

MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
APRIL 26, 2014
SKYLINE CLUB
INDIANAPOLIS
STREAMED LIVE AT WWW.SPJ.ORG
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MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President David Cuillier presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:10 a.m. on Saturday, April 26, 2014, at the Skyline Club in downtown Indianapolis.

In addition to Cuillier, the following were present: President-Elect Dana Neuts; Immediate Past President Sonny Albarado; Secretary-Treasurer Paul Fletcher; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Director at-Large Bill McCloskey; Campus Advisers at-Large Kym Fox and Becky Tallent; Student Representative Lindsey Cook; Regional Directors Andy Schotz, Michael Koretzky, Patti Gallagher Newberry, Susan Stevens, Joe Radske, Don Meyers (virtually) and Tony Hernandez.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel, Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon, Director of Membership Linda Hall, Chapter Coordinator Tara Puckey and Awards Coordinator Chad Hosier.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Cuillier's written report outlined the many efforts being done in the advocacy arena, such as coordinating the Society's efforts regarding the shield law; testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding the need to revamp FOIA; support to journalists in their fights for press rights and access to information; and speaking out about excessive controls by public information officers.

Cuillier thanked all of the SPJ committees for their hard work. Reports from most of the committees are included in the board packet.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Fox, respectively, the board approved meeting minutes from the August 24 and August 27 meetings with the following corrections:

August 24, 2014: correct AEJMC to ACEJMC under Old/New Business

August 27, 2014: correction to the spelling of Aeikens and Kirtley under Ratification section and correction to the spelling of McKerral and Petersen under the Committee section

STAFFING UPDATE

Cuillier and Executive Director Skeel outlined the plan for creating, and hiring, a new communications staff position.

The position will not replace the current post-graduate communications internship. Rather, this person will take on responsibilities that go above the intern's capabilities. With two communications staff members, this would allow SPJ to be more strategic and proactive with its efforts.

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Tallent, respectively, the board approved the creation of a new communications position.

BOARD STIPENDS

Paul Fletcher proposed that board stipends be adjusted based on a directive from the August 2013 board meeting. The changes are as follows:

	Current	Proposed
President	\$10,000	\$10,000
President-Elect	4,000	4,000
Secretary-Treasurer	3,000	4,000
Past President	2,500	2,500
VP, Campus Chapter Affairs	4,000	2,500
Campus Reps (2)	2,500	2,500
Directors on Executive Comm. (2)	2,000	2,500
Regional Directors	1,000	1,500
At Large Directors	1,000	1,500

The total amount budgeted per year under the current system is \$46,500. The total increases to \$51,500, or \$5,000 more.

Reasons for adjustments:

- The Secretary-Treasurer likely is traveling as much as the President-Elect, including attendance at regional conferences.
- The original stipend for VP, Campus Chapter Affairs anticipated the need for "parachute" visits to troubled campus chapters, a task not really handled by the VP any longer.
- The Campus Reps are traveling to two meetings – the spring meeting and convention.
- All Regional Directors would get an additional \$500 to cover increased travel costs.
- Stipend amounts for officers has not been changed since 2005 and the other stipends were raised in 2009.

Stipends are not intended to fully reimburse all the costs of a board member. They are intended as a baseline to help to defray the costs of required board service.

Upon proper motion and second by Hernandez and Fox, respectively, the board approved the new stipend amounts.

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Schotz, respectively, the board approved consideration of unused stipend money for those who exceed their stipend amounts.

APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET

Executive Director Joe Skeel presented an overview of the budget and responded to questions.

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Kopen Katcef, respectively, the board approved the budget.

CHAPTER ACTIVITY

Puckey presented a list of chapters seeking to be chartered:

Ashford University (online program)

Franklin Pierce University

Lindenwood University

Seattle University

University of Central Missouri

University of Northwestern St Paul

Puckey presented the following chapter to be inactivated:

Regent University

Upon proper motion and second by Fox and Stevens, respectively, the board approved the charters for the six new chapters and the inactivation of one chapter.

NOMINATIONS REPORT

Nominations chairman Albarado gave a brief report on the potential slate of officers for the September board elections. There is no pending deadline to declare candidacy, but there is a June deadline to include candidate information in Quill.

SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT REPORT

Robert Leger indicated that the Foundation's financial status is healthy with \$12.3 million, which is a drop of 2.3 percent since December 2013.

Leger provided an update on the Pulliam Fellowship project from 2012 by Sandra Shea. The 2013 winner is unavailable for an update since he is currently working on his project.

Marion Street Press is still working on the history book. They hope to have it ready for convention.

PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGES

Currently, Article 9, Section 8 states:

All members of the Society in good standing at the date and time balloting begins are eligible to vote for officers and at-large directors.

Staff requests the following change:

All members of the Society in good standing ~~at the date and time~~ seven days prior to the date balloting begins are eligible to vote for officers and at-large directors.

Leaving the bylaws as is creates unnecessary work while at convention – when time is precious, and leaves SPJ vulnerable to technology failures.

The safest solution is to amend the bylaws as proposed.

The bylaws committee prefers not to change the bylaws, but instead requests an administrative change.

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Fletcher, respectively, the board approved the bylaws change being sent to the delegates for a vote.

Should the delegates pass the measure, it is suggested that wording be added to the website letting those joining know that they can't vote within the seven days prior to the date balloting begins.

FREELANCE COMMUNITY

Freelance Community Chair Michael Fitzgerald submitted an application to form the first SPJ Community.

Questions were asked, such as who will oversee the communities? Are communities eligible for programming grants? Will there be board representation for communities? None of these questions were answered yet, but as communities develop, these, and other questions, will be brought to the board and addressed.

Upon proper motion and second by Neuts and Stevens, respectively, the board approved the creation of the Freelance Community.

LEGAL DEFENSE FUND REQUEST

A second request for \$5,000 has been received from Otterbein University. Otterbein360.com is suing for campus police records. The students filed the suit and the court has referred the case to mediation. The parties have met with no immediate resolution.

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Koretzky, respectively, the board approved another \$5,000 Legal Defense Fund grant to Otterbein University.

SPJ NAME CHANGE UPDATE

Cuillier reported on the work of the task force regarding the name change. The group determined that there was not enough support from the membership for a name change. They did, however, determine that the Society needs to do more to recruit, retain and engage early-career journalists. As a result, they want to work on this issue instead. The board felt it was important to make a statement regarding this topic and decided upon the following:

Upon proper motion and second by Neuts and Stevens, respectively, the board approved the following statement:

Whereas, the name change task force concluded there is little support for the name change, this board recommends to the delegates that the name remains the Society of Professional Journalists.

When this statement is publicized, include a copy of the task force report.

ETHICS CODE REVISION UPDATE

The board discussed the work being done by the ethics code revision committee thus far. They wondered if it, as a board, should act as an editor for the code revisions. Board members asked about the processes and procedures used during the last code revision in 1996. Those in the room, who were involved in 1996, shared information regarding that revision.

Upon proper motion and second by Newberry-Gallagher and Kopen Katcef, respectively, the board approved a request for an update from ethics committee chair Kevin Smith, in two weeks, and request to see the latest version of the ethics code revision to formulate a recommendation.

SPJ'S FUTURE

Skeel explained how the memo outlining his thoughts about the future of SPJ came about. He said it is a compilation of discussions with SPJ leaders, SPJ staff and journalism association executive directors. The vision has been in the works for the last two years, in some form or fashion, but bringing to the board is really just the beginning. Skeel is looking for, at this meeting, feedback from board members. No motion, no action is needed. Just plain old discussion and dialogue would be the best course of action for the board at this time. Skeel shared that the feelings from executive directors, about partnerships, mainly centered on the fact that they don't want to lose their autonomy or identity.

Overall the board supported the vision presented and they shared a variety of thoughts and suggestions, such as:

Do media employers fall into this plan?

The new staff position (communications strategist) could help with this

The vision plan should be branded

A marketing plan should be created for the vision plan

Something should be sent out to members, but not as vague as the initial memo

Does the vision plan duplicate any efforts with the young journalists' task force?

We should catalog the 60+ journalism association and indicate they do and don't do well

What is the one thing we want or think can happen first within this plan?

Keep the vision plan as a standing item on all executive committee and board agendas

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Neuts, respectively, the board voted to endorse the executive director's vision of SPJ with further details to come.

See Appendix A – memo attached

STREAMLINING OF SPJ AND SDX FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Skuel outlined an idea he presented to presidents Cuillier and Robert Leger (SDX Foundation president). The idea involves having SPJ's focus (time, energy and money) be on lobbying, advocacy, awards and membership. In turn, the Foundation takes over responsibility for educational programming.

The board discussed the concepts in the memo and asked questions.

See Appendix B – memo attached

Upon proper motion and second by Koretzky and Hernandez, respectively, the board voted to support the idea of streamlining activities and responsibilities with the SDX Foundation.

ADVOCACY FUND

Cuillier outlined plans for a sustained fund that fights for FOI. Other organizations are limited in the ability to do this due to their 501(c)(3) status. SPJ is uniquely positioned to be in the forefront of such important efforts.

The board discussed the concepts in the memo and asked questions.

Upon proper motion and second by Fox and Stevens, respectively, the board voted to support the concept of some type of advocacy fund.

See Appendix C – memo attached

REGIONAL MEETINGS AT EIJ14

Regional meetings at EIJ may no longer be able to take place concurrently due to space constraints. A suggestion was made to no longer hold these meetings. Another suggestion was made to have a room available for the meetings and the meeting times are staggered throughout the days. Each regional director can determine if he/she would like to host a meeting. If the regional director requests a meeting, then a date and time would be assigned and publicized to the attendees.

Koretzky volunteered to poll the regional directors to determine who wants to conduct a meeting at EIJ. He is to report his findings to staff.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Time was set aside for public comment because the meeting was live streamed, but there were none to be shared. Only a few people watched the live streaming.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion and second by Hernandez and Neuts, respectively, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.



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APPENDIX A

DATE: March 24, 2014
FROM: Joe Skeel, Executive Director
SUBJ: Vision for SPJ
FOR: SPJ Board of Directors

I was asked by the Executive Committee in August to examine the role of SPJ and its place in journalism. Truth be told, I've been doing this since I was hired as Quill editor in December 2004.

But it wasn't until I was named Executive Director in 2009 that my vision of SPJ began to clear a bit. This, of course, is a result of having the opportunity to evaluate, think big picture, study trends, listen to association experts and meet regularly with other journalism organization leaders.

This has brought me to a few overriding – if unpleasant – realizations:

1. Over the past 15-20 years, SPJ leadership has focused too much on internal matters and not enough on external issues. (Membership vs. journalism).
2. There isn't a single group in the United States that is effectively serving the watchdog/advocacy role on behalf of the profession.
3. SPJ will likely not survive as a membership association – as we define membership today.

I realize this may be hard to read. But I should also point out that I don't see SPJ dying any time soon. We could remain on course for the next few decades. But 50 years from now, if it remains on its current path, I do believe SPJ will be non-existent (or most certainly less relevant).

I also realize that I am one person, with one opinion. There is no guarantee that my beliefs would play out if things remain unchanged. That's why everything I present below contains a critical element: flexibility.

By implementing changes to alter our current path, I believe SPJ can remain vital and relevant long into the future. And if my thoughts are off base a bit, these gradual changes still give SPJ the ability to adapt along the way. The key here is to evolve slowly, as outside forces exert pressure and change the circumstances. It's not healthy to change course suddenly based on the opinions of a select few. When posed with the question "what is SPJ's role in journalism," my answer is simple: To be a leader in the industry on all fronts – advocacy, training, membership, etc. But the more I pondered, the more I realized the question wasn't broad enough.

SPJ doesn't want to just improve journalism. Our mission is based on the belief that SPJ will strive to improve and protect democracy. We do that *through* journalism.

So, the real question is:

How can SPJ most positively impact and protect democracy through journalism?

Incidentally, the answer lies mostly within SPJ's mission statement. We simply need to think differently about how to accomplish these goals.

Our mission:

The Society of Professional Journalists is dedicated to the perpetuation of a free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty.

To ensure that the concept of self-government outlined by the U.S. Constitution remains a reality into future centuries, the American people must be well informed in order to make decisions regarding their lives, and their local and national communities.

It is the role of journalists to provide this information in an accurate, comprehensive, timely and understandable manner.

It is the mission of the Society of Professional Journalists:

- To promote this flow of information.*
- To maintain constant vigilance in protection of the First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press.*
- To stimulate high standards and ethical behavior in the practice of journalism.*
- To foster excellence among journalists.*
- To inspire successive generations of talented individuals to become dedicated journalists.*
- To encourage diversity in journalism.*
- To be the pre-eminent, broad-based membership organization for journalists.*
- To encourage a climate in which journalism can be practiced freely.*

Since 1909, we have felt the best way to achieve these goals is through individual members. The more journalists that are exposed to our mission, the greater likelihood we would be successful in improving and protecting journalism. They would be better journalists, carry the torch in their newsrooms and communities, and democracy would be better because of our grass-roots efforts.

For the first 75 years of SPJ, this was a decent approach. It works fairly well when the majority of journalists are in your ranks. It still works well if you have 15,000-20,000 members. And, frankly, we didn't have the ability to reach the masses like we do today. Grass-roots was the only option for much of SPJ's life.

Today, however, there are fewer journalists in general. Furthermore, there are about 65 journalism associations in the United States. All are dedicated to a niche, whether it's a beat, medium, ethnic group, etc., etc. They can provide specific resources and training better than SPJ. In many instances, they provide more value to these individuals than SPJ ever could. More associations are sure to pop up as the profession and technology evolves.

Because SPJ is the most broad-based, we can't realistically compete with these groups within their areas of expertise.

The fight for members has led to the journalism association landscape becoming introverted. We are all so concerned with doing everything we can to appeal to members, few take enough time to look outside its own walls. Nobody has an eye on the bigger picture. (*Realization #2*). Ironically, our own mission statement dictates that **we** do this.

Lastly, fewer people in general are joining a professional association of any kind. Because of the internet, there are plenty of resources available. And younger generations don't necessarily feel the need to meet "face-to-face" in order to network and find jobs. They will do so if it's an option. They still see value in it, but don't necessarily see it as more important than getting necessary skills, etc. If forced to choose, they will forgo the networking as we know it.

It is this cultural shift, and the vast options for membership associations, that leads me to the conclusion that SPJ membership will continue to decline – or at the very least remain stagnant. It will never return to the level necessary to meet our goals via grass-roots efforts.

As of today, SPJ still has the market cornered on the chapter structure. It's the only local option for many journalists. And we have name recognition. However, other associations are beginning to launch their own chapters – with enthusiastic leadership. Some of our own chapters have seen so much value in what others can offer, they are deciding to become "joint" chapters. Georgia and DePaul are billed as SPJ/ONA chapters. NAHJ has chapters popping up. Not long from now, we won't be the only game in town. And over time, as the numbers dwindle, it will be even harder to find good chapter leaders. Our chapters will likely get worse. Our name won't carry the same weight. Over time, it stands to reason, SPJ will become less important. (*Realization #3*).

What is SPJ without a strong membership base? How would we achieve our mission? Wouldn't we lose our collective voice if we had no members? How could we afford to do anything without a hefty membership base supporting us financially?

It is these questions that led SPJ down a path of chasing its own membership tail. It's a common situation that many associations find themselves in – usually induced by survival instincts. As numbers drop, the first instinct is to do whatever necessary to fix the problem. Groups begin to look inward, focusing their attention and resources on their own processes, procedures, programs, marketing, services, special deals, gimmicks, etc., – all aimed at turning the membership tide. These groups often lose sight of what made them appealing in the first place – their mission.

Caught up in survival, these groups rarely stop to ask: Is this change out of our control? Better yet, would we be better off focusing our attention elsewhere and re-inventing who we are to achieve our mission? Is there another way?

In just the past two years, SPJ has spent considerable time and money on the following topics – all aimed at membership. This list, of course, isn't inclusive of all that we have done, and it doesn't include all committee work or the day-to-day management of membership. But it will give you a good idea of the major stuff:

- Hiring Tara, a full-time chapter coordinator (and the time spent managing chapters).
- Revamping the Scripps Leadership Program.
- Assessing the state of chapters – and deactivating several.
- Revamping the annual report (several times).
- Discussing and eliminating the star ranking system.
- Hiring a part-time caller to contact new and renewing members.
- Upgrading the online join/renew process.
- Auto-dues membership billing.
- Creating newsroom memberships.
- Creating an international chapter plan.
- One member-one vote (and bylaws changes).
- SPJ name change.
- SPJ Solutions.
- Developing communities.
- Chapter leaders training sessions at EIJ.

Think of your last few board meetings, and come up with things that weren't related to membership, chapters or governance. What stands out? Could you think of anything? How many things can you think of that were related to improving and protecting journalism directly – not through a membership/governance function? (*Realization #1*).

This memo is not meant to criticize in any way, shape or form. It's a natural behavior. Furthermore, the board of directors has to manage the Society's governance/operational structure. That's partly why it exists. But, it shouldn't be its only focus.

Our actions (and lack of results) have provided insight into the question: Is this membership decline out of our control? In most respects, I think it is. We can tweak, adjust and alter things here and there. We have been doing this for at least the past five years – likely much longer. But, I don't believe any of these adjustments can lead to a return to the way things used to be. Our best efforts will allow us to stay alive longer, but the climate has changed too dramatically.

We have two choices: Ride it out until the end, or evolve.

I prefer to evolve. Not for the sole purpose of keeping SPJ alive. But because the public needs a group to step up and be a leader in journalism.

With that said, no evolution can happen quickly. We can't ignore our current model, lest our resources will evaporate. Any transition must be a slow one. Therefore, we must continue to invest in membership recruitment and retention efforts. But I think we need to view this as an evolving focus, not our only solution to success and survival. Membership is not an end-game. Improving and protecting democracy is the goal.

Therefore, I believe it's time for SPJ to look beyond membership and chart a course that will still allow us to have maximum impact on the perpetuation of a free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty.

The good news is, we've already laid some groundwork.

SEMANTICS OF MEMBERSHIP

In SPJ's world, an individual who has paid her dues is a member. We also have a handful of institutions that are given membership status. A couple years ago we developed newsroom memberships.

Today, therefore, we have individuals and entities as "members."

What if we went a bit further and we applied the institutional concept to simply include a collective group of people – not defined by their school or place of employment.

What if another journalism association found value in the services that SPJ provides? And those services allow it to direct more energy and resources toward fulfilling its mission – making journalism better. This is no different than a newsroom. Couldn't it be considered a "member" of SPJ if it paid a fee and we provided benefits – similar to an entity or institution?

Let's step back now and look at this scenario: *SPJ membership would consist of individuals, institutions and other journalism associations. All pay some fee. All receive some benefits.*

Now, remove the word "membership" from the statement above.

SPJ would consist of individuals, institutions and other journalism associations. All pay some fee. All receive some benefits.

As you have probably realized, this is already taking place. We have individuals, institutions and other journalism organizations that pay for services. We call the latter "association management" as opposed to "membership."

The difference between these two ideas is the giant hurdle that SPJ leadership must clear. Specifically, leadership must understand that *members* as they are defined today can't be the lifeblood of SPJ.

As a collective group, SPJ still believes the best way to reach its mission is through individuals. It's because this is what we know. And we try to organize those individuals through a chapter structure. We do everything we can to improve our offerings and make our

chapters more effective – leading to more individuals. When it doesn't work, or success is marginal, we try new things. Yet, those new things are still based on the notion that we need more individuals in SPJ's ranks.

It's time for SPJ to move beyond the concept of individuals. For as long as the sun burns, SPJ could continue to fight for individual memberships. We can continue to work on our chapter structure. But as I shared above, I believe no matter how hard we try, it's an unwinnable battle. At our core, we can offer very little that is unique in regards to member benefits. There are fewer people in our business, and other groups have caught up to us in many respects. Finding good, enthusiastic leaders to run chapters gets harder by the day.

This, of course, leads to several questions – which I have pondered for the past four years: If SPJ isn't defined by our members, who are we? What's the point of SPJ and what is our focus? How do we still reach our mission? How do we have a collective voice? And, of course, are we really willing to deconstruct the thing that many find valuable: networking and a sense of community?

In reality, I believe we must remain a “quasi-membership” organization. But it's time we view our structure a bit differently and stop focusing so much of our resources on individuals (and chapters).

THE CONAGRA MODEL

You may recognize the name, but you may not know from where. Its motto: “ConAgra Foods: Making the food you love.”

ConAgra is a conglomerate made up of several different food producers. Here is a brief history: It all started in 1890, when Gilbert C. Van Camp began manufacturing canned pork and beans. A few years later, Central State Flouring Mill is formed. Then along came Hunt Brothers fruit packing company in 1890. In 1919 Nebraska Consolidated Mills was formed, and was made up of a few small operations. In 1920 it launched Peter Pan peanut butter and LaChoy. Also in this year, the Knotts opened their first farm.

Over the years, more independent food producers came onto the scene as Americans desired more pre-packaged food to meet the changes with society. The world was changing. So, Nebraska Consolidated Mills expanded. Chef Boyardee, Parkay, Reditwhip, Marie Callender, Banquet and other notable brands all hit the market – but not under the Nebraska Mills umbrella. They were independently managed, just like the Van Camp company. But over time, these companies were bought up by Nebraska Mills.

By 1969, Nebraska Mills had expanded across the U.S. In 1971, it changed its name to ConAgra and continues to acquire food lines, such as the ones that I mentioned above. It's not uncommon that when a new food line is launched, the inventor approaches ConAgra in hopes they will see value in it. ConAgra provides shelter.

Today, ConAgra is made up of about 45 different food lines. It has evolved by launching its own brands (as it identifies opportunities and gaps in the market) and merging with other

brands. However, you can't walk into a store and buy anything with a big "ConAgra" brand label.

Why?

Because as ConAgra has evolved since 1919, and new products hit the market, it realized the benefit in letting each of those established brands live on. The brand recognition already existed. Individuals found great value and comfort in specific brands. ConAgra believes that it can "produce the foods you love" by doing what it can to help those individual brands succeed.

ConAgra, therefore, helps with research and development. They streamline administrative functions. They speak on Capitol Hill and have their fingers (and money) in the pockets of lawmakers. ConAgra is the company that keeps an eye on the food industry's best interests while allowing the individual brands to focus on what they do best: producing food that people like.

Of course, ConAgra is a multi-million dollar company hell-bent on profits. Their goal is to beat their competitors and corner the market. That should not be SPJ's goal. Journalism (and democracy) is better off if all journalism associations succeed in their own niches.

With that said, I believe that by following the ConAgra concept, SPJ can not only remain relevant and vital to individual journalists, it can have a far greater impact on our profession (and democracy) as a whole. SPJ wouldn't be evolving just to survive. It would become stronger, with one mission in mind. The same mission we have held since 1909 (a decade before ConAgra was born):

"The perpetuation of a free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty."

By providing low-cost management services to other journalism associations, or developing other smart partnerships with these groups, SPJ can help those individual groups become more successful. Saving money on their management leaves more for their individual members and missions. And if all 65 journalism associations were better because of this, it stands to reason that journalism in the United States would be better.

SPJ and its partner associations would also be better equipped to educate journalists on all topics because we could more easily cross pollinate our expertise. No group, such as SPJ, would feel the need to be everything to everyone – duplicating efforts of other organizations in an effort to get/keep members. ONA teaching digital media; Education writers teaching education reporters; SPJ experts teaching ethics and freelancing; NAHJ teaching about immigration and diversity issues; NAJA teaching about coverage of Indian Country; RTDNA teaching about broadcasting. The list goes on and on.

Under this model, I believe that SPJ and its partners could turn the tide of waning media credibility. We would have a greater ability to educate the general public because we would have a unified voice to reach the masses. And by streamlining expenses, we would have more

money to reach this goal. Furthermore, as a group representing all journalists, SPJ could more easily call out the unethical journalism that gives the rest of us a bad name. Other groups also wouldn't feel the pressure of having to do so, putting them in awkward positions. I envision a day when news organizations actually care what SPJ and its partners organizations say, and think before they act, lest they face the wrath of the unified profession speaking out against their actions.

Perhaps most important, I believe this model will allow SPJ and its partners to have a loud voice on First Amendment issues. Instead of 65 journalism groups creating noise independently, having no large-scale impact, one group representing all organizations would speak – with 15,000-20,000 journalists behind it. SPJ and its partners would be a unified voice impossible to ignore.

But, what happens to SPJ's members? Perhaps they join other associations. Years from now, perhaps SPJ's value is as a starting point for journalists, until they define their niche – a niche we would put them in touch with. Perhaps they simply stay an individual member of SPJ because they support the cause of advocacy. Perhaps they are members of more than one association (made easy by a unified membership price) because they like the niche training, networking and support the cause. That's OK, too. I'm not advocating that SPJ force anyone away. I'm simply saying that individuals are *a part* of SPJ's organizational structure. Not the whole.

Of course, the big question is this: Would other journalism associations have an interest? Early indications are “yes,” although it won't happen overnight. Many will be skeptical that this is a takeover plot. It may take several years to eliminate that fear and develop a comprehensive partnership where we are all rowing in the same direction. But, you can see bits and pieces of this today.

NAHJ hired us two years ago to manage their bookkeeping and membership. That evolved into a conference partnership. RTDNA joined with us for EIJ in 2011. Beginning last year, we provide bookkeeping services to them. Most recently, I have spoken with two other journalism associations that have an interest in our services. Executive Directors of 8-10 journalism associations meet once a year. We talk about ways to partner. All of us are eager to do it. Oftentimes, it is organizational culture that holds us back.

Regardless, conversations about partnerships are happening now. And NAHJ and RTDNA are proof that this evolution can happen.

HOW DO WE EVOLVE?

I was asked in my review to create a memo that outlined where SPJ should be in 5, 20 and 50 years from now. Everything I have written, culminating in SPJ becoming a management/umbrella organization for other journalism associations, is where I believe SPJ could be in 20-30 years.

Clearly, we can't just flip a switch and make it happen. Getting there will require small changes over time, some of which we have already started. But we must continue to move forward. Conversations with other organizations must continue.

In the next five years...

- SPJ must remain committed to recruiting and retaining members and providing needed support to chapters. Individuals are still the key to our current business model.
- SPJ leadership must get comfortable with the notion that individual memberships and chapters (as we define them today) are not the way SPJ can have the greatest impact on journalism and democracy. Furthermore, it may not even be a path to survival. Leadership's historical view on individual membership must evolve.
- SPJ must continue to create worthwhile partnerships with other journalism associations in order to show its commitment to ensuring all groups thrive. *We have to make it clear that SPJ is not "taking over."* *Doing so would only weaken journalism as a whole, not strengthen it.* These can be conference partnerships, association management partnerships, educational programming partnerships, membership agreements, etc. Without these partnerships, I believe the quality of journalism (and therefore the public's trust) will continue to decline. We must all row in the same direction.
- As these partnerships develop, SPJ could develop a handful of chapters or communities that are made up of members from SPJ and its partners. Ideally, I'd love to see a metro chapter that is THE journalism chapter/group in the area – regardless of individual membership affiliation. I can't see SPJ chapters surviving as we know them now. But I could see a day where chapters/communities actually thrive if membership is made up of journalists from all organizations – or aren't members of any organization.
- SPJ should continue to identify gaps in the journalism world and create communities to address those needs: such as a freelancing community or a young journalists' community.
- SPJ should strive to hire a person/firm dedicated to advocacy/lobbying by the time 2019 rolls around. Beefing up efforts in this area is critical to appealing to a larger audience and cementing SPJ as a legitimate voice that can act on behalf of other journalism associations.
- SPJ Leadership should begin to understand and accept that the current leadership model (based on geography) will likely change over time.
- SPJ will be evaluating if it is on the best path to best improve and protect journalism.

In 20 years, in addition to what I shared above...

- SPJ's network will contain a significant number of journalism associations, including those from overseas.

- SPJ will have individual members that are undecided about their niche or simply support our mission to improve and protect journalism. But many (if not most) will have chosen to join one of our partners.
- SPJ's main priorities will be: management for other journalism associations (membership, accounting, event planning, awards management, etc.) and advocacy/lobbying (public and governments).
- SPJ and the SDX Foundation will work to fill training gaps not covered by other journalism associations, and provide training resources as needed to members of our partner organizations.
- SPJ's board of directors may be made up of leaders from other journalism associations.
- Through efforts with our partners, the public will begin to understand the difference between credible journalism and the "media."
- SPJ and its partners will be a critical voice on journalism matters. We will call out unethical journalism. We will shine the light on government shenanigans. We will push for journalism to be better, because the public deserves it.
- SPJ will be evaluating if it is on the best path to best improve and protect journalism.

In 50 years...

- Most importantly, the public will have regained its faith in journalism, and journalists will be better about keeping elected officials on the straight and narrow -- truly serving its role as the Fourth Estate.
- SPJ will be entrenched as THE collective voice on matters related to journalism and its role in democracy.
- It will be THE group that the general public, governments and news organizations go to when it comes to issues of the press and media credibility.
- It will be THE group that journalists must join, made easy with the array of options created by our thriving partners.
- SPJ's partners will be thriving without the burden of management holding them back.
- SPJ and its partners will continue to welcome new journalism organizations/communities as the media landscape continually evolves.
- SPJ and its partners will ensure that journalism education meets the demands of the day.
- SPJ will be evaluating if it is on the best path to best improve and protect journalism.

Nobody can predict the future. I certainly don't claim to have a crystal ball. What I have outlined are my thoughts and ideas based on my observations and research.

It's quite possible that in 20 years, SPJ realizes there is a better course for its future and what I have laid out is worthless. Flexibility will always be critical. For example, some of the partnerships we develop today may not lead to anything greater. We may never all come

together. Regardless, they are beneficial today. And that makes them worth pursuing, even if you don't agree with the larger vision.

But, it's a fact that SPJ's current path hasn't led to improvements in membership. Media credibility has only gotten worse over the past two decades. Governments are more secret than ever and journalists themselves are looking for someone to help them make sense of it all. No individual journalism organization can fix these problems by itself.

Doing it will require teamwork, which will require sacrifices and risk. It will bring about frustration and frightening changes. There will be disagreements and unpleasant conversations among leaders and partner organizations. Turning the tide and restoring the important role of journalism in democracy will take all of us working together.

But, most importantly, it will require a leading organization to bring everyone together and start the process.

I believe SPJ is best suited to take on this role. And I believe the time is right to start this evolution.



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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 26, 2014
FROM: Joe Skeel, Executive Director
SUBJ: SPJ/SDX: Divide and Conquer
FOR: SPJ Board of Directors

Last March, Robert Leger, Dave Cuillier and I got together in Robert's backyard to talk about the big picture of SPJ. Much of what we talked about is included in my memo titled "Vision for SPJ."

Part of that conversation, however, was an idea to better streamline and utilize the capabilities of SPJ and the SDX Foundation. Currently, we operate as two separate entities – both in practice and philosophy.

This is likely because the Foundation was established to simply support SPJ's efforts. But despite the enormous growth of the Foundation since its inception in 1967, its role hasn't changed much.

I think it's time we rethink the way we have always done things.

I propose we stop thinking like two different groups and begin to think like a single, determined journalism machine.

In my opinion, we are best served if we let SPJ focus its time and energy (and money) on lobbying, advocacy, awards and membership. The Foundation can focus on educational programming.

As it currently stands, SPJ manages all of this. It requests grants from the SDX Foundation in order to conduct training. Staff determines the programming (after consultation with volunteers and other folks outside of HQ walls), creates the budgets, writes grant requests and submits the grants. SDX then vets the grants and lets SPJ know if it will fund it.

Assuming it does, SPJ then receives a check, with restrictions on how it will be spent. We conduct the programs, then complete a grant recap report for the SDX Foundation at year-end. If any money is left over, we send it back to the SDX Foundation.

Under the new scenario, staff would determine the programming (after consultation with volunteers and other folks outside of HQ walls) and put the costs into the overall annual SDX budget. Staff then executes those programs, branded as SPJ, just as it does now. That's it.

There are a number of advantages to the proposal, as I see it:

- It allows each organization to focus on its capabilities, creating a clear direction for each group. We would be dividing and conquering.
- It's more efficient for both groups, eliminating several hours of staff and volunteer time currently related to the grants process.
- It positions the SDX Foundation to be more entrepreneurial. It can identify the holes in journalism training and move quickly to fill them instead of waiting for someone (including SPJ) to ask for a grant during the next cycle.
- With a clear focus, the SDX Foundation can work to become a force within the journalism funding world. This has the potential to lead to more partnerships with other journalism funders. That leads to training more journalists.
- It allows us to better leverage other sources of funding when we get them. For example, in the past year or two, Gannett Foundation and Kiplinger provided funding for some SPJ core programs – programming we already had approved grants for. Staff was bound to use the SDX grant funding or return it unless we had the resources to pull off extra programs. It's a good problem to have, but a problem nonetheless. If SDX “owns” educational programming, it can more easily shift that funding to a different program altogether or recycle it into the next year. It can find someone doing great training and help support them. It doesn't have to live within the current confines of the “annual grant cycle.” We could even use it to match funding from other foundations, allowing the money to stretch farther and train more people.
- Just as important as the training, SPJ could direct more resources (including money) toward advocacy and lobbying, This is the entire reason SPJ is a 501c6.

There are potential disadvantages:

- To make this pencil out for SPJ, the Foundation would need to also take ownership of Quill magazine, which has evolved into an educational tool. The decisions on what it may become in the future would be in the Foundation's hands.
- SPJ could lose some control over educational programming. If the process remains the same, where staff guides that ship with valuable input, then nothing changes in the practical sense. But SPJ would no longer have the final say.
- As SDX becomes more entrepreneurial, it may be less interested in making grants to outside groups such as Reporters Committee, SPLC and so on.
- Long term, the SDX Foundation may become less of a supporting foundation for SPJ. Are we OK with that?

I'm sure you will think of other pros and cons. You will likely have some specific questions that I haven't thought of. That's the point of this discussion.

The SDX Foundation board will be having this same conversation during its meeting. President Robert Leger has already begun the discussion within the Foundation board.

The SPJ Executive Committee discussed this in January, and is supportive of talking more about it. Why? Because making this shift frees more SPJ resources to devote to advocacy, something we don't do enough of now.

Next question that you may be asking: What are the financial implications?

I produced three potential budgets for Leger and Cuillier:

1. Status quo. SPJ, after hiring a communications coordinator, has a projected surplus of about \$10,000. SDX, after funding SPJ requests, would have \$75,000 to grant to outside groups. Last year, the Foundation filled outside grants for \$15,000.
2. SDX takes ownership of all educational programming *except* Quill, makes no grants to SPJ except for EIJ. In this scenario, SPJ finishes \$55,000 in the red. SDX has a surplus of \$156,000. It's a non-starter.
3. SDX takes ownership of *all* educational programming, makes no grants to SPJ except \$82,000 for EIJ. In this scenario, the SPJ surplus rises to **\$65,000**. The SDX surplus shrinks to \$24,000 available for outside groups. We can adjust these numbers by reducing support for EIJ, which shrinks the SPJ surplus and increases the SDX amount dollar-for-dollar.

This is based on 2014-15 forecasts numbers prior to any finance committee meetings. When the market drops, the SDX Foundation would have to make cuts, including outside grants. But it does that now.

The bottom line of the third scenario: SDX operates more like its own business, generating revenue through extra support from the likes of Kiplinger and the Gannett Foundation, and less like a parent with a checkbook. SPJ uses that bottom-line boost for lobbying and advocacy initiatives. SPJ fights, SDX trains.

In terms of the process for making any of these proposed changes, I expect we're looking at a longer conversation, with no action before Nashville. It will probably require a transition over a year's time or so if we go in this direction. But, it's important to begin this discussion today.



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APPENDIX C

DATE: April 9, 2014
FROM: David Cuillier, SPJ President
SUBJ: LDF Forever
FOR: SPJ Board of Directors

Press freedom isn't free. And it isn't forever.

We can change that.

This memo proposes the creation of an endowed war chest that will guarantee that we will always have the means to fight for press freedom, no matter the economy, the budget, or the whims of donors. You might have seen my column in the January/February issue of *Quill* about an advocacy fund. What I'm talking about is an endowed Legal Defense Fund. Call it the Forever Fund for short.

THE NEED

Clearly, it isn't getting any easier to fight for press rights today. It's getting worse. Plaintiffs and government officials are more savvy at threatening journalists with libel suits, SLAPP suits, and subpoenas. Government PIOs are more adept at managing the message, and officials are increasingly gaming freedom of information laws to increase secrecy at all levels of government. Reporters Without Borders now ranks the United States in press freedom at 46th in the world, behind such countries as Romania, El Salvador and Botswana. Meanwhile, there are fewer and fewer sustainable resources to litigate and advocate for press freedom. News organizations are less inclined to sue for public records and open meetings. Litigation funds are few – the National Freedom of Information Coalition's \$1 million litigation fund is finite and focuses solely on certain litigation costs. The SPJ Legal Defense Fund helps some, but typical annual payouts of \$10,000 have limited impact, and the fund relies on the charity of SPJ members bidding at the annual auction. We, as journalists and citizens, need a sustained war chest to push back and guarantee someone is always fighting for the First Amendment.

HISTORY OF STRUGGLE

Bert Bostrom, in his book *Talent, Truth and Energy*, documenting the history of SPJ, wrote, "Money to finance what its leaders and members hoped to accomplish in fighting for First Amendment rights had always been the Society's major stumbling block." (p. 105) In the early years the organization simply budgeted funds toward helping journalists in need. On Nov. 15, 1972, the board formally established the Sigma Delta Chi Legal Fund with \$1,600, raising donations to get it to \$6,000 by the following year. Most grants were set at \$200 (\$900 in 2014 dollars), and the fund was nearly depleted within five years. The account balance rose and fell, depending on the energy of volunteers, hot-button press case of the time, and spending priorities. For example, in addition to litigation, the fund has

been used, especially early on, to assist a FOI service center, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and media attorneys.

LDF TODAY

The \$150,000 Legal Defense Fund is managed by SPJ (not SDX), meaning contributions are not tax deductible and that the money can be used for any litigation, lobbying or advocacy. According to the SPJ website, the fund's primary role is to "initiate and support litigation that enforces public access to government records and proceedings." But it can also support FOI hotlines, coalitions, newsletters, as well as legislative lobbying aimed at enforcing access to records and proceedings. In the past, the fund also has been used for defending journalists from subpoenas and libel suits. The fund is not mentioned in the bylaws and has no legal restrictions on spending other than fulfilling the intentions of the donors who give toward the fund, particularly at the annual auction. People can request up to \$5,000 from the LDF Committee, and go to the full board for further funding. Typically, annual total payouts have not exceeded \$10,000, although that is likely to change since the committee-level authorized payout amount was increased from \$2,000 to \$5,000 last year. It is quite possible the increased amount could lead to eventual depletion of the fund, just as the society has experienced in the past. Money to fight today; gone tomorrow. A sustained fight requires an endowment.

THE POSSIBILITIES

In addition to helping journalists sue for public records or defend against subpoenas, we can do so much more to fight, advocate and litigate for journalism. Such a fund could pay for:

- Trips for the president or other members to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress on FOIA, the shield law, FERPA, or any number of federal issues.
- Grants for other journalism organizations. For example, the National Press Photographers Association is much better positioned than SPJ to fight for photographer's rights, and this fund could help them battle more effectively.
- Proactive litigation to establish better case law, and advocacy for better state freedom of information laws.
- Travel expenses to give out Black Hole awards and initiate other parachute offenses.
- Public education, such as PSAs, advertising, school curriculum development, and outreach. If the public doesn't support journalism, then the politicians certainly won't. Create another campaign, like the brilliant "If we didn't tell you, who would?" initiative.

THE METHOD

Creating an endowed fund is not easy, and it takes time. This is something that could take decades to develop, but if we start now we might just see the benefits in our lifetime, and the effects will reverberate long after we are dead. We have the chance to protect journalism forever. Here are some ways of getting this started and infusing the fund as we maintain our current activities:

- **Initial Seed Match:** To launch the endowment, provide a 1-to-1 matching seed of \$100,000, shifting \$100,000 from the existing LDF account, leaving \$50,000 available for annual typical LDF requests. Leverage that \$100,000 with donations to

get the endowment to \$200,000. This base level would generate enough interest income (\$10,000) to exceed the annual LDF auction revenues and get started. The goal would be to get the endowment to \$1 million within 10 years, then keep building from there.

- **Fundraisers.** Continue the auction and other ways of raising money. Some of this fundraising would maintain the \$50,000 in the expendable account, but extra could be put in the endowment. For example, I am considering raffling off the president's suite at EIJ14 in Nashville, or putting it up for online auction, with funds going toward the endowment.
- **Lifetime Freedom Memberships:** Give the lifetime membership purpose by raising it from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and make it payable through auto billing for four years (\$41.67 a month). Create the expectation that lifetime members also pledge substantial donations in their wills.
- **Budget Policy:** Establish a budgeting policy that any excess funds in the SPJ budget at year's end go into the endowment.
- **Legacy Gifts:** Some people may want to give to SDX toward journalism education and others might want to give toward this for press freedom fights. The great thing about a legacy gift is when you die you don't need the tax deduction, so people might be more willing to give to the LDF fund in their will rather than when they are alive. I am willing to pledge \$25,000 toward the endowment, raising that to a minimum \$100,000 upon my retirement, and will challenge others to do the same. This will be key to building the fund over time to a substantial amount.

The goal would be to get the corpus to at least \$1 million to generate \$50,000 a year toward litigation, travel expenses for black hole awards, lobbying, public education, and perhaps part of the salary of a communications person. Even more money could accomplish astounding results. We are ideally poised to take this on. Most journalism organizations are 501c3s, so they are limited in their advocacy and lobbying. Not SPJ. We are a 501c6 and are unlimited in our ability to lobby, sue and advocate. It is our responsibility to the profession to advocate. All of this would free up SPJ dollars for other activities, meaning more SDX Foundation money would be available for journalism training and education.

START NOW

So what is needed to start this endowment? Board action to 1) approve dedicating lifetime memberships to the endowment, 2) allocate \$100,000 from LDF toward the endowment for match money, and 3) establish a policy of putting SPJ's excess funds in the endowment at the end of the fiscal year. We do not have to decide this in April. We can discuss this and put it on the agenda for the first meeting at EIJ14. At minimum, though, if there is general agreement in principle by the board, I can begin raising money for LDF now (e.g., talking to donors about potential matches, raffling off the president's suite for LDF), and then the endowment can be announced at EIJ14 if approved at the first meeting.

I ask for your support. Everyone wins, but the big winner is journalism and ultimately, society.