

**IRE Board Call Minutes**  
**February 4, 2009 - 10 a.m. CST**

**Board members on the call:** Cheryl Phillips, Alison Young, Lea Thompson, James Grimaldi, Jason Grotto, Stephen C. Miller, Lise Olsen, Mc Nelly Torres, Lawan Williams and Phil Williams. **Absent:** Manny Garcia, Duff Wilson, Marilyn Thompson. Staff on the call: Mark Horvit, Jennifer Erickson.

1. **Call to Order (Phillips):** Phillips called meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.
2. **Executive Director's Report (Horvit):** Horvit reported on numbers from the 2008 IRE Contest: IRE received a total of 382 entries, which is down from last year's total of around 500. Contest income most likely will be down about \$10,000.

Horvit said that turnout at IRE events has fluctuated recently. The recent regional Watchdog Workshops have drawn well, as did the recent mapping workshop in Columbia, Mo; attendance for IRE's 6-day CAR seminars in Columbia, however, has been light.

Horvit reported that membership at the end of January was down about 15% when compared to Jan 2008; this reflects a drop of around 600-700 people. On average, we are seeing monthly membership numbers that run around 15-17% below last year's numbers. Horvit said he would send the list of people who haven't renewed recently to all board members. Phillips encouraged everyone to scan the list and call people they know; this is an opportunity to ask them to renew and find out what the issues may be.

Horvit said that there is not one category in the current IRE budget that hasn't seen at least a bit of a drop. He said he would share more detail next month at the in-person meeting. Horvit shared good news: the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation has awarded IRE its full request – a \$75,000 grant in support of regional Watchdog training during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Horvit said that several requests for funding for the IRE Conference in Baltimore have been submitted. He also reminded the board members that the Challenge Fund for Journalism drive continues, and that if they know of new potential donors, to please send them our way.

Horvit said that negotiations continue for the Arizona Project movie. He and IRE's attorney have a phone conference call on the subject next week.

Horvit said IRE will conduct a joint workshop at USC in April with the Online News Association (ONA). Three panels will be put together by ONA, and IRE will market the event to the ONA membership. Horvit said he has had good conversations with the new executive director of ONA and hopes to collaborate with them again in the future.

3. **Conference Committee Report (P. Williams):** P. Williams said that planning for Baltimore is well underway. The committee announced Jon Klein as the keynote before the end of the year, and other expected speakers' names have been added to the Web site. He said that the committee is now working on topics for panels, including the showcase panels. He shared a few highlights: how to conduct great work in tough times; how to conduct financial investigations; non-profit investigative reporting. The committee is also putting together tracks for broadcast, Web investigations, and editors/managers. P. Williams said that the panels reflect a conference that will be responsive to the challenges in the media industry today. Horvit reminded board members to send panel ideas to the email: [confideas@ire.org](mailto:confideas@ire.org); he said he would share the current working list of panels by request.

4. **International Task Force (Olsen):** Olsen said the task force began monthly phone meetings in November to plan the first of several bilingual Watchdog workshops — it's coming up this month in El Paso. The task force hopes to bring another bilingual workshop to California later in the year and would like to reach a larger group of international members via on-line videotaped panels. Olsen said that she is also working on international panels for the Baltimore conference.

Olsen said the task force plans to survey the international membership in the coming months on how IRE can serve them better and grow. Horvit added that the next issue of The IRE Journal is focused on international investigative reporting; he intends to include a continuing international feature in future publications.

5. **Upcoming Conference Cities (Horvit):** Horvit said that staff is recommending Nashville as the location for the IRE conference in 2010; the executive committee weighed in on this earlier in the week and agrees. Horvit said the lodging costs are low and Nashville is an easy destination to reach. He said there is no local support yet; P. Williams added that there are a few organizations that may be interested in supporting the conference.

L. Thompson moved that IRE conduct its 2010 IRE Conference in Nashville; Grimaldi seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Horvit said that we are considering Orlando for 2011 and Milwaukee in 2012. Horvit said that he would like to decide on a location for the 2010 CAR Conference before the 2009 Indy conference so that IRE could announce the location. Horvit said that staff had researched different locations and is recommending either St. Louis or Atlanta. Discussion ensued. Olsen asked whether the proposed locations were too close to Nashville, the location for IRE in 2010. Other board members expressed concern with the fact that so many CAR conferences would take place in the Midwest. Horvit said that he would ask staff to do more research to see if there are other possibilities.

6. **Approval of minutes:** Board members reviewed minutes from the Sept. 12 in-person meeting in Columbia, Mo., and the Nov. 19 board call. Young gave one correction to the time of the call to order in the November minutes. The correction was noted. Young moved to approve the minutes as submitted, with the one correction. Miller seconded her motion. All were in favor and the board minutes were approved.

7. **Discussion of strategic planning process:** Young said that all board members should have received an email last night from Phillips with information about the upcoming strategic planning session at the March board meeting. The areas open for discussion will be:

- a. What will the industry look like in near future? What do we expect will be the employment and training needs? How might this vary among journalists working in broadcast, print, on-line, etc.?

- b. What are IRE's current membership trends? Young said she is drafting a survey to current and former members to gauge what their likely participation in IRE conferences, workshops and services will be over time.

c. A review of IRE's current sources of income and planning for the future.

d. A review of IRE's current expenses and planning for the future.

Young said to let her know what area(s) board members would be interested in researching. Phillips thanked everyone for assisting with the process.

8. **New Business:** L. Thompson encouraged board members to help keep the IRE Web site up-to-date and relevant by contributing to the blog. Phillips said that P. Williams recently submitted such an entry and thanked him for his contribution.

9. **Adjournment:** Grimaldi moved to adjourn the meeting; Olsen seconded his motion. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.