New England First Amendment Institute 2011

DAY ONE: THE VALUE OF TRANSPARENCY

3:15  WELCOME
Walter Robinson, Director, Initiative for Investigative Reporting, Northeastern University School of Journalism

3:30 - 4:00  KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE NEW MODELS FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING AND WHY THEY ARE CRUCIAL TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
Robert Rosenthal, Executive Director, Center for Investigative Reporting

Access to the work of government enables citizen and journalist alike to provide vital oversight. As the leader of the Center for Investigative Journalism, Robert Rosenthal has been a champion of the public’s right to know. Drawing on his decades-long career, he discusses the changing landscape of journalism and makes the case for transparency.

4:00 - 5:30  PANEL: TALES FROM THE TRENCHES
Moderator: Mary Jane Wilkinson, Acting President, NEFAC
Panelists: Barbara Laker, reporter/Assistant City Editor, The Philadelphia Daily News; Wendy Ruderman, reporter, The Philadelphia Daily News; Jennifer LaFleur, Director of CAR, ProPublica; Sean Murphy, reporter, The Boston Globe

Panelists will share their practical experience in investigative work through painstaking interviewing and use of freedom of information laws to unearth corruption and bring truth to light.

5:30 - 6:00  ICEBREAKER
Rosanna Cavanagh, Executive Director, NEFAC

6:00  DINNER
DAY TWO: HOW DO WE HARNESS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS AND PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA TO FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS?

SESSION ONE: HOW TO HARNESS THE FEDERAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

9:00 - 9:30  

9:30 - 10:30  
PANEL DISCUSSION: FEDERAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Moderator: Doug Clifton, former Executive Editor of The Miami Herald and The Cleveland Plain Dealer

Panelists: Jonathan M. Albano, Partner, Bingham McCutchen; Michael Morisy, Co-Founder of MuckRock; Elizabeth Ritvo, Partner, Brown Rudnick


SESSION TWO: THE NITTY GRITTY: HOW TO HARNESS STATE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS

10:30 - 11:30  
PANEL DISCUSSION: COMMON ISSUES IN STATE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS

Moderator: Gregory V. Sullivan, Partner and President, Malloy & Sullivan

Panelists: Mitchell Pearlman, lecturer, University of Connecticut; William Chapman, Partner, Orr & Reno; Peter Caruso, Managing Partner, Caruso & Caruso; Sigmund Schutz, Partner, PretiFlaherty; Joseph V. Cavanagh, Jr., Managing Partner, Blish & Cavanagh; Michael Donoghue, reporter, Burlington (Vt.) Free Press

Common issues in state freedom of information laws will be discussed first in a state wide panel of the attorneys. Then, in state-specific breakout sessions, the details of each state’s laws and exemptions will be discussed: What should you ask for and expect to get? What tends to be exempt? How should you respond when access is denied? Case studies illuminate the nuances of the law. Lawyers from each state team up with journalists for a robust discussion.

11:30 - 12:30  
BREAK OUT SESSIONS


12:30 - 1:30  
LUNCH AND LUNCHEON ADDRESS

The FOI Leadership Challenge — Pete Weitzel

Drawing from his previous experience as Managing Editor of The Miami Herald and a founding member of both the Florida First Amendment Foundation and the National Freedom of Information Coalition, Peter Weitzel discusses how you can turn on your inner activist and become a force for freedom of information.
SESSION THREE: DATABASE REPORTING
2:00 - 2:50 Todd Wallack, The Boston Globe
Todd Wallack gives an introduction to computer-assisted reporting — using
spreadsheets, databases and other tools to analyze records and give more power
to your reporting. He offers some ideas about where to find data, how to obtain
it through public records requests and what tools to use to crunch the numbers.

[Break]

SESSION FOUR: SEARCHING FOR GOLD IN SECURITY EXCHANGE COMMISSION FILINGS
3:00 - 3:50 Todd Wallack, The Boston Globe
Thanks to the SEC’s robust disclosure requirements, public companies are required
by law to share information that can be of crucial importance to investigative
journalists. Todd Wallack demystifies 10 K’s and 8Q’s, the alpha-numeric goldmine
of SEC documents. He tells what’s in them and offers tips on how to use them. He
also walks you through a sampling of other key documents to track businesses:
FDIC data on banks, corporate filings with Secretary of States, nonprofit tax forms
filed with the IRS, federal contracting data kept by the US government and union
filings with the Department of Labor.

[Break]

SESSION FIVE: HOW TO PINPOINT IMPORTANT INVESTIGATIVE STORIES, AND TIPS FOR
BRINGING THEM HOME
4:00 - 5:30 Moderator: Larry Laughlin, former Bureau Chief for the Associated Press for Northern
New England
Panelists: Susan Areson, Metropolitan Managing Editor, The Providence Journal; Timothy
Dwyer, Executive Editor, The Day of New London; Mo Mehlsak, Editor, The Forecaster;
Cara Rubinsky, News Editor, The Associated Press

[Break]

6:00 DINNER STARTS

6:30 DINNER ADDRESS: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION TRIUMPHS
Walt Bogdanich, three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and a reporter for The New York Times
A prize-winning journalist reflects on a career of digging though public records
and exposing corporate and governmental misdeeds. Bogdanich’s body of work
is a prima facie case for the societal value of the public’s right to know. He shares
insights into his method of work.
DAY THREE: THE NEXT STEP: GETTING INFORMATION THE OLD FASHIONED WAY — TIPS FROM EXPERIENCED INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS

9:00 - 10:30  SESSION ONE: PANEL — THE LEAK
Moderator: Thomas Fiedler, Dean, Boston University College of Communication
Panelists: Maggie Mulvihill, Executive Director, N.E. Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University; Walter Robinson, Director, The Initiative for Investigative Reporting at Northeastern University School of Journalism; Stephen Kurkjian, Senior Investigative Fellow, Watchdog New England; Doug Clifton, former Executive Editor, The Miami Herald

When your FOI request languishes your reporting continues. This panel covers developing sources, encouraging leaks, avoiding common pitfalls and knowing how to evaluate what you get.

10:45 - 11:45  SESSION TWO: OVERCOMING NEWSROOM Hurdles
Michael Donoghue, reporter, Burlington (Vt.) Free Press, leads a group discussion on issues that block or slow stories getting to readers and strategies for success

[Break]

12:00 LUNCH BEGINS

12:00 - 1:00  LUNCH AND LUNCHEON ADDRESS
Lea Thompson — Lessons Learned Along the Way
Lea Thompson will address how to use your role as a journalist to be a watchdog for the public interest, pulling from her extensive experience as Dateline NBC correspondent and journalism professor. Her work has been responsible for three acts of Congress and numerous product recalls.

[Break]

1:15 - 4:30  SESSION THREE: INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS AND EDITORS
Mark Horvit, Executive Director, Investigative Reporters and Editors: Tapping into Twitter, social media & the internet

From better search techniques to the invisible Web and social media: how to find reliable information on deadline and for enterprise stories. Tips on more effective Web searches. The latest search engines, data sites and other practical information you can use immediately.
Mark Horvit, Executive Director, Investigative Reporters and Editors: Bulletproofing the story

Strategies, tips and techniques for reporters, editors, producers and online staff to ensure accuracy discussed.

[Break]

Mark Horvit, Executive Director, Investigative Reporters and Editors: Great watchdog reporting

A fast-paced look at some of the best investigative and watchdog stories from the past year in print, broadcast and online. Full of inspiration, story ideas, sources and data tips.

4:30

CONCLUDING ADDRESS

Mary Jane Wilkinson, Acting President, NEFAC

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