

Five show interest in anchoring SABEW

The Society of American Business and Economic Writers has received five proposals to anchor its administrative functions, all connected to colleges.

At the board of governors' direction, the Administrative and Communications Committee sent letters to several groups we thought might be interested in anchoring SABEW. The letters went to the University of Missouri, University of Oklahoma, American University, Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley and Columbia University. In addition, the Poynter Center was contacted and Fred Mook talked with officials of the University of South Carolina. Dave Dietz and Mike Kandel also helped with the letters.

STARTING WITH THE PROPOSAL made by member Jimmy Gentry at the Washington meeting, the Business Journalism Program of the University of Missouri School of Journalism has expressed interest. Its proposal has been modified since last spring.

Basically, Missouri would maintain membership records, coordinate and conduct membership drives, prepare quarterly newsletters or journals, keep all financial records, make regular financial reports to officers, publish an annual financial statement in the publication and develop a data base search system available to SABEW members and Davenport alumni at a discount price (perhaps \$30-40 per search).

The cost would be \$5,800 annually for the director of the program (Gentry) and a graduate student assistant. Initially, Gentry proposed SABEW funding a computer terminal. That is no longer necessary. The business program recently purchased an IBM Personal Computer and would keep SABEW's records on it.

In addition, James Atwater, the new dean of the school of journalism at Missouri, wrote Dave Beal in December that the school is working on developing an endowment for the business journalism program that would virtually eliminate the possibility for interference from outside funding sources. The endowment would provide some funds for an assistant to work with Gentry.

The Missouri proposal is patterned after its working relationship with the Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., which is headquartered there.

OFFICIALS AT THE COLLEGE of Journalism and the College of Business Administration at the University of South Carolina followed up after Fred mentioned the idea.

Albert Scroggins, dean of the College of Journalism, said the college would like to be SABEW's home, and believes it has the experience necessary to help the organization develop.

The college is currently headquarters for the national 1,700-member Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, the S.C. Broadcasters Association and the S.C. Scholastic Broadcasters Association.

"We can demonstrate proven and on-going

capability to house your society," wrote Scroggins, who requested that the society "let us know your specific needs" and the college would send an estimated cost for providing services.

"Our available services include word processing, computers for records and research, typesetting and layout units for newsletters and other publications, photographic studios, mailing and delivery facilities," he stated. "We also have available graduate assistants at reasonable costs if needed to perform routine work."

The USC dean said he would like for SABEW officials to visit the J-School facilities and resources.

James F. Kane, dean of the College of Business Administration, said the college just doubled its size in the fall of 1983 and could supply free office space, including use of a phone, and would provide access to its computer at no charge.

Jan Stucker, former business writer for the Charlotte Observer and a Nieman Fellow, is interested in a part-time position with SABEW. For a salary "about \$8,000," Stucker would coordinate and have a newsletter published quarterly, answer correspondence and keep the mailing list up to date. She says additional funds would probably have to be budgeted for secretarial services.

Printing 250 copies of an 8-page newsletter would cost \$250, or \$1,000 per year for four. Mailing costs at S.C. would be an additional 15 cents per copy.

Stucker, who currently is editor of business college's quarterly Business & Economic Review, suggests the university computer could be used to publish a membership directory.

AT THE MEDILL School of Journalism at Northwestern University, George Harmon, assistant professor, said there are several reasons why Medill is a logical spot — a geographical location that may aid in recruiting new members, an appreciation for more and better business news reporting and a large (200) enrollment of graduate students to provide a labor pool for SABEW projects. About 90 students a year take Medill's courses in business reporting.

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Get Ready For Tampa!

Mark your calendar NOW for May 6-9. These are the dates for the society's 1984 annual meeting in Tampa, Fla., and a stellar program has already been lined up.

According to Harry Costello of the Tampa Tribune, who has worked hard coordinating the program, the annual meeting will get started early this year with Sunday events being scheduled to take advantage of nearby Disney World. The regular program will then proceed on May 7 through May 9.

Among the speakers already committed are Frank Berman, chairman of Eastern Airlines; Walter Wriston, chairman of Citicorp; Ed Hennessy, chairman of Allied Corp.; and George Steinbrenner, owner of the New York Yankees.

So plan ahead, and make sure everything is lined up to attend the annual meeting. We want you in Tampa!

The who, what, where, when and how of the annual meeting is scheduled for the next newsletter.

Size, budget of other writers groups varies widely

By SUSAN BISCHOFF

Business Chronicle

The housekeeping approaches of the dozen writers groups surveyed by the Administrative and Communications Committee are as varied as the groups themselves.

The biggest surprise in the survey was probably the wide range in the size of operating budgets — from a few thousand to more than half a million dollars.

The committee members — David Beeder, Diana Kunde, Margaret Daly, Jerry Heaster and Steve Row — worked from a questionnaire to make sure the group would wind up with the same basic information on all the associations. Most of the surveys were done by phone.

The idea behind the survey was to find out how other similar organizations have handled administrative tasks, hoping the Society of American Business & Economic Writers could piggyback on their experience.

Here's a quick rundown on the other associations:

- **National Conference of Editorial Writers.** It has a budget of \$100,000 (including \$45,000 in convention receipts and expense). More than 500 members pay graduated dues of up to \$75 for papers over 50,000. Day-to-day administration is under contract to Everett Association in Rockville, Md. The officers make policy decisions and keep the books. It's tax exempt and recently established a tax-exempt foundation to promote continuing education seminars, grant awards for quality in journalism and set up a scholarship fund. Annual meeting (occasional regional meetings, too) and quarterly publication.

- **Newspaper Farm Editors of America.** Recently raised dues to \$30 annually for 140 members. A member, the executive secretary, is paid a small salary (it would have to be small because annual budget is \$4,000) to keep books and membership lists. The farm editors are working on getting tax-exempt status. Meets twice a year and has monthly newsletter.

- **National Association of Science Writers.** Annual dues of \$45 dollars are paid by 1,100 members. The tax-exempt group meets annually during American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting and sends out newsletter "theoretically five times a year." Officers set policy and an administrative secretary handles mailings, dues, contest entries, etc. Administrative secretary works from her home to save money, but association pays her phone bill, in addition to salary. They plan to hire a managing editor for the newsletter, retaining present editor, a member, as a journalist for it.

- **Associated Press Sports Editors.** Graduated dues up to \$50 for 50,000 circulation from 335 members generates an annual

\$15,000 income from membership. Part-time secretary-treasurer, who averages 10 hours a week, from Auburn University's Journalism Department. The sports editors hold a national convention in July and executive committee meeting in February which others can attend. A quarterly newsletter is published by third vice president, along with an annual report which serves as convention report and surveys published from questionnaires to members. It has no tax status.

- **Education Writers Association.** Its 500 members at \$50 per head, results in \$75,000 annual operating budget pays for an executive director in New Jersey. The group hosts an annual seminar and business meeting along with regional workshops and biannual board meetings. Newsletter six times a year. Non-profit (701-C).

- **National Press Photographers Association.** 7,000 members paying \$40 for professionals and \$25 as students produces an operating budget of \$500,000-\$600,000 with the aid of other income sources such as its annual convention and charges for awards entries. Other than its tax status, everything else is irrelevant due to this group's finances. Association is tax exempt (501-c-6) and foundation is not-for-profit (510-c-3).

- **American Medical Writers Association.** It sports 2,400 members (including doctors and other members of health professions) who pay dues ranging from \$45 for active members to corporate sustaining members at \$450. Students are \$20. Annual operating budget is \$220,000. Not-for-profit (501-c-3).

- **Society of American Travel Writers.** 737 members, paying \$75 for writers and \$140 for press relations officers (who can't vote on policy) along with initiation dues of \$100 and \$200, respectively. An administrative coordinator, a retired military man, works about three days a week for \$18,000. It also uses a bookkeeper through National Geographic, a long-time relationship and a \$100-a-month secretary. Its operating budget \$100,000 and its tax status is non-profit with exempt number.

- **Newspaper Food Editors and Writers Association.** 100 to 200 members with \$35 in annual dues and \$50 for associates. Administration is "a labor of love." Newsletter editor is only paid staff and that's just to cover expenses, but the group is planning to pay someone for administrative work. The food group has an annual meeting and some strong regional meetings. Recently incorporated and it's non-profit. Putting out their first food editors' cookbook as a money maker. It's an all volunteer project. Newsletter more or less monthly.

- **National Association of Real Estate Editors.** About 300 with \$25 in annual dues for active members and \$35 for associates. Ex-

ecutive director, retired newspaper man, works out of his home for \$800 a year, largely putting out a newsletter each month. At least one annual meeting and get together at home-builders convention. Non-profit corporation in District of Columbia.

- **Investigative Reporters & Editors Inc.** About 1,300 members at \$20 per professional and \$10 per student. About \$40,000 annual operating budget, not counting annual meeting.

Proposals

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He thinks Medill could take on SABEW responsibilities at the cost of postage, paper and office time. Secretarial costs would be "allocated."

Harmon suggests Medill could computerize membership records and assist with membership drives. The school has an Apple computer with word-processing capability. It could produce a quarterly newsletter using some of its journalism graduate students on work-study and low-cost typesetting on campus. The university could also provide facilities for meetings.

Harmon does not think it's advisable for an institution to be handling outside money. He recommends that SABEW hire an accounting firm or business in Evanston to perform these services.

MEMBER LOU KOHLMEIER, director of the American University's National Center for Business and Economic Communication, proposes the center act as a "secretariat" for SABEW. The center was established in 1979 to develop education materials and programs in the business and economic journalism for students and the working press.

Kohlmeier has access to the university's administrative computer for membership. Since the center publishes a newsletter already, it could help us with that. He would be willing to maintain financial records.

He also suggests the center's offices could be a base for SABEW officers visiting on association business, using a desk and phone provided by the center. He mentions meeting facilities, too, and that teleconferencing equipment might be useful. He would also help coordinate annual meeting arrangements.

The existing staff (Lou, Alice Hennessey and work-study students) should be able to handle SABEW's needs relative to membership and financial, he said. The cost to SABEW would be the center's out-of-pocket costs such as printing, long distance telephone and computer time.

Using SABEW to explore controversial issues

By DAVE BEAL
SABEW President

Our newsletter, the thread that ties our network together throughout the year, should be more of a forum for dealing with problems and airing issues of concern to us. So let's tip our hats to Sarah Hoover for tracking the "contest controversy" in our last issue.

Sarah described the soul-searching of the Society of Professional Journalists/Sigma Delta Chi in taking a position on journalism contests sponsored by corporations and interest groups. She went to the society's convention in San Francisco, covered the debate about the contests and then wrote it up for our newsletter. SPJ-SDX members, concerned about participating in such contests, passed a resolution urging journalists to refrain from taking part if there are ethical questions about participation. The resolution also directed the organization's ethics committee to propose contest guidelines at next year's convention.

As Sarah noted, the contests go far beyond business and economics writing to embrace the broad sweep of specialties; Editor & Publisher's annual awards issue lists more than 400 contests with cash prizes adding up to about \$500,000. But some of the contests are hardly strangers to us. The business writing competitions — INGAA, Hancock, Loeb, Champion and others — have drawn many entries (and many winners) from the ranks of SABEW.

OUR ORGANIZATION, which a decade ago took the lead in approving a code of ethics for business journalists, shares with SPJ-SDX a tradition of concern about the integrity of the profession. It may be that we will want to consider the matter of contests at our annual meeting in Tampa. There is a great range in the quality of the contests and more and more of them seem to be coming onto the scene.

However, we also share with the sponsors of the business writing contests a concern about the quality of business and economic journalism. True, these outside sponsors have a self-interest as well in backing the contests, but when they moved into the newsroom with their incentives for better business and economic writing in the 1960s, the field was a seriously underdeveloped area. Publishers and editors were doing too little to encourage better work.

Many would argue that such coverage is still far from what it should be, particularly in view of the rapidly growing complexity of the subject matter. Only last year, the American Society of Newspaper Editors added a business writing category to its awards competition. SPJ-SDX hasn't even gone that far yet, and that's unfortunate. The shape and direction of the economy, which makes and

breaks American presidents, is deserving of closer scrutiny from American journalism.

If we do consider the contests, it should be from this additional perspective as well as from the ethical viewpoint articulated by SPJ-SDX.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING last May in Washington was a success in more ways than one. We took in \$9086 in registration charges and associated fees, while paying out \$6331.51 in banquet and other hotel charges and miscellaneous program costs. That left us with a net gain of \$2752.49, exclusive of dues and initiation fees.

We didn't expect such a large surplus, but several factors turned our way. Foremost of these was a sharp last-minute rise in attendance, enough for us to win the hospitality room at no charge and to boost our margin across the board. The sudden surge was a welcome development — incidentally — but we can learn something from it. The earlier you can tell us you'll be with us in Tampa for our annual meeting May 8-9, the easier it will be for us to plan the meeting.

We also priced our registration fees in expectation of higher drink costs and service charges than we ended up paying.

Finally, we were aware of the attendance problems we faced in Dallas (1980) and Kansas City (1982). It's more of a challenge to draw good attendance, and thus to break even, when we move out into the regional centers for our meetings. It's helpful to be in strong financial shape as we return to a regional center this year.

Rating the business columnists

Dan Dorfman, with a batting average of .500, led the line-up of business and economic columnists used by editors responding to a survey of members of the Society of American Business and Economic Writers.

Dorfman's twice weekly column was used in 16 of the 22 newspapers who participated in the survey, conducted in July by David C. Beeler, business editor of The Omaha World-Herald.

Runnersup in the list of columnists considered by the editors were Jane Bryant Quinn, with 14 subscribers; Sylvia Porter's "Your Money's Worth," with 12; Louis Ruker's, with 11, and William Doyle's "Investor's Guide," with 11.

Columnists with five or more subscribers in the survey were the Donoghue Money Market Fund, 8; "Consumer Finance" by Robert Metz, 7; Bob Bruns on Real Estate, 7; the Business Computer by Franklyn Peterson and Judi K. Turkel, 5, and Kenneth Harney's "Nation's Housing," 5.

We were able to hold the registration fee to \$155 in Washington, only \$5 more than the year before, and our room rates were comparable to those of 1982.

The society does not attempt to be so successful financially at its annual meetings, but we erred on the conservative side in pricing the meeting. We were particularly concerned about the prospect of a low turnout because of the uncertain economy.

Overall, SABEW took in \$11,706 for the year ended May 31, 1983, and disbursed \$6,861, producing an excess of \$4,845. This boosted our net worth, which consists entirely of cash in our bank account adjusted for accounts payable and accounts receivable, to \$10,692 at May 31.

The \$11,706 consisted of \$9,886 in convention fees and \$2,620 in annual dues and initiation fees.

This financial outcome strengthens our organization, but increases the obligation of your officers and governors to search for ways to make the society function better. We earnestly solicit your suggestions in that light. In my last report, I outlined several goals for the society in 1983-84. Defining and reaching these goals can best be done with more participation from our membership.

So write to me (St. Paul Dispatch/Pioneer Press, 55 E. 4th St., St. Paul, Minn. 55101), call (612-222-5011) or contact one of our officers if you have suggestions for us or would like to serve on a committee. Our society has enormous potential to become more of a force for professionalism, but we need your help and support.

None of the columnists received rave reviews from editors responding to the survey, in which more than 70 questionnaires were mailed July 7 to SABEW members employed by medium-to large-circulation newspapers.

Dick Dilaver of the Wichita Eagle described some of Dorfman's columns as being "too long and discombobulated."

He said, however, that Dorfman "has a following and probably will be kept for a few offerings."

Alan Gersten of the Rocky Mountain News rated both Dorfman and Metz "as solid newspaper columnists" while evaluating Ruker as "so-so" and Susan Bundy's "Bundy on Money" (2 subscribers) as "mediocre."

Art Ehrenstrom, assistant business editor of the Phoenix Gazette, was one of two editors who said Donoghue's column had been

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Columnists

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dropped in favor of a Money Funds table supplied by AP.

The other Donoghue dropper, for the same reason, was DeWitt R. Rogers, assistant managing editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Dave Dintz of the San Francisco Examiner said he was a Metz fan because "he is honest, timely and a crisp writer."

He joined Cheryl Hall of the Dallas Morning News in liking Scott Burns' Financial Column (3 subscribers), describing Burns as "a very thoughtful guy."

Hall, while liking Burns, said she had not been completely happy with some of the recent offerings by Porter, Dorfman, Quinn and Rukeyser.

"Most stimulating, but often off-base," she said of Dorfman. "Worry about his self-dealing."

She said Porter's column is run in the newspaper's "Today" feature section. "A real problem," she said is there are "often errors in column."

Quinn's column was described by Hall as "hit or miss — too often a miss. I've been disappointed because I expected more after her API appearance." (Hall attended an API

business editors seminar in February 1981.)

Hall said Rukeyser's columns were "off the wall" and "deteriorating over the past year."

Rukeyser also had a critic in Susan Bischoff of the Houston Chronicle who found his columns "very uneven" and "increasingly too political without a direct business tie."

Bischoff said Metz was "sometimes good, but too often so complex that it is meaningful only for a small group of readers," and that Dorfman was "one of the best, but not up to his Esquire column."

She said Doyle's question-and-answer column had "a wide readership, especially with older readers and is easily understandable."

Jim Mitchell of the San Jose Mercury-News said he had found Money Magazine's Money Service columns and photos useful and that the Best of Crain's Business News (1 subscriber) offered "some very good pieces."

Mitchell, who covers Silicon Valley, said the Peterson-Turkel computer column was "good for beginners."

Editors who participated in the survey added to the list several columns that had not been in the printed questionnaire.

David R. Francis, business editor of the

Christian Science Monitor, said the questionnaire did not list the five Monitor columns distributed by the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

The questionnaire also did not list Harney's "Nation's Housing" column, distributed by the Washington Post's Writer's Group and described by Diana Kunde of the Dayton Newspapers as "strong on spotting legislation affecting homeowners."

"Good News/Bad News," a Chicago Tribune panel with two subscribers in the survey, also was left off the survey list as was Edwin Darby weekly investment column distributed by Independent Press Service.

Other columns, each with one subscriber, were added by survey participants. They were: Loren Soth's "Food and Agriculture Affairs" (Des Moines Register & Tribune); "Marketing" by George Lazarus (Chicago Tribune); "Managing Your Money," Merle E. David; Dick Davis' column from the Miami Herald (Knight-Ridder); and Mark Stevens' "Weekly Small Business," P.O. Box 487, Chappaqua, N.Y. 10514.

Of the Stevens' column, Bischoff said: "Good solid advice for small businessmen and hopefuls."

SABEW

Society of American Business
and Economic Writers