

ERROR FORM EXAMPLES

Chicago Tribune

Nov. 22, 2003

ARCHIVES, Part I - Rewriting history**CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION**

Please include the error and section the error occurred in:

Metro: "Named for a 23-year-old DuPage County woman who died of an Ecstasy overdose in 1999, Kelley Baker's Law was drafted as a way to punish club-drug dealers." Also, Metro page 1 Tuesday, Jan. 1,2002: "Named after a 23-year-old DuPage County woman who died of an overdose in 1999, "Kelley Baker's Law' was drafted in response to several local deaths."

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2

A story in some editions of Metro sections Thursday and Jan. 1,2002, inaccurately described the home county of Kelley Baker, whose death from an overdose helped lead to legislation and stricter penalties against club drug dealers. She was from Cook County.

Not for publication**Describe error and show a corrected version:**

How did the error occur? Apparently, no one caught the mistake in January 2002.1 referred to that story for background and repeated the mistake in Thursday's paper.

How did the error come to our attention: The mother of Kelley Baker called me.

Did deadlines affect this error? No.

How could this error have been avoided? The information pulled from the previous story should have been double-checked.

ARCHIVES, Part II

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include the error and section the error occurred in:

In some Metro editionsin a story about students being punished about a drinking party in Addison, we wrote: In the Hinsdale party, 26 youths were accused of stealing about \$20,000 worth of items during a party at a home while the owners were on vacation.

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2

In some editions ... it was incorrectly stated that 26 youths were accused of stealing at a Hinsdale party last spring. In fact, 26 youths were charged with criminal trespassing and one was charged with theft.

Not for publication

Describe error and show a corrected version: We wrote that all 26 people were accused of stealing when in fact just one was. All were charged with criminal trespassing, according to Hinsdale Acting Police Chief Bradley Bloom. Our clips only cover the court cases of 19 of the youths, one of whom was charged with stealing.

How did the error occur? I pulled the sentence out of a May 20 story that included the erroneous information. That article was never corrected.

How did the error come to our attention: The mother of one of the youths who was charged with criminal trespassing called.

Did deadlines affect this error? No.

How could this error have been avoided? We should have corrected the original story that ran last May. And I should have looked at more clips to check the disposition of the cases.

ARCHIVES, Part III

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include the error and section the error occurred in:

Following is the paragraph where error was made. This appeared on of Metro.

“Officials were able to positively identify Boyd through distinct physical features, including a set of metal rods surgically implanted in her legs after a near-fatal 1988 auto accident and several tattoos, said Cook County Medical Examiner Edmund Donahue.”

For publication:

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

A story in Monday’s Metro section included an incorrect spelling of the Cook County Medical Examiner’s name. He is Edmund R. Donoghue.

Not for publication

How did the error occur? I did not ask Donoghue for the proper spelling of his name during a phone interview Sunday. Instead, I used the SAVE system, which includes an Aug. 5 RedEye story with Donoghue’s name spelled as I used it.

How did the error come to our attention: (Copy desk chief) brought it to (source editor’s) attention this afternoon.

Did deadlines affect this error? Deadlines did not affect this error.

How could this error have been avoided? Two options. One, I should have just asked Donoghue how to spell his name. Two, I should have double-checked the spelling against the one given on the Cook County Medical Examiner’s Web site.

LEARNING A THING OR TWO - Confessions

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted.

...Willa Long of the Illinois Coalition on Donation said the charges in the lawsuit, based on allegations by a U. of I. College of Medicine transplant surgeon, are “old news to us” and probably won’t discourage organ donations. “We believe the rules and regulations are working.”

For publication:

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

Willa Lang is executive director of the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois. Her name and title were incorrect in a story in Wednesday’s Metro section about the procedures for allocating donated livers.

Not for publication

How did the error occur? Name spelling was reporter’s typo. I knew full well that the interview subject’s name is Lang, not Long. There is absolutely no excuse, but in retrospect I realize that I was so intent on spelling John Butorac’s unusual name correctly that I concentrated on each use of his name and didn’t give Ms. Lang’s name enough attention. As for Ms. Lang’s title: I found her as a source through the Illinois Coalition on Donation. I knew she was also executive director of the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, and cited her as such in another quote in the story that I later cut for space. During that cut, I consciously chose to identify her association with the Illinois Coalition on Donation because I thought it made more sense than the Kidney Foundation affiliation (because the story was mostly about liver donations, not kidneys). Obviously, it wasn’t the best choice. As she has since explained to me, she is a member of the Illinois Coalition on Donation, but her primary role is with the Kidney Foundation, and she prefers to be identified as executive director of the foundation. (By the way, I turned to Ms. Lang after several unsuccessful attempts to reach someone from the American Liver Foundation, a group that probably would have been a more relevant source for this story.)

How did the error come to our attention? Phone message from Ms. Lang, who complimented the story as a whole but asked that a correction be run. I have since spoken to her to apologize; she was extremely gracious and appreciates the correction.

Did deadlines affect the error? Perhaps, but that’s no excuse. I was asked to cut the story by 50 lines for space at about 7:30 p.m., if memory serves me correctly. I even stood next to the copy editor through much of the copy editing and we double- and triple-checked several points within the story. Unfortunately, I must have run back to my own computer to re-check an e-mailed document at about the same time he was reading over the graf that contained Ms. Lang’s name. Perhaps if I had been reading along with him at that point, I would have noticed the error. I left the office at about 9 p.m., quite assured that the story was correct.

How could this error have been avoided? I should have printed out a copy of the story and double-checked every name and title before filing. I literally feel sick that I did not do this. I will do this for all stories in the future, and “cq” every single name throughout the text. If others have suggestions for avoiding these types of errors, I would greatly appreciate them.

Comments: Today is perhaps the worst day of my journalism career. I can’t believe I was so stupid. I can’t apologize enough to my colleagues, supervisors and to the Chicago Tribune.

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted.

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2

In a main news section story Friday about Wall Street effects of the East Coast blackout, comments about possible impacts on individual companies were attributed incorrectly to Ned Bennett of OptionsExpress. The comments were made by financial adviser James Weiss.

Not for publication

Describe error and show a corrected version: The error was in the attribution in the next to last paragraph. The last sentence of the paragraph should have read as follows: But a private company building a windmill farm on Nantucket Island might start thinking about going public, Weiss said.

How did the error occur? A lot of cutting and pasting occurred during editing. Editor XXX incorrectly attributed the next-to-last graf.

How did the error come to our attention: (Reporter) noticed it in the newspaper.

Did deadlines affect this error? No, blame the late hour (fatigue) How could this error have been avoided? More careful editing by desk.

WEB ADDRESSES - Details, details

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted.

Bahr, a San Diego-area financial planner, and her business partner, Ginita Wall, an accountant and financial planner, have the Web site (www.moneyclub.com), the curriculum and the funding: tens of thousands of dollars from financial services giants Visa and the General Electric Center for Financial Learning, a GE-underwritten nonprofit that supports numerous financial education programs around the country.

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

In a story on the Money Clubs organization in last Wednesday's WomanNews section, an incorrect Web address was provided for the group. The correct Web address for the Money Clubs is www.moneyclubs.com.

Not for publication

Describe error and show a corrected version:

Because of a typo, an incorrect Web address was given for the Money Clubs. Here is the correct version: Bahr, a San Diego-area financial planner, and her business partner, Ginita Wall, an accountant and financial planner, have the Web site (www.moneyclubs.com).

How did the error occur? The web address was typed in by an editor and the S was inadvertently left off.

How did the error come to our attention: The founder of the clubs called the freelance writer and requested a correction.

Did deadlines affect this error? no

How could this error have been avoided? If the editor had cut and pasted the information provided by the freelance writer instead of typing it in; and then also if the Web address had been checked by cutting and pasting it into the browser.

TALK TO EACH OTHER - Multiple footprints and team efforts

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include the error and section the error occurred in:

Page 2 of Sunday's Northwest Metro section: Bonnie "Dursea, chairwoman of the Preservation Committee's Scenic Road Subcommittee, admitted to some personal reasons for pushing the designation. She wanted ammunition in case there are efforts to widen the road, she said."

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

In some editions of Sunday's Metro section, the name of Bonnie Duresa, chairwoman of McHenry County's scenic roads subcommittee, was misspelled and her reason for pushing for Plum Tree Road to be designated as "scenic" was mischaracterized. Duresa said the designation would help residents to keep the 1.5-mile stretch a rural, two-lane road.

Not for publication

Describe error and show a corrected version: Duresa was spelled Dursea; Duresa's reasons for wanting the road designated a scenic road were overstated. In the past, Duresa said, there had been attempts to widen the road. Designating the 1.5-mile stretch as scenic would make people more aware of the road and help keep it two lanes and rural.

How did the error occur? The story, five paragraphs in the Tribune's "The Beat," came in more than double the length needed. One editor (XXXX) rewrote the first reference to Duresa and misspelled her name. Another editor (YYYY) condensed the reason Duresa was pushing for the road to be designated.

How did the error come to our attention: Bonnie Duresa called the reporter, then called Deputy Bureau Chief ZZZZ to complain.

Did deadlines affect this error? Don't know.

How could this error have been avoided? The first editor should have double-checked the edited version with what the reporter submitted. The second editor could have called the reporter or the bureau editor to see whether the rewritten version was correct.

TEAM EFFORTS - The sequel

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted.

Hodgkins residents seek to block drapery center

A group of residents have sued the Village of Hodgkins and a drapery company to block the construction of a distribution center near their homes.

The residents say the property, owned in part by the Hodgkins village president and the village attorney, should not have been rezoned to commercial use from residential.

For publication:

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

A headline on a story about a lawsuit filed against the village of Hodgkins incorrectly stated that Hodgkins residents had sued the village to block a drapery company's distribution center. The people who filed the suit were from unincorporated Lyons Township and are applying for annexation to Countryside.

Revised:

A headline and an item in the Metro section Thursday incorrectly indicated that Hodgkins residents had sued the village of Hodgkins to block a drapery company's distribution center. The people who filed the suit were from unincorporated Lyons Township and are applying for annexation to Countryside.

Not for publication

How did the error occur? The story referred to the people filing suit as simply "residents," leading the headline writer to believe they were Hodgkins residents. The story never specified where the people who filed the suit lived, and in fact it was easy to assume from the lede that they lived in Hodgkins.

How did the error come to our attention: Phone calls from the neighbors

Did deadlines affect this error? No.

How could this error have been avoided? Reporter should have spelled out the hometown of the plaintiffs in the story.

Comments: From source editor: For the record, the headline said "Hodgkins residents," so while the story might have "indicated" such, the headline clearly said it.

PATTERNS OF COGNITION - Seeing what we expect to see

Here is an example of what a colleague characterizes as patterns of cognition. I can't vouch for the origin of that phrase, but it describes how we expect to see things a certain way and thus are vulnerable when it comes to spotting an error. The bold-facing is mine.

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted:

“From coast to coast, lay people as well as priests are calling for an end to optional celibacy. Every Catholic is not in favor of allowing priests to marry, but there is certainly enough interest in this issue to open the topic to discussion.”

For publication

Text of proposed correction for page 2:

A letter to the editor ... incorrectly stated Catholic debate about celibacy. It should have read: “From coast to coast, lay people as well as priests are calling for an end to mandatory celibacy. What people want is optional celibacy. Not every Catholic is in favor of allowing priests to marry, but there is certainly enough interest in this issue to open the topic to discussion.”

Not for publication:

Describe error and show a corrected version: See above

How did the error occur? Letter writer sent the letter in and the mistake was not caught by editor.

How did the error come to our attention: The letter writer sent an email to the editor the next day.

Did deadlines affect this error? No

WHEN OUR OWN COMPANY IS IN THE NEWS - Arrrggghhhh

CLARIFICATION/ERROR EXPLANATION

Please include electronic copy of the error, with section, page and date noted.

Located on State Street between 32nd and 33rd Streets, the building is officially known as the McCormick Tribune Campus Center because the McCormick Tribune Foundation, an arm of Tribune Co., made a \$13 million donation.

For publication

Text of proposed correction for Page 2:

A story on Page 1 of Sunday's Arts & Entertainment section about the new McCormick Tribune Campus Center at Illinois Institute of Technology misstated the legal relationship of the McCormick Tribune Foundation and Tribune Co. The McCormick Tribune Foundation is a separate, nonprofit foundation with substantial holdings in Tribune Co. stock.

Not for publication

Describe error and show a corrected version:

Tribune Foundation officials objected to characterization of the foundation as an "arm" of Tribune Co.

Corrected version:

Located on State Street between 32nd and 33rd Streets, the building is officially known as the McCormick Tribune Campus Center because the McCormick Tribune Foundation — an independent, non-profit foundation with substantial holdings in Tribune Co. stock — made a \$13 million donation.

How did the error occur? Please be specific and include names: At our production deadlines, (a senior editor) asked for an addition to elaborate on why the campus center had the name Tribune in its title and to disclose the relationship between the paper and the building. The last-minute addition - which needed to be as brief as possible to fit in already assigned space — incorporated the word "arm" to describe the relationship.

How did the error come to our attention: (Department editor) brought it to our attention. (Note: several calls from executive suites.)

Did deadlines affect this error? Somewhat.

How could this error have been avoided? (Source editor) should have double-checked Tribune policy on how this relationship is characterized in the paper.