

VES Board Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2021– 1:00pm
Via Zoom Conference

Board members present:

Jan Adamczyk, Neishaw Ali, Kathryn Brillhart, Colin Campbell (*alternate*), Nicholas Casanova, Emma Clifton Perry, Lisa Cooke, Michael Fink, Gavin Graham, Bryan Grill (*alternate*), Dennis Hoffman, Thomas Knop, Kim Lavery, Brooke Lyndon-Stanford, Arnon Manor (*alternate*), Tim McGovern, Janet Muswell Hamilton, Maggie Oh, Jeff Okun, Susan O'Neal, Jim Rygiel, David Tanaka, David Valentin (*alternate*), Bill Villarreal, Joe Weidenbach, Philipp Wolf (*alternate*), Susan Zwerman

Board members absent:

Laurie Blavin, Bob Coleman, Dayne Cowan, Kim Davidson, Camille Eden, Himanshu Gandhi (*alternate*); Josselin Mahot, Karen Murphy, Lisa Sepp-Wilson

Guests present: Roy Anthony, Secretary, Toronto; Tavia Charlton, Co-Chair, Toronto; Mike Chambers, former VES Board Chair; Roxane Fechner, Co-Chair, France; Steve Garrad, Co-Chair, Vancouver; Martin Herzberg, Co-Chair, Germany; Annika Hirsch, Co-Chair, Germany; Gregory Keech, Co-Chair, London; Franck Lambertz, Co-Chair, France; Marine Lelievre, Co-Chair, Montreal; Reid Paul, Co-Chair, Los Angeles; Sebastian Sylwan, Chair, Technology Committee; Paolo Tamburrino, Co-Chair, Germany; Rob Wright, Co-Chair, Georgia

VES Staff present: Jeff Casper, Naomi Goldman, Debbie McBeth, Eric Roth, Ben Schneider, Nancy Ward

Minutes: Lori Bowman

Call to Order – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa called the meeting to order. Gavin Graham confirmed that there was a quorum.
- She reminded everyone to observe Robert's Rules and not talk until recognized by the Chair. She also noted that participants can't speak a second time on an issue until everybody else who wishes to speak has done so.
- Announced that the March 10, 2021 Board meeting minutes were approved online.

Executive Director's Report – Eric Roth

- The VES staff has been working closely with the Technology, Education, Health & Wellness, Archives and Membership Committees.
- The spring membership cycle and dues invoicing process is in full swing so this is a particularly busy time for the Membership Committee and the VES staff.
- Embarking on another website upgrade. The upgrade two years ago was very elaborate and made the site a little clunky. The current upgrade will make the site work more efficiently and provide a more useful tool for members.
- Staff is working on a survey with the Executive Committee that is currently in draft form. The last member survey was two years ago so the goal is to get a current handle on the VES member needs and concerns.
- The 19th Annual VES Awards show occurred on April 6. It was a successful event but more challenging to plan and coordinate since it was a virtual experience. There were 25 awards categories with 4 teams per category and each team had 4-5 members. There were 400-500 nominees across the globe and over 100 teams of possible winners. Patton Oswalt was the host. Jeff Okun was the director of the event and did an excellent job. Jeff thanked Bryan Grill for getting Eycline Studios on board. He also thanked line producer Barry Griven for all his work conducting over 500 interviews in a short period of time.
- Eric thanked everyone involved in planning the event: Jeff Okun, VES Awards Committee, VES office staff, Eycline Studios, Bryan Grill, Susan Rowe, and Stephan Trojansky.

Treasurer's Report – Eric Roth

- Jeff reviewed the report and noted that the VES is in a good financial position. He acknowledged Eric Roth and staff for their stewardship and due diligence in preparing for unexpected scenarios like the pandemic.

Statement from the New Chair Lisa Cooke

- Lisa acknowledged the amazing work of the VES Awards Committee, VES staff, Eric Roth, Jeff Okun and everyone involved in planning the virtual Awards ceremony. She has received very positive feedback and noted all the herculean efforts that took place behind the scenes to pull off this successful event.
- Lisa has been doing a virtual zoom tour with VES members and has received great feedback from everyone.
- Lisa participated on a number of boards and conferences with other board members and section members. VES has been represented globally in conferences like FMX and Reel Time and has partnered with Women in Animation and the Producers Guild. There have been joint discussions on subjects like diversity, education, job opportunities, workplace health, virtual production, new technologies, and AI.
- Lisa thanked members for their outreach efforts and being stellar representatives of VES. She and the Executive Committee will continue reaching out to Board members to set up zoom calls.
- The VES Committees have accomplished a lot of work over the past few months which will be reviewed in the upcoming committee reports.
- Lisa has spoken to Jeff Okun and Sebastian Sylwan about revisiting the creation of a Technology Award. The visual effects industry is technology-based and this award is long overdue. This initiative to create a Technology Award has Lisa's full support.

Adopt 2021 Organizational Budget – Eric Roth

- The budget is on the website for reference.
- Eric noted that the VES is in the red by \$285,000. Due to the way the reserves have been managed, the VES is still in good financial shape. This scenario is an anomaly and there is enough money in reserves to finance the Society's needs. The primary reason for being in the red is because of this year's Awards Show. The show revenue this year was \$417,000 and the expenses for the show were \$217,000 which produced a \$200,000 net profit. The usual net for a traditional live Awards Show is \$400,000-\$500,000 and that \$300,000 differential would have put the VES in the black in a normal year.
- Eric noted that the miscellaneous revenue component is growing and becoming a significant revenue producer for VES. This includes advertising, e-blasts and digital postings. He acknowledged that last year the VFX Voice publication was in the black by \$1,700 for the first time since its inception.
- There have been no increases in the staff and consulting budget amount so it remains the same as last year.
- Eric acknowledged that the Archives Committee budget request is less than half of their request last year. The expenses include creating and editing luminary interviews and the services of a library/archive consultant. The goal is to have a digital museum in place on the website by next year.
- The Health and Wellbeing Committee is a newly-formed committee that is receiving \$25,000 in their budget this year to provide benefits for the members. Committee Chair Emma Clifton Perry added that the budget covers 47 cents per member per month per calendar year which totals \$5-6 per member per year. This will enable every VES member access to a free session model that provides mental health counseling, global research, and referral services for legal, financial and child & elder care. Emma will give more details in the Committee Report.
- **Motion: "Lisa Cooke made a motion to Adopt the VES 2021 Organizational Budget".**
Seconded. Lisa thanked Eric Roth, Jeff Okun and Controller PJ Schumacher for all their work on the budget. She also acknowledged Eric for his fiscal diligence to keep VES on solid financial footing during the pandemic.
- Neishaw Ali asked if there are ways to mitigate this financial shortfall in the future through sponsorships. Eric responded that the budget was created to take into account the Awards Show which is the annual signature event and number one driver of revenues for VES. Since the VES has built up a big reserve the current shortfall is a non-issue. He noted that Nancy Ward handles the sponsorships which consistently provide a solid financial and networking resource for VES and also

provide a great way to build relationships in the industry. Eric anticipates that the financial picture will be back in the black next year.

- Brooke Lyndon-Stanford thanked Eric for all his work maintaining the Society's strong financial footing during this past pandemic year.
- **Vote taken. Motion passed to adopt the VES 2021 Organizational Budget.**

Update on VES Honors Voting – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa announced the Honors Award recipients:
 - Founders Award: Rita Cahill and Mike Chambers
 - Honorary Membership: James Cameron and Gary Demos
 - Lifetime Membership: Rita Cahill; Mike Chambers; Gene Kozicki; Richard Winn Taylor, VES
 - Hall of Fame: The Lumière Brothers (Auguste and Louis); John Whitney Sr.; Phil Kellison; John P. Fulton, Roy Field
- VES Fellows nominees must have 2 letters of recommendation submitted.
- The Fall Honors Celebration event will take place in October but the date is yet to be determined.
- Lisa reminded the Board that the names of these recipients are confidential until the announcement is made public.

Approve Membership Committee Reports – Susan O'Neal

- Susan thanked Ben Schneider and the VES office for their support processing the applications. Thanked the Membership Committee members for their assistance with vetting applicants and preparing the 3 motions.
- There were 153 applications for the spring membership cycle. This includes 12 returning members. The VES consists of 14 Sections in 43 nations with 4207 members worldwide. A geographical distribution of all applicants in the current cycle is included in the report.
- **Motion #1: “The Membership Committee recommends that the 137 applicants named in the committee report be accepted as members of the VES”. Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.**
- **Motion #2: “The Membership Committee recommends that the 12 returning members named in the committee report be accepted as Members of the VES”. Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.**
- **Motion #3: “The Membership Committee recommends the following 4 Applicants be denied membership AT THIS TIME. The applicants are missing supporting documents as noted”:**
 - Stuart Bruzek (Missing 2 letters of recommendation and work history)
 - Eric Jennings (Missing 1 letter of recommendation)
 - Marina Llic (Missing 2 letters of recommendation)
 - James Pastorius (Missing 2 letters of recommendation and work history)
- **Seconded. Vote taken on Motion #3. Motion passed.**

Archives Committee Update – Lisa Cooke

- Continue to make progress. First round of luminary videos is nearing completion. Thanked David Tanaka for all his editorial help. Hope to create new content in the upcoming months. Contracting with an archivist to help plan the digital library. Thanked committee co-Chair Kim Lavery, Debbie McBeth, Nancy Ward, Ben Schneider, Eric Roth and Jeff Casper for all their contributions.
- David Tanaka added that he recruited one of his former Academy of Arts students to assist with editing the luminary reels. This particular student got a contract position through his editing work on the reel. This is a great opportunity for former students who are eager to get into the industry by providing work experience for them. This is a win-win scenario for entry level practitioners and the shared mentorship goals of the VES Archives, Education and Mentorship Committees.

Education Committee Update – Arnon Manor

- Gave a shout out to the Education Committee members who have contributed their time and efforts to the committee work.
- Arnon encouraged anyone who wants to join the committee to reach out to him.
- The Peer-to-Peer Mentorship program led by Neishaw Ali is an internal pilot program with VES mentors and mentees from within the Society.

- The Outreach Mentorship program is a collaboration with the VES and other mentorship programs like Women in Animation, Access VFX, Rise Up and the Brick Foundation. Working on joint efforts with these programs. The goal is to bring underrepresented people into the industry.
- The schools outreach effort is in progress. Have done several presentations in schools that have gone really well. Have reached out to other global organizations that are doing schools outreach and education. An animation company called TeamTO in Paris, France has a school where they teach animation to underrepresented people who are interested in working in the film industry. Animation Project is a program in New York that mentors and teaches underrepresented and troubled youth how to animate and finds work for them. They are funded by the New York Mayor's office and Department of Corrections.
- Reached out to the VES Sections to spread the word about education efforts and find out what the Sections are doing in education in their respective regions. Creating a CTE (career technical education certification program) in California that can be a pilot program for other regions in the world.
- A sub-committee with Arnon Manor, Tavia Charlton, Brooke Lyndon-Stanford and Neishaw Ali was formed to address the issues of creating a junior membership category in the VES. There are two groups to consider: 1) Students and people who are non-professionals who want to work in the industry and; 2) entry-level professionals with 0-5 years' experience who have begun working in the industry but who aren't yet qualified to join the VES. The sub-committee is focusing its efforts on the student/youth membership component at this time. Would like to create a pilot education system with schools and organizations around the world to develop a younger generation of VFX professionals.
- Neishaw Ali noted that she, Kaitlyn Yang, and Rose Duignan have placed 45 mentors and 45 mentees from VES in the Peer-to-Peer mentorship program. Each mentor/mentee has created their own program and the committee will monitor their efforts over the next few months. As part of the student engagement outreach effort they are meeting with Section heads to see what they are doing locally. Want to create a repository on the VES website where the Sections can share their educational events, modules, and programs with other Sections and members. Thanked Debbie McBeth with all her help with these efforts.
- Arnon noted that there is a resource webpage with hundreds of links being created by Susan Zwerman, Camille Eden and Debbie McBeth. Neishaw has reached out to the Sections to add their content to the resource page. This resource will be accessible to everyone on the VES website in the near future.
- Lisa Cooke thanked the committee for all the hard work.

Health and Wellbeing Committee Update – Emma Clifton Perry

- Emma and Philipp Wolf gave a presentation at the FMX conference in early May regarding the VES Health and Wellbeing Committee. The focus was to spotlight VES' goal to improve the general health and wellbeing for its members and VFX professionals worldwide. They didn't reveal what they're specifically working on behind the scenes because it's not yet in the public domain.
- The Committee is starting the process of checking, validating and collating all the mental health resources that have previously been acquired.
- Looking into discounts. Have an extensive list of potential companies to approach. Starting the process of creating and targeting the hit list.
- Insurance discounts have two components: 1) Travel discounts and 2) Expatriate health discounts. Will be focusing on expat health discounts. Nancy Ward is looking into this to see which global expatriate insurance providers would be interested in offering a premium discount to VES members.
- A sub-committee has been formed to formulate a framework for the Best Practices and Industry Guidelines initiative. Will keep Lisa Cooke in the loop and provide further updates in the September Board meeting.
- Philipp Wolf gave an update on the Webinar Series and MAP (Member Assistance Program). Collecting industry stories for the series from people who are sharing their experiences anonymously. Will record episodes in May and do post production in June. Hope to release the series and press release in June.
- Partnered with the University clinic in Montreal and have created a portfolio of mental health professionals. The VES Montreal Section supported the Quebec Film Commission to apply for a second run of the project which is supporting the Webinar Series. If the city approves the project, the Film Commission will finance season 2 of the series.

- The Member Assistance Program is a great resource that will provide a direct line to all VES members worldwide for mental health, legal, financial, child and elder care assistance and support. The program will take about 5-6 weeks to set up and will be introduced at the same time as the Webinar Series. Emma added that every VES member has access to this program and can speak to a counselor for free to get impartial advice and assistance. The policy covers all members. Philipp thanked Debbie McBeth for all her help preparing the committee report.
- Lisa thanked Emma, Philipp and the Committee for their efforts and hard work on the committee initiatives.

Technology Committee Update – Sebastian Sylwan

- There were previous discussions about creating a Technology award and there is now a concerted effort to move this process forward. Sebastian thanked Lisa Cooke and the Board for their support. Hope to have a more concrete Technology Award proposal by the September Board meeting.
- The committee activities involving the reference platform, the Academy Software Foundation and the VES transfer spec are progressing. These are the most visible of the committee's activities.
- Looking for new ways to engage with membership. The Best Practices document was created and widely referenced last year. Proposed developing Best Practices about working from home and a new hybrid model of working in the industry. This is not a Technology-exclusive initiative. Put together a proposal with some sample questions for Eric Roth and Lisa Cooke with the intent to share with Section Chairs. Talked with the newly formed Health and Wellness Committee and agreed both Committees' Best Practices initiatives are very helpful and useful for the members. Both committees will keep each other informed about the progress of their respective initiatives but they will be separate documents and will not be merged into one initiative. After Board approval, will send the proposal to the Section Chairs to start a conversation and get feedback.
- Fostering an initiative to bring in a partnership with industry organizations like the AFC and Movie Labs to standardize meta data coming from set. This initiative was brought to the committee by VES member Joseph Goldstone. The committee believes that standardizing may not be the best solution but an alternative would be to foster an agreement outlining the best and useful parts of this initiative and establish a common definition.
- The Cinematic Color document was updated back in 2015. A VES member led the effort and the document grew to be much larger than anticipated. There has been some copyright and licensing challenges with this effort and the current proposal is to allow the authors to move forward and find another home for the document without VES participation or representation. Sebastian thanked VES members who contributed to this document.
- Looking for better ways for the Tech Committee to engage with the membership on a broader scale
- Requested funds in the budget this year to bring in an intern to help with the outreach and technical requirements of running the committee.
- Lisa thanked all the Board members for their impressive and successful work on all the committees.

New Business

- ***Motion: "Lisa Cooke made motion to approve new members Jan Adamczyk, Mike Fink and Fortunato Frattasio on the Education Committee and to approve Dennis Serras as New Co-Chair of the Awards Committee." Seconded. Vote taken and motion passed.***
- Susan Zwerman announced that she is one of the Co-Chairs on the DGA Digital Day committee. They are working on doing a live event on Saturday, October 23. Researching new technology for the all-day event. Looking for people to give live presentations on a stage and/or do lobby exhibits or demos. The subject matter needs to be in an area of new technology that would interest filmmakers in both film and television. If anyone has suggestions or recommendations for this event, please contact Susan at susanzwerman@gmail.com.
- Lisa noted that there will not be a July Board meeting so the next scheduled Board meeting is on Wednesday, September 8. The time is yet to be determined.

Lisa adjourned the meeting at 2:20pm.

Submitted by Lori Bowman