

Board of Directors Conference Call

Aug. 22, 2013
11 a.m. Central

In Attendance: David Cay Johnston, Sarah Cohen, Ellen Gabler, Andrew Donohue, Mc Nelly Torres, Ziva Branstetter, Rob Cribb, Len Downie, Matt Goldberg, Josh Meyer, T. Christian Miller, Stuart Watson
IRE Staff: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston

Absent: Manny Garcia

Johnston calls meeting to order at 11:07 a.m.

Downie moves to approve the minutes; Branstetter seconds.
Unanimous approved

Executive Directors Report

- Membership numbers are up 5% from August of last year.
- We have a very busy training season coming up. Megan Luther will be on leave this fall and Mark and Jaimi will be on the road more to help cover all of the trainings.
- IRE is doing corporate training for Gannett and Hearst this fall. Additionally, we are holding Watchdog Workshops and doing custom newsroom training under two current grants, the Community Partnership Project and Total Newsroom Training.
- We sold out the Aug boot camp in Columbia and one held at Temple University. The mapping boot camp in Columbia came close to selling out and had a much bigger draw than usual.
- Mark is attending the meeting of the Sigma Delta Chi Board of Directors later this month, where that board will vote on funding a investigative training project led by IRE and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting.
- Mark will be at Poynter next week for a weeklong workshop being done in partnership with Poynter.
- IRE held a Watchdog workshop at the Asian American journalists Association conference They are potentially interested in IRE doing something for their 2014 conference and possibly working with us for ours. Miller noted that it would be a great idea if we can work something out. Torres & Branstetter agreed.
- We have put in a grant request with the Investigative News Network that would help modernize and expand the Database Library.
- There is a web map that Web editor Tony Schick has been working on. It is an interactive map that highlights results of the training. It is meant to show the reach and impact of IRE's training. Board members discussed possible improvements and supported the idea.
- Horvit reminded the Board about the weekend retreat Oct. 5-6 in St. Louis.
- Horvit reminded the Board that the CAR Conference is in Baltimore Feb. 27-March 2, 2014. There is no Board meeting at the conference. The IRE Conference is in San Francisco June 26-29. The Board meeting will be the afternoon of June 26.

Budget Update

Horvit noted that because the fiscal year began less than two months ago, there is not a lot to report. He said an outside auditor will conduct IRE's annual audit this fall.

Proposal for Governance Committee

Cohen discussed the need for a Board committee to examine governance issues, such as the ongoing work to move to an electronic system for electing board members.

Horvit suggested that a motion be made on this even though it is not required.

Wording was discussed and debated. The final version offered for a vote was:

"IRE will create a new committee on governance to address election procedures, board diversity and development, initiation of new and potential board members, and other board-related issues as they arise."

The motion to approve was made by Cohen and seconded by Torres.

Unanimous approval.

Proposal from IRE member Nancy Stancill

Horvit said Nancy Stancill, a longtime member and former Board member, has a proposal that involves raising some money for the endowment. She helped start the Godfrey Wells Stancill Fellowships that help journalists working for newspapers with Sunday circulation under 50,000 attend the IRE conference.

Stancill is preparing to publish a novel and proposes donating royalties for the first 1,000 books to the fellowship. IRE would promote her effort, which would potentially help both the fundraising effort and sales of the book.

Lengthy discussion of Stancill's offer ensued. Questions raised by Board members including Miller and Meyer centered on how it would be presented on the IRE site, whether there would be any guaranteed funding from IRE for the sale of the books, whether IRE would be setting a precedent that could impact how we deal with members who may want to do something similar in the future, and how we'd monitor sales.

Horvit suggested that this could be a test case. If it works well, we could formalize the idea and work with other members who write books if they're interested. He told Board members he would contact Stancill to follow up on the questions raised during the discussion.

Diversity

Branstetter noted that the Board needs to continue to make strides in addressing the diversity issue. She noted the efforts already mentioned earlier in the meeting, including the creation of the governance committee.

Torres agreed, noting that this has been something the Board has been working on.

A lengthy conversation followed. Among the ideas discussed:

Cohen: The Board needs to look at not just race and gender, but also location and type of affiliation.

Watson: Suggested reaching out to historically black colleges and universities as one way to address membership diversity, and reaching out in communities where conferences are held, as was done with the Hispanic community for the recent IRE Conference.

Meyer: Suggested the conference committee make sure diversity is considered.

Miller suggested reviewing past efforts for successes and failures.

Torres suggested that names be suggested for committee membership. Several members suggested each committee address these issues in the appropriate way. Donohue and Cohen said this is better than creating another committee.

Downie asked about existing fellowships that bring minorities to IRE events. Horvit replied that there is a program. Each year we have 15-20 minority fellowships that we can give out. Downie asked that Mark send him the information on those funds.

Fellowships

Horvit said that he and Downie have been has several fellowships that are so small they don't generate enough money to do anything on their own, including the Bob Greene fund, the Jack Anderson fund, and others. We looked at the purpose for each one of them and found that four of them have a similar purpose, to bring young journalists to IRE events. By pooling the funds from these fellowships we could create one fund that would be used to send young journalist to the conference.

Downie commented that by combining them they could do something rather than just lying dormant.

Miller said that he thought it sounded good.

Horvit asked if it needed a vote.

Johnston replied that it did not.

FCC Issue

Horvit said IRE has been approached about joining an effort related to television stations making their information on campaign ad buys more easily available.

Discussion ensued. The consensus was that IRE does not join a large number of such issues and is trying to focus on issues where it can have direct impact. The board decided not to join this effort at this time, but also to put on the agenda for the fall retreat a discussion of when and how IRE should handle requests to join such efforts.

Cohen suggested that a committee be formed to look at this issue prior to the meeting. Donohue agreed, and will be joined by Cribb, Goldberg and Downie, who all volunteered to help.

Johnston adjourned meeting at 12:23 p.m.