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DESIGN / GRAPHICS

DIVERSITY

ETHICS

LEADERSHIP

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PHOTOJOURNALISM

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TV / RADIO

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Date/Time: 3/3/2006 12:06:42 PM
Title: Memo to Knight Ridder editors
Posted By: Jim Romenesko

From: [Knight Ridder Washington editor] Hoyt, Clark
Sent: Thursday, March 02, 2006 7:56 PM
To: krt-kreditors, krt-kreditors
Cc: Hutton, Carole; Wash Buro Editors, Wash Buro Editors
Subject: Journalism Ethics

TO: Knight Ridder Editors
FROM: Clark Hoyt
 [Washington bureau chief] John Walcott

We've been having some vigorous discussion here -- and have been in correspondence with the ombudsmen of The Washington Post and New York Times -- about various ethical and journalism issues. We thought you'd be interested in these issues, and we'd appreciate your thoughts about them. We also think some of this should raise caution flags for your gatekeeping editors as they assess whether to use copy from competing national news organizations.

First, in this post-Jayson Blair era, we believe newspapers must be more transparent than ever about the sources of their stories. That includes acknowledging when others have beaten us to a big story. The Washington Post and New York Times each failed this standard in recent weeks.

On Feb. 7, Warren Strobel reported on a State Department reorganization that sidelined career arms control experts who don't share the Bush administration's mistrust of international arms negotiations and agreements. Exactly two weeks later, The Washington Post published a virtually identical story by Glenn Kessler. We say "virtually identical" only because the stories were written with different words. There was not a single fact in Kessler's story that was not in Strobel's, the product of weeks of careful enterprise reporting and interviews with 11 current and former government officials. We have asked, through the Post's ombudsman, Deborah Howell, who was once executive editor in St. Paul, for a published acknowledgement of the Knight Ridder story. To date, it hasn't happened. We understand that there has been vigorous opposition from the Post reporter, who has claimed, in essence, that the "trade press" had already widely reported the story, a contention that is in fact not correct. We're waiting to see what happens.

This morning, The New York Times led the paper with a story that concluded that fines for mine safety violations are down in the Bush administration. The story was based on "a data analysis by The New York Times." That's interesting. Knight Ridder -- the bureau's Seth Borenstein and Linda Johnson and Lee Mueller of the Lexington Herald-Leader -- published a data analysis on January 9 that arrived at precisely the same conclusion. You may recall that the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration vigorously disputed our story, only to have independent statistics experts say that we were right. USA Today wrote a story similar to ours about a month later, without acknowledging the Knight Ridder

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story. Now comes the Times. We've asked, through Public Editor Byron Calame for a published acknowledgement. /[CONTINUED BELOW](#)

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