

IRE Board Call Minutes May 3, 2012

Board Members Present on the Call: Aron Pilhofer, Alison Young, David Cay Johnston, Matt Waite, Lea Thompson, Manny Garcia, Mc Nelly Torres, Sarah Cohen, Andrew Donohue, Rob Cribb, Leonard Downie Jr.

Staff Present on the Call: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston, Heather Feldmann Henry

Meeting called to order at 11:33 a.m. by Garcia.

Minutes Approval: The minutes from the previous Board call were approved, with a couple of minor corrections, including noting the reason for the confidential session. Vote: Unanimous

Budget (Horvit)

Horvit reminded board members that this was an initial presentation of the budget, and that the board would be able to discuss the budget again at its June meeting, when approval would be sought.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Here are some of the highlights discussed:

- Membership revenue is down slightly, largely in the renewal category.
- Tip sheet sales are higher than they've been in several years.
- Contest revenue equaled the previous year. We will transition to an electronic context for 2013 but we are not projected a change in revenue.
- Journal expenses are proposed to increase because of a shift in the way the editing will be handled and the allocation of salaries.
- Book sales are down. IRE hasn't produced a new book in a few years, and that may be one factor.
- Web revenue is projected to be lower because we have built in less money for the website in existing grants.
- Expenses are higher for the database library because we will have a new full-time director, Liz Lucas. Income also is projected to increase.
- While we have exceeded our fund-raising goals for our conferences for the past two years, we are not projecting an increase for next year, because we don't have a head-start on fund-raising, as we did in Boston.
- There is no budget line for ethnic media training, as we don't have grant funding for that at this point.
- The Campus Coverage Project grant is ending. We may receive partial funding from the sponsor, the Lumina Foundation, for a fourth conference in 2013, but that is not reflected in this budget.
- The budget includes funding for a raise of up to 2 percent for all employees.
- Board members asked that the draft budget be modified to include more funding for legal expenses, raising to between \$8,000-\$10,000.

There was a discussion of membership. Cribb asked why membership renewal revenue is dropping. Horvit said the number of members overall is down from this time one year ago, though it's difficult to make exact comparisons, because we switched member-database systems. Horvit noted that, for the past two years, Gannett has bought more than 200 memberships, and those are normally in the system by April. This year we haven't gotten the names yet, so those memberships – a mix of renewals and new members – are not included yet. Cribb asked whether

the Gannett model could be expanded, offering a similar opportunity to other media companies. Horvit also noted that IRE has fewer current grants that give memberships to those who attend our events, and we have increased the amount of our customized training, in which memberships are not included.

Cribb asked whether there were any complaints resulting from the revamping of the IRE Awards. Horvit said there were very few. He noted that there were relatively fewer entries in the new multimedia categories and that more marketing must be done. He noted that Resource Center Director Lauren Grandestaff did a great job overseeing the transition. Thompson said all went smoothly and that she would be issuing a report on the contest at the next Board meeting. Thompson noted that a special “First Amendment Award” is being given this year. She also said IRE should look at raising funds to create financial prizes. Pilhofer agreed.

There was no more discussion of the budget, and Horvit said it would be presented in a final version in June.

Conference Hotel:

Horvit said the conference room block for Boston filled rapidly, and that Conference Coordinator Stephanie Sinn has worked with the hotel to create extra space at the same room rate. Sinn also is working to create an overflow hotel block. Horvit praised Sinn for her ability to get low rates and other accommodations from hotels, noting that another journalism organization was in the same hotel a few months earlier at a significantly higher rate.

Horvit said the next board meeting will be June 14 at 4 pm at the conference hotel in Boston.

Horvit said that one of two conference Showcase Panels is set. It will examine the ethical ramifications of the News Corp. scandal and will include Guardian Executive Editor Alan Rusbridger, David Carr of The New York Times, Brian Ross of ABC News and Downie. Horvit said a second showcase is being completed, called Investigating Power. Tisha Thompson and Stephen Stock have done a lot of work to set up the broadcast track of panels, with an assist from Lea Thompson. Jennifer LaFleur and Mark Greenblatt have again volunteered to coordinate the mentorship program, which is a big job and their help is greatly appreciated.

Resource Center:

We now have about 15,000 contest questionnaires now available and searchable on our website, thanks to the generosity of Jay Hamilton of Duke University. This will be announced in the next couple of weeks. Board members discussed the best way to announce this and make sure people understand the value of the resource.

Google Project

Google wanted to know if we would be interested in working with a company called Palantir that has powerful software that helps people analyze relationships and connections. IRE would create a system to allow journalists to apply for this, and would help select those that would be picked. We would create a small committee of members who don't work for news organizations to do this. Horvit said that, if the board is interested, he will continue to pursue this. Cohen said this could be time-consuming for IRE and that the software can be challenging to use, but that it would provide a way for journalists to have access to cutting-edge technology. Additionally, Google is discussing providing grants to journalists for data-driven projects through IRE.

Arizona Project

The on-again, off-again discussions to have a movie made of the Arizona Project are on-hold again. We have frozen our negotiating efforts for the moment, pending some reasonable developments.

Meet-Ups

Thompson said that several meet-ups organized by IRE members in the Washington, D.C. area have been very successful. Cohen praised member Aaron Kessler for his work on this.

Thompson said several members, including James Grimaldi, Young and herself, have donated money for these events.

Board Elections

Horvit said the following people have filed for the Board of Directors elections:

Cribb, Donohue, Cohen, Torres, Ziva Branstetter, Ellen Gabler, Rich Gordon, John Russell and Mark Lagerkvist.

Board members discussed the lack of broadcasters on that list and the need to recruit more broadcasters as candidates in the future.

Johnston moved to adjourn at 12:45 p.m. Torres second.

Vote was unanimous.