

IRE Board Call Minutes
May 15, 2008 – 9:30 a.m. CST

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

Staff on the call: Mark Horvit, Jennifer Erickson and IRE attorney David Smallman.

1. **Call to Order:** Grimaldi called meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.
2. **Executive Director's Report (Horvit):** Horvit reported that more than 500 people have registered for the Miami conference, most of the panels are complete and the speaker list is up-to-date. Horvit said that Neil Reisner of FIU and students would blog about the conference this year.

Horvit said that he and staff have streamlined the process of submitting and posting stories on Extra!Extra!, we can now do RSS feeds for individual topics, and people can sign up for daily email blasts.

Horvit said that overall membership is up when compared to last year.

Horvit gave a Web update and said the plan is to unveil a new IRE Web site in time for the Miami conference. He said staff is moving the site into Drupal, which allows the site to be much more dynamic, the staff to add blogs, etc. Wilson said the Web site has short definition of IRE on the front page and recommended making that stronger.

Board members discussed ways to increase registrations for the Miami conference. Horvit said IRE has a FaceBook page to help get the word out, which is new this year. Grimaldi thanked Lea Thompson and Garcia for chairing the conference committee, especially for their help in fundraising, and to all others who helped put together such a strong program.

3. **Membership Committee (Young):** Young reported that she was asked to address what to do about part-time journalists and membership in IRE (bloggers, et al.). What role should they play in IRE and how might they be incorporated into the membership? She said the committee felt very strongly that IRE should be inclusive. Also, the committee believes that these journalists must learn best practices, and IRE is the place to do that.

Young said the existing language in the IRE Articles of Incorporation does not allow journalists working part-time to be members; the committee worked to fix this problem and proposed the following: In Article 5.1 of IRE's Articles of Incorporation, 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."

Young said there may be other classes of membership to add in the future. Discussion ensued. Board members asked if IRE can still decline to allow someone to join IRE, for instance, based on conduct detrimental to the organization. Smallman said the board, through the membership committee or directly, has the inherent power to determine whether a person qualifies for membership.

Lea Thompson made a motion to pass the committee's proposal and refer it to the membership by notice. Miller seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Grimaldi said the next step is to notify the membership in writing; Young said the board should write a paragraph on why the board is doing this. Grimaldi asked Young to attend the membership meeting at the Miami conference so that she may answer questions on the topic.

4. **Board Meeting Plans in Miami (Grimaldi):** Grimaldi said there would be committee meetings on the Thursday morning of the conference, followed by a board lunch and a full board meeting at 1 p.m.
5. **Treasurer Report (Hunt):** Hunt said the board would receive the full proposed budget for fiscal year 2008-09 prior to the June meeting. She said that IRE is holding its own, which is a good sign. As an overview,

revenue was down for several reasons, including a reduced number of IRE Journal ads and lower registrations for the two conferences. General contributions and conference donations are up, however, and spending is down. Hunt said she would have more specific details at the June meeting.

Hunt reported that the fiscal officer is reviewing different fiscal software options, with the goal of making the budget process easier to understand. She said there may be a few funding options for IRE as a nonprofit. Cochran said he would look into this and report to the board in Miami.

6. **New Business:** Cochran asked about establishing a board seat for an international member and whether there are any legal issues. Smallman recommended that the board follow the usual procedure: make a proposal through a committee and obtain legal guidance from an attorney. Grimaldi said it may be time to reconsider whether we have designated slots on the board. Phillips said the board should discuss this topic at the next in-person meeting. Grimaldi asked Cochran and Olsen to prepare discussion points for Miami.
7. **Adjournment:** Young made a motion to adjourn; Hunt seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m CST.