

**Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
February 23 & 24, 2008 - Chicago
Minutes**

Present

Board Members: Kathleen McLean, Kirsten Ellenbogen, Alan Friedman, David Anderson, Julie Johnson, Beverly Serrell, Rita Deedrick, Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Cecilia Garibay, Jeff Kennedy, Karen Knutson, Judith Larsen, Mary Ellen Munley, Matt Sikora, Martin Storksdieck, Carey Tisdal, Robert “Mac” West
Association Manager: Randy Roberts
Guests: Larry Bell, Barbara Butler
Absent: Nikki Andersen, Daryl Fischer, D.D. Hilke

Call to Order

McLean called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM CST, February 23, 2008.

Welcome and Introductions

McLean thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and invited each board member to make a brief introduction. We also acknowledged that Fischer was unable to attend the board meeting due to the recent death of her father.

Review Policy on Committee Process

McLean shared an updated list of committees (noting that it is posted on the VSA Basecamp site in the Board of Directors Strategic Plan Materials section) and reminded us that the board serves the VSA members and makes sure the organization is running appropriately for the members. The standing committees do the work of VSA, and the board vests the committees to do this work. The committees in turn report back to the board. If committees want to do new work, the committee chair should go through VP who will report back to the board. A role of the Executive Committee is to gather all board information and make final decisions on work, or in some cases, bring items back to the full board for discussion and/or approval. Also, *task forces* are appointment by the president to take on specific charges for a finite period of time. A document describing this process is included in the Board handbook and will be posted on the Board of Directors page on Basecamp.

Reminder of Consent Agenda Process

Deedrick explained that the purpose of the consent agenda is to accept routine items efficiently so that more time can be spent on items on the deliberative agenda. Each board member should be familiar with the items on the consent agenda, and if there are any questions or desire for discussion about anything on the consent agenda, that item can be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the deliberative agenda. Deedrick confirmed that the items on today’s consent agenda are:

- Approval of minutes of the July 18, 2007, Board Meeting

MOTION

Friedman moved to accept the minutes; Ellenbogen seconded; the motion carried.

- Officer and Committee Reports:

Association Manager Report; President Report; President-Elect Report; Past President Report; Secretary Report; VP for Professional Development; Professional Development Committee; VP for Organizational Development; Membership Committee; Resource Development Committee; VP for Outreach; Marketing and PR Resource Group; Publications Committee

The Conference Oversight Committee report and the Board Development Committee Report were removed from the consent agenda for further discussion/clarification.

MOTION

West moved to accept the reports section of the consent agenda as amended; Friedman second; the motion carried.

Conference Committee Report

Roberts reported that the date for opening conference registration has changed from the date noted in the report; we are awaiting detail on some events from the local host committee until determining when registration can start, but it will be no later than Saturday, March 1.

Board Dev Committee Report

Ellenbogen questioned the last item of the report, which read:

- *The committee/taskforce chair is responsible for appointing members to serve on the committee/taskforce.*

Ellenbogen pointed out that sometimes the President appoints task force members. After discussion, Friedman suggested adding the following phrase to the statement:

...unless a different procedure is in the motion establishing the committee or task force.

We agreed to add this to the last bullet of the “Revision to VSA Policies and Procedures” as presented in the Board Development Committee report.

MOTION

Deedrick moved to add the phrase to the “VSA Policy on Committee Process” document; Larsen seconded; the motion carried.

Resource Development Committee, Board Members' Roles and Responsibilities

West reported that the Resource Development Committee is working toward VSA being more strategic and focused in seeking sponsorship for the annual conference. They started this by working closely with the Association Manager and others to compile a history of solicitations. In this research they found that we have not had a mechanism for determining who to approach for sponsorship, or knowing who would be the best person to make a given approach. VSA has also not tracked results of solicitation and has little indication of the relationships between VSA and sponsors or potential sponsors.

The Resource Development Committee has begun working with the Board to develop a more thoughtful list for solicitation, and Board Members are asked to follow this list closely (i.e., contact the RDC before approaching anyone you have not already been assigned), requesting that we each think carefully about our relationships with the sponsors, whether there is someone else who should approach, and if we feel comfortable making the approach at all. West and the Resource Development Committee welcome and encourage feedback from each Board Member on their role in soliciting funds. In addition, the Resource Development Committee will pro-actively follow up with each Board Member on the status of their fund solicitation.

Lastly, West publicly acknowledged Caren Oberg for her tremendous work on behalf of the Resource Development Committee.

Basecamp Tutorial

Roberts and Johnson led the board in a brief tutorial on the use of the Basecamp project management system. Roberts explained that VSA is adopting Basecamp as a project management tool, and has set up pages for each committee. She distributed a VSA Basecamp Guide and suggested that Committee Chairs use the handout as a training tool for committee members (and also recommended the online training videos). Roberts also pointed out she is the “working administrator” of VSA’s Basecamp site allowing her to shape the site to suit VSA’s needs. Please contact Roberts if you have questions or requests for the site.

Roberts pointed out that the VSA Basecamp site will hold the VSA master calendar and asked each Committee Chair to post their meeting dates on the Master Calendar.

Sikora asked about posting historical documents on the site; we agreed that this could be useful, and Garibay suggested that the Board Orientation book be housed on Basecamp.

Storksdieck asked about the stability of Basecamp; McLean relayed her good experience with Basecamp and that the Executive Committee feels comfortable with the stability of Basecamp. Garibay reminded us that most everything stored on Basecamp is stored electronically elsewhere, and it is not the only method of recordkeeping.

Strategic Planning Review

McLean shared her sense of where we have come since the 2003 strategic planning by showing a chart illustrating:

2003 Strategic Plan – consolidation and new directions

2007 Strategic Action Plan – growth and diversification of organizational activities

2008 Strategic Initiatives – synergistic activities and cross-committee collaboration [depicted by overlapping circles representing the various VSA committees]

McLean stated that now our actions are spread across the whole organization, being approached from many different angles, and this is how a good organization should be functioning.

Roberts reviewed detail of the most recent strategic planning process before opening the floor to discussion. She explained that we now have seven goals organized under two strategic initiatives. The planning process has confirmed that the organization is moving in a deliberate direction, though that is sometimes hard to see through the complexity of cross committee work. Roberts shared two examples of how work of three different committees converged under a single goal, and that the strategic activity chart now articulates these goals and objectives in common language.

Referring to strategic activity chart, Roberts pointed out that the format – while similar to old committee report forms – now acknowledges that more than one committee may be working on a particular goal. The strategic activity chart will serve as a management tool for the Executive Committee and Board, collecting all activity in one place. In addition to the comprehensive chart, Roberts has also created an activity table for each committee to help committee chairs manage the work of their committees. Roberts also pointed out that the quarterly committee report schedule aligns with the Executive Committee meeting schedule so that committee reporting may be funneled through the VPs to the EC.

Friedman complimented the work, but he and Anderson wondered if the activities should be prioritized. McLean and Munley both reported that their committees (Executive Committee and Professional Development Committee, respectively) had reviewed their charts and felt the work was well organized and “do-able.” McLean feels that prioritizing may be premature at this point, and that prioritization will naturally occur as the plans are implemented and tweaked. McLean asked each committee chair to review their table with their committee and give their realistic appraisal of the work at hand; each committee should reconfirm their plan or give feedback otherwise.

Ellenbogen said that quarterly reporting will help us know if committees are getting overwhelmed. For example, if reports become sparse or late, that may be a sign that things are not going well. Johnson added that VPs can be more cognizant of the workload of the committee within their charge, and should not hesitate to bring forward any difficulty in committees getting work done.

McLean suggested that we set aside an hour on the April board meeting agenda for conversation about progress on the strategic activity plan, perhaps with some write-ups before the meeting. A review after we've "lived with it for a few months" seems in order.

Chen-Courtin questioned measure of impact. Tisdal said that we perhaps need some ongoing comparison to baseline to tell how well the association is fulfilling needs. Johnson suggested that since the plan was borne from the committees, that each committee probably already has outcomes identified for their work and committee chairs should talk with their committee members about outcomes. Roberts cautioned against the Board becoming too involved in specific activities of the committees. She suggested that discussion of outcomes at the Board level be around the larger initiatives. McLean suggested a future task force to assess strengths and opportunities in anticipation of future strategic planning (task force may be formed at the April board meeting).

Johnson summarized the discussion by saying that the strategic activity chart is a useful document that clearly outlines connections among committees; our next steps include taking the document back to committees and across committees for a "reality check" in terms of time frames, and to perhaps begin thinking about priorities. In April, the board will discuss progress and renegotiate work and time frames as needed.

West added that as VSA is looking toward the future, we would be well served in observing the changes happening at AAM, which is under new leadership.

Report from the Professional Development Task Force

Johnson reminded the board of the charge of the Professional Development Task Force "...to articulate a strategic approach to professional development for all of VSA."

Johnson reviewed the task force process and summarized their work by reviewing the four-part practical vision and four major strategies as outlined in the task force report and executive summary. Johnson reminded the board that the task force had representatives from all VSA committees, and these committee members felt that the work outlined by the task force resonated with them and the charges of their committees. Johnson furthered that there are three or four action steps outlined under each strategy for the first year, and these name the committee(s) most likely to work on a piece of a particular strategy. She described this as a top level first-year plan to start to reach the vision.

Johnson asked the board to respond to three questions:

1. What part of report really caught attention?
2. What questions does the report raise?
3. What is the information you need in order to determine if the recommendations are acceptable? (Have we missed something?)

Board response to the task force report was positive and complimentary, noting excellent process and documentation (a model for future task forces); that the plan seems market

driven, and noting an impressive array of activities and a variety of services. In response to a comment that this will push collective thinking and cooperative work, McLean mused that as a professional development organization, perhaps professional development becomes the “glue” that holds the other committees together, noting that this may challenge our assumptions of how VSA is organized. Johnson pointed out that the Professional Development Committee (PD) is not always suggested as the lead committee on the strategy items. Munley said we should develop some ground rules and policies for committees partnering on this work.

Questions about the report included costs and next steps to implementing the work.

Discussion on next steps resumed later in the board meeting (Sunday morning) and included:

- Consensus that the task force accomplished its charge (so well that they are a model for other task forces).
- Johnson reminded the board that the results of the task force work is a distributed model; not all of the work falls to the Professional Development Committee.
- Roberts pointed out that strategic action plan no. 2.2I incorporates work from the task force recommendation, and indicates several committees with responsibility for the work.
- It was also pointed out that ultimately the Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing all of the work.
- Deedrick pointed out that the recommendations of the task force have already been incorporated into the strategic action plan, and that the board had already agreed on next steps for that, namely review, recommit, or make suggestions at the committee level.
- Tisdal suggested using Basecamp to document steps taken, consciously being reflective.
- Chen-Courtin suggested using the VSA enews to communicate the results of the task force to the membership; Johnson agreed to synthesize her notes and pass on to McLean for the enews.
- The board will revisit in April along with the strategic action plan.

Report from the IRB Task Force and Discussion

Tisdal reminded the board of the charge of the IRB Task Force “...to make a recommendation to the VSA Board for a mechanism that allows members to achieve IRB approval of their projects...” Tisdal reinforced that this task force was asked to address a specific problem, so their work was much more concrete than strategic.

Tisdal reviewed the work of the task force citing their difficult task because of unclear regulations, varying interpretations, and inconsistent vocabulary. Tisdal then reviewed the three models the task force formulated for addressing the IRB problem:

Model 1: VSA sets up its own IRB (Borun)

Model 2: VSA creates an informal learning IRB with Collaborating Professional Associations (Tisdal)

Model 3: VSA fosters simple relationships with three existing IRBs (Benne, Gutweil, Monaco)

Tisdal pointed out that each model has advantages and disadvantages and cost implications for VSA; at the present time, the task force is making a recommendation to the board for a modified version of Model 3; the recommendations follows:

The VSA Task Force asks for approval and endorsement of this recommendation so that the IRB Task Force can negotiate with IRBs in an official capacity for VSA, contact NSF ISE to discuss possible funding, and develop a timeline to implement this plan.

Recommendation:

Outcomes

- Develop 3 to 5 simple partnerships with existing IRBs using memoranda of understanding (MoAs) indicating the IRB is familiar with informal learning research practices and has VSA members among its reviewers.*
- Develop the curriculum for a professional development workshop to offer as part at the VSA conference and as part of CAISE.*
- Develop a web area on the VSA website where VSA members can learn more about the partner IRBs, rate their experiences with IRBs, 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

Invite participants to 1.5 day synthesis meeting to develop ways to deal with 1) identifying practices and procedures in IRB submissions that are specific and at times problematic for informal learning organizations (e.g., videotaping in exhibition areas, umbrella approvals, longitudinal follow-up studies with little risk); 2) identifying the scope and curriculum for professional development for researchers, evaluators, and PI's working in informal learning environments and 3) identifying what we would need to be included in memorandums of understanding (MoAs) between VSA/CAISE and existing IRBs. This meeting would be held cost effectively immediately before or after ASTC or VSA using the same location and facilities. Invited participants would include two representatives from three to five for-profit and non-profit IRBs who are interested in developing MoAs with VSA; individuals who conduct informal learning research; individuals who primarily do evaluation of informal learning exhibits and programs; and principal investigators of projects that involve research and/or evaluation. This process will be:

- Include in CAISE's professional development planning for PI's.*

- *Identify and fund the attendance by both for-profit and not-for-profit IRBs whose costs and services could meet VSA member needs.*
- *Cover expenses so that this functional area of VSA activity could reach a cost-recovery status before it stands alone.*
- *Involve a modest upfront investment by VSA.*
- *Insure that VSA is taking a proactive leadership role in the IRB area rather than waiting for others to take action and set precedents that are harmful to visitor studies.*

Discussion of the recommendation included:

-- Ellenbogen felt that parts of recommendation were unclear, especially bullet points 3 and 4. There was also confusion about the “synthesis meeting” which needed more explanation and budget implications.

-- Storksdieck said that the first two models distract us from what we should be doing, which is to provide training to our members about IRBs.

-- Chen-Courtin suggested holding a session at the conference as a first step in helping our membership understand “what they don’t know” about IRBs.

--Ellenbogen said that rather than a workshop or a session, VSA should gather internal resources and place useful information on the VSA website for our members to access.

-- Friedman suggested we simply move ahead to develop a relationship with an outside IRB and negotiate a partnership to service VSA members at a discount.

The board agreed that we are not in a position to pursue Models No. 1 and 2 at this time, and that Model 3 is the most viable. Ellenbogen suggested the task force reframe their recommendation to articulate three separate issues.

MOTION

Ellenbogen moved that the IRB Task Force prepare three separate recommendations that outline production and delegation of work in three separate areas:

1. Creating relationships with existing IRBs.
2. Developing short-term professional development for VSA members (and that addresses the issue of “not giving it away for free” and how this might integrate with the CAISE project).
3. Addressing the IRB problem on a longer-term basis, such as developing a conference that could continue looking into the issue and also address broader issues such as ethics.

Anderson seconded; the motion carried.

The task force is asked to bring their revised recommendations to the board in April.

Marketing and PR Resource Group Metaphor Exercise

Chen-Courtin discussed branding and brand identify with the board, and expressed a desire on behalf of the Marketing and PR Resource Group to develop VSA's brand. With that, Chen-Courtin asked each Board member to complete a two-part metaphor exercise, each naming seven metaphors for VSA as it currently exists. After lively discussion Sunday morning, Chen-Courtin asked each Board to complete the same exercise for our vision of VSA as it should be. These will be sent to Chen-Courtin by March 7, and will serve as a basis for further discussion at the April board meeting.

Review of Future Board Meeting Schedule

Deedrick asked the Board for general agreement on the Board meeting dates proposed for the remainder of 2008 and for 2009, noting that the spring meeting is always in conjunction with the AAM annual meeting (and it seems to work best to hold the VSA Board Meeting the day before the AAM meeting starts); and the summer board meeting is always in conjunction with our own conference (and beginning last year, holding the meeting before the start of the conference rather than after the conclusion of the conference). Discussion on location of winter meeting in 2009 included Houston, St. Louis, or perhaps using the meeting as a site visit for a possible '10 conference city.

We agreed that we are comfortable with the proposed meeting dates and will continue to work to find a suitable location for the winter board meeting.

THE BOARD MEETING SUSPENDED FOR THE EVENING AT 5:30 PM CST.
THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 8:00 AM CST FEBRUARY 24.

Mid-Career Professional Development NSF Planning Grant Report and Discussion

Butler and Bell reported on the work of the Mid-Career professional development working group, centering on the proposed registry program. They reminded the board that the project rationale was to explore the evolution of visitor studies from an individualized and unregulated practice to modern professionalism. They briefly summarized activity on the project that began in 2004 with testing of the idea and the "committee of eight" meetings in 2005 to begin work on the issue.

Following are the major elements of the report:

Professional credentialing system. Butler and Bell shared an example of a professional credentialing system (continuum) that ranged from professional membership to licensing (the most rigorous). "Registry" was third from the top, behind "certification" and "licensing." They explained that registry is less demanding than certification and licensing and is a good starting point for VSA in professionalizing visitor studies. Butler further explained that there was early resistance to the rigors of certification and licensing. Bell said the process of creating a registry - as has been defined by the project - helps to define the field with a vision and a set of goals that could develop further into more rigorous professionalism. Butler added that the proposed registry is voluntary, while "certificates" can seem mandatory.

Identification of competencies. A major outcome of the project was the identification of competencies that all visitor studies professionals should have; while there is confidence in the competencies as stated, they will continue to evolve.

The competencies were tested and then simplified as a result of testing, collapsed from eight into five. The competencies are:

- A. Principles and practices of visitor studies
- B. Principles and practices of informal learning
- C. Knowledge of and practical experience with visitor studies research
- D. Business practices, project planning, and resource management
- E. Professional commitment

Testimonials. Butler and Bell also shared testimonials from seasoned visitor studies practitioners in support of the project, including Ross Loomis, Deborah Perry, and David Ellis.

Program materials. Bell and Butler confirmed that the current proposed program materials consist of four booklets (as provided in the board meeting packet):

- 1) Register administration/management
- 2) Application form
- 3) Self-study guide
- 4) Reviewers rubric.

Registrar and other roles. Bell and Butler shared a potential job description for the registrar, and explained the role of the review panel, the registrar, the association manager, and the panel chair, should the registry program be implemented. They emphasized that the registrar is an administration/coordination role, and would not be part of any review panels (i.e., would not have a “vote” on any applications); this role would be tied to the VSA board, but independent of the board.

Business plan. Bell presented the evolution of the business plan, concluding with a break-even plan; they believe that their estimates are conservative. There are some potential cost savings in reducing or eliminating honoraria for panel members and in holding conferences via phone rather than face-to-face.

Butler and Bell concluded their presentation with the following recommendation:

1. That the grant period be completed by finalizing the registration materials.
 - Complete sample applications
 - Complete Frequently Asked Questions
2. Form a Professional Registration (PR) working committee to finalize the plan for the registration process.

3. Appoint a registrar who will continue to lead this effort. This person should be the chair of the PR working committee.
4. Complete the self-study plan and have it published before the end of the grant. Complete definitions that will be used in it. Grant funds can be used for this work.
5. Submit a proposal to IMLS to support the VSA professional development activities and the start up of the PR program.
6. VSA should get D & O Insurance regardless of whether this program is adopted or not. VSA might consult with a lawyer about this and VSA liability exposure when the PR program is implemented.

McLean opened the floor to questions, comments, and concerns:

-- McLean wondered about the pros and cons of the registrar being a paid position versus volunteer.

-- Ellenbogen expressed the need for the responsibilities among the association manager, registrar, and chair of review panel to be more clearly delineated.

-- Storksdieck noted the registry program is designed for individuals, but wondered if organizations should be able to register.

-- Discussion about the registry putting pressure on the field; is this intentional? Is this desirable?

-- Knutson commented that it is a negative type of pressure and suggested VSA should be looking at a "carrot" such as an award to stimulate positive pressure; does a registry stunt innovation?

-- Chen-Courtin wondered about the demand for this, and if VSA has identified the universe of potential applicants. She also asked: What is the recruitment approach? What is the value added to the applicant and registrant?

-- McLean wondered what would happen if the "heavy hitters" in the field don't opt to become registered and if anyone has asked them.

-- Butler said that this is a leadership issue; the VSA board has power to advance the field; visitor studies is not currently a profession, it's a vocation, and this is our chance to begin defining visitor studies as a profession.

-- Munley wondered about timing and strategy and questioned if going to a registry is the right first move in order to accomplish the big goal? Perhaps our leadership is played out in a variety of ways in order to reach the goal.

-- Friedman commented that VSA should get the self study guide out before the grant expires on May 31. He sees this as a major service we could immediately provide.

-- Friedman also sees a fast growing market for this as NSF ISE is leading the charge of more rigorous evaluation requirements, and other federal agencies are also interested in moving in this direction.

-- Storksdieck wondered if it is our intention to use the registry as a tool to force membership into VSA.

-- Tisdal expressed concern about the potential politics of panel reviews and expressed hope that this does not become a “violent” process for applicants. She also supported Knutson’s notion of an award for an outstanding applicant.

-- Serrell commented that rolling participation on the review panels can generate professional development opportunities in and of itself.

-- Ellenbogen requested specific detail on what it would take to publish the self study guide. She also commented that the rubric is self-referential and questioned evidence showing that a person can be trained in visitor studies without having been part of the visitor studies community.

-- This lead to some concern that the registry program as designed may be unconsciously imbedded with VSA culture (McLean), and may be exclusionary, having too narrow of a view of what “visitors studies” actually is (Storksdieck). Munley wondered about including references from outside of VSA. Friedman agreed with McLean that CAISE may be able to help with a broadened bibliography.

-- Johnson said that while the language may be understood around the board table, it may in fact be exclusionary of others and urged us to ask those outside of VSA if the materials are as welcoming as we intend them to be.

McLean concluded the presentation with a proposal that the questions be addressed at the next Executive Committee meeting, and that the registry proposal can be revisited at the April Board meeting.

Discussion of next steps continued later in the Board Meeting and included:

-- Johnson pointed out that some of the questions posed earlier in the day are board level question, while others can be addressed at the project level. We need to sort through these so we can ask the project for more information at the appropriate level.

-- There is some energy – and urgency – around publishing the self-study. This is seen as a service to the membership that can proceed with or without the rest of the registry program. However, any costs associated with publishing the study must be incurred before May 31, 2008. As chair of the Publications Committee, Storksdieck will investigate what it would take to publish the self-study before the deadline.

-- The board has never adequately addressed the issue of support of the premise of a registry. It was noted that the board is in a pattern of receiving each report on the project with cautious optimism and a “wait and see” for the next step.

-- McLean asked each board member to thoughtfully review all documents associated with the project, as well as the issues, questions, and concerns, to put thoughts in writing about the registry, implementation, budget, and core concept. Please email these to McLean no later than March 7.

Update on Budget Reorganization/Rethinking

Serrell shared Draft 5 of the 2008 budget and the VSA Chart of Accounts. She cautioned that some minor changes had been made to the budget since it had been printed and copied for the meeting. The changes were mostly in how information is arranged with little change to amounts. Serrell also said she formatted the budget to fit on to one page for easy review; she assured the board that the next iteration of the budget would show more detail. Following are highlights of budget discussion:

-- We have yet to settle how grant income and grant expense will be handled, and Draft 5 of the budget incorrectly showed CAISE grant overhead, which should be separated out to show “indirect cost recovery.” Also, the Informal Science grant needs to show income and expense with cost recovery, even though the project is complete; the \$2,600 shown as 2008 income on Line No. 5 should be moved to 2007, reducing 2008 budgeted revenue. The 2007 books cannot close until decisions are made about how to handle overhead. [It should be noted that the report from the Grant Task Force is postponed to a future meeting, and will likely help address some of the grant finance management questions.]

-- We determined that the additional \$2,500 expense for professional development strategic direction and the \$4,290 expense requested by publications committee for web enhancement should indeed be included in the budget, shifting total expenses from \$186,268 to \$193,058, resulting in a deficit.

-- Anderson suggested that residuals from the UPCLOSE project may cover some of the deficit, but McLean reminded the group that a review of the UPCLOSE project is pending to be sure that all promised work has in fact been completed. McLean will discuss in more detail at the Executive Committee.

-- We agreed that the phrase, “*net “profit” TBD for other PD activities*” should be removed from Line No. 34 of the budget narrative.

-- Anderson asked the board to consider substantially increasing the honorarium for the “Visitor Studies” editors in the next contract negotiations. Anderson said that the nature of their work has changed as a result of the new publication, and they were working under a fairly modest agreement to begin with. The board asked Storksdieck to research

market rate for such work and to make a recommendation before the next contract is to be negotiated, and that the changes would not take effect until 2009.

-- Munley commented that the 2008 budget reflects growth within our strategy, and that this work is not yet complete. Storksdieck added that it would be beneficial for the Conference Committee to do a five year financial analysis of the conference, as it is the largest piece of the overall association budget.

The discussion concluded with the following motion:

MOTION

Munley moved that the board accept the 2008 budget in spirit, with the understanding that changes are yet to be made; and to authorize the Executive Committee to approve the final budget with changes as discussed today, up to a maximum deficit of \$10,000.

Tisdal seconded; the motion carried.

Report from CAISE Project

Friedman explained that the CAISE project is a cooperative agreement (rather than a grant) with the National Science Foundation, which means we are working quite closely with NSF throughout the project. He further explained that the agreement was awarded to ASTC, with VSA being one of several subcontracts; Friedman is a co-PI. All documents related to VSA's role in the project are posted on the VSA Basecamp site under the CAISE project. Friedman said that VSA's mission assignment and budget documents are included on the site. He is happy to report that CAISE is on time and on budget for all of the VSA pieces. Their next task is to issue an RFP for workshops. Ellenbogen is chair of the VSA CAISE oversight committee.

Ellenbogen, acknowledged Friedman's influence on the entire project in positioning VSA's leadership.

Freidman also reported that the release of the new NSF ISE RFP was delayed until the new evaluation guidelines book was ready (can be found on www.insci.org); several VSA members contributed to the book. The authors included: Sue Allen, Pat Campbell, Lynn Dierking, Barbara Flagg, Alan Friedman, Cecilia Garibay, Randi Korn, Gary Silverstein, and David Ucko.

Munley suggested we find an opportunity at the VSA conference to recognize the VSA authors; Friedman added that we should be publicizing CAISE at VSA anyway.

Membership Committee Questions for the Board

Sikora sought input from the board to help the Membership Committee think about their goals and ideas for targets.

To help inform its planning, the Membership Committee asks for the Board's feedback to the following questions:

1) Is VSA satisfied with its current membership total or does it want to increase its membership? If so, is there a target level in mind?

2) If VSA wants to increase membership, is the primary purpose to extend VSA's influence in the field, secure more financial resources, or a combination of both?

3) Is VSA satisfied with the current representation of different job functions (evaluators, researchers, exhibition developers, educators, designers, etc.) or does it want to grow in certain areas?

Sikora relayed that the Membership Committee has been considering the numbers: VSA has 331 members, consistent over the last two years; they are now looking at job titles to get a better sense of who belongs to VSA. Though data are incomplete, they can determine that among those for whom information is available in the database there are 48 in-house evaluators; 26 consultants; 25 academics; 35 students; 36 consultants who are not exclusively research/evaluation; 44 education/program development roles; 8 exhibit planners/developers; 25 CEO/administration types; and some additional marketing, visitor services, and others.

Roberts agreed that there are some basic things we don't know about our members and membership because it has never been tracked; we have a rolling membership so tracking fluctuates by the month. However, the Membership Committee is beginning to do this kind of analysis. McLean suggested it is best to look at annual numbers since we have a rolling membership. McLean commented that our publication contract is based on a minimum of 350 memberships, and less than that costs VSA.

Munley commented that there is growth potential in museum staff in general, and we should think strategically about PD offerings and marketing. West concurred that questions are occurring in institutions without in-house evaluators.

Chen-Courtin asked where we should "mine" first for potential members. Suggestions include intentional outreach to AAM and to look in marketing departments. Chen-Courtin also suggested giving 3-month memberships for free.

-- Membership Questions, revisited

Later in the day we revisited Sikora's question about membership. He commented that the previous discussion was helpful (particularly the comment about needing a minimum of 350 members); he will post a membership committee report on Basecamp at the end of month and solicit additional comments through it.

President's Discussion of Possible Task Forces

McLean discussed the possible formation of several task forces:

-- New VSA Office Model. McLean informed the board that Roberts' contract had been updated and renewed for 2008; however, this prompted continuing conversation about

shifting from an “association manager” model to an “executive director” model, and she is seeking three people to look into the budget and other implications of such a change. We all agreed that this task force should be convened, and McLean will take offers to participate in this task force.

- Services/Audiences Matrix. McLean requested input from each committee to develop a VSA services/audiences matrix so that we may have a complete picture of our services as well as our current and potential audiences. Deedrick suggested the task force consist of the committee chairs and association manager; McLean agreed and asked Roberts to coordinate this for presentation at the summer board meeting.

- Legal. McLean expressed a need for VSA to have legal assistance it can use on a regular basis. She appointed Fischer, Hilke, and Garibay to a task force to investigate options.

Announcements

Garibay asked each board member to complete an upcoming online board survey. Larsen asked everyone to contribute to discussion on themes for the 2009 conference; will be posted on Basecamp.

Adjourn

MOTION

Ellenbogen moved to adjourn; Deedrick seconded; the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:36 PM CST, February 24, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Deedrick, Secretary