October 1996

Uplink

A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

Environmental reporting

Uplink update

You can take a deep breath — thanks to reporters such as Russell Clemings of *The Fresno Bee*, James Bruggers of *The Contra Costa Times*, and Mark Schleifstein of *The Times-Picayune*, environmental issues are getting their share of journalistic scrutiny. In this issue of Uplink, Bruggers and Schleifstein share how their newspapers have used computer-assisted reporting to cover avian deaths and examine the world's fisheries. Greg Reeves of the *Kansas City Star* shares information on the toxic release inventory database. And Clemings brings us up to date on the Society of Environmental Journalists' Web page, which is now located on the IRE/NICAR server.

Aso, April Lynch of *The San Francisco Chronicle* talks about INS records, and Clemings, in a separate article, talks about examining CLAS scores.

As usual, look for Richard Mullins' Tech Tip, our calendar of events and our data library list.

Inside

Data exposes avian deaths

For the birds

By James Bruggers
Contra Costa Times

I knew the wind farms of Northern California were killing birds in their giant blades.

I knew it was enough of a problem that researchers were spending big bucks on studies designed to explain the avian deaths and find ways to reduce the mortality.

What I didn't know was how many birds the turbines chewed up, nor did I have a break down of the kinds of species affected. I also did not know exactly how the birds died.

Six months later

After a six-month investigation and a computer analysis of mortality reports, I had my answers — and my readers did, too. On May 14, 1995, the *Contra Costa Times* reported that about 8,900 turbines in the hills east of San Francisco had killed or injured 679 birds over a period of three years and one month. Most were birds of prey.

The death toll included 266 red-tailed hawks, 64 golden eagles, 48 barn owls, and 34 American kestrels. None of these are protected by state or federal endangered species laws, but all are by other federal laws.

The government can fine companies and individuals thousands of dollars if they kill golden eagles or other migratory birds under the Bald Eagle Protection Act or the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The computer analysis also revealed that the deaths were on the increase. The wind farms killed 10 golden eagles, for example, in 1992, 23 the following year and 28 in 1994. The toll on red-tailed hawks climbed from 40 in 1992 to 164 in 1994.

These numbers, however, were only a small part of the three-story package that began on the cover and filled most of two inside pages.

The main story explored a deep rift in

Continued on page two

New kid

SEJ homepage now located at www.reporter.org

By Russell Clemings
The Fresno Bee

There's a new kid in the www.reporter.org neighborhood: The Society of Environmental Journalists.

SEJ moved to the IRE/NICAR server this fall as the first step in an ambitious upgrade for SEJ's online services.

As an SEJ board member and manager of its Web page, I'm excited about the move and the plans we have for new services to our members. Best of all, except as noted, all of the services we have are open to non-members as well.

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Uplink
October 1996
Volume 8, Number 10
A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

Uplink is published every month by the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting, 138 Neff Hall Annex Columbia, MO 65211. (573) 882-0684. Subscription price is $35 (U.S.) annually, $50 outside the United States. Postmaster: Please send address changes to NICAR. Send e-mail to nicar@muccmail.missouri.edu.

NICAR is a joint effort of Investigative Reporters and Editors and the University of Missouri School of Journalism. NICAR services include hands-on newsroom training on computer-assisted reporting, special academic and advanced training in data analysis. NICAR is supported by a grant from The Freedom Forum and other foundations intended to help the institute deliver its services nationwide to news organizations and associations.

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For the birds

California's sizable environmental community over the issue. After all, wind energy is clean energy. It produces no greenhouse gasses, which many scientists blame for causing global warming.

It also detailed industry and government efforts to curb the deaths and revealed that there had been no prosecutions. Persuading a jury that the companies were intentionally violating the law would be difficult, a former federal prosecutor told me.

The second story documented how wind energy, once a booming affair in California, was facing an uncertain future due to land-use conflicts, the loss of subsidies and changing politics. Elsewhere in the United States, and in other countries, wind farms are expanding.

The third story was a short sidebar on a proposed new Bay Area wind farm.

It all started with a tip from a source who said he had heard that golden eagle deaths were increasing. I called the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and asked for mortality statistics, but was quickly rebuffed. They said the records were part of an ongoing criminal investigation, so I couldn't have them.

'No' is not an answer

Instead of filing a lawsuit, I followed another lead and found the records, or at least many of them. Companies operating wind farms in the region have to report mortality data to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

In Alameda County, thanks to a planning commission requirement, they must also submit the reports to the county planning department. The largest company, Kenentech, which has since filed for bankruptcy protection, also reported mortality data for neighboring Contra Costa and Solano counties to Alameda County.

Had Contra Costa and Solano counties also required companies to report mortality incidents, my numbers would have no doubt been higher. Those counties told me they weren't in the business of regulating wildlife.

The records came in two formats. One was a list that itemized each death or injury and included the date of the incident, species of bird, type of injury and location. The other was a sheet of paper that included the same information for each incident.

Notes on the data also included written descriptions of how the birds died.

"It was these notes that impressed me, the descriptions of just how badly these birds were being mutilated, and the fact that the birds couldn't see the danger they were about to face, " said Project Editor Gene Williams.

Building the database

Contra Costa Times computer guru Morgan Cartwright used Visual Basic to design a front-end program that allowed easy data entry. To make sure we entered the data in a consistent fashion, he designed a series of scrolling list boxes. One list, for example, contained all the different kinds of birds. Another was the location of the incident. One more provided choices for different kinds of injuries.

Cartwright chose the database program Microsoft Access to use on our IBM-clone 486 computer to manage and manipulate the data.

It took a temp worker and myself three days to enter the data. Once the data was in, the numbers were extremely simple to calculate.

After we crunched the numbers, I presented them to a variety of sources including the Fish and Wildlife Service, which had refused to share their information. Were we on target? No one objected.

We presented the numbers in roughly four paragraphs in the main bar and in a front-page graphic that also included the location of the turbines and energy trade-offs between wind and other sources.

Tips

- If one government source won't give you the data you need, don't give up. Look for other agencies that might have the same information.
- Balance and juggle. Though I worked on this project for more than six months, I still produced regular daily stories. I'd try to devote one day a week to the birds. Once I was ready to write, I persuaded my editors to give me two weeks to complete the project.
- See what others have written on the subject. A Nexis search turned up wind farm articles from around the globe.
- Check your results. Run them by a variety of experts and see what they think.

James Bruggers can be reached at (510) 935-2525, or send e-mail to ecowriter@aol.com

Continued from page one: # SEJ homepage

We especially encourage Uplink readers and IRE members to take advantage of what we've been putting together. We hope to create a one-stop site for information about and Internet resources of use in environmental journalism. We're not quite to that point, but once we've settled into our new digs, the upgrades will be coming fast and furious.

More documents

The centerpiece is our Web page, at http://www.sej.org. Begun two years ago on space donated by the Tacoma (Wash.) News Tribune, our page has two types of resources.

First, it has a rapidly growing collection of documents created by SEJ and related groups: Our quarterly SEJournal, with back issues to Spring 1995 and more being added steadily; the biweekly TipSheet, a guide to upcoming environmental news from SEJ, the National Safety Council's Environmental Health Center and the Radio and Television News Directors Association; and other publications. Our near-term plans include several new projects, such as "Frequently Asked Questions" files on environmental topics.

Pertinent hot links

Second, the SEJ Web page also contains a well-edited collection of links to other Internet sites that we believe are not just useful to environmental journalists, but also reliable. Some of these sites are featured in On the Internet on page six of this issue. Additional sites are added as they are brought to our attention. Our intent with these listings is to separate the wheat from the chaff, and focus on sites that either a) contain good, solid content, or b) have encyclopedic collections of links to other sites on the subject.

Search engine added

With our move to reporter.org we'll be adding one new feature that our members have requested many times: A search engine. Now, visitors to the Web page will be able to search by keyword for, say, an unfamiliar chemical that they have to write about on deadline, or a new subject — electromagnetic fields, for example — that they need to learn about in a hurry.

The Web page also contains information about how to join SEJ and regular updates on our national and regional conferences, many of which attract non-members as well. For example, on Sept. 7, we brought 80 people to Stanford University for an all-day conference on computer-assisted reporting and the Internet, an event co-organized by the Northern California Science Writers Association and sponsored in part by NICAR.

We've also posted frequent agenda updates for our 1996 national conference Oct. 17-20 in St. Louis, and as plans come together for our next national conference in Tucson Oct. 2-5, 1997, and the one after that in Chattanooga, Tenn., in 1998, we'll be posting updates on the Web site. The same is true for activities of our sister organization, the International Federation of Environmental Journalists. On the SEJ Web page, you'll find the IFEJ newsletter and a summary of plans for that group's annual conference in November in the Philippines.

New listservs

The Web page isn't the only thing we're doing at the sej.org domain. We're also creating several new listservs to supplement our existing, members-only list. At least one of these will be a general discussion list for environmental journalism, open to members and non-members alike. And in imitation of nicar.org, we also plan to create our own newsgroups for whatever purposes seem appropriate — looking for roommates at an upcoming conference, posting press releases and other announcements, and so forth.

We're grateful to NICAR for making room for us on its server, and to the Tacoma News Tribune for having given us a home during our formative period. We hope you'll visit the Web page at http://www.sej.org and let us know how you think it could be improved.

Russell Clemings can be reached at (209) 441-6371, or send e-mail to clemings@cris.com

Check out the Environmental Journalism Homepage and its latest features at its new home at http://www.sej.org

Toxic Release Inventory

What toxins are wafting your way?

IRE, NICAR and *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* will offer the Computer-Assisted Reporting Workshop for Minority Journalists in Richmond, Va., Nov. 15-17.

The hands-on training will include navigating the Internet, spreadsheets, database managers, negotiating for data and more.

Only 10 of 40 slots remain available.

To register, call Lisa Barnes at (573) 882-8969 , or send e-mail to lisa@nicar.org

By Greg Reeves
The Kansas City Star

For a high-impact story using one of the most interesting databases around, take a look at the Toxic Release Inventory data from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Company by company, across the nation, you can produce fascinating reports on the toxic pollutants that waft into our air, float down our rivers, are dumped in a landfill or — the way some toxins are removed — are shot a mile underground.

Good for beginners

If you are a beginner at computer-assisted reporting with no more than a spreadsheet at hand, the TRI database would be an excellent entry point — it's cheap, clean data with lots of public interest.

If you've thrown around a few gigabytes, you can generate great maps offering a detailed portrait of pollution in your community, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Since 1987, federal law has required companies to report "toxic releases" to the EPA. They must report what chemicals were involved and what amounts (in pounds) ended up in the air, land, water, sewer or storage site. Each chemical emission is a separate report. And each report becomes a record in the TRI.

The easiest way to get the data you want is probably a call to your local EPA office, state environmental office, or NICAR. Various Web sites also offer some TRI data.

TRI data is not harmful to your computing environment. The files are roughly one megabyte per state per year. Missouri data, for example, contained 1,845 records for 1994 and fit neatly on one diskette. That included mid-Missouri lead smelter country, where lead emissions in some places total nearly 12 tons per child.

What's in the data

There are 38 fields in the TRI database, and by now you are surely hungry to know them. Basically half the fields identify the "facility," or company site, and the other half identify the chemical and where it went.

For each facility you get: an ID number, name, street address, city, state and zip; parent company (if any) and contact name and phone; and, for map-making purposes, the latitude and longitude of the facility.

For each chemical you get an English name (acetone, styrene, zinc, 1,2,4-trimethylbenzene, etc.), and a unique identifying code from the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) registry. Use the CAS number rather than the chemical name to sort and group data.

For each release, you get: how much went up a smokestack ("stack" air); how much just drifted away ("fugitive" air); and how much went into the water, in the ground, to sewers or to offsite recycling plants.

Finally, each record contains one or more industry codes and federal ID numbers to help identify the facility.

How to use it

One of the best uses you can make of the TRI data is to report how pollution has changed in your community over the past eight years.

Have the worst companies from the 1980s cleaned themselves up? In FoxPro, you might want to find the biggest overall polluters first:

```
SELECT tri_id, facility, SUM(alw);
FROM tri;
GROUP BY 1;
ORDER BY 3 DESC
```

The first field, tri_id, is the facility ID number mentioned above. The "alw" field ("air-land-water") is the sum of stack-air, fugitive-air, land emissions and water emissions. Another handy add-up is stack-air plus fugitive-air, which equals total air pollution.

This query will give you a company name at the top and some huge number of pounds-emitted. Take the first 10 or so companies and see how they've fared since 1987:

```
SELECT tri_id, year, facility, SUM(alw);
FROM tri;
WHERE INLIST(tri_id, "1st tri_id", "2nd
tri_id...");
GROUP BY 1,2 ORDER BY 1,2,3 DESC
```

You're on your way to a story that people need to know. And there's much more. Maps bring out TRI's impact in vivid clarity: per capita toxic waste, the most polluted ZIP code, the center of zinc toxicity in your community.

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Cancer-causing chemicals

Not all of these 75 known carcinogens may show up in the TRI data for your area. In the Missouri and Kansas data for 1994, for example, 48 of the chemicals appear. The following list includes the CAS number, followed by the chemical name and can be used in a look-up table.

000140885 — Ethyl Acrylate
000151564 — Ethyleneimine
000075218 — Ethylene Oxide
000096457 — Ethylene Thiourea
000050000 — Formaldehyde
000118741 — Hexachlorobenzene
000302012 — Hydrazine
010034932 — Hydrazine Sulfate
007439921 — Lead
000058899 — Lindane
000101144 — 4,4'-Methylenebis (2 Chloroaniline)
000101779 — 4,4'-Methylenedianiline
000090948 — Michler's Ketone
000134327 — Alpha-Naphthylamine
007440020 — Nickel
000139139 — Nitrilotriacetic Acid
000079469 — 2-Nitropropane
001336363 — Polychlorinated Biphenyls
001120714 — Propane Sultone
000075558 — Propyleneimine
000075569 — Propylene Oxide
000081072 — Saccharin (Manufacturing)
000100425 — Styrene
000096093 — Styrene Oxide
000127184 — Tetrachloroethylene
000062566 — Thiourea
000584849 — Toluene-2,4-Diisocyanate
000091087 — Toluene-2,6-Diisocyanate
026471625 — Toluene Diisocyanate (Mixed Isomers)
000095534 — O-Toluidine
000088062 — 2,4,6-Trichlorophenol
000051796 — Urethane
000593602 — Vinyl Bromide
000075014 — Vinyl Chloride
000075070 — Acetaldehyde
000060355 — Acetamide
000079061 — Acrylamide
000107131 — Acrylonitrile
000060093 — 4-Aminoazobenzene
000092671 — 4-Aminobiphenyl
000090040 — O-Anisidine
007440417 — Beryllium
000542881 — Bis(Chloromethyl) Ether
000106990 — 1,3-Butadiene
007440439 — Cadmium
000056235 — Carbon Tetrachloride
000067663 — Chloroform
000107302 — Chloromethyl Methyl Ether
007440473 — Chromium
008001589 — Creosote
000120718 — P-Cresidine
000135206 — Cupferron
000615054 — 2,4-Diamino Anisole
000101804 — 4,4'-Diaminodiphenyl Ether
025376458 — Diaminotoluene (Mixed Isomers)
000095807 — 2,4-Diaminotoluene
000106934 — 1,2-Dibromoethane
025321226 — Dichlorobenzene (Mixed Isomers)
000106467 — 1,4-Dichlorobenzene
000091941 — 3,3'-Dichlorobenzidine
000107062 — 1,2-Dichloroethane
000075092 — Dichloromethane

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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.

Reproductive toxins

Not all of these chemicals, which are known to damage reproductive organs, may show up in the TRI data for your area. The following list includes the CAS number, followed by the chemical name, useful for look-up tables.

000071556 — 1,1,1-Trichloroethane
000071432 — Benzene
007440439 — Cadmium
000020042 — Cadmium Compounds
000075150 — Carbon Disulfide
000106898 — Epichlorohydrin
000107211 — Ethylene Glycol
000075218 — Ethylene Oxide
000020100 — Glycol Ethers
007439921 — Lead
000108383 — M-Xylene
007439965 — Manganese
007439976 — Mercury
000095476 — O-Xylene
000106423 — P-Xylene
000100425 — Styrene
000127184 — Tetrachloroethylene
000108883 — Toluene
00108883 — Toluene
000079016 — Trichloroethylene
001330207 — Xylene (Mixed Isomers)

CAR helps catch big fish story

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 Dan Kim
NICAR staff

In 1994, Mark Schleifstein of *The Times-Picayune* asked a simple question: "Is the Gulf of Mexico fishing industry in trouble?" Then, Schleifstein and reporting partners John McQuaid and Bob Marshall used CAR and the 'Net to catch a big fish.

Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council staff members told Schleifstein there would be plenty of fish — more than enough for both sport fishermen and commercial fishing — for the next 20 years. Staffers also said they had learned a lesson from the near-demise of the commercially valuable redfish, which was nearly wiped out in the 1980s by over-fishing, caused in part by the rise in popularity of Cajun blackened redfish.

Yet, when Schleifstein asked the council how the continued rapid loss of wetlands along the Louisiana coast would affect the Gulf fishery, the council replied that if the wetlands continued to disappear at their present rate of destruction, most commercially-important species of fish would disappear, too. That's when Schleifstein realized there was a bigger story.

World scope

Schleifstein, McQuaid and Marshall soon found their investigation of fishing issues had expanded into a world-wide story explaining the commercial, environmental and social forces affecting the world's fishing industry. They examined the giant Japanese fish markets, which have driven much of the growth in the Gulf's fishing industry and endangered many Gulf fish species. They looked at environmental damage in Ecuador and Thailand resulting from aquaculture. They probed how overfishing has affected communities in Massachusetts, Maryland and Alaska. And they examined how the destruction of wetlands affects fishing and fishers in Louisiana and abroad.

The 15-month investigation resulted in "Oceans of Trouble: Are the world's fisheries doomed?" — an eight-part series published in March.

Trawling the 'Net

Much of Schleifstein's computer work involved using the World Wide Web and Internet e-mail. He netted four listservs that were key to finding contacts among scientists and the fishing industry and to becoming quickly acquainted with the issues. He searched Web sites to find scientific papers on fisheries issues, as well as more fisheries contacts.

While Schleifstein trawled the listservs, McQuaid handled most of the database work.

The data, supplied by the National Marine Fisheries Service, included historical catches and market quantities of species for various regions and times. Some of the older data was provided on paper and had to be entered by hand. McQuaid entered and analyzed the data with Excel, generating summary data on fish catches by species and region.

Most agencies he went to had little data on the economic impact of changes in the fishing industry or the quality of the fisheries, but economic problems caused by over-fishing became a primary focus for the series. To get at this issue, McQuaid ran market-value analyses for the fisheries catch data, using Consumer Price indices to normalize prices.

McQuaid warns reporters to look for the agenda of the agency supplying data they use.

Problems

McQuaid said the real difficulty in doing this story was the lack of statistics and data concerning the economic effects and trends in the fishing industry. Often, the number of people employed by the fishing industry was not well documented, nor was the actual economic impact of increased fish catch amounts and changing fish prices. McQuaid also emphasized that the lack of data was as important to the story as the data he was able to get: The lack of data, he said, limited the ability of agencies whose job is to protect the environment and the fisheries to effectively do that job. Most of the data he was able to get was only collected for species of fish that were already seriously threatened by over-fishing.

The agencies seemed to do little to gather data on existing fish stocks before problems arose.

Results

Schleifstein said he hopes the series may have helped shape the revisions to the Magnusson Act

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On the Internet

Environmental sites that cook

By Russell Clemings
The Fresno Bee

General Information

National Library for the Environment: A project of the nonprofit Committee for the National Institute for the Environment (CNIE). At present, the library includes more than 100 reports from the Congressional Research Service (a branch of the Library of Congress) on the environment, agriculture, and natural resources. Eventually, it is supposed to include two other on-line components: "An Encyclopedia of the Environment," and "In Depth Issues in the Environment."

http://www.cnie.org/nle/index.shtml

• Environmental Health Center: Part of the National Safety Council. Including a number of publications aimed specifically at environmental journalists, including the Environment Writer newsletter, "Chemical backgrounders," and TipSheet, an alert to upcoming environmental news (produced in cooperation with the Radio and TV News Directors Foundation and the Society of Environmental Journalists).

http://www.cais.com/nsc/ehc/ehc.html

• Consortium for International Earth Science Information Network: A nonprofit established in 1989 by universities and other research organizations in response to a directive by Congress. Includes thematic guides to key environmental issues (including agriculture, human health, land use, and ozone depletion) and the full text of more than 140 international environmental agreements, plus a searchable catalog of other Internet environmental data.

http://www.ciesin.org/

• Environmental Protection Agency: On the whole, EPA's server is a mess. It's disorganized, and the search engine tends to return lots of trivial regulatory documents with little value. But at this URL, labeled "Finding EPA Information," there are links to the catalog for EPA's library system, the full text of the agency information guide "Access EPA," and other useful resources.

http://www.epa.gov/epahome/finding.html

• Envirolink: A Yahoo for the environment. Contains hundreds of links to sites operated by environmental groups, with a brief summary of each group's purpose. Also has links to environmental news briefs and a large collection of links to environmental sites of varying worth.

http://envirolink.org/orgs/

• GPO Access: While strictly speaking it's not an environmental site, this Government Printing Office service is extremely useful for retrieving documents generated by the environmental bureaucracy, including Federal Register notices, congressional bills and General Accounting Office reports.

http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aaces004.html

• Securities and Exchange Commission EDGAR: The same is true of this site; it's not just environmental, but it contains plenty of data on publicly traded corporations that may be involved in environmental stories.

http://www.sec.gov/edgarhp.htm

On-line environmental databases

Envirofacts: EPA's effort to put five of its major environmental databases, including the Toxic Release Inventory, on-line in searchable form. Difficult to use, but improving.

http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/ef_query.html

• RTK-Net: A telnet site where an environmental group has mounted the Toxic Release Inventory and other databases (including some non-environmental ones, such as the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act) in searchable form.

telnet://rtk.net

Chemicals and toxicology

Extension Toxicology Network: Peer-reviewed information about toxic chemicals, including pesticides. Includes contributions from the University of California-Davis, Oregon State University, Michigan State University, and Cornell University. Searchable.

http://ace.ace.orst.edu/info/extoxnet/

• Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: From the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Includes HazDat (a database of contaminants found at Superfund sites, searchable by geographical area), plus toxicological profiles of hazardous substances, public health statements concerning hazardous substances, and Frequently Asked Questions about chemicals and pesticides.

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Here are some Web sites for job listings recently posted in NICAR-L

• For TV jobs, try http://www.tvjobs.com, with links to a lot of individual station's Web sites.

• Gannett has updated its homepage to include job postings from all departments, including advertising, circulation, finance, human resources, marketing, news, on-line, production and systems. Check the "Job Opportunities" listing on the company's homepage at: http://www.gannett.com.

• IDG publishes computer-related publications from news-focused weeklies such as Network World to more feature-oriented publications such as PC World and Macworld. You can find job listings at: http://www.idg.com/idg/careers/listing/

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On the Internet

http://atsdr1.atsdr.cdc.gov:8080/atsdrhome.html

• National Toxicology Program: From the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. This agency produces toxicological data for use by other federal agencies. The site includes searchable lists of known and anticipated carcinogens and processes, and other health and safety data on chemicals.

http://ntp-server.niehs.nih.gov/

Other topics

Universities Water Information Network: Includes a database of U.S. Geological Survey water research, an experts directory, a searchable index of water-related web sites and a calendar of water events.

http://www.uwin.siu.edu/

• EPA's stratospheric ozone depletion page: Contains information about the science of ozone depletion, federal regulations to protect the ozone layer, information on methyl bromide, information for the general public, links to the Montreal Protocol, and other topics.

http://www.epa.gov/docs/ozone/index.html

• Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Includes a variety of data on U.S. commercial nuclear power plants, including basic details about each plant and its design, SALP (for Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance) reports, and the commission's "watch list" of troubled plants.

http://www.nrc.gov/

• Global Change Master Directory: From NASA, a good starting point for research on global warming. Includes highly technical data sets, but also a searchable collection of links to other servers with more easily understandable content.

http://gcmd.gsfc.nasa.gov/

• Endangered Species Homepage: From the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, includes the current U.S. endangered species list, plus many candidate species, news media fact sheets, the text of the Endangered Species Act as amended, and selected articles from the official Endangered Species Bulletin.

http://www.fws.gov/~r9endspp/endspp.html

Russell Clemings can be reached at (209) 441-6371, or send e-mail to clemings@cris.com

IRE and NICAR will hold a regional/ student conference Nov. 9 and 10 at Syracuse University. The conference will have sessions on paper and on-line records; interviewing, FOI, writing, and investigations on a budget for both print and broadcast. Cost is $10 for members, $50 for non-members, which includes a year membership worth $40. The student cost is $35, which also includes a year's membership worth $25. Student members can also attend for $10. Panels will take place on Saturday. Hands-on computer training will be available on Sunday for an extra $25.

For more information, e-mail Rose Ciotta at ciotta@buffnews.com or Rosemary Armao at armao@ire.org

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Big fish story

recently approved by Congress. The act is the major federal regulatory system governing commercial fishing. Items focused on in the series that are included in the revision are:

Individual transferable quotas, a way of assigning fish species-specific property rights to individual fishers aimed at protecting the resource while limiting the economic impact on fishers; and requirements that fish nets include devices to allow the escape of endangered sea turtles and fish bycatch — unwanted or too-small fish that often are thrown away when caught in existing nets.

Schleifstein mentioned that the series' discussion of the link between the annual summer "dead zone," or area of very low oxygen in the Gulf of Mexico, and the use of agricultural fertilizers in the Midwest, has been used by policymakers working with Midwest farmers to reduce their use of fertilizers.

The importance of wetlands, as the story points out, has led the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council to look at protecting the wetlands from further deterioration.

You can reach Mark Schleifstein at (504) 826-3327, or send e-mail to mersmia@aol.com

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Cancer

000542756 — 1,3-Dichloropropylene
000117817 — Di(2-Ethylhexyl) Phthalate (Dehp)
000064675 — Diethyl Sulfate
000119904 — 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine
000057147 — 1,1-Dimethyl Sulfate
000077781 — Dimethyl Sulfate
000123911 — 1,4-Dioxane
000106898 — Epichlorohydrin
007440382 — Arsenic
001332214 — Asbestos (Friable)
000071432 — Benzene
000092875 — Benzidine
000098077 — Benzoic Trichloride

Tech Tip

How long did that take?

Richard Mullins
University of Missouri/NICAR

Many databases include dates that define significant periods of time and deserve analysis. Court data can have arrest date, trial date and sentence date, for example. Inspection data can have date reported, date inspected and date enforcement action was taken.

Database software has the capability to do calendar arithmetic to answer questions such as, "Which case went the longest between arrest and trial?" or "Which inspection cases took the longest to get around to?"

Sometimes, however, hours and minutes count. For example, you might want to calculate response times for emergency calls, phone call duration, or how long someone was in jail. Comparing the elapsed time with this information is a little more involved, since the beginning time may start at 2:03 p.m. on one day and the ending time may be at 5 a.m. the next morning or the next week.

This month's tip is a custom FoxPro function that you can use to do these time calculations. You can download the file TimeDat.zip from ftp://www.reporter.org

The file contains the source code for the functions, a sample table to test with, instructions on how to use the file and the functions.

The functions are: DateTime(), DateTimeDiff(), and Hours(). You can use these functions as you would the regular built-in FoxPro functions: in a query, or in a FoxPro command such as REPLACE ALL. Copy the file TimeDat.prg to your FoxPro directory and then in the command window, type:

```
set procedure to TimeDat.prg
```

This makes the functions available. If you exit FoxPro or issue the CLOSE ALL command, you will have to type the command again to use the functions. For more information, see the documentation file included in TimeDat.zip

For illustration, I'll assume a table called TEST (included in TimeDat.zip) with five columns: ID, BeginDate, BeginTime, EndDate and EndTime. The question we're trying to answer is how much time passed between one starting date and time and the ending date and time.

The function DateTime takes two arguments: a date and a clock time. The clock time must be in the 24-hour format and indicated in hh:mm:ss or in hh:mm. The function converts the date and clock time to a single unit to define a point in time: the Julian day and the decimal proportion of the time of that day. If you want to think of Julian date as "star date," that's OK, since it is used in astronomy to sidestep the quirks of our calendar.

The function DateTimeDiff compares two DateTime results and returns the time interval, expressed in days. To convert the interval to hours, divide the result by 24.

Here are some query examples. This one uses DateTime:

```
SELECT id, ;
 DateTime(begindate, begintime) ;
 DateTime(enddate, endtime) ;
FROM test
```

This next query adds one more output column, using DateTimeDiff to calculate the days elapsed between beginning time/date and the ending time/date. Note that the functions are nested: the values returned from DateTime are passed to DateTimeDiff:

```
SELECT id, ;
 DateTime(begindate, begintime) ;
 DateTime(enddate, endtime) ;
 DateTimeDiff (DateTime(begindate,
begintime), ;
 DateTime(enddate, endtime) ) ;
FROM test
```

Here is how the DateTime function works, applying it to June 16, 1996, at 15:46:31.

The Julian date for 06/16/96 is 2450251. A Julian date is just a really big number: 2,450,251. It doesn't break down into anything else. At 15:46:31 on the clock, the day is 15.7753 hours old. Dividing that by 24 shows what proportion of the day has passed: 0.6573. Adding the Julian day and the proportion of the incomplete day gives the absolute reference we need to measure time periods that span a calendar day. With this kind of measure we can do time/date arithmetic on the mayor's cell phone calls.

Here is what the FoxPro command window would look like to get these answers. The SYS(11) function is a built-in FoxPro function that converts a calendar date to a Julian date. FoxPro has more than 50 different SYS( ) functions (In the commands below, the lines in bold would show up on the screen, not in the com-

Continued on page eleven

Tim Henderson of Gannett Suburban Newspapers in White Plans, N.Y., recently posted the following tip on NICAR-L: The way to "flip" data in Excel is this: Select the area you want to flip, copy it onto the clipboard, then choose "Paste Special..." and check "transpose" in the resulting dialog. It doesn't work with "cut," only "copy" (at least in Excel 4.0), so you have to paste the transposed data in another worksheet, or another part of the same worksheet and then delete the original selection if you want to get rid of it.

Data makes INS sweat

"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 April Lynch
The San Francisco Chronicle

April Lynch attended NICAR Bootcamp in August.

When Congress held hearings this summer on sweatshops and the garment industry, actress Jaclyn Smith turned down an invitation to stop by. The "Charlie's Angels" icon, who lends her name to a clothing line sold by K-Mart, said none of her apparel comes from sweatshops.

Apparently, she never saw a series from *The San Francisco Chronicle* from a few months before.

"Crime Without Punishment," investigating how the INS lets employers who hire undocumented immigrants off the hook, showed a shop full of women hunched over sewing machines in New York, stitching garments with the Jaclyn Smith label.

Paradox at work

With the help of Paradox, the series uncovered a long-standing pattern of employers flouting immigration laws while the feds looked the other way. Of about 12,000 cases filed by the INS against employers over five years, more than 7,000 resulted in no fines or punishment of any kind. The average fine was about $1,600 — small change for most companies.

Big companies routinely negotiated fines down to zero, and then got the official records sealed. Agricultural growers, one of biggest hirers of undocumented workers, were hardly ever visited by INS inspectors at all. That was especially true in California, where farm interests are big contributors to Gov. Pete Wilson.

Pulling the three-day series together took almost two years. The project began when Chronicle reporter Aurelio Rojas decided to examine the INS emphasis on controlling U.S. borders rather than workplaces.

He first FOIA'ed the INS in early 1994, asking for a record of every case the INS had pursued against employers for the last five years. He got stonewalled for months. But in the summer of that year, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner visited *The Chronicle*. Rojas slipped her a letter and explained his plight.

Covered in paper

A few months later, an envelope three inches thick landed in his mailbox. It was the INS records, and they appeared almost completely useless.

There were more than 12,000 records listing businesses, addresses, fines assessed and fines that were actually paid. The records were in alphabetical order by business name. There was no way to sort all the paper.

I had worked with Paradox and other database programs, and knew they could help make sense of the information. As the editor on the project, I suggested going back to the INS and asking for the disk or tapes that had generated the records. The INS refused, saying the computer information didn't exist.

So, we fed all 12,000 records into a scanner and transferred them into Paradox for Windows. That was a major improvement, until the realization hit that the scanner didn't always see numbers and symbols the way we did. The machine, for example, had sometimes read "$" as "5," turning a fine of "$10,000" into one of "510,000." Cleaning up and double-checking all the data was a slow, painful task.

Irrefutable facts

Once the data was in good shape, however, it revealed more than the INS could refute. Rojas traveled California, the Southwest and New York, visiting farms and factories. When he visited INS district offices armed with our findings, regional directors could not believe he had obtained the information he was showing them.

Even after being confronted with *The Chronicle's* findings, the INS has fought every step of the way. Without computer analysis, getting through their records would have been almost impossible.

"I'm still waiting to get individual case files for some employers, which I requested in May 1995," Rojas said.

"Crime Without Punishment" ran in March, shortly before Congress opened hearings on immigration law and sweatshop employers. Meissner promised quick reforms of how the INS allocates its resources. And closer to home, the series brought in $10,000 from readers for the families of three Mexican men electrocuted to death in a farm accident in California's San Joaquin Valley.

April Lynch can be reached at (415) 777-8432, or send e-mail to lyncha@sfgate.com. Aurelio Rojas can be reached at (415) 777-6030.

CLAS scores

Students beat odds

By Susan Lessmeister
Missouri School of Journalism

One in five students at Fowler High School near Fresno, Calif., cannot speak English and comes from a family on welfare. Yet, by at least one measure, such students outscored their peers at more affluent schools on the California Learning Assessment System tests.

Anastasia Hendrix and Russell Clemings of *The Fresno Bee* compared the socioeconomic status of students in Fresno County schools with students' performance on the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) tests.

Through their analysis, Clemings and Hendrix found that some schools did better than would be predicted given their economic backgrounds, which has been shown to have significant impact on academic performance.

Five of the schools in the Central Unified School District scored significantly lower than their statewide peers. Central High School in this district is located in a suburban area west of Fresno.

CLAS tests were given to over 1 million students in spring 1994. The test measured students' ability in reading, writing, and math. Students received a score for each subject area; the Bee averaged these scores for analysis, Clemings said.

"Generally, we published the data by ranking raw scores," Clemings said. But this time, the Bee included a comprehensive graph ranking the schools' performance against similar schools in California, measured by parent education levels and occupation.

Clemings said the data was readily available on the California Department of Education bulletin board system on the Internet. He converted the raw text files to .dbf files for manipulation.

Interpreting the data was relatively easy, Clemings said, because the state department of education calculated the socioeconomic scores for each school.

"We had no major problems other than logistical," he said. In order to create the graph, Clemings downloaded the numbers into FoxPro and graphed them using Microsoft Graph.

Clemings' and Hendrix's efforts did not go unnoticed by parents and teachers.

"They were generally pleased with where their school came out," Clemings said. "A lot of people called asking more questions about what the data meant."

Advice

Clemings had one piece of advice to offer reporters wanting to try a similar story: Use some other form of data to confirm that socioeconomic status is the most significant predictor of test scores. Clemings used Limited English Proficiency and percentage of minority enrollment to double-check his assumption.

"The idea that socioeconomic factors influence academic performance is not controversial, but it assures you don't go to the trouble to find data that it's the most important predictor and then learn it's something entirely different."

Russell Clemings can be reached at (209) 441-6371, or send e-mail to clemings@cris.com

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

Continued from page nine:

Tech tip

mand window.)

```
set procedure to timedat.prg
? sys(11, {06/16/96} )
2450251
? hours("15:46:31")
15.7753
? hours("15:46:31")/24
0.6573
? datetime( {06/16/96}, "15:46:31" )
2450251.6573
```

The Hours function takes one argument, a character string indicating a clock time or cumulative time, such as 78:35:59. It converts the time string into hours, with the partial hours converted to a decimal number.

Included in next month's Tech Tip will be custom FoxPro functions to convert various time strings such as 1406 and 2:14 p.m. and 02:14:04p to one standard.

Richard Mullins can be reached at (573) 882-2127, or send e-mail to richard@nicar.org

Handout of the month

Math for journalists

By Scott Thurm
San Jose Mercury News

Before you can use a spreadsheet, you need to understand the math behind the program. Here is one reporter's instructions, as presented at the 1996 IRE National Conference in Providence, R.I. Excel uses cell addresses to instantly perform the calculations below, so once you understand the math, you can make a spreadsheet do the heavy lifting.

The Great Flood: Did it happen?

It's simple arithmetic, and context, that will save your butt, not complex statistical analysis or calculus. We'll cover percent, percent change, percentiles, compound percentages, mean vs. median, context, and resources.

The Bible says, "All high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered."

Let's assume the highest peak was around 5,000 feet.

Rain: 40 days + 40 nights = 960 hours.

Rate: Two to three inches per hour is considered heavy rain. So, let's assume one foot per hour.

Amount: 960 feet, not accounting for any runoff.

How hard would it have had to rain?

5,000 feet / 960 hours = 5.21 feet per hour, not accounting for any runoff.

Percents

Percents are a standardized way of expressing a fraction, where the denominator (the bottom number) equals 100.

So, 1/4 is 25 percent, 1/3 is 33 percent, etc.

Percent Change = "change"/"old"

Example:

1996 budget = $500,000

1997 budget = $400,000

Change = $100,000

Percent change = $100,000 / $500,000 = -0.2 = minus 20 percent. (We frequently say something declined by 20 percent.)

Note that if the budget were cut by $100,000 this year and restored next year, that would be a 20 percent decrease, followed by a 25 percent increase. Lesson: You can't just add percentages to compute an overall percentage change.

In general, quantities cannot decline by more than 100 percent, because there's nothing left. However, there is no upper limit on how much something cn increase, in percentage terms. Example:

Michael Jordan's 1986 salary = $1 million

Michael Jordan's 1996 salary = $8 million

Change = $7 million

Percent change: $7,000,000/$1,000,000 = 7 = 700 percent

Percentage points

These are useful when comparing two numbers already expressed as percentages.

March unemployment = 5 percent

April unemployment = 6 percent

Change = 1 percentage point

Percent change = 1 (the change) / 5 (the old) = 20 percent

Compound percentages

A school district signs a contract giving teachers 8 percent raises in each of the next three years. What's the percentge increase in the contract? Note that the percent increase is applied to a bigger base each year. Assume the average teacher made $30,000 under the old contract.

First year: $30,000 * 0.08 = $2,400, so new salary is $32,400.

Second year: $32,400 * 0.08 = $2,592, so new salary is $34,992.

Third year: $34,992 * 0.08 = $2,799, so new salary is $37,791.

Total percent change: $37,991 - $30,000 = $7,991 (change)/$30,000 (old)

= 0.2597 = 25.97 percent

Mean vs. median

Mean is an arithmetic average. Add up the values and divide by the number of values.

Median is the middle value in a group, where the values have been ranked from top to bottom. (If there are an even number of members in the group, the median is the average of the middle two.)

How they can differ: Assume there are 100 workers at a company, and 95 make $30,000 a year, while five make $300,000.

Mean = (95 * 30,000) + (5 * 300,000))/100 = $4,350,000/100 = $43,500

Median = $30,000 (the average of the 50th and 51st highest salaries)

Which is more reflective?

For more information on how to successfully use numbers in news stories, consult:

John Allen Paulos, "Innumeracy," Vintage Books, 1988

John Allen Paulos, "A Mathematician Reads the Newspapers," Basic Books, 1995

Victor Cohn, "News and Numbers," Iowa State University Press, 1989

Philip Meyer, "The New Precision Journalism," Indiana university Press, 1991

NICAR notes

We've got plans for you

By Brant Houston
NICAR managing director

It's the time to accelerate again at NICAR.

Over the coming months, we will start a series of new efforts and expand on the many already underway. Here's a partial list. We will:

• Increase Uplink from 12 to 16 pages in order to accommodate the interests and requests of its readers. We will include "a handout of the month" feature, bring you more news of programs at NICAR, Investigative Reporters & Editors and the Missouri School of Journalism, and expand our coverage of CAR in broadcast and print and at universities.

• Add an intermediate level seminar (coming this January) on data cleaning, good database design, and advanced data analysis.

• Add a seminar in the spring on creating searchable databases on the Web.

• Become a broader repository for common and often used data, particularly state and local campaign data.

• Continue our programs to make CAR available to minority journalists by offering fellowships and working with the journalism school's Multicultural Management Program. We are giving three regional seminars for minority journalists in the next few months, one in Richmond, one in Dallas, and one in San Francisco.

• Offer management seminars for broadcast and print journalists on how to bring and keep a good CAR program at their news organizations.

• Continue our basic Bootcamps. Our January Bootcamp is full, and our May Bootcamp is filling fast. We'll have two more in the summer.

• Give an expanded national conference in Nashville in March. This national conference, dubbed NashCAR, will not only cover the usual computer-assisted reporting panels and training, but also will have advanced classes in mapping, statistics, programming, Web development, and Lotus Notes.

• Develop more joint programs with other universities. We already work with Northwestern University, the University of North Carolina, the University of Maryland and Columbia University.

• Continue our on-the-road programs to better help small- to medium-size news organizations, but also add on-line tutorials as follow-up training.

Brant Houston can be reached at (573) 882-0684, or send e-mail to brant@nicar.org

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.

IRE notes

Contest, publications and more

By Bruce Moores
IRE staff

• Looking for a last-minute, substantive story as the candidates begin the homestretch to the November elections? We can help. The IRE Resource Center has produced a campaign coverage booklet that includes resources and tips for covering campaigns on-line, analyzing FEC data through CAR techniques, backgrounding members of Congress, individual contributors or businesses. A supplement to the booklet includes handouts from IRE's National Conference this June in Providence, such as an FEC guide to contributions and the law, among other enlightening nuggets.

• You've spread out the data, polished the numbers, mined the Internet, backgrounded and double-checked your facts and figures, written sharply and nailed a story. You're proud of it, so why not share it? We are looking for stories that used computer-assisted reporting. We're developing our newest "idea" book, where we take not the story, but the information on how the story was done and publish it so that other reporters don't have to start from scratch when embarking on a similar story. Look for fresh ideas, new perspectives on old problems and, more importantly, practical stuff including a story synopsis, list of sources, databases, spreadsheets, and Internet sources. Read about — and therefore avoid — the pitfalls that tripped up others.

Submit stories to consider to Brant Houston, c/o NICAR, 138 Neff Hall Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, Mo., 65211.

• Along this same thread, consider submitting your best work for the upcoming IRE Annual Contest for the best in investigative reporting. The deadline is Jan. 15. We'll send out entry forms soon. Remember to check out the contest information, and a list of previous winners, on the IRE homepage at http://ire.org

Seminars, bootcamps, conferences

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 onprofits (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.

• Kiplinger Seminar, Columbus, Ohio — Nov. 8, 1996. Closed.

• Allentown, Pa., *Allentown.Call* — Nov. 12-13, 1996. Closed.

• New Brunswick, N.J., AP — Nov. 15-16, 1996. Open to all. (609) 392-3622.

• 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. 20-22, 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 Wendy Charron at (573) 882-0684.

• RTNDA (Radio and Television News Directors Association), Los Angeles — Oct. 9-13, 1996.

• SEJ (Society for Environmental Journalists), St. Louis, Mo. — Oct. 17-20, 1996.

• Multicultural Management Program-NICAR, Columbia, Mo. — Oct. 13-18, 1996.

• IRE/NICAR Student Regional Conference, Syracuse, N.Y. — Nov. 9-10, 1996. Cost is: IRE member $10 for conference. Non IRE Member, professional rate $50 for conference (includes $40 IRE membership fee). Non IRE member, student rate $35 for conference (includes $25 student membership fee. Syracuse students, $5 to attend conference. Additional $25 fee for Sunday computer training.

• Minority Regional Conference, Richmond, Va. — Nov. 15-17, 1996. Open to minorities.

• 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 detains, 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.

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.

• The Health Care Financing Administion'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, 1992-1995, includes breakdowns by agency.

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

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

• 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, 1989-1995. 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.

NEW • 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

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TRI

Continued from page four:

Other important ways to look at TRI data include limiting your queries to include only known cancer-causing chemicals and known "reproductive toxins" — chemicals that damage reproductive organs.

To do that in FoxPro, make a table out of a list of CAS numbers of all the known carcinogens. Then match those numbers against the CAS numbers in the TRI database, something like this:

```
SELECT cancer.*, chemical, any-other-
fields;
FROM cancer, tri;
WHERE tri.cas_no = cancer.cas_no;
```

Then do the same thing with reproductive toxins, making a FoxPro table out of a list of their CAS numbers. See tables on page 4.

Greg Reeves can be reached at (816) 234-4366, or send e-mail to greeves@kcstar.com

Bits, Bytes and Barks

NashCAR on track

NashCAR, NICAR's 1997 national conference, will be March 6-9 in Nashville, Tenn., with the support and help of The Tennessean and a panel of local journalists.

The conference 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.

The conference will use of computer labs at local universities and will have a demonstration room to 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.

Jobs

• The Daily Press of Newport News, Va., is looking for a sports editor who is at home in cyberspace, with television and in the locker room to lead a group of writers who cover sports ranging from the Washington Redskins and minor league hockey to AAA baseball.

Send resume, cover letter and supporting information to: Felicia Mason, staff development editor, Daily Press, 7505 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, Va. 23607, or send e-mail inquiries to fmason@tribune.com

The Daily Press is part of Tribune Co.

• The York Daily Record in York, Pa., is looking for a prep sports writer and metro reporter. Familiarity with the Internet and computer-assisted reporting is a plus for each of the jobs. Send resume and clips to Sports Editor, York Daily Record, P.O. Box 15122, York, Pa. 17405-7122

The prep sports writer is wanted immediately to "continue a tradition of putting a pro slant on prep and community athletics."

The metro general assignment reporter is wanted for Jan. 1. Those with police reporting experience are especially encouraged to apply. Send resume and clips to Metro Editor, York Daily Record, P.O. Box 15122, York, Pa 17405-7122.

The York Daily Record is a 42,500 circulation, Monday-Saturday morning paper. For more information about the paper, see its Web site at http://www.ydr.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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