



CENTER FOR
INVESTIGATIVE
REPORTING

Raising Hell:

A Citizens Guide to the Fine Art of Investigation

Written by Dan Noyes

Edited and produced by David Leishman / Designed by Eleanor Oberzil

Special thanks to Michael Miller, Arnold Levinson and Lori E. Lieberman

Originally Published by Mother Jones Magazine

Introduction

One evening, as she was approaching her 100th year, Mary Harris “Mother” Jones was introduced to a college convocation as “a great humanitarian.” When she took the podium she hollered, “I’m not a humanitarian, I’m a hell raiser.”

That’s where our title comes from. Mother Jones was one of the most effective organizers of her time. She organized anti-child labor marches to Washington, mine workers’ unions, prison reform groups and protests against the Spanish-American war.

She was effective – not only because she organized, but because she knew where to strike. And she knew how to investigate, uncover corruption and expose the weak spots of power. This guide is about her art.

- Mark Dowie, *investigative reporter*

Table of Contents

1. Muck Starts Here
2. Individuals: Who Starts the Buck
3. Corporations: Where the Buck Starts
4. Government: Passing the Buck
5. Property: Where the Buck Lands
6. Public Records: Where the Buck is Buried
7. Investigative Checklist: Federal, State and Local
8. Sources of Information
9. Investigative Library
10. Glossary

Muck Starts Here

“I’m not gonna tell you who I am,” the caller shouted angrily through the phone. “I’m a farmer out here. I don’t support everything you guys are doing, but you better look into this. These guys are coming in, buying farmland, and they’re willing to pay thirty per cent more than the market value. It’s gonna raise up my taxes and force me out of business. I want you guys to do something about this.”

Listening to this tirade, in the spring of 1977, was George Ballis, a founder and organizer of National Land for People. NLP had been formed in 1974 by a group of activist farmers in the Westlands district of California to demand the federal government enforce the 160 acre provision of the Land Reclamation Act. NLP’s goal is to protect small farmers against the financial greed of wealthy individual investors and large corporate interests that speculate in and monopolize California farmland. Such calls were of extreme interest to George Ballis.

But the caller was hesitant to give Ballis much information. Armed solely with the name of one investor given by the caller, Ballis went to the county recorder’s office for the Westlands area and looked up the investor’s name. The records showed that one land deal was completed and another was in process, although a further study revealed that neither were sales. Control of the land was being transferred through the Deed of Trust, not a Land Deed. Because law limits use of federal water to farmers with small land holdings, large investors and owners use the Deed of Trust, which leaves ownership in the hands of the small landowner but effective control of the land in the hands of whoever holds the Deed of Trust, as a means to get around the water law.

Ballis wrote down the names of the corporations who were acquiring the Deeds of Trust and the amount of acreage they were “purchasing” in their scheme to avoid the federal water law. NLP published the information in their own newspaper and made it available to other reporters in the state. While the Bureau of Reclamation has said they can’t take any action because the old owners still legally control the land, NLP has filed an official complaint with the Department of the Interior. “We’ve been raising hell around that one for a while,” Ballis reports.

Raising hell has been a trademark for the effective NLP since it was founded. Several months prior to the phone call concerning the Deeds of Trust, Ballis had received another mysterious call from an anonymous farmer about

a \$100 million investment fund including foreign money, to buy California farmland. The only hard information the caller gave was the investment fund’s name. There was no information on the fund in the county recorder’s office this time because no land or deeds had yet changed hands. Ballis guessed that since the investment fund might be a corporation, the California Department of Corporations might have a file on the firm. He guessed right.

During a visit to the Department’s office a few days later in San Francisco, Ballis located and copied the company’s sample prospectus that revealed the company was limiting its sale of stock to investors worth at least \$4,000,000 and willing to invest \$1,000,000 in the fund. Anonymity was promised to all investors. The Corporations Department file also contained the names of the six principals behind the fund, the names of various legal entities involved, and the name of a company created for the fund as a tax dodge.

“All we had to do was quote from the prospectus,” Ballis explains. NLP assembled the information, drew up a chart describing the operation, and called a press conference to denounce the “Secret \$1,000,000 Club.” Shortly thereafter, the state Assembly Agriculture Committee held a hearing on the fund and within a few months the Department of Corporations announced the fund had withdrawn its offer to buy land in California.

While testifying to the value of public records in NLP’s work, Ballis points out the need to do some long range investigation of all these offerings and corporations so that some kind of legislation can be proposed. Until that happens, he explains, “these funds will just keep being reincarnated in a different form.” In the meantime, Ballis exults about NLP’s investigative abilities. “We’ve demonstrated over the years that when we say something, we know what we’re talking about. I mean we have the goods; we always have things pretty cold.”

Knowing the facts is essential to educating and organizing citizens so they can participate in the decision-making that affects their lives. Citizens have a right to know the facts but this right is useless unless they also have the know-how to obtain them. While investigative reporting has publicized the importance of exposing secrecy, few newspapers, magazines, or radio and television stations investigate and many avoid the expense or have a financial stake in keeping facts hidden.

This guide is an introduction to how and where you can use libraries and public records for facts about individuals, government, corporations and ownership of property. You will want to check many other records, books, publications and people not mentioned here. They are all

ballast to balance the secrecy of power with the public's right to know the truth.

Individuals: Who Starts the Buck

Remember the phone book! It's surprising how many times this essential directory is overlooked in trying to research someone. Use it to check the spelling of a name, address and phone number. Many larger cities have reverse phone books that list telephone numbers by address. Use it to obtain a phone number if you only have an individual's address, verify an address or find other phone numbers for the same address.

Start researching someone at a library reference section. This is an easy way to find basic information and will prevent duplication of research already available. Many libraries have a collection of Who's Who for states or regions as well as the country. There are directories for specific professions and indexes to directories that will mention various sources of biographical information. Remember this information is often supplied by the individual, so it may be incomplete or unverified. Check the index to the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* or other major publications often found in libraries. Many urban areas will have a *Polk's City Directory* or social directory ("blue book") that lists an individual's occupation and home or business ownership. An important library reference work is *Klein's Guide to American Directories* (H. Klein Publications, Inc.). This large, expensive guide lists over 5,000 major business directories in the U.S., by industrial, professional, and mercantile categories. Two useful guides to finding the library information you want are *Finding Facts* and (even better) *Finding Facts Fast*. Be sure to check the local publications and trade journals or Chamber of Commerce publications. Government papers of elected officials are sometimes donated to state or private libraries and are an excellent source of information.

Government records can provide an assortment of information on individuals. Name changes may be listed at the county recorder or Secretary of State and the use of a fictitious name (DBA) for personal business at the county or city clerk.

Records on birth, death, marriage and divorce are usually filed with the local recorder or court clerk where the event occurred and often with the state health department. They are sometimes attached to other records as well, such as deeds. These records will give full names, addresses, age, mother's maiden name, spouse's name and sometimes medical information. There are three H.E.W. publications

available: *Where to Write for Birth and Death, Marriage, and Divorce Records*, that describe which agencies collect this information in each state. (35¢ each, Superintendent of Documents, G.P.O., Washington, D.C. 20402.) Agencies may deny a request if they don't think you're related or have a good reason for obtaining the record. The local coroner's office may supply useful information on relatives of the deceased. Remember that the spouse and mother's maiden name are the two most common aliases.

Voter registrations at the county or city clerk or registrar of voter's office will supply residential address (and sometimes previous address), and place and date of birth, while the state motor vehicles department may supply information from driver's licenses, such as physical description and social security number. Military discharges are sometimes filed at the local recorder's office and may show educational training. Addresses and financial information on debts and ownership are available at the local offices for the recorder, assessor and tax collector. Local or district superior courts may contain information on divorce, lawsuits, criminal record and finances (probate). If you know when an individual's parent or relative died, check the index for probate court records or recorder's office for information on property inheritance. Business licenses are filed with various local and state agencies and give addresses, financial data, employer and education.

Attorneys may reveal a client by filing a power of attorney at the local recorder's office. *Martindale and Hubbell Law Directory* lists lawyers by states, cities and law firms, gives educational background, and sometimes provides financial information and the names of major clients. The county or state bar association may also give information on individual lawyers.

If an individual is an officer or director in a business regulated by a state or federal agency, such as a public utility, stock brokerage firm, bank or savings and loan, insurance company or broadcast station, there may be financial information in the agency's records. Salary, job title, tenure, retirement benefits and sometimes work history of government employees are listed with the federal Civil Service Commission, local government personnel departments or state comptroller. Government officials are sometimes required to disclose financial information under conflict of interest laws. A local auditor's or state comptroller's office usually keeps information on expenses and travel for public employees. Check the local clerk, Secretary of State or Federal Election Commission for contributions to elected officials by private citizens (see government section).

Finally, check the Tax Court in Washington, D.C. and the civil and criminal index for federal courts. Local and state police may give arrest information if you know the date or location (remember an arrest is not a conviction). Inmates and parolees of local, state and federal prisons can be checked with the appropriate department of prisons or corrections. Since most states and the federal government have laws to prevent disclosure of information that invades personal privacy (see *Compilation of State and Federal Privacy Laws*, \$12.50, Privacy Journal, P.O. Box 8844, Wash., D.C. 20003), many records concerning individuals are unavailable.

Finding out who the person is behind the name on a deed or board of director's list is essential to understanding what you already know. A recent attempt lasting some six hours, to investigate a major landowner in a west coast city by an inexperienced researcher gives some insights into how this can be done. The researcher took down the correct spelling of the man's name from a plaque commemorating a city mall in his honor. She then went to City Hall where she obtained his birthdate (but not year), address, place of birth and political affiliation from the Registrar of Voters. As he was born out of state, she would have to write away for his birth certificate or have someone in that state retrieve it for her.

She next went to the Tax Collector's office where she found the address to which his tax bills were sent, the assessor's reference number for the piece of property he was billed for, and the name of the corporation that owned the property. She was confronted with an unfriendly clerk in the assessor's office when she requested information on what other property the man owned. A screaming match ensued when she demanded to see the property list by owner under her rights from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Due to her inexperience, she did not know that FOIA requests apply only to federal records. State and local records are available according to each individual state's law regarding public records. She also did not realize that an index of land ownership by owner's name was available on the counter at the assessor's office or that she should check the assessment rolls for both secured and unsecured property (all taxed real and personal property) so that she could ascertain the assessed value of all his holdings. She should also have checked the paid-unpaid list for secured property to see how much he was currently paying in taxes and whether he had made a late payment. In addition, she could check the delinquency abstract for secured and unsecured property to see if he had not paid his taxes during a previous year. Finally, she could have checked the unsecured property assessment rolls to identify the type of

unsecured property he might own, such as a boat or aircraft.

Next, the researcher went to the county clerk's office to look up any civil or criminal lawsuits involving her subject. There were no criminal suits, but several civil suits, one in which he was a plaintiff and several where he was the defendant, were listed. As all the suits were filed in previous years and were in storage, she wrote down the file numbers for the cases so she could order them. She did not check two valuable sources of information: probate court files and political contributions. Although the man was still alive, there could be a wealth of information in the probate files recorded for a deceased relative.

Finally, our young sleuth went to the city library to look through *Who's Who* and a biographical dictionary. She found some information but felt it was incomplete. As a last resort, she decided to call up the man's business, saying that she was a student doing research on something harmless and needed information on Mr. X. Two days later the public information office obliged with an envelope full of dates, names, directorships, and other background. It is important to remember that important people often like the public to know how important they are, and it can save lots of time.

Corporations: Where the Buck Starts

A journalist once said that investigating business is a lot like sex: you get better with practice and it's not done enough. You need only look at the business sections of most newspapers to see how right he is. He might have added that business dominates our lives every bit as much as sex. Jimmy Carter reportedly told Tom Hayden during a recent visit to the Oval Office that he now understands how businessmen run the country. Someone should ask him for an explanation on the next call-in show.

Understanding who is making economic decisions affecting millions of people, how and why is the first step in making corporate power accountable. Businesses affect everything from the programs we see on television to the choice of products we buy, the prices we pay, the jobs we have and the safety and health of our environment. An excellent starting point to find out what information is available from your local library is a book recently revised by the librarian of the Harvard Business School called *Business Information Sources* (see bibliography). It describes in detail the various books and publications that you will need to use. A wealth of information is also

available in government records if you know where to look.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is the federal government's regulatory agency for corporations offering public sales of stocks and bonds. It obtains regular reports from approximately 10,000 companies that have at least \$1 million in assets and 500 recorded stockholders. The Commission issues an annual *Directory of Companies Required to File Annual Reports* (\$4.75, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Wash. D.C. 20402), which lists companies alphabetically and by industry classification. If the corporation you are interested in is listed here, you can call or write the SEC headquarters for information about it (SEC, 500 N. Capital St., Wash. D.C. 20549, (202) 755-4846). If you live near Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, you can visit the local SEC public reference room and make copies of reports yourself. Regional offices in other areas contain less information.

What you will find is a series of reports detailing the corporation's finances and ownership. The 10-K is a detailed annual financial report that includes the company's major contracts, management history, salaries and other compensation for principal officers. The 10-Q, filed every three months, is a less detailed financial report. The 8-K is a monthly report filed only if there is a major corporate event, such as a change in ownership, sale of large amount of stock, lawsuit filed against the company or major change in its finances. Proxy statement reports describe important decisions requiring approval by the stockholders, such as the election of corporate directors and registration reports detail a public sale of stock or a stock option plan for employees. In addition there are three periodic publications found in major libraries: the SEC Docket gives a weekly summary of litigation for security law violations and of SEC rule changes; the *News and Public Statements* gives a daily summary of registrations, 8-K reports, and major (over 5%) acquisitions of a company's stock; and the *Official Summary of Securities Transactions* gives a monthly report on major individuals in a corporation who buy or sell stock during the month and list their total holdings.

Corporations buy or form smaller companies, divisions or subsidiaries, the way Abraham beget children. To find the right parent for the company you're interested in, check *Who Owns Whom* (Roskill & Co., England), *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives*, the *Dun and Bradstreet Directories*, or *Moody's Manuals* in your local library.

Federal agencies which regulate specific industries obtain valuable information regarding the corporations involved. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 1919 M. St. NW, Wash. D.C. 20554, (202 655-4000), requires information from companies and individuals involved in licensed television, radio, and cable TV stations. Their reports and applications, which include ownership and stock data, are available from the FCC and the broadcast station itself. There are also various FCC publications available from the Government Printing Office, Wash. D.C. 20402 or in major libraries. The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) regulates railroads, trucking companies, bus lines, freight carriers, oil pipelines, and express agencies involved in commerce between states. A publication list and information on certain transportation business such as moving companies can be obtained from the Public Information Office, Rm. 2140, (202-275-7252), or you can inspect records by writing the Secretary, Rm. 2215, ICC, Washington, D.C. 20423. If you're trying to keep track of Bert Lance, the Federal Reserve Board keeps data on banks and bank holding companies in the Federal Reserve System and has public records available in Room 1118, 20th and Constitution Ave., NW, Wash. D.C. 20551 (202-452-3684). The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), 1825 Conn. Ave., NW, Wash. D.C. 20428 (202-382-6031), regulates the air transportation industry and provides information on airline companies. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) investigates labor disputes through some 50 regional offices around the country and allows inspection of formal case documents. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), 825 N. Capitol St., NE Wash. D.C. 20426 (202-275-4006) regulates interstate electric power and natural gas companies. Use the *Government Manual* (see bibliography) for ideas.

An important source of information on all businesses is the court system. SEC 8-K and 10-K reports reveal litigation against companies that may open up a wealth of information in documents on file in local and federal courthouses. The U.S. Tax Court, 400 Second St., NW, Wash. D.C. 20217 (202-376-2751) tries cases involving income, estate, gift and personal holding company tax disputes, as well as pension, profit sharing, stock bonus and bond purchase plans. Tax returns are sometimes available here. Checking the criminal and civil index of the federal court system for the names of companies, directors or owners may reveal information available nowhere else.

At the state level, any company incorporated or doing a major amount of business within a state generally files information with the Secretary of State. Information may include the names and addresses of directors, amount and

value of stock, principal location, DBAs (jargon for other names under which the company may do business), articles of incorporation and by-laws. In California, the Secretary of State also compiles information on trademarks product name registration, Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings that list statements of debt regarding businesses and individuals plus information on corporations and partnerships subject to tax liens (unpaid government taxes), registration of notaries public (often witnesses to the signing of corporate documents), and the names of corporate lobbyists. State government may also have an agency (in California, the Dept. of Corporations) that performs a function similar to the SEC in regulating companies and the sale of stocks and bonds in that state. This agency may contain information on the stockholders, directors, partners and business history of various corporations, franchises, investment agents, loan companies, limited partnerships and joint ventures in the state too small to register with the SEC or not publicly held (traded on a stock exchange or over-the-counter). Also check the state tax board for information it collects on administering state corporate taxes.

Various state departments and agencies issue business licenses for everything from the sale of liquor to agricultural pest control, the installation of elevators and nursing homes. In particular, check for a banking commission that regulates state banks and savings and loans, and an insurance commission that regulates insurance and title companies in the state.

Finally, there are various city and county records with information on businesses. Check the city or county clerk for a list of business licenses required. Check the county recorder, clerk, or city register of deeds for business transactions, DBAs, debts and liens. Check the local courts for civil and criminal lawsuits involving businesses and their directors or officers and the probate court for ownership by deceased stockholders.

Businesses and their owners have a vested interest in hiding as much information as they can, whether to protect themselves from competitors, avoid publicity or conduct illegal or extralegal activities for their own gain. Much of the true ownership of businesses continues to be hidden behind street names, bank trusteeship or investment firms. Don't be discouraged. As in sex, the first time you try may be the worst.

Non-profit foundations or corporations sometimes wield enormous power in a community. All foundations file a federal tax return (IRS) Form 990 that is available from the Foundation Center, 888 7th Ave., New York, N.Y.

10019 (212-489-8610), and one of the Center's branches around the country depending on where the foundation is. A 990 is also available from the foundation's local IRS district office. The Foundation Directory and Foundation Grants Index gives financial and personnel details about the largest foundations in the country and are available from most libraries. Nonprofit corporations must incorporate, just as for-profits do, so you will find information about their incorporators, directors and bylaws with the Secretary of State and country recorder. Many states (in California, the Registry of Charitable Trusts) have a state agency that maintains files on each registered charitable organization that holds property or does business in that state.

Government: Passing the Buck

As politicians fell in esteem following Watergate, a disillusioned public pressured officials at all levels of government to pass reforms for greater disclosure of political activity. Politicians scurried to reassure voters with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974 and similar state and local legislation that ballooned the amount of information available to the public. Correctly filing forms became an essential qualification for gaining the public trust. Knowing what information is available where and how to obtain it gives you a head start in investigating what government officials are up to.

The fact is: to understand politicians, you need to "follow the money." Money might be called the essential homogenized nourishment of politics if the milk lobby that donated so generously to Richard Nixon's campaign in 1972 had any say in the matter.

Information on contributions to federal elections is available from the Federal Election Commission, 1325 K St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20463 and for their respective offices from the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, ST-2, Capital Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 or the Clerk of the House, Office of Records and Registration, U.S. House of Representatives, Longworth Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. The FEC has a toll free number, 800-424-9530 that is often busy. FEC regulations state that required reports must also be filed with the candidate's Secretary of State, although compliance can be spotty.

Presidential candidates must file in states where they spend money but are required to include information only on the particular state. Some county clerks receive reports for congressional candidates, although this isn't required under law. If you need information quickly, it's better to

have a friend in your state capital or Washington pick up copies of the contribution reports than trust a bureaucratic reply through the mail. Filing dates must be checked for the one required pre-election and one required post-election reports.

Of special importance is making sure that you track down reports for all committees raising money for a federal candidate. Each office seeker has a principal committee which must file a statement of organization listing all committees authorized to raise or spend money for the candidate, and each committee must file its own report. If you miss one report, you may be missing an important piece of the puzzle.

Contribution information for state legislators is normally available from the Secretary of State and the county clerk where the legislator resides. Reports for districts encompassing several counties may be filed in only one clerk's office, so you should check them all. Statewide offices, such as governor and attorney general, usually file reports with the Secretary of State. In California, candidates also file in the counties of the two largest cities, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Contributions for county or municipal elections usually are available from the appropriate city or county clerk or registrar of voters. Again, you should be sure to obtain reports for all committees authorized to receive or spend money on a candidate's behalf and check for all the filing dates. Reports for one filing period may not include information available in a previous report.

Contributions from labor, business and other special interest political action committees are playing an increasing role in the financing of elections. In California, where disclosure is more widespread than most states, committees must file a statement of organization with the Secretary of State and send financial reports to that office as well as the county clerks of the two largest cities and each county where contributions are made.

What do Bobby Baker and Ralph Nader have in common? They both lobbied Congress. To know who's representing which special interest in the hallowed halls of Washington, check the Congressional Directory (it lists lobbyists two times a year and who they represent) or the Directory of Washington Representatives of American Associations and Industry, Columbia Books, at your local library. Some states, such as California, publish a lobbyist and employer registration directory each year that's available from the Secretary of State's office.

Checking lobbyist names with political contributions can be a particularly fruitful investigation. While not as

detectable as lobbyists, lawyers often make contributions, manage campaigns or otherwise hold positions of influence with a candidate or official. Use the Martindale and Hubbell Law Directory in your library to check out the lawyer's firm's clients to see who may really be influencing political decisions.

Information on the personal finances of U.S. Senators is filed with the Secretary of the Senate, Office of Public Records, ST-2, Capitol Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 and lists all speaking fees of \$300 or more.

Congressional representatives are less discreet and must report their interest over \$5000 in businesses contracting with the federal government, annual income over \$1000 from such businesses, businesses or organizations in which they or their spouses are executives, creditors owed more than \$10,000 and speaking fees over \$300. This information is available only by having someone go in person to the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, Rm. 2360, Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C. Honoraria can be especially important in determining influences on an official who faces little opposition and has little need for campaign funds during elections.

All candidates for state and local offices in California are required to file thorough reports on their personal finances which are available in the state capital at the Fair Political Practices Commission and with appropriate city and county clerks. Other states vary in such requirements or avoid them altogether. Inquire with your own state or local election offices to see if such information is filed.

To learn about legislative activity in the U.S. Congress, pursue the following sources usually located in a major library or local Congressional or Senatorial office:

1. The Congressional Record Index lists bills, resolutions, remarks under the members' names, different subject headings and provides a guide to the daily Congressional Record.
2. The Congressional Information Service Index and Abstract provides a valuable guide to congressional hearings and reports since 1970.
3. Bernan Associates' Checklist of Congressional Hearings, available for \$42 a year, 9730-E George Palmer Highway, Lanham, MD 20801, provides a frequent newsletter listing current hearings and bills available directly from congressional committees and local congressmen at no cost.

-
4. Printed records of congressional hearings are available at cost from the Superintendent of Documents, GPO, Washington D.C. 20402, from federal bookstores in certain cities, and for public use at certain libraries with government document rooms.
 5. Copies of House or Senate bills are available from either the House Or Senate Document Rooms in Washington.

States generally compile some sort of index listing legislation under subject headings and a legislative history that tells where the bill originated, its sponsors and fate in committees. There may also be a record of each day's activity by the legislature. Check your local library, state representative's local office, state library or archives. City and county councils often keep tape recordings or brief summaries of their actions in the council's offices. Remember that requesting information about an official's actions directly from his office is sometimes the easiest way to obtain what you want.

Other useful sources of information on government officials include:

1. Congressional Profiles written by the Nader Congress Project give information and voting record on each Senator and Representative and are available for \$1 each from Grossman Publisher, Box 19281, Washington, D.C. 20036;
2. The Almanac of American Politics gives information on congressional districts, key votes, each House and Senate member and state governor and is available at many bookstores.;
3. The Congressional Directory, gives information on congressional and committee staff and is available from the Government Printing Office in Washington;
4. The Citizen's Research Foundation, 245 Nassau St. Princeton, N.J. 08540 can provide a list of studies it has published on the financing of national and selected state campaigns;
5. The Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report lists recent financial information about Congress and previous issues available in libraries give federal campaign contributions for preceding years;
6. The liberal ADA and conservative Americans for Constitutional Action in Washington keep lists of voting records for individual Senators and Representatives;
7. Issue 4 of NewsLeads available from the Urban Policy Research Institute, 321 S. Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212 for \$1 gives directions and ideas for investigating money in politics.

Property: Where the Buck Lands

For an investigator, the recorder's and tax assessor's offices go together like gum and shoe. In some locations they are even combined into one office. Together or separate, these local offices can answer two of the most common questions in an investigation: who owns a particular piece of "real" property (real estate), and, what land or buildings belong to a particular owner? Part of either the local city or county government, they keep information only on property located in their geographic area. There is no central source of information on real estate ownership at the state or national level and local government has no uniform method of collecting it, so you have to go to the local office for the property you're interested in and find out how that particular system works. There is enough similarity to the systems to make it useful to study one in detail. (See People Before Property, bibliography, for an excellent description of property research in Boston.)

The local recorder's office (sometimes called the register of deeds) documents sales and other transactions concerning property by year, so you must go through each year of the recorder's index (usually known as the grantee-grantor or general index) to identify all documents for a piece of property. The index lists the name of the seller (grantor) and the buyer (grantee) and gives you a reference number for the deed or other document so a clerk can locate a copy in the office records. The deed will usually tell you the names of the buyer and seller, address or legal description of the property, date of the transaction, and may indicate alterations in ownership. Alterations or encumbrances occur if there is a mortgage, lien, lease, foreclosure or other financial relationship with another party. To determine whether the deed has an encumbrance, go through the index for each year the owner (grantee) holds the property and search for indications of other transactions. A trick to remember if there is a mortgage: the owner or borrower is the grantor (grants the mortgage) while the lender is the grantee (receives the mortgage), even though the money goes the other way. Obviously, you will need to know the name of either the buyer or seller of the property to locate the listings of documents about it in the index. The major place to find these names if you only know the property's location is the local assessor's office.

The tax assessor determines the value of real estate and levies a property tax. If you know an address (or legal description), you can use maps and charts in the office to find the reference numbers you need to locate the record telling who pays taxes for it by year. There may also be records, listed by name of the taxpayer, that give the

addresses of all property billed to that particular taxpayer. While the name may not be the actual owner (just a lawyer, corporation, or agency that pays the bill), assessor records will usually supply enough information, in combination with the recorder's office, to determine ownership.

The following steps are typical of how you would research real estate ownership (known as a title search). Take the address to the local assessor's office or tax assessment department that bills the property owner. Using the maps in the office you can identify the reference number for the records listing annual payments of taxes by the legal owner (or taxpayer). You can determine the approximate property value from the assessment listed in the records. With the owner's or taxpayer's name, go to the recorder's office and look under grantee (buyer) in the index for the years you think the purchase might have occurred. If you want to know whether the taxpayer sold the property after paying the most recent taxes, look under grantor in the index for each year since the taxes were paid. By finding out when an owner bought or sold a piece of property and determining the name of the other seller or buyer from the index, you can check those names in the index, for each year records are kept, to discover the entire ownership history for that piece of property. With the document reference numbers listed in the index, you can locate copies of documents that provide further details.

Sometimes ownership is extremely difficult to determine because property is held by one of the several legal and financial arrangements. A common practice is to record property in the name of a relative, spouse or other family name. It sometimes helps to check those names in the grantee-grantor index. Property can be acquired under such methods as joint tenancy, community property or partnerships. Owners may be corporations, syndicates, partnerships, trusts and associations. Property may be recorded in the name of a land trust, title company or bank. Escrow companies hold title to land until a sale is completed and prevent records from showing who the buyer is. (Although some companies will reveal ownership if called.) In such cases, you should consult someone knowledgeable with real estate and have them check other government records that may reveal ownership.

The local tax collector or state tax board may have information on who is paying property taxes for land or buildings. Local building departments issue construction permits, health departments issue building safety licenses and redevelopment agencies and zoning or planning commissions maintain records on ownership in selected areas. City or county councils may have an appeals process for assessments that record property ownership. The

Secretary of State and county clerk sometimes collect information on property owned by public and elected officials. State real estate commissions have data on land (in California this come mission regulates subdivisions, which are divisions of land into smaller pieces for sale or improvement). The superintendent of state buildings has information on buildings and land the government is leasing from private owners. The Secretary of State and various federal agencies have information on corporations' trusts, partnerships and other organizations listed as owners of property. Tax-exempt properties (owned by religious, charitable or government agencies) are usually listed separately in the assessor's office.

If you're in a hurry or can't find what you want from government records, try the local privately operated real estate service, title insurance company or even a realtor. For a fee, or free if you're lucky, they can provide ownership information on a piece of property, already collected from local records. It's their business to know who owns real estate. One experienced reporter failed for 18 months to discover from local records if Richard Nixon purchased the San Clemente White House before a title insurance friend helped him find it in three hours.

In researching ownership, there is an important distinction between "real" and personal property. Real property is land and its improvements (roads, houses and other structures) while personal property is more mobile, such as an automobile (sometimes called unsecured property). States tax personal property and will have records concerning it at the local tax collector's office. While most states have a motor vehicles department that contains ownership information on trucks, cars and motorcycles, personal property ownership is less systematically documented than real property.

Public Records: Where the Buck is Buried

"Unconstitutional and unworkable," was how Gerald Ford described the legislation to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) when he vetoed it in 1974. But Congress overrode his resistance and justified its action by saying the law "is based upon the presumption that the government and the information of government belong to the people." Today the FOIA, first passed in 1966 is beginning to fulfill Congress' intention that the burden must be on the federal government to justify secrecy rather than on the citizen to prove why information should be available. Although still facing official reluctance to comply, the law is allowing access to documents on such matters as the nutritional content of

processed foods, the efficacy of drugs, the safety and efficiency of automobiles, consumer complaints regarding interstate moving companies, corporate marketing practices, faulty products, the harmful effects of pesticides, pollution control programs, the effectiveness of affirmative action plans, and occupational safety and health data.

FOIA differs from several related laws and these distinctions can help you understand when to use it:

1. FOIA provides standards for obtaining a wide range of information from administrative agencies of the executive branch of the federal government. It does not apply to information maintained by Congress or the judiciary and it does not affect the availability of information from state and local records, which varies according to state and local law.
2. The Privacy Act, also enacted by Congress in 1974, deals specifically with allowing individuals access to information about themselves held in federal agency files. It can create a conflict when someone requests information under the FOIA that is considered harmful to another person's privacy. In the same manner, state privacy laws allow citizens access to information about themselves in state and local records and can restrict access to third parties in certain situations.

Learning to use the FOIA isn't difficult and a number of useful guides make it easier:

1. House Report No. 95-793, U.S. Government Printing Office.
2. FOIA Handbook, Project on National Security and Civil Liberties, 122 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002.
3. How to Use the New 1974 FOI Act, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, 1750 1750 Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20006.
4. How to Use the FOIA, Church of Scientology Information Service, 5930 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, CA 90028.

The basic procedure is to write a letter to the appropriate agency that "reasonably describes" the information you want. If you aren't sure which agency to write or how to describe what you want, check the U.S. Government Manual, which describes all the federal agencies, or try calling the agency headquarters or local field offices. Addresses for agencies are found in the Manual, as well as several of the FOI handbooks. The more specific and limited the request, the greater your chance of receiving the information quickly and inexpensively. Although agencies must respond within 10 days, requests for "all

files relating to" some matter or without fairly specific dates describing the material provide ways for the agency to delay an answer. You should request an estimate in your letter of the costs involved: a search fee of about \$5 an hour to locate the information and a copying charge of about 10 cents a page. The law allows agencies to waive or reduce these costs when "furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public." If you think your request applies, say so. A thorough letter will cite Title V of the U.S. Code 552 (FOIA) and the relevant provisions of the agency's regulations concerning access as authorities for your right to information. Agency regulations are listed in the Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Register (the FOIA Handbook gives the precise page number for each), or you can obtain them from the individual agency. Remember that you don't have to explain why you are interested in the information if you don't wish to. You have a right to know. If your request should be denied by exemptions allowed under FOIA or delayed unusually, you can challenge the withholding of information through procedures described in the various handbooks or contact the Nader affiliated Freedom of Information Clearinghouse P.O. Box 19367 Wash., D.C. 20036 (202-785-3704).

The counterpart to the FOIA for information from state and local records is a less useful body of laws enacted by various state and local governments. These laws can vary as much as the weather from Maine to California and are usually a lot less clear. Two examples of states with laws on access to public records are California (California Public Records Act) and New York (N.Y. Freedom of Information Law). New York law deals with state and local regulations and California deals with only with the state.

A basic procedure to follow in gaining access to information from your state or local government is to ask your state Attorney General, Secretary of State, or local municipal counsel about laws governing access to government records. In general it is appropriate to take the position that you have a right to see public records and don't need a special reason. Any refusal should be met with a request to know the specific law that prevents disclosure or to see a higher official who may have the authority to release a withheld document. As a last resort, go to a friendly elected official or lawyer who can often break down resistance based on ignorance of the local law governing public records. The local ACLU or public interest law firm can often help resolve a denial of access. Probably the simplest rule to remember in requesting any record is to know as precisely as possible what it is you want and where, and then proceed as though you deserve it.

Investigative Checklist: Federal, State and Local

FEDERAL

Individuals

- Civil Service Commission
- SEC
- FCC
- ICC
- CAB
- FPC
- Check for other regulatory departments and agencies in the Government Manual
- FEC
- Civil and Criminal Court Index
- Tax Court

Corporations

- SEC
- FCC
- ICC
- CAB
- FPC,
- FDA
- Check for other departments and agencies in the Government Manual
- Tax Court and Federal Courts.
- I.R.S. (Tax returns for non-profits)

Government

- Federal Election Commission
- Secretary of the Senate
- Clerk of the House
- House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
- Civil Service Commission

Property

See under corporations for land owned by corporations

STATE

Individuals

- Controller
- Secretary of State
- Various departments and agencies requiring business licenses
- Bar association
- Public Utilities Commission
- Corporation Commission
- Insurance Commission

Corporations

- Tax Board for corporation taxes
- Secretary of State

- Corporation Commission
- Various departments and agencies requiring business licenses
- Public Utilities Commission
- Banking Commission for state banks
- Insurance Commission for insurance companies

Government

- Secretary of State
- Agencies regulating campaigns and political activity

Property

- Board of Tax Equalization
- Real Estate Commission
- Superintendent of State Buildings
- Secretary of State (for partnerships, corporations and trusts that own land)

LOCAL

Individuals

- Auditor
- Bar Association
- City or County Tax Collector
- City and County licenses
- Voter Registration
- Civil and Criminal Court Index and Documents
- Probate Court
- City and County Clerk or Recorder
- Coroner's Office
- County or City Tax Assessor
- Divorce Court

Corporations

- City and County Clerk or Recorder
- Civil and Criminal Court Index
- Probate Court
- City and County Licenses

Government

- County and City Clerk
- Registrar of Voters
- City Comptroller (salaries)
- Personnel Office

Property

- County or City Recorder or Register of Deeds
- County or City Tax Assessor
- County or City Tax Collector
- Planning or Zoning Commission
- Court Records (bankruptcy, probate, divorce)
- Redevelopment agencies
- Building Department
- Board of Health
- Probation reports

Sources of Information

The FBI made public the following guide to sources of information. It was prepared originally for federal investigators. Part I of the guide lists 71 categories of information you might be seeking. The numbers after each category refer to the sources of information listed in Part II of the guide.

The FBI cautions users of the guide that the guide merely indicates “where the information can be found and does not imply that information will automatically be given to an investigator.” State and federal privacy laws often dictate that information can be released only with the subject’s consent, with a subpoena or through other legal processes. If you are confronted with such a response, it is best to seek legal advice.

Types of Information Desired: Full Name.

Where to Find It: Telephone directories; State, Department of Justice, Bureau of Identification; Post Office; Telephone company; Registrar of Voters; County Clerk’s Office, Civil Files; County Clerk’s Office, Criminal Files; County Assessor’s Office; Title and Abstract Company; County Tax Collector’s Office; Title and Abstract Company; County Recorder’s Office, Birth Certificate Section; Banks and finance companies; Credit reporting agencies; Gas and electric companies; Water companies; Department of Motor Vehicles.

Types of Information Desired: Address.

Where to Find It: Telephone directories; State, Department of Justice, Bureau of Identification; Post Office; Telephone company; Registrar of Voters; County Clerk’s Office, Civil Files; County Clerk’s Office, Criminal Files; County Assessor’s Office; Title and Abstract Company; County Tax Collector’s Office; Title and Abstract Company; County Recorder’s Office, Birth Certificate Section; Banks and finance companies; Credit reporting agencies; Gas and electric companies; Water companies; Department of Motor Vehicles; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Date of Birth.

Where to Find It: State, Department of Justice, Bureau of Identification; FBI; County Clerk’s Office, Vital Statistics; State Department, Passports Division; County Recorder’s Office, Birth Certificate Section; Credit reporting agencies; Gas and electric companies.

Types of Information Desired: Description.

Where to Find It: State, Department of Justice, Bureau of Identification; FBI; County Clerk’s Office, Vital Statistics; State Department, Passports Division; Department of

Motor Vehicles.

Types of Information Desired: Photograph.

Where to Find It: State, Department of Justice, Bureau of Identification; FBI; County Clerk’s Office, Vital Statistics; School Department; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Occupation.

Where to Find It: Registrar of Voters; State Department, Passports Division; Banks and finance companies; Credit reporting agencies; Dun and Bradstreet; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Marital Status.

Where to Find It: County Clerk’s Office, Marriage License Applications; County Recorder’s Office, Marriage License Section; Credit reporting agencies; Dun and Bradstreet; Department of Motor Vehicles.

Types of Information Desired: Prior addresses of a subject; names of persons previously living at the same address.

Where to Find It: Gas and electric companies; Water companies; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Addresses, present and former, whether renting or buying; credit references; personal and business associates; names of relatives; locations of banks and finance companies.

Where to Find It: Credit reporting agencies.

Types of Information Desired: Telephone numbers and addresses; how long has the suspect had service; record of long distance phone calls; number of extensions in residence.

Where to Find It: Telephone company.

Types of Information Desired: Sources of income; expenditures; personal and business references; net worth of subject; handwriting examples.

Where to Find It: Banks and finance companies.

Types of Information Desired: Information as to credit charges which have been made; what hotels are being used; where has your suspect been buying gasoline; employment and credit references.

Where to Find It: Credit card companies.

Types of Information Desired: Registered owners of vehicles; legal owners of vehicles; description of vehicles; previous owners of vehicles; operators’ license numbers; signatures; photographs; thumbprints; abstracts of traffic citations.

Where to Find It: Department of Motor Vehicles.

Types of Information Desired: Application for bonds which give personal and business references; former addresses; former places of employment.

Where to Find It: Bonding companies.

Types of Information Desired: Records of stocks bought or sold; profits and losses.

Where to Find It: Stock brokers.

Types of Information Desired: Recorded deeds, grants, mortgages, wills admitted to probate, notices of mechanics' liens, powers of attorney.

Where to Find It: County Recorder's Office.

Types of Information Desired: Record of registration for securities offered for public sale; record of individuals and firms who have violated State or Federal regulations in securities traffic.

Where to Find It: Securities and Exchange Commission.

Types of Information Desired: Information concerning reputation of a business; back issues of city directories.

Where to Find It: Better Business Bureau; Chamber of Commerce; Newspaper library or newspaper "morgue."

Types of Information Desired: Businesses' worth, associates, family, holdings and ratings.

Where to Find It: Credit reporting agencies; Dun and Bradstreet.

Types of Information Desired: Information on persons in a medical or dental practice, pharmacists, barbers, funeral directors.

Where to Find It: State Licensing Boards.

Types of Information Desired: Names of post office box holders; return addresses on mail received at post office; mail covers.

Where to Find It: Post Office.

Types of Information Desired: Information on forwarding addresses.

Where to Find It: Post Office; Moving companies.

Types of Information Desired: Marriage license applications; addresses; dates of birth; signatures.

Where to Find It: County Clerk's Office, Marriage License Applications.

Types of Information Desired: Names of the bride and groom; maiden name of bride; ages.

Where to Find It: County Recorder's Office, Marriage License Section.

Types of Information Desired: Information on divorces, i.e., place and date of marriage; date of separation; ages of children; community property; signatures; income; places of employment.

Where to Find It: County Clerk's Office, Divorce Records; Newspaper library or newspaper "morgue."

Types of Information Desired: Information on parents of a child, i.e., occupations; ages; mother's maiden name; name of physician.

Where to Find It: Health Department; County Recorder's Office, Birth Certificate Section.

Types of Information Desired: Disposition of monies from an estate; value of estate; inventory of all assets of deceased.

Where to Find It: Public Administrator's Office.

Types of Information Desired: Name and description of the deceased; property found on deceased and its distribution; cause of death.

Where to Find It: County Recorder's Office, Death Certificate Section; County Coroner's Office; Public Administrator's Office.

Types of Information Desired: Where death occurred; birth place; how long deceased lived in the County, State or United States; names of relatives; whether or not deceased was a veteran.

Where to Find It: County Recorder's Office, Death Certificate Section; Newspaper library or newspaper "morgue."

Types of Information Desired: Civil suits; changes of name; liens; description of property involved; name of court reporter, if any, who recorded the testimony.

Where to Find It: County Clerk's Office, Civil Files.

Types of Information Desired: Political party; physical disabilities which would prevent marking a ballot; name of spouse; when and where married; last place of registration to vote.

Where to Find It: Registrar of Voters; Newspaper library or newspaper "morgue."

Types of Information Desired: Ship, boat and yacht registrations.

Where to Find It: Lloyds Register of Shipping; Lloyds Register of Yachts.

Names and addresses of owners of ships, boats or yachts

Where to Find It: Lloyds Register of Shipping; Lloyds Register of Yachts; Department of Motor Vehicles.

Types of Information Desired: Ownership of aircraft.
Where to Find It: Airport Security; Federal Aviation Administration.

Types of Information Desired: Background on horse owners, jockeys, trainers and people employed at race tracks.

Where to Find It: State Horse Racing Board; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue”; Thoroughbred Racing Protection Bureau, New York, New York.

Types of Information Desired: Case histories of persons on welfare (usually good background information).

Where to Find It: Welfare Department.

Types of Information Desired: Student records, past and present; teachers, records, past and present.

Where to Find It: School Department.

Types of Information Desired: List of all County employees; occupations and rate of pay; records of all financial business for the County.

Where to Find It: County Auditor’s Office.

Types of Information Desired: Presidents and secretaries of all County medical associations; names of hospitals and sanitariums, number of rooms and beds; doctors, names by street and city; doctor’s year of birth, medical school and year of graduation; office address.

Where to Find It: American Medical Directory.

Types of Information Desired: Bar owners, fingerprints, marital status, home addresses, employees, associates Alcohol Beverage Control; Distilled Spirits Institute, New York, New York.

Types of Information Desired: Information relative to Articles of Incorporation, giving businesses, associations, records of election returns; descriptions of seals used by various State officers; papers filed by candidates for election to State offices.

Where to Find It: Secretary of State, Corporate Division.

Types of Information Desired: Names of associates of a person involved in organized crime and which law enforcement agencies have information.

Where to Find It: Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit (LEIU); Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Transcripts of preliminary hearings; probation officers’ reports; subpoenas issued in the case; names of attorneys concerned.

Where to Find It: County Clerk’s Office, Criminal Files.

Types of Information Desired: Parole reports; inmate contacts; visitors; correspondence; work and training assignments.

Where to Find It: Department of Corrections.

Types of Information Desired: Copies of telegrams and money order information; possible handwriting exemplars

Where to Find It: Telegraph companies.

Types of Information Desired: Record of all warrants drawn on the State Treasury; accounts of all persons indebted to the State.

Where to Find It: State Controller.

Types of Information Desired: Legal description of property; amount of taxes paid on real and personal property; former owners of property.

Where to Find It: County Tax Collector’s Office; Title and Abstract Company.

Types of Information Desired: Amount of cost of construction; blueprints of construction; information regarding location of plumbing and wiring.

Where to Find It: Building Department.

Types of Information Desired: Dimensions of property and taxable income of real property, and what improvements, if any, on the property.

Where to Find It: County Assessor’s Office; Title and Abstract Company.

Types of Information Desired: Maps of streets; locations of drains; location of utility conduits; rights of way; old names of streets.

Where to Find It: Highway Department.

Types of Information Desired: Maps having elevations, base lines; landmarks; important sites.

Where to Find It: County Surveyor’s Office.

Types of Information Desired: Sources of information in foreign countries.

Where to Find It: Treasury Department, enforcement agencies; INTERPOL; U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Information as to anticipated travel of a person in a foreign country and vital statistics State Department, Passports Division; Newspaper library or newspaper “morgue.”

Types of Information Desired: Addresses of aliens.

Where to Find It: County Department of Naturalization; Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Types of Information Desired: Alien information, date of entry; manner of arrival; addresses; occupation; age; physical description; marital status; children; signature; photograph.

Where to Find It: County Department of Naturalization; Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Types of Information Desired: A guide to newspapers and periodicals printed in the U.S. and its possessions; thumbnail description of every city, including population, County, and location with respect to the nearest large city.

Where to Find It: Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, N. W. Ayer & Sons, Philadelphia.

Types of Information Desired: Information on cattle and dairies.

Where to Find It: State Department of Agriculture.

Types of Information Desired: Mining information; petroleum and gasoline; fish and game.

Where to Find It: Department of Natural Resources.

Types of Information Desired: Information on transactions in the insurance industry.

Where to Find It: American Insurance Company; Insurance Crime Prevention Institute; Hooper-Holmes Bureau, Inc.

Types of Information Desired: Records of individuals and firms who have violated State and Federal regulations in commodities traffic

Where to Find It: Securities and Exchange Commission; Commodities Futures Trading Corporation, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Summary of State laws and regulations relating to distilled spirits.

Where to Find It: Distilled Spirits Institute, New York, New York.

Types of Information Desired: Regulatory commissions in United States concerning public utilities.

Where to Find It: Federal Power Commission, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Reports which describe duties and functions of County government offices.

Where to Find It: National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Record of individuals and agencies in State government.

Where to Find It: The National Directory of State Agencies.

Types of Information Desired: Record of individuals and agencies in Federal government.

Where to Find It: U.S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Record of insurance risks, agents, claimants and medical examiners.

Where to Find It: American Service Bureau of the American Life Convention, Chicago, Illinois.

Types of Information Desired: Record of scientific projects in progress or being planned as well as scientists involved.

Where to Find It: The Smithsonian Institute.

Types of Information Desired: Companies and individuals doing business in foreign countries.

Where to Find It: U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Companies making investments in less-developed countries.

Where to Find It: Agency for International Development, Washington, D.C.

Types of Information Desired: Credit information on prospective customers of a business entity.

Where to Find It: National Association of Credit Management, New York, New York.

Types of Information Desired: Elected public officials

Where to Find It: FBI; Registrar of Voters; Newspaper library or newspaper "morgue"; Federal Election Commission, Washington, D.C.

Investigative Library

* *Indicates highly recommended publication.*

* **The Reporter's Handbook: An Investigator's Guide to Documents and Techniques**

Edited by John Ullmann and Steve Honeyman
St. Martin's Press

175 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10011

A three year project of Investigative Reporters and Editors; contains more than 500 records and advice from 60 of the nation's top reporters and editors.

Bernan Associates' Checklist of Congressional Hearings.

Bernan Associates

9730-E George Palmer Highway
Lanham, Maryland 20706

52 issues per year plus two semiannual indexes, \$60. Lists publications of recent congressional hearings and committee prints so that you can apply for a free copy directly to the committee that held the hearing. Additional hearings are listed so you can obtain them for a fee from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office.

NACLA Research Methodology Guide

North American Congress on Latin America
151 West 19th Street, Ninth Floor
New York, New York 10011
1970, \$5.75, includes postage/handling. A guide to power structure research and resources for information.

The Workbook

Southwest Research and Information Center
P.O. Box 4524
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106
Six issues per year. \$8.50 for students and senior citizens; \$12 for individuals; \$25 for institutions; in Canada, add \$5. A guide to sources of information about environmental, social and consumer problems, aimed at helping people in small towns and cities gain access to information to help them assert control over their lives.

*** Finding Facts**

William L. Rivers
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632-1975
This book covers pursuing and interpreting facts, interviewing, observing and using libraries; gives more than 200 central sources of books and periodicals. Includes reporting on research (writing, editing, etc.).

*** National Directory of Addresses and Telephone Numbers**

Concord Reference Books
747 Church Road, Suite G7
Elmhurst, Illinois 60126
Annual, \$24.95 (plus \$3 postage and handling). A national phone book, listing numbers alphabetically and by categories, of business, government, media, transportation, etc.

*** The Almanac of American Politics**

Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa
National Journal
1730 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

This useful publication, updated every two years, gives a personal and political history of all representatives, senators and governors; includes maps and profiles of their states and congressional districts; includes the committees, subcommittees, ranking members of Congress; gives information on federal money going to election districts, etc.

*** A Citizen's Guide on How to Use the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act in Requesting Government Documents**

Thirteenth Report by the Committee on Government Operations. Available through:
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20036
This guide includes the texts of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act, and information on how to use both in the procurement of government records. Also lists addresses of selected government agencies.

Congress in Print

Congressional Quarterly
1414 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20402
Lists publications of recent congressional hearings and committee prints so that you can apply for a free copy directly to the committee that held the hearing.

Where's What?: Sources of Information for Federal Investigators

Harry J. Murphy
Office of Security, Central Intelligence Agency
Originally published by Warner Books. Out of Print; available in libraries. A CIA study released to the general public, which gives information on where to find information from the federal government.

Monthly Lists of G.A.O. Reports

U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877
Free. A monthly summary of all G.A.O. reports.

*** U.S. Government Manual**

Published by the Office of the Federal Register National Archives and Records Administration. Available through:
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20037
Updated yearly. This is the official organization handbook of the federal government; it includes purposes and programs of most government agencies, lists top personnel

and tells how to obtain information and publications from the government.

*** Washington Information Directory**

Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

1414 22nd Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20402

Updated yearly in June. Indexed by subject, department or agency, and regional office; organized under 16 subject headings.

County & City Data Book (A Statistical Abstract Supplement)

U.S. Bureau of Census Available through:

Superintendent of Documents

U.S. Government Printing Office

Washington, D.C. 20009

A remarkable source of numerical information about America and Americans, compiled from federal censuses of population, housing, government, manufacturers, business, mineral industries and agriculture.

*** Checking on Elected Officials**

Barry Greever

Reprinted with permission from:

The Midwest Academy, Inc.

600 West Fullerton Parkway

Chicago, Illinois 60614

Questions about elected officials and where to go to get answers; covers local, state and federal elected officials.

Rent Control: A Sourcebook

Edited by John Gilderbloom

Housing Information Center

4020 Blue Bonnet Blvd #J

Houston, Texas 77025

A nuts-and-bolts introduction to rent control: how to write a model rent control law, how to pass it, how to administer rent ceilings, and the effects of controls on the housing stock. Includes a resource list of tenant unions, legal organizations, books, newsletters and housing consultants.

Displacement: How to Fight It

Chester Hartman, Dennis Keating and Richard LaGates

National Housing Law Project

1950 Addison Street

Berkeley, California 94704

Another book that covers some of the complex issues involved in housing.

*** Business Information Sources**

Lorna Daniells

University of California Press

University of California, Berkeley

2223 Fulton Street

Berkeley, California 94720

A wonderful guide to every conceivable source of information on business.

Everybody's Business: An Almanac

Edited by Milton Moskowitz, Michael Katz and Robert Levering

Harper and Row Publishing Company

1700 Montgomery Street, Suite 250

San Francisco, California 94111

Updated on an irregular basis. "The Irreverent Guide to Corporate America: Profiles of 317 large companies."

How to Read a Financial Statement

Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc.

One Liberty Plaza

165 Broadway

New York, New York 10006

(Available at most Merrill Lynch Offices)

A guide written specifically for the lay person on how to read annual financial reports from corporations.

*** How to Research Your Local Bank or Savings & Loan Institution**

Institute for Local Self-Reliance

2425 18th Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20009

Explains common bank terminology; shows where basic information is, how to get it, and what to do with it.

*** Know Your Local Police: A Guide for Citizens**

Mae Churchill

Urban Policy Research Institute

185 Pier Street

Santa Monica, California 90405

This pamphlet is a guide to investigating your own police department, it contains the important questions one needs to ask and the possible sources of information for the answers.

How to Research Your Local Military Contractor

Tom Schlesinger, John Gaventa and Juliet Merrifield

Highlander Research and Education Center

Route 3, Box 370

New Market, Tennessee 37820

Step-by-step information on how to obtain and read a Department of Defense Prime Contract Award print-out; how to locate military contracts [or a specific city, county or state; how to get Pentagon-contractor correspondence through the Freedom of Information Act, etc.

Legal Research: How to Find and Understand the Law

Stephen Elias
Nolo Press
950 Parker Street
Berkeley, California 94710

Everybody's guide to the law library. How to find laws relating to specific cases or legal questions, how to interpret statutes and regulations, understand case citations, Shepardize cases and everything else you need to know to do your own legal research.

Glossary

DBA This is sometimes called a fictitious name or fictitious business file. Companies or people may do business under a name other than that commonly known. DBA files are recorded with local and state government agencies and may give the location and officers of the business.

Tax Lien A financial claim by the government against a person or business for failure to pay taxes. Also known as an encumbrance.

Public and Private Corporations A public corporation has stock owned by members of the public outside the corporation and often traded on a stock exchange or over-the-counter. Private corporate ownership remains in the hands of a few people, usually the founders, directors and their families. Because stock is not available to the general public, there is little information about the corporation available in public records.

Title Insurance Company These companies research titles, or ownership of land, so buyers can be sure there are no claims (encumbrances) to the property that would reduce its value. A quick source of information on real estate.

Street Name Also known as a "straw" or "front name," it is the name or "nominee" used by banks, trust companies, insurance companies, investment firms and others to hide real ownership in a business. The late Senator Metcalf placed the "secret" nominee list into the Congressional Record on June 24, 1971 to make it widely available to the public. Use the list to learn that Aftco, Byeco, Bebcoc, Sixco and Twoco are all street names for the Prudential Insurance Company.

Grantor-Grantee Index Sometimes combined to form a General Index, this annual list provides the names under which all documents, such as deeds, mortgages and partnership agreements are recorded each year at the local Recorder or Registry of Deeds' office. In grantor-grantee

parlance, every transaction has a grantor (who gives) and a grantee (who receives) and both names are listed.

Assessed Value Usually one quarter to one half of the full market value of real property the assessed value is used to determine the property tax by the assessor's office. It should be multiplied by the corresponding factor to determine the full market value of the property.

Trust A fiduciary arrangement for personal or real property where there is a trustor, who funds the trust a trustee, who holds and administers the trust, and a beneficiary, who receives the benefits of the trust.

Quit Title Actions Filed in court, these determine ownership when there is a dispute over possession of property.

Probate Court A source of financial information on the estates of the deceased, these state district courts settle and administer wills and their records often reveal hidden ownership and financial relationships.

Civil and Criminal Court Indexes These are located in the court clerk's office and give an alphabetical listing of all pending and disposed cases by plaintiff and defendant. Each index gives a docket number that allows you to obtain the docket with names, addresses and lawyers for both parties and court papers. These can include transcripts of testimony, exhibits, depositions (questions and answers) and other materials.

Title Search The process of checking ownership, mortgages, liens, property taxes and other information concerning real estate at the recorder's and assessor's offices.

Quitclaim Deed This document releases the owner or grantor from any claims or interest in a property.

*Copyright 2000:
Center for Investigative Reporting, Inc.,
131 Steuart Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, California 94105*

*tel. 415.543.1200
fax: 415.543.8311
email: center@cironline.org*