

**IRE Board Meeting Minutes  
February 27, 2011  
2011 Annual CAR Conference, Raleigh, NC**

The meeting was called to order by Young at 9:05 a.m.

Young began with remarks about the conference. She called it hugely successful, and all board members agreed. There was a motion to approve the minutes from the October 2010 meeting, no discussion, motion approved unanimously.

**Executive Director's Report**

Horvit began his report by noting the success of the conference, with between 420 and 430 attendees. This, compared to last year's numbers (285) was a marked improvement, and Horvit called it the biggest CAR conference in 10 years. He thanked all board members who helped, especially noting the work of Cohen and Pilhofer. He gave kudos to Jaimi Dowdell for helping to design the program. He also noted the presence of 80 – 100 first time conference attendees. One of the many reasons Horvit cited for this increase was the Newscamp, introduced at this conference and also a big success. He mentioned the desire to continue this program, and to convene similar sessions regionally.

There was a brief discussion of next year's CAR Conference in St. Louis and the potential conflict with the South by Southwest tech events in Austin. Cohen mentioned the possibility of presenting the CAR conference in the fall. There was a short discussion about the lack of broadcast journalists participating in the CAR conference.

Conference fundraising – Horvit mentioned that fundraising for Orlando is underway – and highlighted a generous sponsorship from a Florida law firm. He mentioned the need to fundraise nationally for the IRE conference.

Horvit reviewed the membership report – and pointed out that membership numbers are over 4,500 for the second month. He said there are likely multiple reasons for the increase, including efforts from membership coordinator John Green and the membership drive.

Horvit noted that the IRE conference will be in Boston in 2012 and in San Antonio in 2013. He thanked conference coordinator Stephanie Sinn for her work in organizing conferences.

In the data library, analysis jobs are up and sales are down. If the demand for analysis continues to increase, the need for a full-time Database Library Director becomes more immediate.

Horvit highlighted the success of the **Community Partnership Project** (funded by the McCormick Foundation). It allows trainers to continue to work with newsrooms, giving them valuable feedback and mentoring.

**Census** – IRE has a successful Web page devoted to census data, and there has been a lot of traffic to that site. Olsen praised the Webinars. Horvit added that IRE had sold more census webinars than any of the others.

An idea proposed by some members to get several developers together to process census data was discussed. Horvit said that USA Today, through IRE members Tony DeBarros and Paul Overberg, has made processed census data free to IRE members. There were 100 downloads in the first week. This also encouraged new memberships. Horvit mentioned that Google may provide help with its Fusion Tables tool to create visualization tools for the data. Google gave IRE sponsorship for both of the conferences, in addition to sending several employees to come to the CAR conference.

Horvit introduced new Development Officer – Alan Lynes.

## **Financial update**

Johnston mentioned that IRE is in much better financial shape than one year ago. He said it will soon be time begin looking at raising more money for the endowment. Johnston discussed raising fees. Horvit mentioned that he had asked the fiscal officer, Heather Feldman Henry, to do a cost analysis of what would be gained by raising certain fees. He went over this briefly with the board.

## **Member Services Committee Report**

Cohen discussed the membership drive and the power of getting into newsrooms, meeting with journalists and encouraging them to join.

*David Smallman joined the meeting at 9:45.*

Young discussed the possibility of selling institutional memberships to student organizations.

Cohen asked if IRE loses members by selling semester memberships. Olsen suggested doing an analysis of membership. Young mentioned that many schools who have journalism programs do not offer Excel and Access as separate courses, and questioned whether this might be an opportunity for IRE to offer their OTR training at those schools. One drawback is that schools do not have the money to pay for it.

A motion was brought to the floor by Williams to go into Executive Session to discuss a business opportunity, Phillips seconded the motion and it unanimously carried. Aron Pilhofer did not attend the session.

The board resumed after the Executive Session. Torres moved to explore a possible transaction to acquire DocumentCloud; the motion was seconded by Williams and unanimously passed. Torres said that it was an excellent opportunity for IRE to expand and several board members discussed the potential of the acquisition. Young added that IRE would carefully review the financial implications of such a transaction.

Horvit said it was too early for specifics of next year's budget; he wants to consider raising rates for conferences and memberships, and also wants to look at increasing staff salaries. He has heard that the system-wide freeze on salaries at MU would be lifted soon. He also said that increasing fees would help provide some of the money to offset these increases. According to the estimates made by the fiscal officer, a 2 percent across the board staff salary raise would cost \$12,000; a 3 percent raise would cost \$18,000.

The board gave unanimous support for Horvit to look into raises. Phillips mentioned that the staff works very hard and needs the raises. Young reminded the board that ultimately the decision to give raises was the Executive Director's decision.

Horvit said raising membership fees by \$10 would yield an estimated \$27,500 in the first year. Raising it by \$15 – to \$75/year would bring in approximately \$40,000.

Donohue said that the conference fees seem so low, compared to other organizations. The board seemed to all agree, and Young said a gradual increase should be explored.

Horvit said he did not explore raising training fee costs, but would discuss that with staff later in the year.

Young made a motion to go into Executive Session for a legal update from Smallman, Garcia seconded it.

When the full board meeting resumed, the discussion shifted to the design of the **new Web site**.

Young prefaced the discussion by saying that the Web site redesign is the purview of the Executive Director.

There was discussion of a redesigned IRE logo on the site. Horvit discussed the front page blog and the general look of the new site. All seemed to agree that it is a vast improvement over the existing site.

Cohen questioned whether there was enough space for promotional material. There was discussion of whether IRE needed to trademark the new logo. David Smallman explained that they had trademarked the words but not the specific design of the existing logo.

Williams stressed that for consistency and branding purposes, the logo needs to be consistent in all IRE materials.

The general consensus was that the new site design looks great. Donohue asked when the site would go live. Horvit said the designers should be done by the end of March and the site should be up by summer. He mentioned the need to import information from the old site and this will take some time. He also explained that there will not be a link to the old site.

The board then took a short break.

Upon resuming the meeting, the board discussed the June board meeting in Orlando. Horvit explained that there will be a full day of sessions for nonprofit investigative news centers, in partnership with Investigative News Network (INN), which is the same day as the board meeting.

Phillips proposed beginning the meeting at 4 p.m. and ending by 9 p.m.

## **Contest**

Phillips and Thompson discussed the results of a survey conducted to gather members' opinions on the contest. She emphasized that people do not like change. Thompson mentioned how much work it is to judge the contests and that the board is grateful for the judges giving their time. One of the survey results Thompson mentioned being struck by was that 50% of the respondents were print folks, 20% broadcast.

Cohen said it would be worth looking at simplifying the entry form and to consider having the contest applications entirely online. Garcia and Cribb agreed that the process of applying in the contests needs to be streamlined. However, the importance of continuing to gather detailed information in the application process, and maintaining that resource, was stressed.

Discussion ensued with various possibilities proposed, including changing the model for entering categories by creating categories based on the type of work, not the entrant (print/text, audio and video). Discussion included debate on the importance of maintaining size categories. Phillips suggested that the next step would be for the Contest Committee to hash out all the details and then follow up this discussion with a conference call.

There was a brief discussion of next conference, led by Williams. It was noted that the keynote for Orlando, Jeff Fager, had just been promoted to chair of CBS News. Two showcase panels, one on how the relationship between sources and journalists has changed because of WikiLeaks, and one looking at measuring risk in dangerous reporting assignments, were discussed and speakers proposed.

Williams said that the staff of IRE should be given more leeway on non-media conference sponsorships. A discussion of a policy on conference sponsorships followed. Young asked if IRE needs a formal policy. She also wondered if a formal policy would bind the hands of the staff when seeking sponsorships, and suggested "going forward with discretion".

Williams suggested that a policy in writing would make the job of the director of IRE easier.

Garcia suggested tabling this discussion; he also said perhaps the question of sponsorship might be a case-by-case determination. There was a motion by Johnston to continue the discussion of sponsorship policy on a conference call. The motion was seconded by Phillips and passed unanimously.

Williams brought a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Garcia. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35.

Respectfully submitted by Alan Lynes