

**Brandon Roberts**  
Software Engineer & Data Journalist

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portfolio: <https://bxroberts.org/work/>

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I'm a hybrid software engineer/data journalist with nearly ten years of professional experience, half of which has been spent contracting for news organizations like *ProPublica*. I excel at solving difficult problems under strict deadlines with an eye for correctness and quality. In addition to my contracting, I'm also involved in computational journalism research and have presented at NICAR 2013 and 2020.

*knowledge: full stack web development, Django, Svelte, AWS/GCP, unsupervised machine learning, web scraping, big data*

## Experience

### Electionland coalition – *ProPublica*

August 2020 – November 2020

I was brought on to add new features and provide support during the 2020 election cycle. The largest improvement involved extending their internal, journalist-facing Django web application that lets reporters keep track of and report on tips coming in from all over the country.

### Nonprofit Explorer news app – *ProPublica*

October 2019 – January 2020

Nonprofit Explorer has been slowly extended by various members of *ProPublica*'s news apps/data desk over the years. I was hired to give the codebase a high level cleanup & refactor and to make it possible for people to view all the schedules included in a filing on a single page.

### Collaborate open source tool – *ProPublica*

April 2019 – November 2019

Every time *ProPublica* started a new reporting project, they'd build a new Django app. Over time, this became a maintenance nightmare. I was hired to build Collaborate, a generic Django app for turning APIs and CSVs into managed Django admins, no programming required. Development of Collaborate was supported by the Google News Initiative and is currently in use by *ProPublica*, the Center for Public Integrity and the *Texas Tribune*.

### Bay Area Voter's Guide – *ByTheBay*

March 2018 – October 2018

When I was approached to build out the system, all that existed was some GraphQL powered React code. I replaced this with a scalable serverless backend infrastructure and modernized their frontend with mutation-free React Redux.

## Senior Software Engineer – *AlertMedia*

February 2014—June 2017

As part of the founding development team, I built and deployed real-time news alert & two-way communication systems, steered long-term architectural decisions, developed cost saving innovations on AWS and mentored junior developers.

## Data Journalist & Developer – *The Austin Bulldog*

June 2012—February 2014

I led research on a 6-month tax evasion story, using web scraping and open records requests, that resulted in the recovery of hundreds of thousands of dollars. I managed all data analysis needs, automated research methods and built systems to perform background checks on political candidates.

## Open Source & Presentations

### Artificial Informer Labs

April 2019

As someone who has benefitted from using machine learning techniques to aid investigations, I was disappointed with the resources available to journalists. I wrote *Artificial Informer* to clearly and simply describe machine learning algorithms and how they can be used to build stories.

### AutoScrape

February 2019

AutoScrape is an investigative-focused web scraping tool which implements a new framework to simplify many common journalistic data gathering tasks and reduce maintenance costs. AutoScrape was built in partnership with several non-profit media organizations. AutoScrape was presented to C+J 2019 and NICAR 2020.

### SparseLSH

August 2014

SparseLSH is an open source library for finding groups of similar text documents in datasets and proves an order of magnitude speedup for datasets larger than available RAM. Past uses include identifying PACs operated by single individuals in FEC data and competing in Kaggle's 2014 Greek Media WISE competition.

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References available upon request.