

Uplink

November 1996

A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

FOI

Uplink update

This issue of Uplink details journalists' ongoing battles to access information. The new Electronic FOIA Amendments say the government should provide electronic data — but the law is not without its critics. Bob Anderson of the Freedom of Information Center tells the story.

Meanwhile, Jennifer LaFleur of the *San Jose* (Calif.) *Mercury News* talks about access problems journalists face in California and other states, and tells us how to get involved in the fight. NICAR's John Sullivan and Jo Craven detail recent electronic battles and the flimsy excuses bureaucrats offer in data dodges.

In other news, IRE Executive Director Rosemary Armao resigns to become Anne Arundel County bureau chief for the *Baltimore Sun*. And NICAR Training Director Neil Reisner leaves for the *Miami Herald*. The jobs are open — see stories on page 11.

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Keeping up with the digital revolution

Ready, aim, FOIA

By Bob Anderson

Freedom of Information Center

The Freedom of Information Center has donned electronic flak jackets and entered the digital revolution. After responding to questions about accessing government secrets for almost 40 years, the center is now firing back answers to a bundle of queries its founders never could have imagined.

Some examples:

- Which states have the best open records laws for access to electronic information? Answer: One of the best is North Carolina with passage of recent amendments.

- Is Federal government e-mail considered a public document? Answer: Sometimes yes, sometimes no, depending on whether the information is covered by one of the nine exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act.

- How much can a state charge for copies of an electronic database? Can a state charge for redacting electronic information? Answer: Depends on the state. In Kansas in 1995, the State Court of Appeals ruled that the Department of Revenue could force newspapers to pay, at a minimum, hundreds of thousands of dollars for access to the state driver's license database. But the same year, Kentucky's state attorney general said that a \$240 fee to redact juvenile delinquents' names from a database was unallowable.

As anyone can see, some information about electronic access — particularly on the state level — is as difficult to find as data on a fragmented hard drive.

But some other answers about electronic access are getting easier to find, particularly with the passage this fall of the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments law. Those amendments ease getting electronic information from the federal government (See related story on this page).

Throughout these shifts, the role of the FOI Center, located at the Missouri

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Electronic FOIA Amendments get mixed review

By Bob Anderson

Freedom of Information Center

The Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 are bringing the FOIA into the digital age.

The amendments were signed into law by President Clinton on Oct. 2. One of the key points of the amendments is that government should "provide for public access to information in an electronic format," such as databases stored on computer tapes and CD-ROM disks.

That issue — whether electronic information is accessible — has been acknowledged by several federal agencies for years. The new law "makes explicit" that such records are open to the public.

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news organizations and
associations.

Continued from page one: Digital revolution

School of Journalism, remains the same: It is a research and reference library focusing on controls placed by government and society on the free flow of information. The center's staff surveys articles from almost 150 publications and journals to add to its files collection.

Those files now contain more than 1 million articles and documents on the controls of information. That is why the center regularly gets requests from such news organizations as the *Kansas City Star*, the *Arizona Republic*, and the Associated Press. The center receives about 3,000 requests annually from students, attorneys, business people and journalists.

Some of the most recent additions to our collection add to the understanding of how government controls electronic access. They include BNA's Electronic Information Policy

& Law Report, which surveys court and government developments on electronic information.

The center also subscribes to "Government Technology," a publication geared toward government managers who set up information systems.

The FOI Center has put its own digital footprint on the Internet with its Web site at: <http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww>. The site has the text of federal and some state public information laws, as well as links to a variety of sources about access to information.

Got a question about what information you can get from the government? Call the FOI Center at (573) 882-4856 or, send e-mail to jourke@muccmail.missouri.edu.

Continued from page one: Mixed review

The law also:

- Allows a requester to get information in "any form or format" requested, including computer format.

- Requires agencies to put a substantial amount of information on-line. That requirement applies to documents created after Nov. 1 and include "agency opinions and policy statements," information released under FOIA and likely to be requested again, and other information that the agencies now are required to release. Agencies have until Nov. 1, 1997 to make these records available on-line.

- Requires creation by agencies of electronic on-line indices of the records previously released under FOIA. The indices must be on-line by Dec. 31, 1999.

- Requires agencies to create a "multi-track" system for the release of records. In essence, simpler requests would be put on a different "track" than more detailed requests. Persons asking detailed requests would be given the option of limiting their request to get onto a faster track.

- Changes the time agencies have to respond to FOIA requests from 10 days to 20

days.

How worthwhile the changes will be is being debated. The National Security Archives, a private nongovernmental research library, states that some of the changes are flawed — including the multitrack provision, which, the Archives says, is "permissive" and old-hat, because many agencies already have a multitrack provision.

For a look at the Archives' analysis of the EFOIA amendments, check its homepage at "<http://www.seas.gwu.edu/nsarchive>."

A more harsh view of the amendments is offered by Bob Gellman, a Washington, D.C., privacy and information consultant. He calls the provisions "mediocre and limited." For his viewpoints, see the Oct. 9 issue of *Access Reports*.

Despite its shortcomings, the EFOIA does at least codify access to databases, the mainstay of reporters who specialize in computer-assisted reporting, said Paul McMasters, the First Amendment ombudsmen for the Freedom Forum and a nationally known expert on FOIA issues.

"Journalists should be especially happy about this," said McMasters, who recently was inducted into the National Freedom of Information Act Hall of Fame.

Media, agencies wrangle over fees, access

Electronic battles

By John Sullivan
NICAR staff

And your total is \$300,000 — will that be cash or charge? That's what the AP's Special Assignment team heard when it requested the Immigration and Naturalization Services database on non-immigrant status, a system that tracks foreigners who enter the country for business or pleasure.

"This is a completely bogus denial," says Drew Sullivan, national news data editor for the AP. "I have been fighting this for two years, first at NICAR and now here."

Sullivan's experience mirrors that of many reporters seeking to obtain electronic records, says Rebecca Daugherty, director of the Freedom of Information Act Service Center at The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in Arlington, Va.

"A large number of (our) calls deal with fee provisions for electronic data," Daugherty says.

The AP's case is doubly complicated. In its wranglings with the INS, a privacy issue arose. The AP agreed to the redaction of the questionable field from the database; however, the INS said the redaction constituted the creation of a new database — which is not required under federal law.

"We have seen agencies give the line that they don't have to create a record. In some cases, it involves only pushing a couple of buttons, but this is not a reasonable explanation," Daugherty says. She also says the EFOIA seems clear: Redacting a field does not equate to the creation of a new record.

Battle for state records

The EFOIA, effective in the coming year, will help reporters get public records, Daugherty says. However, federal bills such as the Boxer Bill may limit access to Department of Motor Vehicle records, requiring states to allow residents to "opt-out" of having their driving records open to public scrutiny. This will exacerbate what is already the most difficult battle for reporters: accessing state records.

Leslie Reis, an attorney for the Reporters Committee, says there is little precedent or case law in many states, and records access laws vary widely when you cross a state line.

Residency rule

That's what Geoff Davidian found when he sought to start a small investigative newspaper in Tennessee. Davidian tried to get some records through the state and was denied. The attorney general said that Tennessee law provides access to public records for state residents only. Since Davidian had just moved to Tennessee and was not yet a declared resident, he couldn't access the information. He got the information through his son who is a resident, but not without a fight.

Davidian has filed a federal suit claiming that the state is violating his right to privileges and immunities granted by the Constitution.

Reis says there is not much a reporter can do in such a situation.

"Many papers have argued that since they represent a considerable public interest in the state, they should be allowed to get information, but this approach hasn't been particularly successful," Reis says. "We have seen an increasing number of cases where residency is being used to deny access to records."

Some cases are not a question of fees or residency. When a male nurse was fingered in the suspicious death of 165 patients at Vermillion County Hospital, the *Indianapolis Tribune-Star* began to request death certificates from the state. They discovered that many records were kept at the county level and were open. They also found that some counties opt to forward death certificates to the state. But at the state level, the same records are no longer considered open, says *Tribune-Star* City Editor Jim Lewers. *The Star-Tribune* sued.

Thousands of dollars later, the state settled out of court and the paper got the records.

Lewers says it is important to pursue these matters legally. "These are complex suits that are breaking new ground in the state and establishing some precedent," he says.

The Reporters Committee agrees and offers some recourse for reporters.

"We will give advice on cases where reporters have made requests for public records and have been denied, says Daugherty.

John Sullivan can be reached at (573) 882-0684, or send e-mail to john@nicar.org

Journalists can get
help with FOI

issues by:

• Calling the

Reporters Committee

for Freedom of the

Press Hotline for legal

advice at (800) 336-

4243. The committee

receives 3,000 calls

annually, 60 percent of

which come from

reporters whose

access to public

records has been

thwarted in some way.

• E-mailing the

Committee at

RCFP@CAIS.COM.

• Calling the Justice

Department Hotline,

which acts as an

ombudsman

for FOIA fights, at

(202) 514-FOIA.

Also, check the

Reporters Committee

for Freedom of the

Press Web site at

<http://>

www.rcft.org/rcft/

Excuses, excuses

For an in-depth look at problems with databases, check out "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide" by Brant Houston. It can be ordered from NICAR or Investigative Reporters & Editors for \$26 plus shipping. Call (573) 882-2042.

By Jo Craven
NICAR Staff

NICAR has been updating its list of the best (or worst, depending on your perspective) excuses that government agencies have given for refusing to fill data requests. Here are the war stories that reporters around the country have shared with us:

- Ande Engleman, former executive director of the Nevada Press Association:

"My favorite came from a county clerk in reference to a law requiring public access to 'all claims paid by the county' (meaning all checks written to whom and what for): 'That's not an important law to follow,' the clerk said.

"My query of, 'Who says which laws are important and which ones are not?' was answered by a copy of a directive from the Nevada Department of Taxation, which said they would not be audited for following that law. We uncovered a real mess, which we took to the governor. The directive got changed very quickly, and all of a sudden this information became available in all counties."

- Bryant Jordan, *Air Force Times*:

"My editor recently asked the Air Force for some statistics relating to promotions. The official he asked responded by saying something to the effect that, 'Oh, those are irrelevant. You don't need those.'

"My editor's response went something like, 'With all due respect, I decide what's relevant.'"

- Drew Sullivan, *The Associated Press*:

"Here's one I got at NICAR: 'We can't give you the record layout because then you can hack into our system and change the data.'"

- Michelle Moon, *WAVE-TV*:

"How about this excuse I got: 'Well, let me talk to your data guy.' My response: 'I am my data guy.'"

- Bill Kelly, *Nebraska ETV Network*:

"I don't think that's even in the computer."

"On records of purchases of tax delinquencies from a county treasurer: 'We only sell those to private businesses.' A protest to county board members eventually 'clarified' this policy, and the records were released, free of charge."

"In the midst of assisting in the instruction of an advanced reporting class with CAR skills

training at the University of Nebraska, nearly everyone in the class was met with the following from a variety of agencies:

"We couldn't do that for a student."

- Paul D' Ambrosio, *Asbury Park Press*:

"New Jersey has no FOIA law, so we take routine denials in stride (can you say, masocists?) However, a few do rise to the 'you got to be kidding' level:"

ME, to a N.J. state department: I would like to have your line item budget for the last five years, either on disk or on paper.

THEM: I'm not sure we have that.

ME: How do you run your department if you don't know how much money you have?

THEM: Well, we have a budget, but we don't keep it in the format you want.

ME: I'll take whatever you have.

THEM: It'll take an employee two full weeks to do because we have to compile the information from several computers.

ME: I'll wait.

(Two weeks later)

THEM: It may take longer. This is a busy year for us. We're putting next year's budget together.

ME: Muffled screams

- Mike Ravnitzky:

"It's still a classified national security record, but we can't locate it."

"We can't release it because the agency responsible for that document is no longer in existence, and no other agency has taken over its responsibilities."

"Now, why would you want a copy of that, huh?"

"That was illegal, and we can't release information on illegal activities."

- Matthew David Waite, *The Daily Nebraskan*:

"I spent a half an hour listening to a university bureaucrat tell me that they did not have the power to pull salary data information off their mainframe system, yet they publish a book of salary data every year that is printed straight off a database."

"My response: 'Give me a half an hour of mainframe time, and I'll show you how to do it.'"

Jo Craven can be reached at (573) 882-0684, or send e-mail to jo@nicar.org

Breaking barriers

By Rosemary Armao

IRE executive director

In September, the American Society of Newspaper Editors marked the 30th anniversary of passage of the federal FOIA by bringing to the Freedom Forum in Washington representatives from the nation's major journalism organizations, including IRE. It wasn't a celebration.

The point of the two-day session was that a whole lot more of us need to be doing more to see that anti-secrecy laws get used effectively and are expanded.

Seven groups brainstormed solutions for the biggest barriers now keeping the FOIA from fully opening up government to public scrutiny. They have agreed to continue working as an informal consortium to make those solutions happen.

Here are highlights of the two days' work:

- Improving FOIA

The problem: FOIA requests can take years because of staffing shortages in some federal agencies, bureaucratic resistance, prohibitive fees and the government's eagerness to exempt large amounts of information.

Some solutions: The recent passage of the Electronic FOIA is the first step toward strengthening the act. Penalties for the lack of compliance and hiding and withholding records would help. Journalists also should support laws that would make government records held by private firms subject to all FOIA rules.

- Expanding access

The problem: FOIA does not apply to Congress, the federal judiciary branch or to certain offices connected with the presidency, including the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Security Council. Moreover, Congress seems willing to consider changes to the FOIA only about once a decade.

Some solutions: Journalists should forget about expanding FOIA to Congress. Access to the administrative offices of the judiciary and to the presidential agencies would be more fruitful. Journalists need to reactivate old networks in which they watched over the disparate pieces of legislation that together make up federal information policy. The Presidential Records Act, for example should be reviewed with an eye toward pressing for more openness. Jour-

nalists should take advantage of Vice President Al Gore's interest in information exchange over the Internet.

- Using FOIA more

The problem: It takes too long for FOIA requests to be processed. Journalists don't know how to file requests. Publishers and journalism educators are uninterested in supporting or promoting FOIA.

Some solutions: FOIA response time can be improved by promoting dialogue with public affairs officers before requests are filed, by working with public interest groups on requests and by urging more funding for FOIA offices. We should increase newsroom training on the FOIA and enlist publishers, editors and legal departments in a battle for better use of a law important to democracy.

- Supporting access.

The problem: The public sees the media as arrogant about their right to see all records, and there is a public indifference to FOI issues.

Some solutions: Emphasize the value to citizens of freely available information. We need to work with citizens groups and teach the public how to use FOIA and other records laws. We could list cyberspace sources of information and show the public its stakes in openness.

- Balancing security concerns

The problem: National security exemptions to the FOIA are overused, and there is still far too much classification of records.

Some solutions: Reporters need to educate themselves about FOIA issues and recent presidential decisions on secrecy and classification — then demand compliance.

- Technology

The problem: Agencies resist compliance to requests for electronic records.

Some solutions: Journalists need to be vigilant that government data enters the public domain. Contractors should not be permitted to obtain copyrights or other property rights in public information. Agencies should be prevented from charging high prices for data and encouraged to redefine their mission to include dissemination of information to the public.

Rosemary Armao can be reached at (573) 882-1982, or send e-mail to armao@ire.org

Check out the
IRE-L and **NICAR-L**
mailing list archives
on our websites at
<http://www.ire.org>
and <http://www.nicar.org>. You
can see posts to
both lists organized
by thread, author
and date. The list
archives are
available in html or
in plain text format.

California dreaming ...

Resources:

• California

Journalism Online:

<http://>

ccnet4.ccnet.com/

CSNE/

With links to

California Society of

Newspaper Editors

and California First

Amendment

Coalition.

• **Society of**

Professional

Journalists, Northern

California Chapter's

Freedom of

Information

Committee: Co-

chairs are Dan

Borenstein of the

Contra Costa Times

(510) 943-8248 and

Elizabeth Pritzker at

the First Amendment

Project in Oakland

(510) 208-7744.

• **"A guide to Public
Records in California"**

Second Edition.

Stephen Levine and

Barbara T.

Newcombe. Call

Center for

Investigative

Reporting at (415)

543-1200 or California

Newspaper Publishers

Association at (916)

443-5991.

By Jennifer LaFleur

San Jose Mercury News

We may never know what the most common name for a dog is in San Jose, Calif., or who really sponsors roads in the California adopt-a-highway program. These examples may not be critical data for California news organizations, but when government agencies limit access to pet licenses and highway cleanup programs, imagine how they react to requests for personnel files and police data.

That's because getting databases about individuals is just one of the many access problems faced by California journalists. Another problem is that each agency chooses the format in which it provides records and a murky law allows for inconsistencies.

"California, being the largest state, might seem a goldmine for electronic information," said Chris Schmitt, *Mercury News* telecom editor and longtime CAR geek. "But the truth is, it's a jumbled, chaotic mess, with no clear guidelines, and decisions about releasing information seemingly based as much on whim as intelligent policy."

"Those things are really the problem areas," said Terry Francke, executive director of the California First Amendment Coalition, a Sacramento-based organization developed to advance freedom of information. "[One problem is the] overall anxiety about privacy concerns in general, including addresses in particular. The state legislature has just passed a bill that creates a joint committee that deals with computer and personal information and privacy, which will spend all of 1997 looking into both public and private uses of personal information in automated systems and probably will be making some legislative recommendations in the spring of 1998."

'No middle ground'

"It seems to me that with public records requests in the Golden State — paper and electronic — things either turn out very good, or they turn out very bad. There is no middle ground," said Rebecca Raney of *The San Bernardino County Sun*. "I've found that the agencies most willing to abide by the law are those with the most savvy attorneys. There's nothing uniform about application of public records laws here. It's a big free-for-all, with

each agency responding as it sees fit."

Within certain types of records are little-known inconsistencies. "We had an experience with marriage licenses, which are public — right?" said Russell Clemings of the *Fresno Bee*. "But there were some records that were confidential marriage licenses. If you get married in the jail, it's automatically a confidential marriage license."

When it comes to getting access to electronic information, some of the barriers are greater because California's Open Records Act is not specific about access to electronic records; therefore, many agencies will only provide paper documents.

Steve Rees, publisher for Publishing 20/20, a San Francisco-based publisher of regional guidebooks to public schools, fought with the San

Continued on page seven

IRE Access Committee

Join the fight

By Jennifer LaFleur

San Jose Mercury News

Twenty years ago, a group of reporters came together to share resources on important investigations, and IRE was formed. Today, groups of reporters are joining to maintain and open access to public records.

Some of those examples include a group of Arizona reporters fighting potential changes in their state's Open Records Act; reporters in New York who put in a joint request for speeding tickets in order to review the impact of the 65 mph speed limit enacted last year — they were refused access to the database; and in several states, reporters are fighting for DMV records.

Nearly every day, the IRE and NICAR listservs see postings about more problems with access to records.

In response to those access issues, IRE recently formed a committee dedicated to helping reporters fight these battles. If we are to continue working toward in-depth reporting, we must continue to have access to the documentation necessary for such reporting. The Access Committee has set the following objectives so far:

Continued on page twelve

Continued from page six:

... of better access

Francisco school district for electronic data. "The law is somewhat ambiguous as far as electronic records ... whether reports or the .dbf files were the published material," he said. "We ended up with hard copy only after many weeks of wrestling."

Murky law

"Meanwhile, the public records act itself is in the same stage it was in the '70s in a different universe in what is practical in the realm of computers," Francke said. "It's up to each agency as to what form or format or medium they need to give you."

The fuzziness regarding electronic records in the Open Records Act results in inconsistencies statewide — certain data is easy to get in one county but not in another. Clemings successfully gained access to police call data in his area while other reporters across the state have been denied similar data. While several cities provide their pet license database to journalists, the city of San Jose refuses, arguing that abusive spouses will seek out their mates-in-hiding or that others may use the data to locate police officers.

"There's also the issue about segregation of disclosable from nondisclosable information and whether an agency has the obligation to do that, especially if doing that requires a new program," said Judy Alexander of GenesisLaw, a San Jose media law firm. "It's that kind of manipulation and whether it's the creation of a new record that is really murky under California law."

In addition, agencies are all over the board when it comes to fees charged for data. Journalists can help each other by not paying high prices for data because it ends up setting a precedent and hurting others.

"It's also pretty clear if you listen to the lobbyists for state and local government," said Francke. "One thing they want to get out of all this is money."

But the picture of access in California is not completely grim, and experts are hopeful that revisions in FOIA at the federal level may spur states to include electronic information in their laws. In addition, we do have access to some databases not available in all states:

- Voter Registration data: This database is not a public record, but the press has access

through a special exemption. This puts a lot of pressure on news organizations to limit use of such data to just the editorial side of the business. This data is available from counties and the Secretary of State. In some cases, the data is less costly from the Secretary of State's Office.

- Late contributions. The California Voter Foundation provided electronic access to large late contributions in the state through a listserv. This was an invaluable resource for reporters looking into campaign finance in the last days before the election.

In addition, more agencies are making data available on the Internet. Here are some:

- A complete list of California agencies on-line is available at: <http://www.ganymede.org/agencies.html>

- Department of Education: <http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/> This site provides a lot of detailed education data.

- Department of Insurance: <http://www.insurance.ca.gov> This site provides a database regarding companies, their rates and complaints against them.

- California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Pesticide Regulation provides pesticide use reports on-line at <http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/archives/document/docmenu.htm>

- California Department of Transportation provides some report and several of their software engineering models at <http://www.dot.ca.gov>

- Employment Development Department <http://www.edd.cahwnet.gov/> This site provides a bounty of employment and economic data for California.

- The Department of Finance's Statistical Abstract is now on-line at http://www.dof.ca.gov/html/fs_data/stat-abs/toc.htm

- California UCC filings are available during beta test from Merlin Information Services at <http://www.merlindata.com> They have several other databases available on CD-ROM for a fee. A price list is available at this site.

- State Campaign Finance data is available for a fee through LegiTech of Sacramento. (916) 447-1886.

Jennifer LaFleur can be reached at
jenster@sjmercury.com.

Listservs:

- California

Freedom of
Information

Listserv: CAL-FOI.

This list, sponsored
by the Northern
California Chapter
of SPJ's Freedom of
Information

Committee, is a
forum for discussion
of freedom of
information, public
records and First
Amendment issues.

Subscribe to
maiser@rosebud.berkeley.edu with
the message:
subscribe cal-foi
[your name]

- Calgovinfo

This list from
Computer
Professionals for
Social Responsibility
provides a forum for
discussion of access
and
computerization of
government records
in California.

Subscribe to
calgovinfo@cpsr.gov

Access these FOI sites

By Nora Paul

Poynter Institute

Needing information on how to pry information from reluctant agencies? There is a wealth of resources compiled and available on the World Wide Web.

Resource Lists

- Resources on Freedom of Information Issues: <http://town.hall.org/places/spj/foi-resources.html>

Compiled by Syracuse University professor Barbara Croll Fought, the list points out Organizations and Resource Centers, Hotlines, Periodicals, Books and On-Line Resources. Although it is now a few years old, the references are all mostly still valid.

- Parascopes FOIA Help Center Home Page: <http://www.parascopes.com/foia.html>

OK, yes, Parascopes mission is to uncover alien conspiracies and paranormal occurrences, but they have compiled a nice list of links to other FOIA information sites.

- State FOI Laws—Titles and Statutory Citations: <http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/citelist.html>

Need to recite the chapter and verse of your state's Public Records laws? This listing, by state, gives you the citations — have those recalcitrant officials read the rules.

Discussion Lists

- FOI-L: Listserv discussion group on FOI <http://www.reporters.net/nfoic/foi-l.html>

Find out how to join the listserv, sponsored by the National Freedom of Information Coalition and Barbara Fought.

Organizations

- National Freedom of Information Coalition Home Page: <http://www.reporters.net/nfoic/index.html>

Links to information about the NFOIC.

Guides to Filing

- Department of Justice FOIA Guide

<gopher://justice2.usdoj.gov:70/11/oip/foia2>

This gopher site listings and links to the chapters of DOJ's FOIA guide. They are in PDF format, which requires availability of an Adobe Acrobat viewer (download for free from <http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/readstep.html>)

- FOIA Tips and Tricks: <http://www.parascopes.com/tips.html>

Although the source of this site, Parascopes, focuses on paranormal phenomenon, they have a useful, reasonable listing of the seven steps you should take in filing a FOIA request:

Do your research first. Write your request clearly and be specific. Target your request. Establish and maintain contact with the agency. Stay administratively correct. Delays in processing requests while unfortunate are normal. Be reasonable.

- STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE to using the Freedom of Information Act: <http://www.aclu.org/library/foiafaq.html>

A FAQ on FOI.

- Poynter's List of the Top 38 Excuses Government Agencies Give for Not Being Able to Fulfill Your Data Request (And Suggestions on What You Should Say or Do)

<http://www.poynter.org/prof/poynter/excuse.html>

Compiled by participants at Poynter's Computer-Assisted Reporting seminar, 1994.

Contacts

- FOIA Administrative and Legal Contacts at Federal Agencies: <http://www.soc.american.edu/~wc9923a/foia.html>

Listing, by agency name, of the contacts for questions about FOIA request filing in that agency.

Nora Paul can be reached at (813) 821-9494, or send e-mail to npaul@poynter.org

Moving on up

The price of Uplink will increase in January. The newsletter, which has grown from eight pages to 16 pages this year, will cost \$40 for one year for IRE members and \$60 for

nonmembers. Annual institutional subscriptions are now available for \$250.

To beat the rate increase, subscribe before year's end at the current price of \$35.

If you have a problem or question regarding access to electronic records or any other public

records, contact any

IRE Access

Committee member:

Jennifer LaFleur, San

Jose Mercury News:

jenster@sjmercury.com

(408) 920-5728

James Neff, Kiplinger

Reporting Program,

The Ohio State

University:

Neff.67@osu.edu,

(614) 292-2607

Rosemary Armao,

IRE: armao@ire.org

missouri.edu, (572)

882-1982

Frank Green,

Richmond Times-

Dispatch: (800) 588-

9884, ext. 6340

Nancy Stancill,

Charlotte Observer:

NStancill@aol.com,

(704) 358-5000

Rick Linsk, Asbury

Park Press:

linsk@app.com,

(908) 922-4360

Using Report Writer

By Tim Henderson

Gannett Suburban Newspapers

If you're like me, and I know I am, you were horrified the first time you realized there's no "print query" button in FoxPro.

Since then, you've probably copied your queries to a spreadsheet, then to a word processor, or found some other way to get your results on paper. If you found your way into FoxPro's Report Writer, there was no way to guess how it worked, and you gave up.

Truth is, once you learn a little about Report Writer, you may forgive its daunting first impression.

Not only can you print the same query you see in the browse window, you can improve on it by adding titles, changing your column headers to English, setting off groups with summary information, even calculating new fields and using functions to determine what's printed under what circumstances.

As an introduction to Report Writer, let's make a report on night home burglaries in the Phoenix area using the `retas.dbf` file in the NICAR ftp site (<ftp://nicar.org/pub/data/retas.dbf>). Run this query to get the population and the number of night, day, and total home burglaries for the year:

```
SELECT agency, pop,;
      burgnt + burgrd + burgru;
      AS homeburg,;
      burgnt AS night,;
      burgrd AS day;
FROM Retas;
WHERE msa = "662"
```

To make this query work in a full Return A Supplement file, you'd have to sum the fields and group by agency because it would be broken down by month. This sample data includes only one month.

Now, choose Run...Wizards...Report, and pick Report Wizard from the Wizards menu.

(Experiment with the other Report Wizards also when you have appropriate data: multi-column reports will help you fit long, skinny queries on a single page; Group/Total is good for multiple groupings where you want to set off

and summarize the groups)

In the dialog boxes that follow, pick "Query" as the table to use, Ledger style, add all fields, and horizontal layout. Enter "Night burglaries" as the title. Hit the "Preview" button, click on the preview page to zoom in, and you'll see that without much effort you've recreated the look of your query browse window, and you even have a nifty title at the top.

If you're satisfied, you could just close the preview window and "save and print" the report. To sample some of the real power of Report Writer, choose "Modify with Design Tool" and "Finish."

If you've ever used a graphics program or FoxPro's screen builder, you'll have an easier time with the report design screen. Everything you see is an "object" that can be created, dragged, resized or manipulated with the tools in the toolbar.

To see what I mean, click on the date field just under the title to select it – you'll see sizing handles appear around it. Hit delete and it disappears. Click the text tool – the capital A – and then click in the same area, and type "Phoenix metropolitan area, January 1993." Now, click on the arrow tool – the "object picker" – and select the text you just typed. Choose Object...Font. Experiment with different font sizes and types for the title.

If it's not lined up right, drag it into place.

Use the text tool to change the column headings to English and change the font if you wish.

Note that everything in the top Title Bar prints once, at the top of the first page, while the Page Header band prints under the title and atop any further pages. The Detail band prints for every record in your query. To make more room in a band, drag the buttons to the left of the band names. Notice that space is always added at the bottom – you can't directly add space at the top. To work around this, add room at the bottom, then double-click on the bar under the band, which will select all the objects inside. You can then drag them en masse to the bottom, giving you room at the top.

To cut down on white space or save room,

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We've just made it easier to become an IRE member. Now, you can join IRE via our secure Web server, or you can download a copy of our membership form in Adobe Acrobat format from the Web site and submit it by fax to (573) 884-5544.

For more information, check out <http://www.ire.org/membership.html>

If you have any questions, e-mail Web Master Wally Winfrey at wally@nicar.org.

Reporter ISO love story

"100 Computer-Assisted Stories" is published by IRE and NICAR. Newspaper and television reporters recount how they got the story. The price is \$20.

To order, call (573) 882-2042.

By Dave Sheingold
Westchester Rockland News

Dave Sheingold attended NICAR Bootcamp in July.

In the 1990s, age of enlightened thinking, it has been suggested that men and women are full of new insight into the ways of love and what makes each other tick.

Enter the computer to make Cupid's arrow land in the dirt.

Veering off course from the usual heavy duty CAR story, Gannett Newspapers in New York recently looked at an issue we knew everyone would read about — the personal ads — and put a new twist on it. We ran three month's worth of personal ads that appeared in our papers, which cover the northern New York City suburbs, to see what men and women said about themselves in the ads, what they said about their ideal mate and what it all meant, if anything.

The results? Not too encouraging.

Contrary to what we would like to believe, men and women remain on opposite sides of love's Grand Canyon. Neither side, it appears, is doing a whole lot of clear thinking about how to find love everlasting.

According to the most common words they use in their personal ads, men remain in search of Eve. The woman of their dreams can be a blast at parties and quick with a joke, but she better have a sweet smile and body to match or else she might get passed over. When it comes to luring a partner, men highlight a mix of their looks and their eclectic tastes, be they a love of fine food, good movies or the sporting life. Their inner self somehow gets second billing.

Women, meanwhile, were different. They saw the ideal male more for his personality than his looks. While a handsome gent is pretty cool, they said they'd prefer someone caring, romantic, witty and secure. But to bait him, they switched gears and played into the old stereotypes. They talked most about their looks before they mentioned that they were worldly, bright, eclectic and successful.

About the only hope that the differences may be narrowing was that both sexes listed long-term commitment as the No. 1 or 2 thing they were looking for.

As one social planning consultant who gives

seminars on dating put it: "Men are still judging with their eyes, women with their hearts."

The bottom line, according to the experts, was that personals can work, but require patience, kind of like any other mating ritual.

Love match

This also could have been said for the computer process of getting from the raw text of the ads to the final results.

First, we got a list of 2,175 personals as ASCII text from the company that runs them in our papers. Three months was as far back as they kept them, so that's what we took.

The information imported into the Paradox database manager as one text field, so the next thing we needed to do was create a second field and retype the acronym for each ad placed (SWM for single white male, GWM for gay white male, SBPF for single black professional female, etc.) This sounds time consuming, but only took a few hours. We needed to do this so we could run queries on how many of the ad-placers were men or women, Jewish or Christian, gay or straight, professional or nonprofessional.

Then we separated the ads into different databases for males and females.

At that point, we needed to split the text of the male- and the female-placed ads into two fields — one with the section of the ad describing what the ad-placer was like and the second describing what he or she was seeking in a mate.

There was no clear way of doing this. But we knew that almost all the ads began with the person's self-analysis while the second part was about their potential mate. That second part almost always began with ISO (in search of) or with words like 'desires,' 'seeks,' 'wants,' 'looking for' and similar types of verbs indicating a longing for that special person. This was where we wanted to split the text into two fields.

So, we separately exported the new male and female databases out as text and reopened them in Word Perfect. Using the search-and-replace function, we stuck an @ sign in front of every word we could think of that would split the ads into self-descriptions and desires.

Converting the edited text back to ASCII DOS, we re-imported each database into Paradox using

Continued on page twelve

Trucking, trucking, trucked

Neil Reisner, NICAR's training director, is leaving NICAR in January and taking a job at the Miami Herald as a computer-assisted reporter. After 37 seminars in 22 states (or was it 23?) and Canada, Neil and his family are moving from their New Jersey domicile to the more tropical surroundings in Broward County.

By Neil Reisner
NICAR staff

Call me Johnny Daseed.

As NICAR's training director since January, I've spent my time wandering the country, scattering data, spreadsheets, and database managers wherever I've been.

It has (and few who know me will be surprised to find a Grateful Dead reference here) been a long, strange, and completely wonderful trip. In fact, I can't think of a better job.

What could be better than standing at the cutting edge of journalism and teaching excited and willing audiences how to do their jobs better? What could be better than getting on-site insight into newsrooms around the country? (And, given that I telecommuted to NICAR Central in Missouri from my home in New

Jersey, what could be better than being more than 1,000 miles away from your boss?)

It's been a year of travel, averaging two weeks out of every month. The travel is both enjoyable and draining. It's hard to leave home and hearth that often. (It must be said, though, that the travel hasn't interfered that much. By the time this reflection sees print, my wife and I should be the proud parents of our first child.)

It's been a year of hanging out with journalists, all of whom were passionately interested in journalism and how to add computer-assisted reporting techniques to their arsenal of professional weapons. It's been a year of learning my craft better and learning how to teach it.

In some ways it's been a year of show biz — it's impossible to hold an audience for a two- or three- or five-day seminar without injecting a good deal of entertainment, stand-up comedy and bad puns.

And, most of all, it's been a year of working, even at long-distance, with the NICAR and IRE staffs, some of the most collegial, supportive, talented, committed and just plain decent people

Continued on page twelve

IRE committees always are on the lookout for good volunteers. Of particular interest to Uplink readers may be the Computer Committee, chaired by IRE Director Shawn McIntosh of The Dallas Morning News. To volunteer, send e-mail to McIntosh at dmnproj@airmail.net. For information on other IRE committees, send e-mail to IRE Executive Director Rosemary Armao at armao@ire.org

IRE Notes

Executive Director Armao resigns

After three years, Rosemary Armao has resigned as IRE executive director to become Anne Arundel County bureau chief for the *Baltimore Sun*.

IRE is opening a national search to replace Armao, who resigned Nov. 1 in a letter to the group's board of directors and the dean of the Missouri School of Journalism. Explaining why she is leaving IRE, Armao said she can no longer ignore her strong desire to return to the practice of journalism.

She feels, she said, "an increasing homesickness for the newsroom." After nearly three years as executive director, a time "spent working with great reporters, reading wonderful journalism, and advocating in-depth journalism around the world," Armao said she is inspired. "Now it's my turn to try to produce my own great journalism."

IRE, based at the University of Missouri-Columbia, is the leading educational organization for journalists who want to learn to do more thorough, better organized, and important stories. Armao was IRE's fifth executive director since it came into being 20 years ago with the revolutionary idea that journalists sharing their knowledge and skills would be a boon overall to the practice of reporting and editing.

Armao's tenure marks a dramatic increase in the programs and reach of IRE.

- The National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR), a joint program of IRE and the Missouri School of Journalism, has held seminars and conferences training more than 8,000 journalists.

- Thanks to a grant from the Robert

Continued on page fourteen

Continued from page six: Join the fight

Here are some more useful FOI sites:

- Freedom of Information Center: [http://](http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/)

[www.missouri.edu/](http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/)

[~foiwww/](http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/)

Call (573) 882-4856 or

e-mail Kathleen

Edwards at

[jourke@muccmail.](mailto:jourke@muccmail.missouri.edu)

[missouri.edu](http://www.missouri.edu/~foiwww/)

- Reporters

Committee for

Freedom of the Press:

<http://www.rcfp.org>

- Develop a set of letters to be sent on behalf of news organizations fighting for access to particular records. This puts an organization of thousands of journalists behind such news organizations.

- Develop templates for FOIA letters and contacts for use at news organizations around the country.

- Develop a list of story examples where using particular types of data has been in the public's interest. This includes providing slides or videos of stories for presentations.

- Develop a list of resources for reporters fighting for access.

- Track access issues around the country at federal, state and local levels.

- Develop a list of examples where citizens themselves have used particular records.

- Seek out access problems of interest to IRE.

A large part of the committee's work is access to electronic records across the country and to help members gather ammunition for records fights. The work of this committee doesn't just help that one news organization; it helps everyone by setting precedents to open records.

Jennifer LaFleur can be reached at

(408) 920-5728, or send e-mail to

jenster@sjmercury.com

Continued from page ten: The personals

the @ sign as a delimiter. Now we had our two fields.

From there, we began running queries to count the number of times key words appeared in the ads. We figured out what words to look for simply by perusing a few dozen ads in the paper. We essentially divided up the results into categories of physical features, personality traits and other characteristics.

Key words involving looks included handsome, pretty, fit, tall, blond, and attractive. Personality traits included honest, loving, caring and sincere. Other characteristics were most often things like athletic, intelligent, financially secure and an interest in movies,

sports, dining and travel.

You might think that these words were just stock, superficial things people would say or that they were exaggerated. But that didn't matter. We were most interested in the types of things people highlighted. That really told the story of what people think will attract a mate and the kinds of partners they seek.

Note that the results were not exact because not every single ad had the same format. A handful had to be discarded, so the results are somewhat general, open to a bit of interpretation.

But, hey, that's love, isn't it?

Dave Sheingold can be reached at , or send e-mail to 102503.520@CompuServe.COM

Continued from page 11: Reisner bids NICAR farewell

in journalism. (Although trying to fill the shoes of my predecessor, the extraordinarily talented and energetic Jennifer LaFleur was, at best, intimidating.)

It's been challenging in other ways, as well. Administration, organization and, most of all, patience, is not something that comes naturally to many reporters. And certainly not something that comes naturally to me.

But administration and organization is critical when you're on the road doing one seminar, planning the seminar you're going to lead next week, making contacts for the seminars you're going to do next month, answering e-mailed questions from the folks who attended

the seminars you did last month, and overseeing seminars being led by other NICAR staff members and friends.

There have been other benefits. Meeting reporters, editors and news executives all over the country hasn't hurt professionally, as Jennifer LaFleur's move from this post to the *San Jose Mercury News* and mine to the *Miami Herald* clearly shows.

In all, it's been a blast. I recommend it to anyone.

NICAR is searching for a new training director. Those interested should e-mail NICAR Managing Director Brant Houston at brant@nicar.org, or call (573) 882-1984.

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Report Writer tips

To cut down on white space or save room, you can shorten the detail fields by dragging the sizing handles. Try shortening the Agency field by about half.

To make sure you're not truncating anything, double-click the field box to bring up the Report Expression dialog. Make sure the "Relative to Top-Field can stretch" option is checked (the Report Wizard should have automatically done this for you), and preview again. You should see the agency field shortened, and the few long names are wrapped to another line.

If you want some practice in dragging objects, follow up by resizing and dragging the other fields and headings to the left to take advantage of the extra space. The Report...Snap to Grid option should be checked to help you line things up—you may also use the arrow keys to move the selected object in small increments.

The Ledger format we chose puts a grid around the fields: you can drag these grid bars to accommodate the new sizes—or delete them. To draw these yourself, use the Rectangle tool to put a box around all the detail fields, then the Line tool (it looks like two intersecting lines) to draw vertical cell lines between fields.

The Field tool—a little box with an *ab* inside—can be used to add a whole new field to the report. Let's try adding one that calculates the percentage of night burglaries among those in which the time is known.

Click on the Field tool, then in the Detail band where you want to place the new field. That brings up the Report Expression dialog box. Type this into the Expression box: `night/(night+day) * 100`

Click OK to close the dialog, and you'll see your new field. Use the Text tool to type a percent sign just to the right of it. Choose Report...Page Preview to see the results.

Now, to print the report, you have to run the query again, with this additional tag at the bottom—

INTO CURSOR Query
REPORT FORM query.frx TO PRINTER
NOCONSOLE

—substituting the name of the .frx file where you saved the report. If you used RQBE to make the original query, you set the output to Report/Label and check Options to bring up a dialog box where you can browse to the .frx file you made and print the report.

You might instinctively try File...Print from the design screen, but if you do that, you'll print the code rather than the report. Remember, you're not designing a printout, you're designing a template for a printout. I guess this is meant for businesses who want a standard report form for an ever-changing database.

As you experiment with Report Writer's capabilities, here are a few of pitfalls to watch out for:

- You can make reports from joined database files rather than starting from a query. But watch out—the Report functions are not as sophisticated as SQL SELECT. You have to index and set the order of the linked (child) table to the desired field or you could get incorrect data.

- When you use functions to define a print field, as we did in the exercise, you can't mix data types. The whole field has to be character or numeric, or you get an error. So if you wanted to add the percent sign directly to the field above with +"%", it wouldn't work unless you first converted the number to a parsed character string with `STR(ALLTRIM(numeric_function))`

- If your data won't fit onto one page horizontally, and the space-gaining tricks above don't make enough room, you may pine for Excel's "Fit to Page" print option. Alternatively, you can set a smaller font size for your detail and header bands by double-clicking the bands to select everything, then choosing Object...Font

Tim Henderson can be reached by e-mail at thenders@gannett.infi.net

Don't forget that the Advanced Bootcamp offered by NICAR and Philip Meyer, author of "The New Precision Journalism" and journalism professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, will be coming up May 4-9, 1997. The seminar, which is held in Chapel Hill, will concentrate on stats and maps. For registration information, send e-mail to Wendy Charron at wendy@nicar.org, or call NICAR at (573) 882-0684.

Intermediate CAR seminar

This first-time-ever seminar, set for Jan. 24-26, will cover data clean-up, database design and construction of front-ends. The intense, hands-on seminar for those who have mastered

database managers and have some knowledge of building databases.

For registration information, call (573) 882-0684.

Get your training

Get all 12 1995 Uplinks in a bound edition for \$10 plus shipping. With the bound edition, you can review macros devised by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch's George Landau for cleaning data (January 1995); revisit advice from U.S. News and World Report's Penny Loeb on covering schools (April 1995) and tracking nonprofits (December 1995); and remind yourself of how other reporters have used OSHA, HMDA and more.

To order, call Wendy Charron at (573) 882-0684.

On-the-road training

NICAR and, where indicated, The Associated Press provide specialized training in your newsroom. Learn to transfer data from government files into newsroom PCs. Build spreadsheets for insightful stories on the beat. Comprehend documents with database managers. Navigate the Internet and on-line databases.

Cost varies. For information, call Lisa Barnes at (573) 882-8969; or to register, call the numbers below.

Note: In the following list, "Open to all" means any journalist may sign up. "Closed" means the session is open only to members of the host organization.

- Washington, D.C., *Washington Post* — Dec. 9-10, 1996. Closed.

- Washington, D.C. — Medill School of Journalism — Dec. 12-14, 1996. Open to all. (573) 882-0684

- Milwaukee, Wisc., *Milwaukee Journal* — Jan. 21-23, 1997. Closed.

- York, Pa., *York Daily Record* — Jan. 27-28, 1997. Closed.

- San Diego, Calif., *San Diego Tribune* and SPJ — Feb. 19-21, 1997. Open to all. (619) 293-1261

Conferences

NICAR will offer training and seminars at the following professional conferences, including the IRE and NICAR national conferences. Costs vary. For information or to register, call Lisa Barnes at (573) 882-8969.

- Minority Regional Conference, Dallas,

Texas — Dec. 7-10, 1996. Open to minorities.

- NashCAR, NICAR National Conference, Nashville, Tenn. — March 3-9, 1997.

Costs are: IRE member, \$150 for entire conference. Non IRE member, \$190 for entire conference, including IRE membership. Renewal member, \$190 for entire conference, including IRE renewal. Students, \$125 for conference, including student membership. Late fee is \$15 for registrations not postmarked by Feb. 14, 1997

- IRE National Conference, Phoenix, Ariz., — June 12-15, 1997.

Bootcamps

Bootcamps are week-long, intensive training sessions offered at NICAR's headquarters at the Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia, Mo.

As with on-the-road training, you will learn to transfer data from government files into newsroom PCs, build spreadsheets for stories on the beat, comprehend documents with database managers, and navigate the Net and on-line databases — but you'll be drilled all day, every day for a full week.

Tuition ranges from \$500-\$1,000 depending on circulation or market size. For information, call Wendy Charron at (573) 882-0684.

- Jan. 5-11, 1997. Waiting list only.

- Jan. 24-26, 1997 — Intermediate Bootcamp concentrating on data clean-up and more. For details, call (573) 882-1984.

- May 4-9, 1997 — Advanced Bootcamp concentrating on stats and maps at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill with Philip Meyer, author of "The New Precision Journalism." The seminar is held in Chapel Hill.

Continued on page eleven: IRE executive director

McCormick Tribune Foundation, IRE created Periodistas de Investigacion which will serve as an IRE-like organization providing investigative and computer training for Mexican journalists.

- Inwardly, IRE has taken steps to improve its financial position and management.

Armao will be leaving her position in mid-December. Notices about the search for her

replacement will be posted electronically — look for information on IRE's homepage at <http://www.ire.org> and on its listserv — and via regular mailing. IRE will also place advertisements in the major media publications.

Inquiries may be made to IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Mo. 65211, or to IRE's e-mail address at jourire@muccmail.missouri.edu

Growing collection of federal databases

From the NICAR library

NICAR offers a number of federal government databases. Here is a list of our growing collection:

NEW • Federal Aviation Administration's accidents and incidents, including major plane crashes since 1971.

NEW • NASA's air safety reporting system, including anonymous complaints by pilots and air traffic controllers. Useful for finding near misses and problems at local airports, 1988-1996.

• A monthly CD subscription for all 1995-96 Federal Election Commission campaign contributions by individuals and political action committees, plus all presidential matching fund requests.

• The Health Care Financing Administration's 1995 database of all Medicare-funded inpatient work in U.S. hospitals.

• Federal Railroad Administration data for accidents, casualties, and highway crossings. 1991-1995.

• Coast Guard boating accidents, 1969-1994.

• Federal Aviation Administration data, including airplane maintenance work documented in the service difficulty report, pilot licenses and grades, and aircraft registration.

• Home Mortgage Disclosure Act records, for tracking who gets loans and who gets turned down, and finding redlining patterns, 1992-1995.

• Federal procurement data, 1992-1995, includes breakdowns by agency.

• Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms gun dealer records. 1993-1995.

• National Bridge Inventory System data, includes inspection grades. 1994-1995

NEW • FBI Uniform Crime Reports, a detailed compilation of crime data that includes statistical breakdowns of individual murders. This includes the new 1995 data.

• Social Security death records, by name and social security number, going back to 1937.

NEW • Occupational Safety and Health Administration violation data includes worker accidents and exposures to hazardous chemicals by companies, 1974-1996.

• U.S. Department of Transportation truck accident and census data. It includes accidents by company and road.

• U.S. Small Business Administration loan guarantees, 1989-1995. This includes the name of the business, address, amount covered by the SBA, and status, including whether the loan went bad.

• U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loan guarantees, 1989-1995. This includes individuals and businesses, the amount covered by the SBA, and the status, including whether the loan went bad.

• U.S. Small Business Administration's list of minority companies certified for SBA assistance in seeking federal contracts. It includes the name of the company, its address, the owner, type of business and phone number.

• The National Inventory of Dams. 1991-1995.

• U.S. Department of Transportation hazardous materials accidents database, a collection of roadway, rail, air and waterway accidents from 1971 to 1995.

• U.S. Department of Transportation fatal accident reporting system. It includes all roadway accidents from 1988 to 1995.

• U.S. Coast Guard directory of U.S. merchant vessels. It includes the name of the ship, the managing owner, home port and various descriptive information.

For up-to-date prices and more information, call (573) 882-0684, or send e-mail to nicar@muccmail.missouri.edu.

NICAR's week-long bootcamps in Columbia, Mo., offer hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting skills, including the use of spreadsheets and database managers, accessing data in various media, such as nine-track tapes, and negotiating for data.

For more information, call NICAR (573) 882-0684, or send e-mail to nicar@muccmail.missouri.edu

Bits, Bytes and Barks

Gearing up for NashCAR

NashCAR, NICAR's 1997 national conference, will be March 6-9 in Nashville, Tenn., and will offer the widest range of panels and hands-on training yet. Building on the previous conferences in Santa Clara, Calif. (CAR Trek) and Cleveland, Ohio. (CAR Rock), NashCAR will have sessions for beginners, intermediates and advanced users. We'll have tracks for beat reporters, editors, newsrooms managers, broadcasters, researchers and librarians, and trainers both in newsrooms and universities.

The conference will make use of computer labs at local universities and will have a demonstration room that will display equipment and software. We'll also have vendors and numerous opportunities for journalists to find jobs.

In addition, we expect to explore the effect of the World Wide Web on journalism and how journalists are using the Web for their stories.

For more information, call (573) 882-0684.

Moving on

Allentown (Pa.) *Morning Call* editor for computer-assisted reporting David Herzog is leaving the paper in December. On Jan. 2, he will become the CAR specialist on the *Providence (R.I.) Journal-Bulletin* investigative team

Jobs

• *The Buffalo (N.Y.) News* has an opening for an experienced business reporter to handle labor, the auto industry, trade issues and small business.

The News has an active CAR program, and there is an opportunity to do computer-assisted reporting. If you are already trained in CAR, that would be a plus. Applicants should have at least three years of experience at a mid-sized daily; i.e., 80,000 circulation and up.

This is a Guild paper, so salary is set by years of experience ranging from \$37,000 for three years of experience to the current \$48,000 at the top of the scale.

Send clips and resume to Bill Flynn, financial editor, One News Plaza, Buffalo, N.Y. 14240

• *The Allentown (Pa.) Morning Call* has an opening for an editor with advanced computer skills or reporter with strong CAR experience to grow into leadership role on the newspaper's CAR team. Willingness to coach required.

Send cover letter with ideas you would bring to the program, resume and clips to David Erdman, city editor, *The Morning Call*, 101 N. 6th St., Allentown, Pa. 18105, or call (610) 778-7929, or send e-mail to david.erdman@mcall.com

IRE-L and NICAR-L addresses

IRE-L and NICAR-L are located on lists.missouri.edu, a dedicated Unix system designed to service discussion groups run out of the University of Missouri. All posts to the lists should be sent to: ire-l@lists.missouri.edu or to nicar-l@lists.missouri.edu

All commands for subscription changes should be sent to: listproc@lists.missouri.edu

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