Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
April 26, 2008 - Denver
Minutes

Present
Board Members: Nikki Andersen, David Anderson (via webcam/phone), Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Rita Deedrick, Kirsten Ellenbogen, Daryl Fischer, Cecilia Garibay, Julie Johnson, Judith Larsen, Mary Ellen Munley, Beverly Serrell, Matt Sikora, Martin Storksdieck, Carey Tisdal, Robert "Mac" West
Association Manager: Randy Roberts
Absent: Alan Friedman, D.D. Hilke, Jeff Kennedy, Karen Knutson, Kathleen McLean,

Call to Order
Noting McLean's absence due to illness, President-Elect Ellenbogen called the meeting to order at 2:12 PM MDT.

Additions/changes to agenda
Ellenbogen noted some changes to the agenda and that Sikora and Storksdieck would be joining the meeting late.

Announcements
Roberts and Ellenbogen made several announcements regarding the Visitor Studies Conference:

-- Roberts reported that conference brochures are complete and in the mail and asked board members to take a handful of brochures for distribution at AAM.

-- Roberts will outline time periods available for committee meetings at the conference; committee chairs should access this information on the Basecamp site and choose a time for their committee meeting. Meeting times set by May 3 will be published in the conference program; meeting locations will be determined later.

-- The Marketplace will include tables for VSA committees to aid committee recruitment; while committee members may want to staff these tables, this should not be used as business meeting time for committees.

-- Ellenbogen noted that the annual business meeting for the conference will be Friday morning at 8:30, immediately prior to a keynote event. The format will be different too; rather than each officer and committee chair making a short presentation, McLean will compile this information into "state of the association" address. Ellenbogen said that board member attendance at the closing luncheon is still expected.

-- Ellenbogen noted the conference opening event on Wednesday evening will include an interpretive dance about visitor studies.

Fischer presented each board member with a special gift, a photo book of Denver, which had been published by her father 20 years ago; we all thanked Fischer for this kind gesture in memory of her father.

Consent Agenda
Deedrick confirmed that the consent agenda for this meeting contains the minutes of the February 23 & 24, 2008, Board meeting, the VSA 2008 Budget (as approved by the Executive Committee in March), and the following reports: President, President Elect, Association Manager, VP for Organizational Development, VP for Outreach, VP for Professional Development, Secretary, Conference Oversight Committee, and Membership Committee. (The consent agenda does not include the Legal Task Force report or the Legal Assistance Primer, which were in the Consent Agenda portion of the packet, but are actually part of the deliberative agenda.)

MOTION
Andersen moved to accept the consent agenda; West seconded; the motion carried.

Treasurer's Quarterly Report
Serrell reported on finances for the quarter, clarifying several points, which she outlined on a handout. These included:

-- The 2008 budget, which was approved by the Executive Committee in March, has a smaller deficit than originally expected.

-- Serrell continues to work to improve the recordkeeping and financial reporting formats. Serrell acknowledged assistance from her own bookkeeper, and the assistance from Roberts, who is very organized and timely in providing information. Munley thanked Serrell not only for her time and effort, but also for the additional time and effort donated by her bookkeeper.

-- Serrell confirmed that VSA is now working on a cash basis rather than an accrual basis.

-- Anyone working on CAISE in a paid capacity will be asked to provide information for the project; be aware that this request is coming.

Chen-Courtin asked if financial reports can be presented in broad categories, such as "operational" and "conference," to help understand the financial situation. Serrell explained that VSA has been working to break out of these categories, based on earlier suggestions that broad categories made bookkeeping and reporting more difficult. We agreed that a good next step would be to keep the reporting as is, with an asterisk for each "operational" item.

Sponsorship Update
West reported that fundraising for the 2008 conference is going very well. We currently have over $11,000 in sponsorship, with $7,300 in outstanding pledges, and a few additional pending requests beyond that. West credits improved process that has developed over the last two years for the success of sponsorship development, and acknowledged Caren Oberg for her tremendous work on this. West said we now have a better system for identifying prospects and are more analytical in how we pitch sponsorship benefits to particular sponsors. In addition, we recognize that not all board members have equal ability to make solicitations, so we are more strategic about who we ask to raise money and the tools we provide them. Resource Development and Membership Committee now are talking about how to best structure various giving opportunities including an annual giving program.

Munley raised the question of how and when to approach institutions for sponsorship. Now that we have more institutional members, how does this affect our approach to them for sponsorship? Johnson added that we also need to then consider what institutions that VSA will consider sponsoring in a spirit of community "give and take."

Andersen commented that we will use an RFP process for the 2010 conference, which will better coordinate local fund raising efforts.

Board Survey Results
Garibay asked for general feedback on the results of the board survey. Serrell noted a paradox of many respondents saying they feel comfortable in working with finances, yet the most requested professional development was related to finance. Garibay responded just because someone feels competent doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement.

Roberts said that the survey results reaffirm a relative lack of institutional organizational memory; Tisdal agreed.

Munley was struck by the fact that the board is strong in the areas in which most of us work, such as organizational and strategic planning, but weakest in other areas such as governance, which is not the skill set in our profession and, therefore, not reflected on our board.

Garibay said there are several findings that need attention and led us on an exercise to prioritize these. The results of the exercise were that the following issues were the most important to address:

> *2. New and existing board members did not have a clear sense of VSA's communication process.*
>
> The Board Development Committee will remind Board Members where to find this information.

5. Prioritizing strategic plan goals: There was a sentiment that the Board needs to prioritize goals, and to continue refining those goals, in order to ensure feasibility of plan for a volunteer board.

To be addressed by the Executive Committee.

8. Decision making process: The decision making process of VSA – who makes decisions and what is the length of time necessary to make those decisions are not clear.

The Board Development Committee will remind Board Members where to find this information.

9. Project history/context: There was a need expressed from both "new" and existing board members for more background/project history in order to understand the context of current issues before the board and meeting materials.

After discussion, we determined that a brief template for outlining "projects" will help organize this information in an accessible and easily consumable way. Chen-Courtin offered to create a template. In addition, Roberts suggested that board orientation be expanded to include more project history.

Garibay will update this list and present it to the board on the consent agenda for the July Board meeting.

Grants Policy Draft
West spoke on behalf of the Grants Task Force who feels that the proposed policy is appropriate for an organization that will continue seeking national level grants and will seek to cover indirect costs. West said that the policy also begins to address the conflict of interest issue, and it suggests that VSA develop a policy to specifically address this.

Tisdal and others raised questions about who could serve as PI on a VSA grant, and she was concerned that limiting it to the board sent a negative message of exclusivity. We discussed that some limitation is necessary for legal accountability reasons. After discussion, it was agreed that the policy should consistently state throughout, language such as "PI must be a VSA Board Member or under contract with the Visitor Studies Association" and that the policy should explain the accountability issue. Additional explanation of the policy could be accomplished via the VSA e-news.

Storksdieck questioned the responsibility of oversight committees on a project, and how to resolve conflicts between an oversight committee and a PI. Johnson answered that this policy indeed codifies oversight committee responsibilities and reporting. However, Munley concurred with Storksdieck that the policy should state that the oversight committees work "in the best interest of VSA and its mission as defined by the board."

The Grants Task Force will make the suggested changes to the policy and will present it to the Board in July for action.

Legal Task Force Report
Fischer gave a brief synopsis on a pertinent article in the "Chronicle of Philanthropy," which urges attorneys to donate a percentage of time to not-for-profits, and that not-for-profits should not rely heavily on board members for legal advice. The article went on to list legal resources for not-for-profits, including a Columbus branch of "Corporate Pro Bono."

Feedback from the board on the Legal Task Force recommendations included:

-- Eliminate the word "employment"
-- Adding "Memoranda of Understanding" to the list of issues
-- Adding accounting practices to the list of issues

Ellenbogen provided feedback from McLean who suggested that the Past-President's position description be updated to include working with the Association Manager to "take responsibility and leadership for legal compliance and monitoring."

The Legal Task Force will continue to identify pro bono resources and flesh out the bullet points about responsibilities listed on the recommendation; it was also suggested that the Past-President join the Legal Task Force, given the new responsibilities.

IRB Task Force Revised Recommendation
Tisdal presented a recommendation that was revised from the February board meeting regarding making the IRB process more accessible for VSA members. Tisdal said that this recommendation is similar to last meeting, but has cleaner wording and eliminated the formerly proposed short conference about IRBs as it was distracting to the task at hand.

After discussion, the following changes were made to the recommendation:

-- Change "3 to 5 simple partnerships" to "2 to 3 simple partnerships."

-- Change professional development implication to not be restricted to the VSA conference, and to use CAISE as an example

-- Change "Communications Committee" to "Publications Committee"

-- Change the mention of using the VSA website to say "pending capacity."

-- Add language about the Past President's involvement related to legal issues.

Following is the revised motion with changes noted:

The VSA Task Force asks for approval and endorsement of this recommendation so that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Task Force can develop specifics mechanism that allows members to achieve IRB approval of their projects.

Recommendation

Outcomes

- *Develop ~~3 to 5~~ **2 to 3** simple partnerships with existing IRBs using memoranda of understanding (MoUs) indicating the IRB is familiar visitor studies methods and practices and is open to having VSA members serve on its board.*
- *Develop the curriculum for a professional development workshop to offer ~~as part at the VSA conference and~~ **such** as part of CAISE.*
- *Develop a web area on the VSA website where VSA members can **access sample protocols typical of problematic submissions, find information about the IRB process, and** learn more about the partner IRBs. **Pending future web abilities, VSA members may be able to**, rate their experiences with IRBs **and** ~~,~~ provide open-ended comments on their experiences, ~~access sample protocols for typical or problematic submissions, and find information about the IRB process~~.*

Impact

- *Place VSA in the leadership role of setting standards and practices for ethical research and evaluation practice in the informal learning field.*
- *Respond to immediate issues related to IRB concerns for all VSA members.*

Process

1. Pursue memoranda-of-understanding (MoUs) with two to three existing IRBs (e.g. IRC, Inc and Portland State University) who are interesting in taking steps such as providing human subjects certification to VSA members, becoming familiar with visitor studies practices, inviting VSA members to serve on review boards, and take other steps to make approval processes consistent and efficient.

*2. Develop an outline of topics that should be included in a Request for Proposal (RFP) **such as** for a CAISE workshop and to serve as a guideline for a VSA ~~Conference or online~~ workshop.*

*3. Work with the ~~Communications Committee is~~ **Publications Committee in** providing online information, examples, and links to inform and*

support VSA members in preparing protocols appropriate for IRB submission.

4. Work with the Past President for consideration of legal ramifications.

MOTION
Fischer moved to accept the IRB Task Force Recommendation as amended; Johnson seconded; motion carried.

Ellenbogen thanked the IRB Task Force and suggested Tisdal draft a new charge for the Task Force to present to President McLean for consideration at the next Executive Committee on May 13.

Strategic Initiatives
Roberts opened a discussion about the strategic initiatives by acknowledging the significant number of things that have been completed and/or are running on schedule. Roberts asked that each committee chair send status updates using the action plan document. Next updates are due to Roberts by July 5.

Roberts then led the board through the detailed list of actions, noting completed work and gaining clarification on others. Items of note included:

-- Roberts encourages the use of Basecamp by all VSA committees, Task Forces, and working groups as the Basecamp site is serving as the archive of work.

-- Chen-Courtin reminded the Board that any VSA group wanting the assistance of the Marketing and PR Resource Group should pro-actively contact Chen-Courtin with requests.

-- Regarding action 2.1a, *Codify VSA's existing activities that serve the intellectual needs of primary and secondary audiences*, Ellenbogen said that Roberts and Sikora are co-chairing a Task Force that will include all committee and group chairs (Munley, Anderson, Andersen, Garibay, West, and Chen-Courtin) to develop a matrix that identified the services and audiences of VSA.

-- Regarding action, 2.2i, *Implement first year recommendations for the Professional Development Task Force,* Johnson noted that much – but not all - has already been integrated into some committees. Munley offered to bullet out items from the PDTF yet to be done, complete with action steps.

-- Regarding action 2.3a, *Assess status of current strategic plan and determine next steps for developing a strategic plan to guide VSA's activities over the next 3 to 5 years*, Ellenbogen stated that McLean will discuss with Fischer off line a need to revise the schedule.

-- Regarding action 2.3g, *Assess the feasibility of reorganizing to an Executive Director w/Administrative Assistant model*, McLean is appointing a Task Force to explore this; Ellenbogen is to chair, and she is requesting Fischer and Roberts to be on the Task Force. They expect to have a recommendation by October.

Munley suggested we find a way to recognize committee members at the annual conference, and we briefly brainstormed ideas, such as slide show at the annual meeting. Roberts will pursue.

Ellenbogen concluded the strategic initiatives discussion by thanking Roberts for her work on this and asked the board for input on the process. There were many kudos and compliments, especially about the action plan document helping to track accountability. Roberts agreed saying that the more the committee chairs can put in writing in this document, the more efficiently it can be reviewed at each board meeting.

Professional Development NSF Planning Grant Registry Proposal Review and Discussion

Ellenbogen explained that the review and discussion will be organized into four parts:

1. Johnson, short overview
2. Board discussion of the self study guide
3. Board discussion of the registry proposal in semi-executive session.
4. Recommendation of the registry proposal and discussion on concluding the grant.

Short Overview
Johnson reminded the board that the proposal funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) NSF was to explore professional development opportunities for "mid-career professionals." There were several multi-day meetings, which included guest speakers who presented various ideas. After considering these ideas, the group working on the project determined that in order to move forward with essential professionalization, something like a registry program was the way to go (over certification and others, which had more rigorous legal ramifications). They then began to shape a registry program by first developing a set of competencies, looking at other organizations like the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and a Canadian organization for models. At our February 2008 board meeting, we were presented with draft form of the registry program.

Johnson then emphasized that the purpose of a planning grant is to explore a question, produce some kind of product, and publish something (though the product and publication were not specified in our grant). Johnson also reminded us that VSA has already begun to consider how the competencies produced by this project can be used as a framework for VSA activities.

Self-Study Guide Discussion
Ellenbogen noted that at their April meeting the Executive Committee approved a process for proceeding with the publication of the self-study guide, which is outlined in

Anderson's report. A timeline has not yet been set for this process as the Publications Committee has just received the most recent draft of the guide.

The question at hand is whether to publish the guide via a third-party publisher or to self-publish. A factor is that the funds must be expensed by the May 31 grant end. There are costs associated with publication, particularly design and printing.

Ellenbogen stated the following about the two options:

-- Having a third-party publisher would give the publication prestige, and would provide outside review.

-- Self-publishing would include paying a designer to design an on-line template to make the guide available via the VSA website.

Much discussion followed, including:

Income producing or not. The question was raised of whether or not publishing the guide should produce income for VSA. Storksdieck suggested that it has been prepaid by NSF and should be available for free. Johnson stated that the electronic version does not negate the fact that we may in the future go to a printed piece; maybe electronic version will garner feedback before going to a third-party printed piece. Fischer agreed that making it available electronically makes it available to a larger audience first.

Publish or not to publish. Serrell expressed concern that there is too much work to accomplish to make the guide publishable. We confirmed that the Executive Committee had already said it was worth pursuing. Chen-Courtin added that we should consider this the "first edition" – think of it as a living document to be changed and improved over time. Chen-Courtin also said that the Marketing and PR Resource Group could begin working with the Publications Committee on several marketing issues, including developing feedback loops for the guide. Anyone interested in being part of the review process should contact Storksdieck.

Vetting the content editor. While it is understood that the EC action asked the Publications Committee to vet a third-party publisher through the EC before committing to a contract, Tisdal and Munley raised the question of vetting the content editor through the EC also. There was discussion on both sides of the issue, and Deedrick offered detail from the minutes of the April EC meeting in which publication of the guide was discussed in detail; Ellenbogen asked that this portion of the EC minutes be included in these board minutes – see addendum. Fischer agreed with Munley's suggestion that the content editor be vetted through the EC, saying that this helps the Board share comfort and responsibility for decisions with the Publication Committee; with intent being transparency. We agreed that the Publications Committee would outline the process and make recommendations; the disagreement was on whether or not it is advisable or necessary to have the content editor vetted through the Executive Committee.

After discussion, Ellenbogen called for a motion.
MOTION
Munley moved that the Board ask the Publications Committee to vet the recommendation for the content editor through the Executive Committee; Chen-Courtin seconded; the motion carried with 10 votes for and 4 opposed.

Semi-Executive Session
Ellenbogen requested on behalf of McLean that the board enter into semi-executive session for discussion on moving forward with the registry based on the NSF Planning Grant, Mid-Career Project.

Recommendation on the Registry Program and Discussion on Concluding the Grant
MOTION
Serrell moved that the Board does not recommend that we proceed forward with the proposed registry at this time; Garibay seconded; the motion carried unanimously.

The Board discussed in some detail the audiences for communicating the conclusion of this project, and the message to be communicated.

We agreed that we need a statement that:

-- States that VSA accomplished the goals of the planning grant.

-- Identifies the benefits and accomplishments of the work.

-- Recognizes the effort and potential impact of the work on the field, specifically citing the "competencies" and how they are being used.

-- And states that given VSA's resources, mission, and strategic direction, this is not the appropriate time to move forward with a registry, but here's what we are going to do…

We also agreed that communication about the project should occur with:

1. Barbara Butler and Larry Bell who led the project (McLean with assistance from Ellenbogen, Deedrick, and Roberts)

2. The original "group of 8" who initiated the work as well as those who helped test the program (McLean, and encourage additional communiqués from Butler, Bell, and Friedman, particularly to thank these groups for their help with the project)

3. Brief statement to VSA membership (McLean)

4. Report to NSF (Johnson and Ellenbogen)

5. Full Report to Membership (Johnson and Ellenbogen)

For concluding the grant, Ellenbogen proposed that she and Johnson work with Butler and Bell to create the final document for submission to NSF by August 31 (90 days after the grant end date).

Marketing and PR Resource Group Metaphor Exercise
Chen-Courtin pointed the board toward her report stating that continuation of branding merits discussion, and she suggested tabling this item until the July board meeting when we will have time for a full discussion.

Closing Announcements
Ellenbogen reiterated several homework assignments for the board:

-- By May 3, committee chairs should indicate their preference for meeting time at the conference

-- By May 5, comments on the membership survey.

-- By May 15, submit ideas for post-conference survey questions.

-- By May 15, ideas regarding future conference themes

-- By June 6, post any items for the deliberative portion of the agenda for the July board meeting

-- By July 5, committee chair quarterly reports due

In closing, Munley expressed thanks and best wishes to McLean for her work to ensure a good meeting in her unexpected absence, and a special thanks to Ellenbogen and Roberts for running an extraordinary meeting.

Adjourn
MOTION
Deedrick moved to adjourn; Johnson seconded; the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM MDT.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Deedrick, Secretary

ADDENDUM

THE FOLLOWING IS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 4, 2008, EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEETING (EC MINUTES NOT APPROVED AS OF THE WRITING
OF THESE BOARD MINUTES).

MOTION
David moved that the Executive Committee approve the framework articulated in 12 bullet points
in the report, with the following 3 amendments:

1. Add "and the guide will go through a peer review process under the guidance of a content
editor" and ensure this precedes the line about final editing.

2. Replace bullet point about design with "Appointment of a designer will be the decision of the
Publications Committee."

3. Delete reference to the 2008 conference in Houston and state, "…sale and dissemination at
the VSA conference and/or online via third-party publisher."

As a group, we had consensus on the following process (based on Kathy's recommendation)
for publishing the Guide, which we recommend to the Executive Committee:
- Barbara will provide a revised, more complete draft to the Publication Committee
- The Publication Committee will review the draft AND THE GUIDE WILL GO
  THROUGH A PEER REVIEW PROCESS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A CONTENT
  EDITOR
- The revised draft will bed discussed with the Marketing Committee for further input,
  marketing aspects and dissemination issues.
- A final round of revisions by the authors
- The Guide will be copy-edited
- ~~Design can occur with a local designer Barbara is already working with. Design
  examples have been created and seem appropriate.~~ APPOINTMENT OF A
  DESIGNER WILL BE THE DECISION OF THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE.
- Printing
- Marketing
- Sale/dissemination at VSA conference ~~in Houston~~. AND/OR ONLINE VIA THIRD-
  PARTY PUBLISHER.

We recommend the following elements for the Guide:
- Two prefaces: One by Kathy as VSA president, the other by Larry and Barbara as PIs
  and authors.
- An Introduction to provide context to the Guide: Background on process - why, as a
  reader and user, do I care about the Guide and its recommendations? How can I
  trust the content of the Guide? How did that come about?
- A full list of contributors should be provided, as well as an author and institutional
  acknowledgement list.

Kirsten seconded the motion; the motion carried.