

Board of Directors Conf. Call August 4, 2015

In Attendance: Jill Riepenhoff, T. Christian Miller, Nicole Vap, Phil Williams, Josh Meyer, Ellen Gabler, Andy Donohue, Sarah Cohen, Cheryl W. Thompson, Ziva Branstetter, Chrys Wu, Steven Rich

Not in attendance: Matt Goldberg

Staff in Attendance: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston, Lauren Grandestaff

Cohen called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. (central)

Contest Committee: Branstetter

The contest committee had a meeting and would like to recommend three changes to the contest categories and proposed changes to the language. Everyone should have received and email from Horvit with these changes.

- Creating a second radio category (there is now only one) so that national organizations don't dominate the awards every year. National would be in one category, regional and local in another.

- Creating a second student category, so there would be one for work done with professional help. This has been an option for the judges in the past few years; this would formalize it.

- Eliminating the multi-platform category and expanding the digital innovation category. Previously there were 3 multiplatform winners and one winner of the Gannett Digital Innovation Award. "Multiplatform" seems redundant now (very little work isn't multiplatform), so the idea is to expand the digital innovation category and then select a "best in show" from the 3 individual winners (small, medium and large) to get the \$5,000 Gannett winner.

Changes to the Radio Category:

Cohen asked how many national radio organization there were. Branstetter replied that while there are not many in the U.S., there are international radio organizations that fit into that category, and Horvit said three recent winners were national radio from outside the U.S. Cohen noted that there aren't very many other categories where there are only a few people that could win. Donohue also noted that there are a few other organizations that don't necessarily fit in the large category but that have significantly larger resources than most local stations, such as WNYC and KQED.

Horvit said that whatever metric is chosen, it would be best if it is something that can be measured objectively, so staff will not have to make judgment calls.

Miller said he was one of the judges and it was top heavy with NPR and other large organizations entries.

Donohue asked what would be done if there was a podcast but it wasn't associated with a station.

Cohen said what she was hearing was that there was still work to be done on the wording. She asked whether the Board should vote on whether to split the radio category into two parts, and if there is support, the specific wording could be worked out by staff and presented to the board via email.

Motion: To split the radio category into a large and small category, made by Miller and seconded by Williams.

The vote was unanimous in favor.

Changes to the Student Category:

Branstetter said the proposal is to split it into two categories, separating out entries that have professional involvement.

Meyer said that since this is something that he does full time he thought they need to clarify, to make it clear just how much professional help a student could have before moving into the professional category. Miller suggested that looking at where the work is published could be a deciding factor; Meyer said that would not always work because work that is purely done by students can be published in a professional publication. Vap agreed with Meyer.

Donohue asked what problem they were trying to solve and whether the Board wanted to eliminate from the student category work done by students working as interns at professional publications.

Horvit note that definitions of professional involvement become tricky, because some schools have hired professional journalists, in a part- or full-time basis, to teach courses.

Riepenhoff said that she and Ron Campbell had screened the student category last year and that the bigger issue was the involvement undergraduate students verses the graduate students.

Cohen said it really comes down to the big group projects verse the individual students that are working on their own stories.

Williams said the thought wording should be added to state that work should be substantially done by students. Horvit said he thought that internships should be removed from the category and that work done by an intern would compete in the professional category.

Riepenhoff said the screeners struggled with how to deal with the big stories done by teams of students. Miller asked if those would still be in the same category with the new wording that separated items based on professional involvement. Horvit replied that they would, because those projects are campus-based.

Cohen suggested that staff and Branstetter continue to look at the wording and come back to the board with a proposal. Cohen asked that anyone with this on this get them to Branstetter.

Multi-Media

Branstetter said the proposal is to rebrand this category as Innovations in Digital Journalism and include the Gannett award in this category.

Miller said he would recommend making a differentiation between true multimedia work, which would involve truly working in multiple mediums, versus making a web page to go with a story.

Cohen asked how many entries there were in those categories. Grandestaff said there were among the smaller categories for entries.

Donohue said that having work that involves multiple mediums has become so commonplace that it doesn't merit a separate award anymore.

Branstetter said that this isn't a radical change. It's basically dividing the Gannett innovation award into sizes.

Donohue asked if "digital innovation" needs to be in the name. Wu said that the issue with digital innovation is that the definition is so broad and it ends up being a mishmash, which makes it really difficult to judge. There are small organizations that are doing this work and they should be encouraged. Wu noted that including the word "digital" doesn't make a lot of sense, as most work is digital in some way.

Motion- To drop the Multiplatform category and increase the Innovation category to include three size categories, made by Gabler and seconded by Branstetter.

For - Riepenhoff, Vap, Williams, Meyer, Gabler, Donohue, Cohen, Thompson, Branstetter, Wu, Rich **Opposed** – Miller

Horvit said there was one other contest issue. We received a call from someone that was upset that their entry was moved to a larger category and wanted to know why. Horvit said that is because IRE includes both print circulation and digital replica circulation, which includes sales of digital versions of a print publication. Horvit said Grandestaff checked with the auditing firm whose circulation numbers IRE uses, and they recommended that we continue to do this.

Video Archiving – Vap

Vap said that former board member Lea Thompson has submitted a proposal on archiving tapes and videos from the IRE Resource Center. This topic was discussed by the board at its June meeting and a detailed report was submitted by Thompson at that time.

Vap said that, before fundraising begins to pay for such a project, there are several decisions the board needs to make.

She asked whether the board would be willing to accept government money to pay for the work. Several board members said they oppose the idea, and no formal vote was taken.

Vap said another question is whether the board would support offering naming rights if an organization is willing to fund the project, which would cost several hundred thousand dollars. Wu noted that it would be reasonable for an organization to make such a request. Cohen asked that the committee not look at big corporations that have nothing to do with media, like a car company. Vap said that could be taken into consideration and noted that the board would have final approval before any deal was done.

Miller said a bigger picture question is whether IRE should be doing this at all, given all of the work that would go into creating and maintaining such an online archive. Vap replied that IRE wouldn't have to do all of that, the company would be doing the archiving.

Williams noted that the project is expensive, and that not every story that ends up in IRE's archive is necessarily of historical value. Horvit said the question of whether to archive only some of the material, such as the award-winning entries, had been looked at.

Donohue said that Thompson had mentioned the possibility of a national archive like the Library of Congress as an option. Vap replied that during that meeting Thompson also had said that there would be no guarantee that the material would ever be preserved or made public under such an arrangement; IRE would lose control.

Miller asked if donors to this project would allow the material to remain an IRE members-only collection, as it has historically been. Vap said that is unlikely and that accepting funding probably means making the collection public.

Miller asked how often the archives are used now; Vap said it's limited, but that the material is also difficult to access.

The possibility of working with the Newseum was discussed to display some of the video.

Gabler said she had some concerns about the cost of the project versus the use of the archive.

Cohen reminded the board that Thompson and the subcommittee have been told to pursue this project. She said decisions are needed on some of the funding options being proposed by the committee.

Miller suggested continuing the conversation at the September retreat. Cohen said that was fine, but that a firm decision must be made then about the board's opinion on other issues.

She asked whether there were concerns on naming rights. No one spoke up, so Horvit said he would take that as a yes in favor of allowing the committee to pursue that.

Vap said the subcommittee was under the impression that the board has previously supported the project. She said the subcommittee has waited to approach potential funders until some of these details were resolved by the board. She also noted that all the subcommittee is asking for is direction; any actual deals would need board approval.

Proposal to hold a joint conference with the Asian American Journalists Association

Horvit said that IRE has been approached by the Asian American Journalists Association to hold conferences jointly in New Orleans in 2016. IRE's conference is already set for that city; AAJA would join us. An email summarizing the benefits and concerns was sent to board members prior to the call.

Horvit said the idea was brought to the Executive Committee a few weeks ago but at that point we only had a couple of days to decide. At that time the Executive Committee decided it was too short of a time period. Horvit said that when he notified AAJA to let them know what the Executive Committee decided, they said they could give us a bit more time. Horvit noted that AAJA is interested in working with us this year; he could not say whether that would be the case again in the near future.

Thompson asked how joining the conferences would change IRE's programming. Horvit replied that we would still have all of our usual rooms; we would just be adding a couple of rooms. It wouldn't cut into any of the normal things we do.

Gabler asked if by adding the two rooms and almost doubling the size, how that would be workable. Horvit replied that the hotel is larger, so the rooms will hold more people. He also noted that the 2016 conference is in a physically larger facility than the 2015 event was.

Wu said that the IRE conference already has grown in size, and that AAJA's event also is large. She said she has concerns about so much growth so quickly. She said that joining with AAJA would be a tremendous boost to the event's diversity, but that she didn't think IRE was ready to grow that quickly.

Donohue asked if there was a way to experiment with this on a smaller scale. Horvit said he wasn't sure how that would work, and noted that AAJA is a well-run organization with a mission that aligns well with IRE's, so if IRE is going to try to hold a joint conference, AAJA would be an excellent choice.

Miller asked what the benefits would be for IRE. Horvit said the benefits would include bringing in new speakers with new perspectives, and diversifying our attendance, which the board has talked about wanting to do for several years. Vap noted that it would also introduce many new people to IRE.

Branstetter said she thought it was worth pursuing and that the concerns seemed to be more that there will be too many people.

Donohue said he thinks it's a great thing to think about, but was concerned that the timing is too quick to make the decision. Wu agreed and said IRE should continue to pursue this idea for future conferences.

Cohen then said that resolution is needed, because Horvit must report back to AAJA. She said that because there was not a general consensus either way, each board member should state their opinion. (This was not a formal vote).

Branstetter - Yes.

Donohue - No.

Gabler - No.

Meyers - No, but continue to pursue it for the future.

Miller - Yes.

Rich - No.

Wu - No, but continue to work with AAJA on this and other things.

Vap - Yes.

Williams - No, but continue to pursue the idea.

Cohen - No, because the board does not have consensus to do so at this point.

(Riepenhoff left the call before this roll call was taken).

Cohen stressed that while the overall consensus does not support moving forward at this time, Horvit should express IRE's interest in continuing to explore this for the future.

Williams made the motion to adjourn at 5:06 p.m. Wu seconded.