

**Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
July 18, 2007 – Ottawa
Minutes**

Present

Incoming Board Members: Karen Knutson, Judith Larsen, Beverly Serrell, Matt Sikora, Martin Storksdieck, Carey Tisdal

Ongoing Board Members: Nikki Andersen, David Anderson, Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Rita Deedrick, Kirsten Ellenbogen, Daryl Fischer, Alan Friedman, Cecilia Garibay, D.D.

Hilke, Julie Johnson, Jeff Kennedy, Kathy McLean, Mary Ellen Munley, Mac West
Outgoing Board Members: Larry Bell, John Fraser, Judy Koke, A.T. Stephens, Sue Sturtevant

Association Manager: Randy Roberts

Call to Order

Friedman called the meeting to order at 9:16 AM EDT.

Approval of Minutes

Friedman confirmed that everyone had the minutes of the May 12, 2007, Board Meeting in Chicago. Fraser asked that a notation about the completion of the digitization project be added to the May 12 minutes. Ellenbogen questioned the accuracy of the item exploring joint conference support; it was determined that the May 12 minutes are correct though we will explore a possible inaccuracy in the June 26 Executive Committee minutes.

MOTION

Fraser moved to accept the minutes; Stephens seconded; the motion carried.

Introductions

Each person briefly introduced themselves to the group.

Old Business: Reports

Each Officer, Committee Chair, and Task Force lead presented a brief report of activities of the past year.

Friedman reported that much has been accomplished for VSA in that VSA is now appearing “at the table” on a national basis, citing a book on the framework of evaluation for the National Science Foundation (NSF) as one example, and the strengthening of the relationship with CARE (the Committee for Audience Research and Evaluation, a standing committee of the American Association of Museums) as another. Another example of VSA’s influence is that the American Association of Museums (AAM) is changing its policy to allow independent practitioners to more fully participate in AAM, and the Association of Science & Technology Centers (ASTC) is considering allowing individual memberships.

McLean, as incoming president, stated that it has been a privilege to work with and observe Past-President Munley and outgoing President Freidman in action.

As Vice President for Operations, Fischer, explained that she has liaised with four groups (Board Development Committee, Resource Development Committee, Marketing and PR Resource Group, and the Membership Committee), and reviewed their most recent accomplishments. The Board Development Committee developed a “user-friendly” guide to Board procedures, Board nominees, assessment, and added vice-chairs to the committees. They also clarified the expectations of Board service and utilized electronic voting for the first time. The Resource Development Committee created a matrix of resource opportunities, clarified the Board giving policy; and analyzed and expanded the role of the conference Marketplace. The Membership Committee reviewed survey results and made recommendations to the Board about how technology can be used to better serve members. They also conducted a lapsed member survey, and scheduled the first ever conference member breakfast. The Marketing and PR Resource Group created a smooth and efficient process for the bimonthly e-newsletter, which serves as a great program model. They also introduced the use of a program-planning template.

Fraser commented on the three areas that have been under his purview as Vice President for Programs: Publications Committee, Conference Committee, and Professional Development Committee. Fraser acknowledged Sikora and Andersen for their work on the conference with attendance above plan. Fraser reported for the Publications Committee that “as of 9:40 this morning, we have – live on the web – the VSA archives!” (with a brief demonstration); there will soon be a link directly from the VSA website. Regarding Professional Development, Fraser said that Johnson would speak for the Task Force.

Deedrick reported that her role of Secretary was less project based and more about listening, writing, recordkeeping, and communications.

As Chair of the Conference Committee, Andersen said that the “maturation” of VSA has played out well in Ottawa in that the Conference Committee worked more collaboratively with Resource Development for funding; more forward thinking of upcoming conference themes; seeking input from Professional Development; and looking at being more intentional with aligning the annual conference with the strategic direction of the organization. Andersen welcomed Roberts’ increased participation along with Larsen and others to update the conference manual. Andersen reported that conference planning is well underway for Houston in 2008, and that the Executive Committee had recently approved St. Louis as the 2009 venue. Andersen also updated the Board on the previously referenced joint-conference idea; the Conference Committee feels it is generally a good idea, but it needs more strategic consideration; we will not be pursuing it for 2010, as was the notion during the May Board meeting, but will continue to look at it for future conferences.

Sturtevant reported that work with the local conference arrangement committee in Ottawa was a pleasure – despite an especially complicated conference to arrange - because they had much lead line and were a particularly collegial committee. Larsen added that having a good committee chair and skilled fiscal officer were especially beneficial. Fischer suggested we find ways to keep these good committee members involved in other VSA committees. Andersen acknowledged the tremendous amount of work performed by Sikora and Jessica Sickler for the conference programs.

As outgoing Immediate Past-President, Munley bade the Executive Committee goodbye, though she will be staying on the Board. Munley described her time in the leadership roles as fascinating and rewarding. She views the changes that VSA has undergone (and continues to undergo) as both audacious and purposeful. Munley expressed her profound respect for the founders of VSA, and she believes that VSA stands alone in bringing people together for accomplishment of important work in the field; we are part of a working community that bring the best people and best ideas together with confidence that something will come of it.

Johnson reported as Chair of the Professional Development Task Force and incoming Vice President for Professional Development. Johnson explained the Professional Development *Task Force* is different from the Professional Development *Committee* in that the *Task Force* is a time-limited group formed to work on “a thing.” That “thing” has included spending a year understanding the structure of Professional Development in VSA and the workings of the two Professional Development subgroups. Some ideas coming out of the Task Force will be implemented by the Professional Development Committee, but others will fall into cross-committee work. The Task Force is culling documents and is looking at other domains to better understand the genre of Professional Development and VSA’s capacity. They are considering doing a post-conference survey that will get at motivations. Johnson furthered that they will also look at the work of the VSA “mid-career planning group,” which is focused on identifying competencies for research and evaluation professionals, and will compare these to a corollary set of competencies for “practitioners” who make use of research and evaluation. Johnson explained that the Task Force was originally expected to complete their work with six months, but she foresees their needing another six meetings to accomplish their work.

As outgoing Chair, Koke reported on the results of the first year of the Membership Committee. She said that results of their work indicate that some VSA members become engaged in VSA for a long term, while others engage for a short term, and some of them may be more project based. While visitor studies professionals appreciate VSA for what we are today, the so-called “practitioners” want more from VSA. Lapsed members often find information not practical enough or too narrow in scope, and a high percentage of one-year members are based in visitor services. Koke acknowledged the work of several committee members including Pino Monaco, as well as Gina Koutsika who is serving as a VSA representative in Europe. The Membership Committee is asking the question of how we can serve members beyond the annual conference, such as online workshops and discussion boards.

Bell spoke about the NSF mid-career planning grant, relaying that it was Barbara Butler's desire to raise the professionalism of VSA members that led her to seek the planning grant in the hopes of providing a professional development path for those new to the visitor studies field, and growth opportunities for mid-career professionals. The planning group conceived the idea of a voluntary registry for visitor studies professionals, and developed a list of competencies. Bell pointed out that VSA has not yet decided if it will follow through on the registry idea, but the development of the registry and competencies has generated a good thought process. Bell explained that VSA is awaiting word from NSF on additional funding and expects to resume work in September with a report to the Executive Committee in December and a recommendation to the full Board in January.

Garibay reported that the Board Development Committee has developed clear criteria for developing the Board slate, and there is an ongoing process to align the Board with VSA's strategic plan. Storksdieck suggested we develop ways to continue to engage those who were considered for the slate but for whatever reason did not make it to the slate. Garibay said she would share these names with committee chairs. Garibay also stressed a continuing need to communicate more clearly with VSA members about committees and committee work.

Anderson described the Publications Committee as three tiers: conference abstracts, website, and journal. Anderson relayed that they had hoped this year's conference abstract to be bilingually produced, but financial constraints did not allow it. However, he commented that we have the hard work of Kim Burtnyk and others to thank for the high quality of the conference abstracts. They hope to have a complete online submission system for next year's abstracts. Anderson continued that the new journal has received many compliments, and it is now to a state of self-maintenance thanks to an effective editorial board. They are considering how to further publicize the journal and are working to get it on the social science index. Anderson also reiterated the news that the VSA archives are now online and thanked Fraser and Serrell for their work in this effort. Lastly, Anderson reported that the committee is working to improve the utility and functionality of the VSA website.

West thanked Caren Oberg for her work on behalf of the Resource Development Committee for planning and organizing the conference Marketplace, and that the committee will continue to more fully integrate the Marketplace in future conferences. West also reported that VSA raised \$20,000 in sponsorship for the 2007 conference, well above the \$12,000 goal. West reminded us that the conference is an annual event, and we are now "starting from zero" for next year's conference, and the bar has been substantially raised. Each Board member will be asked to add to the list of potential sponsors and to make direct solicitations for conference sponsorship. West also reported that the Resource Development Committee is looking into developing a giving program, and they will be developing and testing an instrument for annual giving to VSA. West thanked Roberts for keeping meticulous records on contributions to VSA.

Chen-Courtin reported on behalf of the Marketing and PR Resource Group that they would like to develop a marketing plan for VSA, and she would very much like to expand the Marketing and PR Resource Group in order to do this.

Governance Transition

Friedman thanked all Board Members for their service to VSA, and he invited outgoing Board Members to remain for the rest of the Board Meeting as well as lunch. With that, Friedman handed the gavel to McLean, who assumed her role as the new President of the VSA Board.

President Address

McLean recalled having joined the Board as President-Elect two years ago recognizing VSA as a large and complicated organization and worrying about living up to the task of President. She was pleased to work closely with Friedman to learn the “nuts and bolts,” and the worry has subsided over the past two years. McLean thanked Munley, Friedman, and Roberts for helping her reach this point with confidence. McLean stated that the work of the Board is to facilitate the committees. She referred to the VSA mission in saying she would like VSA to focus on the “dialogue,” staying true to our roots while bringing more people to the table. She hopes we will focus on the strategic positioning, streamlined operations, and an emphasis on the primary work of VSA in the years to come.

Treasurer Report and 2008 Prospects

Financial Report and Budgeting. Ellenbogen reported that VSA is due to break even for 2007, despite an anticipated \$11,000 deficit. Ellenbogen noted that there would be a two-month transition to Serrell as the new Treasurer, as the next two months will be busy with clearing up the bookkeeping for the conference. Ellenbogen stated a goal of having a balanced budget for 2008, and requested committees develop 2008 budgets in September.

Insurance. Ellenbogen also reported that the work on securing Directors and Officers (D & O) insurance is proceeding, and we are seeking estimates from more than one company. Ellenbogen then asked the Board to comment on VSA’s overall insurance needs. Munley said that we should consider possible increased insurance needs if VSA continues with the Professional Development registry as well as potential involvement in Internal Review Boards (IRB). Koke felt it appropriate to drop the conference insurance now that planning is done within the VSA structure. Hilke suggested that it might be time for VSA to pay for a full financial audit, which could help us secure insurance at better rates. Serrell urged immediate action on the D & O insurance, emphasizing that we each could be help personally liable if fiscal problems should arise. With that, Ellenbogen offered to expedite the process and promised to report progress at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Grants Task Force. Ellenbogen raised the issue of a need for a grants task force to set out guidelines for managing grants, explaining that this is not only needed for our own fiscal management, but will help us to be more competitive in future grants competition. Ellenbogen put forth the charge of such a Task Force:

To make a recommendation to the VSA Board for a mechanism that allows the organization to lead and participate in grants. Recommendations should address but are not limited to liabilities, conflict of interest, fiscal oversight, grant submission processes, establishment of an overhead rate as well as issues related to both governmental and private funding sources.

MOTION

Friedman moved to accept Ellenbogen's proposal to form a Grants Task Force; Stephens seconded; the motion carried with West abstaining.

Subsequent discussion confirmed that the Grants Task Force will report to the VSA President, and members include: Beverly Serrell, Mac West (Chair), Kirsten Ellenbogen, and Julie Johnson.

Strategic Planning Exercise

Fischer and Johnson led a lengthy exercise with much discussion to advance VSA's strategic planning. They began by reviewing the strategic planning process to date and sharing documents that resulted from the May Board Meeting. The ensuing discussion brought forth a couple of key points:

-- "Strategic initiative 1" from the May Board meeting was reworded to emphasize work in leadership in the field, with the assessment of resources seen as "a given" for all work to be done.

-- A desire for a statement of principals to help guide all that we do.

At the end of the strategic planning exercise, Johnson, McLean, and Fischer agreed to take the results of the exercise and reframe two strategic initiatives to be vetted through the Executive Committee and brought back to the full Board to articulate goals and objectives. (See Appendix for summary note of the Strategic Planning Exercise.)

Informal Science Education Resource Center Report and Proposed Structure

Friedman updated the Board on the NSF-funded project, which is cooperative agreement between NSF and the ASTC for the formation of the Informal Science Education Resource Center; VSA is a partner with ASTC and others on this project. Friedman began his report by stating that the name of the project was changing, with the likely new name of Center for the Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE). Friedman reminded the Board that the project will bring in \$217,000 over five years to VSA, and covers a specific scope of work, including participation by both Friedman and Roberts. Friedman invited Board Members to review the scope of work (included in the Board Meeting packet) and share comments about the project after the meeting.

Friedman further explained that VSA's responsibilities will require time and effort of selected members, and that this work will be compensated. For this, Friedman proposed

the formation of a VSA task force to oversee the financials as well a VSA's work on this project. Specifically, Friedman's proposal stated:

The VSA Board will select an ad hoc Task Force, to be known as the "VSA ISERC Advisory Committee" to review the VSA role in the ISERC project, including assisting the co-PI (Alan Friedman) and VSA Association Manager (Randy Roberts) in developing the VSA contribution. The Task Force will establish and operate a process for selecting other VSA members to perform compensated roles in the project. The Task Force will consist of one Board member serving on the Publications Committee and one Board member serving on the Professional Development Committee, plus three other VSA members appointed by the President. The President will also appoint a Chair and co-Chair from the Task Force membership. Task Force members will serve two year renewable terms.

To avoid potential conflict of interest, no member of the Task Force will be eligible to serve in a compensated role on the VSA subcontract. Mr. Friedman and Ms. Roberts will be non-voting ex-officio members of the Task Force. The Task Force may hold executive sessions when reviewing the roles of either Mr. Friedman or Ms. Roberts. The Task Force will report regularly to the VSA Executive Committee and Board, and will keep the Publications and Professional Development Committees informed and engaged in the project.

[Note: if the ISERC name is changed, the Task Force name will be updated.]

Discussion confirmed that not all task force members need be Board Members. McLean emphasized that the new task force should work in conjunction with VSA committees. Friedman said that VSA would own the products we develop as part of this project.

MOTION

Friedman moved to accept the proposal to create the new task force; Tisdal seconded; the motion carried with Johnson abstaining.

McLean agreed to appoint the committee immediately after the Board Meeting in time for the project's Principal Investigator (PI) meeting the next day.

Conference Planning for 2008

Andersen reported that the 2008 conference theme had not yet been targeted. Munley suggested a subset of themes might come from the Professional Development Task Force. Anderson asked how about the process of selecting keynotes; Roberts said the process is detailed in the conference manual, but it is truly a bit more organic. Sikora shared that in his experience as 2007 Conference Program Co-Chair, they received many suggestions and struggled with how well a keynote related to the theme, and worked

through whether they were more “academic” or “practitioner” to strike an appropriate balance among the speakers. Anderson commented that the attractiveness of the speakers should be taken into consideration. Munley commented that the committee must keep its limited budget in mind and wondered if the Resource Development Committee shouldn’t get more involved in keynote planning.

Andersen also invited ideas for a Conference Program Co-Chair, and was especially interested in getting someone with an academic perspective. Andersen confirmed that the 2008 conference will be the third week of July in Houston.

Approval of IRB Task Force Charge

Tisdal asked the Board to review and respond to the proposed charge of a VSA Institutional Review Board (IRB) task force. Johnson suggested at least one member of the task force be an active member of a university community with recent experience working through the IRB process with federal agencies. Storksdieck agreed and suggested we look for someone who has served on an IRB. Tisdal confirmed that this work is exploratory; she hesitated to specify a time frame for the work, but said she was ready to begin work immediately with a possible recommendation to the Board in January. We also confirmed that the task force will report to the Board via the President and the Executive Committee.

After discussion, the charge was revised to state:

The charge of the IRB Task Force is to make a recommendation to the VSA Board for a mechanism that allows members to achieve IRB approval of their projects.

The Task Force will:

Step 1) Review and clarify the nature and scope of interpretation of the Common Rule* that relates to the review of human subjects research in museums and science-technology centers;

Step 2) Identify and explore at least three appropriate responses to this charge.

*Common Rule refers to regulations that govern human subjects of research and have been adopted by multiple federal agencies (45 CFR 46 Subpart A).

MOTION

Johnson moved to accept the revised charge; Stephens seconded; the motion carried.

Project for Consideration: Standardized Citizen Science Evaluation Framework

Ellenbogen asked the Board for support for VSA’s involvement in the development of standardized evaluation for “citizen science” projects. Ellenbogen explained that NSF

may be interested in funding such a project, and there may be a proposal submitted to NSF in September. After discussion, we agreed that there is underlying support for the project, but the Board lacked enough information to make an informed decision to officially support the project.

MOTION

Munley moved that the Executive Committee be empowered to review written documents that outline VSA's possible involvement, keeping in mind strategic direction and principals, and the Executive Committee choose VSA's role in the project (if any). Anderson seconded; the motion carried with Garibay, Storksdieck, and Ellenbogen abstaining.

Announcements and Additional Discussion

McLean asked about VSA having a presence at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) Conference in November 2008 in Denver. Fischer agreed to explore and follow up via the Executive Committee.

Some discussion about the new grant task force led to Friedman wondering if VSA needs a standing finance committee that could serve as fiscal overseer of grants (though the decisions to participate in grants would still rest with the full Board). Munley wondered if this could fall under the purview of the Resource Development Committee, and West concurred, seeing a need to bring "money things" together in one place. West, Ellenbogen, Johnson, and Serrell agreed to put something together regarding grants management, which could include recommendation for broader financial management.

Chen-Courtin expanded on the need to develop a marketing plan that could focus on strategic priorities. Munley suggested it also focus on specific products such as our online archives. Anderson cautioned that strategic initiatives are a starting point and suggested that a marketing plan warranted Board input; McLean suggested it be put on the January Board Meeting agenda with interim thinking directed through the Executive Committee.

We briefly discussed possible dates and locations for the January Board Meeting; Roberts and Deedrick will investigate Columbus as a possible meeting venue.

Adjourn

MOTION

Deedrick moved to adjourn; Andersen seconded; the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:15 PM EDT.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Deedrick, Secretary

APPENDIX
Notes
VSA Board Strategic Planning Exercise
July 18, 2007

Strategic Initiatives	Source	Votes
A. Expand, coordinate, establish a leadership role in the “field” for VSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ policy setting ▪ strategic partnerships ▪ facilitation, convening 	Group 2	21
B. Better attract, serve and dialogue with “practitioners” to truly impact the effectiveness of informal learning environments. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. balance conference opportunities with web opportunities 2. develop marketing/promotional plan 3. enhance current offerings where possible 4. diversify audience/membership 	Group 3	16
C. Serve as a nexus or crossroads for researchers and practitioners	SP Task Force	13
D. Serve as a nexus where researchers and practitioners can engage in dialogue about how to increase the effectiveness of informal learning environments.	Rewording of B&C above	
E. Build capacity for sustainability and growth (value or principle)	Group 2x	Consensus
F. Position VSA in terms of value for target markets in terms of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. serving the breadth of potential audiences 2. improving the field Develop the new organizational structure (e.g., new VP positions) to meet VSA goals, i.e., the supporting infrastructure	Group 1	0

Strategic Initiative Filter

Establish a process to align VSA’s human and financial resources with existing and desired programs and services in order to achieve sustainability.

- Integration and synergy to achieve sustainability
- Sustainability, efficiency and respect for the resources being brought to bear

- “Principled” practices—can we articulate them?
- Everything should be prioritized
- System for management of information:
 - Balanced scorecard to manage/maximize resources
 - Program Planning Template

Assess VSA’s current organizational capacity

- Infrastructure
- Distinguish “must do” work from discretionary work [current vs. potential]
- Fixed vs. variable costs
- Is the 90% solution good enough?
- Manage the resources

Questions/Issues

- How do we direct the activities of the organization?
- How do we prioritize?
- Articulating principles
- Priority setting
- Pacing