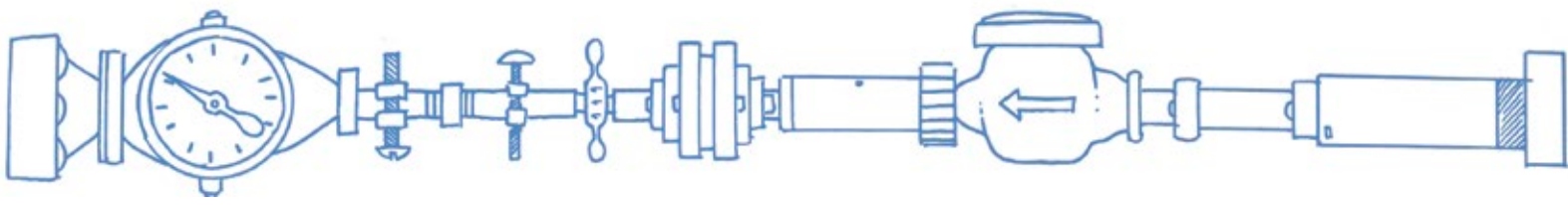
There's a lot of chatter about how it's hard for journalists to properly cover Donald Trump. I don't see it that way. Stick to the basics and you won't go wrong. The problem is that too many of us have been covering the sizzle and not the steak,

the outlandish instead of the substantive, the Trumpian diversions instead of issues of substance.

Trump is a master manipulator of the conventions of journalism. He has spent decades polishing his skill at getting journalists to report what he wants, not what the facts show. He leaks to organizations that care about

a good story, facts be damned, knowing the rest of us will then follow up.

Sometimes Trump gets away with blatantly obvious manipulations because reporters fail to exercise their reportorial authority by citing the existing record. Trump knows many reporters will uncritically quote what he says. When journalists play along, his surrogates



attack their integrity and competency, a cheap diversion.

It's often said that all politicians lie. I don't buy that. I think all politicians present themselves in the best possible light, the same as someone on a first date. They may conflate memories, claim more credit than reasonable, deflect blame for their mistakes or muddy the waters (the latter is a Trump mainstay). But generally speaking, they don't lie.

Donald Trump is different. Never take anything he says at face value.

Consider Trump's statement that he has "nothing to do with Russia." Based on verifiable facts, that's true. But add just one letter — an 'n,' as in 'Russian' — and it's not.

The Putin regime operates in large part through an international network of state-sponsored criminals known as the oligarchs, making the difference between 'Russia' and 'Russian' meaningless, as I explained in a January column for The Daily Beast (bit.ly/TrumpRussian).

Covering Trump requires adhering to what I call the First Two Rules of Good Journalism:

- Check it out. If your mother says she loves you, check it out.
- Crosscheck again and again until you not

only have the facts bolted down, but you can place them in their proper context.

There's also a third rule, one we apply at DCReport.org, the nonprofit news service I founded in December with David Crook and, on the board, journalists Cheryl Phillips, Jonathan Alter and Bruce Bartlett. At DCReport, we cover what Trump and Congress do, not what they say.

We refer to "our" government and "our" Constitution rather than following the convention of using "the," as if the federal government is some power unto itself, an alien and unaccountable entity. As Crook says, "we own our government and we ought to act like owners."

While others cover Trump's tweets, we scour the Federal Register and the Congressional Record to report what affects the privileges, protections and rights we enjoy as a free people. But we also go beyond that to imbue the stories we break — on a shoestring budget — with meaning.

We tell people how to officially file their views with our government. We never tell people what to say. We simply make it easier to overcome the obstacles our government has placed in the way of citizens exercising their First Amendment right of petition.

For example, when it comes to weighing in on proposed regulations, we tell people whom to email, the exact words required in the subject line and other required details that can be cut-and-pasted, so their views become part of the official record. We shine a spotlight on the issues and then enable citizen watchdogs.

At DCReport, we believe that journalism needs to be more than just richly reported information. It needs to empower people to speak to their government, something we do in the hope that our republic and the liberties of the people will endure because people feel invested in their government, not estranged from it.

Whether or not you agree with our approach, by sticking to basics, exercising reportorial authority, checking the clips and never assuming that anything the Trump administration says is reliable, journalists can fulfill their First Amendment obligations to hold our government accountable to the people.

David Cay Johnston, a former IRE board president, wrote "The Making of Donald Trump" and is the founder of the nonprofit news service DCReport.org. At year end, Simon & Schuster will publish his next book, "The Trump Factor."

ROADBLOCK

Access to information is under assault

SOLUTION:

Use resources from NFOIC and SPJ to take the battle to court

By Mark Horvit, University of Missouri

Prying information from government agencies can take time, determination and no small amount of righteous energy.

Unfortunately, if it becomes necessary to go to court to fight for your rights, it can also be expensive.

That's why two of the country's leading freedom of information organizations have joined forces — and funds.

Since 2010, the National Freedom of Information Coalition has operated the Knight FOI Fund to help litigants fight for open government. Created through the generosity

of the Knight Foundation, the fund pays for court costs, filing fees, depositions and related expenses. This support has made it possible for journalists and other citizens doing battle with local agencies to continue fighting for their right to public information, and has led to many victories.

The fund doesn't cover attorney fees, but the Society of Professional Journalists' Legal Defense Fund can help with that.

The SPJ fund was created in 1972 to fight for the First Amendment, primarily for access to public records and entrance to public meetings. Funds can be tapped for providing journalists with legal or direct financial assistance. In 2014, the SPJ Board approved

the creation of an endowed advocacy fund that can also be used for litigation.

The organizations have agreed to join forces. Each fund still provides individual grants, but the combined resources of the organizations and their funds can be marshaled when necessary.

The new effort couldn't come at a more critical time, with access to information under assault in statehouses nationwide and Washington, D.C.

Hagit Limor, the chairwoman of the SPJ Legal Defense Fund, said many journalists who use the fund don't have the strength of a large news organization behind them.

"These are people who are doing yeoman's

work, often in small towns for small publications, or indirectly, as freelancers,” she said. Even when they have cases where they are clearly in the right, it takes money to prove that in court.

“They need any help they can get,” Limor said, “because they are fighting for things we used to take for granted.”

NFOIC Board member Thomas Susman said the courts play a key role in helping the public access information.

“As state and local governments across the country retrench and reverse course to make it more and more difficult for the public to obtain information — and also become more sophisticated in erecting new obstacles to disclosure — litigation remains an indispensable tool for users of freedom of information laws,” Susman said.

“But obtaining access to the courts is not without cost,” he said. “The partnership between NFOIC and SPJ, by assisting in

funding FOI litigation, will remove a major barrier to accessing the courts for relief.”

For more information or to apply for a grant, go to bit.ly/KnightFOIFund or bit.ly/SPJLegalFund.

Mark Horvit is an associate professor who runs the State Government Reporting Program at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He is on the board of the National Freedom of Information Coalition.

ROADBLOCK:

It's easy for officials to tamper with their digital footprints

SOLUTION:

Use tools from the Internet Archive to track Trump and his administration

By Nancy Watzman, Internet Archive

Politicians are well known for flip-flopping and making misleading statements. Even so, tracking the many changing assertions and accusations by President Donald Trump and his administration is a labor-intensive task. The Internet Archive wants to help. Because we're a library, it's free, and you can be sure that when you link to us, that link won't break.

Founded in 1996 by Brewster Kahle, the Internet Archive is an online public library with the goal of providing universal access to all knowledge. Journalists know us best through the Wayback Machine, but we are more than that: our online collections include 11 million books and texts, 4 million audio recordings (including 160,000 live concerts) and 3 million videos. If you're trying to find an out-of-print agricultural report, a 1976 U.S. General Accounting Office report on coal liquefaction, or even a collection of PowerPoints produced by military agencies and contractors, we just might have it. We also have a wealth of information about public officials, including Trump.

The Wayback Machine

The Internet Archive was part of a coalition working to preserve the Obama administration's websites and government data, an effort that dates to 2008 and aims to save information after a transition of power. But the Wayback Machine doesn't just archive government sites, such as

Whitehouse.gov. You can also search private websites, such as the Trump Organization or Trump University.

The Wayback Machine, for example, provides evidence of how the biography of First Lady Melania Trump was altered after questions were raised about whether she had earned a college degree in design and architecture, as a biography on her personal website claimed. It also has archives of former Trump consultant Roger Stone's Twitter account containing vulgar tweets, since deleted, aimed at journalists and others. Stone has been in the news as one of the subjects of investigations into possible ties between Trump associates and Russian officials.

A reporter for The New York Times used the Wayback Machine to fact-check Trump's accusation that the paper had altered a headline on a story about intelligence agencies and law enforcement examining intercepted communications as part of a “broad investigation into possible links between Russian officials and associates of Mr. Trump.” While the paper had used two different versions of a headline for the print and online editions, the Wayback Machine's archive of the 336 caches of the story showed that “the web headline has remained the same from initial publication.”

There are some other ways you can make the Wayback Machine work for you. If there is a particular website you want to track over time, we provide a “save page now” feature that archives that page on demand and adds it to a list of millions of URLs that are saved periodically. If you use Chrome

or Firefox, you can also install a browser extension that allows you to “save page now” from your toolbar. For more complex archiving needs, you can pay to subscribe to our Archive-it service, which allows you to crawl entire websites and pour results into a full-text searchable database. The results can be made public or private, depending on your needs.

The TV News Archive

Another rich resource for reporters is the TV News Archive, a free, online library of TV news shows since 2009, searchable via closed captioning. With more than 1.3 million shows archived, we've got the original source for many types of statements by public officials: news conferences, appearances before congressional committees, appearances on TV news shows and more. You can edit clips up to three minutes long, perfect for sharing on social media and embedding on websites.

To prototype how advanced computer analysis of our TV library might make it simple to find statements by Trump, we've hand-curated a collection of debates, speeches, rallies and other broadcasts featuring the president, both before and after his election. We've also linked these to fact checks by FactCheck.org, PolitiFact and The Washington Post's Fact Checker, available for viewing online or downloading. We will soon release similar archives for Congressional leadership of both parties.

If you're interested in searching certain terms used on TV news broadcasts over time, such as “immigration,” “terrorism,”



or “taxes,” the Television Explorer (bit.ly/TVExplorer1A) may be just what you need. Built by independent data scientist Kalev Leetaru and fueled by TV News Archive data, the tool allows searching for specific terms, as well as terms in proximity to each other, with filters for dates and specific TV news channels. If you want data for comparison purposes, you’ll want to use Leetaru’s tool, which filters out duplicate airings

of shows and otherwise standardizes the data. Another advantage: Results are downloadable in CSV or JSON format.

Additionally, if you’d like to track a specific clip over time as aired on TV news shows — say, Kellyanne Conway saying “alternative facts” — contact us at politicalad@archive.org. We may be able to do a custom analysis for you with Duplitrn, an open-source tool created

by Dan Schultz, the TV News Archive’s senior creative technologist. The tool counted airings of political ads during the 2016 elections, as well as TV news coverage of debates.

Nancy Watzman is managing editor of the TV News Archive, the Internet Archive and director of strategic initiatives for Dot Connector Studio.

ROADBLOCK:

Trump has declared war on whistleblowers and journalists

SOLUTION:

Take steps to protect your data, sources and communications

By Jorge Luis Sierra,
ICFJ Knight Fellow

Digital security isn’t just for super-sensitive stories. All reporters and editors may be subject to a cyber-attack, and it is better to be prepared with good practices, policies and tools.

Do you have confidential sources? Do you use your mobile phone to call them? Are you investigating corruption? Are your passwords weak? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you could benefit from the following tips.

- Use only strong passwords or — even better — passphrases of at least eight words by using Diceware as the method of choice. Do not reuse your passphrases and use a different one for each account. Add additional security by using a two-step verification tool like Google Authenticator, Authy or FreeOTP.

- Always keep all operating systems, software and applications up to date. Most updates involve security patches, and neglecting them may put your information and communications at risk.

- Take advantage of Bitlocker and Filevault, the Windows and OS native applications to encrypt your computers. Apple encrypts all iPhones by default, and Android mobile phones also have encryption options.

- Protect your computer and mobile devices with good antivirus software. The default iPhone encryption only works when

the device is turned off. When you turn your phone back on, everything is decrypted and you may need antivirus software to protect your device from intrusions. Avira, Avast and AVG may work well.

- Do not click or open unexpected links or files, even if they came from friends or colleagues. Most malware attacks happen via phishing attempts. If you want specific advice on avoiding phishing, check out this article from ICFJ: bit.ly/ICFJphishing.

- Pretty Good Privacy, or PGP, is the strongest encryption tool available for journalists, but it’s complicated and not very user-friendly for a novice. However, new encryption apps are making things easier. For example, you can use Mailvelope — a free email encryption software — in your Firefox or Chrome browser to encrypt and sign electronic messages. The software also integrates itself into existing webmail applications. Go to bit.ly/MVencrypt to learn more.

- Please stop using Hotmail or Yahoo when working on sensitive stories. Gmail is a safer service, but if you want a more private email provider, get a Protonmail account at bit.ly/ProtonEmail.

- Use different tools with different sources. Some sources will only use WhatsApp, and that’s fine. Signal is rapidly becoming the tool of choice for investigative journalists, although not many sources are using it. This is why you need to combine tools. You can even use Facebook Messenger to exchange secret messages.

- If you need to call your sources, you can opt for Signal, an encrypted communications

software for Android and iOS. Jitsi Meet is another alternative. The open-source JavaScript application provides high quality, scalable video conferences and allows users to stream their desktop or only certain windows on their screen.

- Think about the possibility that you and your sources are under targeted surveillance. In that case, you need to be aware that adversaries will try to get your data before it’s encrypted. Some reporters now encrypt their data by hand, and then encrypt the already encrypted information. To increase the level of security in your communications, visit securedrop.org, tails.boum.org, or torproject.org. These sites aim to preserve the privacy and anonymity of you and your sources.

- For more training in data encryption, check out the Clandestine Reporters Working Group’s website at bit.ly/CRWgroup. Their workshop focuses on defensive and offensive techniques, as well as providing expert instruction on covering sensitive stories.

These tools and practices will increase your peace of mind when you contact sensitive sources, investigate corruption and do what you love to do: investigative reporting.

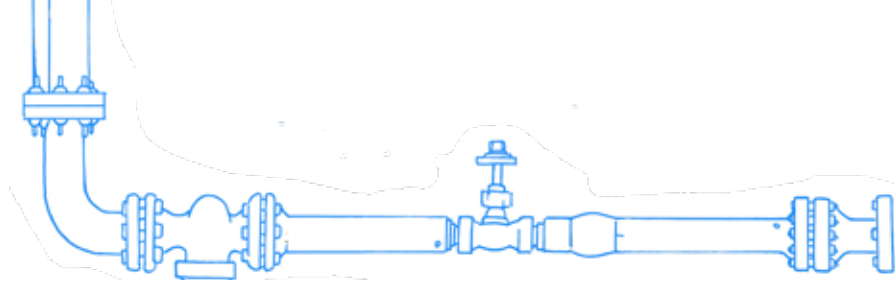
ICFJ Knight Fellow Jorge Luis Sierra is an expert on cybersecurity. He focuses on the intersection of digital security, technology and investigative journalism. As part of his Knight Fellowship, Sierra is developing digital crowd-sourced mapping tools to track crime, corruption and attacks on journalists.

ROADBLOCK:

Federal data is at risk of disappearing

SOLUTION:

Get involved with preservation efforts from IRE & NICAR and Data Refuge



By Charles Minshew, IRE & NICAR

At our annual CAR Conference in Jacksonville earlier this year, IRE & NICAR announced some initial steps to help save federal data.

One question we're getting a lot is, "why now?" In a world where "fake news" and "alternative facts" have entered our everyday vocabulary, data is more important than ever.

Data is what proves the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of government programs. Climate data is just as important to the farmer planting crops as it is to the meteorologist predicting a dangerous line of storms. U.S. Census Bureau data helps tell the story of where we've been and where we're going. Unfiltered, original datasets let Americans hold their government accountable.

It's easy to say that political paranoia is driving data rescue efforts around the world. And there is probably some truth to that. But the threat to data is not limited to a single party.

The nightmare scenario that comes to mind — that one day we log on to a government website and the data is gone — is not the greatest threat.

Our main threat is what happens if funding for data collection and storage simply disappears. In 2013, during a government shutdown, access to data from the U.S. Census Bureau was suspended. Economic reports vital to the economy were delayed. Data collection stopped. That shutdown lasted almost two weeks.

While it's impossible for IRE's membership to build datasets for the federal government, it's within our power as a group to save what is already out there. Ensuring that all Americans have access to federal data is an important task.

At NICAR, we're not seeking to download every federal dataset in existence. Instead, our priority is to organize the data rescue efforts currently underway by journalists and concerned citizens around the world.

Here's how it works: Our online directory (bit.ly/FedDataDirectory) provides links to datasets held by organizations that have rescued threatened federal data. When someone suggests an at-risk dataset, we'll add a link to our database and work with partners to begin archiving that information. If the dataset is ever removed, we will work to provide access to the latest copy of the saved data.

We're also working on ways to help people

ensure the integrity of the data they collect and save. We've compiled a tipsheet (bit.ly/IREDataIntegrity) that covers how to save essential information about the data you collect, as well as maintain the accuracy of that data during cleaning and processing.

Preserving the accuracy and integrity of any rescued data is essential. It only takes one poorly collected dataset to erode any trust in our efforts.

Since we announced this project in March, members have shared or flagged datasets on the environment, consumer protection and immigration.

We're asking anyone interested in saving federal data to help us by completing a survey at bit.ly/iredatasurvey. We want to know about data you want us to find and save. But we're also eager to hear if you've collected a dataset or know about one saved by another organization.

Charles Minshew is the director of data services for IRE & NICAR. He helps maintain the Database Library and assists members with custom data analysis. He most recently worked as a multimedia artist at the Orlando Sentinel.

Protecting endangered federal data with Data Refuge

By Margaret Janz,
University of Pennsylvania

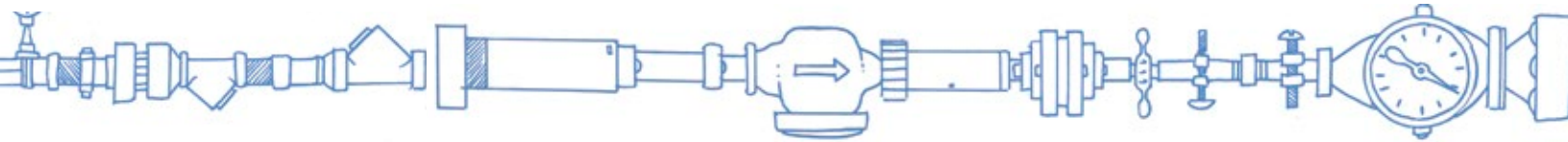
Data Refuge is a collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Programs for Environmental Humanities and the Penn Libraries that began in early December 2016 as concerns grew about how the new climate change-denying administration might thwart access to federal environmental and climate data.

Access to data had been problematic under other anti-science administrations, such as the Steven Harper administration in Canada and the George W. Bush administration. As a result, one of Data Refuge's immediate goals is to create and make accessible copies of these data.

Our other goals include educating the public about the general vulnerability of born-digital information and advocating for these data by finding and telling stories about how they are used to shape our communities.



A group of participants at a Data Refuge event at Washington University in St. Louis work together to build tools that will scrape data from a federal website.



In January, we harnessed community interest around these goals at a Data Rescue event at the University of Pennsylvania. We had a teach-in and panel sessions to discuss the larger problems and an archive day where we developed a workflow to create trustworthy copies of data and archived over a terabyte of information.

Since then, there have been about 35 Data Rescue events across the country, and more are being planned. Thousands of people have attended these events, including students, city planners, software engineers, librarians, information technologists, government employees and researchers across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. They've helped us archive over 10,000 government websites and almost 200 datasets.

When we hear about data and other information that seems to have disappeared, we check to see if we or any other projects

have already created a backup. We check our repository at datarefuge.org, our pipeline of data that might be making its way to our repository, the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine and the National Archives and Records Administration.

Fortunately, very little federal data has been removed, and most of what's been reported missing has been moved or archived by the NARA. Some exceptions include the USDA animal welfare reports, a Department of Transportation dataset about CO2 emissions and some agency directories. Thankfully, some of this information has been archived by the Internet Archive; however, some does appear to be lost.

If you're concerned about a particular dataset and don't have the means to archive a copy yourself, please email us at datarefuge@ppehlab.org or complete our survey (bit.ly/PPEHlabSurvey) and we'll give it a high priority in our Data Rescue queue. If you are collecting

specific data, let IRE know about it.

If you'd like to collect data in a more systematic way, talk to us, and we'll be happy to help you host a Data Rescue event. You can also ask us about the Libraries+ Network (bit.ly/LibraryNetwork) to see how you might contribute to our effort to create a more sustainable and systematic archive of government data.

Finally, to help these efforts, we recommend simply getting the word out. Discussions about archiving federal data on a larger scale have been happening in various communities for decades, but this unique moment in our history has brought the importance of doing so to the fore.

Margaret Janz is the scholarly communication and data curation librarian at the University of Pennsylvania, where she works to improve access to research data.

ROADBLOCK

Trump breaks news — and makes news — on Twitter

SOLUTION:

Harness the power of 3 digital tools to track and monitor Trump's tweets

By Haley Pitto, IRE & NICAR

President Trump has repeatedly used Twitter to broadcast announcements, proposals and disdain for his critics. But with hundreds of tweets from his presidential account and thousands from his personal handle, how can you keep track of what the president is saying and who he's saying it about? That's where the Trump Twitter Archive, Twitter Archiver and All My Tweets come in.

With these tools, the search possibilities are endless. So why limit yourself to just the POTUS? Twitter Archiver and All My Tweets will work for any account — personal or political. Go ahead, dig in. You never know what you'll uncover.

Trump Twitter Archive

This is the only tool of the bunch that is specific to the POTUS. It's also the most complex of the three tools. The archive collects tweets in real time by checking Trump's personal Twitter every minute. Any new tweets are automatically added to the site hourly and remain there — even if they're deleted.

Want to dig deeper? The archive allows you

to search by keyword, date and time.

However, the archive is not without its flaws. There are more than 4,000 tweets missing, and tweets deleted prior to September 2016 are also unavailable. The site's timestamp process can also be a little confusing, and not all tweets come with location data, which makes it impossible to nail down some tweet times.

Twitter Archiver

The Twitter Archiver is a Google Chrome add-on that takes about five minutes to set up. You will need to grant the application access to your Google Drive account — after creating a search rule, the tweets will automatically go into a Google spreadsheet — and permission to link to your Twitter. However, the add-on will not post tweets without permission.

Once it's set up, you can create Twitter search rules for specific words, people, places, hashtags and accounts. It's fast, efficient and — best of all — free! If you find you need more features, a premium option allows you to create additional Twitter search rules and includes 60 days of technical support. The premium version's single per-user license is a one-time fee of \$29.99 and includes free lifetime

upgrades.

All My Tweets

The last tool is the easiest to use and comes with a nifty video tutorial.

All you need to get started is a Twitter account and the username you want to search. Once you've connected your account to the website allmytweets.net, type in a username and search. (You can't search by typing in the person's name.)

Within seconds, the tool will return up to 3,200 tweets associated with that account. You then have the option to refine your search results by excluding retweets or replies.

Of course, there are drawbacks. The site does not allow you to save search results and the process must be repeated for any new tweets associated with the searched account. If it's any consolation, you can always copy and paste the results into a Word document or spreadsheet.

Haley Pitto is a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, where she earned her master's degree with a concentration in magazine editing. She previously served as the editorial assistant for The IRE Journal.

ROADBLOCK:

Trump blacklists reporters and media outlets he doesn't like

SOLUTION:

Use the setback to your advantage — work the story from a new angle

By **Brianne Pfannenstiel**,

The Des Moines Register

By the time Donald Trump secured the Republican nomination for president, he had amassed a sizeable media “blacklist” that included such publications as POLITICO, The Washington Post and BuzzFeed.

Among the first was The Des Moines Register.

“It’s time for Donald Trump to drop out of the race for president of the United States,” our editorial board wrote in July 2015 — just five weeks after Trump launched his campaign and two days after he drew outrage for questioning Sen. John McCain’s status as a war hero.

“Last week, just before he decided to go after McCain,” our editorial board wrote, “Trump was at the top of at least one national poll. But being electable is not the same as being qualified, and Trump has proven himself not only unfit to hold office, but unfit to stand on the same stage as his Republican opponents.”

Trump was not a fan. And he let us know, posting a scathing response to his Facebook page.

“On the campaign trail in Iowa, a state whose people I have truly gotten to know and love, I have been treated very badly by the Des Moines Register. They were uneven and inconsistent, but far more importantly, very dishonest.”

It was the start of a bumpy road as our news team sought to cover his campaign during the final months leading up to the Iowa caucuses.

From that point on, our staff did not receive media credentials to a single Trump campaign event leading up to the caucuses. We tried to persuade his Iowa campaign operatives — who had worked with The Register for years — to lift the ban, but to no avail.

Trump took multiple opportunities both on social media and at his rallies to publicly disparage our coverage, our poll results and our staff.

As the primary Trump reporter at The Register for much of his caucus campaign, that meant I spent a lot of my time requesting public tickets to his campaign

events. I stood for hours in long lines that circled high schools and event centers, and built tenuous and covert relationships with Iowa-based campaign staffers willing to provide me with occasional off-the-record tidbits.

It was not glamorous. Iowa winters are unforgiving, and on more than one occasion I stood in below-freezing temperatures for hours waiting to gain access to events that lasted all of 30 minutes.

But in a lot of ways, that setup provided me with invaluable opportunities that were being denied to the credentialed members of the media. While they were being held up in “media pens,” I had unlimited access to thousands of Iowans who were attending Trump’s rallies.

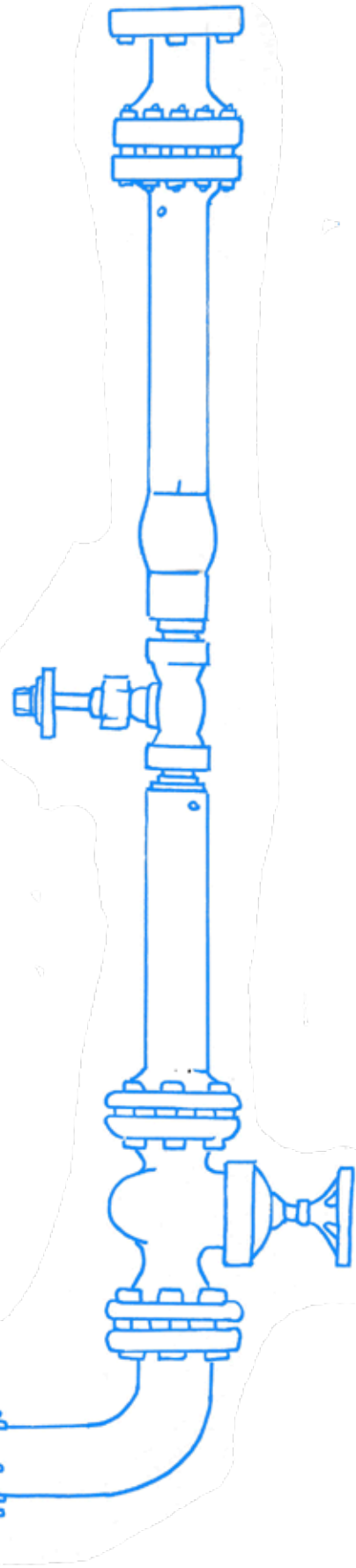
Two hours spent in line meant two hours getting to know the people who were waiting in the cold out of their own volition. It meant having real conversations — focus groups, almost — about their concerns, fears and thoughts about this markedly unconventional candidate.

In our coverage, we did our best to convey to Iowans what Trump was saying at his rallies and the things he was promising to do if he was elected. But we had very limited access to him as a candidate or to the staff running his field operation.

That was hard, and it was limiting. But it also forced us to focus our efforts on something that, I think, news organizations should be doing anyways: talking to and trying to understand actual voters.

Given the option, would I choose to cover another campaign without any access to the candidate? Absolutely not. There’s value in speaking to candidates and understanding the way their campaigns work. But I also plan to spend more time getting out of the campaign “bubble” so we can tell more stories about real people and find the stories we should be telling those who rely on our coverage.

Brianne Pfannenstiel is a statehouse and politics reporter for The Des Moines Register.



LESSONS FROM A "LEFT-WING BLOG"

By Eric Umansky, ProPublica

It's a great time to be an investigative journalist. Sure, no president has done more to demonize media than President Trump. But nobody has done more to boost our standing than Trump, either.

Millions of Americans have put their faith in us. A few weeks after the election, a friend of mine, pondering the reality of one-party government in Washington, looked soberly at me and summed up her sentiment: "You are our Congress now."

What she meant, of course, was that we need to do our jobs: to serve as checks against abuses of power, to ferret out facts and to expose wrongdoing.

It seemed straightforward enough: We just need to keep doing what we've been doing.

But as my friend was talking, one thing kept running over and over in my mind: How the hell are we going to do this?

At ProPublica, our stories often take months, and occasionally longer than that. How could we cover something as fast moving as a new administration? We also tend to stay away from reporting packs. If lots of reporters are already covering something, why would we want to dive in too? One of our advantages is that we don't have to be comprehensive. We can and should skip stories where we're unlikely to distinguish ourselves.

We could have made the decision to stick with those inclinations — to veer away from the pack and focus on areas where others were now even less likely to be.

But we didn't do that.

Instead, on Inauguration Day, we announced what we would be covering — many, many areas related to the new administration, including "Hate Crimes and Extremism" and "Politics, Influence Peddling and 'the Swamp'." The same day, we reported Trump hadn't fulfilled his promise to hand over control of his businesses. Two weeks later, we reported that Trump's daughter Ivanka had failed to do the same. And our stories kept coming: about how Trump's

watered-down ethics rules allowed him to hire a lobbyist at an agency he once lobbied, about the hundreds of officials Trump had quietly installed across the government, and about a Trump trust document that states the president can pull money from his businesses any time he wants. (It's that last story that got the White House riled up and led Sean Spicer to quite helpfully smear us a "left-wing blog.")

We're still in flux. And we definitely don't have all the answers. Like many newsrooms, we're still grappling with how to handle coverage of the new administration. But we have found a few principles to be helpful.

Worry less about zigging when others zag

Rather than tacking away from important topics that already have the country's attention, sometimes it makes sense to look for opportunities within them.

Take the work of The Washington Post's David Fahrenthold, who, of course, could serve as an example in any number of these tips. Countless journalists were covering Trump's campaign. The size of the scrum covering his candidacy probably set a record. But how many reporters were really digging into Trump's charity? It turned out very few — The Associated Press did good, early work, and then Fahrenthold began hammering away.

That's obviously not an easy example to replicate. In fact, Fahrenthold has written about how he didn't know what he was launching himself into. ✓

That doesn't mean you should chase the week's news, or worry about matching what other outlets are doing. What it means is deciding you're going to go after the most important and vital topics, and then giving yourself the task of producing revelatory coverage within them.

A hypothetical I've occasionally invoked: Imagine you had been a reporter during the civil rights era and were looking back at your career

Rather than tacking away from important topics that already have the country's attention, sometimes it makes sense to look for opportunities within them.

decades later. What would you have hoped to cover? (I've heard BuzzFeed's Ben Smith tell his staff something similar: Write now what you think you'll be proud of at the end of your career.)

Stop hoarding and start sharing

ProPublica has been collaborating with other newsrooms since we started nine years ago. But over the past few months, we've landed on new ways of working with others.

On a Friday night in late March, the White House announced it was making many staffers' financial disclosure forms "available." But it didn't post them online or even disclose which staffers had filed the forms. To get the documents, reporters first had to guess who had filed the disclosures. Then, they had to fill out a form on the White House's website for each person. It was like dealing with the world's worst customer service department — only we were dealing with information belonging to the people. Then, one of our editors, Tracy Weber, had an idea: Why not call up our friends at other outlets and coordinate. Within minutes, The New York Times and The Associated Press had agreed to work with us and post all the documents we gathered.

In another instance, we talked with the Times' Eric Lipton about our joint interest in documenting the legion of lobbyists joining the administration. The chat led to a simple and quick collaboration: We shared data on administration hires with the Times, which used it to publish a hard-hitting story that cited our contribution.

It was just one example of many where even the simple act of comparing notes has paid off. That's clearly not the proper approach all the time. But it can be plenty of the time.



Do it out in the open

For years, we've reached out to readers to fuel our journalism. But we've been much more aggressive about it recently.

One thing has been to simply say what we're working on — even if it's just broadly. On Inauguration Day, we not only laid out our areas of coverage, but we also gave contact information for each of our reporters covering those areas. And at the bottom of many of our stories now is a reporter's contact info, and, crucially, an explanation of what information they're seeking.

It's not fancy, but it's effective.

Sometimes readers don't have insider tips, but they can still contribute. In February, a reader wrote us about a letter she received from Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt criticizing Obamacare. The letter was filled with misleading information. We wondered if that was true of other officials' correspondence, so we asked readers to share any similar letters they'd gotten. Again, we coordinated to get the word out with other outlets: Vox, Kaiser Health News and STAT News. Readers sent in hundreds of letters. Using them, we were able to lay out how legislators were sending their constituents correspondence "full of lies and misinformation."

You won't be able to neatly plan and package your stories — and that's OK

Just about the only certainty with this administration is that nobody knows what will happen. And that means if you're going to cover one of the most consequential stories of our time, you're probably not going to be able to, say, carefully plot out a year's worth of stories in advance.

But that doesn't mean just writing what's in front of you, either. In fact, it's more crucial than ever to think carefully about which waters to swim in. Be at peace with the uncertainty about where exactly your coverage is heading. You may have some false starts. And there's no guarantee it will work at all.

Success will require the typical alchemy needed for great journalism — doggedness, imagination and luck. It will also require a leap of faith. Making that leap seems only fair given the faith that readers have put in us.

Eric Umansky is deputy managing editor of ProPublica. He edited a project on "nuisance abatement" laws that won this year's Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

OUR MODEL FOR COVERING THE PRESIDENT IS BROKEN.

HERE'S HOW WE FIX IT

By Tyler Fisher, NPR

For as long as news has been on the internet, members of the digital news world have warned against applying the same structures that governed print and broadcast stories to the web. The internet has undoubtedly made the news cycle faster, and the incremental story — taken from a world where daily updates were all that was possible — fails to keep up with the pace.

As the Trump administration swiftly rolls back Obama-era regulations, sources leak new information to the press, and Congress holds controversial hearings, combating the breakneck pace of news seems more urgent than ever.

For the NPR Visuals Team, that urgency has created new opportunities for us to guide parts of our newsroom toward alternative story models. We have an opportunity to evangelize the work our community has been attempting since its inception. I hope to convince you that you have an opportunity to fundamentally change how your newsroom covers the administration in a way that will benefit your audience.

Why now?

Let's more clearly articulate the problem: There are too many Trump stories. The emergence of products like Matt Kiser's "What The Fuck Just Happened Today?" newsletter, The New York Times' "The Daily" podcast, and FiveThirtyEight's "TrumpBeat" weekly feature are a clear indication that audiences are clamoring for a more distilled, high-level view of what's going on.

Newsrooms are struggling to keep up. Every story seems like a bombshell, so we divert most of our attention and resources to the most recent development. It hardly gives reporters enough time

to process. More importantly, our audiences can't keep up unless they read all day, every day. That is an unrealistic expectation.

Currently, newsrooms have a model that self-organizes around the incremental story. As events develop, newsrooms write additional updates for each new piece of information. As these collections of incremental stories grow, you end up with a disorganized body of work that represents snapshots in time. It makes following a developing story difficult.

In the current digital and political environment, three factors undermine the effectiveness of that model. First, the sheer volume of stories makes it hard to construct and promote everything efficiently. Second, there are larger stories — Russian hacking into the 2016 election and conflicts of interest in the Trump administration, to name a few — that develop at a slower pace, so maintaining all the necessary context is hard. Third, everyone is writing the same story. Short of a novel scoop, your story will look and read like your competitor's.

To solve these problems for both our newsrooms and our audiences, we must think beyond the 800-word incremental story.

We can spot patterns within the firehose of Trump stories. President Trump tweets an unverifiable claim. Sean Spicer defends a policy at a press briefing. President Trump signs an executive order. The House votes to repeal an Obama-era regulation. The key to subverting the story model is to use these patterns to your advantage by turning them into organizing principles.

Short of starting a new news organization, your best chance at getting your newsroom to think this way is by subverting the current processes. To

effectively pitch to your newsroom, you will need to explain what makes your idea better. I have two ideas.

Idea #1: Turn spectacle into evidence

This first idea uses a phrase I'm borrowing from my editor, David Eads: Turn spectacle into evidence. This concept focuses on the general pieces of the Trump administration and the American political system that draw the most attention but, taken individually, do not offer much in the way of substantive policy.

We used this framing for the first time during the presidential debates. A typical newsroom might flood the zone with stories on the debate, with each desk in the newsroom providing a different take.

This time, we decided to focus our resources and harness the spectacle of the event by building a live transcript that any of our reporters could annotate. The system we developed reads a caption feed (we partnered with a transcription service) and dumps the feed into a Google Doc. Dozens of NPR reporters and editors could access and annotate that document. We then transformed that Google Doc into HTML suitable for our live webpage.

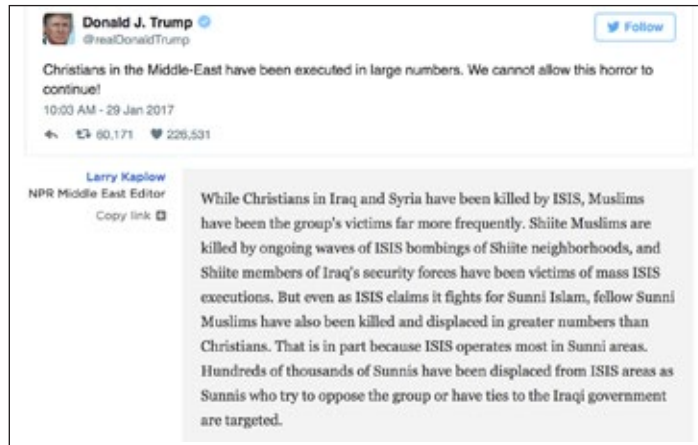
It took some significant development and design time to build the system but, once in place, it simplified our editorial workflow. We have a newsroom where our reporters are experts in diverse subjects, any of which can arise in a wide-ranging presidential debate. We know, from obsessively watching our analytics dashboards, that the average day has one story that outperforms all the others. Rather than have our disparate subject matter experts compete to get that story, we changed the model. Now, we have a model — annotating the primary source document — that allows us to harness all our expertise in one resource. Between the three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate, these resources were NPR's most successful digital product of all-time.

Another daily spectacle? The president's liberal use of Twitter. We used a similar framing to think about our coverage of it. We built a system that would allow us to annotate his tweets and add them to one resource. That way, an annotation can be 50 words or 500, depending on what's needed.

This system allows us to quickly bring in experts when we need them. When President Trump tweeted about Christians in the Middle East to defend his immigration executive order, we brought in our Middle East editor, Larry Kaplow, to write the annotation. Then Trump started tweeting more about health care, so our health care reporters wrote annotations. Over a longer period, annotating tweets in one place allows us to pool our resources in the same way as the live transcripts.

Idea #2: Expandable resources, not incremental stories

The second framing that has worked for us is to think about how to convey information in a way that is a scalable resource. This works best for complex, developing stories where incremental updates would



assume a level of background knowledge that many audience members would not have.

We thought this way when we built the Trump Ethics Monitor (bit.ly/TrumpEthicsMonitor). We spent a week researching and gathering all the promises Donald Trump had made as a candidate or as president about his conflicts of interest, and whether there was any evidence that he had fulfilled those promises. The build was simple — we organized the information in a spreadsheet and created the app out of that spreadsheet.

The week of investment allowed us to build a comprehensive resource that we can point our audience to whenever a new development regarding President Trump's conflicts of interest arises. New information can quickly be added to the app, instead of requiring an incremental story that needs to build up all the necessary context.

In all my examples, there are a couple of important things to note:

First, each model inverts the system by which primary source material is included. In the traditional model, reporters pull in primary source material at their discretion to justify their reportage. In these models, an annotation is brought to the primary source when necessary. By providing the full context of the complete primary source, audiences can trust the journalism more easily.

Second, each model encourages internal collaboration. It's not one person's job to annotate tweets or cover Trump's ethical promises. We have created systems simple enough for anyone to contribute to these resources. At their best, these new models are even fun to use. Your newsroom may find them a breath of fresh air.

Challenges

These models also come with challenges. They tend to live as resources rather than one-off stories — things we can refer back to and continue to develop over time.

The current models for promotion do not play kindly with this format. Facebook has an (unwritten) penalty for a page posting the same link within a specified time frame. Re-promoting the same thing over and over on your homepage will get stale for repeat visitors. The only traffic source that prefers a resource-style model is search, where more incoming and outgoing links enhance the search engine

NPR built a system that allows reporters to annotate Trump's tweets. The tool allows subject-matter experts like Middle East Editor Larry Kaplow to weigh in on key events by contributing to a single resource.

optimization.

These new story models require corresponding alternate publishing models. That means overhauling the entire editorial process for newsrooms to update these resources regularly. We've been lucky to find willing collaborators on our politics and business desks, but it takes a concerted effort to keep these up to date.

We've tried to make these tools as simple as possible — Google Docs, spreadsheets and Django admins — but the fact remains that our newsroom does not typically incorporate these into its processes. At first, it might seem like more work than writing incremental stories. But keep at it! The efficiencies will come with familiarity.

This is an opportunity

The work these new models require is the work that data journalists have always been doing: aggregation, collection, summarization, contextualization. In that way, what I am suggesting is nothing new.

In 2006, Django co-creator Adrian Holovaty wrote, "Journalists should have less of a concern of what is and isn't 'journalism,' and more of a concern for important, focused information that is useful to people's lives and helps them understand the world. A newspaper ought to be that: a fair look at current, important information for a readership."

The work we do as collectors and organizers can direct our newsrooms to provide useful information in more productive ways. That has always been true, but the skill is more necessary than ever.

You probably won't change the entire reporting structure of your organization. Incremental stories will remain the primary output. You will continue to report them, and that work will continue to be good.

But at this moment, newsrooms are hungry for new ways to make sense of the endless onslaught of news. Because of that hunger, our team at NPR has had success applying these skills to collaborative projects in ways we have not experienced before. I would bet your newsroom is feeling similarly anxious to try something new to cover this unprecedented administration. Happy pitching!

Tyler Fisher is a news apps developer on the NPR Visuals Team. Before NPR, he was a student fellow at Northwestern University's Knight Lab.

ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

Health care. Job creation. Immigration. Across the country — and around the world — nationwide policies are affecting our readers, listeners and viewers. And while it's important to cover the policy debates on Capitol Hill, it's equally essential to report on how these decisions hit home in communities large and small, on the costs and in the heartland. We reached out to three publications to learn how they went small on these big issues.

IMMIGRATION: By Mila Koumpilova, Minneapolis Star Tribune

Canadian asylum seekers show the value of nuanced reporting

I wish I could boast that trusty sources tipped me off about the surge of East African asylum seekers crossing into Canada — or that I spotted the story mining Canadian immigration statistics on an inspired hunch. In truth, colleagues at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation who'd recently started covering the crossings reached out to me. Many of the asylum seekers arriving in Winnipeg reported stopping at least briefly in Minneapolis, where I cover our state's immigrant communities. A couple of the border crossers had lost fingers to frostbite on the frigid trek north.

Chastened, I resolved to tell that story first on this side of the border. This was my beat — and my backyard. But I also wanted to go deeper than the almost gleeful "Refugees are fleeing from Trump!" storyline that seemed to be playing out in some Canadian coverage. With departures picking up this past winter, this was in part a Trump election story — but its roots reached back to the Obama administration.

I started by piecing together data, some I already had handy and some I scrounged up for the story. Statistics from the Canada Border Services Agency showed most arrivals were from Somalia, with



The now closed and abandoned former U.S. border crossing in Noyes, Minnesota. The number of illegal crossings from the U.S. into Canada, including from Minnesota, has climbed, even during the cold months.

David Joles / Minneapolis Star Tribune

smaller contingents from other African countries.

Data from Syracuse University's TRAC program showed these countries accounted for some of the steepest asylum application hikes in the U.S. since 2010 — as well as some of the highest rejection rates. In contrast, Canadian asylum outcomes revealed markedly better odds. Meanwhile, Immigration and Customs Enforcement annual reports showed major recent increases in deportations from the U.S. to Somalia.

Next, I tapped community contacts and immigration attorneys to help flesh out the back story. We had previously written about East African immigrants who — with no access to the U.S. refugee resettlement program — paid smugglers to shuttle them to South America and on to the U.S. Then came stints in detention and failed asylum bids. I heard from attorneys that in the final year of the Obama administration, immigration authorities had set out to deport more failed Somali asylum seekers, not just people with criminal convictions. Add to that a policy twist: Because of a 2004 agreement, most asylum seekers at the Canada border are turned back to the U.S. — unless they sneak in and then seek out immigration authorities.

Within days of tackling the story, photographer David Joles and I hit the road. We scored a ride-along with the U.S. Border Patrol, which mostly just alerts colleagues on the other side of the border when they spot northbound crossers. We continued to Winnipeg, where we spoke with migrants who had recently made the journey north — at a local nonprofit that helps refugees, at an apartment shared by six recent arrivals, at a Tim Hortons restaurant.



U.S. Border Patrol Deputy Patrol Agent in Charge Scott Webster drives near the Minnesota-Canada border. Canadian authorities have seen a marked increase in people crossing the border and asking for asylum in Canada.

Since most asylum seekers balked at being identified, we felt it was important to meet and hear from as many as we could. Patterns began to emerge: A trip to the Twin Cities, pricey rides to the border, a long walk north to Canada. As one expert pointed out, those who make money off the movement of people across borders are famously good at drumming up business.

And yes, President Trump did come up more than

once. But so did poverty and upheaval in Africa, immigration detention during the Obama years and Canada's gentler welcome. For me, the experience affirmed the value of context and complexity in a polarized age when simple storylines beckon at every turn.

Mila Koumpilova is the immigration and cultures reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

HEALTH CARE:

By Lauren Katz, Vox

Harnessing the power of Facebook to find sources

At the end of 2016, Vox launched a Facebook group (bit.ly/VoxFBGroup) for Obamacare enrollees. Our goal was to build a safe and unbiased place for our readers who were interested in health policy to discuss their experiences in the health care marketplace. This style of group was a first for Vox, so we promoted it in health care articles on our website, talked about it on our social accounts and asked Vox staff — like reporter Sarah Kliff and Editor-in-Chief Ezra Klein — to share it, too.

Now, with more than 2,000 members, we've also found it a useful tool for sourcing.

We've done targeted callouts for specific stories and asked participants broad questions like, "What types of stories are you interested in?" and "What big questions do you have about the Affordable Care Act's future?" Once, we held a pop-up book club on "Inside National Health Reform."

Beyond that, members guide the conversations.

Health policy is personal, which makes this group passionate. They often find and start discussions around interesting articles, charts and tweets they encounter.

But we've also taken the group offline and met members in person. Two weeks before President Barack Obama left office, Sarah Kliff and Ezra Klein interviewed him about the Affordable Care Act. The White House saved about 30 seats for members of our Facebook group.

We knew that meeting group members in person would also be a great opportunity for interviews. So, when selecting people to attend the event, we asked specific questions about the impacts of the Affordable Care Act on their lives. Those responses, combined with Sarah's ensuing conversations with members who came to Washington, led to the idea for a multimedia piece that explored Obamacare's effects on career freedom (bit.ly/VoxObamacare). The majority of our sources for that story came

from our Facebook group.

So, what have we learned about how Facebook groups can help reporting?

1. Having a tough moderation strategy pays off. We do our best only to let Obamacare enrollees join our group by vetting members as much as possible. Sometimes this includes asking for proof of enrollment. Though time-consuming, it's resulted in an incredibly productive environment for readers with a shared experience — and for health care reporters at Vox to gain story ideas and sources in a completely new way.

2. Readers can become your most valuable supporters. Engagement in our group has helped foster loyalty. One woman, for example, decided to reach out to Andy Slavitt, former acting administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, on Twitter about doing an interview with Vox. Shortly after that exchange, he was in our office for a Facebook Live Q&A.

3. Policy is personal. Our group members are invested in health policy because the law makes such a difference in their lives — some for better, some for worse. The personal connection means that people in the group are genuinely interested in understanding the wonky politics behind certain policy decisions. Their hunger to know what's going on makes this community an extension of Vox's mission to explain the news.

So, now what? We continue to turn to our group for feedback on stories and reporting, and we are experimenting with other groups. In April, we launched a new Facebook group centered around policy and based on our podcast "The Weeds." It's grown even quicker than the Obamacare group. Experimentation is a key value at Vox, so we'll continue to explore ways to engage audiences around our coverage areas when it makes sense.

Lauren Katz is a senior engagement manager at Vox.



Vox sourced the majority of its sources for a multimedia piece on the Affordable Care Act's effects on career freedom from a Facebook group it developed.

JOBS:

By James Briggs, *The Indianapolis Star*

How the Carrier deal became a case study for vetting Trump's claims

The inaccurate number still tops our November IndyStar article: "Donald Trump's deal with Carrier could save 1,000 jobs in Indianapolis."

That detail turned out to be an overstatement. When President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence negotiated a deal that stopped Carrier from sending some Indianapolis jobs to Mexico, the agreement saved somewhere between 730 and 800 jobs, depending on who's counting.

The Carrier deal — and the way it was announced — offered an early case study in how to cover what has become an unorthodox administration. It revealed unusual and challenging patterns that persist for reporters wading through Trump's promises and claims. Perhaps the biggest takeaway is that reporters must be particularly mindful of a basic journalism tenet: Report no detail without verifying it.

We initially wrote about Trump's campaign promise to "tax the hell" out of Carrier and keep the company in Indiana, but didn't begin reporting in earnest until Thanksgiving, when the then-president-elect tweeted that he was "making progress" in talks.

While our early reporting on the Carrier deal might have been stronger if we had treated the agreement as a bigger possibility, it turned out that we probably were right to move slowly. When Trump visited Indiana to announce the

Carrier deal, he admitted he didn't expect to keep the company in Indiana. He called the promise a "euphemism" for saving the manufacturing sector. This gets to a common question journalists have asked about Trump: How seriously — or literally — should journalists take his promises? I'm still not sure I know the answer to that question.

And then there was the number of jobs. While I should have been more skeptical of the purported 1,000-job figure when the news broke — the union had not been briefed on Carrier's plan, which was a red flag — we worked quickly to correct the number and tell our audience the deal's winners and losers.

We reported on the euphoric emotions of more than 700 people who learned they would get to keep their jobs. But we also added context, noting that Indiana would continue to bleed thousands of manufacturing jobs.

On the day of Trump's Carrier visit, one reporter, Robert King, talked to employees who work a mile away at Rexnord — another company Trump had tweeted about — and are still losing their jobs as the company relocates to Mexico. I filed an update to the Carrier story, noting that up to 600 workers there could still get laid off in Indianapolis. Another reporter, Tony Cook, reported that Indiana companies were still planning to ship 2,100 manufacturing jobs to foreign countries.

We also worked to explain why Carrier had decided to leave — and later changed its mind. Carrier, Trump and Pence said the company's initial decision had to do with burdensome federal regulations. I explored this claim and found that neither Carrier nor critics of federal regulations could identify any rules that would have caused Carrier to relocate to Mexico.

Our reporting showed Carrier wanted to outsource jobs to take advantage of cheap labor but backpedaled for the sake of maintaining a strong relationship with the federal government (parent company United Technologies Corp. receives \$5.6 billion a year in federal contracts and has been pushing for tax reform).

Even one of the most basic elements of the Carrier story became a point of confusion. At one point, a Washington, D.C., journalist sent me a message asking what Carrier makes in Indianapolis. Trump repeatedly said air conditioners, while we were reporting that the plant makes furnaces. I assured him it was furnaces, and that Trump had been misspeaking.

If there's one lesson from the Carrier story, it's a reminder to treat every detail that comes from the government — no matter how big or small — with skepticism.

James Briggs is a reporter and columnist for The Indianapolis Star. He writes about government and business.

NO PIOs ALLOWED

How a New York TV station banned public information officers – and got results

By Blake Nelson, IRE & NICAR

Years ago, an idea took root in Casey Clark's head.

Clark was a reporter at Seattle's KOMO-TV station, alongside the late Ken Schram. Schram had found that some of the city's parking meters were faulty, and he wanted to talk to officials about it. But he was having trouble getting a decision-maker on the record.

So, Clark remembers Schram setting up a cardboard cutout of the mayor outside of city hall to "interview" it. (Despite a deep-dive into its archives, KOMO-TV was not able to verify all of the details of this story, and Schram and the mayor at the time have since died.)

Nevertheless, Schram's pursuit of a top city official, and his refusal to talk to anyone but the chief decision-maker, stuck with Clark.

Last August, Clark became the news director for WHEC-TV in Rochester, New York. Soon after, he implemented a new, station-wide policy: "Except in breaking news situations when public safety is in question," he wrote, "News10NBC will not interview spokespeople, PIO's, communications directors or any other public relations person."

In other words: We are done with PIOs.

"It needed to happen," Clark said. "It's a slow creep, and you don't realize over time how many layers have grown between us and the policymakers."

A few numbers illustrate the spread of PIOs in the United States.

The National Information Officers Association has seen its membership rise over the past quarter century. NIOA had fewer than 100 members in 1992, according to Executive Director Lisa McNeal. Last year, they had 750. McNeal wrote in an email



Investigative reporter Jennifer Lewke interviews the general manager of a hotel where the kitchens were temporarily shut down after inspection records detailed mouse droppings and dead roaches.

that they anticipate the numbers to rise again this year.

Two similar groups, the Conference of Court Public Information Officers and the City-County Communications & Marketing Association formed around the same time as the NIOA. According to its website, the CCPIO has more than 100 members today both in the U.S. and abroad, an increase from the two-dozen or so court PIOs that showed up for its first conference. 3CMA has also seen its membership rise in recent years, although Executive Director Scott Lehtonen cautioned that the increase might have as much to do with an improving

economy as it does a spike in PIOs.

For reporters in need of a quick sound bite, interviewing a PIO is often the easiest and fastest way to make sure certain viewpoints are represented. Clark emphasized that his newsroom is still happy to put spokespeople on screen if, for example, a suspect is on the loose and every officer involved in the investigation is understandably busy.

But when it comes to stories about policy issues, or budgets, or choices made by public officials? They'll interview the policymakers. Or nobody.

When Berkeley Brean, the station's chief investigative reporter, first read the new policy, he



WHEC-TV implemented a new, station-wide policy that prohibits interviewing public information officers. The policy has helped reporters get access to top officials and decision-makers.

thought: My job just got harder.

"Just like water, sometimes we find the easiest path," Brean said. "More often than not, that's the public information officer."

But as he thought about it throughout the day, he warmed to the idea.

"It's forcing us to do what we should be trying to do anyway, which is talk to the decision-makers, the policymakers, or talk to the people who are closest to the story," Brean said.

Clark said the most valuable part of the policy is the ability to ask solid follow-up questions.

That could be seen in two different segments with Jennifer Lewke, another investigative reporter at the station. About two weeks after the policy was implemented, she headed to a hotel whose restaurant had been shut down because, among other things, mouse poop came with the couscous.

A hotel manager agreed to talk. As Lewke asked questions, the manager looked about as excited as Wile E. Coyote pondering the anvil overhead. But he still took responsibility on air. Sort of.

"Before the inspection was over," the manager said in the segment, "I was already calling my immediate supervisors so that I could get help to rectify the situation."

Two days later, Lewke sat down with the county health commissioner and pressed him on the fact that only six full-time inspectors were overseeing the county's 3,000 restaurants. The commissioner said he'd start cross-training other inspectors so that more time could be spent on food. That sort of commitment is hard to get from a spokesperson.

In other stories, not talking to PIOs just means one less interview.

In a story about the New York State Assembly, Brean looked into a longstanding practice that allowed lawmakers to buy their legislative chair for just \$25. The leather-bound chairs had an estimated value of at least \$1,500, and the perk was still available to legislators convicted of crimes.

Brean reached out to all of their region's

representatives to see if any of them were planning on buying their chair. Brean received some statements from spokespeople, but none of the representatives were willing to talk. So Brean chucked the statements and reported: "They either declined to answer the question, ignored the question or said they weren't available." Then he moved on.

There's been no big announcement on air about the policy, although Clark said it was mentioned in a few cases when officials refused to talk.

But the chair story, for example, doesn't feel incomplete without any official statements. It just looks like the reporters gave everybody a chance to talk, and nobody did.

"That's their problem," Brean said. "Every agency, every entity is so concerned about message and perception, they control it very, very carefully."

That is certainly true. NIOA holds an annual conference, and descriptions of their panels read like workshops from an Alternate Universe IRE Conference: "Using the Media To Assist Your Agency," for example, or "how to handle — or at least attempt to control — what was going on."

An FBI bulletin from 2010 noted that PIOs needed to embrace new technology (including "a relatively new Internet phenomenon" called "Twitter") to push back against "savvy reporters" who could bypass them altogether.

Public employees are sometimes trained not to talk to reporters. At the New York State Police Academy, for example, recruit troopers are told that only a supervisor or a PIO is responsible for talking to the media at an incident, according to Beau Duffy, the director of public information for the New York State Police. Only those supervisors receive media guidance at basic training.

When the default position is "don't talk," it can be tough to get someone who is used to deferring to PIOs to go on the record. The key, Brean said, is not springing an interview request on an agency at the last minute. Planning out stories in advance

Pushing back on PIOs

Reporting this article led to a public information officer refusing to give out information — on PIOs.

A spokesperson with FEMA initially declined multiple requests to disclose the number of people who have enrolled in FEMA's PIO training program, citing concerns that IRE would improperly equate the number of trainees with the number of PIOs nationwide.

In response, IRE filed two Freedom of Information Act requests.

One business day later (and 10 days after the initial request), FEMA released two numbers: More than 5,600 people were trained in 2006. More than 12,000 were trained last year, the spokesperson said. FEMA said the increase partially reflected the addition of a new class, did not include numbers from FEMA's regional offices and did not necessarily mean there are more PIOs in the country.

Our FOIAs, which asked for more detailed numbers as well as records of internal FEMA communications regarding our request, were still being processed when this issue went to press.

becomes crucial to getting the interviews they want. People are busy. Agencies are overloaded. Brean said he might begin with a PIO, but only as a way to reach somebody else.

Clark emailed agencies in the area to let them know about the policy change. One agency complained, he said, and both he and Brean have heard rumblings that others were either confused or annoyed. But neither could think of times they were denied access or in any way punished because of the policy.

For Clark, the change is just good journalism.

"You wouldn't talk to a third party, and put hearsay on TV," Clark said. "Why are we allowing third parties to get in the way?"

Blake Nelson hosts the IRE Radio Podcast and has spent the past two years reporting and editing for the Columbia Missourian. He is currently finishing graduate work at the University of Missouri.

The power of fact-checking in a post-truth world

Aaron Sharockman
PolitiFact

Here's a quick test: Think about how Donald Trump announced he was running for president. Now, do the same for Hillary Clinton.

I think most of you probably got one but not the other. We remember Trump and his wife Melania gliding down the Trump Tower escalator in June 2015. And we remember some of the things Trump said that day.

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you," Trump said. "They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

As for Clinton?

Some of you, I'd guess, might remember her first major campaign rally, also in June 2015, also in New York. But that wasn't the announcement that she was running for president. That came a few months earlier, in a two-minute, 15-second video.

I bring this up (thanks for playing, by the way) because it's a perfect anecdote of how life for fact-checkers has changed in the era of Trump. Unlike Trump, Clinton carefully scripted and timed her announcement. Just like a typical politician we've seen hundreds of times. And it was free of a factual claim. We looked. Trump, on the other hand, spoke for 40 minutes, and at least some of what he said wasn't from any script. Our fact-checkers at PolitiFact analyzed five claims Trump made during that first speech. Those ratings? False, Pants on Fire, False, Mostly False and False.

So yes, fact-checking Trump is different on some levels. We must be quicker and more decisive. We have to be smarter about what facts we choose to pursue. And we have to be prepared for intense criticism. Trump, in a speech before the election, referred to fact-checkers as "scum."

But in other ways, not much has changed. Fact-checking — and PolitiFact in particular — was built upon an idea that people want to hold their politicians accountable for the claims they make. And in a world with lots of misinformation, readers, viewers and voters are looking for places that can quickly sort facts from falsehoods.

Maybe those cries are just a bit louder today.

Growth of PolitiFact, fact-checking

At the height of the 2016 campaign, PolitiFact saw more monthly visitors than Disney, the NFL or Pottery Barn, according to data kept by Quantcast. So, as I tell people, we were more popular than Mickey Mouse, Tom Brady and stylish dining ware. OK, don't fact-check me on that.

Seriously, though, PolitiFact's web traffic for 2016 more than doubled compared to 2015 (54 million page views to nearly 115 million page views). And so far in 2017, we're ahead of where we were last year, when people were voting.

Those numbers are huge for us but still relatively small when compared to national media. But it's important to note that PolitiFact, in an average month, might publish 150 articles. The Washington Post has said it posts 1,200 pieces of content per day. We're doing more with fewer opportunities, and readers are reacting.

I love citing a survey done of NPR listeners, originally shared with me by Alexios Mantzarlis, director of the still-young International Fact-Checking Network. The survey asked respondents what political stories they wanted to see covered.

The top result was the actual results of the election. The second was fact-checking of candidates' statements, with 77 percent of respondents very interested in seeing that covered. On the other end? Less than 13 percent of respondents said they were very interested in stories about polling and fundraising.

That's quite a change from where we started.

Bill Adair, who created PolitiFact in 2007, tells a story about how people couldn't pronounce our name and how difficult it was to get a call back. One of our first writers, Robert Farley (who now works at FactCheck.org), had to explain his job as a fact-checker to an old boss.

What do you do? the boss would ask.

I fact-check claims made by politicians, Rob would say back.

But that would take like 10 minutes. What do you do after that? the editor would ask again, like he was trying to understand a new mathematical concept.

Today, PolitiFact has published more than 14,000 fact-checks on our Truth-O-Meter. We have healthy competition from The Washington Post and FactCheck.org. The New York Times hired its first full-time fact-checker in February, a

former PolitiFact writer.

Across the world, there are now full-time fact-checking operations in 47 countries with 114 fact-checking organizations, according to a census by the Duke Reporters' Lab. That's a 159 percent increase since 2014.

Think fact-checking can't change minds? Researchers recently presented participants with four Trump falsehoods and asked people to say whether they believed them. After demonstrating with credible sources that Trump's claims were false, belief in them fell among all groups, including Trump supporters.

The role of fact-checking going forward

Think this is reading like promotional material for starting more fact-checking outlets and incorporating them into more newsrooms? Guilty.

Journalists sit down in newsrooms every day and discuss the best way to tell a story. Maybe it's through a video, or a Q&A or a narrative. Those conversations should also include when it's appropriate to tell a story through a fact-check.

Trump certainly has highlighted the importance of independent fact-checking (we at PolitiFact fact-checked him 313 times during the campaign, and 51 percent of the claims we analyzed rated False or Pants on Fire). But the need started before Trump, and it extends through Congress to state capitols and city halls.

Here's how I'd get started:

1. You don't have to do it full time, but you do have to have a consistent methodology. Not everyone needs a full-time fact-checker, but everyone needs a process. Ours includes well-defined ratings (the difference between Mostly True and Half True, for example) and a decision desk that includes a panel of three editors.

2. Be transparent. Clearly cite your sources and take the time to add hyperlinks online. Make sure you provide time and opportunity for the person you're fact-checking to participate.

3. Use fact-checking to tell good stories. Fact-checking doesn't have to be limited to national political reporters. Every day, PolitiFact tries to find interesting facts to check on the big topics of the day. That approach works in city halls just as well. The story of the city budget might be better told through a fact-check than a traditional story. It's a good way to explore the



"Our real unemployment is anywhere from 18 to 20 percent. Don't believe the 5.6. Don't believe it."

— Donald Trump on Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 in his presidential announcement speech



The Islamic State "just built a hotel in Syria."

— Donald Trump on Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 in a speech announcing his 2016 presidential campaign



"Even our nuclear arsenal doesn't work. It came out recently they have equipment that is 30 years old. They don't know if it worked."

— Donald Trump on Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 in his presidential announcement speech



"When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Japan? It doesn't exist, folks."

— Donald Trump on Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 in his presidential announcement speech



"The last quarter, it was just announced, our gross domestic product ... was below zero. Who ever heard of this? It's never below zero."

— Donald Trump on Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 in his presidential announcement speech



PolitiFact analyzed five claims Donald Trump made during his first speech in June 2015 (shown above). The staff eventually fact-checked him more than 300 times during the campaign, and 51 percent of the claims they analyzed rated False or Pants on Fire.

issues, much like explanatory journalism.

4. Try it, and encourage readers to provide feedback. Every piece of research and data I've seen suggests readers want more fact-checking, not less. Yet, for some reason, it remains spread relatively thin across the United States. So try it, and get your readers to provide feedback along the way. Admit it's an experiment and embrace the responses you get back.

5. Don't take yourself too seriously. We're dealing with serious and complicated topics. And often, our sources are academics who

aren't always gifted with boiling down difficult concepts in a way that most people would understand. So try to keep it fun. PolitiFact's first Pants on Fire claim was from Joe Biden, who claimed that George W. Bush was "brain dead." We probably wouldn't do that again, but you get the point.

Here's the last point, and this is probably the most important: You need to have thick skin, as does your editor.

Fact-checking is a little like being the referee between bitter rivals, and not many people root

for the referee. Make no mistake, politicians on the right and the left would be happy if fact-checking as a format went belly-up. Hyper-partisans who see the world in black and white, right and wrong, would be as pleased.

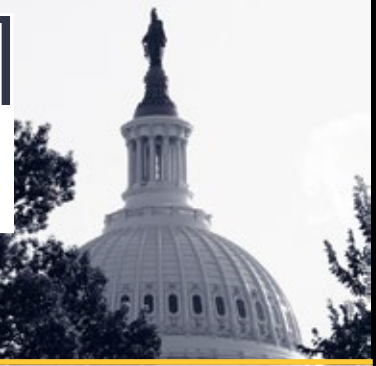
But when those calls and emails and tweets come — and they will — remember that you serve the readers.

And they're reading.

Aaron Sharockman is the executive director at PolitiFact.



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2016

IRE AWARD WINNERS

In the year in which presidential politics dominated the news, journalists from around the world exposed doctors who preyed on their patients and USA gymnastics coaches who sexually assaulted young athletes. The work of other journalists led to improved living conditions for the disabled, the end of hidden co-pays with prescription drugs by a giant health-insurance company and a criminal investigation of campaign finance law in Britain.

These investigations are among the 18 winning entries in the 2016 Investigative Reporters & Editors Awards. Another 37 entries were chosen as finalists.

A team of more than 400 journalists from around the globe who produced the “Panama Papers” project has been selected as the winner of the Gannett Award for Innovation in Watchdog Journalism. The reporters sifted through 11.5 million leaked files to expose the hidden financial dealings of world leaders, fraudsters, gangsters, drug traffickers, billionaires, celebrities, sports stars and more.

“If you are looking for inspiration, high-caliber reporting, and impressive execution, look no farther than this exceptional lineup of award-winning journalism,” said Jill

Riepenhoff, chair of IRE’s Contest Committee and a projects reporter with The Columbus Dispatch. “The judges were impressed by the strong investigative work being done in newsrooms around the world, from small to large. The winners and finalists faced immense obstacles — and in some cases, threats — but persevered. They show that the work of our members is more important than ever.”

This year’s winners and finalists were selected from among more than 480 entries.

The awards, given by Investigative Reporters and Editors 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.

SPECIAL AWARDS

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

TOM RENNER AWARD



Kwiatkowski



Alesia



Evans



Berta



“Out of Balance”

The Indianapolis Star

Marisa Kwiatkowski, Mark Alesia, Tim Evans, Steve Berta

Judges’ comments: For years, USA Gymnastics, based in Indianapolis as the sport’s governing body for its Olympic teams, turned a blind eye and deaf ear to complaints by parents and others that a number of its member coaches at local gyms around the country were sexually abusing the underage girls they trained. Calls were ignored, letters were dumped into a drawer and forgotten, dismissed as hearsay unless signed by a parent or athlete, as none ever was. For 16 years, one such trainer preyed on girls in at least four states before finally caught and arrested. The newspaper’s reporting encouraged a number of victims to go public. By the end of the year, the newspaper could count hundreds of gymnasts who had been assaulted in the past two decades. The Star’s work prompted the ouster of the USA Gymnastics president and led to the charges against physician Larry Nassar at Michigan State University who had been on the American team’s staff at four Olympic Games. Nassar has since been indicted on federal and state charges. Without question, this series of stories was one of the most important and impactful works of journalism seen in recent years.

Finalists:

“Descent into Disorder,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Patrick Marley, Jason Stein, John Diedrich, Catie Edmondson, Kevin Crowe

“Dying for Change: Domestic Violence & Law Enforcement Failures,” KMGH-Denver, Tony Kovaleski, Brittany Freeman, Andy Miller, Ryan Luby, Jason Foster, Peter Lipomi, Lindsay Radford

“Serbian Government Assets Revealed,” Crime and Corruption Reporting Network-KRIK (assisted by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project), Dragana Peco, Pavle Petrovic, Jelena Vasic, Natasa Markovic, Bojana Pavlovic, Stevan Dojcinovic, Bojana Jovanovic, Drew Sullivan

FOI AWARD



Rosenthal



“Denied: How Texas Keeps Tens of Thousands of Children Out of Special Education”

Houston Chronicle

Brian M. Rosenthal

Judges’ comments: The Houston Chronicle mounted an exhaustive effort to probe a secret, arbitrary and illegal quota set by Texas state officials in 2004 to limit the number of students who could receive special education services such as tutoring, counseling and therapy. Adherence to the standard was a factor in school performance scores. The measure saved the state billions of dollars. “Denied” initiated critical change, prompting the U.S. Department of Education to investigate and quickly order that the benchmark end, with remedies for its damage. The shift removed a roadblock to some 250,000 more children entitled to special education who finally could receive needed services. The Chronicle’s use of records and their denial as a foundation for its extensive shoe-leather reporting, and that of others, is a model for investigative reporting. In triggering change for vulnerable children, “Denied” exemplifies the best aspirations of journalism to expose injustice and alleviate harm.

Finalists:

“Chemical Breakdown,” Houston Chronicle, Matt Dempsey, Mark Collette, Susan Carroll, Michael Ciaglo

“Jay Peak’s Path to Fraud: Vermont Ski Resort Developers Accused of Misusing \$200M in ‘Ponzi-like’ Scheme,” VTDigger.org, Anne Galloway, Mark Johnson, Alan Keays

“Unholstered: When Texas Police Pull the Trigger,” The Texas Tribune, Jolie McCullough, Alexa Ura, Johnathan Silver, Justin Dehn, Ben Hasson, Emily Albracht, Ryan Murphy, Todd Wiseman.

2016 AWARD WINNERS AND FINALISTS BY CATEGORY:

PRINT/ONLINE

Print/Online — Large

“Suffering in Secret”

Chicago Tribune

Michael J. Berens, Patricia Callahan



Berens



Callahan



Judges’ comments: The strategy seemed simple: The state of Illinois would save money by directing thousands of low-income, disabled and often defenseless residents to less expensive private group homes. But what the Chicago Tribune uncovered in “Suffering in Secret” was a system that allowed many of the state’s most vulnerable to be mistreated. Through databases, court records, investigative files, emails and other public records, the reporters told a story that was heartbreaking, troubling and sorely needed. And beautifully written.

Finalists:

“California National Guard Bonus Enlistment Scandal,” Los Angeles Times, David S. Cloud

“Nuisance Abatement,” New York Daily News and ProPublica, Sarah Ryley, Barry Paddock, Christine Lee, Pia Dangelmayer, Andrea Hilbert, Sarah Smith

“State-run Doping,” The New York Times, Rebecca Ruiz

Print/Online — Medium

“Doctors & Sex Abuse”

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Danny Robbins, Carrie Teegardin, Ariel Hart, Jeff Ernsthause, Ryon Horne, Richard Watkins, Lois Norder, Alan Judd, Johnny Edwards



Horne, Ernsthause, Robbins, Edwards, Teegardin, Watkins, Norder, Hart, Judd



Judges’ comments: After noticing a pattern in Georgia, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporters expanded their investigation to unveil systemic sex abuse of patients by their doctors in every state. In a project reminiscent of the Catholic priest sex abuse scandal, the reporters combined sophisticated research techniques with shoe-leather and public records reporting and found that the medical profession views sexual abuse as an illness to be treated, rather than a crime to be punished. They found some doctors with hundreds of victims and a profession that has resisted actions that could prevent and detect abuse.

Finalists:

“Chemical Breakdown,” Houston Chronicle, Matt Dempsey, Mark Collette, Susan Carroll, Michael Ciaglo

“Denied: How Texas Keeps Tens of Thousands of Children Out of Special Education,” Houston Chronicle, Brian M. Rosenthal

“Out of Balance,” The Indianapolis Star, Marisa Kwiatkowski, Mark Alesia, Tim Evans, Steve Berta

Print/Online — Small

“Failing the Frail”

PennLive.com/The Patriot-News

Daniel Simmons-Ritchie, David Wenner, Nick Malawskey, Sean Simmers



Simmons-Ritchie



Wenner



Malawskey



Simmers



Judges’ comments: PennLive uncovered major failures with the quality of Pennsylvania’s nursing homes and oversight of the industry. PennLive discovered dozens of avoidable deaths: a diabetic resident who wasn’t given insulin, a resident with Down syndrome who died after his ventilator became disconnected and staff didn’t respond to the alarm for nearly an hour. State investigations appear to be flawed and punishments are typically weak or non-existent. This compelling, thorough and well-written investigation overcame many obstacles including Pennsylvania’s woeful public records law. Although nursing homes are a common subject, PennLive did it in a state that makes very little public under the law, and achieved results that are rare.

Finalists:

“Free to Flee,” Naples Daily News, Jacob Carpenter, Brett Blackledge, Manny Garcia, David Albers, Dorothy Edwards, Carolina Hidalgo, Corey Perrine, Scott McIntyre, Harry Walker, Vonna Keomanyong, Dana Long, Jamie Stoddard, Amy Oshier

“Heroin: Killer of a generation,” The Palm Beach Post, Pat Beall, Joe Capozzi, Lawrence Mower, John Pacenti, Christine Stapleton, Barbara Marshall, Mike Stucka, Melanie Mena

BROADCAST/VIDEO

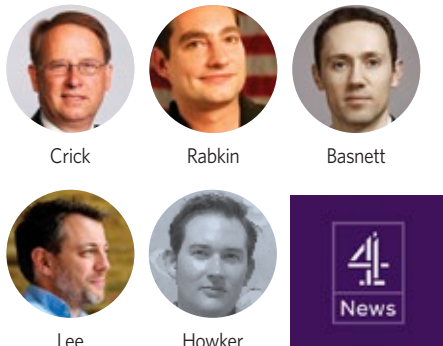
BROADCAST/VIDEO - Large (Tie)

“Election Expenses Exposed”

Channel 4 News (London)

Michael Crick, Job Rabkin, Ed Fraser, Guy Basnett, Andy Lee, Ed Howker, Tom Stone, Paul McNamara

Judges’ comments: In a country with strict rules on election spending, Channel 4 documented how the ruling Conservative Party evaded local limitations by paying hotel bills and other expenses to send in at least five top Tory staffers to help defeat a pro-Brexit candidate in a by-election. In other races, it sent “Battle Buses” filled with activists to help campaign for candidates. The current prime minister’s chief-of-staff helped lead a campaign in another district to defeat the leader of the pro-Brexit movement. All these expenses should have been reported as election costs assigned to the local candidates; they were not. Channel 4’s aggressive reporting led to a \$100,000 fine levied by the Elections Commission against the Conservative Party and has prompted a still-pending criminal investigation involving up to 20 members of Parliament and others.

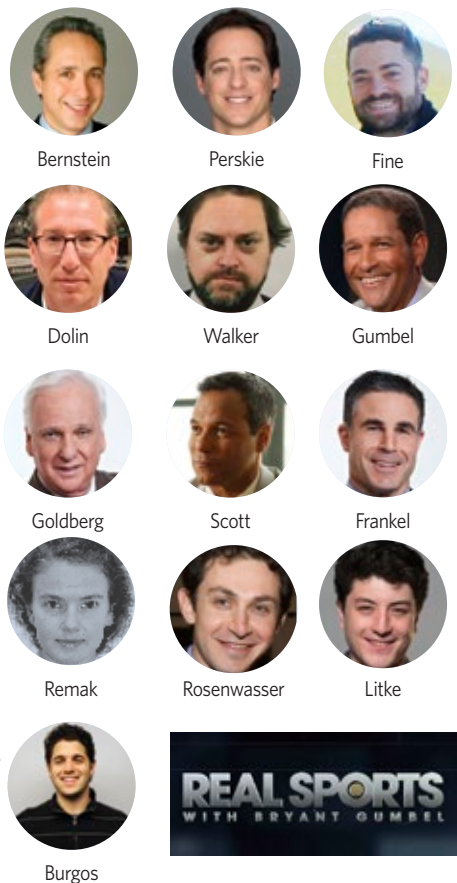


“The Lords of the Rings”

HBO Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel

Rick Bernstein, Joe Perskie, Josh Fine, Nick Dolin, Tim Walker, Bryant Gumbel, Bernie Goldberg, David Scott, Jon Frankel, Beret Remak, Jake Rosenwasser, Daniel Litke, Evan Burgos, Stu Ash, Tres Driscoll, Mike Long, Jason Schmidt, Jeremy Phillips, Mindy Macinnes.

Judges’ comments: In recent Olympic Games, the losers have been the poorest of citizens in host countries. The winners? The pooh-bahs of the International Olympic Committee who demand luxury hotel suites and other special perks and privileges. Real Sports went to Beijing, host of the 2008 summer games, and evaded Chinese handlers to interview people who lost their homes to make way for Olympic venues; the reporting team



was jailed for two days for having slipped away from official surveillance. In Sochi, after the 2014 Winter Games, one former worker told of unreported deaths of imported migrants in construction accidents. Ahead of the IOC vote to award the 2022 winter games to China once again, Real Sports reported that more than 340 human rights lawyers had disappeared, swept into prison, many not to be heard of again.

Finalists:

“**Business of Disaster,**” Frontline and NPR, Rick Young, Emma Schwartz, Fritz Kramer, Laura Sullivan, Daniel Sheire, Tim Grucza, Andrew Metz, Raney Aronson-Rath, Nicole Beemsterboer, Robert Little, Michael Oreskes

“**Terror in Europe,**” Frontline and ProPublica, Sebastian Rotella, Ricardo Pollack, Dan Edge, Mark Johnson, Alan Keays, Andrew Metz, Raney Aronson-Rath

BROADCAST/VIDEO - Medium

“Cash for Compliance?”

KNXV-Phoenix

David Biscobing, Shawn Martin, Gerard Watson

Judges’ comments: KNXV-TV revealed how a local group exploited the Americans with Disabilities Act and leveraged it into a money-making machine cloaked as a nonprofit organization. In more than two dozen reports, the ABC15 Investigators unraveled multi-layered enterprise and showed deception, hypocrisy, motives and the primary players. Their work prompted state investigations and could permanently change how similar cases are handled across the country.



Watson, Biscobing, Martin

Finalists:

“**Charlie Foxtrot,**” WXIA-Atlanta, Jeremy Campbell, Erin Gutierrez, Matt Livingston, Lauren Rudeseal, Blis Savidge

“**Transparency,**” KHOU-Houston, Jeremy Rogalski, Keith Tomshe, Ty Scholes, Stephanie Kuzydym, Matthew Keyser

BROADCAST/VIDEO - Small

“Medical Waste”

WVUE-New Orleans

Lee Zurik, Jon Turnipseed, Tom Wright, Mike Schaefer, Greg Phillips

Judges’ comments: This important investigation exposed the secret process of “clawbacks” in prescription drugs in which major health insurance companies force consumers to pay a hidden premium back to the insurance company for their drugs. The reaction to the work was swift. It led to changes in Louisiana law, served as the backbone of numerous lawsuits and alerted consumers across the country on how to

avoid these shameful clawbacks for necessary medicines. One IRE judge said this was among the best — if not the best — investigation ever aired. The stories were compelling and deeply reported. This investigation did it all: exposed wrongdoing and prompted change. It was a wonderful public service.

Finalists:

“Charity Caught on Camera,” WTHR-Indianapolis, Bob Segall, Bill Ditton, Cyndee Hebert, Susan Batt, Scott Hums

“Injustice in the Valley,” WJHL-Johnson City, Nate Morabito, Phillip Murrell, Chris Greer



Zurik



Turnipseed



Wright



Schaefer



Phillips



“Making the Grade,” WTVF-Nashville, Phil Williams, Bryan Staples, Kevin Wisniewski

INNOVATION IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Innovation — Large

“Panama Papers”

International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, Süddeutsche Zeitung, McClatchy, the Miami Herald, Fusion, Swedish Television and more than 100 other media partners

Judges’ comments: Sifting through 2.6 terabytes of data in 11.5 million files with over 400 journalists representing upwards of 100 partners is a seemingly impossible task to coordinate and keep secret. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists showed exceptional ingenuity and skill by developing new tools and approaches that facilitated the unprecedented collaboration, and demonstrated a new model for journalistic cooperation to expose dealings of hundreds of thousands of entities. The results from this project around the world are testimony to its impact. It clearly made public something that others would want to keep secret.

Finalists:

“A Portrait of Donald Trump,” The Washington Post, David A. Fahrenthold, Rosalind S. Helderman, Alice Crites

“Dangerous Doses,” Chicago Tribune, Sam Roe, Karisa King, Ray Long

Innovation — Medium

“Chemical Breakdown”

Houston Chronicle

Matt Dempsey, Mark Collette, Susan Carroll, Michael Ciaglo



Dempsey, Carroll, Collette, Ciaglo

Judges’ comments: In the wake of a deadly chemical explosion, the Houston Chronicle reporters partnered with experts to create a new method of analyzing and rating potential harm from facilities in the region. Their investigation found harm well beyond industrial corridors, close to schools and homes. The reporters fought local planning boards for chemical inventory data that was not reported to federal officials and salvaged a repository of national data from a defunct nonprofit that had collected it for years. The local fire department has relied on the project’s work to identify previously unnoticed risks.



Finalists:

“Deadly Pursuit | Persecuciones Mortales,” NBC5 Chicago and Telemundo Chicago, Phil Rogers, Karla Leal, Katy Smyser, Courtney Copenhagen, John Hodai, Richard Moy

“Doctors & Sex Abuse,” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Danny Robbins, Carrie Teegardin, Ariel Hart, Jeff Ernsthausen, Ryon Horne, Richard Watkins, Lois Norder, Alan Judd, Johnny Edwards

“Toxic Armories,” The Oregonian/Oregonlive, Rob Davis, Teresa Mahoney, Dave Killen, Jessica Greif, Mark Friesen, Melissa Lewis, Dave Cansler, Lynne Palombo, Beth Nakamura, Scott Brown, Randy Mishler, Drew Vattiat, Lora Huntley, Steve Suo, Nora Simon

Innovation — Small

“Settling for Misconduct”

The Chicago Reporter

Jonah Newman, Matt Kiefer



Newman



Kiefer

THE CHICAGO REPORTER

Judges’ comments: As the shooting of black men continued to make headlines, various cities were doling out settlements to families. So The Chicago Reporter decided to examine how much the city was paying to settle its police misconduct lawsuits and built its own database. The findings were staggering: Chicago paid out \$210 million during a four-year period (and \$53 million on outside attorneys), nearly \$50 million over its annual budget for lawsuits, and forced officials to borrow millions to pay the settlements. This project had it all: an interactive database, maps and video. Well done and timely.

Finalists:

“Bias on the Bench,” Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Josh Salman, Emily Le Coz, Elizabeth Johnson

“Shrinking Shores,” Naples Daily News, Eric Staats, Ryan Mills, David Albers, Brett Blackledge, Harry Walker, Rebecca Reis, Brett Murphy

STUDENT REPORTING

STUDENT — Large

“Voting Wars: Rights | Power | Privilege”

News21

Lily Altavena, Alex Amico, Alejandra Armstrong, Lian Bunny, Elizabeth Campbell, Andrew Clark, Nicole Cobler, Courtney Columbus, Hillary Davis, Sami Edge, Max Garland, Taylor Gilmore, Natalie Griffin, Marianna Hauglie, Sean Holstege, Pinar Istek, Phillip Jackson, Emily Mahoney, Roman Knertser, Michael Lakusiak, Jimmy Miller, Emily Mills, Michael Olinger, Pam Ortega, Kate Peifer, Jeffrey Pierre, Sarah Pitts, Amber Reece, Ali Schmitz, Rose Velazquez, Erin Vogel-Fox



Judges’ comments: In a nationwide investigation of changes in voting laws, students from 18 universities documented voter disenfranchisement in advance of the 2016 election. Using information from every state legislature and public records from local agencies across the country, along with interviews from 31 states, the students matched or outpaced professional publications to show erosions in voter rights and scant evidence of voter fraud in states that had changed their voting requirements since 2012. They went beyond national politics to find that 5.6 million people now live in communities that have eliminated their school boards, leaving parents without a say in their children’s education. Their travels took them from Shelby, Alabama, where the Supreme Court case eliminating portions of the Voting Rights Act began, to Navajo Mountain, where tribe members were fighting for their rights. In advance of the election, their deep reporting also pointed to Donald Trump’s popularity in economically-struggling Democratic regions like Mahoning County in eastern Ohio.

Finalists:

“Discharging Trouble,” Capital News Service, Carlos Alfaro, Joe Antoshak, Darcy Costello, Morgan Eichensehr, Amanda Eisenberg, Nate Kresh, Teresa Lo, Zoe Sagalow, Catherine Sheffo, Daniel Trielli

“Unsettling,” CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, Kanyakrit Vongkiatkajorn, Marguerite Ward, Maria Arcel, Isabel Riofrío, Christina Nordvang Jensen

STUDENT — Small

“Pharaoh Brown Investigation”

Oregon Daily Emerald

Kenny Jacoby, Jarrid Denney, Cooper Green

Judges’ comments: Kenny Jacoby, Jarrid Denney and Cooper Green plowed through massive roadblocks put up by the University of Oregon, its coaches, athletic department administration and a federal student privacy law to expose the truth behind a star football player: He had history of violent behavior. Oregon Duck football player Pharaoh Brown, the reporters documented, punched a teammate, causing a concussion; brawled with another player; and was investigated for trying to choke his girlfriend, whom the police blamed as the instigator. And for all this, Brown faced no punishment from the university, his coaches or the criminal justice system. The university refused to talk to reporters about the incidents. But these tenacious reporters prevailed by finding sources to verify the findings of their investigation. Their determination is an example for all investigative reporters: They refused to quit or back down to a powerful athletic program.



Jacoby

Denney

Green



Finalist:

“Rental Inspections,” The Bottom Line, Brad Kroner

RADIO/AUDIO

Radio/Audio — Large

“Advanced Black Lung Cases Surge in Appalachia”

NPR

Howard Berkes, Robert Little, Nicole Beemsterboer, with contributions from Benny Becker and Jeff Young of Ohio Valley ReSource



Berkes



Little



Beemsterboer

Judges’ comments: Howard Berkes discovered that deadly Black Lung cases in West Virginia and nearby coal states were 10 times higher than the official count, mainly because the federal government was

tracking only working miners. But its methodology missed hundreds of miners who needed their paychecks and waited to go to clinics to seek federal benefits until they were laid off, their mines closed, or they were too sick to work. A poignant story with personal interviews, like that with one miner who said, “The more I talk, the more I get out of breath,” and another who called his rock-cutting machine “the Dust Dragon.”

Finalists:

“**Business of Disaster,**” NPR and Frontline, Laura Sullivan, Nicole Beemsterboer, Meg Anderson, Barbara Van Woerkom, Alicia Cypress, Robert Little, Rick Young, Emma Schwartz, Fritz Kramer, Daniel Sheire, Tim Gruzca, Andrew Metz, Raney Aronson-Rath

“**Doubled Up In Solitary Confinement,**” NPR and The Marshall



Becker



Young



Project, Joseph Shapiro, Christie Thompson, Robert Little, Raha Nad-daf, Nicole Beemsterboer, Jessica Pupovac, Barbara Van Woerkom, Alicia Cypress, Emily Bogle

“**In the Dark,**” American Public Media Reports, Madeleine Baran, Samara Freemark, Natalie Jablonski, Catherine Winter, Chris Worthington, Will Craft, Curtis Gilbert, Jennifer Vogel, Tom Scheck, Hans Buetow, Dave Peters, Andy Kruse, Jeff Thompson, Emily Haavik, Jackie Renzetti, Johnny Vince Evans, Corey Schreppel, Cameron Wiley, Gary Meister

Radio/Audio — Small

“The University of Louisville Foundation Bought An Empty Factory In Oklahoma Because A Donor Asked”

The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting

Kate Howard

Judges’ comments: A classic investigation of which any large network program would have been proud. A donor and a member of the University of Louisville’s Board of Overseers turned his abandoned Oklahoma factory over to the university’s fundraising arm. Reporter Kate Howard found that the multi-layered \$3.47 million transaction had no academic purpose, did not result in any revenue for the organization, and appeared to be an ethical breach and tax code violation. She went to Oklahoma to ask questions and poke around on the ground — a trip that prompted quick results. The university began unwinding the deal while she was still on a plane back in Louisville the next day for her eventual broadcast exclusive.



Howard

INVESTIGATIONS TRIGGERED BY BREAKING NEWS

“Tragedy on Verruckt”

The Kansas City Star

Matt Campbell, Robert Cronkleton, Eric Adler, Steve Vockrodt, Laura Bauer, Tony Rizzo, Katy Bergen, Scott Canon, Hunter Woodall, Toriano Porter

Judges’ comments: After the death of a 10-year-old boy at a Kansas water park, an aggressive team of reporters and editors from The Kansas City Star dove deep on the construction and oversight of the world’s tallest water slide. Their reporting revealed a lack of state



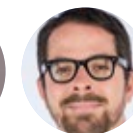
Campbell



Cronkleton



Adler



Vockrodt



Bauer



Rizzo



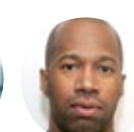
Bergen



Canon



Woodall



Porter

regulation over amusement park rides and little outside review for safety that was putting the public at risk. The reporters also found other riders who experienced

trouble on the ride — and had alerted staff to the malfunctions. Following their work, the owner of the amusement park permanently shut down the ride.



Finalists:

“**Investigations following Philando Castile shooting,**” Star Tribune, Brandon Stahl, Andy Mannix, Jennifer Bjorhus, Dan Browning, MaryJo Webster, Jeff Hargarten

“**Rail Crossings Danger,**” CBC, Dave Seglins, Jacques Marcoux, Jeremy McDonald, Holly Moore

GANNETT AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN WATCHDOG JOURNALISM

“Panama Papers”

International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, Süddeutsche Zeitung, McClatchy, Miami Herald, Fusion, Swedish Television and more than 100 other media partners

Judges’ comments: See judges’ comments under “Large Innovation winner”



BOOK

“The Profiteers: Bechtel and the Men Who Built the World”

Sally Denton



Denton

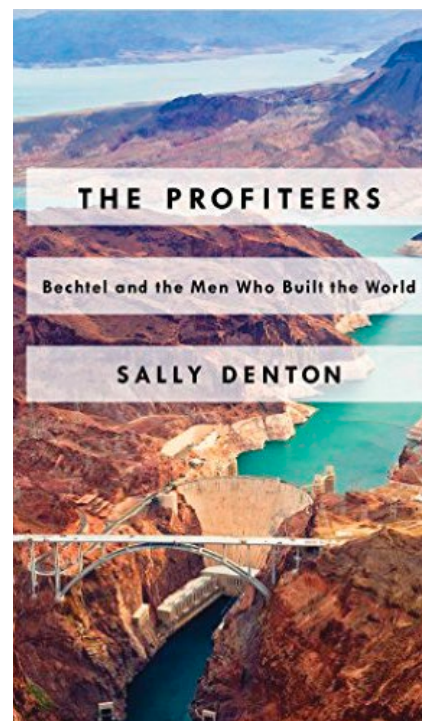
Judges’ comments:

The judges admire the historical lead-up and the contemporary exposé of a multinational corporation specializing in engineering, construction, energy generation and weapons of war. Denton dug beneath the veneer of secrecy to reveal the unconscionable interconnections between government agencies and Bechtel. As a result of its massive government contracts, Bechtel has influenced American foreign policy to match its own interests, which are not always congruent with the best course for the nation. Given Bechtel’s international reach, it seems fitting that Denton decided to write this book after noticing the billions of dollars being paid to Bechtel from the U.S. treasury to allegedly rebuild post-war Iraq.

Finalists:

“The Making of Donald Trump,” by David Cay Johnston

“Next Time They’ll Come to Count the Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan,” by Nick Turse



THANK YOU, JUDGES!

Serving on the Contest Committee represents a significant sacrifice on the part of the individual contest judges — and often an entire newsroom — that may have done outstanding investigative work. For example, The Columbus Dispatch and KNBC-Los Angeles were wholly ineligible to compete, and some work from WSMV-Nashville, The New York Times and The Washington Post could not be entered in this year’s contest.

This year's judges:

Jill Riepenhoff, *The Columbus Dispatch* (contest chair)

Matt Goldberg, *KNBC-Los Angeles*

Nancy Amons, *WSMV-Nashville*

Sarah Cohen, *The New York Times*

Saleem Khan, *INVSTG8.NET*

James Polk, *retired (CNN)*

Cheryl W. Thompson, *The Washington Post*

IRE Resources

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

STORIES

No. 27859: “Donald J. Trump Investigative Coverage.” — CBS News, Washington, D.C.

CBS News investigated Donald J. Trump’s business failures, exaggerated claims of wealth, potential for conflicts of interest as president and the Trump Foundation. (2016)

No. 27822: “A Portrait of Donald Trump.” — The Washington Post.

These stories sought to reveal something vital about Donald Trump’s character, by digging for the truth behind his repeated promises to donate to charity. At first, the stories focused on a specific promise, made on the 2016 campaign trail: that Trump had raised \$6 million for veterans charities, including a \$1 million gift from his own pocket. Then the Post’s investigation broadened, to examine charitable giving across Trump’s lifetime. It revealed, among other things, that Trump had been using his name-branded charitable foundation in ways that seemed to violate both state and federal laws. In the middle of that coverage, The Post also broke news that changed the course of the 2016 campaign: That, in a 2005 video, Trump made extremely lewd remarks about groping women. (2016)

No. 27718: “The Jindal Effect” — WVUE-TV, New Orleans.

WVUE’s investigation, “The Jindal Effect,” exposed the crippling financial impact Gov. Bobby Jindal’s failed presidential bid had on the state of Louisiana. The series shows how the governor may have broken state law, forced Louisiana taxpayers to fund part of his presidential campaign, and questionably raised millions of dollars for his campaign. The series also looks at the effect on taxpayers. Jindal cut budgets but showered big business with gifts as he tried to pave a road to the White House. The result was an exposé on the ways Bobby Jindal ultimately let Louisiana suffer at the expense of his presidential aspirations. (2016)

TIPSHEETS

No. 5041 “Google Trends: Understanding the data.”

Google Trends allows you to see the topics people are — or aren’t — following, in real time. Journalists can use this information to explore potential story ideas, and can also feature Trends data within news stories to illustrate a general level of interest in, say, a political candidate, social issue or event. This tipsheet from Jennifer Lee provides an introduction to the service. (2017)

No. 4991 “Covering Washington outside the Beltway.”

Newsday reporter Tom Brune provides a list of websites you can use to track legislation. It details the names of lawmakers, their staff members, advocates and lobbyists to call and flesh out the story. (2017)

No. 4653 “Tracking government spending.”

Salt Lake Tribune reporter Nate Carlisle explains how to obtain local government spending information by requesting procurement databases and how to explore federal spending on USAspending.gov. (2016)

No. 5018 “Uncovering the influence.”

This tipsheet by Sandra Fish, Ben Wieder and Derek Willis is a guide to discovering which donors could potentially have influence over pieces of legislation. (2017)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

“Inside Trump’s holdings: A web of potential conflicts.” — CNBC
CNBC tracked President Trump’s potential conflicts of interest and those of his family. Its visualizations present a web of over 500 properties spread throughout the world and their connections with the Trump family. The scope and complexity of President Trump’s holdings are unprecedented in the history of the U.S. presidency. Ethics lawyers say divesting from those interests will present major challenges not solved by Trump’s current plan to separate himself from the day-to-day operations of his businesses. (2017)

Read the full investigation here: cnb.cx/2ocqEpE

Does Congress really care about upholding truth in testimony? — The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University

An investigation by The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University found that House committees struggle to maintain transparency when it comes to potential conflicts of interests on the part of witnesses testifying before them.

The “Truth in Testimony” rule requires witnesses testifying before the House to disclose “any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts or payments originating with a foreign government” within the current or two previous calendar years for themselves or any group they represent related to the hearing subject. However, witnesses sometimes fail to disclose this information in full, and the information is not always readily available to the public.

Witnesses testifying before the Senate are not asked to sign any disclosure forms and there are no ongoing efforts to extend the rule there. (2017)

Read the findings in full here: bit.ly/2pdUPya

IRE AUDIO

“Making a List, Checking it Twice.” — IRE Radio Podcast

One of the biggest scoops this election cycle came from Washington Post reporter David Fahrenthold. His relentless shoe-leather reporting — and list making — revealed that Donald Trump wasn’t exactly the philanthropist he was claiming to be on the campaign trail. Instead of donating his own money to charity, Trump would give away or spend dollars donated to his foundation by other people. On this episode, David shares his experiences investigating Trump, talks about how he felt the morning after the election and offers tips for journalists covering the president-elect. (2016)

Listen here: bit.ly/2ow6Lxa

Strong mentorships are critical at this juncture in American journalism



Angela M. Hill
Scripps Washington Bureau

Being mentored by seasoned journalists and having the opportunity to mentor those budding in the craft has enriched my experience as a journalist and significantly contributed to my successes.

Over the years, I've gained a greater appreciation for mentorship as an important responsibility and a significant gift. It has the power to strengthen our industry and, consequently, contribute to the perseverance of our democracy.

Given the current social and political climate where the identity, value and integrity of the news media are under attack, mentoring becomes even more critical in equipping the next generation to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Mentorship is a two-way street. It's an opportunity for those who were a part of the first "golden age of journalism" to learn new tricks of the trade from their younger counterparts who are now ushering in a new "golden age of journalism." It's also a chance for those newer to the field to benefit from the experience, insight and years of shoe-leather reporting methods of seasoned journalists. If approached the right way, mentoring can be a win-win proposition for the mentor, the mentee and their respective organizations.

Mentorships can be formal programs designed and implemented by an organization or an informal connection initiated by a mentor or mentee based on shared interests. The relationship is most effective and rewarding when it's built on mutual respect, continuous communication and steadfast commitment.

A mentorship can last months, years or a lifetime. A long-term relationship might be appealing for people who are just starting out in the industry and desire a mentor who can help them navigate the various phases of career development. It can also be the result of two people — regardless of where they are in their careers — who have established a rewarding professional connection and, in so doing, the mentorship grows and continues for years. Some people may prefer a short-term mentorship to help guide them in learning a particular skillset, tackling a new assignment or becoming familiar with a new work

environment. Short-term mentorships can also be used to test the waters with a mentor/mentee to ensure it's a good fit before making a long-term commitment.

Regardless, the relationship should lead to personal and professional growth that can strengthen skillsets, leadership acumen and position organizations to develop a stronger and more diverse talent pool. As with any relationship, each party benefits to the extent they invest.

I've enjoyed the most fruitful mentor/mentee relationships when I could be in regular contact — be it once a week or once a month — with my counterpart to exchange ideas, set goals and monitor progress. And while it's important to come to the mentorship with expectations and goals, it's also necessary to leave room to adjust and create new goals as you go along.

As a mentee, I gained encouragement, acquired information to assist in my professional development, and enjoyed access to individuals I might not otherwise have had. I also benefited from guidance on navigating internal politics.

Mentorship benefits for mentees include:

- Guidance on professional development and career planning
- Introduction to new ideas, techniques and approaches
- The chance to test ideas without fear of reprisal
- Development of communication skills including listening and questioning skills
- Feedback on how to hone strengths, overcome weaknesses, identify opportunities and navigate challenges

As a mentor, there are few things more rewarding than knowing the insight and guidance I offer can help someone strengthen their journalistic skills. Sharing knowledge is a great way to reinforce my understanding, challenge my convictions and stay motivated to learn more. Mentoring has offered me the chance to recognize both my abilities and my limitations and find out how to adjust my communication and relational style based on the person I'm mentoring and his or her circumstances. There will be times when I don't

know the answer, but I'm committed to finding out or directing my mentee to someone who might know.

Mentorship benefits for mentors include:

- Improving or enhancing leadership skills
- An opportunity to experience different perspectives and learn new techniques
- A chance to develop into a thought leader or subject matter expert
- Assessment and development of professional goals and leadership styles

An organization also gains by implementing formal mentorship programs or, at a minimum, encouraging managers to develop informal mentorships. Such relationships position employers to identify and cultivate talent and build a pipeline of future leaders who can help with succession planning. It can also prove cost-effective in recruiting and retention strategies.

Mentorship benefits for organizations include:

- Contributing to the professional growth of employees at various stages of their careers
- Strengthening leadership skills in managers
- Fostering a more collegiate and motivated work environment
- Expanding and prolonging institutional knowledge

I'll always champion the need for and power of mentorships. I've witnessed and experienced how personally and professionally enhancing they can be for all involved. They help equip mentees and the next generation of storytellers with the skills they need to doggedly pursue stories. They encourage mentors to strengthen their leadership abilities. And they provide organizations the opportunity to identify and groom talented individuals. As the demands on journalism heighten and the media landscape continues to change, mentorships will continue to be an invaluable strategy in maintaining the health, relevance and impact of our industry.

Angela M. Hill is a two-time Emmy Award winning national investigative producer with Scripps Washington Bureau where she reports and produces national investigative stories for the company's digital platforms and 34 television stations across 27 markets.

FOIA logs: A clear-cut way to better reporting



David Cuillier
University of Arizona School of Journalism

Some of the best story tips are right in front of us in Freedom of Information Act request logs.

Most government agencies track public record requests, and those logs are almost always public. In many cases, they are provided online for anyone to see and include the names of requesters, what was requested and whether it was provided.

The benefits of FOIAing the FOIAs are many.

Reporting prowess

Michael Morisy, co-founder of the nonprofit MuckRock, has helped journalists and others file more than 30,000 requests to 7,000 agencies over the past seven years. He said reporters could get a lot out of FOIA logs:

- They provide a good lay of the land to get to know an agency's operations, in addition to other records (budgets, strategic plans, audits, etc.).
- They provide story tips, particularly when public employees or law firms request records that might indicate problems within an agency.
- They help reporters get a sense for what kinds of documents are routinely released and which are denied. This information can help journalists craft more effective records requests in the future.
- The logs show when agencies backpedal, indicating records that were once released but now denied.
- Reporters can submit requests for documents already released, saving everyone time and money.

Anyone can search for "FOIA logs" at MuckRock.com and find thousands of these documents, which can be filtered by agency. Morisy said he's continuing to work on posting FOIA logs to the site in a more user-friendly way.

Insights into the system

FOIA logs also tell us a lot about how the public records process works (or doesn't work).

Max Galka, who created FOIA Mapper, collected logs from 2014 and 2015 from about 300 federal agencies, all by scouring their websites and submitting 200 FOIA requests.

He converted the PDFs to structured data to create a database of about a million requests. From his database, he was able to quantify who tends to request records, showing that only 7.6 percent of requesters are journalists. The bulk of requests come from the commercial sector, which confirms previous research. Galka provides a variety of facts about agency FOIA performance on his website, as well as the actual logs.

"It's good to know who is making the requests," Galka said. "Even finding other journalists interested in the topic you are interested in can help. They might be a good person to talk to and get to know."

The FOIA Project, a part of the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, tracks data on requests, FOIA litigation and appeals. They post some of the request information online, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement data.

Margaret Kwoka, a law professor at the University of Denver, also analyzed FOIA logs to see who is requesting federal records. She too found that journalists are a small portion of requesters and that commercial users can comprise more than 90 percent of some agencies' requests. She is delving into the data more to see the extent of private individuals' requests.

One problem, Kwoka said, is that there is no standard for tracking FOIA requests. Some agencies provide requester name, and others don't, for example. Not all provide outcomes for requests. "We should push for reform to require data be kept in the same way, and that they publish the logs on their websites."

Tools for good and evil

Logs are also used as weapons in the war over information.

On the one hand, request logs can make agencies more transparent, MuckRock's Morisy said. He's noticed that local agencies that track and post public record requests online tend to be more open and accountable.

At the federal level, the logs can lead to more

records online for everyone thanks to a change in the law last year. One of the provisions of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 was to require agencies to post records online if they have been requested three or more times. So, if multiple people look at the logs and see interesting records have been previously requested, they can submit the same request and force disclosure for all.

On the other hand, some agencies have used logs as tools of intimidation.

For example, in 2011, California Rep. Darrell Issa requested FOIA logs from 180 agencies to see who requested information and what they asked for. While he said his request was intended to see how FOIA was working, transparency advocates protested, saying he was on a witch hunt to root out those who would oppose his beliefs.

Similarly, in 2010, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley announced a plan to post public record requests, including the names of the requesters, online immediately "in the interest of transparency and the free flow of information."

Journalists saw the action as a way to chill requests from reporters who might not want competitors to see what they are working on.

Last year, journalists in Chicago told me the practice doesn't really affect their work. Frankly, reporters are too busy to spend time poaching others' stories, and it's a bit hypocritical for journalists to demand secrecy and redaction. I suspect, however, these "transparency" tactics will continue to be used as weapons against journalists.

Ultimately, FOIA logs are great tools for investigative reporters and citizens to see what their government is up to.

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

Follow the FOIAs

The following resources can help you find, request and use FOIA logs in your reporting.

- **Federal agencies.** Start with the source: Many federal, state and local agencies post their FOIA logs online, often as PDFs.
- **MuckRock** provides thousands of FOIA logs on its website, along with the request letters that produced them. *muckrock.com*
- **FOIA Mapper** allows you to see FOIA logs for about 300 federal agencies. The site includes search tools to help you find which agency has the records you need and locate specific topics within logs. *foiamapper.com*
- **FOIA Project at the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse** provides request records from agencies as well as data about FOIA litigation and appeals. *foiaproject.org*
- **DocumentCloud** is a resource for journalists to post their records, including FOIA logs. *documentcloud.org*
- **“FOIA the FOIAs”** is a nice explanation of how and why to use FOIA logs, by the National Freedom of Information Coalition. *nfoic.org/foia-foias*
- **Government Attic** provides FOIA logs from a variety of federal agencies as PDF files. *governmentattic.org*
- **“FOIA, INC.”** is the title of a study by Margaret B. Kwoka on FOIA requesters, based on FOIA logs, published in 2016 in the *Duke Law Journal*.

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:

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

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

Contact: Charles Minshew, charles@ire.org. To order data, call 573-884-7711.

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

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

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The IRE logo consists of the letters "IRE" in a bold, white, serif font, centered within a solid black square.

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The background of the lower half of the page is a dark blue, close-up photograph of a computer keyboard. The keys are slightly out of focus, with some characters like 'Q', 'W', 'E', 'R', 'S', 'D', 'F4', 'F5', and 'F6' visible. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the keys.

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