Investigative Journalism

THE Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) recently concluded the "Investigative Journalism Course for Southeast Asian Journalists" held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from July 28-August 1, 2004. Following are the course materials available in document or rich text format:

- **Investigative Journalism — Definition and Process**
- **The People Trail**
- **The Paper Trail**
- **Investigating Corruption**
- **Investigating the Local Budget**
- **Investigating the Environment**
- **Investigating Ethnic Conflicts**
- **Ethical Concerns in Investigative Journalism**

Investigating Corruption: A Do-It-Yourself Guide, a how-to manual that instructs those interested in corruption—whether they are journalists, activists, government officials, academics, researchers, or plain concerned citizens—how to probe various forms of malfeasance. ORDER NOW

Further Reads

i-site: **Investigating a President**

For a more detailed explanation of how the PCIJ investigated Estrada, see Lars Moller and Jack Jackson, **"Journalistic Legwork that Tumbled a President,"** published by the World Bank Institute.

i-site: **Investigating Corruption**

i-site: **Access to Information in Southeast Asia**

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING
Definition and Process

What is investigative reporting?
■ In the old-fashioned sense, investigative reporting is simply good reporting.

As a type of reporting, investigative journalism is ...
■ In-depth, long-term research & reporting
■ Documentary research and use of public and private records, following the paper trail
■ Extensive interviewing
■ Crime-solving tools and methods (undercover reporting, hidden cameras, surveillance)
■ Revealing information others want to keep secret or information not known to the public

Investigative reporting is also ...
■ belief in the watchdog role of the media
■ focus on the accountability of institutions and individuals wielding power
■ the journalism of outrage: belief in the power of the media to catalyze reforms

Finally, investigative reporting is...
■ determined
■ patient
■ careful
■ fair

Investigative reporting is a process: Working from the outside in

Most often, investigative reporting involves investigating wrongdoing by individuals or institutions.
■ Who is responsible for the wrongdoing?
■ How was it done?
■ What are the consequences?
■ What can be done about it?

How to tell the difference
■ Investigative reports often take a longer time to research.
■ They reveal new information, not just the results of someone else's investigation.
■ They are based largely on documents and extensive interviews.

A hypothesis is a theory or premise to start your investigation.
• Example: From 1995 to 1998, Mayor X received bribes from road contractors in the form of commissions ranging from 20 to 30 percent of the project cost.

The Investigative Trail
■ The Paper Trail: Documents
■ The Human Trail: Interviews
■ The Electronic Trail: The use of computers and the Internet for research and reporting

■ Field Work: Onsite inspections

Why invest in investigative reporting?
Investigative reporting makes an impact by ….
■ Reversing policy
■ Causing the resignation/firing of erring officials
■ Focusing attention previously neglected issues & areas
■ Enriching public debate

Investigative reporting also…
■ **Helps sell newspapers and news programs.**
■ **Widens the scope of journalistic freedom and opens new avenues of access to information.**
■ **Enhances the capacity of the media to play a watchdog role.**

Investigative reporting is a process…
■ First Lead or Tip
■ Sniff or Initial Investigation
■ Forming an investigative hypothesis.

Investigating Estrada
First Lead: How we began
■ We got reports from that fancy mansions were being built for mistresses of the President. Most of the reports came from residents of the areas where these houses were located.
■ There were persistent rumors of big amounts of money being given to the President in exchange for government contracts.
■ There were reports that mistresses of the President were involved in various businesses.

A hypothesis is a theory or a premise to focus an investigation
■ EXAMPLE: Since his election to the presidency in 1998, Estrada has accumulated wealth and built fancy mansions that cannot be explained by his statement of assets and what he earns as president.

The investigative trail
(Make a strategy for the investigation)
■ The Paper Trail: Documents
■ The Human Trail: Interviews
■ The Electronic Trail: The use of computers and the Internet for research and reporting
■ Field Work

Our strategy was to find documentary proof that the mansions were for Estrada and of the extent of the business involvements of his wives and children.
■ Search of corporate records: Look for companies in which wives, children and Estrada were listed as shareholders or board members.
■ Search of land records: Look for registered owners of houses being built or recently purchased.

Strategy of investigation
- Match acquisitions of companies and property with what Estrada officially declared in his statement of assets.
- Interview knowledgeable sources: neighbors, associates, lawyers, architects, builders and suppliers

What we Found from Corporate Search:
- Estrada and his families are listed as board members of 66 corporations. Most of the companies were formed after he became vice president. Since he assumed the presidency, a dozen others were established.
- The assets of 14 companies alone total more than P600 M (about $13 M).
- But in 1999, Estrada declared a net worth of P35.8M ($790,000) and a net income of P2.3M ($51,000)

Our search of land records and interviews with various sources showed…
- Since 1998, individuals or companies appearing to be fronting for President Estrada or his family members acquired of 17 properties in Metro Manila, Tagaytay and Baguio.
- According to our estimates, these properties add up to about P2 billion ($44 million).

Most of these properties were acquired by businessmen very close to the President…
- Dante Tan
- Jaime Dichaves
- Lucio Co
- Mark Jimenez
- Jacinto Ng
- Jose Luis Yulo
- Ramon Ang

We found a pattern of corporate layering and the formation of shell companies.

Key Skills for Investigative Reporters
- Interviewing
- Observing
- Chasing Documents

Useful Tips
- Know the law
- Know the procedures
- Focus your research
- Follow the money
- Just keep digging

Review of Process
- First Lead, Tip or Hunch
- Sniff
- Form an Investigative Hypothesis
- Follow the Investigative Trail: Paper, People and Electronic Trails

- Organize information
- Fill in the Gaps: More data or interviews
- Write the Report
- Fact Check
- Libel Check

PEOPLE TRAIL
A Guide to Sources and Interviews

Why talk to people?
- Gather facts
- Get quotes/official statements
- Solicit expert opinion
- Explain documents
- Confirm what you already know
- Put a human face to your story
- Add color to your story

Traditional sources of news
- Government Officials
- Business Executives
- Police
- Military
- Investigative Agencies

Seldom-used sources
- Experts
- Lawyers
- Nongovernmental organizations
- Community organizations
- Fellow journalists
- Social workers
- Relief & aid agencies
- People behind the scene
- "Ordinary" people, especially those affected by government programs or policies

Think cast of characters
- Major players
- "Workhorses"
- People affected
- Experts
- People "in the know"

Also think…
- Formers and currents
- Friends and enemies
- Losers and winners
- Tipsters or whistleblowers

How good a source is he or she?
- Credibility
- Reliability
- Accountability

- ■ Familiarity
- ■ Availability
- ■ Accessibility

The Art of the Interview: The Setup
- ■ Research: Check clips, read, ask around
- ■ Plan: Who to interview first? Where to interview? How to interview (phone, face-to-face, email)?
- ■ Organize: Minimum interview schedule: most important questions, key words
- ■ Inner interviewing: Warm up, think of an icebreaker

Best interview questions
- ■ Open questions: (What do you think of…)
- ■ Questions that call for specific answers: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW, WHY? (5Ws, 1H)
- ■ Questions that expand upon what's already known or said (Give me an example. Tell me how it happened.)
- ■ Questions that clarify (What exactly do you mean? In what way?)
- ■ Questions that probe (How do you know that? What proof do you have?)
- ■ Questions that display objectivity (Your critics say that….It's been said that…)
- ■ Questions with a logical sequence

Problematic interview questions
- ■ Closed questions, unless you're after a categorical answer (Questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" or with other one-word answers)
- ■ Leading questions (Aren't you angry at critics who are questioning your integrity?)
- ■ Dualistic questions (Do you know whether or not you're healthy enough to run in the elections?)
- ■ Apologetic questions (I hate to ask, but….I know it sounds stupid, but…)
- ■ Questions with two or more parts (How did the management committee find out about the anomaly and what did the committee do when they learned about it?

Be fair to sources
- ■ Interview conditions
  - • On the record
  - • Not for attribution
  - • Background
  - • Off the record
  - • Pseudonym

Note-taking
- ■ Tape the interview (audio or audio-video), but also do backup notes
- ■ Note-taking
  - • Adopt a system for highlighting most important quotes, details
  - • Jot down personal observation on tone, color, texture of interview

Difficult Interview Situations: Getting your source to talk

Source seeks you out first with a tip or leak
- By all means, talk the source but ask for documents or other sources to corroborate what s/he is saying
- Investigate not only the issue, but the source (What's his/her motive?)
- If s/he's a whistleblower, be clear that you can't offer him/her protection
- If he's going on the record, get him to execute an affidavit (just in case s/he decides to recant in the future)

Source keeps refusing to meet you
- Find out why he or she refuses to talk
- Explore all possibilities (phone, e-mail, fax, letter). Add clips to your letter to convince the subject
- Go through an intermediary (spouse, relatives, friends, colleagues)
- Get a third party to vouch for your integrity as a journalist
- Tell source why you want to talk; reveal a little of what you know
- Find opportunities to meet source informally.
- Wait at the person's door and try ambushing him
- Send the questions and take the stance: Here they are, it's now up to you

Source demands "no attribution" or, worse, "off the record"
- Persuade the source to go "on the record" (or no attribution) and fully explain why s/he should
- Listen respectfully and later inject: Is there any way I can quote you about that?
- If he's still reluctant, ask: Are there documents or other persons who might reveal the same information?
- Don't accept "after-the-fact" requests, especially from media-savvy sources
- Get him to agree to go on the record if you could find somebody who is similarly situated who will also go on the record
- An agreement is an agreement, so make sure you protect your source's identity

The source shows up with handlers (publicist)
- Tell the source politely it's s/he you want to talk to ("I came to see you, not them, because the public—I don't mean to be ugly—is not interested in hearing from a subordinate. The public wants to hear what the boss many has to say."
- If the handlers answer: Turn the question back to the source when they're done speaking ("And what's your response?")
- If the handlers try to terminate the interview prematurely, tell them, "We'll stop this interview with your admission that we're not getting to crucial points."

The source goes ballistics
- Don't get angry. Maintain control…
- …but don't try to calm the subject either. Let him/her talk.
- Be polite but pop the question you need to (Why did you take the money? Why did you do it?)
- Avoid interrupting the source when conflict arises

THE PAPER TRAIL
Principles and techniques

A 'Documents state of mind'
- Documents are important to support and back up allegations in your report.

> `Documents are like the bricks needed to build a wall while interviews are the mortar to hold the bricks together and keep the wall intact.'
> — William Gaines

No dearth of documents
- Hard copy
- Soft copy
  - □ Computer databases
  - □ CD-ROMs
  - □ Online information

Different types of documents
- Secondary sources: previously published books, reports, articles, etc.
- Primary sources: unpublished documents

Secondary sources
- Newspapers and other periodicals
- Corporate reports
- Directories and yearbooks
- Biographies and family genealogies
- Other specialized publications: Donor reports, Industry studies, etc.

What is secondary research for
- Helps you know:
  - □ the subject
  - □ the law/procedures
  - □ the structures and processes
- So you know how to proceed

Primary documents
- Public records
- Non-public records

Non-Public Documents
- Investigative files
- Intelligence reports
- Bank records
- Income tax returns
- Credit investigations
- Medical/psychiatric files

When you're denied a public record …

- Assert your right to information. (When laws guarantee access)
- Follow-up. Follow-up. Follow-up.
- Write a demand letter to the agency and quote the law.
- If there are disciplining agencies, let the instance known to them.
- Another person or office could have a copy. Remember that these documents often have more than one copy.

Obstacles to access to information remain
- Culture of secrecy
- Political intervention
- Lack of public information about …
  - the right to information
  - procedures to access information
- Unclear/undefined laws and procedures
- Inadequate/undeveloped information infrastructure

Documents are precious, but …
- Be cautious: Avoid being rash and jumping to conclusions
- Documents can contain information that may already be passé
- Even if published, information must be verified
- Remember that documents, like people, can lie

The Electronic Trail
- Using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to perform tasks associated with journalism

Computer-Assisted Research
- Using secondary and primary sources in both online and offline databases
- Offline databases usually come in the form of CD-ROMs (such as encyclopedia and specialized databases)

- The Internet is more of a tool, than a news source in itself.
- Can be used to help reporters do background research; verify information gathered from other sources; frame questions to ask in interviews

Search engines for online research
- Crawler-based search engines (such as Google): electronic: 1, the "spider"; 2, the index, 3 the search engine software
- Human-powered directories (such as the Open Directory): depend on humans for their listings

Major search engines [www.searchenginewatch.com – gives tips and information about searching the web]

Google – www.google.com
  - comprehensive coverage
  - great relevancy

- used for finding web pages, images, discussions, products
- cached links – will find even "dead" pages; spell-checking; dictionary definitions

Other search engines
- Yahoo – www.yahoo.com
- AllTheWeb – www.alltheweb.com
- Hotbot – www.hotbot.com
- AltaVista – www.altavista.com
  - these search engines are capable of giving you not only web pages but also pictures, audio and video files, news, products

The basics of Search [Google]
- Choosing keywords. For best results, it's important to choose your keywords wisely.
  - Try the obvious first. If you're looking for information on Hun Sen, enter "Hun Sen", not "prime ministers"
  - Use words likely to appear on a site with the information you want. "combating corruption philippines" gets better results than "lessen incidence corruption philippines"
- Capitalization.
  - Searches are not case-sensitive. All letters, no matter how you type them, will be understood as lower case. For example, searches for "Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono", "sUsilo BamBang yUdhoYono" and "susilo bambang yudhoyono" will get the same results.
- Automatic "and" queries.
  - There is no need to include "and" between terms
  - The order in which the terms are typed will affect the search results
  - To restrict a search further, add more terms
  - For example, to find literature on ethical issues in journalism, type "ethics journalism". To find materials on ethical issues faced by journalists in Thailand, type "ethics journalism thailand"

- Automatic exclusion of common words.
  - Google ignores common words and characters such as "where" and "how", as well as certain single digits and single letters, because they tend to slow down your search without improving the results.
  - If a common word is essential in getting the results you want, do a phrase search, by putting quotation marks around two or more words. Common words in a phrase search (e.g., "where are you") are included in the search.

Advanced search
- Language: Specify which language you would like your results returned in
- Date: Restrict your results to the past three, six, or twelve months
- Domains: Search only a specific website or exclude that site completely from your search

(Human-powered directories)
- The Open Directory - http://dmoz.org/
  - uses volunteer editors to catalog the web
  - but no backup results when there is no match with human-compiled lists

- Google Directory - http://directory.google.com/
  - keyword searching
  - software creates backup for human-compiled searches

Metasearchers (simultaneously makes use of more than one search engine)
- Dogpile – www.dogpile.com
  - sends a search to a list of search engines, directories and specialty search sites
- Vivisimo – www.vivisimo.com
  - automatically organizes the pages into categories

Internet IQ Checklist for journalists *(Poynter Institute)*
- Authority
  Who wrote it and why? Who published it and for what purpose?
  Are the author's credentials provided? (Look for a link to "About us")
  Is there contact information for the people who put up the site? (Look for a link to "Contact us" or "Email us")

To know who published the page …
Check the URL: The top-level domain?
  - com — commercial organizations
  - edu — educational organizations
  - gov — government organizations, non-military
  - org — other organizations
  - net — network resources
  - mil — military (army, navy, etc.)

More on the URL …
  - The country domain?
  - The publisher? In general, the publisher is the agency or person operating the "server" computer from which the document is issued. The server is usually named in the first portion of the URL (between http:// and the first /).

- Objectivity
  What opinions or biases, if any, are expressed in the information?
  Is the site a mask for advertising or an agenda? (Is there advertising on the page?)
- Timeliness or Currency
  When was the page produced?
  When was it last updated?
  Is it up-to-date?
  Are the links current?
- Sourcing
  What is the source of information? Is it reliable?
- Verification
  Find at least one other reputable source, preferably not online, that provides similar information

Aside from research, the personal computer assists journalists in other ways …
- Reference: dictionaries, encyclopedia, glossaries

- Rendezvous: Listservs/Email lists, Newsgroups, Forums
- Reporting: Database software to build original collections of information; spreadsheet programs for analyses; statistical programs for large data sets

INVESTIGATING CORRUPTION

Experimenting in investigative techniques …
- Observation
- Participant observation
- Interview of victims
- Use of hidden cameras to record bribe-taking

Impact
- Able to expose only petty corruption
- Only lower-level officials are caught
- Structures and culture that make corruption possible not exposed

More sophisticated techniques developed…
- Greater reliance on public records
- Many more human sources
- Examining financial and corporate documents and government contracts
- More sophisticated fieldwork
- Immersion
- Building computer databases
- Bigger targets

Paper trail for investigating corruption
- Asset declarations of officials
- Corporate and property records
- Contracts
- Audit reports
- Court records

Some human sources for investigating corruption
- Contractors and suppliers, when investigating procurements or contracts.
- Losing bidders or political/business rivals.
- Former officials who know the system
- Lawyers or accountants are usually either accomplices in crime or else have been contracted sniff it out.
- Investigators (police, NBI, Ombudsman, congressional committees, administrative bodies).
- Victims.

Matrix for field visits…

Projects	Planned Output	Actual Output	Variance	Comment
Investigating Officials **Investigate Assets**				

- Comparing asset statements (financial disclosures) with actual assets
- Showing disparities between what is declared and what is actually owned by examining other public records
- Exposing how officials hide assets (through dummies) or inflate liabilities (through fake loans)

Why investigate assets?
- To examine conflict of interest
- To show the fruits of corruption, rather than how the corruption was done
- To show what interests have an impact on laws, policies and decisions.

Paper Trail for Investigating Assets
- Statements/Declarations of Assets
- Property/Ownership Records
    - Land
    - Companies (registration & financial statements)
    - Vehicles
- Licenses and permits (for businesses, etc.)
- Listings, records, publications of trade and professional organizations
- Biographies, news articles, family histories

Investigate Lifestyles
- Hobbies, recreation (including country club memberships)
- Social affiliations
- Bars, restaurants & casinos frequented
- Foreign trips
- Schools where children go
- Shops they, their spouses & children patronize
- Clothes, jewelry they wear
- What they collect

Examine conflicts of interest
- Compare what they own vs what they regulate, legislate, decide on, and have power over.
- Is there a law on divestment? Was there a proper divestment?
- Did they inhibit themselves from discussions or decisions in which they have a conflict of interest?
- Do they use their powers to benefit their interests?

Investigate Public Behavior
- Who do officials meet with? Party with? Play golf with?
- Are there Codes of Ethics or Codes of Conduct that govern official behavior?
- Can the behavior be considered inappropriate or unethical even without such Codes?

Investigate friends, relatives and cronies
- Have family or friends been given favorable treatment – government job, contract, government loan, privileged information?
- Do cronies act as dummies for officials?
- Do certain individuals act as intermediaries for deal making by officials?

Establishing relationships

- Family relationships: biographies, newspaper articles
- Schools: school records, listings of alumni
- Professional relationships: professional associations
- Clubs: membership lists
- Religious or ethnic group affiliation
- Campaign contributors: campaign records

Investigating the Supreme Court
- Examination of cases handled by law offices that included sons of Supreme Court justices.
- Examination of voting by these justices on these cases.
- Examination of overseas trips made by justices (with the help of flight records)
- Examination of lifestyles, including social schedules of justices.

Who is responsible?
Tracing the route of corruption should begin with finding out where the power lies.
- Who makes the decisions?
- Who has the power to interpret or bend the rules?
- Whose signatures are required to sign a contract, permit, appointment, etc.

More Ways to Investigate Corruption
Investigate the consequences of corruption
- Investigate the impact on public services and the quality of people's lives
- Show the victims and the losers…

Explain how the wrong was done and why it was possible…
- Flawed laws and procedures
- Institutional problems
- Power without accountability
- Lack of transparency
- No checks and balances
- Weak leadership
- Lack of enforcement

Sometimes, it is important to show what can be done…
- Transparency in procedures and policies
- Independent monitoring and pricing
- Minimize political intervention
- Improve salaries and benefits
- Encourage citizen participation

Try innovative ways of pursuing corruption stories…
- Surveys of users of government services
- Focus-group discussions
- Get experts to do tests or studies
- Confidential polling

INVESTIGATING THE LOCAL BUDGET

The Budget
- Spells priorities of a local government
- Check for responsiveness: citizens' concerns, development plans, mission statement
- Check against promises and pledges
- Get raw data; plug into spreadsheets
- Multi-year: 3-5 years; a decade's worth
- Compare with preceding years
- Proposed vs final
- Distribution across sectors, departments
- Public hearings
- Line items
- Budget threshold limits
- Regular and supplemental budgets
- Budget realignments
- Budget codes

Budget: Balancing Act
Income (Revenue) = Spending (Expenditure)

Income: Taxes
- Are there new or higher taxes?
- Who are tax exempt? Who got tax breaks or discounts?
- Who are the tax delinquents? Were they fined? Who benefits from tax amnesty?
- Who are the top taxpayers?
- How healthy are industries that make up the local tax base?
- How diverse is the local tax base?
- When was the last time the local government updated assessment values?
- What are tax valuations of public officials and their friends compared to their neighbors?

Income: Other means
- Regulatory and service fees
- Aids and grants
- Corporate: Loans, bonds, economic enterprises

Spending (Expenditure)
- Spending vs appropriated amount
- Comprehensive annual financial report
- Accomplishment reports
- Budget document
- Agencies involved in budget review and accountability

Contracts: What to look at
- Is there an appropriation?
- Is it in the procurement program?
- Who's on the vendors' list?

- Check everything: From big- to small-ticket items

Contracts: Red flags
- No public bidding
- Rigged bidding
- Narrow specifications
- Splitting of contracts
- Change orders
- Cost overruns
- Overpricing
- Under-deliveries and nondelivery (ghost delivery)
- Inferior or substandard products or service
- Double payments
- Red tape

Contracts: Also look for…
- Conflict of interest
- Corruption
- Sources of information
- Comparative analysis

Payroll
- Nepotism
- Special and confidential positions
- Casuals
- Appointments to juicy positions
- Ghost employees
- Employee overtime
- Incentives, benefits for select group

Perks
- Expense account
- Travel
- Cell phone calls
- Acquisition/use of government property and supplies for personal use
- Discretionary spending: intelligence funds, development funds

Audits
- Who audits?
- How thorough the audit?
- Which agency or unit is unaudited?
- How did auditors audit?

INVESTIGATING THE ENVIRONMENT

What are environmental problems?
Mismanagement of Natural Resources
- Forestry Management
- Water Management
- Land Distribution
- Gap between urban and rural area

Pollution Problems
- Air Pollution
- Hazardous waste
- Water Pollution
- Garbage Disposal
- Noise Pollution

How to come up with an environmental story?
- Questioning all aspects of environmental changes
- Follow up from press release or research paper
- Always contact news sources such as government officers, local and international NGOs,
- International organization, Industrial workers, academic or researchers and villagers etc.)
- Participate in meeting and seminar on environmental issues

Use of document sources
- Press Release
- Statistic from survey or other type of research methods
- Result from research project
- Governmental report

Use of human sources
- Local villagers
- Academic, researcher (experts)
- Related Politicians and government officers

Use of Internet or Databases
- Search for scientific data to support the story
- Search for related person or agency
- Search for governmental report

Special characteristics of environmental reporting
- Involved with many technical terms
- Related to people or community daily life
- Beware the use of statistic or numbers
- Respect minority opinion
- Always involved in or related to political and economic issues

INVESTIGATING ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Rwanda Conflict
- April 6th, 1994: Rwanda President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi President Cyprient Ntaryamira shot dead in a helicopter on their way home after attending peace conference in Tanzania.
- 800,000 Tutsis dead in massacre and genocide in Rwanda
- Rwanda's 3 major ethnic groups -- Hutu (85%), Tutsi (14%), and Twa (1%) – governed by Hutu.
- Ethnical conflict between Hutu and Tutsi result of colonial tactic "divide and rule"

East Timor
- January 27, 1999: President BJ Habibie adopts hands-off policy on East Timor problem.
- Habibie wanted to make the East Timorese free, after 24 years under Indonesian control. Indonesia unsuccessful in handling the East Timor problem.
- Was Habibie sincere in his decision?

Aceh
- Some Acehnese want to make the province an independent state.
- Indonesia, backed by international community against the idea.
- Conflict appears to be a long lasting problem

Investigative Techniques
- Find out what has been written or said about the subject
- Make good use of all references, library, electronic database (if possible)
- Find experts in universities, specialized libraries, government, public interest group
- Making a very good interview with them to help you simplifies the problems
- Create your own network .

Starting the Story
- Re-evaluate all information you have and broaden their perspectives
- Engage in process of selecting and emphasizing information
- Outline the material
- Put them in a frame
- Sit down and write the story or script
- Check and recheck

Reminders
- Minimize the use of technical or bureaucratic terms
- Edit long and confusing quotes from sources
- Think over and over about the effect of the information on readers, listeners, or viewers

Covering Conflict Areas
- Most difficult task: Getting first-hand information from actors
- Carelessness can lead to "fatal accidents"
- Know precisely who are the actors
- Choose actors you can trust

- Prepare for the worst so you don't panic
- Remain objective
- Analyze carefully every information you have
- Be careful!!!

ETHICAL ISSUES IN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

What is Ethics?
- Ethics is a system of standards, principles, and values defining what is right in terms of professional conduct.
- As medical doctors have ethical standards and lawyers have theirs, so do journalists.
- In other words, ethics refers to the understanding among journalists about what is proper behavior.
- From the Greek word *ethica (root word ethos),* meaning 'custom' or 'behavior' or 'character'

Why the need for ethical standards?
- Because unlike other professionals whose roles are more clearly defined, journalists have been left on their own to work out their roles and determine their ethics. *('Doing Ethics in Journalism', 1993)*

Law ≠ Ethics
Ethics = ideal behaviors: what we ought to do in order to be moral individuals and professionals
Law = minimal standards: the bottom line, below which we should not fall

Why is ethics important?
Good investigative journalism =
Skills   +   Critical   +   Ethical
                 thinking   decision-making

Pyramid of journalists' competencies [The Poynter Institute 1998]
- Ethical competence
- Cultural and civic competence
- Visual literacy, technological competence
- News judgment, narrative and language, reporting skills

Basic ethical principles in journalism [Society of Professional Journalists]
- Seek the truth and report it as fully as possible.
- Act independently.
- Minimize harm.
- Be accountable.

How do journalists uncover the truth?
- We've learned about the investigative trails: The paper trail (documents); The human trail (interviews, observations); The electronic trail

While doing all that, ethical considerations become most important in …
- Methods
- Relationship with sources
- Accepting favors and/or money
- Moonlighting
- Privacy issues

Seek the truth and report it as fully as possible.
Journalists should …
- Be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
- Inform themselves so that they can competently inform the public.
- Give voice to the voiceless.
- Hold the powerful accountable.

Deception happens when a journalist uses deceptive methods, such as …
- Misrepresentation (false identity)
- Hidden camera / recorder
- Entrapment
- Undercover reporting

When is deception justified?
- The information obtained is of profound importance and other ways of getting it have been tried
- The journalists are willing to disclose the nature of the deception and the reason/s for it
- The harm prevented by reporting that information outweighs any harm caused by the deception
- The journalists invest time, effort, and resources to pursue the story fully. Meaning, that the deception is not a shortcut.

Deception is never justified when …
- The motivation is to win a prize or beat ('outscoop') the competition
- It is used as a short-cut to what should be a deliberate and thorough process
- The journalist's justification is that the subject is unethical anyway

These guidelines are not presented as absolutes …
- But as a process for making the decisions.
- These guidelines set the bar very high, forcing journalists to justify when it might be appropriate to "tell lies to get to the truth." *(Poynter Institute)*

When deciding whether or not to use deception, you weigh …
- The consequences of the deception on those being deceived
- The impact on journalistic credibility
- The motivations for your actions
- The editorial policy/mission
- The legal implications

- (Robert Scheer, an American journalist who was with a radical publication in its anti-war heyday in the 1960s.)
- "When you feel a story is important and there is no other way to get the information, then you use certain means."
- "I don't mean to say that I've got some little calculus that allows you to make these judgments, a measuring stick that will tell you where it's right or wrong. I think these are tough questions."

Strive to act independently.
Journalists should …
- Be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know
- Resist pressure from sources
- Not accept bribes or other inducements
- Pay their own way

From *News for Sale*, a 1998 PCIJ study on the corruption of the Philippine media:
- When offered money by their sources, one of every three beat reporters admitted to taking it.
- Many of them justified accepting money by saying they did not ask for it and that the sources did not ask for anything in return.
- (The survey asked 100 reporters [69 from print & 31, broadcast]; covering ten major beats)

But ethical standards do not only speak about not accepting bribes and inducements. Ethical dilemmas can come in as well even without attempts at direct bribery.

Sources of journalists' conflicts of interest
- Involvement in particular activities
- Affiliation with groups or causes
- Acceptance of favors and money
- Financial investments
- Outside employment
- Friendships

Minimize harm. Act with compassion.
- Portray subjects as human beings deserving respect, not merely as means to your journalistic ends.
- Keep sources confidential if that is what they demand.
- Do not endanger sources.
- Respect an individual's right to her/his privacy.

Be accountable.
- Abide by the same high standards to which you hold others.
- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialog with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.

Using anonymous sources
- Is the story important enough?
- Does the source know the information first hand?
- Is the information confirmed by a reliable second or third source?
- Can I explain in the story the reason for the anonymity?
- Would more reporting get the material on th record?

- If the anonymous source is used, will the story still be accurate, complete, fair and balanced?
- Does the source realize the consequences of revealing the information?
- Will the reporter take all the risks to protect the source's identity?
- Can the story stand without this source?

Journalists who face ethical dilemmas are reminded to ask themselves …
- What should we do in cases like this?
- Who will be hurt and who will be helped?
- Is there a better alternative?
- Can I justify this to other people or to the public?
- What principles or values can I apply?