

Uplink

September 1997

A newsletter for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

Fun with CAR

Uplink Update

For any of those who doubted that CAR could do it all, this issue is for you. CAR is not just for byte heads and government reporters anymore.

In this issue, Janet Roberts shares how the *Wilmington Star* has used CAR for features ranging from African-American women's difficulty in finding love to an analysis of cities in other states that shared Wilmington's name.

Heather Newman and the *Detroit Free Press* turned their lenses on movie critics and reviewed their reviews using computers.

The *Colorado Springs Gazette* asked readers to rate their favorite comics and then used Access to analyze favorites according to age.

NICAR's Kara Morrison also looks at a report on aging trends of parents and popular baby names done by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*.

Also in this issue, North Carolina reporter Hart Matthews shares his first CAR experience.

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CAR for all

Number-assisted features

By Janet Roberts

Wilmington Morning Star

Gone are the days when computer-assisted reporting was the playground of big-splash, hard-news project reporters. Today, any reporter worth his or her salt is in on the game, using computers just like they use the telephone, the notepad and the morgue.

And that includes the features department.

At the Wilmington "Morning Star," a 55,000 daily on the North Carolina coast, we have made it our goal to get all reporters — in all corners of the newsroom — using computers as a daily reporting tool. The effort is paying off.

If you look at the newsroom PCs with Internet access, you won't just find City Hall reporters sitting in front of the screens. You'll see features and sports reporters, too. You'll find the same reporters plugging numbers into Excel for quick crunching. They load Netscape search forms to query the newsroom's voter registration records, property tax records and other government databases. They pop in the SelectPhone CD to find sources for their stories.

For readers, the result is stories that often have more depth, more varied sources and more reach than they would otherwise. Consider these examples:

Coming to their Census

Feature writer Deirdre McGruder set out to do a story about educated black women who have found successful careers but can't find love. She had plenty of anecdotes from women frustrated

because they can't find educated black men to date. From there, she sought figures to lend the story weight.

Fortunately for her, the Census Bureau posted a report on its home page in July with 1996 estimates on the education and income levels of black Americans. She found there are about 50 percent more educated black women in this country than educated black men. The

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Hooray for CAR

Paper rates critics

By Heather Newman

Detroit Free Press

Readers love movie critics, and movie reviews are one of the most-read parts of the paper.

That's what led us to try a computer-assisted analysis of film reviews for the *Detroit Free Press*.

Knight-Ridder/Tribune Graphics puts together a weekly summary of starred reviews of current movies. We typed in their record of the number of stars given to each film by reviewers from nine newspapers into a Paradox database, starting with the ratings given in January 1996 and ending the last week of March.

We ended up with ratings for

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its services nationwide to
news organizations and
associations.

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Critical reviewing

more than 200 movies. Eventually we cut the number of papers we used to seven, because two of the newspapers only appeared in the graphic for about half a year each. Appearing in the final story were reviews from the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *New York Daily News*, the *Seattle Times* and, of course, the *Free Press*.

We typed in the Motion Picture Association of America rating (PG, R, etc.) for each movie, the number of critics who had reviewed a particular film — useful for doing averages — and the month, day and year when reviews first appeared.

We also included an arbitrary “category” for each film. *Free Press* movie critic Terry Lawson and I sat down to go over each film, deciding whether it was a comedy, a drama, horror, suspense, a children’s film and so on. This let us do averages by category, to see which types of films were getting the best ratings that year.

Critical analysis

Once the grunt work was done, we moved on to the analysis.

First up: a quick check to see what the most popular rating was (two stars) and averages by category. Dramas averaged 2.51 stars each, followed by children’s films at 2.44.

Horror movies, to no one’s surprise, were dead last, with an average of 1.8.

Next was a check to see what the best-rated films were for 1996, we wanted to use the year to compare critics’ opinions to the public’s vote (as measured by box office take) and the Academy Awards. The movie with the most stars? “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” whose average of 3.86 put it firmly at the top of the pack.

Unfortunately, the “Hunchback” had not done so well at the box office, where it didn’t even make the top 10, or at the Oscars, where it didn’t get a major award nomination.

“People at Disney didn’t even think that was a great film,” we were told by Bruce Davis, executive director of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the folks who give out Academy Awards).

Thumbs up or thumbs down?

Now we had the basis for our story. We knew, after further checking, that critics didn’t often agree with the public or the Academy.

The next numbers we crunched told us the final link in the story: They didn’t agree with each other, either.

We found just eight movies in the study where critics unanimously gave the same rating. Four of those were bombs. (“Remember Eye for an Eye,” “Kazaam?”). Just one made three stars (“Fly Away Home”). None made four.

In fact, critics didn’t even agree if some movies were good or awful. We had four movies that had gotten both one and four stars by different critics.

Sixty-five films got both one star and three stars from those who reviewed them.

We used Lexis-Nexis to look up some of those reviews, then called the critics who wrote them. In what turned out to be our lead anecdote, Rene Rodriguez of the *Miami Herald* talked about reviewing “Austin Powers,” Mike Myers’ spoof on secret agents. He loved the film, laughing out loud in the near-empty theater, and called Myers “a comic genius” in his review.

We followed it up immediately in the story with a quote from the “Austin Powers” review by Tom Maurstad of the *Dallas Morning News*, who opened that the movie “fails to provide a single reason why we’d want to sit through it.”

We included comments from a half-dozen reviewers, including one-half of the most-disagreeing critic duo in America: Siskel and Ebert. (We got Gene Siskel. Roger Ebert was at Cannes.)

To round out the piece, our critic Lawson wrote a first-person story about being a movie critic, which led with his confession about how he deals with people looking over his shoulder on airplanes and wanting to know why he’s writing about movie stars:

“With no shortage of professional pride, I reply: ‘I do internal system analysis for a Korean portable computer manufacturer.’”

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CAR: it's for everyone

number of black female professionals in the workplace continues to rise as do their salaries. And a trip to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Web page gave her another eye-opening figure: In 1995, black men were seven times more likely to be in prison than their white counterparts.

McGruder was able to weave the statistics throughout the story, resulting in a far more thoughtful piece than it would have been otherwise.

This was her first experience with the Census Bureau's Internet site, and she recommends it to other feature reporters.

"The Census is your friend," she said. "Visit often."

Naming names

Feature writer Lee Roberts did just that when asked to do a piece about the other Wilmingtons in the United States.

He headed to the Census Bureau's home page and searched for the name Wilmington. That found him 12 other communities that share our name, plus a statistical profile of each.

Roberts downloaded statistics on each community and imported them into an Excel spreadsheet for comparison.

The computer work paid off.

Before he even picked up the phone to start calling people in the different Wilmingtons, Roberts knew the racial makeups of the towns, whether they are rural or urban, how many people commute to work, the median income, etc.

That allowed him to frame his questions and focus his interviewing time on the anecdotes and descriptions that gave the story life.

Relocating

Feature writer Clifton Daniel was doing a piece on families who leave higher-paying jobs in other cities to move to Wilmington for its slower pace and beautiful beaches.

The cost of living doesn't hurt, either, a point Daniel drove home with a visit to the Internet's Relocation Calculator.

He was able to plug in the salaries people were earning in the towns they left and show they needed to earn substantially less to lead a similar lifestyle in Wilmington.

What's in a name?

Lee Roberts used the SelectPhone CD, a cross-reference directory for the entire United States, to do a story on just plain folks from our readership area who share famous names with celebrities and historical figures.

The CD led him to Michael Jordan — not the basketball superstar who hails from Wilmington, but the self-proclaimed "short, white and poor" one, a roofer who lives just up the road in a neighboring county. The short Jordan said kids often telephone thinking they've found the basketball star.

"The younger kids who call, I feel sorry for them," Jordan said. "They have high hopes, and then they get me."

Roberts also found Joan "Can we talk?" Rivers living in Wrightsville Beach, John Kennedy living in rural Whiteville, Robert E. Lee living near a Civil War fort in Kure Beach and John Wayne, a huge fan of the movie great.

Janet Roberts can be reached at (919) 343-2389, or send e-mail to starnews@wilmington.net

All of the Internet sites mentioned in Janet Roberts' article can be accessed through the Morning Star's research page: <http://starnews.wilmington.net/starlink/linkmain.html>

CAR goes to the dogs

One of the most popular features and one that is often used as a first project for beginning CAR reporters is an analysis of pet licenses.

Several newspapers and television stations have tried their hand at this story, analyzing the most popular breed, name, sex and color dogs by city or county.

Many cities already have their pet license information stored electronically, but some do not, requiring reporters to do their own data entry.

The results, however, are often worth it. It's a quick story that often gets the biggest of results — reader interest.

The Lawrence, Mass., *Eagle-Tribune* wrote a dog story in 1994 that was featured in IRE's "100 Computer-Assisted Stories."

"It was a fun feature story that delighted our readers," *Eagle-Tribune* reporters wrote in the guide book. "It also showed other reporters and editors that not all computer-assisted reporting has to be lengthy investigative pieces."

Computers get comical

To get a copy of IRE's
"100 Computer-
Assisted Stories,"
which includes ideas
for both
features and
hard-hitting
investigations, call
NICAR at
(573) 882-0684.

By Victor Greto

The Colorado Springs Gazette

They're inane, funny, silly, idiosyncratic — and humbling because they're one of the most popular features of the daily newspaper. They're the comics.

Recently, *The Gazette in Colorado Springs* conducted a survey of its readers to discover what its most-read and most-hated comics were. Readers could cut out a form and send it back to us within two weeks. Sure enough, we received over 4,000 replies, better than any other cut-out-a-form-and-send-it-in-on-your-own-nickel survey we've done.

Readers chose what they thought were our best and worst comics, and then rated each comic with one of the three choices: ALWAYS READ, SOMETIMES READ or HATE IT.

The Gazette's Research Center volunteered to tabulate the results into Microsoft Access and run queries that dealt with ages and gender of respondents, and how a mix of each of these categories judged the comics.

To facilitate inputting, I converted genders into the numerals 1 and 2. I converted age variables into the numerals 1 (17-younger), 2 (18-34), 3 (35-54), and 4 (55-older). The three ratings from which they chose were also converted into numerals.

We hired temps to input the data. It took about three days.

For best and worst

First of all, after all the data was inputted, we wanted to find out the overall tally: what was considered the BEST COMIC?

When you choose peculiar queries, you don't want to run the Query Wizard Access 95 provides. So pick QUERY, then DESIGN VIEW. Choose the table (which in my case I called, simply, COMICS). This query entailed two steps: I chose BEST COMIC within the FIELD slot; in the box beneath entitled TOTAL, I chose GROUP BY. In the next column over, I chose BEST COMIC as the Field name, COUNT in the TOTAL field, then DESCENDING in the Sort field.

I got my answer: the winning comic was "For Better or Worse." Running a similar query, and using the same terms — except using the WORST COMIC field instead of the

BEST COMIC - I calculated what people had voted as the most-hated comic: "Where's Waldo" and "Judge Parker" came out on top — or bottom, actually.

To ascertain the top 5 ALWAYS READs and HATE ITs by age and sex was a little more time-consuming. I had to use Access in tandem with Excel to do it as expeditiously as I could. If you have a better way, let me know.

I discovered I could not run a single query (like I had hoped) by grouping age and sex, then asking Access to count the individual comics' 1-2-3 variables. Access evidently needs to group, then count what it has grouped, one-by-one. That would mean I would have had to have done 42 queries on one category of age and sex. Because I wanted to do 8 categories, that would be a total of 336 queries. Excel came to my rescue.

I exported my original table into Excel. Selecting all the responses to the ALWAYS READ, SOMETIMES READ or HATE IT (i.e., 1,2,3), I eliminated the 2s and 3s, saved the table under COMICS1 (i.e., a different name), then imported it back to Access.

Within Access and with the new table, I ran this query:

Choose QUERY, then DESIGN VIEW; in the first column, I picked my COMICS1 table, the AGE field, the GROUP BY "1" (17-younger); in the next column, I chose the SEX field, GROUP BY "1" (male); in the next column, I chose our first comic, B.C., then COUNT; in the next column, I chose the next comic with the same COUNT, and continued until all the comics were done.

It worked fine. But the results were not sorted in descending order.

To sort the query, I hit the "Analyze it in Excel" button. From there, I selected the results, went to DATA, chose SORT, asked it to sort by ROW 2, which contained the numeric results of the Query, clicked on OPTIONS, asked it to sort from left to right, and hit OK. Finally! The top comics in descending order.

This first query counted all the "1" numerals for each comic as grouped by males 17-younger. I did the same for all the other combinations of male/female and the four different age-groups, analyzing or sorting each in Excel. After the initial set-up query, it didn't take long.

To get the 5 worst for each group, I exported

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Testing for significance

By John Sullivan and Sarah Cohen
NICAR

Many journalists spend hours staring at data and wondering if they are looking at something that happened by accident.

When a sheriff disciplines relatively more female deputies one year than male, is it possible that the pattern is just a fluke? The sheriff will argue it was a random blip in the numbers. A reporter has been hearing of other signs of sex discrimination.

A significance test can help guide you toward the truth.

Pick your test

Many journalists who look for significance use a chi-square test. Pollsters often use a T-test. These may sound confusing, but just think of them as tools that help us look at differences. The decision for which test you can run has to do with the kind of data you start with, how it's collected and whether it represents a universe or a sample.

Categories or numbers?

Let's talk about the different types of data. Statisticians classify variables into four measurement scales: nominal, ordinal, ratio and interval. But we often deal with just three. As you move up the data ladder, you get more power to describe an event that happened in the real world.

Nominal data are used to classify things. Race or gender for example. They are categories that do not run on a scale.

Ordinal data are in categories that run on a scale. Think of them as ranks. Pure ranks, like No. 1 and No. 2, are ordinal. So are words like poor, middle-income and rich. They're easy to think about.

You get more information than just categories, but you don't know anything about the distance between the values. Rich may not be twice as rich as poor.

Continuous variables

These are numbers: Test scores, incomes, or years in prison. Most commonly, we use numbers that can be added, divided and multiplied with ease: Five is half as big as 10. You can always convert a number into a word. You can't convert a word to a number.

Chi-Square

Chi-squares, the most common significance test used in journalism, tells us whether data arranged in categories reflect differences that happened by dumb luck. But keep in mind that we rarely deal with samples. Some would argue there's no point to a chi-square test. If the sheriff disciplined more women than men, it happened. It's true. On to the interview.

But we still have no way to evaluate the sheriff's claim of a fluke. The nice aspect of chi-square tests is that, unlike many other statistical tests, it makes no assumptions about the sample you drew. So choosing one year because it was the most recent can still create a reasonable chi-square test.

You normally get chi-square tests by setting up a crosstab, most frequently using SPSS. Although it's possible to generate them in Excel, it's much harder, because you have to hand-calculate much of its input.

Before we go on, we should probably talk a little about what makes something significant. Social scientists often say you have a "significant" gap if it's unlikely - about 5 percent of the time - you would have seen answers like yours purely by coincidence. It has nothing to do with whether or not the difference is meaningful, or even true. It's just not by chance. The other thing to keep in mind is that significance tests rule out coincidence as a possible explanation. They don't prove anything else.

Also keep in mind that a chi-square is sensitive to two things: The number of cases you're examining, and the difference between the numbers you get and the numbers that you'd expect based on their proportions. As soon as you start looking at thousands or even hundreds of cases, chi-squares begin to report "significant" results, even if the difference is teeny. So a denial rate for mortgages of 7 percent for white homeowners and 8 percent for black homeowners can be significant if you have enough applications. It might not stand up to the "who cares?" test we use for news.

T-tests

The T-test is used to examine the difference between two means. They're used when you're working with one variable, or field, with numbers in it and another that comes in two categories.

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Sarah Cohen is always looking for ideas for future statistics columns.

Has a statistic got you stumped? Have you finally mastered a statistical test? Got an idea for a future story?

E-mail Sarah at sarah@nicar.org

Writing the story

This is a combination of two handouts given at the National IRE Conference in Phoenix. To order the complete handouts or to get a list of other available handouts, call the IRE Resource Center at (573) 882-3364.

By Richard Galant and Don Walker
Newsday/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

It's easy to remember to add color and life to your story when writing features about movie critics of baby names. It is harder, but no less important, to do so when writing about county government or aviation. The following is a combination of two writing handouts given in June at the IRE National Conference in Phoenix.

Not all of these tips are new, but all are worth repeating.

Got data. Now what?

One of the toughest things about computer-assisted reporting is that it's not enough to be a dogged reporter and a skilled user of database software. The best CAR work stands out in large part because the reporters have mastered the skill of writing compelling enterprise stories.

There are no simple recipes for effective writing in newspaper projects. But there are some tips that can serve as a guide.

Hone the message

Sometimes the process of reporting - obtaining data from reluctant officials, getting it into a usable format, crunching the numbers, drawing and verifying the conclusions - can be so mind-numbing that it's hard to stand back and see the significant theme that runs through your findings. But it's this part of the process that's most crucial - you have to figure out the single most important message that needs to be communicated. The best stories have a single, central theme which the data, the interviews, the documents, the examples support.

Keep it simple

You spent three weeks on the story, interviewed 50 people, examined 212 documents and put 6,000 record into a Foxpro database. You used a Pentium 133 with 32 megs of ram to crunch the data. That's impressive and important. But don't let it get in the way of telling the story.

How it was done

How important is it to explain to the reader how we did this wonderful computer research? I've found that it's far more helpful to separate

the "How We Did This Story" from the actual reporting and writing. I think most readers couldn't give a flip what kind of database we used. There's nothing wrong with reporting quickly how we reached our conclusions, but save the heavy lifting for a sidebar inside Part A.

Nerd boxes and graphics

If there's important details about how you used the data and about definitions of terms used in the story, consider breaking it out into a separate box. It will be there for those who need to know the details, but it won't deter the general reader. When using graphics, keep it simple. Highlight boxes on what you found out are extremely helpful. Readers tend to look toward those first, then read the story.

Tell a Story

The same people who balk at reading an eight inch story on county government will devour a 500-page John Grisham novel. When stories are "too long," it's often because writers have failed to make them compelling enough. How do you do that? Again, there's no right formula, but often the key is to use a narrative format. Narratives keep people reading by introducing believable characters and setting colorful scenes. The best stories of this type follow the form of a novel - with a beginning, middle and end. It's not an easy thing to do - in the reporting you need to nail down details of the characters, the color, the dialogue - that you might not gather in reporting a more traditional survey story. There's no excuse for embellishing the details or creating composite characters. But if you do the reporting painstakingly and craft the story carefully, there can be a big dividend in more readership.

The computer did most of your work, but do you have enough human faces in your report? Even the most computer literate will long for a human element to your story. The real question will be whether to include that in your main story, or break out a sidebar. There's no hard and fast rule. But having someone tell your story without the benefit of Paradox or Excel makes the story.

Don't forget the basics

We talk often about the nut graf at the *Journal Sentinel*, as most papers do. But you would be surprised to see how often it gets buried in the

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Focus on writing

story. If you're going to report proudly that bad guys are living in your neighborhood because of some bureaucratic screwup, then explain why that's important to life as we know it. Many reporters seem to get too caught up with the "gee whiz" part.

Vary the tone

Avoid large, uniform sections — chunks of data or extended interview segments — in the story, if possible. To keep readers interested, mix anecdotes, key findings, data and quotes.

Caution

Be conservative in interpreting the data. Try to imagine all the potential counter-arguments to your central finding. Bounce it off experts. You may have to go back to the data to see if your findings and methodology are really bulletproof. Make sure your story states prominently the point of view of those who can make reasonable arguments against the central finding. Do you have an adequate response to your blockbuster? Are they buried in the story, or did they get their shot higher in the story? You have to find the right place in the story, and not bury it, even if they think your story is full of holes.

Killer Comparisons

Strive for ways to derive statistical findings that can fairly be stated in the most concrete terms. In *Newsday's* series last year on racial discrimination in mortgage lending, the central finding from an analysis of nearly 100,000

mortgage loans was that African-American applicants are rejected nearly three times as often as whites. That was stated prominently. But the story also brought that point home to readers: "The gap is so wide that a black applicant making more than \$150,000 a year stands a greater chance of being rejected than does a white person making less than \$35,000 a year."

Suspense

If you use the narrative form, readers will stay with the story because it keeps them in suspense about the way things will turn out. The narrative can build momentum, propelling readers through the story.

The End

Bring it back home at the end of the story. Explain what happened to the people you wrote about at the top — or go back to the community you began writing about — or both. The last few paragraphs of a story can be the most powerful and can leave readers with a lasting impression.

Dynamic

Sometimes the data is strong and the finding so urgent, that the story works best with a hard lead, rather than an anecdotal top and narrative approach. Go for it.

Richard Galant can be reached at (516) 843-3274, or by e-mail at rgalant@newsday.com.

Don Walker can be reached at (414) 224-2051.

The IRE Resource Center has several writing-related handouts including tip sheets from Ken Auletta and Don Fry. To order copies, call the center at (573) 882-3364.

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Comic analysis

the original COMICS table into Excel again. In Excel, I selected and then eliminated all the "1" and "2" responses for each comic. Preserving the 3s, I saved the new table as COMICS2, then re-imported it into Access.

I built these queries in the same manner as the other ones, but this time the "top" comic was actually the worst.

The story, published on April 12, 1997, on the cover of *The Gazette Lifestyle* section, was a success. The tallying, graphics and tongue-in-cheek approach of reporter Rick Ansoorge added to the popularity of the feature.

We found, perhaps naturally enough, that it was dominated by elderly people, but all the categories gave interesting results: for instance, young girls preferred "Luann," while young boys loved "Garfield." Men 18-34 loved

"Dilbert," while women 18-34 preferred "For Better or Worse."

More importantly, it was enlightening for our Features Editor, who took the results and the ensuing comments to reshape the comics page.

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Sites on the borderline

To access the Periodistas de Investigacion Web site, point your browser to <http://investigacion.org.mx>. A version of this handout with all 250 links is available at this site.

By Lise Olsen

Periodistas de Investigacion

This special list of border links, organized by theme, is part of a larger and ongoing effort by Periodistas de Investigacion to compile lists of resources for journalists covering Mexico and covering U.S./Mexico border issues. The complete list, which now includes more than 250 links, is available in Spanish directly from our office.

Health and Environment

Borderlands Environmental Archives

<http://www.txinfnet.com/mader/ecotravel/border/borderlands.html>

Archives of environmental information on the border compiled by Ron Mader, a freelance journalist who specializes in environmental themes. Along with its sister page, Borderlands Links, it includes announcements, press releases, activities of various institutions and independent groups as well as an extensive biography and list of contracts in Mexico and the United States.

Borderland Links

<http://www.txinfnet.com/mader/ecotravel/border/borderlands1.html>

A long list of links related to the border and to environmental issues, which includes a bibliography, and an index of related sites. The author of the site, Ron Mader, offers a rating of each link from the most extensive to the hardly adequate. It includes links to publications, NGOs, government links in the U.S. and in Mexico, academic sites and others.

Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov:8080/epahome/search.html>

EPA's homepage includes lots of information on environmental themes, including directories of databases.

EPA U.S./Mexico Border Activities

<http://www.epa.gov/compendium/index.html>

This page specifically offers information on the EPA projects in the border region.

Programa Frontera XXI

<http://semarnap.conabio.gob.mx:80/>

OPINION\programa.htm

This program, administered jointly by the U.S. and Mexican governments, is meant to foster environmental protection and sustainable development.

Regional Environmental Information System for the U.S./Mexico Border

<http://begss1.beg.utexas.edu:8888/>

This organization, also known by its initials REIS, is being developed by the University of Texas in Austin with funds from the EPA. It includes information from the EPA as well as a directory of resources of other organizations interested in environmental activities in the border.

The Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund

<http://www.compassionate.org/sblpdf/>

This is a non-profit group dedicated to opposing the installation of a radioactive waste dump in Sierra Blanca, Texas, 25 kilometers from the border. The page, obviously with a point of view, offers information related to the case, as well as general information about radioactive waste health effects and the position of the Mexican-American community on the issues, etc.

U.S./Mexico Border Health Home Page

<http://www.ncfh.org:80/border/index.html>

Information about public health projects in the border that are funded by the Department of Health and Human Services of the U.S. Government.

U.S._MEXBORDER

A listserv established by the EPA to foster a dialogue between people in both countries who do research on border environmental issues and other types of related work. To subscribe, send a list by e-mail to listserv@unixmail.rtpnc.epa.gov.

Economics and Commerce

Border Trade Institute

<http://www.tamtu.edu/coba/bti>

Official page of the institute, based at Texas A&M University. It dispenses information on trade between Mexico and the United States, specifically following 25 products and by request offers information about the trade between both countries from 1986-1996.

NAFTALAB

<http://naftalab.bus.utexas.edu>

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Run for the border

Experimental page on border themes produced by graduate students at the University of Texas. It includes the NAFTA agreement, information on economic development, telecommunications, health and other issues.

NATAnet - Electronic Commerce Port-of-Trade for Small Business
<http://www.nafta.net>

A commercial service for businesses that includes links to various special interest publications such as "Nafta Monitor," U.S. government information and intonation trade sites.

General Information

Border and Latin American Information
<http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/lat.html>

List of resources in the Internet, along with complete text of many articles written on border issues from 1986 to the present, compiled by Molly Molloy.

Border Research Institute
<http://www.nmsu.edu:80/~bri/index.html>

The border research institute site, based at the University of New Mexico, is dedicated to supporting better understanding and cooperation between Mexican and U.S. citizens. Its information includes statistics and links to demographic information, businesses, government, environment, energy, commerce, technology, etc.

Borderbase
<http://borderbase.utep.edu/bbplus.html>

Statistics about border states in Mexico and the United States.

BorderLines
<http://lib.NMSU.EDU/subject/bord/bordline/> (In English)
<http://lib.NMSU.EDU/subject/bord/bordline/esp/> (En espanol)

A monthly electronic magazine produced by the Interhemispheric Resource Center, includes news about border themes.

Border - Tijuana/San Diego Border Research
<http://gort.ucsd.edu/mw/tj/tj.html>

Information about this border area, which includes maps, graphics and data about various border projects.

Frontera Norte Star
http://www.nmsu.edu/Research/frontera/public_html/frontera.html

An electronic newsletter about border themes

published by the Center of Latin American Studies of New Mexico State University.

International Boundaries Research Unit
<http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk>

Information about border areas worldwide produced by the British University of Durham.

Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC)
<http://lanic.utexas.edu>

The Institute for Latin American Studies of the University of Texas-Austin offers access to library card catalogs, specialized databases, internet tools, socioeconomic data and links to many other sites.

North American Institute
<http://www.santafe.edu/~naminet>

This is the Internet site of a non-profit dedicated to exploring the development of a North American community and identity, with an emphasis on commercial, environmental and sociocultural themes. It has offices in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Rio Grande free-net
<http://www.rgfn3.epcc.edu>

In addition to offering Internet access for border communities, the service offers a page with information about health, education, science, technology, politics and culture in the border.

U.S.-Mexico Border Information
<http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/bord.html>
Information on the border with numerous links.

Federal Government Information
Mexican Government: Diario Oficial de la Federacion

<http://www.infosel.com.mx/infosel/serv/dof>
This is a service that you must subscribe to but it keeps you up-to-date on Mexican laws and legislative activities. (In Spanish)

Mexican Government: Gobierno de Mexico
<http://info.juridicas.unam.mx/cnsinfo/indice.htm>

Archives based at UNAM in Mexico city which include the Mexican constitutions, and state and local laws. (In Spanish)

Lise Olsen can be reached at 011-525-554-7613 or by e-mail at lise@ire.org

Nora Paul will soon return to writing her

On the Internet column.

If you have any suggestions for possible Internet topics, write

Paul at
npaul@poynter.org
or send e-mail to
Jody Sowell, Uplink's managing editor, at
jody@nicar.org

Tracking tourism

If you have recently completed your first computer-assisted reporting story, we would love to hear about it. E-mail Jody Sowell, Uplink's managing editor, with details. His e-mail address is jody@nicar.org

By Hart Matthews
The Outer Banks Sentinel
(Kill Devil Hills, N.C.)

My first spreadsheet project started with a classic error in reportorial judgment: Late on a Monday afternoon, the day before a weekly deadline, with six years of monthly tax revenues just in on a barely legible fax, I told my editor about a project I'd conceived that day.

Since Dare County collects occupancy and meals taxes as a percentage of sales at hotels, rental agencies and restaurants, the numbers are often used to assess the health or growth of the tourism industry, the only real economy here on the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

The county tourist bureau, charged with increasing visitation in the spring and fall seasons and decreasing the area's reliance on the hurricane-prone summer season, operates on 1.5 percent of those tourist receipts.

The more growth the bureau stimulates in the off seasons, the theory goes, the more revenue it earns. Our numbers, however, would question that seemingly obvious premise.

CAR on the run

I didn't know how the figures might add up. From what the tourism and marketing director told me, I expected to show the shoulder seasons growing faster than the summer.

My editor said, "Can you get it in this week?"

Deadline in 24 hours, two beat stories to finish, and I had never used spreadsheet software in my life.

"Sure," I said.

It was probably 10:00 that night, after I'd entered all the monthly totals using a magnifying glass and back-checking with a calculator, before I realized what I'd gotten into.

When I began doing a simple sum to compare the first two years of receipts, I couldn't even remember what command to type in the third column or how to extend that command down the column for the rest of the rows.

Luckily, I had Brant Houston's "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide" on the bookshelf behind me. (I was working at home because the office had no spreadsheet software. I had Excel.)

Though mainly a matter of juggling columns, it took some time to do the first set of numbers. Since each yearly comparison re-

quired at least three columns — one for a new year, one for the difference, and one for the percentage change — I quickly found myself using eight sheets and 20 columns.

With numerous errors and restarts, I completed my first table, totalling only spring and fall numbers, at about midnight.

I would have been better off had I done the entire table first, but I was anxious to know the angle of my story and excited to learn that fall revenues had grown 43 percent in five years.

The second table, with totals for all months of the year, I finished sometime around 7:30 the next morning after five hours of sleep. Yearly growth came out to 35 percent. So far, so good.

I printed out two reports, knowing that I'd have to find time to come back to the house later that morning for the final grouping of summer and winter revenues.

At work by 8:30. Phone calls; one beat story completed. Back at the house by 10 a.m. The last table I finished before noon.

Back at the office with three printouts, I still had to make calls. I finished the second beat story in between phone interviews with tourism officials.

An hour and a half before deadline, I got a wakeup call from the Chamber of Commerce president, John Bone. I had already written the story in my head when Bone told me that, according to his retail figures and despite high fall growth, the summer still accounted for the same percentage of year-round business as it had six years ago.

According to Bone, the county was just as dependant on good summer numbers in 1996 as it had been in 1991.

Refusing to let go of my angle, I thought my tax numbers would show something different.

I was wrong. Stranded at the office away from my PC, a hand calculator told me that despite the amazing growth rate, the fall had only gained 1 percent on the summer in yearly revenue share. In fact, with the spring lagging seven points behind the yearly average, the summer was now worth 58.5 percent of the year's total, up one-half of a percent from 1991.

What I had failed to understand was the proportional difference between 1 percent of fall receipts (\$4,936) and 1 percent of summer receipts (\$13,894), almost a three-fold difference.

The phenomenal 25-percent growth the county

Continued on page thirteen

Setting the data free

By Andrew Lehren
NICAR

You're walking on a moonlit beach with a loved one.

No, you're processing data.

Wait a second — you can do both at the same time.

Using Windows NT 4.0, there is a clunky little command to schedule jobs while you're away from the office. With some planning, you can spend less time at your desk processing data, leaving more time for analyzing and reporting.

Setting up

The command to run NT's schedule service is called AT. For the most part, Microsoft's documentation shows how you can use this to back up your computer. But you can use it to run, say, FoxPro, and then use a program to do your legwork.

First, you need to get it to work properly with a Windows program. Go to Start... Settings... Control Panels... Click on the Services icon (it's the one with a couple gears grinding away). You get a menu box. Scroll down to Schedule. Highlight it. Hit the Startup Button. Now make sure your settings say the Startup type is Automatic, it will log on as System Account, and check the box to Allow Service to Interact with Desktop. Hit OK.

Now, to make sure NT knows quickly about your changes: with Schedule still highlighted, hit the Stop button, and then hit the Start button. Now NT will let you run a Windows program at will.

Where you're AT

Now we're ready to actually work with the command scheduler using AT.

Go to Start... Run... and then type Command. You get a command line prompt, but don't get scared. The command line you'll need is easy to type.

Here is an example to just launch FoxPro:

```
At 11:00 /next:s "c:\fpw26\foxprow"
```

This means at 11 a.m. on the upcoming Saturday, start up FoxPro. The program will startup FoxPro every Saturday if you change /next:s to /every:s.

If you get lost in the syntax, there are two ways to get on-line help. At the command prompt, you can type at ?, or you can go to Start... Help... and search for AT.

Doing the work

Just starting a program when you're not in the office is pretty silly, and your co-workers will only wonder more about you. The trick is to get the program to actually do something.

Here's how I got FoxPro to do something. It's a two-step process. In the following case, let's assume I've got raw data sitting in a folder called FBI. And let's assume I've written a FoxPro program to import the data into empty tables. Let's say the program is called fbi.prg. (You could add on to your programs to include cleanup tasks like date conversions and eliminating leading spaces in text columns).

Go to a text editor and type:

```
KEYCOMP = WINDOWS
CATMAN=OFF
COMMAND = do c:\FBI\fbi.prg
```

Now save that in a file called fbi.fpw. You've just created a FoxPro configuration file that, when called on, will automatically do your cleanup routine.

Now go to a text editor again and type:

```
c:\fpw26\foxprow -Cc:\fbi\fbi.fpw
```

And save that in a file called fbi.bat. You've just created a batch file that will automatically launch FoxPro 2.6 and, by using -C, you've redirected FoxPro to look to your alternate config file. Don't worry about affecting future uses of FoxPro. The program will only go to that alternate config file when you tell it.

The Last Part

Now let's go back to the AT command. Go back to your prompt, like you did before. Type:

```
at 11:00 /every:s "c:\fbi\fbi.bat"
```

Now, every Saturday, FoxPro will automatically process your latest update of that database. If you want to check on any jobs, go to the prompt and type AT, then hit return. It will list all your jobs.

Trouble Shooting

What we've done is tell our computer to start a program at a certain time, then look to that program's configuration file, which then tells it to process a certain database.

Here are two problems I encountered along the way.

Uplink is looking for reporters' and editors' best tech tips. If you have something that you think should appear in the Tech Tip column or have a tech tip that you would like to share, e-mail Jody Sowell at jody@nicar.org

Continued on page thirteen

Who's bringing up baby?

This story is available
at the
IRE Resource Center.
To get a copy,
call Kara Morrison
at
(573) 882-3364.

By Kara Morrison
NICAR

Bill Loving was looking for new feature story ideas from a commonly used database: birth records.

When a 63-year-old California woman gave birth in May, Loving found what he was looking for. He decided to look at the ages of Minnesota mothers and fathers to see whether they were waiting longer to have children.

Loving, computer-assisted reporting editor at the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, worked with reporter Tatsha Robertson on the story called "Birth of a Trend." The story ran June 8.

Aging trends

To do the analysis, Loving used Microsoft Access. Rather than ranking ages by birth dates, he created new age fields using Access's date arithmetic function. He entered the function syntax into an update query, adding a new field called MomsAge. Here's how it is expressed in Access:

DateDiff("y", [MomsDOB], [BabysDOB])
where MomsDOB is the mother's birthdate field and BabysDOB is the baby's birthdate field. The "y" means express the difference in full years.

After doing this, he was able to group and sort the ages in descending order to find the oldest mothers.

"We did include fathers as well and saw a surprising number in their 70s and even early 80s," Loving said.

By flipping the query into an Excel table, the trend became obvious.

He graphed the age query using birth records from 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995, and found a marked shift toward parents having children later in life.

Between 1985 and 1995, he found the average age of Minnesota women giving birth jumped from 26.6 to 28.5. In 1995, the oldest woman to give birth was 53; the oldest father of a newborn was 83. And the number of Minnesota teenagers having children dropped, while more women became mothers in their 30s and 40s.

From the database, they also saw a distinct cultural difference in the Minnesota population.

"In the oldest parents, the majority were Southeast Asian," Loving said.

Knowing this, Robertson researched why especially Hmong men and women were more

likely to have children later in life.

She found that in Laos, few couples use birth control and the mortality rate is high, so they typically keep having children. The Hmong families who live in Minnesota continue the cultural practice.

Because the database contained addresses, Robertson was able to interview the perfect Minnesota woman to embody the trend toward late motherhood. Carole Kowitz, a new mother of twins in her 50s, was the focus of the story.

"Guys have been doing this for years and years," Kowitz said in the story. Now women are doing it and everyone's aghast."

Naming names

Loving said Robertson, a recent NICAR bootcamp graduate, also wanted to use the database for a story on baby names. She and Loving decided rather than focusing on the most popular baby names, they would focus on the most unusual.

The hardest part here was narrowing the list. Among the names they cited: Praise T.L. (for "Praise the Lord"), Pepsi, California Seven, Lexus, Queen Sarauniya, Moon Man and Gentle.

Loving also noticed through his queries that the number of names given out had increased dramatically.

In addition to an increase in ethnic names, Loving said there appeared to be less of a copycat effect than in earlier years, when several parents gave children common names.

In the story that ran July 13, Robertson interviewed several parents who had searched for unique names. She also interviewed experts about popular ethnic names and historic trends in choosing names.

Robertson and Loving also contrasted popular names given in 1995 with those given a decade earlier.

In all, Loving said the computer analyses were straightforward and each took only an afternoon to complete. And, he maintains there are other stories hiding in the database he hopes to pursue.

"The database is kind of a standard every CAR program should have," Loving said.

Loving had no problems obtaining the database from his state health department, which charges \$50 for the annual database. The one glitch he encountered is that the database does not contain names of babies born out of wedlock.

Kara Morrison can be reached at (573) 882-0684, or by e-mail at kara@nicar.org

Continued from page five:

Testing significance

ries: dead or alive, woman or man. T-tests work with samples, not populations. It checks whether you'd have picked up a difference at least this big if you took repeated samples of the same population. You have to have a special kind of sample – one that's random and normally distributed – for the test to work. Typically, reporters would only use them when working with Census data or some other data that came from large surveys.

T-tests are nice because they can be used when you don't have a lot of records or when you have many records. There are also several types of T-tests. Independent samples T-tests compares means of one variable (income) between two groups (blacks and whites). The paired samples T-test compares the means of different variables (income in 1980 and income

in 1990) from the same group (those who live in a certain neighborhood).

Both of these significance tests are reported by statistical procedures as the chance that the numbers you see are simple coincidence. It's labeled "prob" or "Sig" in the printouts. That chance is reported as .05 for a 5 percent chance, or .001 for a 0.1 percent chance, or .000001 for 1 chance in 100,000.

Again, chi-squares and T-tests by themselves cannot prove an outcome. It really just gives a journalist the ability to go to a source and say, "Look, we noticed that this part of the community is not getting served and the likelihood that is occurring by chance is one in 20 – or even one in 10,000."

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

**Brant Houson's
"Computer-Assisted
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Practical Guide"**
offers practical advice
for those just
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to becoming a
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Cost for the book is
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(573) 882-2042.

Continued from page ten:

First experience

had seen last October could be neutralized by a mere 8 percent drop in July. In fact, Hurricane Bertha had caused a 6 percent drop in July 1996.

Another point I had missed was the difference between summer and off-season rental rates. The weekly cost of a vacation cottage rises roughly 90 percent when the season begins in mid-June and yields much higher occupancy-tax returns than it does in a week in the fall.

The results showed that, in terms of its own budget, the tourist bureau would be better off concentrating on the over-full summer season, since even slight increases would yield greater growth in the bureau's revenues than larger percentage changes during the spring or fall.

I led my story with the huge fall increases, but hedged near the end of the piece with that last point. The tourist bureau took cautious credit for the fall increases, as well as for a stunning rise in early-June receipts.

I turned in the story a little after 6 p.m. and my editor was profoundly pleased.

I could almost see his chest swell with pride when he heard a local radio brief two days later that began:

"According to a computer analysis of county tax receipts conducted by the *Outer Banks Sentinel*..."

Hart Matthews can be reached at (919) 480-1785 or by e-mail at hart@interpath.com

Continued from page eleven:

Scheduling your data

First, make sure you're using the latest version of NT. Go to www.microsoft.com, click on support and go to Windows NT. Somewhere in that patch was the stuff that gets the Command Scheduler to actually work as well as promised.

To make matters worse, the patch requires you to update your NT registry. To do this, look at the *readme.txt* file that comes with the patch. That, of course, refers to another part of the web site. For service patch 3, in section 3.6 of the

readme file, it recommends going to www.microsoft.com/kb/. Then go to article Q166730 for Windows NT. Follow the six resolution steps.

In addition, for those who got NT Resource Kit, you'll get a gui version of the Command Scheduler. That may make the AT command a little clearer.

Andy Lehren can be reached at 1-800-NBC-NEWS x 7739, or by e-mail at andy@nicar.org

Seminars, bootcamps, conferences

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Check out
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at **nicar.org**
to find out
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for upcoming
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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.

October 4, 1997 — Tucson, Ariz.

Join NICAR for hands-on training at the Society of Environmental Journalists' annual conference. Limited to conference participants.

October 10-12, 1997 — Boulder, Co.

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October 16, 1997 — New York, N.Y.

Join NICAR for hands-on training at the Media and Democracy Conference. Limited to conference participants.

October 16-17, 1997 — Washington, D.C.

On-the-road training for Reuters

October 20-24, 1997 — Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

On-the-road training for the *Sun-Sentinel*

October 30, 1997 — El Paso, Texas

On-the-road training for Texas Association of Broadcasters

November 6-7, 1997 — Yonkers, N.Y.

On-the-road training for Consumer Reports

Workshops

IRE and NICAR can also bring their road-tested workshops to sites around the country. We match regional public records experts and experienced reporters with our own trainers for unique seminars ranging from one-day demonstrations and panels on regional public records laws to three-day hands-on sessions on computer-assisted reporting or advanced techniques for data-intensive beats.

Don't wait for someone else to organize a computer-assisted reporting workshop in your area. IRE and NICAR depend on members, news organizations, journalism schools and other journalism organizations to help us bring our seminars to you. Contact Sarah Cohen at (301) 942-2199 or e-mail her at sarah@nicar.org

November 21-23, 1997 — Columbia, Mo.

Intermediate Computer-Assisted Reporting Workshop

December 11-13, 1997 — Washington, D.C.

Computer-Assisted Reporting Workshop

Sponsored by NICAR and the Medill School of Journalism

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 Katy Fanning at (573) 882-0684.

January 4-9, 1998 — Columbia, Mo.

NICAR Regular Bootcamp

May 10-15, 1998 — Chapel Hill, N.C.

NICAR Advanced Bootcamp

May 17-22, 1998 — Columbia, Mo.

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NICAR Regular Bootcamp

Conferences

NICAR will offer training at the following professional conferences, including the IRE and NICAR national conferences. These conferences feature practical tips and story ideas shared by prize-winning journalists in quick-hit sessions. Keep up with our conference schedule through our Web site, at www.ire.org. Costs vary. For more information or to register, call Lisa Barnes at (573) 882-8969.

November 15-16, 1997 — Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Border Conference

March 5-8, 1998 — Indianapolis, Ind.

NICAR National Conference

June 4-7, 1998 — New Orleans, La.

IRE National Conference

June 3-6, 1999 — Kansas City, Mo.

IRE National Conference

From the NICAR library

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

- NEW** • National Endowment for the Arts, 1987-1996, includes information on individual or organization receiving money.
- NEW** • Immigration and Naturalization Service legal residency, 1980-1995, includes information on the characteristics of aliens who were admitted as immigrants.
- NEW** • National Highway Traffic Safety Administration vehicle recalls and complaints, 1966-1997, includes information about vehicles that have been recalled by certain manufacturers.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Medical Devices Reports, detailing complaints about drugs, pacemakers and other medical products. 1974-1996.
- U.S. Centers For Disease Control's AIDS database, providing case-by-case demographic information about those with the HIV virus. 1995.
- U.S. Census Bureau's Consolidated Federal Funds Reports, showing which communities get how much under various federal programs. 1983-1995.
- Federal Aviation Administration's accidents and incidents, including major plane crashes since 1974.
- NASA's air safety reporting system, including anonymous complaints by pilots and air traffic controllers. Useful for finding near misses and problems at local airports, 1988-1996.
- Federal Election Commission campaign contributions by individuals and political action committees, 1990-1997.
- 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, 1991-1996.
- 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, 1974-1997.
- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act records, for tracking who gets loans and who gets turned down, and finding redlining patterns, 1992-1995.

- Federal procurement data, 1992-1996, includes breakdowns by agency.
- Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms gun dealer records. 1993-1996.
- 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 1995 final report.
- 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, 1974-1996.
- U.S. Department of Transportation truck accident and census data. It includes accidents by company and road.
- U.S. Small Business Administration loan guarantees, 1980-1997. This includes the name of the business, address, amount covered by the SBA, and status, including whether the loan went bad.
- U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loan guarantees, 1989-1995. This includes individuals and businesses, the amount covered by the SBA, and the status, including whether the loan went bad.
- U.S. Small Business Administration's list of minority companies certified for SBA assistance in seeking federal contracts. It includes the name of the company, its address, the owner, type of business and phone number.
- The National Inventory of Dams, 1991-1995.
- U.S. Department of Transportation hazardous materials accidents database, a collection of roadway, rail, air and waterway accidents from 1971 to 1996.
- U.S. Department of Transportation fatal accident reporting system. It includes all roadway accidents from 1975 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 info@nicar.org

The IRE Resource Center has copies of hundreds of stories that have used the databases listed here. If you are interested in seeing how reporters have used these databases, call the center at (573) 882-3364.

Bits, Bytes and Barks

Conferences and Seminars

NICAR is forging ahead with new seminars and new approaches to conferences and workshops. Our annual conference, March 5-8 in Indianapolis, will not only include the usual panels and hands-on classes for beginners to the advanced, but also a set of special half-day sessions that will take in depth looks at how to use electronic information for particular beats.

We also are expanding our seminars for the intermediate range. Earlier this year we did a seminar on education and statistics. In the coming months, we plan to hold seminars on database design and data cleaning, use of SQL servers for the newsroom, mapping software, and business reporting.

Watch our website at www.nicar.org for dates and times.

For more information on seminars and bootcamps, call (573) 882-0684.

Help Wanted

IRE and NICAR still have several positions open: Director/Trainer for Campaign Finance Information Center and Database Library Administrator for Campaign Finance Information Center, IRE Deputy Director and Database Library Administrator for NICAR.

Inquiries and resumes should be sent to Brant Houston, Executive Director, IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Columbia, Mo. 65211 or brant@ire.org

Reader Response

It's time we heard from you. We are looking to improve Uplink and want to know your ideas.

Are there certain columns that you would like to add? Are there certain topics you would like covered? Have you done a story that you think should be featured in an upcoming issue? This is your chance to play armchair editor.

Send comments, critiques and suggestions to Uplink's editor, Jody Sowell, at jody@nicar.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

NICAR Net

Recent topics on the IRE and NICAR listserv have included campaign finance data, troubles with traffic accident data, ethics, medical investigation, medical investigations and Access tips.

To subscribe to IRE-L or NICAR-L, send e-mail to listproc@lists.missouri.edu

In the body of the message, type:

subscribe NICAR-L<your name>

subscribe IRE-L<your name>

Also, check out the IRE-L and NICAR-L mailing list archives on our website 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.

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