

**Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
January 27-28, 2007 – Chicago
Minutes**

Present: Alan Friedman, Kathleen McLean, Daryl Fischer, John Fraser, Kirsten Ellenbogen, Rita Deedrick, Mary Ellen Munley, David Anderson, Nikki Andersen, Larry Bell, Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Cecilia Garibay, Lisa Hubbell, Julie Johnson, A.T. Stephens, Kathy Wagner, Mac West
Staff: Randy Roberts
Guests: Barbara Butler, Jonathan Finkelstein (from Learning Times via video conference)

Call to Order

Friedman called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM CST.

Approval of Minutes & Consent Agenda

Deedrick confirmed that the consent agenda for this meetings consists of the minutes of the July 29 Board meeting, the treasurers report and the association manager report. Johnson pointed out a needed correction to the July 29 minutes; the word “now” being changed to the word “not” on page 5, with regard to IMLS Grant Proposal Invitation. Because there were some questions related to the Treasurers report, the Treasurer’s report was removed from the consent agenda, and questions fielded later in the meeting. With that, Stephens moved to accept the remaining consent agenda; Fraser seconded, the motion carried.

Officer/Staff Reports

Presidents Report. Friedman reported his intention to get VSA involved in larger forums; For example, the National Academy of Sciences is looking at informal learning and has involved several VSA members (namely, Garibay, Ellenbogen, and Sue Allen). There is also new activity at the National Science Foundation in looking at the role of evaluation and recommending good procedures and practices for Principal Investigators; Friedman and other VSA members are expected to be involved. This could become a model for Federal government evaluation.

President Elect Report. McLean has been heading up the Strategic Planning Task Force, which is foundational planning for VSA. McLean read aloud the current vision, mission, and focus areas, and she proposed we begin each Board meeting with such a reading. She reminded us that while we are “for members,” we have a larger and more important impact on informal learning, writ large, so we make a difference “out there.” VSA started as a grassroots organization and is now poised to go forward, but we must make the most of our precious resources for the most impact, and make organizational process and structure streamlined and transparent.

Past President Report. Munley reported that while she has been stepping back from involvement in running the organization, she has been particularly involved in two things,

the Strategic Planning Task Force and looking at professional development activities more holistically across the organization.

Munley reflected on the value as well as disadvantages of committee structures. She believes that the hand-off of work to our committee structure was less than ideal, and seeks to help current and future committees carry out the vision of the association. She welcomes the engagement from other past presidents and seeks ways to keep the engagement of those who had high level of service to VSA.

Munley also reported that VSA (with Executive Committee approval) has nominated Chan Screven for the AAM Distinguished Service Award.

Treasurers Report. Ellenbogen fielded overall questions about budget. Johnson requested clarification about insurance for Directors; Friedman asked Roberts to begin researching the matter by contacting VSA's existing insurance provider.

When asked for her greatest budgetary concerns, Ellenbogen said:

- Need to improve integrating grants into the larger financial picture, especially as we pursue more grants.
- Board giving may increase or shift from conference income, depending on the outcome of new Board Giving guidelines.
- We've made major shifts in association management and publications from which we have not yet quite recovered.

Additional budget questions and comments included:

Andersen asked about the purpose of the April Award CD; it was briefly explained that the April Award Fund is to support the continuation and growth of the April Award; further discussion was referred to the small group budget session.

Munley noted that expenses for the 2007 conference are \$24,000 higher even though income is the same. Fraser responded that this is due to the cost of translation services for the bilingual conference in Canada; Roberts added that the budgeted income is conservative and can be looked at more closely in small group session.

Secretary report. Deedrick reported in her primary role of "scribe" and record keeper, she has been participating in the monthly Executive Committee meetings, writing and distributing minutes and other documents, and generally facilitating communication. This has included sorting through files inherited from previous Board members, and sifting through past minutes and other documents to index "policies" and other statements so they can be collected into a more accessible form.

Vice President for Programs. Fraser reported that the digitization project is progressing (though they are working through a contract question with Michigan State University). Fraser also reported that the conference program committee is working on online workshop and session submissions for future conferences, which will facilitate abstract publications. And on the subject of publications, we have fully executed the contract with Taylor and Francis for “Visitor Studies” and the first issue should be out in time for AAM. Some expense associated with the publication change thought to be complete in ’06 will shift to ’07. Fraser also reported that the Conference Planning Committee is on schedule and both the Conference Program Committee and the Conference Host Committee are doing well.

Vice President for Operations. Fischer reminded the Board that she supports the work of the Board Development Committee, Resource Development Committee, the Membership Committee, and the Marketing and PR Support Group. While there is lots of good work being done within the committees by active members with a diversity of experience, Fischer urges us to maximize potential by starting to look across committee to create synergies. The board must align the VSA organization better with VSA members and the field at large.

Association Manager. Roberts reported that as she starts her second year, she feels she has a good handle on the day-to-day operational needs of organization, and she hopes to play a bigger role in things like cross committee communications and strategic positioning. The infrastructure is in place to move operations forward, so we are now able to be more strategic in our thinking.

Online Training Options Demo

Stephens explained that the Membership Committee has been examining the use of technology to expand service opportunities for current VSA members and looking at programs we can offer to people who are not yet invested in VSA. In addition, some technology could be useful for our own operations such as monthly Executive Committee meetings.

At this point, the Board experienced a live demonstration of technology options with Jonathan Finkelstein, from Learning Times, who joined the Board meeting via video conference. Learning Times specializes in online outreach and online collaboration, and he urged us to learn more about his company at www.ltgreenroom.org.

After the demonstration, discussion included:

- Possibility of piloting workshops with simultaneous distance learners and live class (Fraser).
- Caution on mixing live and online options (Bell).
- Need for further research into online options for programs and internal use, and suggestion that we host additional demonstrations (Johnson).

-- Agreement for further research and coordination of cross-committee efforts (Stephens).

The discussion concluded with McLean referring to the probable future research center project, which would be a perfect venue for investigating this because this project would be big enough to create and sustain the programming. With this she cautioned us against using our limited resources “reinventing the wheel” or creating “parallel universes.”

Professional Development Task Force

Johnson reported that the PD Task Force was created carefully to encompass the right people. At this point she is still pondering if the questions at hand are still the right ones or if they need to be refined. She is also questioning how we communicate beyond the Executive Committee to other committees’ members as well as VSA members. She also reiterated the question of whether VSA is primarily a member organization or a service organization.

Hubbell clarified that she is still the chair of the PD Committee and explained that Johnson was asked to co-chair in anticipation of Hubbell’s Board term ending, and Johnson is helping to foster strategic thinking for the PD Committee (much like the former Publications Task Force did a few years ago). Munley added that we face a challenge in determining how the work on the NSF Professional Development Planning Grant will fit into overall operations and strategic direction of VSA.

In answer to a question about who is on which committee, Friedman asked each committee chair to send to Roberts a list of current committee members.

NSF Professional Development Grant Progress Report

Friedman introduced the topic by reminding the Board that this work is a result of our first ever NSF grant, and that last summer we agreed on three stages for continuing work on the project:

1. Testing and refining the plan to date (report now)
2. Testing (report at May 2007 meeting)
3. Decision on next steps (summer board meeting)

Stages 2 and 3 are contingent on receiving continuation grant, which is stalled pending NSF reorganization.

Bell reported that they have completed the peer review, which consisted of interviews of seven reviewers. With this, they were mostly trying to see if the material was clear before moving to further testing. Marcella Wells did the data analysis and prepared the report. Bell reiterated points from the written report.

Bell and Butler reported that the project is close to being on schedule, but is in danger of falling behind if the funding decision is not made soon. Butler said there are some things

that they can do without incurring costs, such as Bell, Butler, and Wells going over the review comments in fine detail and refining the packaging of the materials.

Reaction to the report included:

- Suggestion of doing more reviews, a sort of “stage one and a half” (Johnson).
- We are in essence doing a Delphi study, and suggest continuing the Delphi model by broadening the audience for study (Ellenbogen).
- Noting a thread of “opposition” through the reviewers’ comments and not feeling a strong sense of acceptance from the evaluation (Wagner).
- Conceptually, need to separate in-house from independents in the project. The notion of “mid-career” gives the appearance that we are striving for the maximum qualifications, rather than the minimum (Chen-Courtin).
- Gut feeling that a “registry” is a good idea, but a sense of need for a baseline of what “evaluation” means (West).
- Harris Shettel hosted a session at the Albuquerque meeting on “what is a profession” and there was some consensus that this still needs to be defined. The “registry” may or may not be the best form for operationalizing the definition of “profession” (Friedman).
- What other operationalizations have been considered, and how was this (registry) chosen? (Munley)
- In the example of the “architecture” profession, it took 12 years to develop the model, but licensing became the guide to designing workshops, classes, conference, etc., and had led to a more technically proficient profession (Fraser).
- Competencies matrix is a good base piece to work with, and would like to share (as a draft) with the Professional Development Task Force (Johnson).
- The competencies can help inform future conference planning (Andersen).
- Need to consider different ways we might operationalize the competencies matrix. It could be about designing workshops, organizing sessions, doing self assessments. The registry idea is just one way; hope that by the summer Board meeting we will have a list of options (Friedman).
- The original charge of the project was to define a sense of what the profession is, and that has been done through the competencies matrix. This is a huge accomplishment in defining parameters and standards of the practice. What offshoots can be now developed from this (Munley).

Next steps for this project include moving ahead within the parameters of the \$4,000 that is remaining from the original grant, which can include talking through the evaluation and creating a new version. Bell and Butler can also begin recruiting applicants for the next phase as well as begin recruiting the review panel members. However, materials will not be sent until there is confirmation of additional funding.

Membership Committee Recommendations to the Board

Stephens noted three recommendations as presented in the Board packet:

1. Develop, seed, and maintain a listserv
2. Online education or workshop
3. Membership input breakfast

Stephens said that he sees the need for us to look more holistically at what we offer to our members now and to keep them interested. While the Membership Committee wants to identify what we can do to attract new members, he recognizes the need for these recommendations to be further researched and coordinated with the Professional Development Committee, and noted that perhaps these recommendations should be tabled for further discussion. Stephens did say further that these recommendations stem from two member surveys; he also explained that the recent creation of the Membership Committee stemmed from a need to reallocate work that had overloaded the Resource Development Committee.

Reactions to the recommendations were mixed. They included seeing the listserv as low-cost way to raise visibility and provide a resource; but it is not without need for support and maintenance, and what is real sustainability of interest of a listserv.

It was also suggested that members “always want more” on surveys, and perhaps we should look at subset of members and different needs before proceeding.

Fischer pointed out that the Membership Committee is not only making thoughtful recommendations, but is also finding ways to make things happen; she would like to see the momentum continue.

Despite this, Friedman suggested postponing action until after the strategic planning session. Stephens said he can take back to the Membership Committee the assurance that they “have been heard” and there are avenues to continue their work.

FOLLOWING IS FROM DISCUSSION LATER IN THE MEETING, AFTER STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION:

Regarding the recommendation for a “member input breakfast” at the conference, there is concern about confusion with committee breakfasts, cost considerations, and logistics for the 2007 conference. McLean moved to accept the idea of a membership breakfast for the 2008 conference, with the Membership Committee exploring a no-host gathering in a convenient location in Ottawa. Fischer seconded, the motion carried.

Regarding the list serve and on-line workshops, it was suggested that the Membership Committee further explore these options, with the intent that they will interface with the Professional Development Committee.

Working Session on Budgets

The Board broke into small groups to tackle specific budget issues. Results of these small group discussions were captured by Ellenbogen as follows:

ROUND ONE

Group One

1.1) Are workshops part of Professional Development or part of Conference?

- Workshop income and expense moved into the Professional Development budget.

1.2) Will the board membership sponsorship “profits” move from Conference to Board Giving?

- We will eliminate the Board Giving line of the budget, but the Association Manager, Treasurer, and Resource Development chair will work together to track board giving no matter where it comes from (unrestricted giving and conference sponsorships included).

- We will create a new income line called Unrestricted Gifts. All unrestricted giving (which includes board giving, but not conference sponsorships) will go into this line.

- Conference Sponsorships will remain part of the conference income line. 100% of the sponsorship gift will be accounted for in the conference income line. The amount above the actual cost of the sponsored item –e.g., buses, printing, etc—will be included with the individual board member’s record.

Group Two

2.1) What is the role of the April Award CD?

2.2) Create a document that details financial guidelines for the April Award.

- April Award will create a budget (income and expenses) that will be incorporated into the Professional Development budget.

- The fund (CD) is there to support the April Award and possible growth. It acts as a contingency for years in which the luncheon is not self sustaining.

Group Three

1.1) What is the relationship between subscriptions to VS (through the publisher) and memberships? Particularly for institutional members.

- Randy will analyze current situation. AT, Dorothy, and David, working with Membership, Marketing/PR, and Publications will follow up to consider additional institutional membership benefits.

1.2) Membership income projected.

- Increased from \$28,000 to \$32,000

ROUND TWO

Conference income projected.

- Conference income will not increase in 2007, but should in 2008. For 2007 the conference will probably net zero, primarily due to translation expense.

Board Giving income projected.

- As part of an extensive solicitation, Board Giving for 2007 will increase from \$6,500 to \$7,500 and other unrestricted giving will be \$1,000 for a total unrestricted giving of \$8,500.

Professional Development Budget

Board Recognition

- Board Recognition for 2007 and beyond will no longer be donated in kind. Cecilia will get estimates and add new numbers to Board Development budget.

The meeting was suspended and resumed Sunday, January 28.

Strategic Planning Discussion

McLean set the stage for a working session on strategic planning by reminding us that we need to be strategic about what we are doing and what we should be doing, and the difficulty will be in deciding what NOT to do.

The session proceeded with each committee chair talking about work within their committee and identifying issues within or otherwise affecting their committee. These issues were recorded on large sheets of paper, which were digitally photographed and subsequently emailed to Board Members for their input. Next steps in the strategic planning were for the Board members to categorize and rank the issues with McLean continuing her work on strategic planning by organizing and interpreting the Board responses.

The session ended with Munley urging three guiding principals on continuing with our VSA work: consider the need for cross committee work, do real budgeting in terms of time and dollars, and continue to build on the work that VSA has already accomplished (in other words, continue to ask questions about the VSA history and learn from the discussions and decisions that have already taken place).

Date Planning for 2007 Board Meetings

Deedrick shared ideas for the dates and times of the next two Board meetings, to be scheduled around the AMM meeting and the Visitor Studies Conference. While no date or time could be found to meet everyone's schedule, we agreed that the following were the best times to schedule the Board meetings:

Spring meeting, 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM on Saturday, May 12, 2007

Summer meeting, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Wednesday, July 18, 2007

Board Development Committee

Nominations/election issues

Garibay updated the Board on the current nomination and election process. The BD Committee has identified six open slots on the Board, including the Vice President for Programs and President Elect; nominations deadline is February 15. The Committee is seeking strategic direction for vetting nominees.

McLean suggested that the BD Committee should look for a mix of "cultural elders paired with entry and mid-level people, hungry to be mentored by the elders and anxious to do the work." She speculated a need for certain expertise on the Board such as project management and implementation, law, technology, etc. Munley agreed and added we need someone with membership management expertise. Friedman commented that the President appoints committee chairs.

The difficulty in filling Vice President roles was raised. The Executive Committee will discuss this problem, and the two models proposed: moving up the election cycle, and creating a Vice President Elect post.

Discussion of BDC recommendation on Vice Chair Role

We noted the recommendation as included in the Board packet that establishes Vice-Chair positions for committees to 1) share responsibilities and streamline work and communications, and 2) building capacity within VSA membership. Garibay moved to accept the recommendation; McLean seconded, the motion carried.

Resource Development Committee

West reported on behalf of the Resource Development Committee:

- 1) Solicitation packets are still being finalized, but will be ready in time for the upcoming Canadian Museums Association meeting.
- 2) The committee is suggesting that we run the conference marketplace in conjunction with the poster session to strengthen both.
- 3) The committee has developed a statement that defines "board giving" and set expectations. Discussion on the Board Donation Policy followed.

We clarified that the value of the time contributed by the staff of a small business (wholly owned, sole proprietorship) of a Board member can be counted as “board giving,” even though the individual Board member’s time cannot. Roberts also clarified that a board gift that is given in relation to sponsorship should be valued as “minus associated costs” without losing the wording about its value as sponsorship.

Ellenbogen said she is redefining “unrestricted giving” in the books, and will track Board giving separately.

Recently, board giving has been expected to be \$300 value per Board Members per year, but the history is confusing. There is a need for the Executive Committee to declare the minimum average board giving expectation. West promises more active communication with current and potential Board Members regarding Board giving. The emphasis remains on 100% Board giving, even when some amounts are small.

West moved to accept the Board Donation Policy as presented in the Board packet; Fischer seconded, the motion carried.

Adjourn

Deedrick moved to adjourn the meeting; Hubble seconded, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned as 12:10 PM CST.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Deedrick
Secretary