Data storytelling for investigative journalism using novel government accountability data obtained by FOIA

Boston Herald

Background

The Boston Herald is one of the oldest dailies in the country with wide readership in the New England area. They have a strong reputation for government accountability investigations, particularly in state and local issues, and are looking to experiment with an expansion into data journalism. The Herald, with the help of your team, seeks to develop and feature an original data-journalism investigation either into (1) gun permits and gun violence as public health issues, OR (2) waste, fraud, and abuse in Massachusetts compensation.

The reason there are two possible topics is that Herald journalists, course staff, and your team will be evaluating the quality and content of data that comes back shortly as a result of ongoing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to local, state, and Federal agencies.

Deliverables

Research in the form of literate Jupyter notebooks that demonstrate methodology, state assumptions, explore and visualize the data, build models, and distill key insights.

Executive summary of insights, backed up by careful data analysis, that journalists can use to go out and talk to people in order to develop the human interest side of the story.

Visualizations and interactive exploration tools that can, without major changes, be adapted for use on the www.bostonherald.com website to be viewed by tens of thousands of daily unique viewers.

Data Available

TBD