

Uplink

May 1996

A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

Winners use CAR Uplink update

We always push CAR for deadline stories, beat reporting and special projects; now, we would like to highlight CAR reporters who have reaped the rewards: This issue of Uplink features the 1996 Pulitzer Prize winners and finalists who used computer-assisted reporting to get their stories.

We hear from Pat Stith, Joby Warrick and Melanie Sill of the *Raleigh News & Observer*, who won the Pulitzer for public service for "Boss Hog," a series detailing abuses by corporate pig farmers. We talk with reporters from California's *Orange County Register*, whose staff won the Pulitzer for investigative reporting. And we look at work by the *Dayton Daily News*, *The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* and *Kansas City Star*, who all had Pulitzer finalist stories.

Also, check out Tech Tips for helpful information on searching the Net, and On the Internet for a look at journalism awards and where you can find information on all types of honors and prizes.

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Pulitzer winner for public service

'Boss Hog'

By Anna Clark

Missouri School of Journalism
The (Raleigh) News & Observer's 1996 Pulitzer prize-winning public service series "Boss Hog" sparked a public debate on hog farming that continues more than a year after the series ran.

At a population of 8 million and growing, hogs outnumber people in North Carolina. Pigs are taking over the economy where tobacco has left off, making North Carolina second only to Iowa in pig production. The economic boon to the state has not been without costs.

Pigs can produce up to four times as much waste as humans, yet North Carolina let waste disposal go largely unregulated. Open lagoons, many of which have no clay liners to prevent seepage into the sandy soil, hold the waste until it can be sprayed as fertilizer on fields.

Sacred pig

The News & Observer ran "Boss Hog," a five-part series from Feb. 19-Feb. 26, 1995, exposing the environmental, economic and political impact of the state's new sacred cow — make that sacred pig. Reporters Pat Stith and Joby Warrick brought to light research about hog waste's threat to the water quality. They pinpointed leaks and spills hitherto covered up.

Stith and Warrick also showed the human side of the manure problem — the stench. People living near hog farms find themselves sealing their houses, running to get into cars when they have to go out and still having the odor stick

to their clothes throughout the day.

Perhaps the most condemning aspect of the series was the direct link Stith and Warrick uncovered between politicians and big-time hog producers. Phone records tracked legislators' calls to the Murphy Family Farms on the day regulation bills were up for vote. "Boss Hog" spotlights Wendell H. Murphy's cozy relationship with Gov. Jim Hunt. Murphy

Continued on page two

Top prize for investigation

Fertility fraud

By Stan Dorsey
NICAR Staff

In a state where nearly 60 percent of all phone numbers are unlisted, reaching out and touching someone can be far more difficult than it sounds.

This frustrating fact of life confronted the staff of the *Orange County Register* as it tried to piece together its 1996 Pulitzer Prize-winning series on fraudulent egg transfers at the internationally renowned University of California-Irvine Center for Reproductive Health.

A hospital employee tipped staff medical reporter Susan Kelleher that doctors at the center might be taking eggs from their patients during fertility procedures and later trans-

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its services nationwide to
news organizations and
associations.

From page one:

Pulitzer win hog heaven

became the No. 1 hog producer in the country while a state legislator.

Pig in a poke

The seven-month project began with a tip about a state-employed veterinarian accepting a hunting trip from Murphy Family Farms. *The News & Observer* asked for phone records of all long-distance calls placed by all state employees for the previous two years, although initially they were interested only in the records for one person.

"Generally, it is easier to get much rather than little," Stith said of records requests.

They waited six months for the database. *The News & Observer* has a strict records-request policy: "If we ask you for it, we're going to get it or sue," Stith said.

In the end, the veterinarian story was a "throwaway," Stith said. It did not run as part of the series. The bigger story was in calls between government officials and Murphy Family Farms. *The News & Observer* calculated an average of 50 calls a week over two years from state employees to the Murphy company and family, including calls from legislators and the governor's office.

Story goes whole hog

"Boss Hog" developed from a story about one person abusing a system to a business story (corporate farms swallow independent farmers) to an environmental story (what are the big farms doing with all that waste?). It turned into a series with political, economic, environmental and human impact. The series received the attention of the N.C. General Assembly, which authorized the governor and legislative leaders to form a task force to investigate problems uncovered by the report. "We're shocked," Warrick said of the series' impact.

After the series ran, legislators who had wanted to push for regulations were emboldened to introduce a half dozen bills, Warrick said. Several major lagoon spills during the summer of 1995 highlighted the environmental risks "Boss Hog" had forewarned, and some regulatory bills passed.

Between *The News & Observer's* coverage and the summer accidents, N.C. Gov. Hunt has

begun cracking down on the industry's polluters, Warrick said. The blue-ribbon commission he helped appoint, of which the majority of members have financial interests in the hog industry, has come up with significant proposals for regulation.

"Pressure has been such that they knew they had to do something," Warrick said.

Databases

The News & Observer used the following resources: It's own database of political contributions, started in 1990, that now contains the records of 100,000 contributors and 250,000 contributions.

A database of records of all long-distance calls from state officials for a two-year period, including more than 40 million records.

The team used NineTrack Express with FoxPro and R&R Report Writer on a Zeos 486-66 PC. They had a Contech tape drive to download the tapes.

Online data

For online data, the newspaper tapped:

FEC data of campaign contributions.

General Assembly public terminal with legislation on the hog industry.

Lexis/Nexis and Information Resource Service Inc. (IRSC) to track property owners in Florida.

AVCOMM BBS, an FAA database for aircraft and pilot information.

LINC, a N.C. state government database with economic data on the hog industry's growth.

Dun's Market Identifiers and Dun's Financial Records Plus through Dialog for companies' financial and historical information.

Disclosure/Spectrum Ownership through Dialog for stockholder information.

Insider Trading Monitor through Dialog for information on corporate insiders.

Securities Exchange Commission through the Internet and Dialog.

USDA through the Internet.

Secretary of State and Limited Partnership databases from the state on N.C. companies.

PhoneDisc for phone numbers.

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Pulitzer finalist for national reporting

'Military secrets'

By Rex W. Huppke

Missouri School of Journalism

Tailhook was just the tip of the iceberg.

An eight-month investigation by Russell Carollo, Jeff Nesmith and Carol Hernandez of the *Dayton* (Ohio) *Daily News* revealed that the U.S. military has shielded hundreds of sex offenders within their ranks, including child molesters.

In a series that was a 1996 Pulitzer Prize finalist for national reporting, the reporters told readers about:

- Norman Michael Fletcher, who, as a Navy recruiter, was accused of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl. Fletcher received an honorable discharge from the Navy in lieu of a trial. He now helps oversee a home for unwed teen-age mothers.

- Cortney A. Riley, who was accused of raping a 16-year-old girl. A witness heard the girl screaming as she was assaulted, but a panel of Riley's Navy co-workers concluded that she "wanted sex." Six months later, Riley raped and choked a 15-year-old girl at gunpoint.

- Christopher R. Matthews, who was charged with two rapes. At trial time, the Navy claimed it could not "find" the first victim. Matthews' own attorney said this was instrumental in winning his client's acquittal. It took the *Dayton* reporters about 15 minutes to locate the "missing" accuser using her Social Security number and a publicly available computer database.

Spotting the trend

Carollo noticed the trend of military sex offenders while researching another series titled "Prisoners on Payroll," which showed that many imprisoned servicemen collect paychecks while in jail. He next turned his attention to the sexual charges.

Using FOIA requests, he obtained court martial databases from the Navy and Air Force. The Army refused to cooperate. The Coast Guard did not have a database, so Carollo built his own from Coast Guard files.

The reporters analyzed the data and found evidence of unusual judicial practices:

Hundreds of military personnel charged with sex offenses managed to get around prosecution or criminal punishment. Numerous military sex offenders returned to civilian life with clean

records because the military often allows sex offenders to resign rather than face prosecution. They also found that military members who were victims of sexual assault and spoke up were frequently ostracized or fired. And, they reported, the military often refused to report criminal records to the FBI, as required.

The series, which ran in October 1995, got results.

U.S. Rep. Robert Dornan, R-Calif., requested that the Department of Defense investigate several issues the series uncovered.

A 1992 case in which two Navy sailors allegedly sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl in Alaska was reopened by a civilian prosecutor in Sitka, Alaska.

The *Dayton Daily News* filed a federal lawsuit against the Army after it refused to provide records of public courts-martial. The Army wound up giving Carollo most of the information.

Carollo said Paradox was used almost exclusively for the data analysis.

The Air Force data was very detailed and clean, Carollo said. The Navy database, on the other hand, contained many discrepancies. For example, "Memphis Naval Base" was abbreviated more than 15 different ways.

Another problem Carollo encountered with the Navy information was that defendants' names were not given. The locations of the trials, however, were in the database. The reporters managed to contact the civilian attorneys who had been involved in the various cases and were thus able to obtain the defendants' names.

Looking back, Carollo would recommend several tips for someone trying to deal with obtaining military information.

"The most important thing is to file your FOI way in advance," he said. "Give yourself four to six months." He also suggests starting off confidently and asking for the right people — the computer technicians.

"Assume there is a computer database that you're looking for," Carollo said. "Find the person who operates that system. If you deal with public affairs, you are just putting another layer in an already bureaucratic system."

Russell Carollo can be reached at (513) 225-2000, or send e-mail to russell_carollo@dni.com

Read "Boss Hog" for yourself. *The News & Observer's* definitive work on how massive high-tech hog farms are polluting the air and water in North Carolina is available from the IRE

Resource Center. The 115-page series costs \$20 including shipping.

Call the Resource Center at (573) 882-3364 and ask for Item No. 12688.

You can obtain copies of the *Dayton Daily News's* "Military Secrets" from the IRE Resource Center. The series costs \$5.

Call the Resource Center at (573) 882-3364 and ask for Item No. 12570.

Pulitzer finalist for explanatory journalism

'Divided We Sprawl'

"Divided We Sprawl,"
the *Kansas City Star's*
six-part series
examining the causes
and effects of urban
sprawl is available
from the IRE
Resource Center. The
series is 39 pages and
costs \$10 including
shipping.
Call the Resource
Center at (573) 882-
3364 and ask for Item
No. 13004.

By Glaston Ford
NICAR staff

Your home may not be the inflation-beating investment it is sold to be. Ask Marvin Blevins.

In 1981 he bought his three-bedroom ranch house in a suburb of Kansas City for \$62,550. If the value of the home had kept up with the rising cost of living, it would have sold for more than \$103,000. He sold it last fall for \$73,000.

In the Kansas City metro area, the housing values in more than half the census tracts did not keep up with inflation between 1980 and 1990. So, even though the cost of homes in these tracts might have increased, the real value of the home declined.

That is one of the key discoveries of *Kansas City Star* reporters Chris Lester, Jeffrey Spivak and Greg Reeves in their six-part series examining the cost and character of sprawl.

The series, "Divided We Sprawl," ran Dec. 17-22, 1995. It was a 1996 Pulitzer finalist for explanatory journalism.

Start your engines

From the beginning, Lester knew the project would require a lot of number crunching.

"The computer work was the key to analyzing white flight and income flight," said Reeves.

He found that Kansas City lenders reject applications from blacks 2.5 more times than they do from whites. Even high-income blacks are rejected more than low-income whites.

They also wanted to come up with a way to measure the cost of sprawl. Many people leave the urban core for a promise of a better life in the suburbs. This spread creates a maze of government, from school districts, sewer districts, library districts, to cities and counties. The cost is staggering.

A computer analysis of the 1987 Census of Government Finance Statistics found that Kansas City ranked third in the nation in governmental units per person. The total regional cost is \$3 billion with an average annual cost per household of \$5,000.

Another question they had was, "What is the pattern of housing value in the entire metropolitan area between 1980 and 1990?"

Reeves massaged the numbers. Then Lester and Spivak used the results to stimulate their investigation.

They analyzed every census tract in metropolitan Kansas City and looked at median housing values in each tract from 1980 to 1990. The increase seemed small, so they decided to check it against inflation. The results were surprising: Many homes lost value, even in wealthier suburbs.

The Golden Rainbow

Lester discovered some research done in Ohio that suggested people who make money on their homes tend to purchase homes farther from the urban core. The tax code encourages this behavior.

If a homeowner makes a profit, he can avoid paying a capital gains tax by buying homes of equal or greater value. These homes tend to be in the suburbs. "That got us all agitated about the codification of sprawl in the tax code," Lester said.

He wanted to see what was happening in Kansas City.

Reeves used Atlas GIS to map housing values in the metro area. He then calculated the average housing value of owner-occupied units within a two-mile radius of the downtown intersection of 12th and Main. Then, he determined the average value for the next ring and the next ring, and so on.

Average housing values increased incrementally until peaking in a ring 14 to 16 miles from downtown — the golden rainbow.

He did the same analysis using census figures from previous years and discovered the golden rainbow of peak property values had been creeping away from downtown about two miles a decade. This figure became one of the measures of sprawl in the story.

Cities tend to grow in directions, not circles. So they picked the quadrant with the greatest wealth, Johnson County, and used that figure in the series.

Lester and Spivak used the computer results, together with interviews with more than 700 sources, to try to explain sprawl. It wasn't easy.

"This wasn't about investigating one public official who did something wrong and sending them to jail," Lester said. "This is about trying to explain in some rational way why American society came out the way it did over the last 50 years."

The reporting team got the 1980 and 1990 Census housing tables online. They typed in the

Continued on page eleven

Pulitzer finalist for beat reporting

'Medicaid HMO Game'

By Dawn Hobbs

IRE staff

Doctor, doctor give me the news; I got a bad case of — cheating the taxpayers.

A *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* investigation revealed that HMOs designed to provide cost-cutting health care for the poor often fail to deliver services the state paid them to provide.

The investigation also indicated that while patients may suffer, some Medicaid HMO executives live lavishly off the taxpayers — leasing luxury cars and awarding themselves generous salaries or service contracts.

"The Medicaid HMO Game: Poor Care, Big Profits" is the *Sun-Sentinel's* fourth investigative series exposing quality problems in tax-funded Florida HMOs. The series, by Fred Schulte and Jenni Bergal, was a 1996 Pulitzer finalist for beat reporting. It ran Nov. 26-29, 1995. The reporters began investigating HMOs in the early 1990s.

Contractors see green

The investigation exposed physicians with histories of providing poor patient care, convicted felons and trash collectors — all of whom had applied for HMO contracts or had already received them. The point is to sign up as many people as possible, Schulte explained, because the state pays the HMO contractor per person.

"They were out signing people up under bridges and forging people's names on applications," Schulte said. "In Miami, they'd drive up in a big van and unload a bunch of sales agents dressed up as nurses with white coats and stethoscopes. They'd knock on people's doors and tell them about this wonderful program. When the people said they were already on Medicaid, the agents told them they must sign up or lose their Medicaid benefits."

The enrollment fraud proved to be so outrageous, that Schulte and Bergal investigated matters further.

The team began collecting every sort of document available: the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration general correspondence files, HMO hospital and physician utilization data, disenrollment data, medical peer review reports, annual incident reports and grievance reports and administrative hearing judgments and final reports.

None of these documents came in electronic form. And even worse, Schulte and Bergal found thousands of pages of medical peer review records and other reports sitting in boxes in a closet in the Tallahassee state offices.

Built to order

After retrieving all the boxed data, Schulte and Bergal met with Jay Mendell, professor of public administration at Florida Atlantic University in Ft. Lauderdale. Mendell, who has taught computer systems and the Internet to graduate students for 20 years, has provided technical support to Schulte and Bergal on several assignments.

Mendell set up data templates with as much error rejection as possible in which Bergal then entered some 5,000 to 7,000 pages of peer reviews. As Easy As, shareware available through Trius, and File Express, another shareware put out by Expressware, were used for entering the data on an IBM clone.

Pick a program

Once the data was entered, Mendell explained, it went into a program that best expressed the results — sometimes Excel and sometimes SPSS.

"Sometimes simple summary statistics and ratios will do the trick, and then you use Excel," Mendell said. "Other times, when the data is more complicated, you need to produce three-dimensional plots and look at them from different angles. This is when you use SPSS, a heavy-duty statistical program."

As a result of this series, key Florida legislators promised new laws to crack down on Medicaid HMO abuses during the current session, rewrote contracts for Medicaid HMOs and banned door-to-door marketing. State officials also refused to license two HMOs whose ties to state Sen. Alberto Gutman were documented by the newspaper. The series disclosed that the senator had attempted to broker the sales of HMOs for fees as high as \$1 million and had gone into the HMO business outside Florida with some health industry executives with business before his committee. Gutman has resigned from the health-care committee and faces state charges.

Fred Schulte can be reached at (305) 356-4591, or send e-mail to freds@aol.com

"The Medicaid HMO Game: Poor Care, Big Profits," the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel series examining HMO fraud, is available from the IRE Resource Center. The series is 227 pages and costs \$30, including shipping. Call the Resource Center at (573) 882-3364 and ask for Item No. 12940.

Debunking gas claims

By Chris Heinbaugh
KNXV-TV, Phoenix

Chris Heinbaugh attended the NICAR Bootcamp in March.

It sounded too crazy to be true. After all, it involved two huge firms, the Phoenix-based Circle K chain, and UNOCAL 76 Gasoline. In a well-publicized announcement, last year they announced that Circle K would now carry Unocal 76 gas in the pumps at its stores in Arizona and Nevada. It was followed by a major advertising blitz: full-page ads, billboards, TV, radio.

But the News 15 investigative unit began getting calls from tanker drivers and Circle K employees, all saying the same thing: The gas at Circle K, wasn't coming from UNOCAL's terminals. We checked it out, following tanker trucks, and sure enough, the gasoline at Circle K, was coming from the same gas terminals it was using before the agreement. Nothing had changed, except now "76" was slapped on the pumps.

FoxPro is my friend

But we wanted more proof. So I called the Arizona Department of Weights and Measures, the agency responsible for testing quality. An inspector there would not get specific, but dropped hints about inspections reports. He mentioned they were kept on a database. BOING! Having just returned from NICAR Bootcamp, I was salivating. He began bragging about this great FoxPro program.

"FoxPro is my friend," he said.

"Can I get a copy of your database?"

"Sure," he said. "Just fax me an Open Records request."

One fax and a diskette later, I had my database (easiest I've ever acquired), and I had the hard facts to back up my story.

The proof

The database helped me verify what our insiders had been telling us. As part of the inspection, the stations must list which terminal the gas came from. This field not only proved the Circle K gas wasn't coming from UNOCAL, but because the records stretched back to well before the agreement, we could prove these were the same suppliers as before.

Another field showed the elements used to oxygenate the fuel. UNOCAL only uses ethanol in Phoenix, but the gas at Circle K used MTBE as well as ethanol, clearly demonstrating a difference.

The database also helped us establish a serious difference in the quality control between real UNOCAL gas, and the stuff at Circle K. I ran queries pulling out all the violations inspectors handed UNOCAL and Circle K since January. UNOCAL only had three. Circle K had 33 — more than any other chain.

The database also helped debunk Circle K's claim that swapping gas is something everyone does. It showed that the gas at Chevron stations was coming only from Chevron terminals, Mobil from Mobil terminals, Unocal from Unocal. Circle K has lots of suppliers, and few got their gas from UNOCAL. The bottom line: The gas I buy at Circle K is not the same gas I would get at UNOCAL.

Loosening tongues

Faced with this, state inspectors now felt quite free to spell out their concerns that consumers were being misled. And the state Attorney General's office made it clear, if the companies are saying it's UNOCAL gas, it better be UNOCAL, not something like UNOCAL, and the ads could be violating consumer protection laws. Circle K could not refute that it was different gas. They could only say that it met the standards set by UNOCAL. But even this didn't hold up because the database showed the problems with quality control.

Data backbone

The story was important to consumers, and might not have flown if it wasn't for the database. Circle K had brushed off concerns as no big deal, insisting the gas meets UNOCAL's standards. At least one of our print competitors reportedly shelved their story because they bought Circle K's explanation. We might have too if we hadn't found and used the database. While it was only one element our viewers saw in a colorful story, it provided backbone and gave the report the teeth it needed to stand in the face of some major corporate pressure to refute it.

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Looking for a
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Taking the show on the road

By Brant Houston

NICAR managing director

Fifty-two. Count 'em. 52.

That's how many seminars the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting will give between Jan. 1, 1996, and June 30, 1996.

In six months, NICAR instructors will have gone to more than 25 states to teach the rudiments of CAR to more than 1,000 print and broadcast journalists. The NICAR seminars last from one to six days, ranging from a CAR overview to intense hands-on work in statistics and mapping software.

In the past few months, NICAR has conducted customized on-site seminars for 10 to 20 reporters and editors at *Newsday*, *The Washington Post*, the TV magazine *American Journal*, Alabama Public TV and *Money Magazine*.

The institute also held a special, first-ever seminar for 25 broadcast journalists in March at Northwestern University and a week-long advanced seminar in statistics and mapping at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill with precision journalism guru Philip Meyer.

At the same time, NICAR has trained journalists from smaller news organizations on the needs of minority journalists. In a joint effort with the Associated Press, NICAR will give at least 16 regional seminars in six months, with several more planned. Journalists from papers such as *Paducah Sun* and *Kalamazoo Gazette*

have been able to afford the low fees and convenience of these regional, two-day meetings.

Minority fellowships

Minority journalists have been offered fellowships to the week-long bootcamps at the University of Missouri in Columbia. In the fall, NICAR will hold three two-day regional seminars for minority journalists. NICAR hopes to hold the seminars in Richmond, Va.; Dallas, Texas; and San Francisco, Calif. NICAR also has teamed up with the Multicultural Management Program at the Missouri School of Journalism to hold a week-long seminar for minority managers dealing with the new technology.

NICAR also plans to give presentations and sample training at the national conventions of the associations of Hispanic, Black, and Asian American journalists.

NICAR's basic curriculum covers practical use of the Internet (not to surf but to produce stories), spreadsheets, and database managers—the three basic tools of CAR. NICAR instructors can also teach mapping, data managing and statistics.

Providing a backbone of instruction are exercises created by practicing journalists and the NICAR staff, the handbook "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide" and two books of synopses of CAR stories, and a collection of videotapes.

Miss something?

Check out the IRE-L

and NICAR-L mailing

list archives on our

websites at [http://](http://www.ire.org)

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, which is

useful for

downloading a

particular month.

Post praises 'ambassadors'

"Ambassadors to the newsroom" is what *Washington Post* executive editor Leonard Downie Jr. called the journalists at the NICAR seminar at the *Post* this spring.

In a brief talk with the 10 seminar participants, Downie said he expected them to take their new knowledge back to the newsroom and lead the way on computer-assisted reporting.

Downie said he wanted computer-assisted reporting to become a routine occurrence in the *Post* newsroom, saying that it could be used for deadline stories, on-the-beat stories and projects.

The *Post* invited NICAR to teach three days of a five-day seminar put together by *Post* CAR experts and trainers. William Casey, who heads CAR at the *Post*, led the first day of training on

the Internet and spreadsheets. NICAR trainers then appeared on the second day and spent three days on spreadsheets, database managers, data acquisition and data cleaning. On the fifth day, Casey finished the seminar.

Casey said the training journalists received before NICAR's arrival made the seminar extremely productive. Trainers at the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Globe*, and *Newsday* have also found that kind of preparation helpful.

Diane Weeks, manager of computer training for the newsroom, said the seminar worked "really well" and plans are underway for *Post* trainers to spread the CAR word further.

— Brant Houston

Seek and ye shall find

By Dan Keating
Miami Herald

"The News & Observer School for Computer-Assisted Reporting" is the name of a handout created by Pulitzer winner Pat Stith. It outlines the schedule used to train the News & Observer staff to use computers in their day-to-day reporting. It includes examples of CAR stories done by the N&O including feature, business, political, spot news & investigative stories. The handout is 17 pages and costs \$5 including shipping. Call (573) 882-3364.

A typical area of confusion for new online users— especially reporters — is searching. People hear about "search engines" and indexes, but seldom recognize the important differences between them, and when to use the different things. Here's a guide:

What's out there?

- Indexes — They work by general descriptions of content. There are indexes, largely of World Wide Web sites. Yahoo and Galaxy are well organized to quickly get to the kind of information you want. They are comprehensive of major Web sites.

The owner of a Web site has to "register" with the indexes, so they are for finding sites to which someone would want to draw attention. They tend to be sites of major educational, government, organization and commercial interests. They are organized based on the general topic of their content. So if a site is about movies, it'll be organized there. The Web site may or may not have a section about Marilyn Monroe. All you know is that it has movies.

You find sites by checking the general descriptions. You can also search the index itself, so you can look quickly for a particular business name. But you are searching only the name of the link and description of the link, not the content of what's on the link. Links will almost always bring you to the main homepage for a site. You will also find pointers to some discussion groups and a handful of listservs.

Yahoo! <http://www.yahoo.com>

Galaxy <http://galaxy.einet.net>

- Internet Search Engines — They look at the exact content of each site. There are "search engines" for searching the content of all the Web pages on the Internet. Obviously, it would be impractical for them to scan the entire network after you put in your request. They work by sending out "robot" programs that automatically read every page of every Web site they can find (there are things administrators can do to prevent pages from being read). They then index every word on every site.

So, the search engines have a giant database listing words and where they were found. When you search, it looks in the database and brings back the matching sites.

Unlike an index, you're not just searching for words in the title or description of a site; you're actually searching the contents of every page on a site. And you might get linked to a page deep within a Web site, rather than just the front page. For instance, if you searched for "Marilyn Monroe" you might get a link to a reference to her on a page with an address such as "<http://www.moviespot.com/classics/comedy/some-like-it-hot/stars/mm.html>". That is extremely useful for getting exactly to what you want. But you won't be at the "welcome" screen for that Web site, so you might have trouble figuring out where you are.

Also, you are likely to find a lot of obscure things when you search here, since just one reference on a page somewhere might match your search, even if the general contents of the Web site at that link aren't of interest.

So, when you search these Net-wide engines, you tend to get a huge number of responses and may get buried in them.

Lycos <http://www.lycos.com>

WebCrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>

AltaVista <http://altavista.digital.com> (my favorite)

- Usenet Discussion Group Search — Searching online conversation. The indexes and search engines generally point you at sites where information has been posted.

But there's a lot of discussion online, too. You can search the content of the discussion on 10,000 usenet groups. If you search for a common term, such as "Microsoft," you'll get buried. But if you're trying to find an expert on some obscure topic, such as "hermaphroditic mammalian albinos," the discussions are probably your best chance.

You can find out who's talking about something and what they're saying.

DejaNews <http://www.dejanews.com>

AltaVista <http://altavista.digital.com>

What do I use?

If you're looking for a specific site online that is not obscure and whose creators would want it to be found, then you are best off at the indexes.

If you are looking for the various sites on a general topic, the indexes are by far the best choice. So, if you want to find all the sites online about classical music or computer-assisted de-

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On the Internet

Awards, honors and prizes

By Nora Paul
The Poynter Institute

Yes, of course, we write and produce great journalism for the benefit of our readers and viewers. But it sure is nice when those stories win prizes.

This issue's Web column focuses on journalism awards and on where you can find information on all types of honors and prizes. Check out the sites with the winning entries available and learn about great newswriting from the best in the industry.

The Pulitzer Prize web site: <http://www.pulitzer.org/>

Produced by Columbia University's Center for New Media, this is the site for information on current and past Pulitzer winners, a history of the prize and information about how to submit an entry for consideration.

The prize winning photos and cartoons are available, click on exhibits button at the end of the individual prize announcement pages. The entire set of winning contributions will be available on the site in June.

The AJR's awards, grants and scholarships: <http://www.inform.umd.edu:8080/News/AJR/awards.html>

Information about a variety of journalism awards, part of the American Journalism Review's annual special advertising section.

NPPA / University of Missouri Pictures of the Year Contest: <http://www.missouri.edu/>

[~photowww/poy/index.html](http://photowww/poy/index.html)

Pictures of the Year is one of the world's oldest and largest photojournalism competitions. This site shows the annual winners and information about the judges and judging of the award.

RTNDA / Radio and Television News Directors Association: <http://www.rtna.org/rtna/awards.html>

This comprehensive listing of major electronic journalism awards, grants and fellowships provides information on more than 70 awards or programs for journalists.

American Association for the Advancement of Science: Science Journalism Awards: <http://www.aaas.org/communications/awards.htm>

This award for excellence in science journalism (print or broadcast) is sponsored by the Whitaker Foundation. The site tells about applying and links to the 1995 winners.

APME (Associated Press Managing Editors) Awards: <http://www.apme.com/apmewin.htm>

This listing of APME awards links to a page with information about the winners and finalists. Entire winning entries are available.

SND (Society for Newspaper Design) Awards: <http://www.medill.nwu.edu/snd/contest17/winners.html>

This is a listing of awards for excellence in newspaper design.

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Here's a tip if you're trying to find a listserv mailing list or usenet discussion group: Try Tile.Net at <http://tile.net>. It has lists of discussion groups and listservs.

Nova University also has a good site at <http://www.nova.edu/Inter-Links/listserv.html>.

Another place where you can find those lists, and tons and tons of other information about the online world, is at RTFM (for "Read the Friendly Manual") at MIT. It's at <ftp://rtfm.mit.edu>. It's not a pretty interface (it's general ftp navigation), but it has mountains of great information.

Continued from page eight:

Tech tips: Searching

sign or reproductive rights, you'll almost certainly find a heading on that subject in the index. You'll find the related sites.

If you are looking for something that isn't major and whose creator wouldn't register it with the indexes, then try the search engines. Don't do this with general subjects, such as Microsoft or engineering or classical music. But it would be good if you were looking for a page about Seji Ozawa or Arctic seals.

Only use the search engines for things that are specific enough and obscure enough that you won't get buried. Sometimes they are useful in searching for combinations of things, such as "wolf and Yellowstone."

You probably won't find a Web site under

that definition in an index, but there's a good chance of finding a page with those words on them somewhere on the Web.

If you are mainly interested in finding an expert or the subject is even too obscure for the search engines, try searching the usenet discussion groups. Searching the discussion groups is also useful for finding more current topics, since it generally takes a while for information to get posted into Web sites.

In general, start with indexes because they're fast and efficient. If what you want isn't there, try the search engines. Finally, turn to discussion group searches.

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From page one: Finding fertility fraud

You can obtain copies of the Orange County Register's series on "Fertility Fraud" from the IRE resource center. The series is 86 pages and costs \$15 including shipping. Call the Resource Center at (573) 882-3364 and ask for Item No. 12531.

ferring these eggs to other barren women. The catch: The eggs were being transferred without the patients' consent, and some of the illegal transfers had resulted in live births.

Hospital roadblocks

Register reporters Kim Christensen, Michelle Nicolosi, Ernie Slone and Kelleher had to go to great lengths to obtain the medical records of the allegedly criminal procedures that the doctors were performing.

Some sources returned records anonymously by way of regular mail. Others used what investigations editor Jim Mulvaney called a "modern age Transom system," returning records to members of the team by way of self-addressed Federal Express envelopes. Kelleher even worked out a system where sources left records in the unlocked trunk of her car.

Once validated, the records were turned over to Slone, who, using Access and Paradox, built a database of patients who had donated or received eggs through procedures performed by the accused doctors. Some records clearly showed corruption, while others took more investigation. But without Slone's database, the information would have been unwieldy.

Use local resources

Slone's work was particularly handy when it came to identifying patients. Using local resources such as voter registration records, motor vehicle records and Social Security numbers, Slone was able to find matches for a good number of the patients in his database.

"When we went to these women, we were going to be changing their lives," said Mulvaney. "Most of the people didn't even know they were being victimized."

That meant the Register staff would have to make absolutely sure they were contacting the right women.

The team used commercial databases, such as CDB Infotek and Information America to further identify patients. This allowed them access to local census and advertising databases.

Slone was then able to target certain women, such as those between the ages of 25 and 45 and those in higher income neighborhoods, to find additional matches among them. These women were far more likely candidates for in vitro

fertilization and could possibly afford the \$10,000 price tag.

The extra step helped save the reporters from the potential disaster of contacting the wrong patient.

"It's the ultimate invasion of privacy," added Mulvaney. "You have to be relatively certain."

Caught In the web

As the team continued to follow the case, the reporters began posting their articles on the Register's World Wide Web site (<http://www.ocregister.com>).

They expected it to be an excellent resource for anyone who had heard about the case and wanted to know more. What they didn't expect was for it to help them locate Ricardo Asch, the primary doctor under investigation.

Asch and one of his partners had fled the country under the pressure of the Register articles and five federal probes into the allegations. The health minister of Mexico called saying he had seen the Register's Web site and knew that Asch was trying to apply for a license to practice in Mexico.

The team subsequently sent an undercover reporter to check out the story.

Not just for numbers

After eight months, the Register's project produced some startling numbers: 61 women were identified as fraud victims, 10 children were born from stolen eggs, and 32 patients had filed lawsuits against the doctors.

On Jan. 19, in Tijuana, Asch gave a four-day deposition in response to those lawsuits, and Slone drew on his computer-assisted instincts once again: He electronically transferred transcripts from the depositions to the Register, where they were entered into a text database program called askSam.

Reporters queried the database for specific information from the deposition. This afforded the Register a major advantage over the competition.

"We were able to get straight to the exact facts of the day," said Mulvaney, who helped edit the 300 pages of transcripts per day. "Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times' reporters were still writing off of the lawyers' claims."

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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 • 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.

NEW • 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.

- Federal procurement data, 1992-1994, includes breakdowns by agency.

- Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms gun dealer records.

- National Bridge Inventory System data, includes inspection grades.

- FBI Uniform Crime Reports, a detailed compilation of crime data that includes statistical breakdowns of individual murders. This includes the new 1994 data.

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

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration violation data includes worker accidents

and exposures to hazardous chemicals by companies.

- 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, 1989-1994. 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.

- 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 1994.

- 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.

- National Endowment for the Arts, grants, 1989-1993.

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

The following week-long bootcamps offer hands-on training in computer-assisted reporting skills:

- **NICAR Bootcamps**, featuring training in the use of spreadsheets and database managers, accessing data in various media, such as nine-track tapes, and negotiating for data; May 19-24, July 14-19, and Aug. 11-16.

Columbia, Mo.

For more information, call NICAR

From page four: 'Divided We Sprawl'

values for 1950, 1960 and 1970. This wasn't as much work as it seems: Each year had only 200 to 300 records.

The Census of Government Finance Statistics came from the Missouri state data center. Each state should have one, but the file is also available directly from the Census Bureau. "This is the database from hell," Reeves said. The file contains 70 to 80 fields, many of them coded.

"You'll get used to the codes," he said.

They obtained HMDA data from NICAR and checked parts of their analysis against published government reports.

Comparing census tracts over several decades was tricky. Tracts change and split as the population changes. Be prepared to spend a lot of time massaging the numbers if you plan to do this.

Bits, Bytes and Barks

Check out the IRE contest home page

Read the abstracts of the 1995 IRE contest winners and finalists. The site also includes winners going back to 1979, information on how to enter, and background on the judges for the 1995 contest. The site is at <http://www.ire.org/contest>

Data to think about

You can find more than 85,000 governmental bodies in the census of governments. In addition to states, counties, and cities, the census includes every taxing entity from sewer districts to school district to library districts.

The census looks at debt, property values, revenue and expenditures. The data includes the source of the revenue and purpose of the expenditure. There is also a directory file identifying all U.S. governmental units.

The census is conducted every five years in years ending in "2" and "7." The most recent year for which all the data is available is 1987. However, the preliminary finance file for 1992 is available on CD-ROM from the Census bureau.

To order the data, call the Census Bureau's customer service line at (301) 457-4100. Your state data center should also offer the data, probably at a cheaper rate.

NICARIANS moving on

Glaston Ford, a NICAR graduate researcher, has accepted a job as a computer-assisted reporter at the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*.

Also, staff member Natalya Shulyakovskaya has accepted a position with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch's* computer-assisted reporting program.

Taxed to the limit?

Taxpayers in some American communities are at least 10 times more likely to face criminal charges from the Internal Revenue Service than those living in others, according to a new analysis of internal government records.

Detailed data obtained by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), also show that the chances the IRS will recommend criminal charges against anyone are extraordinarily remote: only 17 per million. (The FBI says you're five times more likely to be murdered.)

TRAC's data is available via the web for reporters who want to do a CAR story on what's happening in their area. Reporters can download the data for individual federal districts.

The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse is a data research organization connected with Syracuse University. The co-directors of TRAC are David Burnham, a former investigative reporter with the *New York Times*, and Susan Long, a professor in Syracuse's School of Management who has specialized in IRS issues for more than 25

Keep up with NICAR online

Subscribe to our listserv and join in as reporters talk about how to do the job better. E-mail to LISTSERV@MIZZOU1.MISSOURI.EDU. In the message, on the first line, write: subscribe NICAR-L your name. To join IRE on the Internet, the instructions are the same except, on first line, write: subscribe ire-l your name.

IRE and NICAR are also accessible through CompuServe's Journalism Forum. Go to the JForum, Section 19. Also look into the IRE/NICAR files in Library 19.

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