Minnesota Pro Chapter
2006 Annual Report

I. General Chapter Information

A. Report submitted by Marisa Helms, chapter president

B. Officers and Board Members

Marisa Helms
President
Reporter/Producer
Minnesota Public Radio
480 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: 651-290-1361
mhelms@mpr.org
Term: July 2005 through June 2006

Art Hughes
President Elect
Reporter/Producer
Minnesota Public Radio
480 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: 651-290-1462
ahughes@mpr.org
Term: July 2005 through June 2006

Mike Knaak
Treasurer
Asst. Managing Editor
St. Cloud Times
Box 768
St. Cloud, MN 56302-0768
Phone: 320-255-8747
mknaak@stcloudtimes.com
Term: July 2005 through June 2006
(Knaak resigned from the board on January 11, 2006. The board appointed Nicole Garrison-Sprenger to fill out the rest of the fiscal year.)

Nicole Garrison-Sprenger
Treasurer
Staff Reporter
Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal
120 S. Sixth Street
Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: 612-288-2112
ngarrison@bizjournals.com
Term: February 2005 through June 2006.
(Garrison-Sprenger was elected to the board in July 2005. The board appointed her Treasurer in January, 2006, following the resignation of Mike Knaak.)

Dave Aeikens
Secretary
St. Cloud Times

Box 768
St. Cloud, MN. 56302
Phone: 320-255-8744
daeikens@stcloudtimes.com
Term: July 2005 through June 2006

Dave Beal
Board member
Business Columnist
St. Paul Pioneer Press
345 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: 651-228-5429
dbeal@pioneerpress.com
Term: July 2004 through June 2006

Joan Gilbertson
Board member
Senior Producer
WCCO-TV News
90 S. 11th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Phone: 612-330-2535
jegilbertson@wcco.cbs.com
Term: July 2004 through June 2006

Gary Hill
Board member
Director of Investigations
KSTP-TV
3415 University Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55414
Phone: 642-4437
ghill@kstp.com
Term: July 2005 through June 2007

Jane Kirtley
Board member
Silha Professor of Media Ethics and the Law
University of Minnesota
111 Murphy Hall, 206 Church Street, SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-625-9038
Kirtl001@umn.edu
Term: July 2004 through June 2006

Yvonne Klinnert
Board member
Editor
Stillwater Courier
102 South 2nd Street
Stillwater, MN 55082
Phone: 651-439-4366
yklinnert@stillwatercourier.com
Term: July 2005 through June 2007

Todd Melby
Board member
Freelancer
2015 Milwaukee Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404
Phone: 612-338-6700
melby@bistream.net
Term: July 2005 through June 2007

Chris Serres
Board member
Business Reporter
Star Tribune
425 Portland Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55488
Phone: 612-673-4308
cserres@startribune.com
Term: July 2006 through June 2006
(The board appointed Serres for a one year term.)

Scott Theisen
Board member
Staff Photographer
Sun Newspapers
Phone: 952-882-2471
stheisen@mnsun.com
Term: March 2006 through June 2007
(The board appointed Theisen to fill out the remainder of Garrison-Sprenger's term. Garrison-Sprenger became Treasurer in January, 2006.)

C. President Marisa Helms, President-elect Art Hughes, Secretary Dave Aeikens, Board members Dave Beal, Gary Hill and Jane Kirtley attended the 2005 national convention in Las Vegas, NV. President Marisa Helms, President-elect Art Hughes, Secretary Dave Aeikens, Board members Dave Beal, Nicole Garrison-Sprenger, and Todd Melby attended the 2006 Region 6 conference in Bloomington, Minnesota.

D. 2005-2006 Financial Report: Attached.

E. Chapter Bylaws: Attached.

II. Chapter Activities and Programs

A. General Meetings

The Minnesota Pro Chapter board of directors held 10 board meetings throughout fiscal year 2005-2006.

The chapter held eight all-chapter events for members and will present its Page One awards banquet after this report is filed, on June 14, 2006 (more on that event below), for a total of 19 meetings (10 board of directors meetings, and nine all-chapter events).

October 5, 2005. **Intern Night**.
Sixty students turned out for the Minnesota SPJ Student Intern Night. The annual event was hosted by KSTP-TV and featured a tour of the 5 Eyewitness News studio and newsroom. Students came from the University of Minnesota, University of St. Thomas, Minnesota State University, Macalester College and Augsburg College. They listened to and asked questions of representatives from the Star Tribune, The Business Journal, KSTP-TV, Minnesota Public Radio, and WCCO-TV. The media professionals brought written materials and information about their respective intern programs for the students. Art Hughes, president-elect of the Minnesota Chapter touted the value of SPJ membership and invited the students to apply for chapter scholarships. Students had dozens of questions: "What do you want to see on my

resume?" "How should I prepare my clips?" "How important is a second language?" "How flexible is the schedule?" The program started at 6:30pm and didn't end until the final questions were answered about 9pm. A couple of the students had even attended last year and felt it was valuable enough to come back a second time.

December 6, 2006. **Holiday Party.** This informal annual party is a great opportunity to meet with current members and engage prospective members. This year, we had a fun event at a bowling alley in Minneapolis. We sent invitations to all members and posted flyers in board member's newsrooms. About 35 people attended. Many student members attended and got a chance to mingle with professional journalists. It was a very warm and welcoming evening.

January 26, 2006. **"Understanding and Covering the Growing Latino Community."** Panel discussion, Me Gusta Mexican Restaurant, Minneapolis. About 35 people attended**.** The evening was a great success. Several news stories resulted from the introductions SPJ made between local journalists and the panelists. Top media executives catering to Minnesota's Latino population told the gathering that the Latino population is becoming more complex and harder to define as it grows and expands throughout the state. For example, Lorena Duarte, editor of La Prensa de Minnesota in Minneapolis, noted that Latinos come to the state from 21 different countries. Some speak little English and, as newcomers, can be hard to reach and are just starting to climb the economic ladder. Others are bi-lingual and very well-established economically. Other panelists were Alberto Monserrate, CEO at LCN; Luis Fitch, principal and founder of Uno Advertising in Minneapolis; and David Elmore, general manager of WUMN-TV Univision in the Twin Cities. Monserrate's firm also operates radio station La Invasora AM 1400, and publishes the Gente de Minnesota weekly newspaper, the Vida Y Sabor entertainment bi-weekly and Minnesota Hispanic Directory.

February 20, 2006. **"The End of Journalism? Why News Still Matters."** Very well-attended and stimulating panel discussion about the state of journalism. Held at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus. The headline speaker was Bill Kovach, chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. The panel also included opening Remarks by The Honorable Paul Anderson, Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court, and panelists Ted Canova, Former News Director, FOX-9/UPN-29, Dave Kansas, Editor, Wall Street Journal Money and Investing Section, and Nora Paul, Director, Institute for New Media Studies University of Minnesota. The discussion was moderated by Minnesota Pro Chapter board member Jane Kirtley, Silha Professor for Media Ethics and Law, University of Minnesota.

The panel addressed several key questions on the state of journalism today including the influence of the digital age and the internet on the newsroom, and the loss of courage and traditional newsgathering practices in newsrooms. About 150 students, journalists and other media professionals attended the event and stayed for a lively question and answer session with the panelists.

February 27, 2006. "**The Crisis of Polling: The Accuracy, Reporting, and Campaign Uses of Public Opinion Surveys."** Co-sponsorship with the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute's Center for the Study of Politics and Governance, Minneapolis, MN. Public polling was one of the biggest casualties of the 2004 presidential campaign and we will most likely see this again in the 2006 election cycle. The proliferation of polls, press preoccupation with polling, and the campaign strategy of attacking pollsters have contributed to a sense among journalists and many Americans that polls cannot be trusted. But is this impression correct? Are pre-election polls inaccurate? Are reporters merely the conveyors of bad polling or do they contribute to mistaken conclusions about what polls show? Are campaign consultants victims of poor polling or are they consumers who use the polling results to gain strategic advantages over their opponent? The conference examined the central criticisms of polling - their accuracy, the media's coverage of them, and their use by election campaigns. It offered original, cutting edge analysis and commentary from the country's leading experts on polling, media coverage, and election campaigns. A successful event, attended by a range of academics, journalists and students.

March 25, 2006. **"The Media, Public Policy and the Age of Indifference."** Co-sponsorship with the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN. Speakers included Deborah Howell, ombudsman for the Washington Post, and David Mindich, author of the book *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*. About 125 people attended. This workshop and "The End of Journalism?" forum we sponsored a month earlier (see above), were two of the principal community-wide events convened in the Twin Cities this year to encourage more public interest in, and debate about, the state of journalism.

March 31 – April 1, 2006. **Region 6 Conference.** Bloomington, MN. More than 360 people attended the annual conference.

The conference is one of the largest member events we hold each year. Board members organized and hosted several panel discussions. President Helms moderated a panel she devised with board member Todd Melby on the "Art of Interviewing." Board Secretary Dave Aeikens was on an ethics panel led by Bob Steele, a Poynter Institute ethicist. Bruce Cadwallader of the Columbus Dispatch; JP Skelly of KORN-AM in Mitchell, S.D.; Angela Kucharski the news director at WBZ-TV in Boston were also at a featured event Saturday morning of the conference. Board member Dave Beal organized a panel on improving writing skills.

May 1, 2006. **Ethics Week panel: Seek Truth and Report It:** "The Customer is Always Right? The Assault on Media Impartiality from the Empowered American Consumer." Speaker: Seth Mnookin, Author of *Hard News: Twenty-One Brutal Months at* The New York Times *and How They Changed the American Media* (Random House: 2004). Co-presentation with the Silha Center marking Society of Professional Journalists Ethics Week. Mnookin delivered the keynote address followed by commentary by Kate Parry, Reader's Representative at the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. The program was moderated by Jane Kirtley, Minnesota SPJ Pro chapter board member and Silha Professor of Media Ethics and Law and Director of the Silha Center at the University of Minnesota's School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

About 100 people attended the event at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus.

"We are at a unique moment. We have pressure from the government and pressure from the marketplace. The government is emboldened to move against the media because of marketplace pressures." With that Seth Mnookin began his keynote address at Silha Center Spring Ethics Forum. Mnookin is the author of the book Hard News and contributing editor at Vanity Fair. Hard News explores the Jayson Blair scandal at the New York Times. In his speech Mnookin laid much of the blame at the feet of Howell Raines, the former executive editor of the Times. He said Raines was convinced the media could reverse their downward slide by giving the readers want they want.

June 14, 2006. **Page One Awards Banquet.** The Page One Awards Banquet is the chapter's largest gathering of the year. About 150 print, electronic and broadcast media are expected to attend. The keynote speaker is radio host and political satirist Al Franken.

In addition to presenting over 150 awards to local journalists, the chapter will award $1,000 to student scholarship winner Drew Sandholm of St. Cloud State University.

A President's Award will be presented to long-time chapter board member Dave Aeikens who is leaving the board to run for national office.

The Minnesota Chapter will also be honoring two lawmakers who have a long history of supporting openness in government and Freedom of Information. The state legislators will be presented with the Peter S. Popovich Freedom of Information award.

B. Chapter Projects.

FOI

The Minnesota Chapter got involved in successfully fighting two initiatives by powerful individuals that would have closed off more public information. Governor Tim Pawlenty proposed turning the state's data practices act on its head. Now the act says data is public unless the law specifically says it is not. Pawlenty wanted all data to be private unless the law specifically says it is public. Co-chair Hill was quoted in the Associated Press as saying it was an awful idea. Hill also spoke out against an effort by a member of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents to keep private the names of finalists for the university's top positions. The legislation successfully passed one committee but was killed in another.

The chapter has also begun a new initiative to get cameras in our district courts. In Minnesota we only routinely get cameras and microphones into our appellate courts. Previous efforts to remedy that have run aground in the courts. The effort is in its earliest stages. So far meetings have taken place between

a supportive judge, media lawyers and media lobbyists. Look for further progress in this area in the months ahead.

At our regional conference we staged a panel called: "FOI Are We Fighting The Good Fight?" The panel featured two veterans of Freedom of Information fights and two current editors. The veterans recalled journalists who wrote legislation, lobbied actively and threatened lawmakers with editorials all in the name of preserving the public's right to know and explored whether those tactics still appropriate today and if so are we doing enough to protect access.

The Minnesota Chapter will be honoring two lawmakers who have a long history of supporting openness in government and Freedom of Information. The state legislators will be presented with the Peter S. Popovich Freedom of Information award at the chapter's annual Page One awards banquet.

Shield Law.
The Minnesota chapter has aggressively joined the national push by the Society of Professional Journalists to pass a federal shield law. The Minnesota chapter contributed a thousand dollars to the national effort. Members of the chapter are meeting with the Minnesota congressional delegation to urge their support. The meetings appear to be producing results. The day after meeting with Senator Norm Coleman's staff the senator was quoted as supporting the shield law. At our meeting with Representative Jim Ramstad we received his pledge to sign-on to the House bill as a co-author. A meeting with Representative John Kline produced an promise of willingness to support passage of the bill. Additional meetings with Minnesota congress members and candidates for congress are planned.

Access to Public Meetings.
President-elect Art Hughes got into the middle of a recent FOI fight. Ann Alquist News Director KFAI Radio called Hughes and FOI co-chair Gary Hill asking for help. The Whittier Alliance was hosting a candidate forum for the council race in their area. Although the public was invited, recording devices were banned. The Whittier Alliance is one of the several Neighborhood Revitalization Programs. They are non-profits that control millions in taxpayer funds. The Alliance claimed they had an opinion from the city attorney's office that allowed them to ban the recordings. Hughes attended the meeting and spoke against the ban. Alquist asked the candidates to speak against the ban, which they did. The Whittier board then voted to adjourn the meeting so the recording could be allowed without rescinding the ban. Access was gained for the evening, but the longer fight continues.

Hughes and Hill made calls to the Whittier Alliance, the city attorney's office, the mayor's office and the Minnesota Broadcaster's Association. Even though the city attorney insists it never provided the opinion that Whittier is relying upon, it and other NRP's have not agreed to rescind its bans. MBA has agreed to get its attorney involved. The Minnesota chapter plans to continue to help with this access fight. helped one of our members, and upheld its mission to promote open government.

Page One Contest.
This year¹s contest attracted more than 480 entries from Minnesota¹s print, broadcast and online journalists. Awards will be presented on June 14, 2006. The Minnesota chapter swapped entries with chapters in Seattle, Detroit, Long Island and Houston.

Legal Defense Fund.
The Minnesota Pro Chapter donated $500 to the Legal Defense Fund. Proceeds from chapter activities including the regional conference and Page One contest were set aside for this contribution.

Federal Shield Law Campaign.
The Minnesota Pro Chapter donated $1,000 to SPJ's federal shield law campaign. We firmly believe journalists need to be able to promise confidentiality to their sources in order to bring the truth to the American public. Prosecutors and the courts have recently made it clear that journalists need a federal shieid law in order to properly do their jobs. Proceeds from chapter activities including the regional conference and Page One contest were set aside for this contribution.

C. Student Journalists.
The chapter has invested $15,000 to fund annual student scholarships of $1,000 for up to two deserving journalism students. Eligible applicants are college students who either attend a post-secondary school

in Minnesota or are Minnesota high school graduates who are attending journalism school outside of Minnesota. This year's applicant base for the $1,000 scholarship was lower than it has been in the past, but the student chosen this year, Drew Sandholm of St. Cloud State University, shows real promise in his anticipated work as a broadcast journalist. His chosen field of study and work will add to the array of aspiring journalists who have received the scholarship from the chapter, who have primarily been print journalists. The scholarship is always presented at the annual Page One awards program, which heightens awareness of the scholarship among the general membership.

The annual fall intern night was again a popular event, attended by about 60 students. The students get an opportunity to interact with professionals in a panel discussion and through informal conversation.

All chapter events are open to student chapter members. Board officers frequently make themselves available to speak to student chapter meetings, answer questions and provide advice to student journalists. President Marisa Helms spoke to a group of college women about journalism at a banquet hosted by LOTT, Leaders of Today and Tomorrow. Secretary Dave Aeikens spoke at the First Amendment Forum at St. Cloud State University. A group of journalists discussed how to use open records in your investigative reporting. Panelists included Ron Nixon of the New York Times, former Star Tribune reporter Chris Ison, public records expert Don Gemberling and John Bodette, editor of the St. Cloud Times. President-elect Art Hughes and board member Jane Kirtley were panelists for a University of Minnesota student chapter event. The discussion focused on the balance between developing sources and maintaining an unbiased distance from the people reporters cover. The event was organized by the student campus chapter to better inform students considering a career in journalism about what to expect. Hughes shared several real life examples of judgment conflicts from his own experiences. He urged those attending who are serious about journalism to set clear, solid guidelines ahead of time to refer to when ethical challenges arise. Hughes also attended a University of St. Thomas student chapter meeting to talk about his job as a reporter and to answer questions about what future journalists might expect to encounter in their first job.

D. Membership.

The Minnesota Pro Chapter supplied membership brochures at each of our events this year. At least one chapter leader was present to make a pitch for membership. We have gained a few members and saw a handful of lapsed members, but stayed even at just under 100 members.

To serve and recruit outstate members, we continue to work with our satellite chapter, the Lake Superior-Arrowhead chapter serving Northeastern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin.

E. Chapter Communication.

We produced four newsletters (quarterly) this year and sent them to all our members. We are proud of this, because the board member who was in charge of this task, quit the board unexpectedly, and other board members pitched in to make the newsletter a success.

Our Web page continues to serve as a conduit for prospective members and for people seeking comment or information about First Amendment or FOI concerns.

In addition to meeting in person 10 times a year, the Minnesota Pro Chapter board of directors regularly stays in contact with each other through an internet group list at yahoo.com. We conduct chapter business online, including preparing for events and organizing tasks, and taking votes on pressing issues that need resolution before the next meeting.

Chapter board of directors remained in regular contact with Region 6 Director, Gordon Govier in fundraising and planning the regional conference. Board members Jane Kirtley and Gary Hill are both committee members on the National board’s ethics committee, as well as the SDX board (Kirtley). So board members were regularly briefed on national efforts.

III. Chapter Evaluation

A. Strength and Weaknesses.

Our chapter's strength this year has been our committed board members and their hard work. The chapters pro members and local students have benefited greatly this year from the strong programs we offered. The Minnesota Chapter is known for its commitment to First Amendment issues and promoting open government. And this year the chapter reinforced its mission by promoting passage of a federal shield law to members, the public, and lawmakers.

But perhaps our greatest strength this year was in our unity and ability to get things done, despite strong opinions, split votes and the resignation of board Treasurer Mike Knaak. Knaak abruptly resigned the day after two board votes didn't go his way. The board was stunned by his departure. Knaak was a valuable member of the board and had taken on an especially large number of critical tasks. With his departure, many of us had to learn for the first time how to do certain things and every board member stepped up to fill the void and keep the chapter running efficiently and with success.

New member recruitment unfortunately took a back seat this year to our increase in programming. However, we did excel in maintaining our high profile in the community and with our members through our programs.

B. Rank

We believe our chapter activities and efforts merit a ranking of four stars.