

# SPJ/SDX Combined Meeting Minutes

## October 3, 1999 - Indianapolis

**Meeting Date:** October 3, 1999; 10:00am

**Meeting Place:** Westin Hotel, 1999 Annual Convention, Indianapolis

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### Roll Call:

Foundation Members Present: 5

Phil Record  
June Almquist  
Lou Dobbs  
Sue Porter  
Russell Pulliam

Foundation Members Absent: 15

Paul Steinle  
Paul McMasters  
Georgiana Vines  
Howard Dubin  
Betsy Ashton  
Fred Brown  
Paul Davis  
Bonna de la Cruz  
Steve Geimann  
Frank Gibson  
G. Kelly Hawes  
Ray Marcano  
Wendy Myers  
Kyle Niederpruem  
Reginald Stuart

SPJ Board Members Present: 20

Wendy Myers  
Kyle Niederpruem  
Ray Marcano  
Fred Brown  
Todd Gillman  
Mac McKerral  
Julie Asher  
Melanie Ave  
Ginny Frizzi  
Pat McKeand  
Michelle Swafford  
Irwin Gratz  
Anita Weier  
Jay Evensen  
Mark Scarp  
Bonna de la Cruz  
Staci Kramer  
David Carlson  
Elizabeth Fraas  
Robert Leger

SPJ Board Members Absent: 3

Lance Wallace  
Lisa Rollins  
Laurie Williams

SPJ Staff Members Present: 4

James Gray  
Leslee Combs  
Jeff Mohl  
Frank Giammarino

Others Present:

Al Cross

Bruce Callwallader

Terrance Aldridge – The Working Press

Oren Campbell

Bruce Sanford

Bob Lystand

Lucy Dalglish

Angel Marten

Kathy Walt

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## **Strategic Plan**

Following is Fred Brown's report on Strategic Planning:

The past two years have brought some important organizational changes to the Society of Professional Journalists and the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. We changed executive directors (twice). The Foundation adopted a more flexible asset-management policy. Now we're moving to a new headquarters, a building we own rather than lease, near downtown Indianapolis.

Amidst all this change, it seemed to be a good time to take a comprehensive, structured look at SPJ's mission and future. A strategic plan was an idea I put on the back burner when I was president, but Wendy Myers revived it when she took office in October 1998 and appointed a 13-member committee to undertake it.

The committee was diverse and a delight. It represented different ages, geographical areas, ethnic and racial groups, news media, gender and membership types. Members of both the SDX and SPJ boards were included.

Collectively, the Strategic Planning Committee has spent thousands of hours reviewing SPJ's history, taking inventory of what we're doing now, surveying members, doing planning exercises, making charts, culling, amplifying and trying to decide where SPJ ought to go in the future.

The Foundation set aside \$40,000 for the effort -- to hire a professional facilitator and to pay for expenses. We met four times, over weekends. We covered walls with charts. We did homework -- lots of homework, which is listed as a separate graphic. We fiddled with tension-relieving twisty finger toys and Play-Doh.

What the committee produced is a set of ideas, not a rule book or a list of chores. While the plan is a flexible document, subject to annual review and updating, the committee felt that the vision statement and the four goals were constants, the basic principles that have been a part of the Society since its founding and that will survive well into the new millennium.

We used strategic planning jargon -- goals, objectives and action steps. Steve Geimann even came up with a "G-O-A" grid for easy reference. But it's best to think of goals as the major principles, objectives as destinations to reach on the way to fulfilling those principles, and action steps as the vehicles -- changeable rental cars, perhaps -- used in arriving at those destinations.

Some action steps already have been implemented or are in the works. For example, the SDX Foundation has voted to fund the hiring of a development director to identify potential donors for the educational activities of SPJ and SDX. Each mission committee now has a liaison on the SPJ Board. There was an orientation session for board members and committee chairs at the Indianapolis convention.

Other changes will take time, money, bylaws changes -- and a lot of wrangling over whether we actually want to do them. A prime example is the plan's suggestion to reduce the size of the national board. The

first step, a report from an appointed task force, won't come until January of 2001.

By the way, each of these action steps identifies who's responsible for doing it and sets a deadline. The implementing committee will keep careful track of those. But they also are the pieces that are most subject to change.

So here it is. The committee is looking more for feedback than for editing. And its hope is that the plan presented here will be widely circulated and thoroughly discussed. It is, after all, just a start -- but a good one, we think.

## VISION STATEMENT

The Society of Professional Journalists is dedicated to quality, responsible journalism as the foundation of a free and informed society. By maintaining a large and diverse membership, SPJ enhances its influence in advocating press freedoms, developing the skills of working journalists and supporting students entering the profession. The Society seeks to be widely recognized as the conscience of journalism and the guardian of its principles.

## RELEVANCE

Journalism is changing, and so is the society it serves. The Society of Professional Journalists must strive to provide services to a diverse and dynamic membership, to increase its influence and maintain its reputation as a voice for quality, responsible journalism.

**GOAL:** To be essential and user-friendly to our members, the profession of journalism and the public, emphasizing access to information and journalism ethics.

**Objective:** Give Freedom of Information and Ethics equal organizational and financial support.

- Actively seek grants in both areas for educational purposes
- Appoint SPJ Board liaisons to the Society's FOI and Ethics committees for increased presence and relevancy.
- Examine the possibility of sponsoring annual national ethics workshops, similar to the annual FOI workshop. (Responsibility: FOI and Ethics chairs, development director; March 2000 report to Finance Committee)

**Objective:** Improve the focus and influence of Quill magazine.

- Plan minimum of three specialty content issues for Quill (Freedom of Information, Ethics, and Networking and Career Development) to respond to needs identified in member survey. Schedule them within the 2000 fiscal year; include reader-feedback forms and lists of resources and references in each issue. Each issue should include print, broadcast and on-line journalists.
- Every Quill should include lists of SPJ and SDX governance (boards, committee chairs, sunshine chairs, etc.)
- Have editor and publisher provide semiannual reports to the SPJ and SDX boards, based on reader feedback. Add survey forms on Quill to the SPJ website. Conduct small focus groups of Quill audiences, including members and industry leaders.

**Objective:** Improve SPJ's message, visibility and influence.

- Develop a plan to market to associates (media lawyers, government FOI officers, lawmakers, others).
- Launch an interactive website.
- Create targeted marketing materials for chapters, donors and the public.
- Create a source list to refer journalism inquiries from the media and public.

## FINANCIAL SECURITY

A healthy organization needs a reliable base of funding. SPJ is fortunate to have the active support of the well-endowed Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. But maintaining financial health requires careful attention to fiscal strategies.

GOAL: Maintain cash flow and invested reserve by diversifying revenue sources.

Objective: Seek more partnerships to further SPJ missions, recruit new members, increase revenue and reduce costs of programs.

- Identify five to ten groups with compatible missions willing to partner with SPJ.
  - Explore providing a certified skills course for a fee, with emphasis on new technologies (assess budget impact and marketability).
  - Objective: Build an expanding base of financial support
- Hire a development director with the primary responsibility of identifying and cultivating funding sources for SPJ and SDX, including individuals, foundations, corporations, media organizations and like-minded advocacy groups.
- Define fund-raising responsibilities for individual SDX Board members or set individual fund-raising goals as requirements for board membership.
  - Analyze all costs of servicing each member.
- Objective: Convince news organizations to support memberships.  
Send mailings to the 10 largest news organizations and explain SPJ's role to editors, publishers, news directors, managing editors and other top executives.  
Create more institutional membership benefits (such as volume discounts for employees attending convention, or for SDX awards entry fees, or for university institutional members, volume discounts for Mark of Excellence awards entry fees).

Objective: Maintain a competitively compensated, professional, trained staff and efficient headquarters.

- Commit resources for ongoing staff training.
- Update and maintain job descriptions for staff positions.

## MEMBERSHIP

Historically, the Society of Professional Journalists has been the largest and the most diverse of the journalism organizations. While size is not the only determinant of a group's influence, it is a critical factor. Even more important is the membership's level of activity and involvement.

GOAL: Identify, recruit and serve a diverse membership that is active, involved and committed, and that includes all media.

Objective: Create a pro-active and personalized membership system.

- Annually review the membership recruiting system, including materials and marketing strategy.
- Conduct an annual demographic survey .
- Conduct biennial member-satisfaction survey.
- Review dual-billing system of chapter and national dues.
- Create a resume template for students and job seekers.
- Provide an on-line job bank for members only. (Consider a careers committee, and end the charge for the service)

Objective: Increase number of high school journalism members.

- Reduce the cost of high school membership dues.
- Target advisers through Journalism Education Association.

- Develop programs targeted at high school students.
- Explore partnerships with scholastic journalism groups.
- Design membership benefits exclusively for high school students.

Objective: Increase the number of broadcast members.

- Appoint a broadcast membership committee to develop recommendations for programs and recruitment strategies for broadcasters; targeting FOI and Ethics materials for broadcasters; exploring partnerships with broadcast journalism groups.
- Make the Taishoff Seminar an annual priority.
- Seek foundation grants to support broadcast initiatives.

Objective: Increase the number of members from on-line/new media.

- Appoint a on-line/new media membership committee to develop recommendations for programs and recruitment strategies for new-media journalists; targeting FOI and Ethics materials for new media; exploring partnerships with new-media journalism groups.
- Seek foundation grants to support new-media initiatives.

Objective: Increase the number of members from the trade press.

- Appoint a trade-press membership committee to develop recommendations for programs and recruitment strategies for trade press journalists; targeting FOI and Ethics materials for the trade press; exploring partnerships with trade-press groups.
- Seek foundation grants to support new-media initiatives.

Objective: Establish a better local-national network for volunteer recruitment and leadership track.

- Seek continued funding for the Ted Scripps Leadership Training.
- Create a central registry of members who want to volunteer.

## GOVERNANCE

The Society of Professional Journalists is dedicated to serving and representing a profession that is devoted to effective and honest communication. Its own governance should be efficient, rational and accessible.

GOAL: Ensure a practical governing structure that invites participation.

Objective: Simplify chapter requirements.

- Change bylaws to allow flexibility in chapter governing structure.
- Create a fill-in-the-blanks form for annual chapter reports, in electronic and hard-copy format.
- Survey professional and campus chapter presidents to determine their preference for a universal chapter election month.
- Create a leader orientation package to mail to each new student and professional chapter president within one month of election.

Objective: Make the national committee system more efficient.

- Eliminate the requirement that each regional director appoint a member to each national committee.
- Assign an SPJ national board liaison for each national committee chair.
- Assign staff resources to national committees.

Objective: Restructure and reduce the size of the SPJ national board. (This clearly would require a bylaws change)

- Appoint a committee to study board representation based on geography, news medium and type of membership.
- Create written policy guidelines for board members and national committee chairs.
- Provide a mandatory orientation session for all board members and committee chairs annually at national conventions.

Objective: Increase the equity and diversity of convention decision-making.

- Consider a one-member, one-vote system to replace the delegate system of weighted voting (Another bylaws change, if we do it).

Objective: Ensure that the strategic plan remains viable.

- Appoint a committee to review the plan on an annual basis.
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## **Facility Report**

Gray reported on the new headquarters at 3909 North Meridian St. in Indianapolis. This building is approximately 12,000 square feet. There will be an ambitious capital campaign to raise the funds to replace reserves used to purchase the building and to repay bank loans for the renovation and furnishings, etc. Gray reported that the capital campaign will be marketed to the membership, other organizations and foundations. The campaign is already well on its way to the goal. Howard Dubin donated \$100,000 to the fund. Betsy Ashton and Fred Brown each pledged \$1,000 towards the fund. Todd Gillman pledged a portion of his region's income. The campaign will run for 3-5 years. Wendy Myers clarified to the boards the breakdown of funding which made it possible to purchase the building with cash. Gray also clarified the budget of \$1 million (\$400,000 for purchase of building, \$400,000 for renovation and \$200,000 for furnishings, etc.). Anticipated ribbon cutting is August 1, 1999. Gray stated that if every member were to pledge \$100 (payable over 3-5 years), the capital campaign would be complete in five years. Preliminary plans for the second floor range from leasing to an outside party or establishing a journalism training center for online, print, television and radio. The dinner at the governor's mansion is a fundraiser for the building fund.

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## **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was moved and seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:00p.m.

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**ACTION REQUIRED BY BOARD MEMBERS:** None

**ACTION REQUIRED BY STAFF:** Mail draft minutes to board within two weeks

**NEXT MEETING:**

SPJ Board - October 6, 1999; 8:30 am

SDX Board – October 3, 1999, 12:00pm

**DATE SUBMITTED:** October 20, 1999

**SUBMITTED BY:** Leslee A. Combs, Executive Assistant

**APPROVED:** April 29, 2000 by SPJ Board of Directors