



The Growing Importance of Nonprofit Journalism

Citation

Lewis, Charles. "The Growing Importance of Nonprofit Journalism." Shorenstein Center Working Paper Series 2007.3, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 2007.

Permanent link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37375928>

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Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

Working Paper Series

The Growing Importance of Nonprofit Journalism

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#2007-3

Joan Shorenstein Center
PRESS • POLITICS



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Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

April 2007

The Growing Importance of Nonprofit Journalism

by Charles Lewis*

Introduction

Never in our lifetime has there arguably been a greater public need for independent, high quality journalism in the United States.

At the start of a tumultuous new century, with the public's need for credible, unvarnished information as vital as ever, the news-gathering business, in all its commercial media forms, is undergoing an historic transformation. Public confidence and trust in news and the news media are at disconcerting levels. Mass market consumer interest in news from traditional, for-profit, newspaper, magazine, television and radio media outlets have been steadily eroding literally for decades, which has not gone unnoticed by advertisers and investors.¹ Because of these disturbing trends, and the industry's laggard response to exciting new technologies hugely impacting global communications and society in general, its long-term economic future has become the subject of intense concern and speculation.

Of course, meticulous information-gathering and editorial quality-control essential for serious, high quality news require time and money – finite resources that many news organizations are increasingly unable or unwilling to expend. Indeed, in recent years nearly all of our media corporations have been actually reducing their commitment to journalism, reducing their editorial budgets, early “retiring” thousands of reporters and editors from their newsrooms, in order to keep their annual profit margins high and their investors happy, harvesting their investments from a “mature” industry. The net result of this hollowing out process: There are fewer people today to report, write and edit original news stories about our infinitely more complex, dynamic world.²

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Millions of words of history, analysis, data and prognostication have been devoted to this compelling and quite timely subject. Most relevant to us here is the editorial impact locally and nationally of this disruptive economic transformation, and what alternative approaches and strategies have been attempted over the years to better inform the public.

Not surprisingly, the sheer volume, enterprise and quality of serious news stories have quite noticeably diminished. And international reporting and investigative reporting, always time-consuming and expensive, have come to be regarded by management as vainglorious indulgences: high risk, high maintenance, high priced impracticalities. A quarter century ago, CBS News, once the network of Ed “This . . . is London” Murrow, had 24 major or small foreign bureaus and stringers in 44 countries; today there are six bureaus, none of them in Africa or Latin America.³ The print carnage from 2006 alone was rather stunning. Besides the sale and disappearance of one of the most respected newspaper chains in U.S. journalism history, Knight-Ridder, four estimable metropolitan U.S. newspapers – the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, once the flagship of Knight-Ridder, the *Boston Globe*, *Newsday* and the *Baltimore Sun* – closed their remaining overseas news bureaus.⁴

As news organizations have reduced their commitment to serious journalism, there has been an incalculable cost to communities, to citizens’ ability to monitor those in power, and of course to those professionals directly impacted in the profession of journalism itself. The mere reciting of grim layoff statistics does not adequately convey what has been and continues to be lost, year in and year out. Perhaps most disconcerting of all, there is little evidence the American people are remotely aware or particularly concerned about what is and has been happening. But of course, that is part of a much larger problem, of a disconcertingly uninformed populace, in which more people can identify the names of the Three Stooges than the three branches of the federal government.⁵ Almost six months after the invasion of Iraq at the end of 2003, 69 percent of the American people thought Saddam Hussein and Iraq had something to do with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.⁶

James Madison warned that, “A people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”⁷ If that is true, it would seem that we have an extraordinary number of unarmed Americans, less and less

knowledgeable about public affairs or news. To what extent can a democracy ostensibly “of the people, by the people and for the people” exist without an informed citizenry?

Don Barlett and Jim Steele first began to emerge as two of the nation’s preeminent investigative journalists in the early 1970s, when they began doing computer-assisted reporting which analyzed thousands of records regarding *every* felony arrest and conviction in the criminal justice system in Philadelphia. Their compelling series of stories, “Crime and Injustice,” revealed the stark differences race makes in what happens to criminal cases, among other things, and also put the tough-on-crime campaign rhetoric of an ambitious District Attorney named Arlen Specter in factual perspective.⁸ Those and subsequent investigative stories under renowned editor Eugene Roberts became emblematic of what we now know was the golden era of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. During their 26 years at the Knight-Ridder newspaper, their work won two Pulitzer Prizes and scores of other national awards.

Years later, their investigative, nine-part 1991 series, “America: What Went Wrong?” about economic issues facing the middle class in the nation, a subject not closely examined by the national news media in the United States, caused a national sensation. In Philadelphia, hundreds of people lined up outside the *Inquirer*, attempting to buy the newspaper articles. How often do you see that in any city today? It prompted thousands of requests for new subscriptions to the newspaper, reprints of the series sold 400,000 copies and the subsequent paperback book published from the articles was on *The New York Times* bestseller list for eight months.⁹

Each year at national meetings of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), hundreds of journalists attend their informal, soft-spoken session, sometimes standing room only, such is the regard in which they and their work is held within the profession. They eventually left the troubled *Inquirer* and in 1997 went to Time Inc., where they produced several investigative cover stories for *Time* magazine.

In May 2006, their jobs were eliminated, as part of an overall reduction by the company of 650 people. The editor-in-chief of Time Inc., John Huey, told *The New York Times*, “They’re very good but very expensive, and I couldn’t get anyone (other company magazines) to take them on their budget. We’ll miss their work.”¹⁰

The following week, it was reported that Time Inc. had just paid \$4 million for exclusive photographs of Shiloh, the newborn baby of movie actors Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt.¹¹

Fortunately for Barlett, 70, and Steele, 63, they landed on their feet and were hired months later by *Vanity Fair* magazine, to write investigative articles as contributing editors there. But the symbolism of their vulnerability was not lost to investigative reporters around the world. If ever two reporters had had “job security,” it would have been them. What does it say about the state of journalism in America today when the most respected, sustained investigative reporting duo in history is no longer worth it to the owners?

Of course, it is simply the latest evidence of more corporate layoffs, downsizing, “the shedding of workers” to use Louis Uchitelle’s phrase from his recent book, *The Disposable American*.¹² Ironically no journalists in this country have chronicled more powerfully or poignantly how companies dispose of their employees than Barlett and Steele.

Today their old newspaper, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has *half* the number of reporters covering the Philadelphia metropolitan area than it did in 1980. And that is also the pattern for all newspaper reporters in the Philadelphia area, dropping from 500 to 220 in that time.¹³ That generally is happening in cities across America. Courageous and independent watchdog reporting is on the wane, based on the numbers alone: There simply are fewer and fewer professional reporters monitoring those in power. According to the *2006 Annual Report on the State of the News Media*, published by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, newspaper owners have cut their operating overhead and jettisoned at least 3,500 newsroom professionals since 2000, or seven percent of the editorial workforce nationwide.¹⁴

As a result, other credible, financially sustainable models for producing these and other types of important, specialized journalism are suddenly more interesting and relevant to a profession under siege, and they thus require closer attention and analysis. And the constantly emerging new technologies are enabling infinitely less costly and wider-ranging, global possibilities for previously unimagined entrepreneurialism.

While there has been much recently written about the current, critical state of journalism, relatively little has been said about various independent, non-commercial initiatives specifically designed to produce high quality, public service journalism. One distinguished deacon of American newspapers intrigued for years now by the prospect of a news organization operating irrespective of profit margins and quarterly earnings is veteran newspaper journalist Philip Meyer. Meyer, a 1966 Nieman Foundation for Journalism Fellow, helped to pioneer computer-assisted journalism in his work for Knight-Ridder newspapers and his seminal 1972 book, *Precision Journalism*. The Knight Chair and Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina wrote in his 2004 book, *The Vanishing Newspaper*, “The only way to save journalism is to develop a new model that finds profit in truth, vigilance and social responsibility.” According to Meyer, nonprofit institutions such as National Public Radio and the Center for Public Integrity represent such models for the future.¹⁵

There is, of course, a long, well-established American journalism tradition of nonprofit ownership, from the creation of the Associated Press more than 150 years ago to newspapers such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, the *Manchester Union Leader*, the *Day* in New London, Connecticut, the *Anniston Star*, the *Delaware State News* and such publications as *Congressional Quarterly*, *National Geographic*, *Consumer Reports*, *Mother Jones*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy* and *Harper's*.¹⁶ On national television, two highly respected programs, *Frontline* and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, are aired on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), created in 1967.¹⁷

No nonprofit or for-profit news media organization in the United States today can match the audience growth of National Public Radio (NPR), which began in 1970 and now has 36 bureaus worldwide and 26 million weekly listeners, *double* what it was a decade ago.¹⁸ However, despite its often excellent and in-depth reporting of national and international affairs, NPR is not known for its sustained commitment to investigative reporting (e.g., the sole investigative reporting radio documentary unit in the U.S. today actually operates out of St. Paul, Minnesota, home of Minnesota Public Radio /American Public Media, a separate nonprofit and the second largest producer of public radio programming which also airs regularly on NPR stations nationwide).

Indeed, none of the nonprofit ownership outlets mentioned above is solely engaged in the practice of investigative journalism, which can be defined as “serious journalism that takes a comprehensive, exhaustive look at issues that have significant impact on the lives” of the public.¹⁹ Some, but not all and not this author, would narrow this definition further as a type of journalism involving “matters of importance which some persons or organizations wish to keep secret.”²⁰ However it is defined, it is painstaking, very time-consuming work, usually taking weeks, months and sometimes years to complete, with the possibility of not finding a publishable story at the end of the process.

This paper will discuss four nonprofit investigative journalism organizations on three continents dedicated solely to publishing investigative content: the largest in the world, the Center for Public Integrity, based in Washington, D.C.; the oldest group, the Center for Investigative Reporting, based in Berkeley, California; the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, based in Manila; and the relatively much newer and smaller Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism, based in Bucharest.

I am hardly a disinterested party to this subject. After 11 years I quit the commercial journalism milieu, specifically network television production at the CBS News program *60 Minutes*, and before that, ABC News. In 1989 I founded—and for 15 years directed—the Center for Public Integrity. During that time, the Center published more than 275 reports, including 14 books, and broke several major news stories, its work honored more than 30 times by national journalism organizations.²¹

As an expatriate journalist from the “traditional” news media who subsequently also has worked successfully in the “Brave New World,” what follows are some of my observations and reflections about the origins, operations and overall potential of the various nonprofit journalism models. Obviously, my understanding of the Center for Public Integrity is far greater than the other mentioned organizations, and that is reflected in the level of candor, detail and historic perspective presented below.

To the extent possible, I will describe the nature of the journalism produced; the level of professionalism, editorial values and ethical standards inside each organization; the primary manner of dissemination or publication, including via the Internet and other new technologies; each institution’s sources of financial income currently and in the

foreseeable future; the realistic potential for financial growth and wider “market penetration”; each entity’s approach to libel and other litigation liability exigencies; and especially the public impact and national news-making resonance of their recent reporting.

Beyond those groups profiled, other nonprofit investigative reporting-related initiatives around the world – similarly founded and operated by journalists in search of greater investigative reporting and publishing freedom – will also be identified, including those at universities.

The Center for Public Integrity

Days before turning 35 and under contract to CBS News as a producer assigned to senior correspondent Mike Wallace at *60 Minutes*, with a family to support, a mortgage, and no savings, I abruptly quit. It was October 1988, the morning after my story had led the broadcast.

For many reasons, I had become frustrated that investigative reporting did not seem to be particularly valued at the national level, regardless of media form. That frustration had mounted over several years and two television networks as national news organizations only reactively reported the various systemic abuses of power, trust and the law in Washington – from the Iran-Contra scandal to the HUD scandal to the Defense Department’s procurement prosecutions; from the savings and loan disaster to the “Keating Five” influence scandal to the first resignation of a House Speaker since 1800. In Washington there was very little aggressive investigative journalism about these or other subjects, and equally galling to me, smug denial instead of apologetic humility by the press corps despite its underwhelming, lackluster pursuit of these major instances of political influence and corruption. To compound matters, internally at the networks, occasionally I had seen my own and colleagues’ investigative stories or proposals rebuffed, reduced or merely ignored for what appeared to be non-journalistic reasons.

The question was: Is there a way to create a modest attempt at a journalistic utopia, an organization in which no one would tell me what or who *not* to investigate, the final story or report unfettered by time and space limitations? I was not out to change the world; I did not have an agenda, except to conduct major, thorough, responsible

journalistic investigations about apparent abuses of power and the public trust. Then and today as stated on the organization's website, www.publicintegrity.org, the mission is "to produce original investigative journalism about significant public issues to make institutional power more transparent and accountable." The Center modus operandi has generally been to investigate macro, systemic issues of great public relevance, using a "quasi-journalistic, quasi political science" approach, sweeping studies about government and public policy distortions of democracy which also name names.

I asked two trusted journalist friends living and working on opposite coasts who did not know each other, Alejandro Benes and Charles Piller, to serve on the board of directors of this new organization, and they agreed. I was chairman of the board and the executive director. In part because the "investigative reporting" names had already been taken by nonprofit organizations – the Center for Investigative Reporting in California, Investigative Reporters and Editors in Missouri and the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington – I proposed and we adopted the "Center for Public Integrity" as the new group's name. While it sounded a bit pretentious and maybe even a little odd, all investigative reporting seemed to be about, on some level, affronts to "public integrity." The Center for Public Integrity was incorporated in Washington, D.C., on March 30, 1989, its mailing address a P.O. Box; months later the IRS approved its tax exempt status as a 501(c)(3) organization, and on October 1, 1989, I began working full-time as the first and only official employee, from my suburban Virginia home.

Soon we had an advisory board of distinguished Americans, including Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., political scientists James MacGregor Burns and James David Barber, political communications scholar and then-University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School Dean Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Notre Dame president emeritus Father Theodore Hesburgh, veteran journalists Bill Kovach and Hodding Carter, sociologist William Julius Wilson and others.

By May 1990, the Center had secured enough money from a foundation, some companies, some labor unions and a consulting contract with ABC News to open its first office in downtown Washington, D.C. (although for that first office lease, my home was required as collateral). The issue of perceived financial "purity" and exactly from whom the Center should seek and accept money from has been an introspective feature of nearly

every board meeting since 1989. Eventually, beginning in 1995, for example, we stopped raising funds from companies and labor unions because of their direct economic interests in influencing public policy; the nonpartisan Center has never accepted money from government, advocacy organizations, paid advertising or anonymous donors.

The first full year of operation, 1990, the Center raised and spent approximately \$200,000. From late 1989 through 2004, cumulative Center revenues and expenditures were roughly \$30 million, more than 90 percent of that from foundations such as MacArthur, Knight, Schumann, Ford, Carnegie, Open Society Institute, Annenberg, Newman and many others. No year has been more successful financially than 2004, in which our fourteenth book, *The Buying of the President 2004* (Perennial/HarperCollins) was on *The New York Times* (short or extended) bestseller list for approximately three months. Revenues were \$6.49 million, and expenditures were \$4.54 million. In 2003 and 2004, the full-time staff reached 40, with 15-20 or more paid interns each year, and 200 paid contract writers, readers or editors in 25 countries on six continents.²²

Transparency and accountability have always been important values at the Center for Public Integrity, reflected since 1996 online. Today *all* donors are disclosed, as are annual reports, annual IRS 990 disclosure forms for at least the past three years, and names and brief bios of every employee. In terms of employee work conditions, we did not operate with a nonprofit, public interest, “hairshirt” mentality. My informal motto in the office was that “quality begets quality,” meaning that quality journalism can only come from quality researchers, reporters, writers and editors who should be paid as well as possible, and have sufficient time and the best, up-to-date technology needed to do quality journalism. Regarding the level of professionalism, from the late 1990s on, newspaper researchers, reporters and sometimes even editors were hired from places such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the Associated Press, *Congressional Quarterly* and elsewhere and generally paid a *higher* salary at the Center, with annual raises, with full employer-paid medical, dental and retirement benefits and a minimum of three weeks paid vacation. In recent years staff salaries have ranged from \$30,000 to \$195,000.

Employees have always been encouraged to attend or speak at training workshops and professional conferences (travel expenses and registrations paid by the Center). Since 1990, the roughly 200 undergraduate and graduate student intern researchers working at

the Center have been paid a respectable hourly rate, with two annual paid fellowship arrangements eventually forged with the University of Delaware and American University. Interns work side-by-side with veteran Pulitzer Prize-winning and other highly respected, full-time reporters, exuberance mixing with real-life experience, everyone benefiting in the unique, independent laboratory, located in a renovated 1920s-era building just two blocks from the White House. Undeterred by the exigencies of daily news coverage, sales and subscription interest or viewer ratings, the Center for Public Integrity today is the only place anywhere solely and simultaneously devoted to state, federal and international investigative reporting. Summer speakers for Center interns and staff have included Stephen Breyer, Ross Perot, John McCain, James Carville, Ben Bradlee, Jill Abramson, Bob Woodward, Seymour Hersh, Helen Thomas, Ted Koppel, Elizabeth Drew, Judy Woodruff and many others.

The editorial approach reflects an investigative methodology combining prodigious research and reporting, “peeling the onion” by extensively consulting secondary and then primary written sources and then interviewing several or as many as hundreds of people. Center projects usually take at least a few months from idea to publication and often longer; a single project has taken as long as four years. The writing and editing (optimally at least two layers of editors) takes weeks and multiple drafts, and then the fact-checking and subsequent libel review by outside counsel can also be painstaking and time-consuming. No reporting project is initiated or granted final approval for publication without the personal approval of the executive director, who functions essentially as both the executive editor and publisher. The earliest Center reports were issued on paper and distributed at news conferences conducted at the National Press Club; from 1990 through 2004, I held 35 of these conferences, and Center findings or perspectives were covered in approximately 10,000 news stories in the United States and throughout the world.

For instance, the first Center report, “America’s Frontline Trade Officials,” was presented at a well-attended National Press Club news conference, and was covered by C-SPAN, CNN, the ABC News program *20/20* and many others. The report disclosed that 47 percent of White House trade officials over a 15-year period became paid, registered “foreign agent” lobbyists for countries or overseas corporations after they left

government. The report prompted a Justice Department ruling, a General Accounting Office report, a Congressional hearing, was cited by four presidential candidates in 1992 and was partly responsible for an executive order in January 1993 by President Clinton, placing a lifetime ban on foreign lobbying by White House trade officials. The Center modus operandi of systematic investigation and announcement of findings to the national news media worked.²³

In July 1994, the Center entered a very topical, bitter Washington fray, positioned as an “honest broker” in the midst of the political battle over the Clinton administration’s health care legislation. *Well-Healed: Inside Lobbying for Health Care Reform*, more than 200 pages and the work of 17 researchers, writers and editors, chronicled the activities of 662 health care interests, analyzing and presenting everything from privately funded trips and “revolving door” examples to campaign contributions, personal investments and other information. The news conference was covered by more than 50 reporters plus seven cameras, including ABC’s *Nightline* and *World News Tonight*, NBC’s *Today Show*, CNN’s *Inside Politics* and *Newsmakers*, and *The New York Times*, etc.

The first online reports began to appear in 1999, although the Center website went up initially in 1996. The first commercially published book, *Beyond the Hill: A Directory of Congress from 1984 to 1993. Where Have All the Members Gone?* (University Press of America) was released in 1995, and it revealed the post-employment practices of 350 former members of Congress. Center book exposés were selected as the runner-up finalist in the IRE’s annual book award competition for 1996, with the publication of *The Buying of the President*; in 1997 with *Toxic Deception*; in 1998 with *The Buying of the Congress* and in 2000 with *The Buying of the President 2000*. In 1999, *Animal Underworld: Inside America’s Black Market for Rare and Exotic Species*, by Alan Green and the Center for Public Integrity, actually won the IRE book award. No author or organization has been so consistently honored for books for five consecutive years by the 30-year-old association of 4,000 reporters and editors. In 2007, the Center will release its 17th book, published by Louisiana State University Press, about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The release of reports on the web and occasionally in the nation’s bookstores represented an historic change in the amplification and dissemination of the Center’s investigative findings. The Center no longer had to depend solely on the news-coverage

judgment and goodwill of the news media to inform the public about its findings; now the Center was reporting directly to the nation and the world, and if traditional or “mainstream” journalists also found it newsworthy, all the better.

The Center’s investigative reports are probably best known for exposing political influence and its impact on public policy decision making in Washington, D.C., and in the 50 state capitals. For example, dozens of researchers, writers and editors amassed and studied thousands of pages and half a dozen types of federal and state records in 1996, 2000 and 2004 to produce *The Buying of the President* books, the first political books systematically examining the powerful special interests closely aligned with each of the major presidential candidates and published and available to voters weeks *before* the Iowa caucuses. The first book, serialized in *The New York Times*, provided substantial editorial basis for the 1996 *Frontline* documentary, “So You Want to Buy a President?” and the various major candidates’ “Top Ten Career Patrons” lists moved worldwide on the wires. *The Buying of the President 2000* first reported that George W. Bush’s top financial “career patron” was Enron. At one point, in 1996, the *New Yorker* referred to the organization as “the center for campaign scoops.” That year, the Center broke, among other things, the Clinton White House Lincoln Bedroom fundraising scandal.

“Fat Cat Hotel” won the Society of Professional Journalists “public service in newsletters” award, a first for the Center. The report was written by Margaret Ebrahim, who later went on to become an award-winning investigative producer at ABC News, *60 Minutes II* and now HDNet’s *Dan Rather Reports*. She worked alongside Diane Renzulli, who spearheaded the Center’s entire state investigative focus from 1995 through 2000, along the way mentoring a DePauw University intern named Leah Rush, who has succeeded her. The first five years of investigating corruption in state legislatures culminated in *Our Private Legislatures: Public Service, Personal Gain*, a national investigation of conflicts of interest by lawmakers, displayed on the website and discreetly disseminated in embargoed fashion to a consortium of 50 leading newspapers in 50 states. That 2000 report won the IRE investigative reporting award.

The organization was beginning to grow in reputation, funding, size, variety and number of published investigative reports, especially in 1996 with the addition of veteran development director Barbara Schecter, whose fundraising helped the Center *quintuple* in

size over the next nine years. The Center began to assemble a critical mass of prodigious reporting and editing talent, including co-founder and managing director Alejandro Benes, the former NBC News director of news; director of investigative projects Bill Hogan, a former Bingham Prize winner and managing editor of the *National Journal*, and Bill Allison, former researcher for Don Barlett and Jim Steele at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* who rose to become Center managing editor from 2002–2005.

Beginning in 2000, the Center has posted, analyzed and reported about annual financial disclosure filings for more than 7,000 state lawmakers, as well as lobbying, private-all-expense trips, outside (“527”) groups, political party committees and other types of government records available in Washington and the state capitals. An entire computer-assisted “data cave” was created, where reporters Aron Pilhofer and Derek Willis thrived until hired by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, respectively. All of these millions of amassed documents are accessible to journalists and citizens, searchable online by name.

We seemed to be investigating almost every subject except the media’s power and influence, which the public increasingly asked me about. And so “Well-Connected,” tracking the players in media, technology and telecommunications, was created and directed initially by John Dunbar, who is now covering the same subject in the Washington bureau of the Associated Press. This unique Center watchdog, reporting about media and other telecommunication companies, contains cumulative, detailed information about political influence gleaned from government documents about media ownership as well as media and telecom companies’ federal and state lobbying and campaign contribution activities. Dunbar’s team made news when they uncovered that Federal Communications Commission (FCC) officials had been taken on 2,500 all-expense-paid trips over an eight-year period, by the companies they were entrusted to regulate. Within months Congress curbed all such travel at the agency.

In February 2003, the Center obtained, analyzed and posted secret Patriot II draft legislation in its entirety and against the explicit wishes of the Justice Department. The heavily covered report – roughly 100 news stories worldwide; 350,000 unique website visitors and 15 million hits within five days – caused a bipartisan uproar, as Congress had

been told for six months that there was no Bush administration intention to propose sequel legislation to the controversial 2001 Patriot Act.

Weeks later, and within days of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Center published a new report disclosing that at least 9 of the 30 members of the Defense Policy Board, the government appointed group which advises the Pentagon, had ties to companies with more than \$76 billion in defense contracts in 2001 and 2002.

Eight months later, in October 2003, the Center for Public Integrity published *Windfalls of War: U.S. Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan*, which included the major U.S. government contracts in Afghanistan and Iraq, definitively revealing Halliburton to be, by far, the largest beneficiary. For six months, 20 researchers, writers and editors worked on the project, filing 73 Freedom of Information Act requests and even suing the Army and the State Department (and ultimately winning the release of key, no-bid contract documents). That report, which won the George Polk investigative reporting (online) award, was prepared by the Washington staff of the Center's International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (www.icij.org), led by Maud Beelman.

I had hired the former Associated Press war correspondent and Patterson Fellow to direct the ICIJ, which I had founded in late 1997. Although never robustly funded, it is the first network – now consisting of 100 people in 50 countries – of some of the world's preeminent investigative reporters working with each other to produce original international enterprise journalism. Since 1998, the ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting, a \$20,000 prize, has been the only award given expressly for investigative journalism across borders, without eligibility restrictions based on nationality (such as the Pulitzer Prize, which is not awarded to non-U.S. reporters). Besides the Iraq/Afghanistan reporting, ICIJ members have collaborated to produce international reports exposing illegal cigarette smuggling by the major manufacturers, the on-the-ground human rights impact of U.S. military aid in Latin America, the growing, global role of private military companies, the privatization of water, the politics of oil, etc.

The international impact and multimedia journalistic possibilities of the ICIJ in the Internet age were never more poignant to me than in April 2002, when the Center posted a report from Washington entitled, “Kuchma Approved Sale of Weapons System

to Iraq.” It revealed that Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma had personally authorized the sale of \$100 million worth of sensitive, anti-aircraft radar technology to Iraq in apparent violation of United Nations sanctions, and the Center story included an audio tape of Kuchma in Ukrainian making the deals. Within weeks of its release, U.S. aid to the Ukraine was suspended and Kuchma was under criminal investigation in Kiev.²⁴

Unfortunately, the astonishing potential of investigative journalism across borders, fully utilizing the members and the various media platforms, has not yet been fully realized. However, the Center’s International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in its first decade has certainly provided a tantalizing glimpse of what’s possible, on a regular basis, technologically and journalistically, with more resources.

Not surprisingly, the Center, merely through its work over the years, has become an international authority on political corruption. From years of traveling and speaking abroad, I had become concerned that the extremely dangerous, heroic corruption reporting in the world is too micro, beyond the drama and titillation, often lacking context and even broad, public relevance. While in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1997, I had an epiphany that inside and outside that repressive country, all citizens – from foreign investors and companies with offices there to tourists as well as truly endangered indigenous human rights activists and journalists – seemed to lack current, credible online information about the quality of governance, rule of law, civility, press freedom and accountability. There was no satisfactory, comprehensive, “one-stop-shopping” organization or website generating such vital insight. From the Center’s national survey investigations into U.S. corruption in the state legislatures and in Washington, we had discovered a more sweeping, objective way of examining corruption. What if our often macro investigative methodological approach in the U.S. could be adapted to the entire world?

In July 1999, I asked Nathaniel Heller, a newly arrived recent University of Delaware alum and Center Soles Fellow (annual, fully paid fellowship offered to the top honors grad selected by the political science dean, in honor of distinguished Professor James R. Soles), to help me explore a new way of monitoring and reporting on corruption, government accountability and openness around the world. It culminated in an unprecedented, 750,000-word Center report – by far the largest ever – published

online in 2004, entitled Global Integrity, prepared by 200 paid social scientists, journalists and peer review editors in 25 countries on six continents. This massive project, directed by Marianne Camerer, an internationally respected anti-corruption social scientist from South Africa, spawned a new nonprofit organization with a more academic, social science orientation and quantitative methodological component, and with greater and more diverse funding and capacity needs than the Center for Public Integrity. One of my last official acts as Center executive director in December 2004 was to recommend to the board of directors that this exciting new entity be spun off as a new global nongovernmental organization (NGO).

Global Integrity (www.globalintegrity.org), of which Heller, Camerer, its managing director and international director, respectively, and I are co-founders, was incorporated in late 2005 and is completely separate and independent from the Center for Public Integrity. In January 2006, Global Integrity released a new, epic, 43-country survey analysis featuring a “Global Integrity Index” derived from more than 290 “Integrity Indicators” illuminating “the existence of laws, regulations and institutions designed to curb corruption but also their implementation, as well as access that average citizens have to those mechanisms.”²⁵ The next report will encompass a larger number of countries, possibly as many as 100, half the world, depending upon the resources available. Each authoritative report and slew of news stories about the findings is building public credibility and interest around the world, especially in the multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations, keen on an independent, comprehensive, NGO assessment of the quality of governance and civility in each country with “diagnostic” detail.

Editorial Values and Ethical Standards

There are strict internal “Standards and Practices” in the research, reporting, editing and final production of the Center for Public Integrity’s work, in some ways more explicit than the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics which is reprinted in full on the Center’s website. For example, any person or organization portrayed negatively for even a sentence worth of copy must be contacted for comment prior to publication. No report is important enough to justify violating their privacy, or private property or other

laws, and as a general practice, even when it is legal in some states or countries, no one should ever be taped without their knowledge and permission.

As I wrote on December 30, 2004, on my “Thank You and Farewell” final email to the Center staff: “The Center must always maintain courageous, fearless “edginess” and a willingness to expose abuses of power, from Presidents to multibillion dollar corporations. But edgy and compelling must also always accompany fair and accurate at the Center for Public Integrity, and nothing beneath this standard should ever be published. There is no such thing as too careful when it comes to information gathering . .

..

The stakes,” I said, “are very, very high just as the opportunities to create high impact national and international journalism are extraordinary. Don’t ever let the bastards get you down or intimidate you. But also, don’t ever, in any way, enable them to diminish your credibility as a truth teller.”

That said, no one is perfect, and despite its prodigious output and successes, neither is the Center for Public Integrity. Over the years, typographical, methodological, data-related or other mistakes, of course, have occasionally been made in the many millions of words produced, and when that has occurred, corrections have been issued. Worse, one employee was found to have committed plagiarism. Not only was he fired immediately, a year-long investigation by an outside-hired editor was conducted to ascertain the full extent of the effrontery, going back years. The Center disclosed the situation publicly on its site, I sent personal letters of apology to several reporters or their editors whose work had been plagiarized, and a coveted IRE national book award, in which the plagiarist had contributed some chapters, was returned voluntarily (and the book was corrected, properly attributed and re-issued).²⁶

The Center’s work in general has often had a somewhat feisty irreverence, which excited, amused or enraged readers, depending on their vantage point. Report titles have often been more rambunctious than the sometimes dense prose and data inside – *Private Parties, The Cheating of America, The Buying of the Congress, Making a Killing: The Business of War, The Corruption Notebooks, Toxic Deception, Outsourcing the Pentagon, The Trading Game*, etc. On the occasion of the 10-year anniversary in 2000, James MacGregor Burns congratulated the Center for its “combination of realistic

militance and fine scholarship.” Kathleen Hall Jamieson wrote that the Center has “shaped and enriched the national dialogue on topics of public importance with provocative research.” The late John Kenneth Galbraith observed, “Nothing is so inconvenient, so unwelcome and often so powerful as the cold truth. This, the CPI for our pleasure and for our benefit provides.”²⁷

Subjects of Center investigations, though, regardless of ideology or political party, are usually neither pleased nor amused. Indeed, over the years there have been angry op-eds in major newspapers, incensed radio listeners calling into various programs, and even public relations people posing as reporters to ask distracting questions at nationally televised Center news conferences. Advisory Board members and Center donors have been personally pressured, as well.

The Threat of Libel Litigation

Unwelcome journalism also can and sometimes does result in years of costly libel litigation. Any reporter or publication faces the occupational hazard that producing published investigative journalism might incur years of costly libel litigation. In the current, inhospitable commercial journalism milieu, critical, unfavorable investigative stories can be watered down or killed outright internally following external pressure, or discredited and possibly litigated publicly after publication. Not because what was reported is incorrect, but because of the public embarrassment and sheer power and money of those implicated.

Although the Center did not face any lawsuits in its first decade of existence, as the its public presence increased, three suits were brought against the organization in 18 months, beginning in late 2000. All of them were eventually dismissed, and no new litigation has been filed for more than five years. There were also many verbal and even written legal threats from companies and individuals around the world who ultimately chose not to sue.

One of the cases, OAO Alfa Bank v. Center for Public Integrity, was one of the largest libel cases brought in the U.S. in a quarter century. Brought in U.S. District Court in Washington by two Russian oligarchs represented by the powerful D.C. law firm of Akin Gump Strauss, Hauer, Feld, LLP, the case entailed nearly five full years of

discovery, 20 depositions and 107,000 pages of documents. A journalism professor at a major U.S. university testified under oath that he had been paid at least \$400,000 as an expert witness to help the oligarchs; it was the tenth libel case on behalf of plaintiffs suing journalists for the former IRE board member.

The good news about the unsuccessful, multimillion dollar lawsuit against the Center was that it illuminated the immediate need for an institutional bulkhead protecting the organization from future storms of litigation. To help protect the Center from frivolous, expensive libel litigation, the Fund for Independence in Journalism (www.tifj.org), a 509 (a)(3) endowment and legal defense support organization was created in part as a self-insurance mechanism, with initial foundation contributions totaling \$4 million and a goal of at least \$20 million. In addition, five prestigious law firms have pledged, on a case by case basis, to defend the Center for Public Integrity in any future cases, pro bono. The Fund's board includes founding chairman Bevis Longstreth, a retired Debevoise & Plimpton attorney and former Securities and Exchange Commissioner, Paul Volcker, the former Federal Reserve chairman, Amy McCombs, former president and CEO of Chronicle Broadcasting Company and University of Missouri journalism professor, and former *Des Moines Register* editor Geneva Overholser. I am the Fund's founding president. Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University and Harold Hongju Koh, Dean of Yale Law School serve on the Fund's Advisory Council as did the late Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

Future Prospects

Recognition and credibility are instrumental in building a new institution, and each brick and cornerstone have been keenly noticed along the way, internally and externally. In 1994, *National Journal* did the first feature story about the Center for Public Integrity, calling it a “watchdog in the corridors of power.” In 1996, after more than 20 published investigative reports including two books, Sonja Hillgren, then the president of the National Press Club, told a televised luncheon audience that the Center had become “a significant force in the nation’s capital, a new government watchdog . . . [that has] developed a reputation for being tough but fair . . . a conscience for the news media and politicians alike.”²⁸

Professionally, the organization has been recognized and honored in almost every conceivable way: The George Polk Award and more than 20 other national journalism awards plus another 16 finalist nominations, including Investigative Reporters and Editors, the Radio and Television News Directors Association Edward R. Murrow Award for website excellence in a small market, the Online News Association's General Excellence award and the Society of Professional Journalists national award for excellence in online public service journalism for the past five consecutive years. Along the way, the Center founder and then-executive director received a MacArthur Fellowship in 1998 (in the announcement, the MacArthur Foundation cited the Center's "high quality, high impact, public service journalism") and the PEN USA First Amendment award in 2004. Center reports have prompted Congressional hearings and other government investigations, and new laws and public policies at the state and federal level.

However, in journalism, as we all know too well, you are only as good as your last story. And although there are a few thousand members who contribute at least \$35, those sources of annual income are insubstantial overall. The Center for Public Integrity, like all nonprofit investigative reporting organizations, must continually raise several million dollars and produce more major, news-making reports annually. That alone is no small feat, but of course it is even more difficult after the founder and longtime executive director steps down, as I did at the end of 2004.

The mark of a true institution is one that has been able to survive one or more leadership transitions. I came to the sober realization a few years ago, after passing a milestone birthday, that at some point the founder has to leave the building, for the long-term wellbeing of the enterprise. The past two transition years have been very difficult to watch. Most of the Center's carefully assembled, very talented, senior staff had quit by the fall of 2005; the successor executive director's 16-month tenure ended abruptly in June 2006, followed by an acting executive director for another six months. During this time, with a few notable exceptions, the reports, while undeniably important and fulfilling a public need, were generally unremarkable, generating neither substantial news media coverage nor web interest. Worse, some stories even required embarrassing public corrections. Fundraising revenue to the Center for 2005 and 2006 was only about half

what it had been in 2004, and in early 2007, the number of full-time staff was reduced by one-third.

Through the turmoil, though, under patient, persevering leadership of co-founder and chairman Charles Piller, the board of directors has evolved from a founders board to a governing Board, in early 2005 adding respected former journalists Bill Kovach, former Nieman Foundation curator and co-founder of the Committee of Concerned Journalists; Hodding Carter III, now a professor at the University of North Carolina and before that, president of the Knight Foundation (both members of its original Advisory Board); and Geneva Overholser, former *Des Moines Register* editor and University of Missouri School of Journalism professor who holds the Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Reporting.

In late 2006, after a months-long search, the Board of Directors chose Bill Buzenberg, a journalist and innovative news executive at newspapers and public radio for more than 35 years, as the Center for Public Integrity's third executive director. The former National Public Radio London bureau chief and first NPR managing editor launched several new programs, including *Talk of the Nation*, American Public Media's documentary unit *American RadioWorks*, and *Speaking of Faith*. Buzenberg has demonstrated substantial talent, grace, vision and leadership in his multi-faceted career as a working journalist, experienced manager and proven fundraiser. And he understands the vast potential of the Internet age, having begun Public Insight Journalism at Minnesota Public Radio, using technology to draw specific knowledge and expertise on news stories from thousands of citizens, a.k.a. the audience.²⁹ There are high hopes now that with his arrival, he will reestablish the Center's moorings and sail the ship forward to new, uncharted waters and exciting, unimagined horizons.

Such optimism about the future was reinforced in early 2007, when the Center for Public Integrity received a Special Citation for its "superb investigative work in the public interest" by judges for the prestigious annual Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government

According to Alex S. Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center, "The Center for Public Integrity has emerged as a muscular, reliable and tough-minded resource for the

kind of investigative public-interest journalism that the Goldsmith Awards encourage. The judges of this year's awards wanted to send a signal that the Center's work is extremely important to journalism and to democracy."

The Center for Investigative Reporting

The first and oldest nonprofit investigative journalism organization in the world is the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), based in Berkeley, the website address www.muckraker.org. It was founded 30 years ago by three California-based investigative reporters, Lowell Bergman, David Weir and Dan Noyes. Bergman would later go on to have a celebrated career in national journalism, winning the most esteemed prizes in journalism and portrayed by actor Al Pacino in the Academy Award-nominated movie *The Insider*.³⁰ Bergman back then was mostly investigating organized crime. Weir, who today teaches journalism at Stanford University, recently had done in-depth reporting about the Patty Hearst kidnapping and extended saga with the Symbionese Liberation Army.³¹

In 1977 Bergman and Weir were staff writers for *Rolling Stone* magazine, then based in San Francisco. When Jann Wenner, the magazine's founder and publisher, moved it to New York, Bergman and Weir were suddenly unemployed. Around this time, Noyes had been running an investigative reporting training program in southern California at the Urban Policy Research Institute, through which he had met Bergman.³²

It had only been three years since the Watergate scandal had ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon, and one year since a reporter for the *Arizona Republic*, Don Bolles, had been murdered in Phoenix. The car bomb which killed Bolles also ignited reporters to come together from all over the nation by going to Phoenix and investigating his death for months and months. Bergman and Noyes were there, and the energy and collaborative potential of reporters working together excited them both. They were not the only ones to feel this way. That camaraderie and adrenaline also helped to spur a brand new organization, Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), celebrating its 30th anniversary with a special annual conference in June 2007 in Phoenix.

After Bergman and Weir had been laid off, as Noyes recalled, "the basic impulse was to create our own investigative journalism jobs."³³ It was first run out of Bergman's

house in Berkeley and with a \$3,000 grant from the Stern Fund. CIR rented a small office in downtown Oakland.³⁴ (Years earlier, Phil Stern’s Fund had enabled the creation of the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington and more than a decade later would provide important early funding to the Center for Public Integrity.).

Created “to reveal injustice and abuse of power through the tools of journalism,” it was a nonprofit, tax exempt 501 (c)(3) organization incorporated in California.³⁵ Despite the excitement and the adrenaline, Noyes actually had fairly low expectations, “I looked at CIR as an experiment that would produce some important stories but that was likely to run out of “startup” funding after two to three years. I didn’t think there was enough major foundation support to sustain something as controversial as investigative reporting.”³⁶

That assessment in the early years appeared as though it might be correct, because by early 1981, Noyes once told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “We weren’t sure we were going to make it.” But *Oakland Tribune* editor Bob Maynard helped to secure a \$5,000 grant from the Gannett Foundation that helped to enable a breakthrough project that put the organization on the map nationally.³⁷

It started with the National Magazine Award-winning series, “Corporate Crime of the Century” in *Mother Jones* magazine – another nonprofit organization that had begun publishing in San Francisco around the same time. CIR was beginning to make waves with its investigative articles. That series became a book, *Circle of Poison*, about dangerous goods banned in the U.S. but were still being shipped overseas to countries with poor or no regulatory protections. CIR has kept up its vigilance on the subject, examining hazardous waste exports in 1990 and according to Noyes, “we are currently working on a project concerning the European Union.” But the exposé back then was the lead story on NBC *Nightly News* and prompted Congressional legislation. It also alerted the media, policymakers and the philanthropic community of its arrival and existence.³⁸ In 2005 and early 2006 alone, CIR reporting in the online magazine *Salon* resulted in the withdrawal of a federal judicial nomination by President Bush. A CIR/CNN documentary, *Reasonable Doubt*, revealed that FBI crime labs had been using faulty forensic science for over 30 years; the FBI announced it would no longer perform the forensic comparative analysis in question.³⁹

Over the past three decades, the Center has conducted dozens of successful investigations, and won most major journalism honors except for the Pulitzer Prize (although some of its alumni, including Jeff Gerth of *The New York Times*, have won individual Pulitzers). They include the George Polk Award, top IRE and Society of Professional Journalist awards, the National Magazine Award for Reporting Excellence, the Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia Silver Baton, and the Emmy Award. The CIR modus operandi has always been to release its investigative findings the way a freelance journalist would – every way possible – through major media outlets. As its website describes, “We produce multiple stories from a single investigation – for television, radio, print and the Web – and release them in coordination for maximum reach and impact.”⁴⁰

For example, *Washington Post* reporter Robert O’Harrow Jr., who had carved out a unique information technology, marketing and privacy beat there and was a Pulitzer finalist for his 2000 stories, took a leave of absence financially supported by CIR, and in 2005 produced a multimedia project called “No Place to Hide.” It revealed the disconcerting alliances between commercial data services companies and government anti-terrorism efforts to combine a new intelligence infrastructure. A series of stories in *The Washington Post*, a bestselling book, *No Place to Hide*; the ABC News primetime documentary *Peter Jennings Reporting: No Place to Hide*; and the *American RadioWorks* radio documentary *No Place to Hide* all combined to create a great public furor, and prompt Congressional hearings. In reviewing the book for *The New York Times*, William Safire wrote, “*No Place to Hide* might just do for privacy protection what Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* did for environmental protection nearly a half century ago.”⁴¹

By way of comparison, the Center for Public Integrity, which has had network and other TV consultant contracts and released the same investigative material in multiple media simultaneously, usually has released its information to the public, as findings, often with news conferences, breakfast briefings or nationwide conference calls. But those arrangements before mass release with the media almost always occur on an embargoed, discreet, but non-exclusive basis.

CIR, based on the West Coast, has generally worked and disseminated its material exclusively, with one or more select outlets, the information not released en masse. This reflected the founders' early, freelance writer approach, operating internally, specifically with individual contacts, with news organizations' reporting, editing and management structures sometimes, securing either consultant fees or otherwise mutually beneficial partnership arrangements.

Most notable about the difference in approach between the two organizations, though, is CIR's sustained commitment and record of accomplishment in the television documentary production, co-producing roughly 30 investigative, national television or radio documentaries, 18 of them with the PBS program *Frontline*. And in early 2007, a co-produced film, *Banished*, was selected for the annual Sundance Film Festival, airing ultimately on PBS.⁴²

Bergman is a correspondent and producer for *Frontline*, and his wife, Sharon Tiller, a former CIR executive director, for more than a decade, has been a senior producer for the related program *Frontline World*. Both are close personally to the founder and longtime executive producer of *Frontline*, David Fanning. And the symbiosis among these three people, two of them substantially responsible for the success of CIR before joining *Frontline*, and the co-production and reporting relationship of CIR with the program, helps to explain the prodigious investigative output broadcast there.

The Center for Investigative Reporting has a small staff of seven people, with a budget of about \$1.5 million. "The budget," according to Noyes, "has stayed about the same in the recent past, although it did decline in the mid-1990s and then grew to its current level in the late 1990s. The decline is probably attributed to problems the organization had with [the] transition to new leadership."⁴³ The editorial director of CIR is long-time reporter and author Mark Schapiro. There are several part-time contractors, from a bookkeeper and development consultant to many others – "independent contractor reporter/producers . . . and a variety of other video editors and associate producers depending on the status of the video production (CIR has an off-line video editing suite)." Staff salaries are lower than at major, commercial news organizations in California or in

Washington at the Center for Public Integrity. For example, the last CIR executive director earned half of what the CPI's executive director earns.⁴⁴

Tiller's departure from the organization and the ill-fated selection of a new executive director, a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper reporter with little management or fundraising experience, was a difficult ordeal for the Center. Half a million dollars in either reserves or committed grant income was spent down with virtually no new organizational or project funds raised. Noyes regards it as CIR's most formidable, consequential crisis challenge since it began, "The organization almost went under. The Board of Directors allowed the organization to drift too long before determining the situation needed to change." That storm passed, but the memory of it lingers. Co-founder and current Board secretary Noyes returned as acting executive director for the organization when Burton Glass left the organization in January 2006. Christa Scharfenberg, former communications and development director, recently took over from Noyes and will assume the new role of managing director when CIR completes the search for its next executive director.

The abrupt transition when the board did act during its 1990s nightmarish transition became public when the deposed director fired some parting shots about the agendas of private donors and the level of independence for an investigative reporting enterprise under such circumstances.

In fact, both organizations have had public criticism through the years from aggrieved subjects of investigations or their allies, almost always citing a particular source of funding. Most recently, in late 2006, the Lexington (Ky.) *Herald-Leader* – under intense pressure from the subject of a staff, CIR-funded investigation of Senator Mitch McConnell – returned \$37,500 to the Center for Investigative Reporting, citing the "liberal" bias of its donor, the St. Louis-based Deer Creek Foundation, (Deer Creek is a small foundation widely respected in the philanthropic community, which also has contributed to the Center for Public Integrity over the years.) Regarding CIR and the McConnell story in Kentucky, McClatchy Vice President Howard Weaver said, "If we want one of our staff members to do a report for one of our papers, we should pay for it."⁴⁵

Indeed, he and other newspapers certainly should, but increasingly don't, which is exactly why both organizations were created initially. And why CIR had initially been contacted by the *Lexington Herald-Leader* editor Marilyn Thompson (back when it was still a Knight-Ridder newspaper and before she left for the *Los Angeles Times* in Washington), seeking funds to help pay for a six-month investigation by one of her reporters, John Cheeves. CIR subsequently secured a \$300,000 grant to look nationwide at both Democrats and Republicans, of which the \$37,500 expenditure was part.⁴⁶

CIR accepts income from foundations, contract revenue from news outlets, and individual donations. CIR has "received a few corporate donations from media companies," and does not disclose individual donors as a general rule, in both cases unlike the Center for Public Integrity. Although foundation supporters are sometimes noted at the end of stories, and are mentioned in the midst of biannual reports downloadable in pdf file form, they are not readily accessible on the Website. Nor are staff bios.⁴⁷

The Center for Investigative Reporting has never been sued, although numerous actions have been threatened over the years. Board member and libel attorney Judy Alexander has done CIR's libel vetting for the past decade "at little or no cost" to CIR. According to Noyes, "We have attempted to pay her in the last few years if there is money in a project budget to do so." The group pays \$15,500 per year for libel insurance coverage of \$1 million with a \$50,000 deductible. Noyes said, "We assume that we would search out pro bono legal coverage if we had to defend ourselves." CIR has received pro bono legal assistance in the past from the law firm Pillsbury Sutro, now Pillsbury, Winthrop, Shaw, Pittman.⁴⁸

Overall, Noyes is deeply proud, and when asked to name CIR's greatest achievement, he said, "Sustaining for 30 years an organization named the Center for Investigative reporting that does original reporting and promotes the need for and value of investigative journalism." And he is optimistic about the future of nonprofit investigative journalism in the U.S. because of "the increased sources of funding that can be approached from a healthy economy, the growing recognition that nonprofit journalism has an important role to play in a civil society, and the rising means for distributing information in the Internet age."⁴⁹

The Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism

In 1986, the public literally rose up in anger and, after days of massive protests against the corrupt and repressive regime of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, ousted him from power.⁵⁰

“We had great expectations of what we could do after we had a free press,” recalled Sheila Coronel, then a Manila-based journalist who had worked for the *Philippine Panorama Magazine*, *The Manila Chronicle* and *The New York Times* as its Manila correspondent.⁵¹ “We thought that with a free press, we could do the kind of probing, in-depth reporting that we had always dreamt of doing. Unfortunately that was not the case. We ended up doing routine, day-to-day reporting with not much time for anything else but the usual ambulance-chasing. This, we thought, was not what journalism was all about. We realized that the only way we could do what we wanted was to get out of the newspapers, to flee the newsroom and do things on our own.”⁵²

In 1989, Coronel founded, along with eight other Filipino – mostly print – journalists who had endured censorship and various other restrictions in the Marcos years, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (www.pcij.org). She was its executive director from 1989 through 2006 and recently stepped down, left the country, culture, time zone and climate, and has become the director of the new Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York.⁵³

“We started out,” Coronel recalled, “with almost no money, in a borrowed office, and volunteer time. The idea was to specialize in original investigative journalism, and, like CIR, rely on it being used by established, national, commercial media outlets. The Center funds investigative projects for both the print and broadcast media, approximately 12-15 a year. The operating budget has been about \$500,000 to \$600,000 the last three years or so, which pays for roughly five journalists on staff, and a copy editor on contract. According to Coronel, “Salaries are about the same or slightly below those in newspapers, but much lower than what TV pays.”

Like the other Centers, a Board of Directors oversees the nonprofit corporation, approving budgets, overall policies. The PCIJ roughly receives 30 percent of its annual income from the interest of an endowment (from the U.S.-based Ford Foundation, supplemented by earned revenues over the years); 50 percent from grants and individual contributions and 20 percent from the sale of books, magazine subscriptions, reports. The ratio varies from year to year, depending on the economy, book sales, etc. The Philippine Center multimedia website, which includes advertising, features everything from streaming audio and video to downloadable podcasts. Staff names and bios are disclosed, as were the sources of the Philippine Center's funding in its first blog ("Inside PCIJ: A Window into PCIJ"), and that year, 2005, more than half of the operating budget came from outside the country, from either special projects grants (the Canadian International Development Agency, Japan Foundation, Open Society Institute) or proceeds of the Ford Foundation-supported Endowment Fund.⁵⁴

Coronel explained to readers, "The PCIJ is unique – and not only because of its special focus on investigative reporting. No other media organization in the Philippines is funded in a similar way: a combination of grants, revenues, and contributions from individual supporters. Our funding structure allows us to be independent because we are beholden neither to media owners nor to advertisers nor even to grant-giving organizations (the diversity of our funding base allows us to choose the projects we want to do with donors and set our own terms with them.)"

The Philippine Center website's proud homepage slogan is "Journalism with an impact: We tell it like it is. No matter who. No matter what."⁵⁵ Few informed citizens of the Philippines would disagree. Over the past 18 years, from its investigative reporting and writing, the PCIJ has published more than 250 articles in major Philippine newspapers, produced eight television documentaries and written two dozen books. It has published fearless reports about astonishing corruption in the Supreme Court, in the president's cabinet, in government agencies and even in media newsrooms.⁵⁶ But the organization captured the nation's imagination in 2000, when Sheila Coronel and her colleagues produced several investigative reports which were later used as evidence for the impeachment proceedings against President Joseph Estrada, who was removed from power in 2001.

Coronel and the PCIJ obtained government records, interviewed dozens of lawyers, bankers, building contractors and others and even managed to track offshore financial maneuverings, all of which revealed that Estrada had been acquiring expensive homes worth tens of millions of dollars for his mistresses and family members through various friends and associates. The revelations flew directly in the face of the former actor-turned-president's populist image as a man "of the people" ostensibly living on a paid government salary of \$50,000 a year. The Philippine Center reports were brilliantly documented, covered heavily by radio and television outlets, and they caused a national sensation.

As Doreen Fernandez, chairwoman of the Ateneo de Manila University's Department of Communication, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Philippine Center "is the foundation stone of the Philippine media." As to the organization's work, she said "It's brave, and it's necessary. They went ahead of the other media. They anticipated the whole thing."⁵⁷

As bad as Estrada might have been, the Philippine vice president who succeeded him as president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, "is reviving bad memories of crony corruption, presidential vote-rigging and intimidation of critical journalists," as *The New York Times* described it.⁵⁸ Coronel and her colleagues at the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism were threatened by the Justice Secretary with sedition charges and attempted police search warrants which the courts refused to issue.⁵⁹

"It was clearly intended to intimidate us. We have had to take security precautions, including backing up all of our disks, changing locks, and keeping track of staff whereabouts. The public outcry, here and abroad, against the threats against journalists has forced the government to back off [filing formal sedition charges]."⁶⁰

She said "during that period, we got anonymous threats . . . There were also strange men hanging around our office and asking about our whereabouts, what time we went to work, etc. I don't think they intended to harm us; they only wanted to intimidate us."⁶¹

The Arroyo regime is the most repressive since Marcos. In 2006, there was a declared state of emergency, six reporters murdered and 25 attempted murders, and over 50 lawsuits brought against journalists by Mike Arroyo, the president's husband.⁶² Separately, Coronel had seven libel lawsuits filed against her by one man (and in one case, his wife), who had publicly defended President Arroyo after the Philippine Center had posted online tape recordings of her conversations with the election commissioner about rigging the results of the 2004 elections. The tape recordings were downloaded by Filipinos a million times over a three month period.⁶³

“Until recently, we have been relatively free from legal harassment. One of the things we are proud of is that we have had no libel suits in almost 17 years of existence,” Coronel said in early 2006. “The increase in the legal harassment is linked to the current political crisis, as Arroyo's presidency is shaky and her people are flailing about in all directions, hitting back at enemies, perceived or real, including those in the press.”⁶⁴

When Coronel announced that she was stepping down from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, which she had co-founded and led for over 16 years, in light of the pending litigation and lingering threat of formal sedition charges, PCIJ lawyers “decided it was prudent not to make a big thing” about her departure lest she might “be barred from leaving the country.”⁶⁵ She said goodbye in the PCIJ blog in September 2006.⁶⁶

Her leaving was certainly a big thing for the Philippines, for journalism there, but also for her organization. Leadership succession is complicated in any context, but in this high pressure, high impact environment year after year, in which she courageously stood up to power, as an investigative journalist revealing the unvarnished truth, especially so. How do you replace a public figure as respected as Sheila Coronel, author, co-author or editor of a dozen books and winner in 2003 of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and the Creative Communication Arts? In 2001, she was named the Philippines' Outstanding Print Journalist, and to the Hall of Fame of the Jaime V. Ongpin Awards for Investigative Journalism, having won the top prize four times in 12 years.⁶⁷

“There has been a shake up in the organization,” Coronel said, “with the resignation of two of the most senior staff members, for various personal and other

reasons, including the fact that they did not agree that I should leave. That part was difficult and bitter . . . Financially, the Center is stable. Organizationally, it's smaller and more focused. There was some demoralization caused by my departure and the resignations that went with it, but it seems everyone is moving on.”⁶⁸

Coronel's immediate successor and acting executive director at PCIJ is Jaileen Jimeno, former executive producer of *Imbestigador*, the most popular investigative TV program in the Philippines.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism is widely acknowledged today as the premier investigative reporting institution in Asia, literally introducing investigative journalism to the Philippines and other countries in the region. Not only have its high impact, multimedia investigative reports served as a public example, the organization also has separately held seminars and published training manuals teaching national and international journalists about techniques for investigating political corruption, how to access information laws and other exigencies in the entire Asia-Pacific region. PCIJ trainers have also worked with local journalists on-the-ground in Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, China and Thailand, and, in fact, a similar organization patterned directly after PCIJ was created in 1997, the Nepal Center for Investigative Journalism (known on the ground in Nepal as “KPK”).⁷⁰ The Philippine Center success also has inspired journalists in other countries – Bangladesh and Indonesia, for example – who have been fascinated and flirtatious entrepreneurially about creating a similar organization.

That process of spawning a new approach and institution, and making it work journalistically and financially, is an exceptionally difficult and precarious journey, requiring enormous patience, perseverance, physical and mental stamina, an indomitable will, great social networking skills and a natural leader with selfless grace able to coalesce a respected but inevitably “complicated,” often difficult group of investigative-minded, often idiosyncratic journalists with substantial egos. In general, luck is always helpful and important, certainly, the right timing, circumstances and adaptability to opportunities or problems as they arise.

Sadly, in many countries talented, independent journalists are hardly in short supply. The dire shortage these days is in places where serious, important journalism

needs to be done. Ultimately the financial question is actually, by far, the most compelling and difficult Rubicon to cross of all – how to raise the financial wherewithal without compromising the work and reputation of the enterprise, and from whom. Transparency about donors, legal and tax status, internal if not public standards of what monies are sought and received, and internal systems to protect the integrity of the editorial and journalistic process are essential. Ultimately, though, nothing is more revealing and definitive about the quality of the organization’s journalism and independence than the published work itself.

And on one level, perhaps the most stunning thing of all about the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism is how much it has accomplished for that country and the region on such a small budget – in its 17 years roughly just half a million dollars a year.

Reflecting on it all, in her last months in Manila before stepping down and becoming the first director of the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University, Coronel said she believes that nonprofit investigative journalism is especially needed “in new democracies challenged by both state restrictions and profit-hungry media markets. Investigative reporters help set a standard of journalism that would otherwise not be there, especially when media markets are deregulated after the emergence of democracy, and media companies compete on the basis of sensationalism and sleaze.”⁷¹

The Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism

The earliest years are the most difficult and precarious for any startup enterprise, and one of the world’s newest, smallest and most interesting nonprofit investigative journalism organizations is no different. That might be exacerbated in traditionally one of the poorest countries in Europe, Romania. The per capita GNP in that country, in 2004 dollars, was \$2,960; to put it in global context, that is more than twice the amount of \$1,170 in the Philippines.⁷²

In 2001, the Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism (centrul roman pentru jurnalism de investigatie, www.crji.org) was founded as a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization based in Bucharest by three investigative journalists, Stefan Candea,

Paul Radu and Sorin Ozon, all three former investigative reporters for *Evenimentul Zilei*, a newspaper in Bucharest. Leadership of the Center has varied, but in the past year Ozon has been the President.⁷³

Ozon also has worked for *Ora*, *Jurnalul National*, *Academia Catavencu* and *Evenimentul Zilei*. According to his bio on the newly redesigned Center website, now also supporting audio and video content, “the times, the environment and the bosses turned him into an investigative journalist.” In reference to the three of them creating the Romanian Center, it wryly notes, “In fact, someone would have had to do it.”⁷⁴

Candea, besides *Evenimentul Zilei*, has done investigative reporting and research for *The Sunday Times* of London, *The New York Times*, ABC News’s *20/20*, BBC’s *News Night*, Channel 4 in London and *La Repubblica* in Rome. He has worked in radio in Koln, Germany, and attending training seminars in Maastricht and London. He also visited and did research for a few days at the Center for Public Integrity in August 2005 in Washington.

While in town and frustrated that the Justice Department Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) office charges 50 cents a page to print out copies of the form, how Candea improvised on the spot astonished Justice Department staff and even prompted a brief *Washington Post* news story. He took out his digital camera and began snapping photos of the public documents in which he was interested. The Justice Department objected, but later had to concede that, while such a practice has never been attempted, it is not illegal.⁷⁵

Such is the gumption and adaptive creativity that these Romanian journalists must and do bring to their extremely challenging work, on a shoestring. Asked what their annual operating budget is, Radu said, “We don’t have an annual operating budget . . . The expenditures for maintaining the RCIJ are about \$3,000 USD a year (this only involves maintaining the website, translations, meetings).” The Center doesn’t have a formal office but is run from “a one-room apartment which belongs to one of the founders.”⁷⁶

Funding comes from “our own money, coming from freelance activities,” and substantially from government sources, and disclosed upon request but not on the Website. Grants have come in recent years mostly from the Danish government, the

European Union, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), or other NGOs.⁷⁷ According to Radu, “RCIJ is in a permanent stage of crisis, because we don’t have long term financial support.”⁷⁸ By way of perspective, the U.S. Center for Public Integrity and the Center for Investigative Reporting do not accept government money, and the Philippine Center does receive some Canadian government support.

There is a core of six investigative journalists, part-time staff (lawyer, accountant and IT manager), plus 30 other member journalists, available on a short-term contract basis. The fees for participating in a project vary. On an investigation into “energy brokers in the Balkans” reporters have been paid approximately 500 EURO/month, with a project team of four people – two from Romania, one from Bulgaria and one from Albania. As Radu put it, “These salaries are not bigger than a reporter would get while working for the mainstream media in Bucharest. Although threatened “constantly” with libel litigation, it has not happened thus far, nor have any of the RCIJ reporters been physically threatened or assaulted because of their work.

Radu is the former head of the investigative department of *Evenimentul Zilei*, a daily newspaper in Bucharest. He has been an Alfred Friendly Fellow working on investigative projects at the *San Antonio Express-News*; a Milena Jesenska Press Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, Austria, where he researched transnational organized crime groups, his specialty. In recent years at the Center, he has investigated human trafficking in the Balkans as well as the relationships between various organized crime groups and the energy and mining sector.

His work is respected across the Atlantic. In 2003, he was invited to become a member of the Center for Public Integrity’s International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) project. Winner of a 2004 Knight International Press Fellowship Award, he is an investigative journalism trainer and projects coordinator across Central and Eastern Europe, working with the Centre for Investigative Journalism (London) which has done trainings in this region and the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR) in London, particularly its multi-country Balkans reporting project.

Asked why he and other founders created the Romanian Center, Radu noted the poor quality of investigative journalism in Romania, “Most of the investigative articles were used for blackmailing, advertisement racketeering, commissioned articles or were

just an edited form of some official files. We felt that the Romanian society needed a strong investigative journalism organization to uncover corruption and (the) ties between high-ranking officials, organized crime groups and crooked intelligence officers. These groups are controlling the Romanian economy, politics and also some media groups.⁷⁹

“We intended,” he continued, “to enhance the quality of investigative journalism by performing our own independent investigations based on the principles of project journalism. One of the first rules we imposed on ourselves was that we will only fund the Center’s projects from foreign sources in this way trying to keep our independence.”⁸⁰

The Romanian Center has produced numerous articles on the arms trade, offshore media ownership and on international organized crime groups generally. Its articles are translated into many languages and used, according to Radu, by human rights groups or the European Union when pushing for various reforms in Romania. There are some current across-border projects examining tobacco smuggling in the Balkans, as well as relating to energy contracts in the region. At the end of 2006, RCIJ launched, with another investigative reporting group in Sarajevo, a joint website, www.reportingproject.net in which coverage of the “electricity brokers” was posted. Government investigations were launched, as a result.⁸¹ In addition, RCIJ members have trained reporters in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and elsewhere, and organized the first investigative reporting contests in Romania.⁸²

Besides all of this important information, which goes otherwise unreported or poorly reported, the further institutionalization of the Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism is an open question. With a paucity of financial support, but also some acknowledged lax internal business management – “a bad accountant plus our lack of interest in the business side” – certain paperwork went unfilled and the Ministry of Finance in late 2006 put the RCIJ on an “inactive NGOs” list. The situation, said Paul Radu, was rectified and “it didn’t affect our activity.”

Not only was this a mere hiccup to Radu, he and his fellow founders are optimistic about the future of nonprofit investigative journalism in Romania and the region. “We believe that NGO-based investigative journalism will grow and will be the main base for in-depth investigative journalism.”⁸³

Universities and Other Journalism Initiatives

In the United States, we also are starting to see some innovative, cross platform collaboration and synergies at universities or other nonprofit, non-government organizations, in which those considerable human and physical resources – researchers eager to learn and also be mentored, library facilities, physical office space, experts in various, eclectic disciplines all in an intellectually open environment – help to enable respected investigative journalists to do their important work, often published in high profile commercial newspapers or on national television media venues.

In the U.S., as international news coverage has noticeably slipped, new content-generating groups have been emerging or, in one case, keep fulfilling their important, longstanding mission. They include:

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (part of the World Security Institute), under the direction of Jon Sawyer, a 31-year veteran of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* who did reporting in 60 countries, began last year and “intends to be a leader in sponsoring the independent reporting that media organizations are increasingly less willing to undertake on their own.” There also is a joint partnership project with the International Center for Journalists; both organizations are based in Washington.⁸⁴

For nearly a decade, the International Reporting Project (at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University), under founding director and former foreign correspondent John Schidlovsky, has sent more than 100 IRP Fellows to do reporting projects for five weeks in countries around the world.⁸⁵

In television, Link TV, substantially funded by MacArthur and other major foundations, was launched in December 1999 as “the first nationwide television channel dedicated to providing Americans with global perspectives on news.” Based in San Francisco, it is available to 22 million U.S. homes that receive direct broadcast satellite (DBS) television and is beginning to partner with the American University School of Communication for its Washington coverage.⁸⁶

Freelance investigative journalism written for any media is extremely difficult and fragile, which is why the Fund for Investigative Journalism was founded by the late Philip Stern in 1969. That first year a grant of \$250 enabled journalist Seymour Hersh to begin investigating a tip about a U.S. massacre in the Vietnamese village of My Lai; an

additional \$2,000 helped him to finish reporting his memorable story. The Fund, directed by former *Des Moines Register* reporter and author John Hyde, in recent years, has been giving away \$100,000-\$150,000 annually in small grants, \$500 to \$10,000, as high as \$25,000 (the annual book award) for national and international investigative reporting. These are available only “to reporters working outside the protection and backing of major news organizations” in every corner of the world.⁸⁷

Throughout the nation and the world, among the oldest nonprofit institutions obviously are colleges and universities. And there are some creative synergies between professors and students on investigative reporting projects which certainly have the potential to become major news media stories. For example in London, veteran television documentary producer Gavin MacFadyen, with funding from the Lorana Sullivan Foundation, began the Centre for Investigative Journalism, an educational and training organization. CIJ has been holding international training sessions in London (Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya spoke there in 2006 weeks before being murdered in Moscow), the Balkans, South Africa, India and the U.S.

However, MacFadyen has been working with a few dozen, unpaid graduate students from City University, the London College of Communication, Goldsmiths (a College in London University) and Westminster University. Together they are systematically investigating the deforestation issue in Brazil, Indonesia and elsewhere around the world, and hope to complete their investigation and get it published or broadcast in the fall of 2007.⁸⁸ This is a departure into content generation for CIJ.

That is extremely difficult because it is essentially unfunded, and several students have had to drop out, because of, said MacFadyen, “the instability and insecurity our relative poverty automatically creates.”⁸⁹ This is a vivid contrast with the new, very well-funded, carefully coordinated “News21 Incubators” project, in which every summer 44 students at five leading U.S. universities receive a stipend of \$7,500 to participate in 10 summer weeks of “innovative, hands-on journalism” on topics of “global importance.” Headed by veteran media executive Merrill Brown, this is part of the multimillion dollar, multi-year Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education⁹⁰ This group is starting to produce impressive and high quality journalism content, not surprisingly, and major stories, some of them investigative, have been and will continue to be placed

in the national news media. The question is not whether the “News21” initiative is exciting and a rare example of long-term philanthropic vision and leadership, which it certainly is, but exactly how long it will last, the extent of its long-term impact and how broad a swath it will ultimately cut across American journalism school campuses and beyond.

However, and so far more commonly, there is occasionally high impact, university-fostered and enabled investigative journalism on college campuses which necessarily emanates more organically and sometimes resonates off campus and online to much larger audiences, from student publications and their faculty advisers. Consider, for example, undergraduate Ginger Gibson, news editor of *The Daily Reveille*, the Louisiana State University newspaper, who “scooped” the rest of the state’s reporters with her story revealing that Louisiana state legislators had quietly changed their recorded votes after legislation was decided, roughly 500 times in 2006.⁹¹

But in the United States, a growing trend less institutionally organized than “News21” but more systematic than the above London MacFadyen project, is simply when distinguished journalist/professors conduct major investigations with their own students or those from nearby universities. First, recall that Columbia University’s Sheila Coronel has begun working with students at the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism – stay tuned! In addition, two well-known U.S. journalists and their modus operandi with university students, in fact, are precisely what motivated and inspired MacFadyen, an American living in London, to try to coordinate a group investigative project with students.

In recent years, award-winning investigative reporter and former *60 Minutes* producer Lowell Bergman, co-founder of the Center for Investigative Reporting, has been teaching at the University of California (Berkeley) Graduate School of Journalism, while also a consultant to *The New York Times* and a correspondent and producer for the PBS program *Frontline*. Students learn from him and help him do important national journalism, which they helped to make possible and with which they are associated. This happened most notably in stories Bergman co-authored on worker safety for *The New York Times* and *Frontline*, which won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service and the Peabody and Alfred I. DuPont awards.⁹²

For years at the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism, David Protess has famously directed the Medill Innocence Project in which he and his students investigate miscarriages of justice. Their investigative reporting has contributed to the exoneration of 10 innocent men and women, five from death row.⁹³ Protess early in his career was the research director of the Better Government Association (BGA), an investigative watchdog nonprofit organization which publishes reports and collaborated with the Chicago-area news media on several award-winning stories. One of his books (co-authored with Rob Warden), *A Promise of Justice: The 18-Year Fight to Save Four Innocent Men*, won the 1998 IRE book award.⁹⁴

Protess also is a founding board member of the Innocence Network, a consortium of 30 journalism and law schools across the nation. Meanwhile, Medill students have been investigating murder cases outside Illinois, traveling to Texas, Indiana and Michigan. The university/student collaborative efforts at Northwestern and UC Berkeley in impressive collaboration with Protess and Bergman are centered on their classroom teaching as professors (The Medill Innocence Project is part of the Northwestern Medill School).⁹⁵

In 2004, highly acclaimed investigative journalist Florence Graves founded and began directing the Brandeis Institute for Investigative Journalism, assembling a staff of journalists to conduct investigative projects with the collaborative help of students. It is “the nation’s first investigative reporting center based at a university” created “to help fill the void in high quality public interest and investigative journalism.”⁹⁶

Everyone who knows or knows of Graves knew to keep watching, for good reason. She founded and edited *Common Cause Magazine*, receiving the National Magazine Award for General Excellence in 1987. It was regarded as the best investigative reporting magazine in the nation, with the *largest* circulation of any political magazine (250,000), before the nonprofit publisher, Common Cause, astonishingly shut it down. In 1992, on Page 1 of *The Washington Post*, she (as a freelance contract writer, working with a Post staff writer) broke the national sexual misconduct story about then-powerful Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon. Not surprisingly, given her distinguished

background and multiple years' worth of awards, she is also a United States member of the Center for Public Integrity's International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.⁹⁷

In April 2006, Graves and her Institute produced, in collaboration with *The Washington Post* (on page 1, above the fold), a national exposé about airline safety and the manufacture of unapproved parts in jet planes, and the conduct of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Boeing.⁹⁸ And, among other investigative reporting subjects, the Institute is developing an Innocence Project.

In February 2007, it was announced that philanthropists Elaine and Gerald Schuster had donated \$5 million to Brandeis' Institute for Investigative Journalism, which is now the Elaine and Gerald Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism. Elaine Schuster said, "We are happy to support the urgent work of the institute, especially in this era when fewer media outlets will dedicate the resources needed to dig deeply and expose wrongdoing."⁹⁹

This is a common perception across the nation and the world, as commercial news organizations keep their profits high by downsizing and putting premier journalists on the street. And it is exactly why nonprofit investigative journalism will keep expanding and evolving in different ways in the years ahead.

Concluding Thoughts

Serious journalists in need of a place to publish their work, wealthy citizens and their foundations, and an informed, educated public weary of the obsessive celebrity "news" about Anna Nicole Smith or Angelina Jolie's baby will all coalesce together, as they already have been doing for many years now. We have briefly examined four nonprofit investigative journalism organizations on three continents dedicated to publishing original reporting content, the Center for Public Integrity, the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and the Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism.

Few journalists in the world have the international investigative reporting perspective of Brant Houston, executive director since 1997 of the world's largest, oldest investigative reporting membership and training organization, Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), begun in 1976. He has trained and spoken to journalists in 18

countries during the past decade, including Russia, India, China and Australia, most recently helping to establish national investigative reporting IRE-like organizations in Brazil (Abraji) and Colombia (Periodismo de Investigacion en Red).¹⁰⁰

According to Houston, the four organizations “not only have done groundbreaking work, but they have reminded the mainstream media of their public service responsibilities during a time of corporate takeovers and ensuing cutbacks.” He said, “The Centers have demonstrated what solid investigative reporting is and thus raised the standards for investigative journalism. They also have shown that there is an alternative way to do investigative work – that a journalist doesn’t have to join a traditional newsroom to get the resources and backing necessary for long-term, in-depth stories.”¹⁰¹

In 1999, Houston and respected Danish journalist Nils Mulvad came up with the idea of Global Investigative Journalism Conferences, in order for journalists to “increase cross-border cooperation.” Multi-day, multi-panel global conferences were held in Copenhagen in 2001 and 2003, Amsterdam in 2005 (460 journalists from 55 countries; attendance rising with each conference) and are scheduled to be held in Toronto in May 2007 and Oslo, Norway, in September 2008.¹⁰²

In the past decade, other, similar investigative reporting groups around the world have been contemplated informally or actually founded by frustrated, enterprising journalists yearning to do more serious work. In the Balkans, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) was created from the Balkans program of the London-based Institute for War & Peace Reporting. Based in Sarajevo, BIRN has member journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia-Montenegro, Romania and Bulgaria. It produces original, in-depth journalism.¹⁰³ So too does the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia.¹⁰⁴ Other groups, in which it is unclear how well-funded or active they are, include the Ghana Center for Public Integrity, begun in 2002 by journalists Raymond Archer and William Nyarko and the Nepal Center for Investigative Journalism, founded in 1997.¹⁰⁵ Over the years, I have had conversations with journalists in Peru, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, England and France inquiring about the logistics of starting these kinds of investigative reporting organizations. Obtaining the money to start

the independent enterprise, from acceptable, multiple, credible sources, almost *always* is the roadblock to proceeding.

None of the nonprofit organizations discussed in this paper are able to do as much reporting as they would like, and all are limited in various ways, from the caliber of experienced personnel to the quality and frequency of their publications or documentaries, to their ability to fully utilize the exciting new technologies and means of distribution. The net result is that important subjects desperately requiring responsible investigation and public education simply go unaddressed. The public is not as well informed as it could be, important truths do not emerge in a timely, relevant fashion or at all, and accountability of those in power essential to any democracy does not occur. These trends are universal, irrespective of geography, climate or the country's economic or democratic condition.

It all comes back to the importance of serious journalism as a core element of democracy and the current crisis in news coverage by the major media. Here in the United States, why did it take a nonprofit investigative reporting organization to post online all of the Iraq and Afghanistan contracts and the windfalls of war to the penny, company by company? How come in the Philippines the corruption of the President, spending tens of millions of dollars to build lavish mansions for his mistresses, was uncovered by a nonprofit investigative reporting organization, resulting in his removal from office? Why did it take a nonprofit investigative reporting organization working across borders and continents to reveal that the major tobacco companies have been involved in illicit cigarette smuggling for years, avoiding many millions of dollars in customs taxes?

Where were the major newspapers and the TV networks, on these issues and many more? Why didn't they break these stories and so many others? Of course, when a news organization guts its newsroom and closes its overseas bureaus gradually over the years, there are simply fewer resources to cover local communities, Washington or the world. Important projects are not even contemplated because they are impractical. And inevitably the quality and breadth of news coverage suffers, as we have all suffered and winced in consuming it.

The message in all of this is actually profound and yet still not well understood or fully appreciated by the business and the profession of journalism, let alone the public at large. If commercial journalism had been functioning well with great independence, courage and enterprise, many years ago, none of the investigative reporting centers discussed here would have even been necessary or created. They began expressly to respond to a perceived need for more and higher quality reportage. And they have been fulfilling that need, with limited capacity and sometimes difficult financial circumstances with unflinching courage, creativity and perseverance.

Our disillusionment with the limitations of the commercial broadcast news media certainly is not new. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) were created roughly 40 years ago for various reasons, including the public's need for more substantive, enriching news and other information. Philanthropic foundations (the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York) were instrumental in creating these vital national nonprofit institutions and their noncommercial systems of distribution.¹⁰⁶ In 1970, NPR had 30 employees; today it has 700, a major media company covering the world with a reporting presence in 35 U.S. and foreign cities, its programming on more than 800 independent public radio stations.¹⁰⁷

With the waning commercial commitment to serious news coverage more dramatic and urgent now than ever, the public need for higher quality reportage and a better informed citizenry has substantially increased. With the most expensive and difficult journalism – international and investigative reporting – particularly ebbing away in the commercial media venues, our public, nonprofit institutions, PBS and NPR, need to substantially deepen and broaden these types of news coverage (for example, the respected PBS program, *The News Hour* with Jim Lehrer, and NPR generally do not do investigative reporting). That is not sufficient, but it is a logical and necessary editorial progression for them into this newly available niche. And the philanthropic community, so supportive of those initiatives these past decades, ought to continue its magnificent support for this type of coverage.

But obviously the systemic issues diminishing the extent and reach of original investigative and international reporting extend far beyond television and radio, the current domain of PBS and NPR, to all media forms, with the even less predictable wild

card of the exciting, multimedia online world, constantly changing and evolving technologically. And the commercial and competitive media companies show little ability to provide any over-arching grand strategy or way forward for the industry and for the profession and the public. Each outlet and its company have an idiosyncratically singular notion of how they plan to adapt to 21st century technology and market exigencies.

In other words, the moment is ripe for bold innovation on a national and global scale. Whether or not it will happen is unclear. But there is an unmistakable, momentous opportunity and a profound societal need for national leadership to solve a finite, discernible problem: How to regularly generate high quality, investigative and international reporting news content in an unprecedented, broadly accessible, multimedia way. This is a problem that is eminently solvable, with various possible solutions. What are required are informal consensus, a focused, eventually formal approach, and inevitably the considerable financial sustenance to launch it in the first years. This would seem to be a natural, large-scale, nonprofit journalism situation – doing *not* what makes 20 percent or higher annual profits but what is important and serves the broad public interest. There are reasonably realistic opportunities for significant future annual income and shrewd efficiencies which could plausibly be achieved through partnerships, over time as an institutional presence and relationships are cemented.

For America's major foundations, this could be another PBS/NPR moment, in which great, collaborative vision and substantial resources together can accomplish something lasting and historic. At the very least, the investigative reporting organizations profiled here deserve not only continued but significantly increased, long-term support, the quality and the quantity of their output and its public dissemination, resonance and impact *directly* related to it. All of it would provide greater citizen access to public service journalism and improve the “informed citizenry” dimension of our democracy.

In June 2005, at a University of Pennsylvania workshop of about 40 journalists, scholars and others sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, I said that nonprofit journalism more than ever can be “an unfettered place to do unfettered journalism” and this is desperately needed today, now more than ever. In this unsettling transformative moment in history, our news-gathering capacities, our news consumption, our public knowledge about civic affairs and the overall health of our democracy itself all

appear to be declining. Because of this gathering storm, “we should have a Marshall Plan by foundations and other philanthropic folks” to support nonprofit journalism models. “We have a robust civil society, but a fragile one. There’s got to be a serious commitment here.”¹⁰⁸

Since that event, I have attended very interesting and useful “future of journalism” discussions at Harvard University (the 20th Shorenstein Center reunion), American University School of Communication, the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and the University of Massachusetts, and read the transcripts of other recent symposia at Louisiana State University Manship School of Mass Communication, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and elsewhere. More of these are planned. Everyone worries about the future, ideas abound, but consensus beyond “the problem” is usually neither sought nor achieved.

What are needed now are bold, precise initiatives, national leadership, focus and action. As someone who, with a very talented staff, has organized consortia of news organizations or individual journalists in Indiana, later in Illinois, then throughout the nation and the world (twice, with the Center’s aforementioned International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and subsequently, as co-founder of Global Integrity (www.globalintegrity.org), the new corruption research organization utilizing hundreds of respected social scientists and investigative journalists around the world on each epic report), I know something highly collaborative and large is absolutely doable. But initially such a macro organizational feat as what is required right now could not be attempted and maintained over many years without a massive commitment and infusion of public-purposed money from the philanthropic world.

Nonprofit journalism is not the only answer to the current crisis, of course. New, for-profit companies with owners committed to their communities and to journalism, must and certainly will also emerge in the months and years ahead to fill the above-described voids, since it is well understood that, as Geneva Overholser put it so well, “the long-building plaint is now undeniable: journalism as we know it is over.”¹⁰⁹ The time has come for for-profit/nonprofit hybrid entities or clusters of partners to emerge.

One of the most exciting and impressive examples of this is the Media Development Loan Fund (www.mdlf.org) a nonprofit corporation registered in New York with funding received from the Open Society Institute, the MacArthur Foundation and an eclectic array of others. Since 1996, MDLF has provided invaluable financing, \$52 million in low-cost loans to 135 projects for 58 for profit media companies in 18 countries outside the U.S.¹¹⁰ Recently, the largest media foundation in the U.S., the Knight Foundation, pledged to spend \$25 million over five years on “journalism innovation” grants, available to nonprofit but also for profit entrepreneurship.¹¹¹ These are exactly the kinds of initiatives which will stimulate and enable a dynamic, independent news media, nonprofit and for-profit, providing important news to local communities, the nation and the world.

The often unnoticed irony is that amidst the current, deteriorating state of original, investigative and otherwise independent journalism in America, right now there are new, very energizing forces at play – talented and highly motivated journalists, mindful of the stakes involved; entrepreneurial leaders with vision, a commitment to community and financial wherewithal; new media platforms and technologies revolutionizing the means and cost of production; and every day, more and more signs of what is possible journalistically, particularly with the new social networking connectivity of the Web and related, constantly improving technologies.

Joseph Pulitzer once said, “Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations.”

All they need is a public-spirited, trustworthy place to work.

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- 14 Ibid
- 15 Ibid. p. 226-227.
- 16 "Nonprofit Journalism," by Daniel Akst, in "Journalism's Crisis of Confidence: A Challenge for the Next Generation," A Report of the Carnegie Corporation of New York 2006, pp. 56-68. See also "News in the Public Interest: A Free and Subsidized Press," The Breaux Symposium, March 20, 2004 (The Manship School of Mass Communication/The Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, Louisiana State University), p. 19.
- 17 Ibid (Akst), p. 58.
- 18 Ibid, p. 56, 63.
- 19 James L. Aucoin, *The Evolution of American Investigative Journalism* (University of Missouri Press: Columbia, Missouri: 2005), p. 2.
- 20 David L. Protess, Fay Lomax Cook, Jack C. Doppelt, James S. Ettema, Margaret T. Gordon, Donna R. Leff, Peter Miller, *Journalism of Outrage* (Guilford Press: New York: 1991), p. 5, quoting from Investigative Reporters and Editors, *The Reporter's Handbook* (St. Martin's Press: New York: 1983), "Foreword" by Robert W. Greene, pp. vii-viii.
- 21 The Center website, www.publicintegrity.org, lists all awards, annual reports (the 2000 report includes a history and chronology of the first 10 years, including a list of all major reports), the annual IRS 990 forms for recent years, donors and other information.
- 22 www.publicintegrity.org, "About Us" and under "IRS Compliance," see the IRS 990 forms for 2004.
- 23 www.publicintegrity.org, "About Us" and under "2000 Annual Report," p. 16.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 www.globalintegrity.org (Assessments & Data section).
- 26 The IRE Award-winning Center book referenced was: Diane Renzulli and the Center for Public Integrity, *Capitol Offenders: How Private Interests Govern Our States* (Public Integrity Books: Washington, D.C.: 2002). The plagiarism incident was publicly disclosed in a Center press release, "Statement on Unattributed Use of Source Material," September 8, 2005. (www.publicintegrity.org, "About Us" under "News Room")
- 27 www.publicintegrity.org, "About Us" and under "2000 Annual Report."
- 28 Ibid., p. 18.
- 29 www.publicintegrity.org, "About Us" and under "Board of Directors."
- 30 While I know many of the investigative journalists mentioned here (the investigative reporting world is not vast), full disclosure: I met Lowell in 1979 when we were both working at ABC News as investigative reporters, in different cities, and later at CBS News 60 Minutes as producers for Mike Wallace. We collaborated on a few successful stories at both networks, and we have stayed in touch over the years.
- 31 Dan Frost, "San Francisco Center Keeps Muckraking Alive," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 2002
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Interview with Dan Noyes (phone and email), May 5, 2006.
- 34 Dan Frost, "San Francisco Center Keeps Muckraking Alive," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 2002.
- 35 www.muckraker.org (Reveal: Results, Bi-Annual Report, Center for Investigative Reporting, 2006)
- 36 Interview with Dan Noyes (email), May 5, 2006.
- 37 Frost, "San Francisco Center Keeps Muckraking Alive," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 2002.
- 38 Interview with Dan Noyes (email), May 5, 2006.
- 39 Reveal: Results, Bi-Annual Report, Center for Investigative Reporting, 2006, www.muckraker.org
- 40 Ibid.

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- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid. and the CIR homepage as of March 1, 2007.
- 43 Interview with Dan Noyes (email), May 5, 2006.
- 44 IRS 990 filing for 2005, www.muckraker.org compared with IRS 990 filing for 2005, www.publicintegrity.org
- 45 www.muckraker.org "The McConnell Machine: Sources and More Information"
- 46 www.muckraker.org and various news accounts of the incident. To be clear, Cheeves took a leave of absence from the newspaper and received \$37,500 from CIR as a contractor. The Herald Leader subsequently paid CIR that corresponding amount after the relationship was publicly criticized.
- 47 Interview with Dan Noyes, May 5, 2006.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Sheila Coronel, "The Philippines: Robin Hood Politics," in *The Corruption Notebooks* (Public Integrity Books: Washington, D.C.: 2004), p. 251.
- 51 Ibid., p. 258.
- 52 Interview (email) with Sheila Coronel, April 20, 2006.
- 53 The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism is "dedicated to training students interested in pursuing distinguished careers in investigative journalism." For more information, see: www.jm.columbia.edu/academic_programs/MS/stabile_center.asp.
- 54 Ibid., under "Inside PCIJ: A window into PCIJ," April 4, 2005.
- 55 www.pcij.org
- 56 Ibid., and "Citation for Sheila Coronel," 2003 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts, on www.rmaf.org.
- 57 Benjamin Pimentel, "Uncovering Mansions, Mistresses; Journalists track corruption secrets," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 2000, p. A16
- 58 Editorial, "Dark Days for Philippine Democracy," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2006.
- 59 Q & A with Sheila S. Coronel, "Breaking news in the Philippines," www.transparency.org
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Interview with Sheila Coronel (email), February 22, 2007.
- 62 Reporters Without Borders, www.rsf.org, 2007 Annual Report for the Philippines.
- 63 Interview with Sheila Coronel (email), February 22, 2007.
- 64 Interview with Sheila Coronel (email), April 20, 2006.
- 65 Interview with Sheila Coronel (email), February 14, 2007.
- 66 Sheila Coronel, "Not Quite Good-bye," www.pcij.org, "Inside PCIJ" under "Sheila Coronel," September 11, 2006.
- 67 www.pcij.org
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Interview (email) with Sheila Coronel, February 14, 2007.
- 70 www.pcij.org and www.himalassociation.org. "KPK" Nepali reference from email correspondence with Sheila Coronel, 4/21/06.
- 71 Interview with Sheila Coronel, April 20, 2006.
- 72 Edited by John W. Wright with editors and reporters of the *Times*, *The New York Times 2007 Almanac* (Penguin Books: New York: 2006), p. 524.
- 73 www.rcij.org
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 No byline, "Noted with Interest," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2005, p. A11.
- 76 Interview with Paul Radu (email), April 27, 2006
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Interview with Paul Radu (email), February 18, 2007.
- 83 Interview with Paul Radu (email), April 27, 2006.
- 84 www.pulitzercenter.org
- 85 www.journalismfellowships.org. Full disclosure: I am a member of the Advisory Board and a SAIS alumnus.
- 86 www.linktv.org
- 87 <http://fij.org>. Full disclosure: For years I have been and continue to be a member of the Fund for Investigative Journalism Board.
- 88 www.tcij.org and interview with Gavin MacFadyen, February 24, 2007 (email). Full disclosure: I was a speaker at the 2006 CIJ London summer school.
- 89 Ibid (interview).
- 90 <http://newsinitiative.org>
- 91 Ginger Gibson, "House vote changes produce few, incomplete records," *The Daily Reveille*, December 8, 2006, p. 1

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- 92 <http://journalism.berkeley.edu> (faculty)
- 93 www.medill.northwestern.edu under "faculty."
- 94 www.ire.org under "awards" (1998).
- 95 www.medill.northwestern.edu under Medill Innocence Project
- 96 www.brandeis.edu/investigate/who/index/html
- 97 www.brandeis.edu/investigate/who/graves.html
- 98 Ibid. and www.icij.org
- 99 "Miranda Neubauer, "University secures \$5 million journalism grant," posted 2/6/07, www.brandeis.edu
- 100 Interview with Brant Houston (email), February 23, 2007.
- 101 Ibid. Full disclosure: I have been a member of IRE since 1983, and have spoken at IRE and Global Investigative Journalism conferences for at least the past decade.
- 102 www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org. Full disclosure: I have spoken at each of these conferences, and I have accepted the invitation of the 2006 conference host, the Canadian Association of Journalists, to speak in Toronto. Also, the Center for Public Integrity ICIJ and the Fund for Independence in Journalism are both members of the steering committee.
- 103 www.birn.eu.com
- 104 www.cin.ba
- 105 Gcpi.virtualactivism.net. Apparently Nyarko and Archer and I met and talked in my office following a talk to visiting journalists, and that, according to their website, encouraged them to start a Center for Public Integrity in Ghana. There is no editorial, legal or financial connection with the Center in Washington; indeed, I was not consulted about the group's name.
- 106 Dr. Edward M. Lenert, "Mapping Social Entrepreneurship and the Role of Charitable Foundations in Electronic Media: 1946-1996 (online; <http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/mediastudies/ff/report.pdf>).
- 107 www.npr.org
- 108 Geneva Overholser, "On Behalf of Journalism: An agenda for change" New York City, June 2006 (Web circulated), p. 7.
- 109 Ibid., p. 1
- 110 www.mdlf.org under About Us.
- 111 www.knightfdn.org