

# I Read The New York Times

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I read the New York Times. It is a fascinating source of information. While it is often criticized (usually by the political right wing and sometimes by the very far left), numerous examples of interesting and thought provoking articles are easily found.

The other day -- April 18 -- I came across two very interesting articles that exemplified excellent, professional journalism.

The first article featured Steve Ballmer's new website that tracks government spending at the local, state and federal level. Written by Andrew Ross Sorkin, in his Dealbook column, the article discussed Ballmer's new website, USAFacts.org. As most people know, Mr. Ballmer is a retired Microsoft CEO, worth an estimated \$24 billion. Three years ago, he set out to find out what happens to all tax dollars. Discovered and assembled at a cost of about \$10,000,000, most of which came from Mr. Ballmer's pocket (and not deducted, we are told), the website contains hundreds of facts about how tax dollars are spent at the local, state, and federal level. For example, there are 24,000,000 government employees, most of whom are teachers, doctors and in the military. I will confess that I spent a couple of minutes on the site and did not find it hugely rewarding. However, I think it may become an important source of factual information in the future for anyone interested in actually finding out facts about how tax dollars are spent.

The second article described a nascent criminal court in San Francisco charged with meting out justice to selected young adults who are charged with certain crimes. For example, a young African-American man, arrested for assault after a traffic altercation, was diverted to this court. The court required the young man to attend counseling sessions and to report weekly to the court for about a year. Ultimately, we find out that his case seems to be a success. Young adults court came about because neuroscience tells us that the brains of young adults are not fully formed. By diverting appropriate defendants to this court, the aim is to steer young adults into productive lives, rather than sending them to prisons where criminal behavior will likely be ingrained. The journalist interviewed experts on both sides of this experiment and we learn about arguments on both sides, allowing the reader to reach his or her own conclusions. The journalist may have revealed his own feelings with his concluding paragraphs which revealed the positive outcome of the young man -- he ignores a racial epithet hurled at him, despite a rising anger.

There are any number of similar stories every day in the Times. Pick it up and see if you agree.