

Board of Directors Meeting
Saturday, Dec. 1, 2012
St. Louis Missouri

Board in Attendance: Mc Nelly Torres, Len Downie, Josh Meyer, Andrew Donohue, Sarah Cohen, Lea Thompson, Rob Cribb, Matt Waite, Alison Young, Ellen Gabler, David Cay Johnston, Stuart Watson
Via Phone: Manny Garcia

Staff in attendance: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston, Stephanie Sinn, Heather Feldman Henry, Alan Lynes

Meeting called to order at 9:09 a.m.

Previous Minutes

Young makes motion to approve
Torres seconds it
Minutes approved unanimously.

Exec. Director's Report

Membership

- Membership numbers looking good.
- November ended with 4,200.
- We won't have new Campus Coverage memberships this year. Young asked how many student membership we had with the Campus Coverage Project. Horvit noted that we usually had about 70 per year.
- Gannet is once again buying memberships for reporters at its newspapers. Kate Marymont at Gannett spearheads this effort.

Data Library

- Liz Lucas and Ted Peterson are working on a project to update many of our databases by moving them out of out-of-date software like FoxPro.
- Horvit said that now that we have a full-time database library director, costs for running the library will increase. Thanks to a grant-funded project the library's revenue will look neutral to good, but we should expect a deficit in the following year.

Johnston asked if there was any possibility of it making money if we joined with a service like Lexis Nexus. Horvit said that IRE has in the past looked at syndicating but no action was taken.

Horvit discussed the goal of getting members to share data after completing projects, as the Atlanta Journal-Constitution did with a recent school cheating project. Board members discussed the value of this.

Document Cloud and PANDA

- Horvit updated the Board on DocumentCloud and discussed the need to begin generating revenue to cover its expenses in the coming year. He also discussed PANDA, which offers newsrooms an intranet service to host and share data. Horvit said he has had preliminary conversations about whether Ire could help PANDA being more widely used, but it would take an additional person to oversee it work. Horvit said that one problem with a number of tools being created for journalists is that there is no sustainability model, and that IRE could help the industry deal with that problem. He is hoping to speak with officials at the Knight Foundation

- about this. Cohen noted that the rule of thumb is that you need one person per program.
- Freelancers requesting DocumentCloud accounts are asked to submit samples of their work. We want to take steps to try and ensure that documents posted are legitimate, which is why most membership goes through established news organization.
 - Work on two DocumentCloud grants continues, to add public commenting to documents and to add languages to foster internationalization of the platform. Board members discussed issues related to both.

Resource Center:

- Philip Meyer awards received about 20 entries this year, which is typical. Cohen noted that part of the difficulty in drawing entrants might be that the entry date is close to election time. She also offered to help with the wording for a better description. It was also noted that there is also the assumption that if you win that you can't enter IRE contest, which is not true.

Johnston stated that Sarah will propose language for the description and send it to Mark.

- A new Beat Book on religion will be coming out soon. The effort was led by Debra Mason, head of the Religion Writers Association, who is lead author.
- Thompson said that we are looking at digitizing the video and audio archive in the Resource Center. Cohen then noted that the Wayback machine wants to work with reporters and that it might be something worth checking into.

Website:

Young and Thompson both think the new site looks great.

Horvit noted that Tony Schick should be noted for all his work on the site. Horvit then updated the board on various aspects of the site, including that the site is now averaging 25,000 visits a month. Young asked if we knew how the traffic has changed on the current site compared to the previous site. Horvit said it was hard to say due to how that was previously measured, but the numbers are significantly higher. Donohue asked about social media, and Horvit discussed the way staff handles IRE's Twitter and Facebook accounts, both of which have seen steady growth. Cribb noted that it would be helpful if IRE had key people in other countries that could tout the resources IRE offers. Horvit said that overall we are good at reaching the people in our traditional circles, but the key is to reaching out beyond that. Cribb then asked about the possibility of getting a list of listserves in other countries that would post information. He noted that in Canada they have one list that all journalist use.

Training:

Horvit noted that we are very busy with training. He is talking with Hearst and Gannett about more training for 2013. He also discussed training done for NBC-owned stations that was conducted in the fall.

- The CAR conference is being held in Louisville, KY this year.
 - o We will be highlighting Data Science for advanced sessions. Jaimi Dowdell has been working very hard on the program.
 - o We expect to find out next week if Scripps will be extending the mentor program to the CAR conference. This will be a smaller group with only 20-30 pairings.

- Horvit said he'd like to have some sort of focus on sustainability models for data-driven projects and services. Waite noted that Knight is very sensitive about the sustainability argument right now. Not only are they asking how you are going to make money but how you are going to sustain it.

Future Conferences:

Sinn has been looking into hotels for the 2014 CAR Conference on the east coast, specifically in the Washington D.C./Baltimore area. She noted we can get a rate of \$149 which is on track with what we have been paying. One concern with that is that people wouldn't stay at the hotel, which would lead to attrition problems.

Discussion ensued regarding hotels and locations.

Sinn then said that we need to start looking at 2015 as well, and suggested looking west and mentioned Denver as one possibility. Horvit asked for other suggestions, and several cities were named, including Las Vegas, Phoenix, San Diego, and others. Horvit said staff will look into it.

Discussion then switched to the 2016 IRE Conference. Several cities were discussed, with a general consensus that New Orleans would be the first option if an affordable hotel can be found.

Already scheduled are: 2013 in San Antonio; 2014 in San Francisco; 2015 in Philadelphia and 2017 in Phoenix.

Sinn noted the importance of getting people to stay in our room block as opposed to other hotels for our conferences, because of the financial commitments IRE makes to hotels. Discussion ensued on the possibility of incentive programs and other options. Johnston said the Executive Committee will look into the issue further.

Fundraising:

- The Dallas Morning News and Belo are co-hosting the 2013 IRE conference. Horvit noted that Maud Beelman of the Morning News has been instrumental in helping get this set up. Horvit said Hearst also is considering co-hosting the conference.
- Also thanks to members Mark Katches and Matt Goldberg, we have co-hosts for the 2014 IRE Conference in San Francisco. (The Center for Investigative Reporting and NBC).
- Horvit updated the board on several grant applications and upcoming fund-raising meetings.
- We received about 80 applications for the new Data Fund sponsored by Google Ideas. A panel of judges that are not with news organizations have been put together for this.

Johnston praised Horvit's work over the past year, and Meyer pointed to the successful IRE Conference in Boston.

Endowment Report:

Meyer noted that we have a high level of cash in the accounts. Horvit noted that both the Pulliam and General funds are cash heavy right now. After the end of the year that will be invested but IRE's investment advisors, JJP Capital, wanted to wait and see how issues resolve involving the fiscal cliff and Congress. Thompson noted that this was the same group that took us through the recession and asked the Mark please let them know how pleased the Board is with them. Johnston remarked that they have done sterling work.

Budget:

- Horvit said that the budget is shaping up well, adding that most of IRE's cash flow is in the second half of the year. He also updated new board members on the way in which IRE uses endowment income in the budget.

Downie asked about earned income. Horvit noted that training income has increased over the past couple of years, and that data library income is not as high as it has been in past years.

Downie asked what the completion is charging for training. Horvit said IRE has increased its rates in the past year, but others still charge more. Horvit also noted that IRE will be working with Poynter, another training organization, on at least one workshop in 2013.

Cohen asked about webinars, and Horvit said that we're looking at how we can increase revenue from those. He noted that we did increase online training in 2012 and are working on plans for more in 2013.

Downie and Johnston discussed the need to be strategic when looking at possible training partnerships, and discussion ensued.

Cohen asked about revenue from the tip sheets and story library. Horvit said that while the Resource Center doesn't pay for itself directly, those items are a key reason why people pay for membership each year.

IRE Conference:

- Staff is proposing that we change how we charge for the IRE Conference by removing the extra fee for Thursday and increasing the overall fee. Currently we charge \$200 for Friday-Saturday and \$60 for Thursday for pre-registration (onsite costs more). The proposal is to charge \$230 for pre-registration for the entire event. Horvit said this change would be revenue neutral or could raise slightly more money overall, but would simplify the increasing problem that we have that some people who don't pay for Thursday arrive early and attend sessions. Policing this is very difficult. Overall, he said Thursday attendance has grown significantly in the past few years.

Johnston asked if we this was too conservative and if it should be moved to \$250. Horvit recommended against going higher than \$230 for now. Downie suggested that we do a rate of \$230 this year and maybe charge a little more next year because San Francisco will be more popular.

Discussion ensued regarding prices of other organization's conferences, many of which are much more expensive than IRE's.

Horvit noted that we must make sure our attendees know that they are getting more with this price increase. Donohue stated that marketing is going to increase with our online presence.

Motion: Downie made a motion to change the registration rate to \$230 for the early bird rate, which will include the Thursday rate, while leaving the student rate at \$100. Young seconded the motion.

Approval was unanimous.

There was discussion of the possibility of a benefit concert that IRE member Ricardo Sandoval has been working to organize. Horvit said the costs make this look unlikely, but that staff is still looking into it.

The board then discussed the Blues Bash and whether to hold one in San Antonio or to take a break and try something different. Johnston thanked Blues Bash organizer Mark Lagerkvist for all the work he has put into the Blues Bash over the years, and Watson and many others strongly echoed that sentiment.

Horvit said he had told Lagerkvist that some board members had discussed whether to put the event on hiatus for a year. Lagerkvist had sent an email to many board members discussing the event and its benefits through the years. Young said that she likes the Blues Bash, but noted that it's not necessarily the ideal venue to meet people, because of the volume of the music, a point also made by Johnston.

Board members asked about the financial aspect of the event. Horvit said that IRE covers hotel and travel costs for Lagerkvist in exchange for his work on the event, and that in past years IRE had paid for an advanced site visit, though that has not happened the past couple of years. The event has made money for IRE most years.

Discussion continued, with the idea of holding an event that would be earlier in the evening and designed to give both new and returning members a chance to get to know each other.

Motion:

Johnston made a motion stating: For the 2013 conference, IRE will be taking a hiatus from the Blues Bash. The board appreciates all of the work that Mark Lagerkvist has put into the Blues Bash.

Torres seconded the motion.

Thompson amended the motion to add that the event in San Antonio should reflect the location by incorporating local flavor.

The vote passed 12-0, with Watson abstaining.

IRE Keynote:

Horvit stated that it is important for the board to agree on a keynote speaker during the meeting.

Downie noted the need to find a speaker whose message is motivational. Torres said that we have talked in the past about diversity, and being in San Antonio, it would be a good opportunity to have someone speak about the risks journalists face in Mexico.

Discussion ensued about various potential speakers.

Motion: Meyer made a motion to authorize the staff and Contest Committee to find a keynote speaker to address the situation journalists face in Mexico. Young seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 for lunch and resumed at 2:06 p.m.

Membership Committee Report

Gabler said the committee has focusing on several areas in some initial conversations, including:

- Regional meet ups. Several have been held in Washington, D.C. and have been successful. Looking to expand the cities those would be in.
- Focusing on growth areas, including data and programming.
- Whether IRE should approach media companies to help increase membership.

The board discussed whether to hold a membership drive. Horvit discussed the drives conducted in the past couple of years and passed along suggestions from membership coordinator John Green.

Cohen noted that if drawings and prizes are included in this membership drive and hotel nights for the conference are included, the winner should have the

option of either going to the IRE or CAR conferences (in the past, only IRE was offered).

The board discussed ways to engage more student members and how to organize more regional meet-ups. Watson mentioned the need to add diversity to IRE membership.

Watson asked about reaching out to high schools. Young commented that we have limited resources and Johnston commented that it should be considered after we have done more to develop membership at the college level. Horvit noted that student membership is defined at the college level in IRE's organizing documents.

Discussion ensued regarding holding a panel at the IRE Conference on being a leader for IRE, about recruiting more editors and news directors and looking at the computer programming community.

Contest

Horvit gave a demo of the new online contest system and discussed wording on the categories.

Watson asked why video cannot be uploaded and discs must be submitted.

Thompson responded that IRE needs a copy for its archive. Horvit noted that unlike some other contests, the size of the submission isn't limited, so files can be very large.

Watson asked why can't we just do a video file? Thompson responded that we don't currently have a way to archive it. Horvit noted that we don't limit the size of the piece that they can submit.

Thompson praised Lauren Grandestaff for her work on overseeing the creation of the new system.

Fundraising

Donohue listed several priorities – coming up with names of potential donors, identifying a pitch and setting a fundraising goal.

Johnston noted the need for a case statement, and Donohue added that priorities should be set for funds that are raised.

Horvit said that the original endowment goal was \$5 million and it stands at \$3.3 million.

Downie noted that donors will want specifics of where their money would be used, beyond simply building an endowment.

Horvit said one possibility could be creating a fund to underwrite training for smaller news organizations. Young noted that restricting funds in the endowment for certain purposes limits the organization's ability to spend in other areas. She suggested that the goal not be too specific.

Thompson said staff has previously created materials to help Board members with fundraising. It was suggested that staff and Donohue could put together a packet of information that included letters, talking points etc.

Johnston then had each board member write list with three people that could be approached for money. He said once the names were collected he would give them to Lynes.

Technology

Horvit said that at the June meeting he was asked to look into creating a position that would oversee technology, including DocumentCloud. There isn't money in the budget to create such a position, but Horvit talked about creating a Technologist in Residence position that could help fill that gap. It would be a year-long fellowship in partnership with the Reynolds Journalism Institute at MU, based at IRE. The position would help oversee existing projects, help with

training in new areas would allow time for the person in the position to work on projects of their own that benefit investigative reporting. The position could be based in Columbia but would not have to be.

Motion:

Meyer made a motion to create the Technologist in Residence position. Gabler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Horvit said that IRE is likely going to be taking on the Ujima Project, an international data collection created by longtime IRE member and former staffer Ron Nixon. IRE was an initial supporter of the effort, which has been housed at the Center for Public Integrity. Horvit said it likely would not come with funding, but would be incorporated into the data library.

Board members asked about possible funding options and questioned whether doing so would create additional burdens on the staff. Horvit was asked what would happen if IRE did not take on Ujima, and he said the project might not find a home. Torres noted that would be unfortunate.

Board members supported the idea of working with Ujima, but cautioned that if it became a financial liability IRE would have to consider halting any work on it.

Motion: To go into Executive committee to discuss legal council.

Motion made by Young, Seconded by Torres, Unanimous approval.

The Board reconvened a short time later and adjourned for the day.

Sunday, Dec. 2, 2013

Meeting called to order at 9:04

Founders Award

Downie discussed creating a Founders Award that would be comparable to a lifetime achievement award, for both work in journalism and impact on IRE. The selection committee would consist of some of IRE's founders, the current Board president, another board member, the executive director and one or two other members. The Board would have ultimate approval of the selection of the winner. Downie said that Horvit had suggested founder Myrta Pulliam as a good choice for the committee.

Johnston remarked that this is not something that has to be given out every year. Downie agreed and that would be up to the committee.

Motion:

Young made a motion to create the Founders Award.

Meyer seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Transparency

Discussion of a previous idea to get IRE more involved in transparency issues. Horvit talked about the possibility of creating a new committee of members of several journalism organizations that could be prepared to take stands on key issues when necessary.

Discussion ensued, and ultimately the board decided that other avenues already exist and that creating a new one was not the best use of IRE's resources. Board

members also noted that IRE already has a board subcommittee focused on engagement.

Transparency Award

Cribb discussed an idea talked about previously by the board, to create an “award” that draws attention to a public official or agency that obstructs access to information. A committee would be formed to select the winner. The board discussed various options for members of the committee. He said that Downie and Meyer would join him in the effort to put the award together for this year. Cribb said that among the items needing to be done are naming the award, creating the award itself, completing the committee and putting the process in place. The award would be given at the IRE Conference.

Discussion of various aspects of the award ensued. Among the items discussed were whether the award would be limited to government, as opposed to industry (Cribb argued in favor of that limiting to government); preference would be given to calling out an individual rather than a faceless agency; details will need to be worked out to verify the agency’s actions that are being criticized.

Additional committee members will be added from IRE membership. Cohen and Donohue volunteered to join the committee.

Moral Courage Award

Cribb noted that another award that was previously discussed was creating a “moral courage award” to honor whistleblowers.

After lengthy discussion, board members agreed this is something the board already can do if the right example arises, and that it can be handled by the engagement subcommittee. It would not be a regular award, but could be given when appropriate, much like the awards now given to honor service to IRE.

Election & Governance

Young provided some background, explaining that in the past we have explored having honorary board members. Downie explored the idea and concluded that potential appointees didn’t want the position without some power on the board. Cohen added that a lot of boards have one or two such members.

Young and Cohen said that it’s important to give more direction and help for those that want to run. Johnston suggested that he could write a letter for the Journal; Cohen then offered to do so. She also recommended that more information about candidates be made available on the IRE website, so that those voting absentee will have more to decide on and so that all members get more on which to base their votes.

Absentee voting procedures

The board continued a discussion started at the previous meeting looking at ways to increase the number of members who vote absentee, to increase participation in the process. Cohen noted that because those who attend the CAR Conference typically don’t attend the IRE Conference, they can feel disenfranchised. Improving the absentee process could help address that.

Many alternatives were discussed. Young asked about the possibility of electronic voting. Discussion ensued, and Gabler asked whether, if electronic voting were offered, if attendance at the annual membership meeting where candidates speak would drop dramatically.

Cohen said that there are some people who feel extremely strongly that people should be at the meeting.

Waite said there shouldn’t be a problem in setting up electronic voting, saying there are options that would make it possible. Johnston asked Waite to send the

board a memo describing how this could work and that the Executive Committee would take the first look at how and whether to change to electronic ballots. There was some discussion of changing the membership meeting to Friday night at the conference, and to whether the bylaws prohibit these changes. Horvit was asked to look into the issues and report to the Executive Committee. Young noted that attorney David Smallman had raised concerns ballot security if a switch to a new system isn't made carefully.

Motion:

Young moved that Waite develop a proposal for a way to modernize absentee voting and the voting process and for the Executive Committee and/or the Governance subcommittee to come forward with a proposal for discussion by the board in 2013.

Thompson seconds. It passes 12-0, with Downie absent.

Use of Mailing List:

Horvit said some members have requested the IRE mailing list for a variety of reasons, from campaigning for the Board to sharing information with members. He said the staff's current policy is to decline, as some members do not want that information shared and overall we have tried to limit the amount of email members get as a result of their membership.

Torres and Waite opposed the idea of giving this out.

Motion:

Waite made a motion to enthusiastically support allowing the Executive Director to have discretion handling the member mailing list.

Young seconds. The motion passes 11-0, with Downie and Garcia absent.

New Business

Gabler talked about the advantage of having more moderators on IRE panels, to help keep them moving and on point.

- Some of us were talking about having more moderators at the panels.

One way to improve some of the panels would be to have more moderates for the panels. After discussion, it was agreed that Board members would volunteer to moderate additional sessions.

Horvit asked that any board member who is interested in helping set up panels, please let him know.

Johnston asked for motion to adjourn. Young made motion. Donohue seconded. Meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.