

# Danielle C. Cervantes Stephens

Journalist & Educator

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## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Data Journalist / Investigative Reporter

#### InquireFirst, San Diego (August 2016-present)

- Currently, I work on a team tasked with evaluating the nation's water infrastructure, including the efficacy of privatizing public water systems. The lion's share of my work has focused on conceiving and designing a universal, public-friendly dashboard that aggregates EPA inspection and quality data with consumer-confidence records. No such database exists yet nationally. In addition, I contribute my research and reporting skills to tracking state and federal legislation, its sponsors and influence from contributors, lobbyists and utilities.

### Adjunct Professor in Investigative and Data Journalism

#### Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, (Jan. 2007-present)

- I teach introduction to journalism, editing and investigative journalism courses at PLNU. In addition, I have advised the student newspaper, *The Point Weekly*. During the 2009-2010 year, the editorial board did in its first-ever investigation, which examined the City of San Diego and university's mishandling of a public land agreement that ultimately impacted the school's Title IX status. Post-graduation, my students have won many state and local awards in investigative journalism and open-records advocacy.

### Adjunct Professor in Digital and Data Journalism

#### Dept. of Graduate Digital Journalism, National University, San Diego, (July 2008-present)

- I consult on curriculum development and teach a graduate course in computer-assisted reporting, where students analyze data for news production while practicing watchdog journalism.

### Data Journalist / Investigative Reporter

#### iNewsource, San Diego (June 2011-January 2013)

- For this grant-based assignment, another reporter and I examined the murky world of federal contracting. We concentrated our inquiry on minority-owned businesses that were subcontracting all or most of their contracted work back to non-minority-owned businesses. Key to the investigation was a first-of-its-kind 3-million record database of federal contractors and subcontractors that I worked months to normalize and aggregate so that we could identify and track who actually performed the work after earning the initial federal contract. This data was eventually monetized and released to other investigative non-profits through the Institute for Nonprofit News (formerly the Investigative News Network).

### Data Journalist / Investigative Reporter

#### Watchdog & Investigations Teams, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* (July 2005-Feb. 2011)

- My work examined public assets and contracts, compensation, pensions, food safety, stimulus spending, mortgage fraud and campaign finance. I provided statistical analysis and database reporting, performed deep backgrounding using public records and commercial databases, developed in-house watchdog and data training and mentored younger colleagues in investigative techniques and public-records law. I collaborated seamlessly with teams of editors, reporters, photographers and graphic artists and was known for being a positive, effective collaborator. In 2005, the newspaper submitted my work for Pulitzer Prizes in Investigative and Explanatory Reporting after those stories inspired financial and public safety reforms in San Diego and California. For the same work, I was named a Finalist for the Livingston Award in 2006. My investigation into city contracting after our region's devastating wildfires of 2007 triggered a federal criminal investigation into the billing practices of two city contractors; in 2011, they were ordered to refund more than \$1 million to taxpayers.

### Senior Staff Researcher/Senior News Librarian

#### News Research/Library, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* (April 2000-July 2005; internships, 1996-1999)

- I contributed research to our staff's Pulitzer Prize for National-Affairs Reporting that exposed Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham's bribery scandal. As a senior researcher, I collaborated with reporters and editors and provided research for all types for news stories and utilized a range of sources, from traditional reference books to public records, government databases and commercial sources like Accurint, Lexis-Nexis and PACER. During that time, I was also recognized as a national expert in Census and demographics reporting.

## PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

- MediaShift/PBS Student Journalism Hackathon (faculty mentor to 2015 winning team)
- Best in Show, San Diego Press Club Awards (2009 winner)
- Investigative Journalism, San Diego Press Club Awards (2009 winner)
- Investigative Journalism, Society of Professional Journalists (2009 winner)
- Livingston Award for Young Journalists (2006 finalist)
- Editors' Special Recognition for Excellence in Journalism (2005)
- Freedom of Information Reporting, California Newspaper Publishers' Assn. (2005 2<sup>nd</sup>-place winner)
- Pulitzer Prize for National Affairs Reporting (2005 newsroom staff winner, contributor)
- Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting (2005 work submitted by publisher)
- Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting (2005 work submitted by publisher)
- Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting (2003 nominee/finalist, research contributions)
- Best Support of Journalist Excellence, *Union-Tribune* (2003)
- Librarian of the Year, *Union-Tribune* (2002)

## EDUCATION

### Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA

- Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, Women studies minor, May 2000 (GPA: 3.70/3.77)
- Bachelor of Arts, English Literature; French minor-equivalent, May 2000 (GPA: 3.49/3.8)
- Distinguished Graduate, Political Science, May 2000
- Honors Project / Thesis: *Solving for X: A Generational Ethnography*, May 2000
- The William Y. Elliot Award for Best Research in Political Theory, Undergraduate Political Science Research Conference, April 2000
- Dean's List / Academic Scholarship, 1994-2000
- Treasurer, Associated Women Students, 1996-1997

## ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND PROFICIENCIES

**Computer proficiency:** Excel (expert, 15 years); Access (expert, 15 years); MySQL (advanced, 10 years); ArcGIS (intermediate, 10 years); SPSS (intermediate, 20 years); Tableau (basic, 5 years); Caspio (advanced, 7 years) Photoshop (advanced, 17 years) PowerPoint (advanced, 20 years); HTML (basic, 17 years).

### Reference/research proficiency:

- **General:** Mastery of traditional reference sources, including encyclopedias, indices and directories; advanced web search techniques, including finding information via the "invisible web" and "deep web"
- **Databases:** Lexis-Nexis, Factiva, ProQuest, Google Scholar, JStor
- **Public records:** Accurint/Lexis-Nexis, PACER, county criminal, civil and assessor databases, SEC and FEC
- **Social media:** Facebook, Twitter, genealogical sites, vital records
- **Demographic:** Census Bureau, BLS, BEA and NCES.

## PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Contact information shared upon request.

- **Susan White:** Executive editor, InquireFirst
- **Karin Winner:** Retired editor in chief, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*
- **Lorie Hearn:** Director, iNewsSource (San Diego)
- **Maggie Mulvihill:** Fellow, Hariri Institute for Computing and Computational Science & Engineering, Boston University; co-founder, New England Center for Investigative Journalism
- **Ricky Young:** Watchdog editor, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*
- **Jennifer LaFleur:** Senior editor for data journalism, The Center for Investigative Journalism (Berkeley)
- **Brooke Williams:** Former project partner, clinical professor at Boston University, *New York Times* contributor
- **Matt Perry:** Data designer, *Harvard Business Review*; former graphics editor at *The San Diego Union-Tribune*
- **Jaimi Dowdell:** Immediate-past training director, Investigative Reporters & Editors
- **Kevin Crowe:** Data and investigative reporter, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

## ACADEMIC REFERENCES

### Hadley Wood

Ph.D. Harvard University  
Professor Emerita of French & Literature  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
(619) 849-2295

### Kay Harkins

M.F.A. Bennington College  
Professor of Writing (Retired)  
St. Katherine's College  
(619) 295-4722

### Linda Beail

Ph.D. University of Iowa  
Professor of Political Science  
Director, Margaret Stevenson Center  
for Women's Studies  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
(619) 223-6848

### Dean Nelson

Ph.D. University of Ohio  
Professor of Journalism  
Director, Journalism Program and  
Writer's Symposium by the Sea  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
(619) 849-2592

### Sara Ellen Amster

Ph.D. UC San Diego  
Assistant Professor of Journalism  
Director, Graduate Program in Digital  
Journalism  
National University  
(949) 300-6952

### Maria al-Salem

Ph.D. University of Colorado  
Professor of French History & Politics  
Director, Paris Internship Program  
Lake Forest College  
33 (01) 45-04-17-64

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Member, Investigative Reporters & Editors/National Institute for Computer Assisted Reporting (2002-present)
- Member, Society of Professional Journalists (2010-present)
- Board member, Society for Professional Journalists, National Committee for New Media (2010-2013)
- Member, California Chicano News Media Association (2007-2009)
- San Diego Press Club (2009)

## SPECIALTY PUBLICATIONS

- Cervantes, D. Index. *Mad Men and Politics: Nostalgia and the Remaking of Modern America*
- Cervantes, D. Bibliographie. *furibles*, No. 253: 93, 2000 May.
- Cervantes, D. Giving proper credit. *Uplink*, 20(1): 1, 20-21, 2006 January.
- Williams, B. and Cervantes, D. City Assets: Financial meltdown prompts reporting of flawed San Diego real estate records. *IRE Journal*, 29(2): 16-17, 2006 March.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Cervantes, D. *Data Journalism*. InquireFirst International Investigative Journalism Symposium. San Diego, Nov. 2016.
- Cervantes, D. *Introduction to Investigative Data with Spreadsheets*. Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE) Data Watchdog Workshop. San Diego, Oct. 2016.
- Cervantes, D. *Le Morte d'Arthur: Or How I Used the Death of My Dog to Teach Backgrounding with Data and Docs*. Educator Lightning Talks. National Institute for Computer Assisted Reporting (NICAR) Annual Conference. Denver, March 2016.
- Cervantes, D. *Tools for cracking PDFs*. NICAR Annual Conference. Atlanta, Feb. 2015.
- Mulvihill, M. and Cervantes, D. *Teaching CAR in the Classroom*. NICAR Annual Conference. Raleigh, Feb. 2011.
- Cervantes, D. *Introduction to Computer-Assisted Reporting*. SPJ Regional Conference. San Diego, Feb. 2011.
- Cervantes, D. and Sanjay B. *Finding and Negotiating for Public Data*. IRE Annual Conference. Las Vegas, June 2010.
- Cervantes, D. *After Disaster Strikes: Be A Recovery Watchdog*. NICAR Annual Conference. Indianapolis, Feb. 2009.
- Armendariz, A. and Cervantes, D. *Tracking a Wildfire*. NICAR Annual Conference. Houston, Feb. 2008.
- LaFleur, J. and Cervantes D. *Bulletproofing Your Data Stories*. NICAR Annual Conference. Newark, March 2006.
- Cervantes D. *Excel for Beginners*. NICAR Annual Conference. Newark, March 2006.
- Overberg, P. and Cervantes, D. *ACS: Get Ready for the Every-Year Census*. NICAR Annual Conference. Los Angeles, March 2005.
- Cervantes, D. *Backgrounding Individuals*. NICAR Annual Conference. Los Angeles, March 2005.

## ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

### Editorial Intern

Revue *futuribles*

Futuribles International, Paris, France

Sept. 1999-Jan. 2000

Wrote book reviews for the journal, *futuribles*; edited any/all text published in English; completed project to copy-edit journal's entire online archive.

### Tutor, Teaching Assistant and Language-Lab Assistant

Dept. of Literature, Journalism & Modern Languages, PLNU

Aug. 1996-May 2000

Taught courses in composition, literature, literary theory and French; graded essays, exams and homework; developed supplementary curriculum.

### Copy Editor, Student Publications

*The Point Weekly* (newspaper), *The Driftwood* (literary magazine) and *The Mariner* (yearbook), PLNU

Sept. 1996-May 2000

Copy-edited news and feature articles; served on executive council that made all operational and editorial decisions; assigned and managed story deadlines

### Reading Tutor

America Reads Program

California-Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP), UCSD

Aug. 1998-June 1999

Instructed underperforming elementary-school students at Barnard Elementary School in Point Loma; created in phonics and reading comprehension exercises to improve literacy.

### Copy Editor

*Sleeping in the Garden: A Collection of Poems* by Daintry Conner

Oct. 1997-March 1998

Duties and Responsibilities: Copy-edited poetry collection; made stylistic suggestions for more metered verse and literary suggestions for theme, imagery and purpose.

### Substitute French Teacher

French I, II and III (Grades 7-9)

Children's Creative and Performing Arts Academy, San Diego

Oct. 1997-Dec. 1997 (temporary position)

Taught three levels of French in a combined classroom for school while permanent replacement was found; planned curriculum; tested and evaluated students.

### Tutor Coordinator and Multi-Subject Tutor

The Write Place Tutoring Center, PLNU

Aug. 1995-Dec. 1997

Tutored writing, political science, French and biochemistry; served as student supervisor to 12 tutors, crafted work schedules, assigned subjects for tutoring and matching student clients with tutors.

### University Intern

Dr. John Cannon

Dept. of Education

University of Nevada, Reno

Sept. 1993-June 1994

Performed research on mentoring professor's area of expertise (constructive learning in physical sciences); graded student projects and kept class records.