

IRE Board of Directors
Conference Call
Thursday, Feb. 21, 2013

Attending:

Manny Garcia, Stuart Watson, Alison Young, Josh Meyer, Mc Nelly Torres, Andrew Donohue, Len Downie Jr., Matt Waite, David Cay Johnston, Lea Thompson,

IRE Staff: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston

Not in Attendance: Sarah Cohen, Ellen Gabler, Rob Cribb

Meeting called to order at 11:03 a.m.

Previous Minutes:

Young motions to approve minutes from the previous meeting.
Garcia seconds, Unanimous approval

Executive Directors Report:

2013 CAR Conference

- Horvit said the CAR conference is next week and it is breaking records. Boston 1999 had been the largest conference, with 515 attendees. This CAR conference is starting out with 590 pre-registered. We might have to consider capping the conf. next year in Baltimore. Sponsorships are also higher for this conference than recent years. For the first time, we'll have a conference app instead of a printed program. We will have a printed schedule, however. He said training director Jaimi Dowdell has overseen the program and done a wonderful job.
- There was brief discussion of replacing a full program with an app. Horvit noted that this year we are trying it for both the CAR and IRE conferences and we can reevaluate after seeing how it works.

2013 IRE Conference

- Horvit said keynote speaker Marcela Turati, a journalist from Mexico, has been confirmed. Watson has agreed to head the effort to line up broadcast panels. Showcase panels still need to be determined.

Total Newsroom Training Program (TNT)

- Horvit said we have received almost 40 applications so far for the program; the deadline is at the end of this week. A \$100,000 grant is funding this program, which provides training in small to midsize newsrooms.

Downie asked for some examples of where the applications have come from. Horvit said a number of smaller newspapers, including the Belleville News Democrat and the newspaper in Springdale, Arkansas.

Website Update

Horvit said Tony Schick continues to do a great job leading the effort to produce content for the website. He has worked with data library director Liz Lucas to revamp the CAR section. We have dedicated a grad student position to creating content for the site. Traffic on the site continues to grow, Waite asked if the site has shown any problems with the increased traffic; Horvit said it has not. Torres asked which features are drawing the most interest. Horvit said staff hasn't studied that in-depth.

INN position in the data library

Horvit said that a previously discussed position in the data library that will work for Investigative News Network members has been advertised. He noted that it may be hard to fill the position. Johnston asked why, and Horvit said that, industry wide, there were more positions than qualified candidates.

RJI-IRE Fellowship

Horvit said that the first candidate for a previously discussed fellowship that will be funded by the Reynolds Journalism Institute and IRE took another position. The search will continue; Horvit asked for any suggestions to be sent to him.

The candidate that we were looking at has taken another job.

Blues Bash update:

Horvit said Mark Lagerkvist is proceeding with a Blues Bash. He has funding from the Franklin Center, which provides funding for the site he works with. The event is being coordinated with IRE's opening reception so that the two events will not conflict. The Blues Bash will be free this year.

Training

Horvit updated the board on training IRE conducted for Al Jazeera in Qatar. Horvit said the organization may want to sponsor the IRE Conference. Young noted IRE's prohibition on taking government money and said this needs to be carefully considered, as Al Jazeera is funded by the government of Qatar. Horvit asked whether this is different than the BBC, for example. Downie asked Horvit to do more research into Al Jazeera's funding and operation in the U.S. Thompson noted that there are a lot of new organizations around the world that are government funded that could use IRE's training to do better work. Young said she wasn't opposing such funding, just noting that it needs to be considered before proceeding.

2016 IRE Conference

Horvit said that at the board's direction from the recent retreat, Stephanie Sinn is looking at New Orleans for 2016 and will do a site visit. Stephanie will work to negotiate the best deal and it will be brought back to the board for approval.

Finances

Horvit said things look good, but cautioned that because a number of large grants were received during the past year, the organization's 990 will look better than things really are, because some grants received this year will be spent over two years. He noted revenue is up for the CAR Conference, but that we likely will take in less in San Antonio than in 2012 in Boston, because east coast conferences draw larger groups.

We are in good shape but not as good of shape as it looks.

The contest generated more revenue as well, as entries for the first year of an online contest were up by about 50. He credited Lauren Grandestaff for doing great work on outreach. Johnston asked if with the higher numbers for CAR is there a push to engage the new members and keep them in the organization. Horvit said he needed to look at that.

Thompson said the larger number of entries, and other factors, made judging a much bigger job. Discussion ensued about possible ways to deal with this in future years.

Update on Board Elections procedure

Horvit delivered a report prepared by Sarah Cohen, who could not be present. A subcommittee which looked at the issue recommended no major changes this year, but did recommend some changes to the absentee voting procedures. Absentee ballots

should be accepted via email, rather than paper mail, to make the process easier and encourage more participation.

There was discussion of the importance of ensuring ballot security; Horvit said John Green will oversee the effort and staff will develop a plan to handle any security issues and ensure that multiple voting cannot occur.

Revenue Committee Report

Donohue described a plan to have board members contact friends and colleagues to request donations. He said Alan Lynes has compiled a list of IRE accomplishments and he will be sending that out. There was some discussion of what funds would be dedicated to; no decision was made.

Founders Award

Downie updated the board on the idea of a Founders Award, first discussed at the last meeting. He met with Myrta Pulliam to work out details for such an award, which likely will be launched in 2014.

Motion: An IRE Founders' Award will be created, which can be presented at the IRE Conference, beginning in 2014, when an award winner has been chosen by a Founders' Award selection committee consisting of the members of the current IRE executive committee and four other IRE members chosen by the executive director and the executive committee for staggered three-year terms. The criteria will be lifetime achievement in investigative journalism and service to IRE. The selection committee could solicit nominations for the award in any way it chooses. Members of the selection committee would be ineligible for the award during their time on the committee.

Motion made by Young, Seconded by Meyer
Unanimous approval.

Transparency Award

Meyer delivered the report for Cribb. He said various names have been considered by the subcommittee created to look into the award, which is meant to draw attention to a government official or agency that blocks access to information.

After some discussion, the board agreed on calling the award the "Golden Padlock," pending Cribb's agreement.

Membership Report

Watson reported that meet-ups are planned in Washington, DC, Chicago and New York. He said the next membership drive will be in April.

Board members discussed the meet-ups and the costs involved, and whether IRE should cover any of them. Young noted that having volunteer members collect and spend money could create problems because there is no record of money raised or spent.

IRE Conference Showcase Panels

Horvit thanked Torres for helping line up keynote speaker Marcela Turati. He said it's necessary to choose topics for the showcase panels.

Garcia suggested something with a sports panel would be worthwhile.

Downie suggested a session about boarder policy, boarder security, employment etc. He noted that there is much debate over the key topics tied to the border and not enough clear information.

Discussion ensued regarding other topics.

Donohue suggested trying to get Lawrence Wright at the conference. Horvit said Wright has already agreed to come with his band and play at the conference. We hope he'll also speak.

Young motions to adjourn. Watson seconds
The vote was unanimous.