



Sheriff slashes \$700 bill for public records

By **BRUCE RUSHTON**

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The Sangamon County Sheriff's Office has dramatically reduced a bill for records requested by the Downst contends someone has been wrongfully convicted in a 1989 killing.

The sheriff's office had demanded \$700 for copies of 11 compact discs and six audio tapes that capture poli Johnston, whose confession and testimony helped convict Thomas McMillen of murder in the stabbing death agencies from collecting more than actual reproduction costs and forbids charging for staff time in compiling

Late Monday afternoon, Bill Clutter, investigator for the Innocence Project, said his office received a hand-de \$37.78, a discount of more than 90 percent.

Clutter credited a story in Sunday's State Journal-Register that pointed out the sheriff's charges appeared to "I'm not an epidemiologist, but I think there's a cause and effect," Clutter said.

Tony Sacco, chief deputy for Sheriff Neil Williamson, confirmed Tuesday that the newspaper's story prompte the Innocence Project.

"I honestly think that had an impact on the way we're doing things," Sacco said. "We're looking at a revision

For now, at least, the sheriff's office won't change fees for insurance companies and businesses that reques making a request under the state Freedom of Information Act, Sacco said.

That's akin to having one fee schedule for folks who know the law and another for less-savvy requesters, sa often represents clients in public-records cases.

"I don't know of anything that says if you make a FOIA request, you have to say 'FOIA,'" Craven said.

The Innocence Project wants the records so that Richard Leo, a University of San Francisco law professor w examine police questioning of Johnston, who pleaded guilty to robbery charges in the Koontz case and testii

Leo has written a book about the Norfolk Four case in which four Navy sailors were convicted of a 1997 rape being threatened with the death penalty, and 30 former FBI agents on Monday announced they should be in evidence shows they're innocent.

Leo, who appeared Monday at the University of Illinois at Springfield for a lecture sponsored by the Innocent of the McMillen case and Johnston's confession has raised questions.

“So much of what he (Johnston) describes doesn’t fit the case facts,” Leo said. “There’s definitely some red was not true.”

At Monday’s lecture, a woman offered to donate \$700 to the Innocence Project so it could buy the records fr to Johnston firsthand, Clutter said. All told, the project raised about \$5,000 from Monday’s event, he said, ar experts like Leo instead of the police for public records.

“It’s just a tremendous response from the community,” Clutter said.

Bruce Rushton can be reached at 788-1542.

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