CASE STUDIES OF INVESTIGATIVE NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC RADIO COLLABORATIONS

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gold medals for changing my life go to independent radio producer, Sally Herships and IRE’s Jaimi Dowdell. Sally was the first to introduce me to IRE, which I scribbled on the back of a napkin and later Googled. Jaimi made a small announcement at the 2010 Computer-Assisted Reporting conference in Raleigh, North Carolina that piqued my interest, “Oh, by the way, if you want free grad school you can come work in our Database Library.” Thank you for that offhand remark that has shaped the past three years of my life and the future of my career in journalism.

I would like to thank the good folks at IRE and NICAR for shepherding me through the process of becoming a data journalist, especially David Herzog for teaching me that “WHERE [field] IN(‘variable1’, ‘variable2’)” was possible; Mark Horvit for calling me from Qatar to talk about my investigative story; Elizabeth Lucas for walking me through joins; and Ted Han for making me realize how empowering computer programming can be. Also, thank you to Barbara Cochran for introducing me to the media ecology of Washington, D.C. and humanizing the people inside the machine. (I only kind of hate politics now.)

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Chapter One: Introduction

The sound of NPR has been a constant presence throughout my life. News and information streamed into my family’s cars and kitchens. I imitated Ira Glass at the dinner table. In high school, my clock radio was set to our local NPR affiliate. In fact, that’s how I first learned that the World Trade Center had been attacked September 11, 2011 – Steve Inskeep’s voice waking me up, saying, “They’re gone! They’re totally gone!”

As an adult, I’ve been able to (more or less) feed, house and clothe myself from producing interviews and reports for national and international public radio organizations. Now, after nearly two years plunging myself into data journalism and investigative reporting, I find I straddle a few unique worlds and carry with me a mish-mash of skills, from audio editing and sound-effects production to geo-coding and badgering the police for an accident report.

My course work at Mizzou has made a tremendous difference in my vision of myself as a journalist and my future in journalism. In graduate school I have learned all stages in the process of incorporating data into a story: discovering what is available, negotiating access to it using public records laws, getting a grasp on what’s in the data, querying it and conveying the findings in narrative form. At the NICAR Data Library, I dug up to my elbows in federal databases. When I encountered a problem, I learned strategies to find out what I didn’t know, and in the process, I gained greater literacy about basic computer science. I acquired a lot of strange words and acronyms to the “Skills” section of my resume: SQL, SPSS, ArcView, QGIS, Python, Django,
My project this semester combined my diverse journalism experience at the perfect location, the Investigative Unit of NPR in Washington D.C. I was able to waltz into the booth for the daily All Things Considered broadcast and observe the taping of “two-ways” (host/reporter interviews). I saw stories in all stages of reporting and production. But above all, I contributed – really contributed – to the work in progress.

Still, the more I used what I learned at Mizzou on a daily basis, the more I butted up against the ways I still need to refine and strengthen my skills. There will always be an alphabet soup of other programming languages and platforms that I don’t know (R, Postgres, JavaScript, for example). Also, there are dozens of different ways to use the systems I’ve already learned about (SQL crosstabs, anybody?). I have already run into specific problems that didn’t come up during class at Mizzou or in the Data Library, and I’ve had to accept that each analysis will present its own set of specific challenges.

In the future, I would like to continue to combine data, investigative reporting and radio. I see myself working as a member of an I-Team, preferably in radio. I have been offered a temporary position on the NPR I-Team after my internship is over, which I hope will lead to a more permanent opportunity. My ideal would be a job that allows me to muddy my boots field reporting and also muckrake by digging through open records and data. I would also be happy as a Metro-Desk reporter with latitude to embed myself in a community and enrich short-term stories with data. Whatever I do, my goals is to produce journalism in the public interest. My time at NPR will be wind at my back as I proceed on my career path.
Weekly FAQs 1, August 25, 2013

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

I am working remotely for the first three weeks of the program, until Sept. 9 when the NPR internship officially starts. I have been assigned to work with rural affairs correspondent, Howard Berkes on his series on mine safety. He is based in Utah, so we have been corresponding over the phone and email.

Howard asked me to retrieve data and paste it into a spreadsheet from the Mine Data Retrieval System of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (part of the Department of Labor), so I proposed making a scraper with Python to automate the process. NPR has someone who writes scrapers for them, but Howard said I could take a stab at it. After two days of writing a tiny snippet of code, testing it, and googling the resulting error, I eventually reverted to the ol’ copy and paste method (which took a few hours) and got Howard his data.

Where did you do well?

Even though I'm marginally familiar with scraping and Python, I really tried hard to figure out how to do it -- and I made progress. I was able to actually retrieve the text I wanted from the system, but I faltered at getting the text cleanly into a CSV. I threw myself into learning as much as I could about mine safety, and the work Howard has done on it previously. I asked Howard for clips to familiarize myself with the issues, and started looking up key words to understand coal mining terminology.
Where could you use help?

Python is hard! While it's been my goal to get good at scraping for a while, being faced with this task finally solidified my resolve to increase my coding skills. However, writing effective Python code is still like trying to compose a love-letter in Portuguese (a foreign language I vaguely understand). Look up the vocabulary and syntax all day long, but get one little thing wrong and your efforts just won't work. It would be great to have someone besides online forums to lead me through the process.

What progress did you make on your research project?

None yet. Unless you consider recovering from jet-lag progress, and I could make a compelling argument it is.

What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

Like any study abroad program, the way to maximize your experience is to become immersed in the environment. In DC, this means subscribing to a diversity of Twitter feeds and newsletters, attending as many events as possible, meeting new people and getting out of the office and exploring.

Weekly FAQs #2, September 1, 2013

This week I continued to work remotely for rural affairs correspondent, Howard Berkes, based in Utah, and I also got to visit NPR HQ and meet my future supervisor, Bob Little, and co-workers in person.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

Most of the week I worked with Howard and Robert Benincasa to figure out how to obtain data on a key mine safety measurement, called the VPID, violations per
inspection day. Howard thought we could get them off the Department of Labor's online data system, but after much discussion and trial and error (but mostly error), I think I figured out how to derive the numbers from another source of raw data.

Also, Howard handed over some spreadsheets of data obtained from the Treasury Department and said I should see what patterns I could find. I did some pivot tables and data integrity checks on them, but decided to import them into MySQL instead. I spent some time making sure that the data were in the right format to successfully import. I'm jazzed about this analysis!

Where did you do well?

I think I successfully problem-solved how to deal with these data and how to analyze them. I'm glad I will have Robert as a backstop to look over my queries, just in case.

I also talked with a data journalist in DC who said he would look over my scraper and make some suggestions on my code.

Where could you use help?

I felt very nervous and awkward touring NPR HQ and meeting everyone for the first time. Being unfamiliar with the institutional culture, I left feeling gauche and concerned about the impression I gave. I'm used to very haimish work environments (Yiddish for homey), but everything at HQ seemed sleek, formal, and blindingly IKEA-white.
One of the reporters on the I-team, Danny Zwerdling, and I are going to start getting coffee together regularly during my internship, so I plan to confer with him as a cultural guide so that I don't feel like such a foreigner.

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

After some deliberation and Barbara's help, I decided to focus on the investigative collaboration, Poisoned Places, by NPR and the Center for Public Integrity, to serve as the main case study of my project. I read through the transcripts of all the stories in the series and made a preliminary list of people to interview at NPR, CPI, and investigative/public radio collaborations in Colorado, San Diego and Wisconsin. So far it includes 12 names, although it seems like it could get even longer. I also read clips of some of the work produced by the collaborations to familiarize myself with their work and identify good interviewees.

I began drafting my interview guide so I can ask consistent questions across interviewees.

**What will you do next week on your research project?**

I will start reaching out to interviewees over email to set up times to talk, finish my interview guide and continue to read and listen to story clips.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

This week we visited the Foreign Press Center and spoke with a staff member about the center's work. I didn't know that the State Department was charged with facilitating access for foreign reporters in the United States, so it was a completely new experience. It was interesting to hear about how the staff of the press center balanced the
interests of the foreign reporters with the role of the State Department in promoting
American interests.

Weekly FAQs #3, September 8, 2013

Monday is my first official day at NPR HQ! It was a strange week because of Labor Day and Rosh Hashanah, but I managed to get some work done.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

I spent most of the time querying data from the Treasury Department that Howard had sent me and writing up a memo. The biggest challenge was figuring out the right data type to set the fields to (for numbers, figuring out if it should be "decimal" or "double", for example.) The rest of the time I pawed through the data dictionary for other mine safety data and imported them into MySQL, which took some time because the tables are so large.

Where did you do well?

Being thorough in my queries and data integrity checks to make sure everything imported correctly. I caught some problems and had to reimport the data.

Where could you use help?

One question: I was thinking I should reach out to INN about my research project because they have a spot on their site about "editorial collaborations." I wanted to see if someone at the organization thought it might be useful to put some version of my research on that page, and if they had any input before I start interviews so I don't miss anything they would want addressed. Is there anyone in particular I should email, besides the general email address?
What progress did you make on your research project?

I emailed seven of the people on my list and finished writing my interview guide.
(Susanne Reber, Jim Morris, Keith Epstein, Ryann Growchowski, Howard Berkes, Tegan Wendland, Laura Frank)

What will you do next week on your project?

I hope to start interviews and finish emailing people from Minnesota and St. Louis collaborations that didn't pan out. I will approach Robert Benincasa in person to see if I can interview him.

What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

This week we went to the Newseum, which was very interesting. My favorite factoid: The first radio transmission was completed in 1895 by Guglielmo Marconi, and as a result, radios were called Marconis for some time after that. Another interesting concept to ponder: If the front pages of newspapers are a snapshot of a certain moment in time, how do we capture history and societal values in the same way now that webpages are constantly updated and content is so ephemeral?

Weekly FAQs #4, September 15, 2013

It was my first week at NPR HQ. On Monday we had a full day of orientation and Tuesday through Thursday I continued the data analysis work I had been doing for reporter Howard Berkes.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

I did a lot of problem-solving in SQL to figure out how to measure the comparative safety of a long list of mines using different databases from the Mine Safety
and Health Administration. I ran a lot of queries to make sure I had the data I needed and consulted with Howard to make sure I was counting the right things. I also participated in two editing sessions with Danny Zwerdling, who is another reporter and somewhat of a mentor to me.

**Where did you do well?**

I think I did a good job of jumping right into the work. It was a lot more relaxed getting to know everyone than the first time I visited. I tried hard to offer suggestions to Danny, although I felt like I was in a little over my head by giving feedback to such a veteran.

**Where could you use help?**

Two questions: Based on previous students’ experiences contacting sources for their projects, what is the best strategy for bugging people? After I’ve sent an email, at what point do I follow up? Also, how many interviewees do I need? I think about 10-12 is doable, if they are willing to talk.

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

I did 2.5 interviews (Jim Morris of Center for Public Integrity, Ryann Growchowski of inewsource, and Howard Berkes of NPR, who had to get off the phone quickly for a meeting, but I'll resume the interview next week.) I reached out to Liz Williams of INN, Andy Hall of Wisconsin Public Radio, Margaret Wolf Freivogel of the St. Louis Beacon, and Tim Eby of St. Louis Public Radio. I read about the collaboration at St. Louis Public Radio, started to read about the breakdown in communication between
MinnPost and Minnesota Public Radio. I found out about a collaboration between the Lens and WWNO public radio in New Orleans.

**What will you do next week?**

I heard back from two more interviewees from the inewssource/KPBS collaboration and Ellen Weiss (formerly of NPR) and will speak with them next week. I'll prep for those interviews by reading more clips. I'll continue to reach out to more sources and follow up with the ones I contacted before.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

No weekly seminar this week. Instead I worked on my project.

**Weekly FAQs #5, September 23, 2013**

**What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?**

It was a little stressful trying to acquire as much information as quickly as possible about a guy (Aaron Alexis) no one knew much about. The production assistant, another reporter and I worked the phones calling every conceivable connection and relative that appeared in the public records search performed by the news librarian. By the second or third day of the story the desk returned to our regularly scheduled investigations. I finished analyzing the mine safety data I’d been plugging away at and sent it to Howard Berkes.

**Where did you do well?**

I found Aaron Alexis’ former co-workers and interviewed one of them on tape, a clip of which appeared on Morning Edition. I also got some police records from Fort Worth that no one had looked at before, but by that time the story had cooled somewhat,
so I’m not sure how helpful they were to the national desk correspondent I handed them off to.

**Where could you use help?**

All is good here. But, since you asked, I’m starting to apply for jobs in Seattle post-graduation, so please let me know if you hear of anything. Seattle is my first choice, but I’d be interested in other jobs in the Pacific Northwest, as well. I’m looking for any reporting jobs in print or radio, preferably using data. Thank you!

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

I did 2.5 interviews (I finished up the one with Howard Berkes of NPR, Ellen Weiss formerly of NPR and CPI and Lorie Hearn of inewsource in San Diego.) I read more about the collaboration between the Lens and WWNO public radio in New Orleans and found out about another freshly minted collaboration in Boston.

**What will you do next week?**

I will interview Tegan Wendland of Wisconsin Watch. I have been working to set up a time with Suzanne Marmion of KPBS, so hopefully we’ll be able to pin down a time this week, too. I will also reach out to the folks in New Orleans about their collaboration. I’m giving the folks in Colorado a bit of time to recover from the flood, but they are on my list coming up soon.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

Fantastic visit to CBS’s Face the Nation. I got a first-hand look at the production process and editorial strategy at the show, as well as its importance to national political news. It was fascinating to see how all the pieces came together.
Weekly FAQs #6, September 29, 2013

I continued to work on helping Howard Berkes analyze and understand various measurement of mine safety for his stories. I also set to work figuring out a project of my own to spearhead and started research on it.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

Time management. The biggest challenge is figuring out when to work on Howard's story and when to work on my own, and how much time to devote to each. I am now starting to look into regulation of hazardous material and natural gas pipelines -- so exciting! I want to be able to accomplish something tangible with that story, but I also need to be there for Howard and keep up my work for him. There's not much structure to the day besides what I impose on it, so I just have to decide what work I should do when.

Where did you do well?

I did background research and pitched four stories to Bob on Tuesday, two of which he really liked. Direct quote from Bob: "I love pipelines!" I've been making use of my NICAR database FOIA skills and filed my first NPR FOIA the next day.

Where could you use help?

I'm doing just fine. I'm having so much fun!

What progress did you make on your research project?

I am trying to get copies of documents that relate to the collaborations I've interviewed folks about (memoranda of understanding and fundraising copy) so I emailed NPR's lawyer and followed up with the folks I talked to last week about getting copies. I interviewed the investigative multimedia reporter at the Wisconsin Center for
Investigative Journalism/Wisconsin Public Radio and had scheduled an interview with the news director of KPBS, but she flaked out. I emailed folks in New Orleans, Minneapolis and Colorado about their collaborations (or lack thereof). I also reached out to the news director at Wisconsin Public Radio.

**What will you do next week?**

This is the "start tracking people down" phase of my research, now that I've basically reached out to nearly everyone I want to talk to. I will call Andy Hall of the Wisconsin Center to see if he'll talk to me. I will hopefully interview Danny Zwerdling and the woman from KPBS. I'll also ask my boss, Bob about the collaborations NPR is engaged with now (he mentioned leads I could follow during a meeting last week). I think I also need to start pre-writing, plugging the pieces I've already got into my outline.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

Getting a job is a marketing strategy that requires "multiple impressions." Job seekers should politely make their presence known with Thank you notes, clips and follow-up phone calls.

**Weekly FAQs #7, October 4, 2013**

I'm getting more settled in at NPR and having listener-sponsored tote-bags full of fun. I've been dividing my time between researching my own story on pipeline safety and data munging for Howard Berkes.

**What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?**

1. Feeling like my head was going to explode. I keep trying to learn as much as possible about pipelines to focus my story. After hours of reading, I felt that my own
head might sustain a "hook crack" and rupture along a faultily welded seam. My boss, Bob, introduced me to NPR science reporter, Elizabeth Shogren and I will talk with her so I can process some of the information and seek advice, since it's basically her beat.

2. Making tables join together nicely without crazy duplicates. Joins continue to be the most challenging part of SQL -- not necessarily writing them, but making sure that I perform them without detrimental side effects. I got a lesson in being exhaustive in data integrity checks before joining. After spending hours banging my head against the (SQL) tables, I realized I hadn't been diligent enough.

Where did you do well?

Howard seems to be happy with the help I can provide him. I'm trying to explain what I'm doing and pass along data tips to build his data literacy. I had a good chat with Bob about the direction of my story and he seems to be happy about it. I've been thinking of creative ways to get the data to illustrate a part of the pipeline issue that's been spottily covered.

Where could you use help?

Liz in the Data Library and I used to talk about SQL joins a lot, but is there any kind of reference guide or tip sheet I could keep handy? I think a whole session at the NICAR conference could be filled with the dangers of bad joins and how to prevent them.

What progress did you make on your research project?

I interviewed Joel Kramer from MinnPost about the lack of collaboration in Minnesota. I had an off-the-record chat with Joe Schapiro about collaborations at NPR.
He said he could go on the record later. I was really busy at work so I didn't have time to approach Danny Zwerdling about an interview.

**What will you do next week?**

Go through my notes and begin pre-writing. I'm not sure how productive I will be, as I might be away from electricity for days while at a family event in Wyoming.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

This was by far my favorite seminar. We had the former press secretary for Bill Clinton during the Lewinski scandal and last government shutdown. He shared fantastic behind-the-scenes stories of being in the White House and prepping the President for press questions. He also gave insight on the current government shutdown and the future of Congressional gridlock (the short version: everyone in power has to get old and retire/die before anything changes).

**Weekly Update, Wyoming edition, October 14, 2013**

Last week I was in the Wind River Range of Wyoming celebrating my brother's 30th and my father's 60th birthday, so was away from the trappings of civilization such as electricity, Internet, running water, public radio, investigative reporting, higher education and heat (brrrr).

As far as my project goes, I didn't get a chance to work on it much, but I will have a first draft for David by next week.

So far I've interviewed the following people:

NPR: Howard Berkes, reporter.
CPI: Ellen Weiss (former NPR VP for News, former Exec Editor at CPI and now at Scripps). Jim Morris, reporter.


Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism: Tegan Wendland, reporter.

MinnPost: Joel Kramer, founder.

I've sent follow-up emails to the news directors at KPBS in San Diego and Wisconsin Public Radio, who agreed to interviews but I haven't caught on the phone yet.

I have one interview set up so far this week.

Howard Berkes of NPR told me that Nieman Reports has been interested in articles about collaborations, so he put me in touch with their editor. I sent her an email pitching my research, so we'll see if she's interested.

Weekly FAQs #9, October 20, 2013

I got deep in the weeds with data integrity checks on the analysis and joins I've been doing for Howard Berkes. I also started doing background interviews on the story/stories I'm trying to do on pipeline safety.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

Getting a headache talking data with Howard. He's trying really hard to collect and analyze important data, but he doesn't have a background in data analysis so he and I have different workflows and perspectives on how to handle data. At one point we talked on the phone for two hours and seemed to spin our wheels on how to solve a certain
problem, each of us with diverging ideas on next steps. I deferred to him in the end but we still don't have a great solution.

I feel like time is fleeing rapidly, and I'm anxious to get my work on the air before my internship is up! I'm confident I'll be able to pull something off, but deadlines make me anxious nevertheless (especially of the "you don't work here anymore" variety).

Where did you do well?

I data integrity checked the snot out of those tables, six ways to Sunday, till the cows came home. I'm going to run everything by Robert Benincasa and might do a few more spot-checks just to be sure, but at least I can breathe out a little now that they should be accurate (fingers crossed, knock on wood!).

I chatted up Danny Zwerdling on his process for investigative reporting and implemented his ideas right away when I called a few sources. Totally the right decision. I'm excited to follow his approach to get sources to ramble at you and tell you stories.

Where could you use help?

Question: Just because I interviewed someone for the project, doesn't mean I have to use much material from them in the analysis, right? Like any collection of interviews, some people are naturally more informed, helpful and pithy than others.

What progress did you make on your research project?

I interviewed an editor from KPBS and wrote a rough, rough draft. I'd like to refine it a little more and I plan to send it by mid-week. I heard back from the editor of Nieman Reports and she said she's interested in looking at a draft.
What will you do next week?

I still have to try and pin down some folks from the Wisconsin collaboration. I will submit a first draft!

What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

We met with Keith Woods, VP of diversity for NPR and toured NPR HQ. I found his approach to diversity interesting because he conceptualizes it as an action rather than a value. As in, how are we actively bringing in perspectives and voices from undercovered parts of society? How do we engage people in the ways that make them different and the ways that make them ordinary? Great session.

Weekly FAQs #10, October 27, 2013

The autumn leaves smolder on their branches and the interns settle even deeper into their work, fretting that as the days grow shorter, so too does their semester. (Forgive the sentimentality.) The projects I'm working on continue to move forward, and I'm getting used to the workflow and getting to know the team better.

What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?

Working in an office. For example: The phone in the cubicle next to me rings, a long conversation ensues. Five minutes of productive silence. Intern meeting time. Back to work. Behind me, the phone rings. John Legend performs for a Tiny Desk Concert. Five minutes of productive silence. My phone rings, it's Howard. Passersby chatter and Howard overhears. "How do you get anything done a headquarters?" he asks.

In spite of the noise pollution, I was working hard to calculate a measurement of mine safety across the mines that the investigation targets. There were a lot of steps
involved, and the raw data tables were big enough that I had to figure out how to slim them down to make the query run.

**Where did you do well?**

This week's answer is brought to you in part by Indexes and the letters S-Q-L. I persevered at doing the analysis despite initial technical difficulties. Indexing my tables helped smooth the process as well.

**Where could you use help?**

Please let me know if any job openings you hear about in the Pacific Northwest.

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

I sent a draft to David and forwarded it to Jan Gardner at Nieman Reports and she liked it. She has some edits we're going to go over next week. I called and emailed the folks at the Wisconsin collaboration, but didn't get ahold of them.

**What will you do next week?**

Talk to Jan Gardner about her edits and rewrite.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

This week we took a tour of the Washington Post and chatted with Jeff Leen and David Fallis of the Investigations Desk. Excellent. I enjoyed hearing them talk about their process and perspective on investigative reporting. Best quote on how to succeed at investigative reporting, "You have to have the heart of a gambler but the mind of an accountant."
The investigations continue! We’ve been working on this long enough that Howard had to get an updated set of data for us to use. Investigations editor Bob Little is really keen to get me on the air, so Howard is letting me peel off one of the findings of the investigation to report as my own story.

**What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?**

Calculating safety measures. We abandoned one measurement of mine safety after it a) proved too ungainly to calculate, but most importantly b) the folks on the project decided was not a good measure because it could be misleading. My next data task involves more problem solving about how to calculate yet another safety metric.

**Where did you do well?**

Choosing a good story to make into a sidebar for the main investigation. I needed to find something interesting enough, not overly ambitious (hard for me to think in unambitious terms when it comes to stories) and newsy and somewhat investigative. It took me about a day, but I figured out something that Howard and Bob liked.

**Where could you use help?**

I need to find a third case study, since the folks in Wisconsin still haven’t gotten back to me. My strategy I think is to find another case. I plan to bug the other folks I’ve reached out to.

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

Jan Gardner, my editor at Nieman Reports, sent back comments and we talked over them. I still need to have enough journalists interviewed for a third case study, so I
emailed the folks in New Orleans again, this time saying I was doing the research with Nieman Reports. I also emailed and called Robert McClure at InvestigateWest in Seattle to see about using his collaboration with KUOW as a case study.

**What will you do next week?**

I will re-interview Howard Berkes and Jim Morris according to the additional questions Jan had. I will follow up with the other journalists I need to interview or re-interview. I will write and edit the pieces of the article I can once I have done the interviews.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

Lobbying is like pooping: everyone you know does it, even if it seems like they're too clean for it. Even organizations and institutions who seem untainted by such a word as "lobbying" are actually engaged in "petitioning their government for a redress of their grievances."

**Weekly FAQs #12, November 11, 2013**

**What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week?**

This week I had to redo a lot of the analysis I did before because we got an update in our data. We also heard back from the Mine Safety and Health Administration about our request for interviews and the inclusion of our preliminary numbers. The administrator raised questions about the way we conducted the analysis and started defending his agency in the way we expected. I took another look at the analysis to see if there was a way to eliminate any methodological challenges, while keeping the integrity of the analysis. All of this, of course, means even more work.
We also had long conversations about the best way to answer the “compared to what” question as it relates to our analysis. How do we make sense of the safety metrics for particular mines compared with the larger universe of all mines? How do we fairly put the numbers we’ve found in context?

**Where did you do well?**

Perseverance. Hashing out the details of the data analysis was tortured, and even Howard said he was getting a headache talking about it. I took a cue from Robert Benincasa and starting looking for how I can organize my queries so revising or re-doing an analysis isn’t an arduous process. I spent some time looking into writing everything as sub-queries, instead of joins, as Robert does, but then I realized that MySQL performs them very slowly or runs out of memory. I think I’m just going to organize the queries I have more neatly, combining multiple queries into one window separated by a semi-colon so I can run a bunch with the stroke of a single button.

**Where could you use help?**

I realized belatedly that I scheduled my defense for the same day the project is due to the graduate school so I can graduate in December. I would really appreciate it if you could send me as much feedback as you can ahead of my defense, so I can start revising it right away.

**What progress did you make on your research project?**

I finally heard back from five people I’ve reached out to. Instead of panicking that I don’t have enough material for the case studies, it now seems that I’ll have an overabundance. Right now 75% of it is written according to the edits of my editor at
Nieman Reports and David. I also spent hours and hours compiling and formatting everything for the project report.

**What will you do next week?**

I WILL SUBMIT MY PROJECT! Expect to have everything on Thursday, if not sooner.

**What did you learn from the weekly seminar?**

Disaster correspondent Donna Leinwand came in to share her stories about covering catastrophes. I learned that beauty parlors are the best places to get scuttlebutt during a war, to always pack a tent, donuts are useful for bribing military officers in foreign countries and when you see a bathroom, use it. Her life is not one I want for myself, but it’s entirely possible I might find myself covering stories about similarly disastrous events.
Chapter Three, Evaluation

My NPR name-badge says Intern, but this is the least like an intern I’ve ever felt. My time at NPR has had the effect of refining my technique. It’s kind of like being a novice tango dancer, rock-climber or Judo wrestler (I’ve been all three). When you first start out, you often over-exert yourself, fumble needlessly and look silly before you learn just the right way to execute a move. In this case, I know I performed SQL queries less elegantly than I could have, and over time I realized ways to make my work more efficient and less exhausting. The data work has had the effect of increasing my stamina, too. At the beginning, my mind would get tired after a morning of data analysis, but now I can go much longer before feeling fried.

The more I learn, though, the more I realize how much more trial and error I have until I achieve real mastery, and not just a master’s degree. The biggest challenges that remain: establishing a workflow in my analysis that is easily reproducible when data is updated and keeping my queries and tables organized.

Still, I am proud of my time at NPR. I was able to assist the team in news gathering when a shooter attacked the Washington Navy Yard. I pitched new ideas to my editor that he saw promise in. I’m confident that I actually contributed in furthering the research for the ongoing series on mine safety that Howard Berkes has worked on since 2010. I brought my ability to look at a CSV file on the Department of Labor’s site, import it into MySQL and query it six ways till Sunday. I even taught Howard, an experienced, award-winning reporter whom I admire, how to sort and filter data in Excel.
I feel like I finally understand what investigative reporting is and can envision the whole process, from the first idea to the radio broadcast. I have learned how much reporting goes into a radio story before one second of sound is recorded, and how to extract the narrative out of a large mound of documents, data and interviews and use sound to communicate it to listeners. I also appreciate how sources, documents and data go together like boxing gloves, to use an analogy I heard from Jeff Leen, Investigations Editor at The Washington Post. You use each source of information like a one-two punch. Documents. Pow! Data. Thwak! Sources. Biff!

My work at NPR has been different than I initially imagined. The majority of my time was spent data munging and I only recorded one interview on tape. I haven’t logged even one second of audio, either, which I’m not terribly upset about. I have not been able to see a collaboration between NPR and CPI from the inside, so my professional analysis has not flowed as organically from my professional placement as I thought. Still, Howard has been a tremendous resource for my analysis and introduced me to an editor at Nieman Reports, where it is slated to be published.

The focus of the analysis portion of this project was timely, as two more collaborations between investigative non-profits and public radio organizations were announced after I picked my topic in spring semester. If I had wanted to get a true flavor of how these collaborations take place in real time, I could have completed my professional placement at a local investigative non-profit or public radio station. But, I had already set my sights on NPR, even though my assignments were not part the kind of collaboration I was researching. Even though I started to worry I wouldn’t have enough
material, in the end I interviewed five more people than made it into the final report. (Even after two years of grad school, I still have trouble economizing my efforts sometimes.)

After this semester, I know I am in a better position to enter the job market with the firsthand perspective on investigative radio reporting I’ve gained and the contacts I’ve established at NPR. This semester was the culmination of the skills I worked hard to gain and refine at the University of Missouri. I threw myself into tackling the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities it represented.
Chapter Four: Abundant Physical Evidence

Analysis of data from the Treasury Department of delinquent mine owners,

September 4, 2013

debtors at DOJ by name-

there are 13 different debtors at DOJ. Almost all have multiple records.

Average debt age – 193.0043

Average referred balance 4009.689065

diff sum refbal and sum netcoll – sum(refbal) the amount referred: 52,631,178.67

Sum(netcoll) the amount that’s been collected: 18,206,585.36

The difference between the two: 34,424,593.31 – was referred by hasn’t been collected

diff sum refbal and sum net col for YESes –

This is for those that have been determined to have been collected

For those that are in the YES sheets, the treasury has actually collected more over all than

was referred to the dept.

Sum(refbal) 16857308.03

Sum(netcoll) 18206585.36

Difference (refbal minus netcoll) -1,349,277.33

diff sum refbal and sum net coll for NOs –

This gives a different result of the amount that is left to pay when you split it into

categories of what the treasury has decided was and was not collected. I think this query

is clearer because otherwise the fact that the treasury has overcollected for the referred

balances makes it seem like less is actually owed.
Sum(refball) 35,773,870.64
Sum(netcoll) 0.00
Difference –(amount to be collected that has been determined that it was not collected)
35,773,870.64

Justice operator group by colldetails – NO 244, YES 37

Most of the debts of Justice operators have not been collected

Justice operator sum amount owed –
Sum(refbal): 1,304,534.61

Sum(netcoll) amount collected: 303,425.51

Amount owed (sum of refbal – sum of netcoll): 1,001,109.10

Justice operators debts by current location and closure reason -

Like the other debts in general, the ones that are at CA are mostly collected, whereas the ones that have not been collected are mostly at PCA and DMS

North Napier operators debts –
I was not able to find most of the operator names listed in the spreadsheet of their debts that Howard sent me, but I did find these folks:

where DEBTORNAME in('K & D MINING','NECO ENERGY, INC.','NAPIER & SONS TRUCKING','JANICE NAPIER LLC','NAPIER TRUCKING CO')

82 records

North napier group by colldetails – NO 77, YES 5

Most of the debts have not been paid
north napier operator sum amount owed -

sum(refbal) 1408071.58
sum(netcoll) 1105.99

difference (refbal – netcoll) 1,406,965.59 (the north napier operators owe the treasury debt nearly 1.5 mil)

group by currentlocation and colldetails -

If it is located at a creditor agency, it will most likely have been collected on. But if it was sent to a private collector agency, a debt management service or the DOJ, it was most likely not collected on

CA YES 5483
CA NO 2757
PCA NO 2410
DMS NO 1922
PCA YES 246
DMS YES 237
DOJ NO 68
DOJ YES 3

Memo to Howard Berkes and Ellen Smith on Treasury Department

Hello,

I’ve been doing lots of queries on the treasury data and wanted to share what I know about it so far. As a precautionary note: this is the preliminary result of just a day’s worth
of queries, so the information here is just to get a flavor of what is in the data so you can figure out where you want to go with it.

**Basic information**

The data stretches from 10/03/2009 to 05/25/2013, with more debts being referred every year. For example, there were 3327 cases in 2010, and 3895 cases in 2012. Right now it doesn’t make sense to count the number of debts in 2009 and 2013, as we don’t have sufficient data covering all 12 months in those years. There are 13,126 records in all. The smallest amount referred to the Treasury was $25.16 and the largest was $903,835.73. The average amount referred was $4009.69.

The smallest age of the debt referred was 50 (I assume this is days, right?) and the longest was 2537. The average number (of days) was 193.

There were 4,110 different names of debtors, although a few of them are different spellings for the same name (like “Adams Stone” and “Adams Stone Company”). I don’t know how many have spelling variations like this exactly, but it seems that mostly the data are clean and don’t list too many different versions of the same company’s name. A lot of the names contain the words “trucking,” “sand” or “gravel”.

Each row has a unique case ID. There are 72 duplicates where one company will have multiple case IDs for the same referred amount, referred date and current location of the debt. I’m not sure if these duplicates represent different debts or the same debts that have been mistakenly entered multiple times. The money represented by these duplicates is only $34,066.95, so it doesn’t seem to represent that big of an issue right now. Still, it would be good to iron out the reason behind the duplicate records.
Most of the debts have not been collected. 7,157 were categorized as not collected (about 54.5%) and 5,969 were designated as having been collected (about 45.5%).

The treasury actually collected $1,349,277.33 more than the amount referred to the department when you look at just the debts the Treasury categorized as having been collected. Of the debts the Treasury designated as NOT having been collected, $35,773,870.64 was referred to the department but not collected.

Most of the debt is listed as currently located at a Creditor Agency (CA) (62.7% or 8,240 records), followed by about 20% of the cases at Private Collection Agency (PCA) or a Debt Management Service (DMS). 71 cases (representing 13 companies) say they have been sent to the DOJ.

I looked at the frequency of collection for different locations and it seems that a debt will most likely have been collected if the debt is listed as being located at a creditor agency. But if it was sent to a private collector agency, a debt management service or the DOJ, it was most likely not collected on. There is no information on if, when or why a case was closed if it was not sent to a CA. Only cases being listed as currently at a CA say when and why a case was closed. I’m not really sure what any of these bodies is or what they do, or why a debt would be sent to a CA versus a PCA or DMS.

**Trying to track individual debts**

I found the debts that belong to the Justice operators listed in the violations data and some of the Napier and North operators (see below).

I got the caseids and started plugging them into the History tables the Treasury Department sent over to see what the story was with each debt. A lot of the cases end
with entries like this “ZZZZZZZZZZBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB, 0,” Or some other combination of Z’s and B’s that look like someone fell asleep on the keyboard and started drooling. Each entry like this has a date beside it that is exactly a month after the previous entry like this.

Questions I have a result of the initial analysis

What is the process for assigning case IDs? Why do 72 companies have multiple records with different case IDs but the same referred amount, referred date and current location of the debt? Why would a debt be sent to a CA versus a PCA or DMS? What does it say about the debt? What’s up with the Z’s and B’s in the history table?

Queries of data from the Mine Safety and Health Administration

create table EarliestDelinquencyDates

select `Mine ID` as mine_id, `Controller ID` as controller_id, min(`Delinquent Date`) as MinOfDelinquencyDate
from delinq_debt
group by `Mine ID`, `Controller ID`
order by 1 desc

create table delinqcont_delinqtime_viols

select delinquent_violations_tojoin.*, earliestdelinquencydates.MinOfDelinquencyDate
from delinquent_violations_tojoin
LEFT JOIN earliestdelinquencydates
on delinquent_violations_tojoin.mine_id = earliestdelinquencydates.mine_id and
delinquent_violations_tojoin.controller_id = earliestdelinquencydates.controller_id
where violation_occur_dt >= MinOfDelinquencyDate

**Creating lots of smaller tables for each safety metric**

create table tojoin_rulestolivebyi

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*)
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where part_section in('56.9101',
'56.12017','56.14101(a)','56.14105','56.14130(g)','56.14131(a)','56.14205','56.14207','56.15005','56.16002(c)','56.16009','56.20011','57.3360','75.202','75.220(a)(1)','75.511','75.140 3-10(i)','75.1725(a)','75.1725(c)',
'77.404(c) ','77.1607(g) ', '77.1607(n)', '77.1710(g) ', '77.1710(i)' )
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 3 desc

create table tojoin_rulestolivebyII

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as RulestoLiveByII_viols
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where part_section
in('75.203(a) ','75.223(a) ','75.333(h) ','75.337(f) ','75.360(a)(1) ','75.360(b)(3) ','75.370(a)(1) '
,'75.1504(a) ','75.1505(b)' )
create table tojoin_rulestolivebyIII

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as RulestoLiveByIII_viols
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where part_section in('75.362(a)(1)','77.404(a)','77.405(b)','77.1000','77.1605(b)',
'77.1606(a)','77.1607(b)','77.1713(a)','46.7(a)','56.3130',
'56.3200','56.14100(b)','56.15020','57.14100(b)')
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 3 desc

create table tojoin_spasyes

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as SpAsYES
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where special_assess = "Y"
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 1

CREATE table tojoin_lostdays

SELECT controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as LostDays
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where inj_illness = 'LostDays'
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 3 desc

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as SandSYES
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where sig_sub = 'y'
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 3 desc

select controller_id, count(*)
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where part_section like "%75.360%"
group by controller_id
order by 2 desc

select controller_id, controller_name, count(*) as 104b_viols
from delinqcont_delinqtime_viols
where type_of_actn_1 = '104(b)'
group by controller_id, controller_name
order by 1
select distinct tomash_violation_counts_all.*, tomash_scofflaw_unique.comments as scofflaw_notes, tomash_notes.comments as notes
from tomash_violation_counts_all
LEFT JOIN tomash_notes
on tomash_notes.controllerid = tomash_violation_counts_all.controller_id
left join tomash_scofflaw_unique
on tomash_scofflaw_unique.`controller id` = tomash_violation_counts_all.controller_id

November 12, 2013. SQL Pivot Query

create table for_howard_11_14_cont_time_of_viol

select controller_id,
    sum(if(type_of_actn_1='104(b)', 1, 0)) as '104b',
    sum(if(type_of_actn_1='107(a)', 1, 0)) as '107a_viols',
    sum(if(negligence = 'modnegligence',1, 0)) as 'modnegligence',
    sum(if(negligence = 'highnegligence', 1, 0)) as 'highnegligence',
    sum(if(negligence = 'reckless',1, 0)) as 'reckless',
    sum(if(likelihood='reasonably', 1, 0)) as 'reasonably',
    sum(if(likelihood = 'highly', 1, 0)) as 'highlylikely',
    sum(if(likelihood='occurred', 1, 0)) as 'occurred',
    sum(if(sig_sub = 'y', 1, 0)) as 'SandSYES',
    sum(if(special_assess = "Y", 1, 0)) as 'SpAsYES',
    sum(if(likelihood= 'reasonably', 1, 0)) as 'reasonably',
    sum(if(likelihood = 'highly', 1, 0)) as 'highlylikely',
    sum(if(likelihood='occurred', 1, 0)) as 'occurred',
    sum(if(sig_sub = 'y', 1, 0)) as 'SandSYES',
    sum(if(special_assess = "Y", 1, 0)) as 'SpAsYES',

sum(if(part_section
in('56.9101','56.12017','56.14101(a)','56.14105','56.14130(g)','56.14131(a)','56.14205','56.
14207','56.15005','56.16002(c)','56.16009','56.20011','57.3360','75.202','75.220(a)(1)',
'75.511','75.1403-10(i)','75.1725(a)','75.1725(c)','77.404(c)','77.1607(g)',
'77.1607(n)','77.1710(g)','77.1710(i)'), 1, 0)) as 'rulestolivebyi',

sum(if(part_section in(
'75.203(a)','75.223(a)','75.333(h)','75.337(f)','75.360(a)(1)','75.360(b)(3)',
'75.370(a)(1)','75.1504(a)','75.1505(b)'), 1, 0))as 'rulestolivebyii', sum(if(part_section
in('75.362(a)(1)','77.404(a)','77.405(b)','77.1000','77.1605(b)',
'77.1606(a)','77.1607(b)','77.1713(a)','46.7(a)', '56.3130', '56.3200', '56.14100(b)',
'56.15020','57.14100(b)'), 1, 0))as 'RulestoLiveByiii',

sum(if(inj_illness = "lostdays",1, 0))as 'lostdays',

sum(if(inj_illness = "permanent",1, 0))as 'permanentinj',

sum(if(inj_illness = "Fatal",1, 0))as 'fatalinj',

sum(if(part_section like "%75.360%", 1, 0))as 'preshift_viols'
from delinqmine_delinqtime_viols_mattos

    group by controller_id
Chapter Five: Analysis

Across the United States, investigative journalism organizations and public media outlets have started joining forces in greater numbers, most recently in St. Louis and Boston. Partners in the collaborations often find that the relationship demands thoughtfulness and hard work, but yields great rewards. What follows is a collection of wisdom from reporters and editors who have worked as members of collaborations at NPR, the Center for Public Integrity (CPI), KPBS and inewsource in San Diego and InvestigateWest and KUOW in Seattle.

Tip One: Communicate early and often.

In 2011 a grain elevator exploded at the Bartlett Grain Co. in Kansas, killing six. The disaster caught the attention of Center for Public Integrity reporter Jim Morris, who mentioned it to fellow reporter, Howard Berkes at NPR. Morris and Berkes were in the midst of reporting on pollution for a project called Poisoned Places, but were already setting their sights on their next collaboration.

The reporters started researching and discovered that such explosions were rare, but worker deaths because of drowning in a grain bin was much more common. Chris Hamby at CPI pulled Occupational Safety and Health Administration data and the reporters started looking more deeply into it. The result was a series called “Buried In Grain.”

NPR and CPI often work together on stories or collaborate with reporters and editors at other organizations. Berkes and Morris have a lot of experience working with
others as members of a collaboration, and they have figured out ways to collaborate more successfully.

Morris recommends pitching a story to a partner as soon as the idea is developed. Morris and Berkes starting talking early.

“You don’t want to have a half-baked idea, but you don’t want to report it to death.” Bringing a partner on board quickly fosters early buy-in rather than bringing them up to speed later in the game.

Working together allowed the reporters to share resources – such as legal and data experts – as well as the burden of reporting. “We hold nothing back,” Berkes said. They share sources, documents and interview transcripts over email if one partner can’t sit in.

Generally, Morris and Berkes like to do their own interviews and build on each other’s work, he said, either recording broadcast-quality audio in person or calling a source later on their own to get quotes.

The reporters cover for each other when someone gets pulled onto another assignment, he said, and negotiate who tackles each task, Berkes said.

“While I was busy with the Olympics, Jim was busy laying the groundwork,” Berkes said. Jim was contacting and interviewing key sources and gathering court documents.

On Berkes’ first day back from covering the 2012 London Olympics, both men met in Mount Carroll, Ill. to interview the survivor of a grain bin tragedy. The young man, Will Piper, was caught in a grain bin accident and saw his friend die within arm’s
reach. Morris had been ready to write the story months earlier using deposition documents.

“That didn’t work for me,” Berkes said. “I needed him face to face and I needed him to tell me in a way that would work for radio what happened that day.”

The young man played a key role in telling the story to a radio audience, even if listeners were urbanites unfamiliar with agriculture. He narrated the events of the day, his voice full of emotion. “It was what connected people to grain bins and OSHA penalties,” Morris said. “When you get the voice like Will Piper, it makes the story infinitely more powerful and interesting.”

Morris’s groundwork paid off, but so did Berkes’s persistence in getting Piper to talk – a process of persuasion and building trust that spanned six months. Both reporters dug through local court documents extensively. Interviewing sources together, each reporter would pick up on different bits of information and storytelling that the other would miss, Berkes said.

Morris contributed his extensive background covering workplace safety issues. Berkes dug through every workplace fatality reported to OSHA to find ones the agency had misclassified.

The reporters spoke several times a week at the beginning and every day when the reporting really picked up. They constantly emailed each other. Berkes periodically sent an email to his editor and Morris summarizing the progress in the reporting and the next steps.
The reporters represent an institutional partnership at its most basic level, so it’s important to have chemistry, Morris said. He and Berkes are thinking of their next story together.

“Sometimes you just sort of click with people,” Morris said in a phone interview with both reporters on the call. “You find out that you can work together without killing each other too much, right Howard?”

**Tip Two: Understand the demands of each medium and learn how to work across them.**

During the 2012 election, former inewsource reporter Ryann Growchowski saw a campaign mailer that endorsed both Barack Obama and conservative Gary Kreep – a strange pairing, considering that Kreep was a “birther” and believed Obama was not born in the U.S. and not fit to be president.

Growchowski looked more closely at fine print on the flier and realized what looked like an endorsement from a literacy group was actually “slate mailer,” a piece of mail voters receive where candidates have paid to place their name, alongside those of other politicians. The team decided to investigate.

The investigative non-profit, inewsource, has been embedded in the headquarters of public broadcaster KPBS since October 2011. Today the desks of inewsource staff line a wall near the news hub, steps away from KPBS beat reporters and producers. The two organizations work together to report and produce local watchdog journalism.

The transition to a new medium has posed challenges for inewsource.
“It was crazy,” Growchowski said, laughing. Coming from a print background, she learned more and more how to “think in radio” as her story on slate mailers progressed.

Growchowski started researching the campaign fliers and recorded interviews with her sources over the phone. That is, until former KPBS investigative producer Joanne Faryon stepped in with advice. (Faryon has since become employed as a reporter by the inewssource side of the collaboration.)

Since some of Growchowski’s sources were local, Faryon suggested an in-person interview instead. Growchowski didn’t realize how that in-person recordings are always better than recordings done over the phone.

“I honestly didn't think it mattered,” Growchowski said. “But Joanne played me audio of both, and it was obvious that the in-person recorded interview was miles ahead in quality and clarity.”

At the next interview for the piece – this time with a voter – Growchowski learned about using natural sound to paint a scene. Faryon suggested Growchowski start recording sound as soon as she got to the source’s house, instead of pressing the “record” button at the start of the interview. She was able to capture the sound of a dog barking, which Faryon mixed into the piece to add color.

The final piece featured both Faryon and Growchowski’s voices talking about what Growchowski had found in her reporting.

Faryon: “If I got one of these in the mail, I might feel a little duped.”
Growchowski: “And that’s how Nadine Scott felt. I met with her in her house in Oceanside.”

Natural sound: “Growl, growl. Woof! Woof!” (Doorbell rings.)

Growchowski: “And once I got past her dog, we talked about how she felt about getting these in her mailbox.”

Faryon worked with Growchowski to identify the key storytelling elements among the information she had gathered. Faryon helped Growchowski with what she calls “simple things” that distinguish broadcast from print reporting.

“The difference is you have to leave the building, and you have to spend time with this person” you are interviewing to capture color for the story, Faryon said.

Collaborating on stories like this have allowed KPBS to beef up its investigative reporting capacity and better fulfill its mission of serving the public high-quality, high-impact news. Growchowski was able to spend enough time to thoroughly understand and report the story, and Faryon coached her through conceiving the material in a broadcast-friendly format, she said.

“KPBS got great content on three platforms – web, radio and TV,” Faryon said. The station has trained inewsource reporters extensively in audio production skills and even voice coaching, KPBS editor Suzanne Marmion said – a process which took about six months and some “awkward-sounding” radio stories.

Marmion has encountered skepticism from broadcast producers at other stations about the quality of investigative storytelling, and she tries to convince them the final product is the same engaging storytelling audiences expect.
“It doesn’t have to be a bunch of dry data blah-blah,” Marmion said. “We know how to tell good stories for broadcast; we’ve been doing it forever.”

**Tip Three: Start small, build trust and take on more risk gradually.**

Anacortes, Wash., police chief Bonnie Bowers knew where to find the body; she’d heard from another law enforcement official how Alzheimer’s dementia patients follow straight lines when they start to wander.

KUOW reporter, Ruby de Luna traveled with the police chief to a grassy marsh where the body of 69-year-old William Landers was found dead, four days after he had wandered away from his apartment. Her mic captured the sound of chirping birds as the police chief explained how she deduced where the missing man may have ended up. Landers’ case was among dozens identified by the series, “Wandering,” jointly produced by KUOW radio, KCTS television and InvestigativeWest, a local investigative journalism non-profit. The story signaled a greater level of collaborative reporting than the organizations had undertaken before.

De Luna had reported on Alzheimer’s patients before, but wouldn’t have come upon this story without the station’s partnership with the investigative organizations, which her editor at KUOW, Carol Smith helped found.

De Luna was game when her editor approached her with the idea.

“I thought, ‘Sure’”, she said. “When I learned more about it, I was really intrigued.”

In 2009 InvestigateWest was started from journalists who had been laid off from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer when it shifted from a daily paper to an online-only
newsroom. Early on, the new organization began forging a relationship with NPR affiliate, Associate Director Jason Alcorn said. Thanks to KUOW, InvestigateWest reporters received training in the craft of radio, won a few grant to produce radio reports, and appeared on day-time talk shows to share their investigations.

Still, the collaboration was limited to providing content, rather than jointly reporting and producing stories.

“We were collaborating with them, but it wasn’t a rich collaboration,” Alcorn said.

That changed in January 2013, when InvestigateWest founder Carol Smith was hired as a KUOW editor, and the two organizations began to embark on more involved projects together, Alcorn said.

At the request of KCTS TV, InvestigateWest started researching law enforcement and missing persons and soon realized the story lay in discussing how well (or poorly) officials respond to reports of people with Alzheimer’s and dementia who go missing. Alcorn used interviews and news clippings to compile a database of missing people. He wrote a story brief and listed key sources, which he shared with de Luna.

De Luna said she became involved in the story after a lot of the research was already complete, so her challenge was understanding what Alcorn had found and contribute her own original reporting without duplicating his efforts.

Alcorn divided up the sources and reporting tasks so each part of the team wouldn’t call the same people and make them answer the same questions over and over. The radio station followed the case of William Landers, a missing man in the western
part of the state. The TV station followed a case in the east. Meanwhile, the investigative non-profit tackled the policy-makers and state officials.

While Alcorn dealt with the data, de Luna focused on the voice of the affected families.

“I felt like we all contributed our strengths to this piece,” de Luna said. “It makes the series more multidimensional.”

This November, another KUOW and InvestigateWest collaboration on foster care launched, the product of much more joint reporting than the series “Wandering.”

This time, de Luna’s “pod-mate” in the newsroom, Liz Jones, got a turn digging into a collaboratively reported story.

“Because (“Wandering”) was such a positive experience it made us more open to future collaborations,” de Luna said.

KUOW took on a larger risk agreeing to dig into the topic, and the reporter played a larger role reporting it from the beginning, Alcorn said.

“We were able to do that because we established that trust the first time around,” he said.

Achieving that level of credibility has been a process for the small start-up, which this year won 10 awards, including the Society of Professional Journalists New America Award for reporting on an immigration detention center in Tacoma, Wash.

Now, instead of approaching partners, practically “holding our tin cup out,” Alcorn said, others are asking to work with InvestigateWest.
“In the last 12 months we’ve become an organization that traditional news organizations want to work with,” Alcorn said.

**Tip Four: Little details make a big difference.**

By working together, public radio organizations and investigative non-profits can fill the gaps in capacity that the other lacks. NPR member stations can serve their audiences with well-reported, in-depth coverage that would be too time- or resource-intensive to produce on their own. Investigative non-profits can achieve greater impact by translating their findings into new mediums and reaching more people with their stories.

Some collaborations encounter greater hurdles and flounder because the basic foundation wasn’t established in the first place: picking a partner who shares your organization’s journalistic values and is completely committed to the success of the partnership, communicating constantly and sharing everything.

Opportunities for conflict abound, said Ellen Weiss, who has served as a news executive and managed collaborations at NPR, CPI and most recently at Scripps Howard.

The examples in this article demonstrate the need to balance the autonomy of the partners and their mediums while unifying their members around common reporting. Successful collaborations defy old patterns of competition and rely on strong relationships built on trust between reporters and leadership at two separate institutions. Like many relationships, hard work may be required. A journalistic partnership requires that both parties put their humility on the table and take equal ownership over the final product.
“They can be infuriating,” Weiss said. “But my experience has been they’re so worth it because – if you can get past your ego – you have access to a ton more ideas and resources.”
Appendix Two: Supervisor Evaluation

November 14, 2013

Professor Barbara Cochran
The Missouri School of Journalism
529 14th Street NW, Suite 1240
Washington, DC 20045

Dear Barbara:

I’m pleased to provide this evaluation of the professional experience of Anna Boiko-Weyrauch, who has served as an intern on NPR’s Investigations Team while she completes her graduate studies at Missouri.

Anna has taken full advantage of her experience at NPR. She has worked closely with one of the network’s veteran correspondents, Howard Berkes, on an investigative project about coal mine safety that should be broadcast in late 2013 or early 2014. She helped to acquire and analyze databases of mine-safety violations that were instrumental in developing the series’ conclusions. She also played a key role in using the information to frame the stories, and has taken the lead in reporting and writing an accompanying profile of an industry executive who will be one of the series’ primary subjects.

In addition, when the team took part in coverage of the Washington Navy Yard shooting Anna played a central role in finding sources and tracking the news for correspondents on the air. And as she worked to develop the coal mine project, Anna pitched and reported a data-driven story of her own related to pipeline regulation.

An NPR internship also offers structured cultural and learning opportunities – brown-bag lunches with correspondents, concerts with emerging artists, etc. – and Anna has embraced these as well.

Investigative reporting requires a rare and precise mix of talents. Successful members of NPR’s Investigations Team are ambitious, curious, self-directed and inquisitive, equally skilled at complex analysis and rich storytelling. Anna fits in. She brings a sophisticated understanding of data analysis that rivals many veteran correspondents and has put it to good use. I hope her time at NPR has been as valuable to Anna as it has been to the network.

Best Regards,

Robert Little
Senior Supervising Editor, Investigations
Appendix Two: Original Proposal

Radio and investigative non-profit collaborations

Introduction.

If you want to delight your date, tell them you work in public radio. Their eyes will spark and their chin tilt in, “Really?” they’ll gasp. Without much to your credit, you will benefit as the proxy for radio listeners’ feelings of love and devotion for NPR. Now, if you want to really impress them, say you’re an investigative reporter. Follow the same procedure for repelling them. If the night flops and you’d rather desert than dessert, mention all the court records at your fingertips. Pose the question slyly: “What was your last name and birthdate again?” Then simply purse your lips, “Hmm…”

My project aims to combine these elements of shock and awe. It will examine collaborations between public radio newsrooms and investigative news non-profits through a case study of collaboration between NPR’s Investigations Unit and the Center for Public Integrity.

Since graduating college, I have reported for print and radio from across the U.S. and Africa for outlets such as NPR, The Economist, and the BBC. While reporting on gold mining in Ghana, I realized my stories could make people pause by the radio, in between bites of breakfast burrito, and listen. I decided to increase the depth of my reporting by learning data analysis and mapping skills, and began graduate studies at the University of Missouri. At the NICAR Database Library, I FOIA-ed federal agencies and analyzed massive databases. I solidified my print skills with numerous front page stories at the Columbia Missourian. But radio is still my first love. The more I learn about
investigative reporting, the more I want to meld my past life mic-ing interviews and cutting tape with my new life of navigating bureaucratic red tape and flipping through stacks of inspection records. After I graduate I want to work as a reporter with an established news organization. As long as I don’t have to freelance anymore, I will thank my lucky stars. The more elements of investigative reporting and radio I can finagle into my next job, the better.

This is where I am headed (as expressed by a MySQL query):

```sql
SELECT job_title
FROM possible_careers
WHERE (type IN ("local beat", "investigative") AND medium IN("radio", "print", "digital") AND location = "Pacific Northwest") OR (type = "investigative" AND medium IN("radio", "print", "digital") AND location IN("D.C.", "N.Y.C."))
ORDER BY location like "%Pacific Northwest%" desc
```

This project will help me achieve this goal because it combines radio and investigative reporting. A professional placement involving an organization which collaborates with others across mediums will help me see what it means to meld investigative reporting and radio, and how I could make it work in a future career.

**Professional skills component F.A.Q.s.**

**Where will you work?.**

What an excellent question. Right now I am in discussions with Robert Little, the new NPR senior editor for investigations about doing my professional placement there.
Little just started at NPR at the beginning of March, after leaving The Baltimore Sun, so he is unfamiliar with the organization’s protocol. We last spoke April 4, 2013 and he said he will have to check with higher-ups to see what intern program the investigations unit has, and then would be back in touch to determine if I might be the best person to serve in that role. In the case that this placement falls through, I would be interested in working with the NPR Newsapps team or at the Center for Public Integrity. Either way I will be participating in the Washington D.C. Program in the fall.

**What will you do, and why are YOU the one to do it?.**

The journalism specialty I would pursue in a project is investigative reporting, specifically investigative stories on the radio. I am qualified to pursue this project because I was a radio freelancer began my graduate work and have continued to produce stories for NPR and Public Radio International as a Mizzou Tiger. I have been trying my darnedest to learn investigative reporting through studying data analysis, working at the NICAR Database Library, taking the investigative reporting class, attending IRE conferences and reporting investigative stories for the Columbia Missourian.

**OK, how about a detailed description of the work you’ll do?.**

If I complete my professional placement at NPR, I would log tape, file open records requests, perform research and analyze data. The work would be in support of the investigations the unit has underway, and would probably not be disseminated on its own. Robert Little would most likely supervise my work, although those details are still up in the air. Tentative beginning and ending dates for the Washington Program are August 19th to December 1st. NPR’s internship dates are September 9th to December 27th (16}
weeks). I anticipate I will work Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“Abundant physical evidence” will take the form of a log of my daily activities, the open records requests I file, memos and SQL queries I write and any stories that I help produce.

**Analysis Component.**

Scene change. Photos projected on the screen at a recent “Brown-Bag” presentation at MU were hard to take in. Blood pooled under cows strung by their feet at the slaughterhouse. The trough below them overflowed ruby-red. The meeting highlighted Kansas City Star reporter Mike McGraw’s year-long investigation on the American beef industry. Glancing toward the carnage, he said he was rather fond of the shot.

That day, the point was collaboration. McGraw distributed his story in part through partnering with Harvest Public Media, an ag journalism network.

“It’s part of the ongoing project to transform and revitalize investigative reporting.” Brant Houston of the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting said of the collaboration (Houston). The process of transformation is still a chrysalis. The reporters and editors are trying to understand how to make the collaboration work, including how to translate information obtained through investigative methods to video and audio formats. Some reporters have sliced off one of the investigation’s findings and presented a human-centered narrative. Others have taken a more “hard news” approach. Harvest Public Media’s Donna Vestal said the organizations are contemplating the best path forward (Houston).
I’d like to help them figure that out. Investigative non-profits have increasingly shouldered responsibility for watchdog reporting as newspapers have cut staff. Some of these new organizations have partnered with radio stations to expand the audience for their reports and deepen their impact. I would like to help more recently founded investigative non-profits follow the same path.

For my professional analysis, I propose the following research questions:

**RQ1: What is the step-by-step process followed during investigative reporting collaborations to produce investigative stories for public radio?**

**RQ2: What motivates partners in collaboration to embark on projects, and what prompts them to continue such efforts?**

I would like to write a guide of best practices based on the experiences of collaborations between the NPR Investigative Unit and the Center for Public Integrity. This guide could be distributed through a few professional networks: the Investigative News Network, the IRE Journal, the Third Coast International Audio Festival and the Association of Independents in Radio. Public radio stations and investigative non-profits would benefit from seeing examples of how other journalists have overcome the challenges inherent in cross-newsroom collaboration and radio production. I hope the guide would encourage other nonprofits to consider such collaborations in the future, and help lead them through each step using real-life anecdotes and audio examples of relevant stories and concepts. This research could help fledgling collaborations by providing a roadmap based on the experiences of others who have traveled the path before them.
**Joining forces for journalism – project justification.**

Investigative reporters have become a “vanishing species” and in their place has arisen non-profit organizations conducting investigative journalism (Walton, 2010a, p. 20). Still, these independent bodies rely on “old-line” media to bring their stories to audiences (Walton, 2010a, p. 29). In 2009, investigative non-profits established a federation known as the Investigative News Network (INN), which seeks to improve in-depth and watchdog reporting across the United States (Lewis, 2009, p.17).

One example of “old-line” media is radio, which continues to occupy a vital niche in U.S. media consumers’ diets. News and information programming is the second most listened-to genre after country music; half of Americans say they get their local news from the radio (Pew Research Center, 2012). NPR is one source of such programming, and it continues to draw listeners’ attention through podcast downloads and web traffic, both on the rise (Pew Research Center, 2012). Overall listenership has increased dramatically over the past decade, and now totals 26 million people weekly (NPR, Audience, n.d., para. 1).

Collaborations between investigative non-profits and public radio stations stand to benefit both partners. In one article NPR investigative reporter Daniel Zwerdling spoke glowingly of his collaboration covering traumatic brain injury in the military with ProPublica’s T. Christian Miller (Walton, 2010b, p. 25). Zwerdling said the impact of their reporting was greater than either could have achieved on his own (Walton, 2010b, p. 25).
Research on the INN recommends smaller members join hands with partners across media platforms “to build brand recognition within the community they serve, and grow their membership” (Osder & Campwala, 2012, p. 46). Also, investigative organizations could find a receptive audience among NPR listeners, as research finds those tuning into NPR are better educated and more politically active than most Americans (NPR, Audience, n.d., “About the Audience” tab). Airing more investigative stories would help build the stations’ credibility with their audience. Research has shown public radio stations with more newsroom staff draw more devoted listeners, market share and donations, prompting many stations to seek to increase reporting capacity (Station Resource Group & Walrus Research, 2011, p. 23-26).

The collaborations could leverage people power in the absence of ample financial resources. Neither investigative non-profits nor local NPR affiliate stations are rolling in dough. Few local public radio stations regularly cover local news with full-time reporting staff, as overhead sucks up much of the station’s funding (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 35). NPR has made the push to increase its own investigative unit, and collaborations have helped the investment go even farther (Walton, 2010b, p. 25). Zwerdling said NPR essentially gained another seasoned reporter without having to pay another salary during its collaboration with ProPublica (Walton, 2010b, p. 25).

Theories of “sharing nicely” – theoretical framework

Underlying my analysis will be co-director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society Yochai Benkler’s theory of “social sharing” (Benkler, 2004, p. 357). He advances the idea that sharing is a sustainable economic model that exists independently
from commercial markets or governments. The theory will be used to understand news organizations’ motivations for engaging in partnerships, and allow other newsrooms to identify potential collaborators.

Benkler examines carpooling and distributed computing as examples of “shareable goods,” how people share certain possessions with others when their possessions are not being put to full use (p. 276). In other words, the potential benefit provided by that good is in excess of what the owner could use (Benkler, 2004, p. 297). People share when they see it’s easier and more beneficial to do so than to keep their things to themselves. In economic terms, people share when the “opportunity cost” of being stingy is higher than the cost of being generous (Benkler, 2004, p. 311).

For example, Benkler describes a semi-formal arrangement in a Northern Virginia suburb where drivers pick up strangers looking for a ride into town so the drivers can use the H.O.V. lanes, otherwise forbidden for single-occupancy vehicles. Both the driver and the passengers benefit from the arrangement: passengers get a free-ride and the drivers don’t have to wallow in traffic (Benkler, 2004, p. 284). The opportunity cost of not carpooling means a slower commute, which is costlier than picking up passengers in the carpool system. Benkler extends his analysis to information and cultural production (p. 348).

This theory was used later by Benkler and Nissenbaum on “commons based peer production,” such as computer and information technology developed by a loosely coordinated group of individuals working for free over the Internet, such as Wikipedia or the Linux operating system (2006a). Benkler also expanded on the motivations behind
sharing with others in an often-cited treatise on Internet-based collaborations (2006b, p. 92). This book was picked up by studies on Internet collaborations, which looked at how scores of people contribute a small bit of their time, energy and creativity to innovate new products or solve problems – including “citizen journalism,” readers becoming involved in writing online news (Lev-On & Hardin, 2007, p. 7; Witt, 2006, step 6).

I would like to take a step back from the Internet collaborations and view the theory as it applies to a smaller group than, say, the collaborators of Wikipedia. The most relevant usage is by journalism researcher and former editor of The Oregonian, Sandy Rowe in her research on local investigative collaborations (2011). Rowe looked at investigative collaborations in print and digital media to understand how collaborations could benefit the parties involved. She argues that investigative research has been slow to cash in on advances in knowledge sharing and production, but could capitalize on the motivations Benkler outlines (p. 5).

In my analysis, investigative reporting capacity and radio airtime would be conceived as shareable goods. For example, Benkler’s theory fits ProPublica’s content distribution model which encourages other newsrooms to “steal our stories” (ProPublica, n.d., para. 1). The organization is funded by a large philanthropic grant (Guensburg, 2009, p. 27). Under Benkler’s theory, because the organization’s mission is to propagate investigative reporting, influence policy and inform the public, not sharing stories would carry a higher cost than allowing other news organizations to distribute or repurpose them. ProPublica has a supply of stories in excess of what it can distribute, so sharing and collaboration put their reporting capacity to better use.
I’m curious if radio airtime can be thought of the same way. As many public radio stations don’t focus on local news, do they feel a deficit of coverage that an investigative non-profit could fill? Do the radio stations feel they have an excess quantity of airtime that could be more productively filled with in-depth watchdog reporting? I will keep these themes in mind during my interviews with radio and investigative non-profit reporters, producers and editors.

**Literature Review**

Relevant literature on this topic has been confined mostly to trade publications, as well as consultants’ reports charting the path forward for public media and investigative non-profits. Folks in the industry have been the ones most concerned with examining the present health and future success of public radio and investigative reporting. Scholarly work that relates to this paper is represented by qualitative investigations from the field of convergence studies that address newspaper and television collaborations. This literature review will walk through the points raised by relevant articles and studies, as well as an excursion back into the philosophy of Yochai Benkler on sharing as an economic modality. Finally, this paper proposes methods for conducting further research on best practices between radio and investigative organizations. But first off, let’s talk about driveway moments.

**Public Radio.**

Public radio has become a successful and prominent news source, and the literature on this medium is concerned with proposing a path forward. Articles in trade publications and consultant reports suggest that public media can do more to build on
past successes, solidify core listenership and attract new ears. The federal funding mechanism for public media situates it in a special place in the context of overall media industry turmoil, as it has been subjected to repeated threats from Republicans (Avery, 2007, p. 362).

National Public Radio aims to be “America’s pre-eminent news organization” and advocate the “highest standards of public service in journalism and cultural expression” (NPR, Our Mission and Vision, n.d.). The network’s programs and brand have attracted “ardent fans,” who couldn’t imagine life without a daily dose of Steve Inskeep or Michele Norris (Overholser, 2007, p. 35). NPR stands for the news radio format of sound-rich, on-the-ground reporting as well as the public service journalism mission, which has been called “part of the mother’s milk” of NPR (Overholser, 2007, p. 36 and p. 47).

But public radio needs to do more. A recent report by the Station Resource Group recommends changes to double the audience for public broadcasting and triple the number of people of color who tune into NPR and PBS stations for news and information (2010, p. 2). One path to increasing credibility and prominence is getting more “feet on the street” to report on local issues that matter to target audiences (Station Resource Group, 2010, p. 4). The report suggests investing more in enterprise and investigative reporting: “At its best, investigative reporting produces high visibility, high impact coverage that both makes a difference on important matters and advances the credibility and authority of a news brand. Such work could align closely with public radio’s public service mission” (Station Resource Group, 2010, p. 25).
But that day seems far away; right now most public radio newsrooms employ 10 or fewer reporters (Station Resource Group, 2010, p. 28). Instead, overhead costs suck up most of a radio station’s funding (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p.35). One NPR senior editor, Ellen Weiss, worried that reporters were being pushed to the limit with so much content to create and so many different audience members to reach: “What worries me most is the growing demands. We fill so much air time now. I worry about, as we expand, we’re giving people less time to do reporting. Trying to squeeze more out of people. We shouldn’t sound just like everyone else” (Overholser, 2007, p. 49).

**Investigative non-profits.**

“Call it the Pocantico Declaration”, wrote Charles Lewis, founder of the Center for Public Integrity (2009, p. 13). Lewis alerted the *Columbia Journalism Review* to the establishment of the Investigative News Network (INN) in 2009, which brought together in solidarity the increasing numbers of journalists working at investigative non-profits.

“An investigative-journalism ecosystem is emerging in which an increasing percentage of the most ambitious reporting projects will emanate from the public realm, not from private commercial outlets. That is a tectonic shift.” (Lewis, 2009, p. 18).

Some writers in journalism journals view investigative nonprofits optimistically, but they retain a hint of skepticism about their funding, transfused as it is from private foundations as the lifeblood of current watchdog efforts (Browne, 2010; Guensburg, 2008; Walton, 2010a; Walton, 2010c). ProPublica is often written about as a rarified golden-child of philanthropic largesse, churning out ground-breaking reporting on generous private funds (Guensburg, 2008; Walton, 2010a; Walton, 2010c; Anderson, et
al, 2012; Rowe 2011). Lewis points out that NPR is also a journalism nonprofit that has been able to diversify its revenue stream and thrive since it was created in 1970 – however he points out many public radio stations do not invest time in investigative reporting (Lewis, 2007, p. 34).

Elizabeth Osder and Kaizer Campwala researched the nonprofit landscape and proposed tactics and strategies for increasing revenue streams (2012, p. 6). The white paper begins with an introduction by Kevin Davis, CEO and Executive Director of the INN, “…foundations cannot be expected to foot the bill indefinitely,” (p. 4). The researchers outline the principles of building a nonprofit, including funding (p. 25), understanding the audience (p. 35), content distribution and sustainability (p.60). Osder and Campwala identify public media as a stakeholder in investigative reporting, as public broadcasters often air service-oriented content commercial stations won’t (p. 18). The authors divide INN members into four “archetypes,” and cater distribution and audience development recommendations to each one based on its available resources, focus and capacity (p. 24). The archetypes are “The Startup Shop,” “Topic Specialist,” “Community-Driven News,” and “$1 Million+” (p. 24-25). I will return to this taxonomy in my methods section later.

The Startup Shop and $1 Million+ stand to gain more in the long term by diversifying their income streams through distribution deals with established media organizations (p. 28-29). For many, monetary incentives are the most pressing motivation to create partnerships. Other researchers have looked at it through a collaborative lens.
Rowe cites the collaborative theories posed by Yochai Benkler and Clay Shirky and seeks to apply them to a changed media environment. She writes:

Shirky’s collaborative model, applicable to investigative reporting, relies on a non-hierarchical network with a small number of contributors, tightly aligned on the mission of the project. The group will be defined by interest (there by choice), ability to contribute (skill set that will benefit the network), independence coupled with mutual reliance (must have trusting ties to each other for success) and benefit derived (for some it will be organizational, for others the personal satisfaction of contributing to worthwhile work). (Rowe, 2011, p. 6)

Rowe takes the case studies of ProPublica, the Rocky Mountain Investigative News Network, Oklahoma Watch, and California Watch and addresses how the organizations distributed and monetized their content. She also writes about crowd-sourcing as a collaborative model, and partnerships between universities and professional news organizations. Rowe’s essay is interesting because she outlines the benefits of collaborations: they “create value,” the work is “magnified” throughout the community, and it breaks down barriers between the news organization and the community it seeks to serve through crowdsourcing (p. 20-21).

Rowe’s research is a good starting off point, but I will further apply these theories to radio collaborations specifically, not just print and digital ones. This project examines the applications of these theories more in-depth through participant observation (see methods below). One key point she raises is that approaches to collaboration take on
many forms, as each news organization is different. She quotes ProPublica general manager, Richard Tofel who said, “You’re going to need to be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to work with people where you find them.” (p. 29) Rowe argues that collaboration looks nice to grant-makers and actually encourages funding (p. 30). Overall, she proposes a culture change to bring about this collaborative atmosphere, away from exclusivity and secrecy and towards sharing and asking others for help (p. 32-33).

C.W. Anderson, Emily Bell and Clay Shirky seek to redefine how we should think about the future of journalism, which they say is already here. They write that newsroom partnerships, such as those with the New York Times, have a mixed track record, and instead they advocate that journalistic collaborations follow the form of “networked institutionalism” to crowd-source data analysis, as in ProPublica’s “Free the Files” (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 76). This is how to be a “post-industrial” news organization, they argue:

Decide what part of the news you want to report and how. Get out of any activity that doesn’t support those goals. Look for partnerships or collaborations with other organizations that advance those goals at lower cost than you could manage in-house. Work to make the remaining activities either excellent or cheap (or, ideally, both). (p. 116)

At this point let’s check back in with Yochai Benkler and his work. The introduction already addressed his philosophy as the theoretical framework of this project so I’ll just dip into the foundation of his theory a little bit more deeply here. Benkler
argues sharing can be a “sustainable social practice” (2004, p. 276). A lot of things are “shareable goods” – something you have more of than you can put to maximum use all the time: guest bedrooms and bathrooms, sperm, eggs, and blood (Benkler, 2004, p. 305). Creativity, knowledge and human-power can also be “shareable goods” and be provisioned over the Internet through “common’s based peer production” (Benkler, 2004, p. 333-334). “On the web people are engaging in voluntary acts of cooperation every day” (Benkler, 2011, p. 23). In the context of this project, I will experiment with conceiving of airtime and investigative reporting as “shareable goods.”

Benkler argues that humans are more inclined to empathy and cooperative behavior than dominant thinking has led us to believe; given the right tools we can harness our innate cooperative tendencies not for a Kumbaya utopia, but for a thoroughly modern information-rich economy (2011).

Communication is the first major step to activate our empathy for others and engage in collaboration (p. 117). Benkler outlines the key ingredients for a functional collaborative system. It needs to be fair for people to participate (p. 141), participants need to know their efforts will be reciprocated somewhere down the line (p. 40), and the system needs to be governed by a “set of norms” (p. 168). Material incentives can be part of the motivation for participating, but they can’t be the only one – Benkler pragmatic in his approach to the role of money in a cooperative system (p. 200). Finally, collaborations need to take into account that different people have different reasons for participating (p. 245).
The last chapter of the book examines how businesses can be augmented by cooperative principles that multiply employee efforts (p. 202). The most interesting nugget to apply to my project is the book’s findings on a voluntary payment system for free legal music downloads. One site allowed users to pay whatever they wanted to download music (including paying nothing at all). Most users paid more than the minimum suggested price ($5) when prompted with cues such as words like “Typical” next to the $8 price, “Generous” next to the $12 price, and “We love you” next to $18 (p. 147). Benkler argues that this system created a standard of normal behavior that encouraged payment and customers followed suit, even though they could have legally downloaded the music for free (p. 148).

**Localism.**

Local is a big part of understanding the motivation behind linking radio stations with investigative reporting organizations. Seattle Times reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner, Ken Armstrong discussed the additional impact an investigative series had because it was set on a local, rather than national, scale (2007, p. 8). People have more of a connection to local investigative stories than national ones, so your efforts can resonate further with audience (p. 9-10). One local effort is the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting, a new investigative nonprofit that partners with local NPR and TV stations (Gibson, 2010). The founder, Andy Hall, thinks collaboration is the way of the future. The center has grants and can meet its financial obligations, but it gives away content for free. The center is looking start up a membership option to ensure sustainable, stable funding (Gibson, 2010, 15).
NPR has a pull and tug relationship with localism. The most listened to shows cover national news. Yet the network’s listeners feel connected to the places they live and share a “strong sense of place,” craving more from local NPR coverage (Walrus Research, 2006, p. 14). Vassar sociology professor William Hoynes advocates that strengthening local programming for television and radio should be a fundamental part of the future of public media (2007, p. 373). Recent research on this topic by the consultants, Station Resource Group, recommends strengthening local reporting capacity through “local journalism centers,” targeting resources to local newsrooms, collaborating and partnering with other creators of content (2010, p. 5).

**Past newspapers/TV collaborations.**

Ball State University journalism researchers Larry Dailey, Lori Demo, and Mary Spillman have conducted a number of studies evaluating television and newspaper collaborations, and have also established a new theoretical model to assess the success of these partnerships in achieving a state of convergence (2005a, 2005b, 2009). The “Convergence Continuum” is a line of circles with arrows arching in all directions like the halo of the Blessed Virgin (Daily et al, 2005a). The continuum branches from stages typified by simply promoting a partner’s content on your website, called “cross promotion,” to “full convergence,” where the teams work together under common leadership (Dailey et al, 2005a, p. 156). A variety of factors determine a partnership’s level of convergence: enterprise reporting can encourage it, while a newsroom culture of competition can hinder it (Dailey et al, 2005a, p. 159).
The researchers tested their model in a 2005 study where they found editors most commonly reported behaviors that belonged to the “cross promotion” stage; despite working together, newspaper editors still felt competition with TV stations, which prevented closer collaboration (Dailey et al, 2005b, p. 48).

In 2006 researchers Kraeplin and Criado compared two surveys of newspapers and TV stations in the largest U.S. markets and found that the partnerships were being successfully maintained. However in 2009 Daily et al followed up and saw that the partnerships were faltering: although newspapers were starting to incorporate multimedia collection routines in their work, competitive sentiment still reigned (Dailey et al, 2005b, p. 27).

These studies provide important points to contrast with the partnerships I will be studying. The sample in these studies is different from my proposed sample in a few ways. The newspapers and TV stations already had their own audiences and resources when they began partnering – what separated them was platform. Many investigative nonprofits are relative new-comers and do not have such established audiences. Trust and respect for TV partners were low among newspaper newsrooms because TV was seen as inferior journalism (Dailey et al, 2005b, p. 44). In response newspapers and TV stations were “protecting their turf” (Dailey et al, 2005b, p. 46). That barrier might be less pronounced between investigative non-profits and radio stations because the organizations haven’t competed against each other in the past.
**Methods.**

The methodology for this project will be a case study of one particular completed collaboration between NPR and the Center for Public Integrity. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). This method is like journalism on steroids: find an interesting phenomenon, hang out a lot with the people involved, interview them in-depth and see what their stories reveal about a larger theme, trend or situation. The case itself cannot predict outcomes in other situations (“statistical generalizations”), but it is designed to paint a vivid enough picture that readers can “personally transfer these findings to a range of familiar contexts” (p. 239). Researchers toil to capture the “lush material details” of the subject matter that will resonate with readers and illustrate the complexity of the case (p. 235). Data collection, or “evidence,” can assume the form of organization and personal artifacts, archival and documentary records, direct or participant observation and interviews (Yin, 2009, p.102).

A well-cited and respected journalistic case study is *White News: Why Local News Programs don’t Cover People of Color* (Heider, 2000), in which the author maximizes on his own news background and position as a white male to investigate newsroom decision-making from the inside. Lengthy observation in newsrooms in Hawaii and New Mexico affords Heider an intimate, rich view of how individual editors and reporter reproduce a racially white view of the world in countless ways everyday (p. 51). In my case study I would be able to springboard off my previous radio experience to
blend in and observe collaboration in action, if I complete my professional project at the NPR Investigations Unit. Heider’s proximity to his subjects throughout the day allows him greater insight into how and why they behave the way they do – their motivation and cultural background – than interviews alone (p. 52). Observation in case studies is beneficial to capture the current reality of a situation and the “interpersonal behaviors and motives” of those involved (Yin, 2009, p.102). Being in close proximity to news collaborations in action will allow me to view the “how” and the “why” in ways that simple interviews would not convey in rich enough detail.

In contemporary media research, case studies have been used to access a specific community experiencing media in a specific way. Two examples are perceptions of Welsh reality TV (McElroy & Williams, 2011) and Turkish and Indian film showings in Antwerp, Belgium (Vandevelde et al, 2011, p. 58). The target sample was unique and situated in a certain and time and place, but these investigations were involved and deep enough to address larger themes of media use and identity. The case study method would benefit my research as I am looking at a few specific cases to strike on themes that will resonate with other non-profit investigative organizations and public radio stations.

McElroy and Williams (2011) and Vandevelde et al (2011) relied on participant observation to gather the richest details on the media phenomena they were studying – basically they invited themselves over to Welsh homes to watch reality TV, and went to the movies in Antwerp. As I hope to be stationed and working in the Investigations Unit of NPR anyway, I would naturally become a participant observer. I would journal and reflect on what I learn about the collaborative process during my daily work duties.
NPR and CPI form a “critical instance sample” (Tracy, 2013, p. 137) chosen to show a successful case where participants bring a lot of experience in their respective fields and hold great credibility among other journalists. The organizations have well-established brands and a successful track record and can provide examples of what to emulate and what to avoid. These organizations fall into the archetype of $1 million+ of INN members (Osder & Campwala, 2012, p. 25). Many investigative non-profits do not have as much funding as NPR and CPI do, so I would supplement this case study with a sample of community investigative non-profits who have collaborated with local public radio stations, such as the I-News Network in Denver and Colorado Public Radio, and Investigative Newsource in San Diego and KPBS. These INN members fit the “Startup Shop” and “Community-Driven News” archetypes (Osder & Campwala, 2012, p. 24).

For comparison, I would also conduct interviews with collaborations that have not moved forward so smoothly: the Voice of San Diego, the St. Louis Beacon and St. Louis Public Radio and Minnesota Public Radio and MinnPost.

My position inside the Investigations Unit will lend itself to off-the-cuff interviews where I will be able to pose questions during the course of work when reporters and editors have a spare moment to respond (Tracy, 2013, p. 140). Ideally NPR will be engaged in collaboration during my time there, so I would also help produce collaborative stories and observe the process firsthand as an active participant (Yin, 2009, p. 111).

I will follow up off-the-cuff interviews with 20-45 minute-long “focused” informant interviews where the interviewee and I will sit down together or talk over the
phone (Yin, 2009, p. 107). Interviewees will be key individuals at NPR and CPI, who would “articulate stories and explanations that others would not, and are especially friendly and open to providing information” (Tracy, 2013, p. 140). Focused informant interviews will also be used with key individuals at the community-level investigative/radio collaborations.

These interviews will be semi-structured, starting with a “tour” question to set the scene of a collaboration, “motives” questions to capture the motivation of the collaborators, followed by “timeline” questions to suss out the process step by step (Tracy, 2013, p. 147). The interview guide will touch on the monetary aspect of the collaboration as well, and will conclude with a “catch-all question” on suggestions for others seeking to embark on the same process (Tracy, 2013, p. 151).

The interview guide will include probes directing interviewees to address the managerial and editorial challenges of collaborating across newsrooms: how do you get everyone to work together? How do you divide tasks and keep everyone on the same page? I will also probe the motivations behind the collaboration to see how they fit into the model proposed by Benkler.

I would also ask the interviewees to share examples of specific stories or moments in stories that demonstrate successful radio presentation of investigative material. Those examples would form a bonus audio element to accompany the written guide.
Conclusion

This research will study the cases of collaborations between NPR and the Center for Public Integrity to help guide other potential nonprofit news collaborations. I will direct the research to help fledgling investigative non-profits and public radio station navigate a new collaboration. Both partners stand to gain by sharing reporting and distribution capacity if the benefits of collaboration outstrip the potential costs. Research into past efforts could help make the path smoother for everyone involved.
Appendix Three: Modification of Original Proposal

NPR’s Investigations Unit accepted me as an intern for the fall semester as my professional placement. I was paired with Rural Affairs Correspondent Howard Berkes on a series on mine owners were delinquent in their fines to the Mine Safety and Health Administration. My role was decided to help Howard analyze federal mine safety data and contribute my ideas for other on-air stories.
References


Houston, Brant and Vestal, Donna, presentation at University of Missouri, January 29, 2013.


