Minutes of the PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING, International Communication Association

New York City, NY, USA, May 29, 2005, 5:15-6:30 p.m.

I. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by chair Sherry Devereaux Ferguson on May 29, 2005, at 5:15 p.m.

Ferguson introduced incoming chair Hochang Shin and commended both Shin and division reviewers for their efforts. Ferguson also introduced board members Cindy Christen (secretary), Bonita Neff (past chair), and Betteke van Ruler (vice chair-elect). With the end of her term as chair, Ferguson will move into the position of board member-at-large for the Americas (non-U.S.).

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Minutes, New Orleans, LA, 2004

Copies of the minutes from the 2004 meeting were distributed. All attending members (52) approved the minutes without modification.

B. Election Results

Betteke van Ruler was introduced as the vice chair-elect for 2005-2007.

C. Activities Review

1. Establishment of Cross-national Research Committee. Craig Carroll updated division members on taskforce efforts to identify, promote and consolidate opportunities for cross-national PR research.

A taskforce steering committee has been established, consisting of Carroll, Krishnamurthy Sriramesh (vice chair for Asia) and Betteke van Ruler (vice chair for Europe). The appointment of vice chairs ensures broad representation on the committee. The steering committee met in Los Angeles in April 2005.

At present, 21 members representing 13 countries are involved with the taskforce. Activities have included compiling a list of university and government funding sources. This information will be provided to the division’s webmaster. A taskforce listserv has also been created, which will also be turned over to the webmaster. Next year, the steering committee hopes to schedule a meeting of the entire task force.

Among the projects proposed to the taskforce is a project involving the ICA-United Nations Foundation Partnership. Carroll and Sriramesh attended the U.N. Research Meeting to determine how it works, research needs, and determine how best to collaborate with the U.N. Foundation. Any proposal will be handled in-house through ICA. To be meaningful to the U.N., there must be international representation on the research project (not just one or two countries).

The proposed project would consist of an evaluation of the U.N. Department of Public Information's messages in press releases and news coverage in 20 countries. TV coverage is of particular interest. A list of the top 10 stories the U.N. feels the world should know about has been compiled. At the meeting with the U.N. Foundation, a breakdown of media around the world (including TV) was provided. Factors of interest include portrayal of U.N. attributes in the media, assessment of other sources competing for attention in news stories, and evaluation of the legitimacy of the U.N.
Ideally, the proposal will involve PR division members from 20 countries. (Ten have been recruited thus far.) Members must be a part of the country and culture they represent. They also must be willing to raise about 80 percent of the required funds for their country. Symbolic funding in the amount of $30,000 a year would be provided by the U.N. Foundation. A funding plan should be in place by the beginning of November. Also, members must submit a plan for obtaining local and national TV coverage. (TV coverage is of greater interest to the U.N. than newspaper or web coverage.) Coding instruments will be developed in concert with members representing other countries.

The timeline for the project includes the following milestones:


c. November 2005 – Plan for funding submitted (i.e., how members will secure 80 percent funding).

d. November 27, 2005 – Steering committee meeting in Amsterdam to review codebooks and draft proposal to U.N. Member plans must be in place by this time.


f. January 2006 – Submittal of proposal to U.N. Foundation. Van Ruler will submit the final proposal. Carroll will act as the liaison to the U.N.

g. May 2006 – Announcement of award at the ICA conference.

h. May to August 2006 – Data collection.


Carroll views this project as a major opportunity to increase the standing of the PR division within ICA, demonstrating the importance of the PR division by establishing and maintaining a relationship between the division and the U.N.

2. Membership Numbers. Sherry Ferguson announced that the Public Relations Division had 289 members prior to the conference but that this number had climbed to 300 by the time of the conference. Ferguson extended a welcome to new division members.

3. Career Productivity Award. The Public Relations Division nominated James and Larissa Grunig for the ICA Career Productivity Award. Many prominent scholars were nominated, and this year’s winner was Linda Putnam.

4. Deadline for Thesis/Dissertation Competition. The deadline for submitting theses and dissertations for next year’s competition is January 1, 2006. The competition will cover all theses and dissertations completed over the past two years, from January 1, 2004, to December 31, 2005.

5. Establishment of New Journals. Elizabeth Toth announced a new research annual (eventually to be published quarterly), Best Practices in Public Relations and Communication Management, to be published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. The new research annual, to be edited by Toth, will blend theory and practice, examining new and evolving practices from both perspectives. Manuscripts will be limited to 15 pages.

Betteke van Ruler announced a new journal, the International Journal of Strategic Communication, to be published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. The journal will feature perspectives and approaches from all over the world on such topics as strategic communication, corporate communication, etc. The journal will be edited by van Ruler, Kirk Hallahan and Derina Holtzhauzen, and is scheduled to be launched in 2007.
D. Report by Program Chair

Program Chair Hochang Shin reported that 90 papers and 7 panels had been submitted to the Public Relations Division. Sixty papers were submitted by professors and 30 papers were submitted by students. Of these, 64 papers (70 percent) were accepted: 49 papers (80 percent) by professors and 15 papers (50 percent, up from 30 percent last year) by students (some of whom presented as part of a high-density student session). Four panels were also accepted. Shin thanked all members who had reviewed papers and panels for the conference. Sherry Ferguson invited reviewers to stand for a round of applause.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Dresden and Other Conferences

The 2006 ICA conference will be held in Dresden, Germany. The conference will be held June 19-24, 2006. The conference theme will be “Networking Communication Research.” The emphasis will be on communication and development of relationships across boundaries. Conference organizers encourage submission of cross-division and cross-country research for theme session consideration. One to two theme sessions will be conducted.

Ronald Rice discussed features of the next conference venue with division members in attendance at the business meeting. Dresden is located on the Elbe River, and next year is its 800th anniversary. The town, which features great cafes, bars and nightlife, is a very “walkable” town. Dresden has a brand new conference center, with a conference hotel located next door. ICA Executive Director Michael Haley is negotiating a discount hotel rate. Side trips to Budapest, Prague, and Vienna, as well as a pre-conference meeting in St. Petersburg, are possible.

The cost of Dresden five-star hotels will be about 140 euros, four-star hotels will be 115 euros and nice three-star hotels will be 75 euros. There will be no special ICA rate for hotel rooms. Members who plan to attend the 2006 conference in Dresden should book hotel rooms on their own.

Lufthansa will be the official airlines for the 2006 conference. Lufthansa gave away two free first-class business tickets at this year’s conference. A graduate student was the lucky winner.

B. Website and Listserv – Call for Volunteers

Sherry Ferguson praised Diane Witmer for doing a spectacular job maintaining the Public Relations Division website and led attending members in giving Witmer a round of applause. Ferguson then asked for volunteers to help maintain the website and listserv. Kirk Hallahan from Colorado State University has agreed to take over as the new Webmaster; however, Ferguson is still looking for a listserv volunteer. Ferguson apologized to those members whose addresses were inadvertently revealed in a recent e-mail communication.

C. Request to Name Thesis/Dissertation Award

Attending division members considered a request by Sherry Ferguson to name the thesis/dissertation award in honor of James and Larissa Grunig, who recently retired after long and noteworthy careers at the University of Maryland. Bonita Neff and Dean Kruckeberg, as well as a number of University of Maryland graduates, praised the Grunigs’ contributions to public relations research. Naming the thesis/dissertation award after James and Larissa was deemed a suitable honor given the Grunigs’ visibility and many contributions to public relations. Attending members voted unanimously to name the thesis/dissertation award in honor of “James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig” (official wording of the award).

D. Establishment of Ad Hoc Committee to Review Process and Requirements for Judging of Thesis/Dissertation Award

Sherry Ferguson noted problems with the process of coordinating and judging the thesis/dissertation process. The process requires extensive time on the part of judges to read all theses and dissertations
from start to finish. Ferguson also noted that the program chair has been responsible in past years for coordinating the process. However, this responsibility overlaps with the demanding duties of conference planning. Based on her previous experience and the more recent experience of Hochang Shin, the demands are too great for one person to bear. Alternatives for simplifying the process and reducing the workload were discussed, including naming a separate individual to coordinate the thesis/dissertation competition and providing an expanded abstract and table of contents in lieu of the entire thesis or dissertation. Bey Ling Sha agreed to assume responsibility for next year’s thesis/dissertation competition, and she will be seeking assistance with this process.

E. Establishment of Ad Hoc Committee to Review Criteria for Judging Robert Heath Top Paper Award

Members judging the Robert Heath Top Paper Award contacted Sherry Ferguson to inquire about the criteria that should be used. At the time, Ferguson counseled judges to use the same criteria as that applied to the judging of the division conference papers. At the annual business meeting, however, Ferguson asked for volunteers to head an ad hoc committee to review criteria for judging the top paper competition. Bonita Neff suggested that a committee of past division chairs could make those decisions.

F. Support for Division Newsletters

The ICA Public Relations Division has had two division newsletters: one focusing on Public Relations Division contributions to the larger ICA, coordinated by the division chair (Sherry Ferguson); the other featuring personal news (grants, promotions, calls for papers, etc.), coordinated by the division secretary (Cindy Christen). In the past, however, few members have chosen to submit items for the personal newsletter. Both Christen and past secretary Betteke van Ruler experienced this problem. Therefore, Ferguson proposed consolidating the two newsletters. Personal items would still be welcome and should be submitted to Christen via e-mail (cindy.christen@colostate.edu). Personal items would be appended to the basic ICA newsletter distributed to division members via e-mail; however, the version submitted to ICA would not include the personal items. There would also be a link to the combined newsletter on the division website. Members agreed with the idea of the combined newsletter. Christen agreed to coordinate the combined newsletter over the next year on behalf of incoming chair Hochang Shin.

G. ICA Annual Board Meeting Topics

Sherry Ferguson provided a summary of discussions that took place at the ICA board meeting. ICA has been largely successful in moving toward a larger, more business-like, international organization. The board is currently debating whether to buy or continue leasing its present facility in Washington, D.C. The ICA journal publisher has changed; Blackwell will now publish ICA’s journals.

The issue of student representatives on the ICA board was discussed. Katerina Tsetsura, formerly an ICA student representative, observed that it is difficult to entice international students to apply for ICA student positions. Members were urged to encourage students to apply. The possibility of establishing a third student position on the ICA board that must be filled by an international student (i.e., a student who studies full-time at a non-U.S. institution) was also discussed.

Tsetsura also reported that the ICA board had approved complementary memberships for B and C countries. Inquiries regarding complementary memberships should be submitted to Tsetsura. The complementary memberships will be for three years and will include access to the ICA website and papers, as well as the option to receive journals in print. The objective is to encourage more countries and graduate students to become involved in ICA.

The ICA board is considering changing the diversity grant to an international travel grant in order to encourage students in B and C countries to attend the annual conference. Funds were originally dedicated to U.S. minorities (specifically African-Americans). The ICA Board is interested in opening up the grant to students from B and C countries.
Francoise Cooren, University of Montreal, has been named the new editor of Communication Theory. Three of the top 10 downloaded journal articles, published in the last year in Communication Theory, addressed public relations topics.

The ICA board is considering a proposal to create a Games Technology Interest Group. This raises the question of whether it is good for ICA to continue adding new divisions and interest groups. Is this the best way to keep ICA interesting and vital?

ICA would like to identify conference papers presented elsewhere. At the same time, ICA board members agreed that it should be acceptable to present a paper to a different association under the following conditions: (1) the language is different, (2) the discipline is different, and/or (3) the country is different. In the past, ICA has discouraged the presentation of papers at more than one conference.

Dean Kruckeberg suggested that the Public Relations Division should get involved in public diplomacy. Kruckeberg has an article on this topic appearing in an international journal. He believes the Public Relations Division has as much to offer in the area of public diplomacy as other ICA divisions and sees public diplomacy as being just as important as other public relations topics (for example, corporate public relations). Ferguson suggested that he should make contact with Evan Potter, University of Ottawa, who is a specialist in this area.

Katerina Tsetsura announced that the University of Oklahoma would be establishing a new Ph.D. program and would be searching for two new faculty members in strategic communication in the coming year.

H. Presentation/Recognition of Awards

1. Top Four Student Papers. Program chair Hochang Shin acknowledged the authors of the top student papers in public relations: Jennifer Bartlett, Queensland University of Technology, Australia; Yu-Ri Regina Chen, University of Maryland; Hyo-Sook Kim, University of Maryland; and Yi Luo, University of Maryland.


H. Reception and Dinner – Recognition of Sponsor

Sherry Ferguson invited division members to attend the reception and dinner that followed the business meeting. Hochang Shin acknowledged and thanked South Korea Telecom, one of the leading telecommunications companies in South Korea, for sponsoring the dinner.

I. Other Business Announcements of Interest to Division Members

Sherry Ferguson concluded the meeting with a few comments regarding her experience as division chair over the past two years. She thanked the members for their assistance over the past four years of her terms as vice chair and chair.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy T. Christen, Secretary,
ICA Public Relations Division