

**IRE Board of Directors Meeting  
June 26, 2014  
San Francisco**

In attendance: David Cay Johnston, Andrew Donohue, Sarah Cohen, Ellen Gabler, Manny Garcia, Josh Meyer, Matt Goldberg, Len Downie Jr., Ziva Branstetter, Mc Nelly Torres, Rob Cribb, Stuart Watson, T. Christian Miller (via Skype)

IRE staff: Mark Horvit

The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m.

**Previous Minutes**

Unanimously approved

**Executive Director's Report**

Horvit said conference attendance hit a new record, with more than 1,600 attendees. There numbers of students and international attendees are up, and several media companies sent large contingents.

Fundraising went very well. The budgeted goal for both conferences was \$140,000, and we raised about \$300,000. This includes new multi-year funding agreements with the Knight Foundation and the Lumina Foundation.

Membership has consistently been above 5,000 for several months, one of the longest such streaks in IRE history. Student membership is strong, at more than 900. Professors requiring membership for their courses drive some of that.

Horvit introduced Sarah Hutchins, a new staff member is running the web site and overseeing social media. IRE has held a soft launch of a new IRE Radio feature, which takes advantage of the audio we already collect from conference and workshops, and includes new audio. We're also doing a podcast. This is available to nonmembers. Work is being done on the back end of the website to make audio searchable and easier to present.

The TNT training program grant was renewed for a second year. Custom training has been done recently for several organizations, including a webinar series for Scripps Howard.

Early voting in the board elections has been heavier than expected. We ran into some initial problems with corporate websites blocking the emails containing the ballot link, but have been able to correct that.

Horvit suggested that the nomination process be changed. Several members have noted that because candidates are not nominated until the membership meeting, all those voting online don't know who is nominating and seconding the candidates. That information can be a factor in selecting whom to vote for. Horvit said one solution would be to have nominees listed online as soon as voting opens.

**Downie made a motion that nominations be listed initially when candidates are announced. Cohen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

IRE had a second Google Fellow this year, a student from Columbia University who is working on DocumentCloud.

The CAR Conference in 2015 will be in Atlanta from March 5 – 8, and the IRE Conference will be in Philadelphia from June 4-7. Next year's Board of Directors meeting will be on June 4.

Horvit told the board that the Knight Foundation has awarded a \$1.4 million, two-year grant to DocumentCloud. This will allow us to significantly increase the size of the team working on DocumentCloud, and to make improvements to the platform, add services and work on sustainability. The goal is to be generating income by the end of the grant period. The first hire will be a project manager, then a developer.

Horvit said that IRE will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015. The board agreed to discuss options for marking the milestone, including fundraising efforts, by its fall retreat. A committee will be formed consisting of board members and others.

### **Budget**

Horvit presented the final version of the proposed 2014-15 budget. The board had reviewed a draft during a May phone meeting.

He noted that because of the DocumentCloud grant, some figures have changed. Revenue for the data library also was increased slightly because of a job the library was hired to do.

Donohue walked through a new budget guide that has been created and asked board members to send him feedback.

Horvit said the budget includes funds to hire two new positions: one for another trainer with expertise in coding, and another front office position. The new trainer position would provide additional expertise, allow the executive director to do less training and free up Training Director Jaimi Dowdell to focus more on online training. The front office position will help handle an increased workload created by the growth in IRE's conferences, and help with administrative duties related to grants.

Horvit noted that he is not creating a technology director position at this time, though it had been discussed previously. In part, he said, this is because of the additional funding for DocumentCloud, but also because of other priorities.

Gabler asked about creating an associate director position. Horvit said that he had previously addressed that by promoting Dowdell and Stephanie Sinn and giving them supervisory roles. He said he believes the new structure will strengthen IRE's structure by decentralizing some things and make it easier when the times comes to transition to a new executive director.

Meyer asked if it would save Horvit time from some of the work he'd been doing; he answered that is already has.

Gabler supported the idea of having someone on staff who can teach programming.

Donohue and Garcia said there are advantages to having an associate director.

**Watson moved to approve the 2014-15 budget. Meyer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Reserve Fund**

Horvit said he would like to increase the size of the Reserve Fund. The fund currently holds \$200,000, but he said there is other money that is effectively reserve funding, including unspent gains in the endowment and cash generated by operating revenues the past three years. Those funds total \$106,000.

The board discussed goals for the eventual growth of the Reserve Fund.

Johnston said building up six months of reserves would be a good goal, but said it could be done over time.

The board agreed to move \$30,000 into the Reserve Fund.

### **Golden Padlock**

Cribb said 40 nominations were received and narrowed down to five finalists.

Two winners will be announced at the Saturday awards luncheon, one national, one regional.

### **Estate Planning**

Former Executive Director Brant Houston made a short presentation recommending that IRE begin a program to encourage members to leave money to IRE through estate planning. Houston said an attorney or insurance broker should be found to advise IRE.

The board agreed that the Endowment Committee could look at this in the coming year.

### **Future Conference Locations**

Horvit gave the schedule for future conferences:

IRE 2016 will be held in New Orleans on June 23-26.

IRE 2017 will be held in Phoenix on June 22-25 (keeping with IRE's tradition of honoring the Arizona Project each decade on the "7"s.)

He said work must be done to book the 2016 and 2017 CAR Conferences.

Potential locations discussed included some Florida cities including Tampa; Denver, Nashville or Memphis; and Austin. Horvit said CAR room rates may increase because, as the conference has grown, our options for smaller hotels in smaller cities are disappearing.

A break was taken from 3:25 p.m. -3:40 p.m. Gabler and Branstetter are speaking on a session at the conference and will return afterward.

### **Video Preservation**

Former board member Lea Thompson updated the board on her efforts to preserve IRE's collection of broadcast stories on video in various formats.

She said research done by IRE Resource Director Lauren Grandestaff and her staff indicates that there are about 3,500 tapes with as much as 27,000 hours of material. She said that means it could cost as much as \$370,000 to digitize. She is looking at potential funders and dealing with issues such as whether to use cloud storage or an existing service to do things like tagging the video to make it searchable. She would like to create a committee with some expertise to look into these and other issues. The committee would include both board members and others. Goldberg, Watson and Johnston volunteered to be part of the effort.

**Watson made a motion to create a committee for the revival and protection of IRE's video and audio archive. Torres seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Database Library**

Data Library Liz Lucas gave an overview of plans to revamp the Database Library. Among her recommendations were maintaining fewer data sets, spend more time engaging with data journalists, lowering the cost of data overall (and making some free), getting data when it's timely and not necessarily maintaining it if that doesn't make sense, and selling data to non-IRE members at a higher price.

Cohen said it's important that the library doesn't begin focusing on providing data for corporations. Horvit said journalists would always be the priority. The board supported Lucas' proposal.

### **Student Members**

IRE member Matt Drange made a presentation in favor of giving students voting rights as IRE members.

Cohen explained that to make this possible, the Board would need to pass a resolution recommending the change, and the membership would have to approve it.

Gabler asked why students aren't allowed to vote. Horvit said he spoke with several long-time members and a couple of founders, and no one remembers the initial reasoning. He said no one he spoke with opposed the change.

Horvit said the other class that cannot vote are associate members, those who joined IRE as journalists, left the profession but have been allowed to maintain their membership without the right to vote.

Board members discussed various options for increasing student involvement, including creating a subcommittee of students.

**Downie moved to adopt revisions to the Articles of Incorporation to give students the ability to vote. Cohen second. The motion passed unanimously.**

Downie said the Board should look at other ways to involve students in the organization.

Cribb said he is supportive of having a student on the Board as an advisor or representative. He noted there could be a cost associated with creating such a position (funding to get the student member to meetings) but said it would be worth it.

Drange agreed with Cribb and said doing so would formalize the idea that IRE values tomorrow's voice.

After discussion, the board agreed to create a committee or subcommittee to look at student issues.

## **Other Business**

Cribb proposed creating an annual project to do a national survey of the way federal agencies respond to open records requests. A report could be issued holding the worst agencies accountable. He recommended working with other journalism organizations and making it a continental audit including the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Downie noted that The Associated Press already does something like this in the U.S. and said that he has concerns about filing faux requests that can slow down real requests and create credibility issues with agencies.

Johnston said other organizations do similar projects and questioned whether this would take IRE's focus off of its major priorities of training and promoting investigative journalism.

Miller noted that foia.gov provides a method for monitoring and tracking agency responses. He echoed the concern about duplicating what other organizations already do.

Watson said it might make sense to join with one of those existing efforts.

Johnston suggested refining the concept and doing more research into it.

Horvit and Downie said that keynote speaker Lowell Bergman has asked what IRE has done for journalists like James Risen who face threats or prison time for the work they have done.

Downie discussed efforts that are underway in discussions with government officials related to Risen's case and others.

Discussion ensued. Cohen asked if there is something that can be done to give any statements IRE makes more impact.

Donohue noted that the Board has created an advocacy committee that explores issues like this and looks at cases where IRE's voice or involvement can have impact.

No other new business was brought forward.

Meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.