

IRE Board Call Minutes
Sept. 17, 2009 – 11 a.m. CDT

Board members on the call: Alison Young, David Cay Johnston, Duff Wilson, Manny Garcia, Cheryl Phillips, Rob Cribb, Stephen C. Miller, Lise Olsen, Mc Nelly Torres, Lawan Williams, Phil Williams. **Absent:** Leonard Downie, Jr., Lea Thompson. **Staff on the call:** Mark Horvit, Jennifer Erickson.

1. **Call to Order and Meeting Overview (Young):** Young called meeting to order at 11:07 a.m. She referred to the agenda for today's call; she emailed it to everyone ahead of the meeting along with copies of proposed contest categories and items for the membership drive.

2. **Potential New Categories for the 2009 IRE Contest (Phillips):** Phillips said the Contest Committee plans to review the entire contest in the coming months and report to the board on recommended changes at the December board meeting. She said the categories under consideration today were developed by the committee given the trend of shorter investigations and the desire to recognize that type of work being done by IRE members. The two categories as submitted are:
 - a. Annual Body of Work: This award recognizes journalists who have done multiple investigative stories in one year on a variety of topics. This category is open to all journalists regardless of media platform. Entries should include examples from three or more distinct topics published during the award period. Topics may center on one beat or subject area, but each must represent a distinct investigation. Entries also can cover a range of beats or subject areas. A maximum of 12 separate days' work may be submitted on all topics combined (multiple elements published, broadcast or posted on the same day count as one example).

 - b. Breaking News Investigations: This award recognizes outstanding investigative work done following a news event or development. This category is open to all journalists regardless of media platform. All work entered in this category must be published, broadcast or posted within 60 calendar days of a news event. The entry must specify the date that this event occurred, and the initial story, broadcast or post must be included as verification, even if this initial story was not produced by the entrant (it will be used for verification purposes only unless otherwise specified by the applicant). Entries may include from one to five stories.

Discussion ensued. Olsen asked why the board should add a new category ahead of the bigger contest review by the committee. Young said the media landscape is changing very rapidly and IRE must be responsive to the changing times.

P. Williams said that 60 days does not reflect the pressure IRE members are under; many turn out good work in fewer days. He suggested that they change the time range on the Breaking News category to 30 days. Olsen made a motion to amend the proposed category for Breaking News to 30 days. P. Williams seconded her motion. All were in favor and the Breaking News category was amended.

Discussion continued. Young proposed that they first determine if either of the categories have support from board members. Then they may vote on whether to add one or both categories to the 2009 contest.

P. Williams moved to change the language of the Breaking News category to reflect "one to ten stories"

instead of “one to five stories.” Miller seconded the motion and opened the motion up for discussion. Following further discussion, P. Williams withdrew his motion.

Young took a poll on whether board members support each of the proposals. She began with the Body of Work category: seven said they would support the new category; three said they would not; and one abstained.

P. Williams made a motion to add only the Breaking News category to the 2009 IRE Contest. L. Williams seconded his motion and opened up the meeting to discussion. Cribb, Phillips and Miller expressed support for the Body of Work category; Phillips said the Contest Committee members felt strongly that this category should be added to the contest. Wilson moved to call the question; Miller seconded. Young reminded board members that a vote in support of Williams’ motion would mean that the Body of Work category would not be added. The vote was as follows: Ayes: six; Nays: five. The Ayes won and the motion carried.

The new contest category in its final form is as follows: Breaking News Investigations: This award recognizes outstanding investigative work done following a news event or development. This category is open to all journalists regardless of media platform. All work entered in this category must be published, broadcast or posted within 30 calendar days of a news event. The entry must specify the date that this event occurred, and the initial story, broadcast or post must be included as verification, even if this initial story was not produced by the entrant (it will be used for verification purposes only unless otherwise specified by the applicant). Entries may include from one to five stories.

3. **Update on October membership drive, and how board members can help (P. Williams):** P. Williams said the task force has been meeting via email and have fine tuned a pitch for the October membership drive. Young thanked P. Williams for his leadership and hard work.

P. Williams said the pitch is as follows: **Bigger stories, quicker hits, better connections. Get the edge. Join IRE.** These days, there’s more pressure than ever to rise above your competition. IRE can help put the punch into your daily reporting -- with resources you won’t find anywhere else.

P. Williams said that, to encourage people to renew or join IRE during October, incentives would be offered, including drawings toward free databases, \$15 credit toward purchase of book and free conference hotel nights and registration. If all are on board with the pitch, the next step is to get recruiters in most markets to supplement email bursts. Horvit said that IRE’s attorney is reviewing plans for the raffle and will report to the board in the coming days.

Horvit said that IRE staff members are working on the following:

- A PowerPoint presentation that will turn into flash on the Web; why join IRE?
- An edited-down version of the IRE testimonial video that was broadcast at the endowment table in Baltimore, to play on the IRE Web site.
- A new topper to the main IRE Web page plugging the membership drive.
- Other materials for recruiters to use in their regional pitches, including PowerPoint presentations on backgrounding individuals and Web research and handouts.

Young outlined the plan for recruiters. She said we will tap into the current membership for help in recruiting throughout the country. Recruiters will help put up posters, visit nearby college campuses and work with journalism programs, conduct brown bag training sessions in their own newsrooms and perhaps other newsrooms in their regions. Horvit said IRE will also prepare some presentations to distribute to the recruiters.

Young emphasized that the membership drive is a very important push; P. Williams agreed and said the drive is in response to declining membership. Horvit said that this month IRE membership is down by around 500 from the previous year, and around 1,000 over two years.

4. **Update on committee structure (Young):** Young said the bulk of board work will take place in committees and task forces. She asked board members to reach out to committee heads to share ideas and expertise even if they are not on a particular committee. She said that L. Williams will be heading the marketing task force and Thompson the new-revenue task force.

5. **Executive director's update (Horvit):** Horvit reported that IRE received word that a \$75,000 grant had been approved from the Ford Foundation. The grant is over two years and has two major components: ethnic media workshops at The New York Times and four border workshops on the Mexican border. He said this is a great development as it's the first such grant from Ford. Horvit said that he and staff will launch publicity materials for the Campus Coverage Project, funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, in the coming days. If you have contacts at colleges and know good candidates for the program, please help us spread the word.

6. **New Business:** No new business.

7. **Meeting Adjournment:** Olsen made a motion to adjourn; Johnston seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 12:16 p.m. CDT.