

## **IRE Board Minutes**

**June 5, 2008 – 2 p.m. EDT**

**2008 IRE Conference; InterContinental Miami Hotel**

**In attendance:** James Grimaldi, Cheryl Phillips, Stephen C. Miller, Lea Thompson, Wendell Cochran, Manny Garcia, Mark Katches, Lise Olsen, Marilyn Thompson, Duff Wilson and Alison Young. Absent: Renee Ferguson and Dianna Hunt.

**Staff present:** Mark Horvit, Jennifer Erickson and IRE attorney David Smallman.

1. Call to Order (Grimaldi): Grimaldi called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. He welcomed the board members to Miami and expressed appreciation to the conference and local committees and to Garcia and Lea Thompson for putting together a great conference. He reminded the board that one year ago in Phoenix the organization had an acting executive director and was in the middle of search for a new director. He said IRE has come a long way since then and the transition has gone extremely well. He also reported that IRE has exceeded its fundraising goals for Houston and Miami.
  
2. Approval of Minutes: Board members reviewed minutes from an in-person meeting in Houston on Feb. 28 and a conference call on May 15. Katches moved to approve both sets of minutes; Garcia seconded. All were in favor, and the minutes were approved.
  
3. Executive Director's Report (Horvit):
  - a. Miami Update: Horvit reported that more than 780 people had registered for the conference as of today; he expects registration to reach 800 and surpass the numbers from Dallas/Fort Worth. He said this is another testament to IRE and what the organization means to our members.
  
  - b. Administrative Update: IRE membership numbers are down; Horvit said he and staff would review data to try to determine the reasons for the drop.

IRE has conducted 29 training events so far this calendar year, which is slightly higher than last year. Horvit said IRE received a new \$75,000 grant from the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation for the Watchdog series. He and staff are working to better market regional training, since many journalists cannot afford to travel in the current atmosphere.

The Web Frameworks session in Miami filled up; the program teaches programmers how to build their own interactive Web pages for news. Horvit said there is another seminar scheduled for August in Columbia, Mo., and four more have been scheduled in the coming months. He thanked IRE members Matt Waite, Aron Pilhofer and Chase Davis for their leadership and assistance in putting together the program.

For the CAR Boot Camp over spring break, staff is experimenting with modular Boot Camp options; since IRE handles the teaching of Excel and Access separately, we will allow people to attend one or the other module.

IRE has plans to apply for a grant from McCormick Tribune Foundation to support Ethnic Media Watchdogs. Horvit said he will travel to Chicago for a meeting with the foundation.

IRE is collaborating again with NABJ this year to conduct a Watchdog seminar. There are also plans to conduct a couple of bilingual seminars on the border. IRE will also conduct Watchdog and CAR training at the UNITY and ONA conferences this year.

- c. Update on Services: IRE membership numbers are down. The Database Library reports a slight decrease in revenue, which Horvit said is understandable considering that it was without a director for a couple of months. The new director Jeremy Milarsky brings experience in Web design and Web development to the table.

Horvit reported that IRE surpassed its fundraising goal for the two 2008 conferences. He said that IRE raised the funding differently than in past years; less funding came in from news organizations overall and more foundations came to the table, including Knight, Lumina and Scripps Howard. Grimaldi thanked Garcia for having come up with many fruitful ideas for conference support this year.

Gannett will be the main sponsor for the 2009 CAR Conference in Indianapolis and The Sun of Baltimore for the 2009 IRE Conference in Baltimore.

An updated version of The Reporters Handbook will come out soon. Resource Center Director Beth Kopine has been researching e-books and Horvit is consulting with the IRE attorney to find out next steps. IRE plans to publish two new Beat books in the coming year.

IRE staff has been digitizing the whole collection of IRE Contest questionnaires. Horvit said this is a huge value for IRE members; no other journalism organization can offer this resource.

- d. Website Update: IRE publications coordinator Megan Means has decided to pursue a graduate degree and will switch from full- to part-time and will focus on the Web. IRE is searching for a new editor for The IRE Journal. Two major advertisers for the Journal pulled out, which has led to lower publications revenue. Horvit said he hopes to make up some of the revenue by means of the new electronic newsletter and Web advertising.

Horvit moved the meeting to a room next door to preview the new IRE Web site and asked for feedback. Discussion ensued.

- 4. Public Comments (Grimaldi): Grimaldi thanked IRE members Corey Johnston, Topher Sanders, Paul Begala and Duane Pohlman for attending the board meeting.

Pohlman addressed the board and said he is pleased and encouraged by the recent progress of IRE. He said thanked the board for their hard work during the search process for a new executive director. Pohlman also thanked Lea Thompson for a superb job on putting together broadcast panels in Miami.

Pohlman said these are trying and exciting times for journalism and offered the local broadcast perspective. He said that across the country, with frequency, the best investigative reporters are being let go or are walking out of their jobs. He said that ratings are all important – it used to be about the station doing the right thing; now it's all about viewership. Pohlman said that broadcast journalists want to be integrated into the newsroom. He said that there are directions IRE can take to help broadcasters in this atmosphere. He

suggested that IRE offer a component at each regional Watchdog seminar for local TV broadcasters on 50 quick investigations, where to go on the internet, etc. Pohlman also suggested that IRE partner more often with RTNDA. Pohlman closed by saying that this is one of most exciting times in journalism and that reinvention should be part of the critical core of what IRE does. Discussion ensued. Grimaldi thanked Pohlman for his comments.

5. New Business:

- . 2008-09 Budget: Grimaldi said that Dianna Hunt could not make the meeting and asked Horvit to fill in for her. Horvit said that the 2007-08 budget will end with a \$15,000 surplus. He said that the 2008-09 budget will reach \$1.4 million overall and that income from the growing IRE endowment fund helps significantly.

The board members reviewed the proposed budget for fiscal year 2008-09 and discussion ensued.

Philips moved to approve the 2008-09 budget as submitted. Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Miller moved that the board meeting go into executive session. Wilson seconded Miller's motion. The meeting went into executive session.

Young moved to end the executive session; Phillips seconded her motion. The meeting was called back to order.

a. Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University (Cochran): Cochran said that in February he and Chuck Lewis started an investigative reporting venture at American University called the Investigative Reporting Workshop. He said that he and Lewis cherish their relationship with IRE and would like the two organizations to collaborate. He also said that they do not intend to conduct any training. Grimaldi noted that the acronym IRW is very close to IRE and its trademark. Cochran said that their style book indicates they are not "IRW" – they are "Investigative Reporting Workshop." Discussion ensued.

b. Election Process for Executive Committee (Olsen): Olsen said the election process for officers is too hasty and tends to take new board members by surprise. She suggested that the board delay this process until the week following the first board meeting. Olsen made a motion that officer elections take place via conference call on the first Thursday following the membership meeting and that all interested parties should declare their intention to run 48 hours before the call. Cochran seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. The board voted as follows: 5 were opposed, 4 were in favor and 2 abstained. The motion did not pass.

6. Committee Reports

- . Development (Phillips): Phillips directed the board members to an overview of fundraising efforts among the board materials. She said IRE has until the end of September to raise an additional \$260,000 and obtain the full Knight Foundation match. She said that former executive director Brant Houston is involved and working with the board and staff. Horvit said IRE will apply to take part in the Challenge Fund for Journalism V program – IRE was one of 22 journalism organizations invited to apply.

a. Endowment (Hunt): Grimaldi said that Dianna Hunt, who could not make the meeting, is the chair and referred the board members to a complete report among the meeting materials.

b. Member services (Young): Young reported that the committee has focused recently on four items:

i. An amendment to the IRE Articles of Incorporation will be put to a membership vote on Sat., June 7, during the membership meeting in Miami. In Article 5.1, the definition of Associate membership would be amended to (amended portion in italics and underlined): “Associate” membership will be available to former Professional or Academic members who are not retired, individuals engaged part-time in reporting or editing, plus individuals recognized by the Board of Directors for their contributions to this corporation to the field of investigative reporting and editing.”

ii. The committee is considering removing the directive in Article 6.03, Members as Directors, that indicates that no more than one Academic member may sit on the Board. Discussion ensued.

iii. Issues on publications.

iv. How the committee can best help board and staff members make decisions on issues such as student membership and non-traditional membership.

c. Conference (Garcia): Garcia gave an overview of fundraising for Miami. He recommends going to the individual news organizations and then following up with the parent companies when raising conference support each year. Katches recommended offering a payment plan for news organizations; this allows for budgeting very early in the process. Garcia said that fundraisers should expect to hear “no” quite often.

Lea Thompson said the Miami conference will offer 127 teaching programs, many new faces among the more than 200 speakers, and Web panels. Also, she said that there would be more attendees who work in management than ever before, that more than two dozen different countries would be represented and that 66 mentors/mentors connections have been made.

Horvit said that the 2009 conference locations are set: the CAR Conference will take place in March in Indianapolis with Gannett as hosts; the IRE conference in Baltimore in June with The Sun of Baltimore as host. The 2010 and 2011 locations are open (considering San Diego, New Orleans and San Antonio), and IRE will take place in Milwaukee in 2012.

Lea Thompson complimented Horvit and conference coordinator Stephanie Sinn on putting together a great conference in Miami. She also thanked Garcia and IRE members McNelly Torres,

Aron Pilhofer, Stephen Stock, Jeff Burnside, and Phil Williams for their guidance and assistance. Grimaldi thanked Lea Thompson for all of her hard work.

d. Education Committee (Cochran and Katches): Items under consideration by the committee in the coming months are plans for a possible Web conference to be offered in the coming year and the possibility of more international training, with a start in Latin America (originally proposed by Olsen). Lea Thompson thanked Olsen for putting together the international panels in Miami.

7. Centennial plan: Grimaldi said that the fall board meeting would be in conjunction with the Missouri School of Journalism Centennial celebration the second week of Sept. The formal meeting will take place on Friday, Sept. 12, and a few board members will be speaking on a panel on Thursday, Sept. 11. He said that board members need to be in Columbia by the evening of Sept. 11; the IRE staff has booked rooms.

Grimaldi thanked outgoing board members Renee Ferguson and Mark Katches for their years of excellent service to IRE.

8. Executive session: Lise Olsen made a motion that the meeting should go into executive session. Phillips seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting went into executive session.
9. Adjournment: Young made a motion for the meeting to adjourn; Marilyn Thompson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned.