

STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

In April 2006, several board members and staff of the IMAA participated in a strategic planning session funded through the Canada Council's Flying Squad program. These sessions were held over the equivalent of two full days and were facilitated by Jack Walsh, Co-Director of the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture based in San Francisco.

These discussions served as a follow up to several meetings held between 2003 and 2005 centered on priorities, governance, internal structure and organizational capacity building for the IMAA.

A rapid increase in membership, (essentially doubling in four years), without a significant increase of resources or additional staff, has prompted the organization to explore ways in which it could continue to deliver effective services without straining the organization.

Following the flying squad meetings in April, moderator Jack Walsh provided IMAA with a report outlining the discussions held over the two-day sessions. A total of thirty-one recommendations were tabled and the executive, staff and board have prepared action plans based upon these recommendations. (summary of report attached)

Many of the recommendations from the report are internal in nature and have already been put into action. These include concerns regarding HR, governance, board effectiveness, funding, capacity and organizational health.

One of the key decisions to be implemented this year, centers on the process for the annual general meeting. It was identified that given the scope and size of the membership and the multitude of issues being brought forward in the form of motions; that the annual general meeting needed to be streamlined. In lieu of this, we have shortened the AGM to a half-day meeting, using the time allotted to focus on reporting.

In previous years, the IMAA used the AGM as a forum for the membership to put forward motions; this in turn helped to create the agenda and focus of IMAA's activities for the upcoming year. We have decided to change this process for the 2006 AGM. Instead of accepting motions from the floor during the plenary, an open forum has been scheduled on the final day of the conference. This meeting will be an opportunity for members to bring forward recommendations to the board and staff regarding advocacy initiatives and suggestions for actions for the upcoming year. Our aim is to continue ensuring that the voice of the membership is heard and is a strong force in helping to set goals for the IMAA.

Over the following year, IMAA will continue to implement important strategic decisions based on these meetings, helping to sustain, nurture and grow the organization for many years to come.

Linda Norstrom, President

Attached is a summary of the final report tabled by Jack Walsh from these sessions.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARTS ALLIANCE

FLYING SQUAD REPORT

**PREPARED BY JACK WALSH
MAY 2006**

BACKGROUND

The Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA) contracted with Jack Walsh, Co-Director of the US-based National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) to consult on organizational capacity building. Specifically three areas were identified to focus this project: Membership, Human Resources and Fundraising. In preparation for a three day meeting in Montreal, Jennifer Dorner, National Director, and Katherine Jerkovic, Administrative Coordinator provided Jack with background information about IMAA.

Agenda:

- Day 1 – Review of NAMAC's Programs and Services with particular attention to membership, human resources and fundraising
- Day 2 – Full day retreat examining current state of IMAA membership, human resources and funding including recommendations for change
- Day 3 – Meeting with full Board of Directors to present work from day 2 and to solicit feedback and recommendations for implementation.

The Flying Squad members included Jennifer Dorner, Katherine Jerkovic, Board President Linda Norstrom, Vice President Kym Gouchie (NIMAC), Treasurer Diane Dickert (Prairie), Secretary Roberto Ariganello (Ontario) and Board Members Mireille Bourgeois (Atlantic), Walter Forsyth (Atlantic), and Sylvia Jonescu-Lisitza (Pacific). Also joining the group was Liz Barron NIMAC staff.

MEMBERSHIP

In the last four years, IMAA experienced a tremendous growth in membership, increasing from 40 to 80 members. This growth was not without its own set of new problems for the organization. Though membership doubled, staff size remained the same. The new membership did not significantly increase revenue; in fact, it has taxed organizational resources and staffing. Among the areas experiencing stress are: advocacy (new issues to advocate), AGM process noting that membership has doubled thereby straining AGM effectiveness (e.g., physical space, number of motions), and new technology problems due to diversity of membership base as well as national office's technology capacity.

Current members receive an incredible return on their membership dues. In addition to having a national body that lobbies for funding increases and policy initiatives, they also receive a monthly field wide electronic newsletter, access to regional reports on the web, travel subsidies to attend the Annual Conference and AGM, web-based information services, regional meetings, and the ability to shape organizational policy initiatives and directives through motions.

The AGM was identified as the place witnessing the greatest strain from the membership growth. For example, at the 2005 AGM, fifteen motions were passed. A number of these motions were identified as ongoing motions that may be better served by an annual report-out versus reintroduction as a motion. In reality, the organization (both Board and staff) can effectively complete the work on five motions annually. Further taxing the motion process is members' expectation that staff and Board accomplish the tasks related to the motion without help from the motion creator.

Still, all agreed that the motion process holds many positive components. Prime among them was the ownership members feel about a particular motion and the grass-roots democratic process that forms and passes them. All agreed that the old model is not working.

Next, the Flying Squad was asked: What new services could be offered, possibly for fees, to existing and new members. Among the services identified, again not ranked by priority, were:

- Research & Publications
- Professional Development Training in the areas of:
 - Best Practices
 - HR Policies & Procedures
 - Grantwriting/Fundraising
 - Crisis Management
- Marketing and Publicity
- Income Generating Strategies
- Business Strategic Planning
- Professional Toolkits
- Succession Planning

HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff

The National Director and the Administrative Coordinator currently make up IMAA's staff. Both positions are less than full time. The ND position is for 32 hours per week and the AC is for 20; total staff hours equal 52 per week. Staff report that they often work more than their compensated hours per week. Board and staff acknowledge that the organization grew and staff responsibilities increased; yet, staff capacity did not match growth. Further, they acknowledged that each job carries an ambitious, and perhaps unrealistic, skill set for the current compensation. One example of this is that the current part-time Administrative Coordinator was responsible for the design and build-out of the website, which she also updates, as well as translates all communications so they will be in both English and French.

Staff reported that burnout was a key problem they faced in their current configuration. The Board acknowledged the demands on staff and the organizational limitations they face. They are committed to reasonable hours, to fair compensation and benefits for employees, and to exploring alternative ways of compensation, for example, time off in lieu of cash compensation. The Board also recognized that nonprofit culture in general often works against advancement, and they acknowledge the need for professional development funds to help the staff.

Board was asked to identify top five job responsibilities of staff (listed in no ranked order) with staff providing details about each responsibility:

National Director (30 hrs)	Administrative Coordinator (20 hrs)
Advocacy – Research topics, write briefs, travel, present publicly to legislators and funders	Translation – 30-40% of job
Grants – R&D, writing, management, and reporting	Website – designed architecture and built, updates and maintains
Conference Planning – Long list of duties takes up about 50% of time annually	Conference Planning – documents, conference registration, travel arrangements upon request
Communication – email, phone, Board listserv	Communication – email, phone and newsletter
Budget – prepares, tracks expenses, and creates financial reports	Members services – renewals, dbase, handles new member applications

Board of Directors

IMAA's Board is made up of thirteen members: two representatives from each of the five Regions, two representatives from NIMAC, and the President. The President is elected at-large by the membership at the AGM. Board member terms are two years and they may be reelected. The regions and NIMAC also elect two alternate representatives to step in should a representative not be able to serve out her or his term.

Board Responsibilities include:

- Turning AGM motions into actions
- Regional communication with members via phone, email, convenings
- Membership Recruitment
- Serving on Subcommittees
 - Executive, which also serves as HR
 - HR
 - Finance
 - Fundraising (ad hoc)
 - Conference (ad hoc)

The Board feels it is currently faced with a number of issues that limit its effectiveness. Among these were:

- Board members fulfilling terms and/or duties
- Inconsistent term strategy nationwide
- Regional election process is not standardized

- Regions need to communicate more with the national office
- AGM Motion process

Of major concern was the AGM process. Flying Squad members expressed concern that with the growth in memberships, too many motions were generated and passed annually. Board and staff lack capacity to act on all of them. Further, many of the motions were redundant to ones passed at previous AGMs. To examine this concern, the Flying Squad performed an assessment of the motions passed at the 2005 AGM.

Of the fifteen motions passed, four were actively pursued by Board and staff since the AGM: (editors note: at the time of the April meeting)

- New media representation at Winnipeg Conference
- Regional funding for regional meetings (currently in the R&D phase)
- Meeting held with National Gallery to advocate hiring a media arts curator.
- Facilities (successful listserv salon occurred in April 2006)

Six other motions were ongoing motions (motions advanced in previous years as well as 2005) that Board and staff work on in an as-needed basis:

- Rates Schedule
- Diversity
- Equipment Clearinghouse
- Regional Fundraising
- Censorship Advisory Network
- Archives/Preservation

Two required no action as they were complete by the time they passed at the AGM:

- Script-to-Screen
- By-law on regions

Two had no action since the AGM:

- Marketing requirements for distributors
- Tariff

FUNDING

An examination of earned revenues revealed that in FY06, sponsored projects generated \$20,000 of revenue. From some of these projects IMAA receives a 5% sponsorship fee, for others there is no fee paid to IMAA. Approximately 10% of the revenue from the 25th Anniversary publication project will stay with IMAA. Membership dues make up about 7% of annual revenues. However, membership provides a huge return on the membership dues investment. Members receive airfare to the AGM that, in some cases, exceeds the cost of actual membership.

Canada Council Funding has reached a ceiling. In FY 2007 the Council will provide \$90,000 in operations revenue and \$50,000 in Conference revenue. There has also been discussion at the Council about creating a separate application category for arts service organizations and providing one grant for general operating support that would include AGM support. Such a shift may have negative repercussions for IMAA, which is currently receiving the largest annual support for an arts service organization. In the

proposed scenario, there may be an equalizing strategy adopted by the Council, which could result in IMAA receiving less funding.

IMAA is in a familiar position that many organizations experience when faced with a need to grow yet deterred by a limited pool of known funders and supporters from which to solicit support. Such moments beg for creativity in both approach to new fundraising strategies and imagining what a more robust organization would look like. To aid IMAA in building organizational and staff capacity, the Flying Squad developed the following criteria and action plan:

(summary)

- Build staff capacity
- Work with existing funders to seek out additional sources of income
- Research best practices of existing organizations
- Create an individual donor campaign
- Find funds to create a fee-for-service initiative

OBSERVATIONS

IMAA is transitioning in many respects. The new National Director is just celebrating her first year anniversary, and a new Administrative Coordinator is about to be hired. The organization experienced tremendous membership growth, doubling in the last four years, while the staff size remained unaltered. IMAA is also turning twenty-five this year, an event that should be acknowledged and celebrated. This anniversary provides IMAA with a moment to reflect on organizational accomplishments as well as planning for the upcoming opportunities and challenges the organization faces as it prepares for its next twenty-five years.

Both the Board of Directors and staff acknowledge that the organization can no longer function as it has in the past. The Board is keenly aware of the demands on staff time and resources, and expressed commitment to improving the working conditions for current staff and to hiring more staff. The Board also recognized that the AGM motion process, the democratic hallmark of the organization, is not working with the increased membership. Further, IMAA has reached a ceiling on the amounts of funds it can currently raise from public funding. In order to grow the organization, IMAA needs to look for new sources of contributed and earned income through foundations and/or new fee-for-service offerings to members.

Throughout the Flying Squad engagement there was a wonderful synergy among Board and staff that the time for change is now.