

James Benedict



24 deaths — up until four months ago this was the closest you could get to knowing how many people died due to a Taser. But this number ignored another 129 people killed by the device the **Reuters** national desk and I identified. We stood by our findings even when a powerful and litigious company tried to spin the facts. I want to continue this fight at the Center for Public Integrity by humanizing data pertinent to the country's interests.

I'm a visual journalist specializing in interactive design and data-driven graphics. The reader is always my first concern, whether that means contextualizing a story with **graphics**, breaking down a complicated **database**, or developing **tools** to train designers to build better websites. A reader shouldn't have to fight the story's medium to make sense of it, so I'll adapt to tell stories in approachable ways.

It would be a dream to work with you because of the CPI's dedication to watchdog journalism. You'll teach me the best ways to make a difference in my community while I still produce meaningful work. My skills as a designer and data-savvy reporter make me a great fit for your newsroom that tells complicated stories. My goal is to make graphics and news apps, but I need more hands on experience with libraries like React or Angular for news app development.

Already I have the ability to turn raw data into a compelling visual or an explanatory story on deadline. I would love to continue working on topics I've previously reported on like campaign finance and police use of force. The data is out there, it is just up to us to visualize it and make people want to explore it. If given an opportunity to work with you, I'll make stories understandable to the uninformed readers as well as engaging to the experts.

A few ways I've accomplished this is by contextualizing a story about the **opioid crisis** through clear graphics and mapping **campus crime** to avoid explaining my finding with statistic laden paragraphs. As a reporter I've tried to make complex stories approachable, like tracking money spent on **Indiana elections** and **Taser** related deaths. I've also managed large projects, like **redesigning** the Indiana Daily Student's website, that required me to evolve my mockups based on users' feedback.

I'm always looking to improve my efficiency, which led me to create a web design **template**. Beyond reducing my time designing longform stories, it's trained more than twenty designers and became integral to the curriculum of the most advanced visual storytelling class at Indiana University. Additionally, my Python proficiency allows me to quickly solve problems like managing files and analyzing data on deadline.

On a team, I believe writing documentation is more important than writing code because it encourages cooperation and makes me more conscious of my decisions designing. My work as a designer, reporter and programmer allows me to empathize with the whole team and makes me well suited for this collaborative job.

You can view the works referenced above on my **portfolio** and see how they were made on my **github**. My resume includes my references' contact information. Thank you in advance for considering my application for the Center for Public Integrity's internship and I hope to hear from you soon.