2014 Annual Meeting Report

This year, the Media Consortium held our annual meeting in Chicago, February 27-March 1. Fifty-seven percent of our members sent staffers, and we welcomed guests from local colleges, Chicago community news outlets, and potential member outlets, along with our speakers. Over 120 people came in all, with 80 people attending our lunch plenaries on February 28 and March 1.

Highlights of the conference included our one-day mini-conference “No Secrets”; our continuing look at impact; and

**No Secrets!**

The theme of this year’s conference was no secrets: journalism in the age of surveillance.

* **Julian Assange.** Many associations in the news world have tried to entice Julian Assange to speak at their conferences without success. On Friday, February 28, Julian Assange skyped into the Media Consortium’s conference, and spoke for two hours with moderator Juan Gonzalez of Democracy Now!, and co-panelists Bea Edwards of the Government Accountability Project and Gavin MacFayden of the Centre for Investigative Reporting. Assange chose to speak to the Media Consortium because we represent truly independent news organizations. We believe in free and unfettered speech, and in protecting whistleblowers completely. One key goal for 2014 is to arm our members with the tools to evade surveillance and so provide safe harven for whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden.
* **Anti-Surveillance Training.** On Thursday, February 27 we began with a full-day mini-conference on surveillance, sponsored by the Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago-Kent College of Law. The morning featured talks by national experts on corporate, police, and federal surveillance, making the case that journalists covering corporate malfeasance and community protests need to understand surveillance just as much as journalists covering national security. By the afternoon, all the attendees felt like Dyan Ruiz of people.power.media, which covers local community actions: “I didn’t think I needed to protect myself and my sources from surveillance, but now I know that I do.” We have already been asked by media observers present to duplicate this event at other national conferences, including the conference of Alternative Newsmedia. This definitely is a training to be continued.

**Impact**

The mission of the Media Consortium is to support and grow the impact of member organizations.

* **Impact Awards.** The Media Consortium was thrilled to hold our second annual impact awards. These awards are given to member organization stories that had the greatest impact in the previous year. This year, 20 outlets submitted stories, and five were chosen:

**"The Life and Death of Crystal Wilson" (American Prospect)**

**"The Horror Every Day" (Texas Observer)**

**"Fed Up" (Ms. Magazine)**

**"The Science of Citizenship" (Orion Magazine)**

**"The Wage Theft Epidemic" (In These Times)**

For more on these winners, please see our blog post.

* **Measuring Impact.**