

IRE Board Minutes

Sept. 12, 2008 – 1:30 p.m. CDT

Columbia, Mo.

In attendance: Cheryl Phillips, Alison Young, Lea Thompson, Duff Wilson, Manny Garcia, James Grimaldi, Jason Grotto, Stephen C. Miller, Mc Nelly Torres, Lawan Williams and Phil Williams. **Absent:** Marilyn Thompson and Lise Olsen.

Staff present: Mark Horvit and Jennifer Erickson.

1. **Call to Order (Phillips):** Phillips called meeting to order at 2:07 p.m.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Board members reviewed minutes from in-person meetings on June 5 and June 7, and a board call on August 15. Young made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Garcia seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the minutes were approved.
3. **Executive Director's Report (Horvit):** Horvit asked the board members to review the report from JJP Capital Management.

Horvit said that he attended a meeting of the Council of National Journalism Organizations (CNJO) and reported that other journalism organizations have experienced significant drops in attendance at events and in membership and difficulty in fundraising. One group opened membership to all trade organizations; another really pushed international membership.

Horvit said that he has restructured the training staff and has hired two training directors. Doug Haddix started on Sept. 2 and plans to work out of Columbus, Ohio; Jaimi Dowdell will start Oct. 1 and will be headquartered in St. Louis. Both will conduct on-the-road training. Dowdell will take the lead in developing on-line training; Haddix on updating IRE training materials. Horvit said that Megan Means will now oversee the Web site and help with conference publications in a part-time capacity.

Horvit said that IRE would conduct training events in New York (workshop on investigating business in collaboration with the Centre for Investigative Reporting) and Los Angeles (Watchdog Workshop on covering healthcare in collaboration with USC Annenberg) in the coming week.

Horvit said that staff conducted a pilot workshop for Gannett in Detroit that received positive feedback; he hopes to conduct another 7-8 of these in the future. Upcoming training locations include Wichita, Kan.; New Haven, Conn.; San Francisco; El Paso, Texas (bilingual session). He and staff plan to offer bilingual or Spanish-language training in other locations in the future. Lise Olsen will take a big role in putting this together.

Horvit reported that IRE was awarded a new \$100,000 grant from the McCormick Foundation to conduct six ethnic media workshops and further develop Web materials. New America Media and others will partner with IRE on the program. He also said the New York Times Company Foundation is considering a grant for a second Watchdog Workshop at the Times.

Horvit said that the CAR Boot Camp schedule has changed a bit. IRE will conduct traditional boot camps in January, March and August and will offer a three-day training in Django and Web

programming in May. Participants of the traditional seminars will have a choice of attending the full six-day seminar or either the Excel or Access portion only. Horvit said many journalists find it difficult to get out of newsroom; some could get away more easily with fewer days involved. IRE also added a boot camp in Minneapolis – IRE member Mary Jo Webster will lead it; Dowdell will be the secondary trainer. Horvit said he may continue this effort by bringing CAR Boot Camps to different regions of the country to allow journalists to save on travel money.

Horvit reminded the board members that he and staff would start raising funds to complete the Challenge Fund for Journalism V at the end of October; IRE must raise \$75,000 to receive a \$50,000 grant in support of capacity building.

Horvit said that IRE has applied for a \$50,000 planning grant from the Lumina Foundation to train college journalists. He intends to apply for a three-year grant following the completion of the planning grant. The program will be a collaboration with Education Writers and the Student Press Law Center. Lumina will pay for each student to attend. Horvit said it will be a huge undertaking with lots of potential.

Horvit said the staff is preparing to relaunch Uplink, which had been largely dormant for several months while staff member David Herzog was filling in to run the Database Library. He said that staff has created a new Web site in Drupal. All of the content is ready, and Horvit expects it to launch in two weeks.

4. **Report from JJP Capital Management:** Dr. John Pascucci, Garry Banks and Christopher Pascucci of the firm JJP Capital Management joined the meeting to update the board on how the endowment fund stands and the current investment strategy.

Dr. Pascucci said that IRE's portfolio was originally set up to keep all the money in credit instruments. Therefore, even though the S & P and Dow are 14% down, IRE still has conservation of capital. He said that IRE has many good bonds in its portfolio.

Garry Banks, another principal of the firm, said the overall makeup of IRE's portfolio is good; strongly leaning toward fixed income. Banks said the biggest challenge this year is that IRE has raised a lot of money that it will take time to invest.

Phillips thanked Pascucci, Pascucci and Banks for taking the time to meet with the board and take questions. Dr. Pascucci thanked the board for the opportunity to serve IRE.

5. **Committee Reports**

- a. **Education Committee (Phillips):** Phillips said that Marilyn Thompson, the chair of the committee, could not attend. Phillips said the plan is to spend time on education and training on the Oct/Nov. board call. Miller reported that the international task force met and said that it has a lot on its agenda. He sent out a report on his training in Africa and will share that with board members upon request.
- b. **Endowment Committee (Phillips):** Phillips said this is one committee that is structured in IRE's bylaws. The board treasurer (Lea Thompson) serves as the committee chair; the committee is comprised of one other board member and three other members. Phillips

recommended that Garcia take the board position, and that IRE members Mike McGraw, Brant Houston and Shawn McIntosh serve as the remaining committee members. Discussion ensued. Young made a motion to accept the roster as presented; Phil Williams seconded her motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

6. **Treasurer's Report (L. Thompson):** Thompson reported that IRE membership income is down by around \$30,000. She said that Horvit and staff are working on increasing membership. Thompson also reported that IRE raised more money for conferences this year by \$20,000; income for Boot Camps is down by around \$30,000 less than projected; media workshops' income down by \$15,000. IRE ended fiscal year 2008 with \$10,000 in the black. \$100,000 is coming in from the McCormick Foundation and \$50,000 from the Challenge Fund for Journalism V. She said that staff is working hard to keep costs down. Horvit said that there will be many challenges in the coming year.

7. **Committee Reports (Continued):**

- Membership Committee (Young):** Young asked board members to review the membership report that was included in the board packet. Young said that John Green conducted a study of six-month memberships given as part of the Better Watchdog Workshop program. For some workshops, we retain very few members; for others we retain 90%. The average is around 40%. Young said it would be helpful to raise that retention rate. She said that all board members and volunteers must work to sell the value of an IRE membership when they attend workshops and when they're out in public volunteering for IRE.

Young said that the committee will tackle the following topics in the coming year: A) Does IRE have the image of serving only journalists on projects teams, and does that keep potential members away? B) How can we retain existing members? C) Can we do more for members of the traditional media? D) Is there a way to recruit new members from corporate on-line media? E) What do we want to do in recruiting new members from grassroots media? Discussion ensued.

- a. **Contest Committee (Grimaldi):** Grimaldi moved to accept a proposal from IRE member Mark Katches to raise the IRE Contest fee by \$5 in order to pay for changes that will allow for 11 x 17 submissions. Young seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Conference Committee (Wilson and P. Williams):** Wilson reported that the committee agreed to invite Jon Klein as the keynote speaker for Baltimore; there also will be a session with Bob Woodward. If anyone has ideas for other panels, please send them to the email address: confideas@ire.org. Wilson said that they are considering other locations for future conferences, including San Antonio, Orlando, Los Angeles and Milwaukee. Horvit said that the Hilton Hotel chain will give IRE a discount if they secure multiple bookings with them.

8. **Selection of Executive Committee Members (Phillips):** Phillips said that possible alternatives to the current method of electing board executive committee members were sought during the June in-person board meeting. She said that new members in particular may feel blindsided by officer elections taking place so soon after they themselves have been elected. Board members discussed the issue and decided that they should work on transparency of the process and marketing, rather than changing the process.

9. **Meeting Adjournment:** Young made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Miller seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m. CDT.