

**MINUTES  
MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS  
JULY 21, 2012  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

With President John Ensslin presiding, the meeting of the SPJ Executive Committee was called to order at 9:05 a.m. EST on Saturday, July 21, 2012 in Washington, D.C. The meeting was conducted at the offices of Bloomberg News.

In addition to Ensslin, voting members in attendance included President-Elect Sonny Albarado, Secretary-Treasurer David Cuillier, Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston, Director At-Large Bill McCloskey and Past President Hagit Limor. Also present were SPJ Executive Director Joe Skeel, Region 10 Director Dana Neuts and Washington, D.C. chapter members Julie Asher, Sue Kopen-Katcef, Andy Schotz and Kathryn Foxhall

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Albarado, respectively, the executive committee approved minutes from the following meetings: Jan. 28, 2012; Feb. 27, 2012 and May 23, 2012.**

Ensslin asked that his most recent quarterly report to the board be included in these minutes. They are attached as Appendix A.

**SCRIPPS LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

Skeel shared that University Place Hotel and Conference Center, home to the Ted Scripps Leadership Institute, will be closing its doors in November. This prompted staff to re-evaluate the program in its entirety to ensure it was meeting its full potential.

After careful consideration and some number crunching, Skeel shared that the program could be delivered more effectively by becoming a traveling road show as opposed to hosting it in a central location each year.

The key benefits to the change are:

- Reach two to three times the amount of leaders than previous Scripps programs.
- Have the potential to train a chapter's entire board in leadership skills and all things SPJ, which in turn strengthens our chapters and helps fill the leadership "black hole" that often occurs in chapter structure.
- Connect leaders with more people in their region, helping make joint programming and local networking easier.

Skeel shared a sample budget and schedule, which were based on the goal of conducting four programs a year.

Although no vote action is required to simply alter an ongoing program, Skeel asked the Executive Committee for its support because of the drastic change from years past.

The Executive Committee gave its full support to move forward with the new concept.

**REPORT OF THE SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT**

SDX Foundation President Steve Geimann reported that past SPJ president Jean Otto (who died in September 2011) bequeathed \$25,000 of unrestricted funds to the Foundation. That money was received in

June 2012.

He also shared that the Foundation board's would meet via conference call in late July to discuss its involvement in SPJ elections and the potential history book project.

He shared that the Foundation's assets are hovering around \$10M.

## **INTERNATIONAL CHAPTERS**

Skeel shared via memo (Appendix B) that SPJ has seen increasing interest from international journalists. Although the organization has always allowed individuals to join regardless of geographic location, journalists abroad are now showing interest in starting SPJ chapters.

Skeel recommended that the Society be proactive in developing a plan for international chapter growth. The idea isn't to create a marketing strategy for growth, but to be prepared when requests come from outside the U.S.

In the memo, Skeel shared his research into international chapters and how they might impact the Society's operations. He shared findings from SPJ's counsel and other organizations that have an international presence. Furthermore, the memo detailed steps for accepting international chapters into SPJ, including but not limited to issues related to governance, awards, LDF and tax implications. Skeel concluded that SPJ could support international chapters, if the Society deemed the proposition worthy.

One of the key points of discussion centered around "vetting" international chapters. Some members of the executive committee were uncomfortable with the notion of SPJ deciding who was and who wasn't "worthy" of joining the Society. "It's a slippery slope considering we don't do that for our U.S. chapters."

Limor shared that the idea of international growth goes beyond just journalism. "It's about spreading our missions and democracy."

**Upon proper motion and second by Limor and McCloskey, respectively, the committee voted to instruct Skeel to move forward with creating plan for international chapter growth based on the blueprint in the memo.**

Skeel will deliver a final plan to the full board in September for its consideration.

In addition, Skeel was instructed to survey the Society's international members to find out why they value SPJ and why they have decided to join.

In addition to the discussion on chapter growth, Ensslin read a memo from International Journalism Committee chairman Ricardo Sandoval regarding recruitment of individual international members.

Recommendations from Sandoval's report were:

— Because we do not now "vet" international journalists — that is hold them to different standards than US journalists — in this new drive we should first reach out and invite a select first generation of international journalists based on recommendations from SPJ leadership and members of the international committee. The idea behind this is to set at least a reputational standard for future foreign journalists seeking to join SPJ's ranks. In short, we would select and invite the best journalists we know abroad and thus set them up as examples of the kind of journalist we seek as SPJ members.

— Prior to inviting this first crop of potential members, we ought to informally review them. For potential new members who we personally know, there would not be much actual vetting necessary. For other potential new members, I believe that our international committee and SPJ leadership have the global connections necessary to conduct some informal vetting of journalists from a number of regions.

— Subsequent potential new members who seek us out via traditional membership applications should be

then subject to the reviews we now extend to any potential new member, plus a sharing of the nominees with the international committee to see if they raise any obvious concerns or caution flags.

— We should not alter our fees for international nominees as SPJ’s current structure allows for lower-cost membership. Maintaining our fee structure also helps deliver a message that foreign members will be treated in the same fashion, will have the same membership responsibilities and be eligible for the same benefits as US members and affiliates.

— As we do not discriminate in the United States against prospective members based on national origin or other demographic factors, we likewise should not prevent international membership based on such characteristics.

— We should loudly advertise among foreign journalists our requirements for membership and the alternatives to full membership so as to apply the same limits to SPJ participation that we exercise in the United States.

— We should translate the SPJ Code of Ethics and other basic materials to the benefit of international members who request the information.

— We should make available to groups of international members and interested journalists the types of training SPJ now offers to US-based members. SPJ leadership should understand that access to this training is an extremely attractive benefit for potential international members.

## **INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

In a memo to the Executive Committee, Skeel shared a plan for reviving institutional membership. After meeting with several newsroom leaders of varying mediums and newsroom sizes, a tentative “menu” was created.

Newsrooms would be allowed to choose from this menu, which varies by cost and services that SPJ would provide.

The Executive Committee asked that staff clearly define who would be eligible to be an institutional member. For example, The Indianapolis Star would be eligible, the Gannett Corporation would not be.

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Ralston, respectively, the committee voted to recommend to the board that it direct staff to pursue institutional members as outlined in staff’s memo.**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Skeel led a discussion on the Society Operations portion of the Strategic Plan.

The Executive Committee evaluated each goal, vetting it for relevancy. Skeel was instructed to create a red-line version of the changes, adding an explanation for each of the changes.

Ensslin said he plans to share that redline with the full board in advance of the September board meeting.

## **CHAPTER FINANCES**

Albarado shared an update on the situation with the Oklahoma chapter. He then shared his ad-hoc committee’s financial best-practices with the group.

In addition, Albarado said that staff and regional directors must do a good job of monitoring the financial section of the chapter annual report. Failure to complete this section puts the chapter at risk for losing its “good standing.”

The group discussed ways to get the best-practices into hands of local leaders and educate them on importance and practice of sound financial practices. Ideas included inclusion in chapter training programs, webinar, etc.

The committee agreed to:

- Send out the recommended best practices to chapter leaders.
- Include financial discussion as part of chapter-leaders session at convention.
- Create an online tutorial based on the best practices.

In regards to regional funds: Albarado will ask RD Caucus chair Brian Eckert to speak with RDs and create a proposal on how to best monitor regional funds.

## **SPJ ELECTION 2012**

Skeel asked the Executive Committee to consider changing the by-laws in order to adjust the date of voter eligibility. Skeel is seeking to set the cut-off date to a time when staff is still in the office before leaving for convention.

The committee took no action and Ensslin encouraged Skeel to go through the election cycle this year and bring the recommendation back to the bylaws committee or board if he desired.

## **AWARDS**

### **David L. Eshelman Outstanding Campus Adviser Award**

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Cuillier, respectively, the committee awarded Jenny Wohlfarth of the University of Cincinnati. Ralston and Limor abstained.**

### **Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award**

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Ralston, respectively, the committee awarded Mitch Eden of Kirkwood High School.**

McCloskey asked that the minutes reflect his thanks to the SPJ Journalism Education Committee for its tremendous work. He found the comments helpful.

The Executive Committee discussed that language for next year's award needs to be clear of who is eligible: high school or college. The group agreed with the Education Committee's notion that college and high school are too different to be judged in the same category. Ensslin shared he is going to meet with high school group and talk about the possibility of a joint project for a high school award and high school essay contest.

### **Ethics in Journalism**

**Upon proper motion and second by Cuillier and Albarado, respectively, the committee awarded Karen Gadbois of The Lens.**

### **Fellows of the Society**

**Upon proper motion and second by Limor and Ralston, respectively, the committee named DeWayne Wickham a Fellow of the Society.**

During discussion, Ensslin asked that we change the deadline for Fellows so that they can be chosen in January by the Executive Committee. This would allow them to be invited to the annual conference earlier, in hopes they could attend. He suggested a December 1 deadline. The Executive Committee supported the idea. Skeel would see if this is a possibility on the staff end.

### **Historic Sites in Journalism**

**Upon proper motion and second by Cuillier and Limor, respectively, the committee awarded the**

## **Tubac Presidio State Historic Park.**

### **First Amendment Award**

**Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and McCloskey, respectively, the committee awarded Mike Hiestand of the Student Press Law Center. Ralston and Ensslin abstained.**

### **Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member Award: Large Chapter**

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Ralston, respectively, the committee awarded Bill Bleyer of the Long Island Press Club.**

### **Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member Award: Small Chapter**

**Upon proper motion and second by Cuillier and Ralston, respectively, the committee awarded David Sheets of the St. Louis Pro Chapter.**

During discussion, the Executive Committee recommended removing language from the criteria that says they must be nominated by chapter. Also, the committee suggested that staff talk to Howard to remove "contributions to their SPJ chapter" as an award benchmark. This disenfranchises many SPJ members.

### **Julie Galvan Outstanding Graduate in Journalism Award**

**Upon proper motion and second by Limor and Albarado, respectively, the committee awarded Breann Schosow of the University of Milwaukee — Eau Claire chapter.**

### **Regional Director of the Year**

**Upon proper motion and second by Limor and Albarado, respectively, the committee awarded Dana Neuts of Region 10.**

### **Sunshine Award**

**Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and McCloskey, respectively, the committee awarded Bloomberg News, Medill Innocence Project and the Republican-American newspaper.**

During discussion, the committee asked that the 10-page limit on nominations is strictly enforced.

The officers met privately at 4:45 p.m. to choose the winner of the Wells Memorial Key

The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m. on Saturday, July 21, 2012.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **PRESIDENT'S QUARTERLY REPORT ISSUED ON JULY 1**

Membership....Holding steady at just above 8,000. Holly Edgell is organizing a second round of calls to lapsed members as well as a membership drive in September. I'm working on mailing a series of handwritten notes to people whom I believe would be good members.

International Journalism....Ricardo Sandoval Palos is working on a proposed strategy for attracting new members in North America if the board approves actively recruiting beyond the U.S.

Raising DePauw...Tara Puckey and I made contact in April with a student editor who is interested in reviving a student chapter on the campus where SPJ began in 1909. I've made plans to visit the campus on Sept. 8-9 to support this effort.

Joe Skeel reports that he has gotten good and useful feedback from several newsroom leaders on what they would find useful in an institutional membership. In a word, it's training. We expect to have a proposal to be vetted by the Executive Committee in July.

Chapter Assistance....A task force headed by Sonny Albarado submitted a series of recommendations to

the New York City Deadline Club on ways to better structure their contest and scholarship programs. The club's board has adopted all of the recommended changes and plans to implement them this summer.

Oklahoma Pro...Sonny has remained in touch with chapter leaders who are exploring their legal options with respect to Scott Cooper. Sonny is also heading a committee that will have recommendations in July on how to better monitor chapter and regional director funds.

Meanwhile, the SPJ board has appointed Eddy Gallagher of our Fort Worth Chapter to serve as interim Region 8 director. Members from Region 8 will elect a director in September.

Communications...Held the first five of 12 virtual town hall meetings. While attendance has been small (up to 15) the conversations have been good and I've gotten some excellent feedback and ideas.

Candidates for regional director posts also have been able to use these forums as a way to introduce themselves and answer questions from members. The audio from these meetings will be posted on our Election Central page.

Wrote six columns for the Freedom of the Prez blog, which now has had a year-to-date total of more than 4,200 page views. The most popular column this quarter was one I wrote about the layout of my ideal newsroom which got 305 pageviews.

Studio SPJ...Holly Fisher has lined up two segments and is working on a third in July featuring interviews with winners of our SDX awards contest. These will air in advance of the July 20 banquet. Where possible, local chapters will be asked to co-host these broadcasts on our Internet radio program.

The SPJ Membership committee also aired three programs, including segments on the FOI committee's Black Hole Awards and an episode on our upcoming national convention. Each program has gathered an audience of between 20 to 50 listeners.

Training...Worked with Michael Koretsky to produce our first ever webinar, Michael's "Weird Careers in the Media." A total of 109 people from around the country tuned in. I received several emails from participants who described how useful they found the program.

Digital Media chair Gil Asakawa and Professional Development chair Deb Wenger are working on producing two more webinars which we hope to air by September.

Advocacy...Wrote a letter in May to the president of Bridgewater State University urging him not to dismiss a student media advisor for a paper where the student editor chose to publish the name of a sexual assault victim who had given a public talk on campus. So far, the advisor still has his job so perhaps the letter had some effect.

I also wrote in June to the sheriff in Washoe County, Nevada protesting an incident in which the photo editor of the Reno Gazette Journal was pushed to the ground and handcuffed after he had been escorted away from an area where he was photographing a fire. I urged that charges against the photographer be dropped.

Held our first virtual board meeting on June 16. I've also held virtual meetings with our J-Ed Committee and Diversity committees.

J-Ed is working on an effort aimed at convincing high school administrators not to abandon their journalism programs.

The Diversity committee is working on updating our Rainbow source book and hiring gap resolution. At my request, committee chair Bonnie Davis nominated a minority journalist for one of our Fellows of the Society awards.

Awards....Public Radio host Bob Edwards accepted our nomination for another of the Fellows of the Society award and will travel to our convention in Fort Lauderdale to accept the honor.

I awarded three more Volunteers of the month: Lynn Powell from Region 3; David Sheets from Region 7 and Ian Marquand from Region 10. I have nominated all nine of the "volunteers of the month" as candidates for the Howard Dubin award to outstanding professional member.

Bylaws....In light of the Oklahoma Pro situation, I asked the bylaws committee if they felt there was a need for a specific bylaw needed for removal of a member of the society. There is a specific provision for national board members, but none for members. The committee's unanimous advice was that no such bylaw is required.

Elections....Hagit's committee has continued to refine the details of our first one-member, one-vote election. Staff has created an Election Central page, where we will post podcasts of regional candidates statements from the virtual town hall meetings.

Travel...Traveled to Richmond, Va. to attend and speak at a Virginia Pro chapter's ethics program which featured a screening of the documentary "Page One."

Visited Silverton, Colorado to take part in a ceremony making the installation of an SPJ Historic Sites in Journalism for The Silverton Standard and The Miner, a weekly that dates back to pioneer days and is currently operated by the San Juan Historical Society.

Also attended the New York City Deadline chapter's awards banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria and the Washington DC Pro chapter's Hall of Fame banquet at the National Press Club and the New Jersey Pro chapter's awards banquet at the Dow Jones campus near Princeton.

Upcoming...I'll be returning to Charlotte, N.C. on July 28 to be a speaker in their program for journalists preparing to cover the Democratic National Convention. This is a program funded by an SDX grant.

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 12, 2012

**FROM:** Joe Skeel, Executive Director;  
Tara Puckey, Chapter Coordinator

**SUBJ:** International chapters

**FOR:** Executive Committee

In July of last year, the executive committee decided to focus its short-term efforts on individual international members as opposed to chapters. After good discussion, it was clear there were too many hurdles in managing international chapters. John Ensslin then asked the international committee to share its thoughts on attracting international members.

In April, John led a discussion with the full board about recruiting international members, starting a conversation that would be continued in September. That conversation can no longer wait.

The international community isn't that patient. And the notion of waiting to develop an international chapter plan is no longer an option.

SPJ should act now to best control its own international expansion.

### **WHY THE RUSH?**

Matt Duffy, adviser to Zayed University's SPJ chapter in Abu Dhabi, is also a coordinator of the Arab-US Association of Communication Educators — an association that holds a conference similar to AEJMC. The conference, taking place in November, is aimed at “transforming Middle East media” and Matt is making SPJ a part of it.

Because Matt believes there is value in SPJ's missions to other schools throughout the Middle East, he's including a session, “How to start an SPJ chapter,” in the upcoming conference and invited us to the table.

We could have tried to prohibit this. But whether or not it is an official session, there is no doubt SPJ would be a topic of conversation among some convention goers — even if it's just a few. We have already received inquiries from some folks Matt has talked to.

Therefore, we believe it's in SPJ's best interest to be proactive and prepare for international chapters. As a result, SPJ plans on sending representatives to Matt's conference, hopefully armed with a clear and thoughtful plan of how the Society will handle international chapters on all fronts.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Staff has worked diligently over the past two months in an effort to develop a plan for starting and (more importantly) governing international chapters. Most of our research has involved discussions with people we consider “experts” in this area. To date, we have spoken to counsel at Baker Hostetler, our accounting firm, and two non-profit executive directors that have an international presence within their organizations. One of those EDs oversees a chapter-based organization.

Overall, we have concluded that there's no reason SPJ can't, or shouldn't, have an international presence. The standards and oversight in foreign journalism are vastly different. However, as Bill Culbertson of Baker Hostetler said, the “standards of the profession are exportable.”

What follows is our recommendation for international growth. With the board's support, this will be the basis for the information we share in Abu Dhabi. And we hope it will be the foundation of SPJ's future international structure.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

### **Becoming a chapter**

- Chapters seeking a charter will follow the same basic process as those in the United States
- Same rules and expectations apply to domestic and foreign chapters
- Before filing for a charter, chapters acknowledge they have received detailed information about the missions and expectations of SPJ
- International chapters will sign a certificate of understanding that explains what SPJ will do on their behalf. (i.e. we will recognize them as a chapter, they will be exposed to our materials, we will advocate on their behalf only when feasible, etc.). Creating a solid certificate of understanding is key to this plan
- Chapters will address additional questions when applying for a charter, including information about their type of government, if they are affiliated with terrorists and if their chapter/media organizations are funded by government. Staff will research and verify these assertions after receiving their application.
- Charters are still granted as they are now — by board approval on a case-by-case basis. Those charter requests will come with a staff recommendation if desired.

### **Governance**

- International annual reports will be assigned to the Directors at Large, both campus and pro
- Initially they will not be part of any region, although we may create new regions over time. They will be represented on the board by the Directors at Large.
- Any international member may run for an appropriate board office
- Headquarters will maintain frequent communication with international chapters, providing the outreach role that our RDs are expected to maintain now. (Should we grow beyond staff capabilities, this role could

shift to a Director at Large).

### **Scholarships & Fellowships**

- Open to all U.S. members and non-members and international SPJ members only. This would eliminate the need for staff to research every international application
- Travel reimbursements for all scholarships and fellowships will be capped
- Working Press: international members are eligible, but must speak/write English

### **SDX & MOE**

- Open to all US members and non-members and international SPJ members
- Entries will be designated to a region determined by HQ based on number of entries, judges, etc.
- Print entries must include the original piece, as well as English translation; broadcast entries must have English subtitles

### **Legal Defense Fund**

- Continues to operate on a case-by-case basis. Any international recipient will be checked against terrorist watch lists and reported accordingly on our IRS Form 990

### **Quill**

- International members will receive digital Quill

### **Taxes & Finances**

- International chapters cannot be a part of SPJ's group IRS ruling, individual chapters are required to file taxes as required by their own country
- Headquarters will run necessary checks (background, State Department lists, Office of Foreign Assets Control, etc.) for all chapter officers and those dealing with chapter finances

## **CONCLUSION**

We don't claim to have all of the answers — yet. That's because there is no way to anticipate all of the questions that may come our way. It was our hope to have met with Mac McKerral before this meeting, but there was a conflict. We will be meeting with him on July 31. We feel he can provide good perspective on the concerns from past leaders, allowing us to find solutions before the September meeting.

This we do know. SPJ would not be the first chapter-based organization to expand internationally. Because it has been done, we are confident we can make it a reality.

It will be hard work. We should expect to spend more time with a new international chapter than we might with a new domestic chapter. They need more handholding. It's unlikely we will always be able to manage our growth from Indianapolis. As the SPJ name spreads, expect to make connections with other journalism groups abroad.

As Tom Popcheff said, "If you want to grow, you have to go. That's the cost of international expansion." Popcheff is the executive director of Sigma Theta Tau, the world's largest (and probably only) international nursing honor society.