

**Board of Directors Conference Call**  
**Thursday, May 9, 2013**

**Attending:** Alison Young, Stuart Watson, Ellen Gabler, Sarah Cohen, Matt Waite, Len Downie Jr., Mc Nelly Torres, David Cay Johnston, Lea Thompson, Andy Donohue, Josh Meyer, Manny Garcia

**Staff Attending:** Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston, Heather Feldmann Henry

**Not in Attendance:** Rob Cribb

Meeting called to order at 11:05 a.m. central time

**Previous Minutes:**

Young motions to approve minutes from the previous board meeting  
Torres seconds motion.  
Unanimous approval

**Executive Director's Report: (Horvit)**

**Membership and Elections:**

- Membership numbers are running ahead of last year.
- The new email absentee ballot process has launched, and a candidate questionnaire has been added to the elections website. Thanks to Cohen for her guidance. Last year we had about 95 ballots requested and 34 returned. Amy Johnston and John Green have been working on the new ballot procedure.

**Website**

- During March and April, we had 62,000 users, an increase of about 25 percent over last year.
- We worked with Poynter's Al Tompkins to put together a breaking news reporting guide for the story of some kidnapped women being found in Ohio after a decade. Working with Al helped get that resource in front of many people who don't otherwise know our site. Tony Schick and Lauren Grandestaff did great work on deadline.
- Next week is the first Google hangout event we will have attempted. Tony has lined up several reporters from around the globe; it will be live on the website, and will be recorded for playback.

**Training**

- We are lining up fall training for Hearst Broadcast and Gannett.
- We will be holding daylong workshops at the annual conferences of the Asian American Journalists Association and the National Association of Black Journalists
- We have applied for a renewal of the Community Partnership Program with the McCormick Foundation. We have many examples of stories done as a direct result of the training.
- AR&D, a marketing firm, is doing a national survey on investigative reporting at no charge for IRE. The results will be presented at the annual conference in San

Antonio. A small committee of members has been put together to brainstorm and look over questions. Cohen & Downie have helped with this.

- Michael Mannes of the Knight Foundation will be at the IRE office next week to talk about DocumentCloud and its sustainability, as well as other projects like Panda.

Donohue said it would be good to have some sort of list where Board members can be notified about new developments at IRE, so they can share them via social media.

### Budget:

Horvit presented a draft of the proposed 2013-14 budget.

Thompson said she has reviewed the budget with Horvit and that it looks good.

Among the items in the budget discussed were:

Resource Center – No projected changes. The RC on paper loses money, but it is a service to members so is partly responsible for membership revenue, which appears elsewhere in the budget.

Contest – The new electronic contest helped bring in more revenue; this is reflected in the proposed budget.

Data Library – As discussed before, we knew that this was going to operate at a loss once we hired a full-time director. This was anticipated.

Conference & Seminars - We are doing really well on fundraising for the conference. Some people who have given us money for several years have stopped, but we made up for that in other ways.

Training – Is going well, in part because of the corporate training we are doing. Boot Camps have done well. The Watchdog Workshop grant was renewed for next year. All of this is reflected in the proposed budget.

The budget includes an average of a 2% raise for staff.

We are currently looking at ending 2012-13 \$ 55,000-\$60,000 in the black, which is well ahead of the projections included in the budget.

Young asked where we stand on the reserve fund now. Horvit replied that it stands at about \$185,000. He also noted that we can decide if we want to add money to this at the end of the year.

Horvit noted that there had been no decision made on bonuses for staff, and that he will look at that at the end of the year.

Thompson said she and Horvit discussed the budget. She said there are some places where the document can be consolidated to make it easier to understand. Horvit said he and Henry discussed this and will present a revised version to the Board in June.

Discussion ensued on how best to present the budget.

## Committee Reports

### Membership Drive: Gabler

We held a membership drive in April. There were 580 new memberships and about 350 renewals during the month. There have been some Meet Ups. The Meet Ups are done to engage current members and bring in new people:

- There were 80-100 in New York
- Around 75 in Washington, DC
- 15-20 in Chicago
- There has been talk of doing one in LA
- The Bay Area will also start doing these in the fall.

Several board congratulated Gabler.

### Revenue Committee – Donohue

Donohue said he wants to start a conversation about what the Revenue Committee's focus and mission should be. He said he'd like to have a breakout session at the June meeting to discuss it.

### Golden Padlock Award

Horvit gave the report for Cribb, who could not be on the call. There have already been 30 submissions. A graduate student designed the new logo, and we are working on creating a plaque and/or trophy.

Downie asked how we are cataloging the submissions as they come in. Horvit said he and Cribb have been discussing that and would let the other judges know how it will be handled.

Meyer asked if Board members could submit nominations; Horvit said there is no reason they can't do so.

Thompsons noted that originally the board had discussed having the award be something other than a plaque, something whimsical. Downie noted that there was concern that the cost could be prohibitive.

Discussion ensued regarding the award.

Meyer noted that we need something that looks good as a logo.

Horvit responded that we did reach out to multiple people to get something made and the cost kept going up.

### Conference:

Horvit said preliminary attendance numbers look good and that the hotel room block has filled quickly. He also noted that conferences always draw more heavily on the East Coast, so numbers shouldn't be comparable with the Boston Conference of 2012. He said fundraising has gone well. He noted that the mentorship program is accepting volunteers and encouraged any interested Board members to get involved.

Horvit said the area that needs the most immediate attention is the Showcase Panel or panels. Two ideas have previously been discussed:

- Sports Panel – Deadspin says they are coming but it's been hard to get a solid commitment. Several of the bigger names contacted for the panel have not materialized.

- Boarder Panel – Lot of great people are available, but we also already have other panels addressing many border-related issues, and the keynote address deals with Mexico.

Discussion ensued on whether those were the best topics to pursue, and whether other options, like the CNN IRE medal-winning project from Benghazi, could be good alternatives.

Horvit was instructed to work on the showcase further, and to switch sports and the border topics to other panels.

In other conference-related content, Young noted that the vote for contest judges usually gets lost amid the Board election. Horvit agreed and said that we need to send something out and advertise it. Thompson said that she would put something together for the website.

Horvit asked that Board members Tweet or post something on Facebook about the proposed changes to the Contest rules regarding Board entries that will be discussed at the June meeting. He said anything they could do to make people aware of that would be great. Young commented that she had not gotten any feedback on that.

Johnston noted that they needed to vote on the 2016 conference.

Horvit said that we would like to take the conference to New Orleans for 2016. The room rate is under \$200. The only problem could be fundraising, but he said he would work on it. Horvit said that the date is June 23-26 at a Marriott hotel for the rate of \$189.

**Motion:**

Meyer made a motion to hold the conference June 23-26, 2016 in New Orleans. Young seconded.

The Board voted unanimously to approve.

Other business

Johnston noted that all Board members need to donate to IRE and asked everyone to get a check into IRE before the end of June. He noted that any amount that a board member is comfortable with is helpful.

Johnston said the Board's next meeting would be on Thursday, June 20, at the IRE Conference.

Motion to adjourn is made by Johnston

Meyer seconds

Unanimous approval