

James Benedict



24 deaths — up until three 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 Texas Tribune by humanizing data pertinent to Texans' interest.

It would be a dream to work with you because of the Tribune's dedication to watchdog journalism. I want to make a difference in my community and I know you will teach me the best ways to do this while I produce meaningful work. My skills as an interactive designer and data-savvy reporter make me a great fit for your newsroom that make complicated stories approachable. My goal is to make graphics and news apps, but I need more hands on experience with libraries like React and Angular. I would appreciate learning this in a collaborative environment with the Tribune's talented developers. Also, as a native Houstonian I would love to make a difference in my home state and wouldn't mind returning somewhere with good BBQ.

A reader shouldn't have to fight the story's medium to make sense of it. I think of myself as a quick learner who adapts to each story I tell, whether that's with a D3 chart or a clean UI. My history as a designer and reporter lets me understand my teammate's point of view without losing sight of the reader's experience. I'll make stories understandable to the uninformed readers as well as engaging to the experts.

A few ways I've done 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**, Ugandan fishermen's **medical records** 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 student media 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.

I am a multidisciplinary developer who enjoys experimenting almost as much as I love telling stories. 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.

If given the opportunity to work with you, I would appreciate reporting on police use of force and campaign finance. Specifically, I would love to build an interactive database of all the ways people died at the hands of the police and what circumstances surrounded the altercation. This could build on the Unholstered project to include deaths by Taser and physical force. While working on my campaign finance story I was surprised how much international and national money was spent. I would like to visualize how local elections are becoming anything but local. The data is out there it is just up to us to humanize it and make Texans want to explore it.

You can view the works referenced above on my **portfolio** and see how they were made on my **github**. Thank you in advance for considering my application for the Summer Data Visuals Fellowship and I hope to hear from you soon.