

Board of Directors Call
Feb. 23, 2016

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

Staff in attendance: Mark Horvit, Amy Johnston, Stephanie Sinn

Meeting called to order at 11:02 a.m.

Previous minutes:

Motion to approve previous minutes made by Wu and seconded by Meyer.
Approved unanimously.

Executive Directors Report

Future Conference Locations

Horvit turned things over Stephanie Sinn for a quick rundown of locations we are looking at for future conferences.

Sinn said that for the CAR conference, Indianapolis has submitted a proposal and that we are waiting to hear from Chicago. For IRE we are looking at going east to Boston or Washington DC. The hesitation with DC is that historically we don't have as many people stay at the hotel. She also noted that we are looking at Houston.

Horvit asked if there were any questions and noted that they would be following up with the board in the future, once they have more details.

Membership

Horvit said membership is currently at 5,510. Last year we ended February at 5,192. We are currently looking to start March with 5,200 members.

Thompson asked if that included student members. Horvit said that it include everyone, semester memberships, workshops, etc.

Training

Horvit said we are looking at doing two Coding Boot Camps this coming year. One will be held in Columbia, MO and the other in Los Angeles. We offered one Coding Camp last year in New York City that sold out.

There are eight students for the Dow Jones Fellowship program that will be come to Columbia for training. We hope to get that number up to 12 in the future. IRE is partnering with Dow Jones for its first data-journalism focused fellowship program.

Alex Richards is working on creating a new Course Pack teaching structured query language (SQL). Course Packs. Eleven classes around the country this semester that were using the Excel course pack, with more than 80 students that are using this. Horvit said the number of professors using the initial Course Pack has been slow to increase, but that the program is still relatively new. Cohen asked if the course packs come with student memberships. Horvit said that they do not include membership at this time.

There will be a standalone Digging Deeper with Data training in Los Angeles offered by Jaimi Dowdell. The workshop blends hands-on training with discussion sessions. We will also be offering this course at the CAR conference in Denver.

The TNT training just wrapped up and we are re-applying for the grant.

Dowdell is working on an online training module for Excel with the Knight Center for Journalism in Latin America, as that organization has done many successful online courses and graciously agreed to work with IRE. Revenue from an initial course would be shared with the Center.

Resource Center/Contest

There were a record number of entries for the Phil Meyer award this year. IRE received about 560 entries for the IRE Contest this year, which is down about 30 from last year but still very strong.

Web

Horvit said we now have 60 people signed up and paying for the new NICAR-Learn platform, that offers short video tutorials on specific data skills. We currently have 20 videos and will be setting up a table at the conference where people can sign-up to record more sessions. Uplink has officially ended and has been folded into NICAR-Learn. David Herzog, who edited uplink, will turn some of his efforts toward NICAR-L. Cohen asked what the cost is for NICAR-Learn. Horvit said it is \$25 for IRE members and \$40 for non-members. He also noted that's the introductory price.

Podcasts are going well, so far we have had over 19,000 listens. Sarah Hutchins is heading this up and MU students record the sessions. KBIA, a university-based NPR affiliate, lets us use their equipment. The podcasts are available to everyone at no cost, not just IRE members.

CAR Conference

Horvit said we have 800 people registered for the conference as of this morning. It looks like we are going to have numbers similar to those from the last two years, which were between 950-1000. Dowdell has done a great job putting together the schedule, working with Richards, Megan Luther and Liz Lucas. The conference overflow hotel is almost full. Cohen thanked the staff and Horvit for all their great work on the conference.

Budget

Horvit said finances are in good shape, but the endowment has lost some value, because of a downturn in the stock market, bond prices and other economic factors. The funds are down between 1.5 percent and 4 percent, which is not a lot, but does mean in some cases that we cannot withdraw money as we normally would.

Horvit said asked fiscal officer Heather Feldman Henry to rework the current year's budget by taking out all of the endowment proceeds that had been built into it – about \$150,000. He said that the revised budget shows IRE ending the year in good financial shape. By not touching any endowed funds this year, he said our financial advisors agree that it makes it more likely that there will be money available next year. Horvit discussed this approach with the Endowment Committee, which agreed, and with Donohue.

Donohue noted that Horvit has been very careful and thoughtful in the boom time and has built up a nice cushion for times like these. We have also been building up the reserves but it looks like we won't have to touch that.

Williams, who chairs the Endowment Committee, said that Horvit has done a great job of keeping everyone up to date. Miller asked if it made sense to cut back in any areas for the remainder of the fiscal year. He also asked if they should use the reserve fund to fill in what we have lost from the

endowment. Horvit replied that we don't need to touch the reserve fund and he also noted that we have cash on hand that could be used if we needed to.

Donohue noted that going into the reserve fund is a pretty serious thing and that it does require a vote by the board of directors. This is a situation where one revenue stream is gone but we still have other streams that make up the difference, he said.

Fundraising

Horvit reminded board members that at the fall retreat they encouraged him to hire a consultant for fundraising. With the help of Chrys Wu we hired a person who works with small organizations. Sinn, Henry and Horvit, along with some other staff have met with her and she is putting together a report for us. Once we get that report. The fee for the consult was \$5,000.

Cohen said she thought it was a really good use of those funds and that the board needs to acknowledge that it is not knowledgeable in fundraising.

Mexico-related training

IRE was approached by a member who is doing some safety training for journalist in Mexico. He wanted to know if this is something that we would be willing to participate in. Horvit will be meeting with him to discuss some questions he has. IRE's role would be focused on journalism or data, not safety, as that is not the organization's area of expertise.

Keynote Speaker – Matt Goldberg

Goldberg discussed options for the keynote speaker for the annual IRE Conference. John Oliver was approached about it, but his staff said that the conference comes during his show's season and that he could not participate.

Goldberg discussed names of potential speakers who were discussed at the fall retreat.

Discussion of various potential speakers ensued, and the board agreed on a finalist list of NBC anchor Lester Hold, Inside Sports anchor Bryant Gumble and Sheila Coronel, who runs the investigative reporting program at Columbia University.

The board went into executive session at 11:48 a.m. and the executive session ended at 11:55 a.m. Branstetter joined the call at 11:55 a.m.

Code of Conduct-

Horvit said a member reached out a few months ago asking about whether IRE has a code of conduct. He spoke with her, then reached out to an organization that has one to learn more about what creating one would entail.

After those conversations had begun, a dispute erupted on the NICAR-L listserv when someone posted a suggestive photo and logo as in connection with the annual contest to design the NICAR Conference t-shirt. Another member of the listserv reacted angrily saying the posting was sexist and inappropriate, and a huge and heated conversation ensued. More than 100 posts were written in a little over a day. Horvit said he consulted with Cohen and then decided to temporarily halt posting to the list, also promising to gather any further posts on the topic and post them as a group. (The goal was to stop the steady stream of emails into members' inboxes, which a growing number of people said was disruptive).

Horvit posted a note asking listserv members to contact him separately if they wanted to discuss the issue. He also asked members to email if they had any incidents of sexual harassment or other problems that they wanted to report. There were two or three who responded but did not want their names shared. In general, those incidents and a handful of others he learned about involved comments made at the NICAR Conference after hours in the bar.

Horvit then spoke with several other organizations about their codes of conduct, and sent a draft to the board a few days ago based on those conversations and examples. He also ran it by IRE's

attorney and a University of Missouri attorney, who offered thoughts only as input but not formal legal advice. Horvit also discussed possible methods for enforcing such a code.

Cohen said the issue of having a code of conduct seems especially important to IRE's younger members, and that we risk losing younger members. She then asked for Rich's input.

Rich said he thinks we need a code, in part as a reminder to members to be respectful of others.

Miller said he thought it was a big decision and that they needed to look at this closely.

Meyer asked if there was a way that they could do something at the CAR conference and get some input. Horvit replied that he had spent a lot of time gathering input already.

Donohue said he thought that it's a really important thing to do, and asked what the pressure was to act quickly. Cohen said one consideration was having something in place by the IRE Conference in June.

Williams said that in principle he liked the idea, but that the red flag for him is that a code could be seen as restricting speech because the idea of "demeaning speech" runs the risk of impinging on members' ability to express themselves, depending on how it is defined. Horvit said he has had some complaints from members who are worried that a code could have that impact.

Gabler said she is generally in support of this but thinks we need to make sure it is something we can act on. Horvit noted that his concern is that as the conference grows, attendees might not feel comfortable enough to come up to a staff or board member. Gabler agreed with Horvit that as the conference gets bigger we need to make sure something is in place.

Vap asked if this wasn't just advertising what we would already do. Horvit replied that IRE already has a system in place.

Cohen proposed that everyone take a very close look at the wording and that they schedule another meeting to discuss this.

Miller asked if there was a committee that could handle this. Gabler replied that the membership committee could handle it. Several members agreed that the membership committee seemed like the appropriate place.

Cohen asked Horvit's thoughts. Horvit said that the version he provided was just a draft to start a conversation. He said that he spoke with the staff and that most were in favor of enacting something. Horvit said that creating a committee is fine, but that he believed they should be able to post something that indicates that the board is taking some sort of action.

New Business

Miller noted that the next time they meet, DocumentCloud will have 6 months of funding left. I think we need to be thinking about what we are going to do once the money runs out. Horvit replied that it will be on the June agenda and asked that if anyone wants to discuss this before June, please let him know.

Motion to adjourn was made by Miller and seconded by Gabler. Unanimous approval
Meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.