

# Smofcon 15 Program Book

Front Cover

Doubletree Hotel  
Boston, Massachusetts  
5 – 7 December, 1997

brought to you by  
Massachusetts Convention Fandom, Inc.



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## Smofcon 15 Committee

Bonnie Atwood: Con Suite  
 Bob Eggleton: Art  
 Gay Ellen Dennett: Con Suite  
 Scott & Jane Dennis: Resource Room  
 Deb Geisler: Hotel, Publications, Merit badges  
 Teddy Harvia: Merit Badges, Art  
 Lisa Hertel: Hotel  
 Debbie King: Con Suite  
 Mark L. Olson: Publications, Program  
 Priscilla Olson: Program  
 Kelly Persons: Con Suite  
 Ruth Sachter: Program  
 Sharon Sbarsky: Chairman, Badges, Web page  
 Ben Yalow: Hotel

## Smofcon 15

Massachusetts Convention Fandom, Inc.  
 PO Box 1010  
 Framingham, MA 01701

We've used lotsa service marks in here, some of them knowingly. Those include WSFS, Hugo, Worldcon, Boskone, Noreascon.

# Smofcon 15 Program Schedule

## Friday

2:30-4:30

**Building the Chair** – Priscilla Olson (K)

3:30-4:30

~~Services~~

4:30-6:00

~~Memories~~ – Laurie Mann (m), Joe Siclari, Peggy Rae Pavlat, Dick Smith (K)

8:00-9:00

**First Smofcon** – Sharon Sbarsky (m), TR Smith, Kent Bloom, Jane Dennis (K)

~~Parliamentary Procedure~~ – Kevin Standlee, Ben Yalow

9:00-10:00

~~Traditions/One-Shots~~ – John Lorentz (m), Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Sally Woehrlé, Martin Deutsch, Fred Duarte (K)

**Comic Cons and SF Cons** – Pam Fremon, Bill Neville

10:00-11:00

~~Spin City~~ – Joe Siclari and Mark Olson

(m), Ben Yalow, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Eric Van (D)

**Publications (Print)** – Lisa Hertel, Diana Thayer, Tim Szczesuil

2:30-3:30

**Management** – Martin Easterbrook, Mark Olson (m), Mike Benveniste, John Sapienza (D)

~~Art Show~~ – Gay Ellen Dennett, Joni Dashoff, Mark Hertel, Gary Louie

3:30-4:30

~~Making Meetings Work~~ – Tom Whitmore, Joe Siclari (m), Mark Olson, Leslie Turek (D)

**How to Program** – Ben Yalow, Drea Brandford

4:30-5:15

~~Rightsizing: Finding Your Inner Con~~ – Leah Smith (m), William Sadorus, Seth Briedbart, Teresa Nielsen Hayden (D)

**Dealing with Emergencies** – Kurt Siegel

5:15-6:00

~~Marketing: Telling People About It~~ – Laurie Mann, Leah Zeldes Smith, Deb Geisler (m), Mike Zipser, Mike Citrak (D)

~~Improving Worldcon Fan Exhibits~~ – Gary Feldbaum

5:30-6:00

~~Jewish Services~~

8:30-9:30

~~Keeping Things from Going Stale~~ – Nancy Cobb(m), Brendan Quinn, Davey Snyder, Tim Illingworth, Beth Zipser (K)

**Gaming at Conventions** – Keith McCormic

9:30-10:00

~~Smofcon selection~~

10:00-11:00

~~Kirk Poland~~ – readers: Michael Burstein, Tom Whitmore, Ann Broomhead, Eric Van Midnight

~~Computerization Disasters~~ – a cast of thousands....

## Saturday

10:00-11:00

~~Empire Building~~ – Kathryn Daugherty(m), KIM Campbell, Todd Dashoff, Randy Shepard, Paul Selkirk (D)

~~Sponsorships~~ – Scott Dennis, Gary Feldbaum

11:00-12:00

~~Dispersed Committees~~ – Jim Mann (m), Kevin Standlee, Ruth Sachter, Martin Easterbrook (D)

**Publications (Web)** – Sharon Sbarsky, Saul Jaffe, Laurie Mann

1:30-2:30

~~Philosophy of Program~~ – Priscilla Olson

*Sponsorships*

*Indexing  
with  
checkbox*

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**Sunday**

11:00–12:00 **Cash Handling** – Peggy Rae  
Pavlat, Dave Cantor, et al.

—11:00–12:00 **Ghosts and Parasites** – William  
Sadorus, Mike Siladi, Jim Mann, Susan  
deGuardiola (m), Michael Pins (D)

12:00–12:30:

**Inquisition** as needed

1:30–2:30

— **Cutting Your Losses** – Ruth Sachter (m),  
Peggy Rae Pavlat, Tom Veal, Tom Whitmore,  
Lisa Hertel (D)

**Real World Interface (Cons and  
Publishers)** – Patrick Nielsen Hayden

2:30–3:30

— **After the Con** – Priscilla Olson (m), John  
Lorentz, Tony Lewis, Karen Meschke (D)  
**Hotel Resumes** – Ben Yalow, Nancy Cobb

Room key:

(K): Kendall

(D): Dunster

others: To be announced

# Program Precis

*(Precis are in chronological order)*

Smofcon is for smofs like all of us — and if you're reading this, you're a smof. The Smofcon program isn't a bunch of famous people entertaining the masses, nor is it a few experts lecturing to the apprentices. We all have something to contribute and the Smofcon program will be best if everyone takes part in it.

We're laying out the program items to emphasize this: While we will assign specific people to lead each program item, we're not sitting them at a head table because we want them to lead a general discussion that includes everyone.

Join in! Show off! Ask questions! Make this *your* program!

## General Program

### Memories

Building the con-runner's FAQ....and wondering why it hasn't been done before.

What do we need to remember and why? How applicable are these? What are the minimal bits of knowledge that need to be passed on from year to year (particularly vis-à-vis Worldcon running.) We *will* start creating a list of items, and begin work on FAQ project for weekend!

*How can we remember? What can we do (besides going to things like Smofcons). And (maybe the real nub of it all) —why do we keep forgetting? Is it because people like being perverse?*

### How to Enjoy Your First Smofcon....

...Which sorta sez it all.

Smofcon is a bit different from most other conventions—it practically requires (well, expects) you to interact. Find out how to do so — and *why* you should. Help us figure out why so many seem to regard Smofcon as invitational!!!!

Highly recommended for any new Smofcon

attendees (neo-smofs?), though Old Pharts can learn a bit too.

### Traditions and One-Shots

Where do Worldcons and Westercons really fit? How do you maintain a regional flavor in a rotating convention? (And, should you even try?)

Most of us work on one or more regional conventions which are held regularly and which have over the years developed their own culture. Most of us have also worked now and then on Worldcons, Westercons or Eastercons, the major rotating conventions. How do they differ in their cultures? Does a rotating convention have a culture in the same sense that a regional does? Is this a Good Thing?

When one of the big rotating conventions comes to town, to what extent is it appropriate for the local convention's culture to inform it? To what extent is it possible? Are all Worldcons more or less the same, regardless of where or by whom they are run? How does Eastercon differ in its impact on local fandom from Westercon or Worldcon?

How can a local convention survive a visit by an 800 pound gorilla?

### Empire Building

We all know of conventions where the members of the committee have settled into their positions and do the same thing year after year, eventually building up tidy little empires. These empires take on a life of their own, having their own insignia, secret hand-grips, T-shirts, etc. Frequently con-runners will develop more loyalty to their little empires than to the con itself.

In general, empires hurt the con of which they are a part. Why are they built? How can they be toppled without necessarily losing the empire-builders? Are they always a problem to a convention? Are there some thing that look like empires,

but aren't so destructive? How do you convince people to accept the trade-off of letting someone inexperienced move into an area and possibly run it poorly in order to benefit the whole committee in later years?

If you can do so without giving too much offense to anyone else in the room, can you cite examples of empires from your own experience?

### **Dealing with Dispersed Committees**

We've all worked with a local group putting on a local con or a local group putting on a Worldcon. And more and more of us have been deeply involved with a dispersed committee. How is a geographically-dispersed committee different from a geographically-condensed committee? What sorts of problems does the dispersed committee face that the local committee avoids? How significant are they? Are they sufficiently large to put a dispersed committee at a disadvantage to a local one? Can they be solved? And—is it only distance that disperses cons?

How about cultural differences? Can you cite examples of cultural differences which impact committee effectiveness and team-building amongst con-runners from different places? Is this a distinct problem from geographical dispersion? How big a deal is it, anyway?

### **Philosophy of Program**

Should a convention program be "community" or "content" based. When is each appropriate? Under what circumstances might less be more?

There are two main philosophies of running Program: the N-Ring Circus and One Big Happy Family. The N-Ring Circus tries to include something for everyone and aims for a large, diverse program with multiple, independent items. Little effort is put into making different program items interrelate, and few people see the same program, since there are so many options to choose from. Practitioners of this style take a complaint that there were too many interesting things to attend them all as the ultimate accolade.

One Big Happy Family tries to have a single, tightly-focused program, frequently just a single track. Emphasis is placed on a unified program with

various program items being interrelated. It is considered good to have more-or-less the same people attending the whole program.

Compare and contrast the two philosophies—what do you prefer, and why? Are these two approaches mostly a matter of convention size, or could a large convention successfully do a unitary program and a small con do a multi-track monster? How does the type of program relate to the people who attend the convention?

When is it most appropriate to follow these philosophies, and what do you tell the children?

### **Applying Real-World Management Techniques to Conventions**

What are these techniques? Can some of them work? (which?) Why do some succeed and some fail? How can you apply these techniques to your average fans, so they won't suspect they're even being "managed?" Which aspects of fandoms can contribute to good management of conventions, and which aspects detract from it? Is it even appropriate to apply real-world management techniques to conventions?

Additionally, as *volunteers*, fans may indeed need a different kind of stroking than salaried employees to stay happy and productive. What can you do to make volunteers become and stay part of a team? How can you motivate people to put their time/effort/money/whatever into working for (with?) your convention? How is this implicit trust developed? Please share stories and ideas!

### **Making Meetings Work**

Meetings are hard work, and some meetings hardly work. How can we make meetings work for the group and not just bore people to tears? What sorts of meeting styles work and what don't? What is the role of the Chairman? Is a strong Chairman necessary?

How does a meeting make a decision? In particular, how do questions get put to the meeting, how are they discussed, and how is a decision finally made? Are there more or less effective ways to do this? How does your local group work? (and are some group structures more effective at building consensus than others?)

Is consensus desirable? Is it achievable? Is it a matter of local culture, is it the right goal for all groups? How can the way a group operates make consensus more or less likely. Just what *is* consensus, anyway? Why is it important?

Once a decision is made, how important is it to stick with the decision? Is it easy? Are there effective con-running styles in which decisions are frequently reopened?

If you have experience working in different fannish groups, can you show how different approaches are used. Are some more effective than others?

Is there a gentle art of persuasion?

### **Rightsizing and Marketing**

Discovering Your Inner Convention and Telling People About It.[2 related items]

“Right-sizing” is an awful word coined by over-paid management theorists to describe the process of shrinking an organization to its natural size (when the natural size is larger, it’s called “growth” and doesn’t need a management theorist to explain it). Is “right-sizing” an appropriate concept for conventions? Why or why not?

What sorts of things affect the natural, optimal size for a con? Facilities? The locality? The committee? Other things? All of them?

How can you estimate the optimal size for your con? Are there signs which point to a con which is too large or too small? Use examples, when possible.

Who *are* you, and who do you *want* to be?

If you think you need to shrink your con, how do you do it? Can you gain insight from your concept of what your con is? Do you do a crash diet or gradual weight-loss?

Finally, once you discover your inner convention, how do you tell people about it? And how do you manage the feedback (ahem) when they find out?

### **Keeping Things from Going Stale**

There’s a tendency to leave well enough alone, particularly when things are going good. That’s fine, but eventually even the best ideas get a bit stale. So, how do the “good” keep going, even

when the going *isn’t* tough?

How does one keep a well-run con from getting stale? There are two models: continuous incremental change and occasional revolution. Is one better than the other? Easier to do? Better at eliminating staleness?

Even if you keep one area of a convention exciting (e.g., program), could your convention as a whole become *mundane*???

Does your home con have any systematic ways to keep from getting stale? Do you know of any that work well? (Or any that don’t work well?) Is a formal effort to do this even worthwhile, or is it just more bureaucratic crap to get in a con-runner’s way?

Is it worthwhile rotating people out of areas regularly? Even if they’re doing a good job? Even if they don’t want to? (And, in either case, how do you best do that?)

### **Computers: When Not to Use Them - a Midnight Horror Panel!**

Nearly everyone has been on the edges (at least) of a fiasco where someone decided to do a super-computerized job for a con, and made a complete mess of it. So where *is* it appropriate to computerize? Can either of the extreme positions (“never” and “always”) be defended?

Discuss some computerization failures that you have reasonably first-hand knowledge of. Are there any common threads amongst them? Real-world computerizations tend to fail because the systems were poorly thought out, or too unreliable for the application, or inadequately tested and hence buggy, or not designed for the end-user, or not designed to address the actual application, or require too much training for random volunteers, or are just not tested in real-life situations. Do any of these fit your experiences?

Now let’s talk about successful computerizations. (*Are* there any?) What do they have in common? Are they generally less ambitious than the failures? Designed by sharper people? Or what?

How can one tell if a given proposal is a good one? What can a convention manager do to make a computerization succeed? Should pre-con and at-con systems be subject to different standards?



And, in the end, are there applications which are simply too important to be done by computer?

### **Ghosts and Parasites**

'Ghosts' are people who participate in convention activities without purchasing a membership. 'Parasites' are people who buy a membership, but who use the convention as a venue to pursue their own, unrelated (and sometimes inimical) activities. Are either or both a problem at your home convention? In other conventions you attend regularly? Do you feel they are a problem generally?

Why are they a problem (or why not?) Is it even appropriate to lump them together as a single topic? Do you disagree with either of the definitions given above?

Should anything be done about them? What? Can they be tamed or brought into your convention community? Have you taken measures against either? Were they successful? Why or why not? Are you considering taking any actions against either?

### **Cutting Your Losses**

OK, you have a disaster ripening on your hands. Maybe a little problem is growing into a large problem. How do you know when it's time to stop tinkering and take drastic action? Drastic action, while popular with armchair con-runners, is difficult to do in practice, since it usually involves hurting someone, and leaves you as the villain.

(Examples: a friend is screwing up in a sensitive position, promises made regarding a piece of your convention will cost mucho money, your space arrangements are changing dramatically.....). Discuss the plusses and minuses of being proactive, whatever the problem. Share philosophies, problems.....solutions?

### **After the Con Is Over**

Once the con is over, the committee is usually ready to go to sleep for a while. After all, it's over, isn't it? What *is* involved in closing out a con?

To start with, how does one debrief a con to learn from its mistakes without re-fighting all the wars? Are there debriefing techniques which can help to retain the lessons learned? Are debriefings

useful? Are they necessary? Is a blame-free discussion even possible?

What sorts of things are needed to keep the group together? If the con went badly, how can the wounds be healed enough that the group can do the next con better? (This is the old lessons-learned issue again.)

The problems after a poor con are quite different than after a good one, but are they completely different? Can you describe the differences and similarities? Be sure to talk about both regionals and Worldcons.

What is the role of failure?

## **Special Events**

### **"Chair Building"**

A "touchy-feelie" team-building workshop for those who like the stuff—scheduled for Friday afternoon so as not to offend the rest of youse ....

### **Jewish Services**

Friday at sunset, and Saturday following afternoon program

### **"Spin City"**

Friday night ice-breaker/opener. We hope to do it in the con suite. Please, tell us your disasters (real or imaginary!), and be prepared to do damage control with others.....

### **Kirk Poland Does Smofcon**

(To Tell Them Truth with well-known(?) convention stories, in the Readercon style)— Convention stories frequently (often? always?) get mangled in the telling. What's the real scoop on the great disasters or near-disasters of the past?

How well do you really know what happened?

### **1998 Smofcon Selection and announcements of future bids**

General "inquisitional" question time—This is just to answer additional questions not adequately explained by the material in the con suite. (There will not be "the usual" evening presentation.)

## Workshops

### Break-outs

#### “Birds-of-a-feather”

(note: content will be particularly strongly determined by attendees in these items.)

#### Parliamentary Procedure

How to understand (and use) it. What rules should be used for Business Meetings?

#### Comic Cons and SF Cons

How are they alike? How are they distinct from each other? Is it possible to be fans of both, or to get fans of one interested in the other? Is it desirable?

#### Sponsorships

Sponsorship of convention activities by external groups is fraught with difficulties, especially when the external group is completely mundane. How does sf-community-based and non-sf-community-based sponsorship differ? Where has sponsorship worked? Where has it failed? Should sponsorship be allowed? Encouraged?

Are there practical steps which might be taken to make sponsorship work better? Is it ever worth it? Is sponsorship potentially a useful source of revenue for cons? An ethical one?

#### How to Do Publications (Web)

A discussion and (ideally) “show-and-tell” about effective web design that can help you to market your group or convention.

#### How to Do Publications (print)

A how-to on “book” productions. From progress reports and program books to hardcovers. Bring samples, suggestions, and horror stories.

#### Art Show Issues: Building, Running, Money Concerns and Philosophy....

How do you build an art show out of “native” supplies? Alternately, a discussion of the “mission” of convention art shows.....or, tax/money issues!

What’s hot and controversial these days? Workshop *your* particular Art Show concern with others of like mind!

## How To...Program

The nitty-gritty of putting the program together. Do you use computers or darts? Index cards or relational data bases? Re-invent the wheel with us. Learn — and share!

#### Improving Worldcon Fan Exhibits

How can these exhibits be freshened up for the coming years? Brainstorm, and work up ways to improve the exhibits that tell who we are.

#### Dealing with Emergencies

We’ve all dealt with emergencies — the printer is late with the Program Book; the GoH’s plane is fogged in, H\*r!\*n \*ll\*s\*n has just offered to be on Program — and we’re pretty good at it, aren’t we? (Pause for a round of self-congratulations.)

But do we know how to deal with *real*, life-threatening emergencies, like a serious medical issue, or a fire, or a bomb threat? Something that needs an immediate and effective response, and can’t wait for a committee decision? Something where the Real World <gasp> impinges on *us*????

Remember—sometimes, knowing when *not* to do something yourself is the first step on the path to wisdom....

#### Gaming at Conventions

Where does it fit? Is it a plus or a problem? How can you make gaming work at your convention, and why you should consider it!

#### Money Handling [Special request from Buccaneer]

Money: it may have a tendency to stray. How can you keep this from happening, in an organized and effective way? May include tracking and securing equipment (whether owned by individuals or rented) and other convention items as well.

#### Real-World Interface: Working with Publishers

Publishers are people, too: talk about convention running with a live one!

How can you work with each other to mutual benefit? What are the tacit expectations and common pitfalls fans encounter when they interface

with real-life economics? What do publishers need from the cons they attend? What do they expect? What things do con-runners frequently do that really bugs publishers? What do publishers do that really bugs con-runners?

What is the role of the program book ad in the publisher's advertising program? What can cons do to make themselves more attractive to publishers?

Here's a chance to ask a Real Live Publisher who understands cons and con-runners.

### **Hotel Resumes**

Another "how-to" on techniques of writing a resume your hotel might actually understand and follow! (Also, is there any software to help with this?—share!) This item should cover F&B, room set-up, and a whole lot more.

# MASSCATATONIC UNIVERSITY

## Graduate School of SMOFology – Course Catalog

### [SMOFCON 15]

| <u>Course<br/>Dept/No./Title</u> | <u>Course<br/>Description</u> [Courses boxed; wkshps. in italics] | <u>Room<br/>&amp; Time</u> | <u>Prof<br/>&amp; TA's</u> |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
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### *Friday*

|   |  |                   |                |
|---|--|-------------------|----------------|
| Engin. 223<br><b>Building the Chair</b> | A touchy-feelie team-building thang for those who like that sorta stuff. | Kendall<br>2-4:30 | <b>P.Olson</b> |
|---|--|-------------------|----------------|

~~Relig.Stud. 117      Jewish Services. Shabbat Shalom.      3:30-4:30~~

|                              |   |                   |   |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Psych.322<br><b>Memories</b> | What do we need to remember & why? How applicable are these things to con-running? Why hasn't anybody done an FAQ before? | Kendall<br>4:30-6 | <b>L.Mann</b><br>J.Siclari<br>P.R.Pavlat<br>D.Smith |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|

HomeEc. 001      Dinner. Food for the soul & mind is not enough. **Eat.**      6-8

|                                     |   |                |  |
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| Elem.Ed.001<br><b>First Smofcon</b> | Smofcon is different from other conventions – it nearly requires that you interact. Find out how to do so -- and why you should. Why do so many people think Smofcon is "by invitation only"? | Kendall<br>8-9 | <b>M.Burstein</b><br>S.Sbarsky<br>T.R.Smith<br>K.Bloom<br>J.Dennis |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------|--|

*Govt. 100  
Parliamentary  
Procedure*      *How to understand and use parliamentary procedure. What rules should be used?*      8-9      *K.Standlee  
B.Yalow*

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| Hist.422<br><b>Traditions &amp;<br/>One-Shots</b> | Where do Worldcons & Westercons really fit? How do you maintain a regional flavor in a rotating convention? Should you even try? How much should a local con's culture influence a large, rotating one? | Kendall<br>9-10 | <b>J.Lorentz</b><br>TNH<br>S.Woehrle<br>M.Deutsch<br>F.Duarte |
|---|---|-----------------|---|

*Pop.Cult.297  
Comic Cons &  
SF Cons*      *What goes on at a comic con? Why is the dealers' room the center of the con? How do fans & pros meet?*      9-10      *P.Fremon  
B.Neville*

|                              |  |       |                        |
|------------------------------|--|-------|------------------------|
| Comm.533<br><b>Spin City</b> | Ice-breaker/opener. Do's & don'ts of damage control for disasters. | 10-11 | J.Siclari<br>M.L.Olson |
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## Saturday

|                                    |  |                  |   |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|---|
| Cabal666<br><b>Empire Building</b> | Sometimes, people on committees settle into a rut resembling an empire – and the empire becomes more important than the con. Why are they built? How can they be toppled without destroying a con? | Dunster<br>10-11 | <b>Daugherty</b><br>P.Selkirk<br>KIM C.<br>T.Dashoff<br>R.Shepard |
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| <i>Finance309</i><br><i>Sponsorships</i> | <i>Where has sponsorship of con activities worked? Where has it failed? Should it be encouraged?</i> | <del>10-11</del><br>5:15-6:00 | <i>S.Dennis</i><br><i>G.Feldbaum</i> |
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| Geography419<br><b>Dealing with Dispersed Committees</b> | How is a geographically dispersed committee different from a geographically condensed one? What sorts of problems does the dispersed committee face that the local one avoids? How bid a deal is it, anyway? | Dunster<br>11-12 | <b>J.Mann</b><br>K.Standlee<br>R.Sachter<br>Easterbrook |
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| <i>Comp.Rel.276</i><br><i>How to Do Publications (Web)</i> | <i>A discussion and "show and tell" about effective web design to help market a group or con.</i> | <i>11-12</i> | <i>S.Sbarsky</i><br><i>S.Jaffe</i><br><i>L.Mann</i> |
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|           |        |         |  |
|-----------|--------|---------|--|
| HomeEc002 | Lunch. | 12-1:30 |  |
|-----------|--------|---------|--|

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| Rel&Law 729<br><b>Philosophy of Program</b> | Should a convention program be "community" or "content" based? When is each appropriate? Looks at "One Big Happy Family" vs. "N-Ring Circus." | Dunster<br>1:30-2:30 | <b>P.Olson</b><br>E.Van<br>B.Yalow<br>PNH |
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|   |  |                  |  |
|---|--|------------------|--|
| <i>Journ.147</i><br><i>How to do Publications (Print)</i> | <i>A how-to on "book" productions: from progress reports to program books to hardcover fiction and non-fiction. Bring samples, ideas &amp; horror stories.</i> | <i>1:30-2:30</i> | <i>L.Hertel</i><br><i>D.Thayer</i><br><i>T.Szczesuil</i> |
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|  |   |                      |   |
|--|---|----------------------|---|
| InterntlRel004<br><b>Real World Mgt. &amp; Con. Mgt.</b> | How can the best techniques of people and issue Management in the real world be applied to con running? What are the primary rewards needed to keep a volunteer population engaged? | Dunster<br>2:30-3:30 | <b>M.L.Olson</b><br>Easterbrook<br>Benveniste<br>J.Sapienza |
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|   |   |                  |   |
|---|---|------------------|---|
| <i>Art500</i><br><i>Art Show Issues</i> | <i>How do you build an art show out of "native" supplies? Alternately, a discussion of the "mission" of convention art shows. What's hot &amp; controversial in art shows these days?</i> | <i>2:30-3:30</i> | <i>G.E.Dennett</i><br><i>J.Dashoff</i><br><i>M.Hertel</i><br><i>G.Louie</i> |
|---|---|------------------|---|

*Filking at Conventions*

*2:30-2:30*

|   |  |                      |  |
|---|--|----------------------|--|
| ConfMgt.444<br><b>Making Mtgs.<br/>Work</b> | How can meetings work for the group and not just bore them to tears? How should meetings function? What styles are appropriate for different groups? Is consensus both desirable & achievable? | Dunster<br>3:30-4:30 | <b>J.Siclari</b><br>T.Whitmore<br>M.L.Olson<br>L.Turek |
|---|--|----------------------|--|

*How to Deal with Dealers*

*3:30-4:30*

*CompSci.101*

*How to Program*

*The nitty-gritty of putting the program together. Do you use computers? Darts?*

3:30-4:30

*B.Yalow  
D.Branford*

|   |   |                      |   |
|---|---|----------------------|---|
| Mkt. 421A<br><b>Rightsizing &amp;<br/>Marketing</b> | <b>Finding your inner con.</b><br>What sorts of things affect the optimal size for a con? Who are you, and who do you want to be? What is the healthiest way to shrink? | Dunster<br>4:30-5:15 | <b>L.Smith</b><br>W.Sadorus<br>S.Breidbart<br>TNH |
|---|---|----------------------|---|

*communications Workshop*

*4:30-6*

*CrisisMgt.392*

*Dealing with  
Emergencies*

*How do we deal with real, life-threatening emergencies - fire, bomb, heart attack?*

4:30-5:15

*K.Siegel*

|   |  |                   |   |
|---|--|-------------------|---|
| Mkt. 421B<br><b>Rightsizing &amp;<br/>Marketing</b> | <b>Telling people about it.</b><br>Once you discover your inner convention, how do you tell people about it? How should you manage the feedback of various populations about your decisions? | Dunster<br>5:15-6 | <b>D.Geisler</b><br>L.Mann<br>L.Smith<br>M.Zipser<br>M.Citrak |
|---|--|-------------------|---|

*IntDesign133*

*Improving  
Worldcon Fan  
Exhibits*

*What can be done to plan, create and archive useful, effective and interesting fan exhibits when the Worldcon doesn't stay in one place?*

*10-11*

*G.Feldbaum*

~~Relig.Stud.117~~

~~Jewish Services.~~

~~5:30-6~~

HomeEc003

Dinner.

6-8:30

|   |   |                      |   |
|---|---|----------------------|---|
| HVAC333<br><b>Keeping Things<br/>From Going Stale</b> | How does a well-run con keep from going stale? Which is better, easier & more practical for con-running & change: continuous incremental change, or occasional revolution? Can you & should you keep people from "ruts" in con running? | Kendall<br>8:30-9:30 | <b>N.Cobb</b><br>B.Quinn<br>D.Snyder<br>T.Illingworth<br>B.Zipser |
|---|---|----------------------|---|

*Athletics400*

*Gaming at Cons*

*Games? I think they're in 204. You know, the closet. What do gamers need?*

8:30-9:30

*K.McCormic*

Orienteering303

Smofcon 1998

Selection

9:30-10

|  |  |                  |  |
|--|--|------------------|--|
| PolishStud533<br><b>Kirk Poland</b><br><b>Does Smofcon</b> | Con stories frequently get mangled in the telling. What's the real scoop on the great disasters or near-disasters of the past? What really HAPPENED? | Kendall<br>10-11 | M.Burstein<br>T.Whitmore<br>Broomhead<br>E.Van |
|--|--|------------------|--|

|   |  |                     |        |
|---|--|---------------------|--------|
| Crash2000<br><b>Computerization</b><br><b>Disasters</b> | When is it appropriate to computerize jobs in a con? <b>Midnight Horror Panel.</b> | Kendall<br>Midnight | Chorus |
|---|--|---------------------|--------|

## Sunday

|   |   |                  |   |
|---|---|------------------|---|
| Zoology715<br><b>Ghosts &amp;</b><br><b>Parasites</b> | "Ghosts" are people who participate in cons without purchasing memberships; "parasites" buy memberships but then use the con to pursue their own, unrelated (and sometimes inimical) activities. Are they a problem? If so, what measures may be successful for coping? | Dunster<br>11-12 | <b>deGuardiola</b><br>M.Siladi<br>J.Mann<br>W.Sadorus<br>M.Pins |
|---|---|------------------|---|

Acct.429  
Cash  
Handling

*Money: it may have a tendency to stray. How can you keep an eye on \$\$ in an organized, effective way?*

11-12

P.R.Pavlat  
D.Cantor

Epistemic487  
"Inquisition"  
as needed

12-12:30

HomeEc004  
Lunch

12/12:30-1:30

|   |  |                      |  |
|---|--|----------------------|--|
| ShipRats290<br><b>Cutting your</b><br><b>Losses</b> | So there's this disaster, see. Or maybe just a little problem that's slowly becoming a bigger one. How do you know when it's time to stop tinkering and take drastic action? Discuss the plusses and minuses of being proactive, whatever the problem. | Dunster<br>1:30-2:30 | <b>R.Sachter</b><br>P.R.Pavlat<br>T.Veal<br>T.Whitmore<br>L.Hertel |
|---|--|----------------------|--|

Sociology516  
Real World  
Interface

*Cons & Publishers*  
*How can you effectively work with publishers?*

1:30-2:30

PNH

|  |   |                      |   |
|--|---|----------------------|---|
| Archaeology490<br><b>After the Con</b><br><b>is over</b> | Once the con is over, everybody goes to sleep, right? What do we have to do to bring closure? How can we debrief without excess finger-pointing? What is the role of failure? | Dunster<br>2:30-3:30 | <b>P.Olson</b><br>J.Lorentz<br>T.Lewis<br>K.Meschke |
|--|---|----------------------|---|

Theology720  
Hotel Resumes

*A "how-to" on techniques of writing a resume your hotel might understand and even follow.*

2:30-3:30

B.Yalow  
N.Cobb

# Smofcon 15 Restaurant and Area Guide

## Introduction

Welcome to the Smofcon 15 Restaurant Guide.

The Review Team for this Guide was Mark Olson (MLO), Tony Lewis (ARL), and Chip Hitchcock (CJH). Our credentials are that we all like food, we all eat, and MLO and ARL work nearby, while CJH lives nearby. The Review Team dedicated lunch hours and dinners to the unenviable task of discovering the best places to eat for Smofcon. It was a hard, never-ending task. Pity us.

The ratings:

\*\* — OK

\*\*\* — good.

\*\*\*\* — better.

\*\*\*\*\* — really great.

## Overview

Smofcon 15's hotel, the Doubletree Suites, is on the Charles River in the Brighton neighborhood of Boston. Just upriver is the Harvard Business School, while Cambridge lies on the other side of the Charles. (We'll get a map up here one of these days!) Of the nearby universities, Harvard is closest — we're located about a city block from the edge of its campus; Boston University is a bit further away on the Boston side of the river. (Unlike Harvard and MIT, though, it's not terribly easy to get to on foot from the Doubletree, and none of us know the area around BU as well, so there'll probably be fewer reviews from there.) MIT is about a mile downriver from the Doubletree. The presence of three major universities makes for a particularly interesting area for eating and shopping.

There are three main eating areas in the vicinity: Brighton, Harvard Square and Central Square, with Kendall Square (MIT) a little bit further off. Each has its own, special character.

**Brighton** is a place where real people live, including many students from the nearby univer-

sities. The area is full of little restaurants, but lacks the big-name, fancy places you can find in Cambridge. The closest Brighton restaurants are 2-3 blocks from the hotel and quite walkable.

**Harvard (Hahva'd) Square** is the ritziest area, and the most interesting. It caters to students, so it's not hopelessly pricey, but they're Harvard students so pinching pennies isn't top on the list of priorities. Harvard Square is also the best bookstore area in Boston. Harvard Square is 6-7 blocks from the hotel along the Charles River. Unless the weather is nasty, it's a pleasant walk.

**Central Square** is roughly halfway between Harvard and MIT. It's definitely a low-rent, student district compared to Harvard Square. Where Harvard Square has boutiques, Central Square has used furniture stores. Where Harvard Square has fine restaurants, Central Square has ethnic ones (though as you get closer to MIT, Central Square boasts some top-of-the-line places, too.) Central Square has at least a half-dozen Indian restaurants, a half-dozen Chinese, and several Middle Eastern, besides seafood, Ethiopian, Mexican, Caribbean and others. Central Square is about the same distance from the hotel as Harvard Square, but straight away from the Charles rather than along it.

All of the neighborhoods anywhere near the hotel are safe for pedestrians. They're all working class/student areas with moderately grungy housing. If you decide to go wandering, take a map, since neither Boston nor Cambridge ever heard of rectilinear street plans. (It's near here that the intersection John W. Campbell raved about in an editorial in Analog that had all one way streets heading into intersection — and none leading out.) (MLO: I regularly, year-round walk from the Doubletree to Harvard or Central Squares for lunch, but I'd probably recommend a cab at night for people not terribly familiar with the area.)



## Restaurant Reviews

We've grouped our reviews by area. The list below is the high points — places we recommend — plus a smattering of OK joints. We review other good places, too.

### Allston/Brighton

#### Café Brazil [Brazilian]

421 Cambridge Street, Allston, MA 02134.  
617-789-5980

Lunch 11.30 to 4.00 pm

Dinner from 4.00 pm to ??

Middle-class Brazilian food at reasonable prices; especially good for lunch. To see what the cuisine is like, try the Brazil 2001, a selection of most of the dishes and a well-liked favorite. ARL likes the bife a cavalo (grilled marinated beef on rice with sauteed onions and cabbage, farofa (ground casava root, onion, and bacon) and fried eggs). All entrees come with rice and stewed black turtle beans. Although Brazilian cuisine is a bit heavy on meat, they do have vegetarian meals. This is a favorite with MLO as well who likes the Brazil 2001 especially.

Café Brazil is one of the closest restaurants, a 3-long-block walk from the Doubletree, and also one of the better and more interesting. — MLO \* ARL rating \*\*\*\*

#### Herrell's [ice cream]

155 Brighton Ave., Allston, MA

Belonging to the founder of Steve's (one of the originators of the ice cream boom >20 years ago), who sold the rights to the name and then found he had ice cream in his blood. Great ice cream, sauces, toppings, coffees, and other desserts. A tossup as to whether this is better than Toscanini's (Cambridge: on Main St. and in the MIT student center); T is slightly more creative (avocado sorbet?) but Steve's is closer to the Smofcon hotel (almost walking distance, which is a good idea after one of their sundaes). — CJH

#### North East Brewing Co. [brewpub]

1314 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton, MA (~2 miles from hotel )  
566-6699

Brewpub, with wide range of prizewinning beers; moderate-size menu including pastas, grilled meat/fish, other entrees @ \$12-15. Go early to avoid live music. — CJH rating \*\*\*

#### Sports Depot [sports bar & grill]

353 Cambridge St, Allston, MA  
783-2300

The food is edible, its menu general American, its prices not unreasonable, its televisions omnipresent and its proximity to the hotel its greatest feature.— MLO rating \*\*

#### Sunset Grill [Brewpub]

130 Brighton Ave., Allston, MA  
254-1331

Near Boston University (>1 mile from hotel.) College portions and prices (top entree is <\$15), but good food (peppered grilled prime rib, schrod Monterey, ...) and over 300 beers, 100 of them on tap — stouts under nitrogen, Real Ale, even Belgian beers. Will fill up on Friday and Saturday nights, but worth a visit right after program ends. Monster desserts; if none of them appeal, see Herrell's across the street. — CJH rating \*\*\*

#### UVA [Italian]

1418 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton, MA (~2 miles from hotel )

Good, frequently-changing menu of modern Italian-inspired dishes (grilled lamb steak with bean stew, monkfish, ...) @ \$12-20; also, design-your-own pasta dish (choose 1 of 4 pastas, 1 of 5 sauces, and as many toppings (onions, garlic, olives, spinach, mushrooms, pancetta, sausage, ...) as interest you, for \$12-16 depending on how many toppings you pick. Good choices for wine-by-the-glass, and bottles at non-inflated prices; one of Chip and Davey's all time favorites. Closed Sundays. (OTOH, come in early for the Wednesday-night wine tasting....) — CJH rating \*\*\*\*

## Harvard Square

### Mr. & Mrs. Bartley's Burger Cottage

[expensive, but worth it, fresh meat ground on site as required; lime rickies, real french fried potatoes and onion rings]

1246 Mass Ave

Bartley's Burger Cottage is a Cambridge tradition. It's a hole-in-the-wall, crowded, student sort of place with a huge variety (40? 60? 80? different kinds) of hamburgers. There is other food available, but you go there for a hamburger. Bartley's is not your standard, assembly-line hamburger shop — it's a one-of-a-kind. No reservations, of course.

-- MLO \*\*\*

### Bertucci's [pizza & Italian]

21 Brattle (Harvard Square)

799 Main (between Central Sq and MIT)

Bertucci's is a very high-end pizza and general Italian restaurant. (It's not gourmet Italian; it's gourmet pizza.) Excellent food, reasonable prices, great bread, usually crowded. It's a Boston-area chain with probably a dozen restaurants total. This location is smaller than the Bertucci's in Central Square. -- MLO \*\*\*

### Café Bombay [Indian]

In the Galleria. Buffet

### Café Sushi [Japanese]

1105 Mass Ave (halfway between Harvard and Central Squares)

492-0434

Café Sushi is a mostly-sushi restaurant which is a favorite place for many local software developers. (I can't speak to the quality of the bait sold there myself, but many of my colleagues like it a lot.) Entrees are in the \$12-\$18 range. -- MLO \*\*\*

### Delhi Darbar [Indian]

Holyoke Center. Not as good as Café Bombay.

### Dolphin Seafood [seafood]

1105 Mass Ave. (upper deck of two-level shop frontage)

Not as inventive or high quality as Legal, but

substantially cheaper and less crowded (and closer to the Smofcon hotel). -- CJH \*\*\*

### Herrell's [ice cream]

15 Dunster St.

See under Allston/Brighton; this one is in a former bank, with seating in the vault. -- CJH

### John Harvard's Brew House [microbrewery]

33 Dunster

This is the only microbrewery in Harvard Square. The beer and food are average or better. It's in the basement of the building which houses Pandemonium, the SF bookstore. -- MLO \*\*\*

### The Skewers [modified middle-Eastern food]

92 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

617-491-3079

Monday-Sunday 11 am - 11 pm

Somewhat Americanized middle Eastern food plus a variety of burgers, teriyaki, steak, etc. You can get kabobs, falafel, hummos, shawarma (recommended), salads. They have takeout and vegetarian meals. -- MLO \*\*\*

### Upstairs at the Pudding [eclectic/Italian]

10 Holyoke St — Harvard Square

864-1933

The Hasty Pudding is a Harvard student club with theatrical pretensions and a great deal of history. (Five US presidents were members in their student days, for example.) Nowadays, it does some theater, but as far as I know its days as a student dining club are done.

Upstairs at the Pudding is an excellent restaurant located on the top floor of the Hasty Pudding. It's one of the nicest restaurants in Harvard Square. (It has a great roof-top dining area, too, but that is probably only of theoretical interest in December.) The cuisine is non-ethnic and fairly eclectic, but everything is superb. (For example, they served the best Caesar salad I've ever eaten, bar none.) I've eaten there at lunch time on business, but never at dinner. Lunches can easily run up to \$20 or \$25, and I would expect dinners to be correspondingly expensive.

Reservations are mandatory. -- MLO \*\*\*\*\*

**Yenching [Chinese]**

Reasonable Chinese at reasonable prices; good solid Szechuan food, nothing remarkable. -- MLO \*\*\*

**Pandemonium Books & Games**

Located in The Garage. Cambridge's SF Bookstore.

**Central Square**

Central Square has a variety of fast food places, including McDonald's, Au Bon Pain, a chicken place and others. This section shows a few of the more interesting restaurants.

**Asmara [Ethiopian/Eritrean]**

739 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139.

617-864-7447 (takeout).

Sunday-Thursday 11.30 am to 10.30 pm

Friday-Saturday 11.30 am to 11.30 pm

Excellent Ethiopian and Eritrean food at reasonable prices. Most meals are served on injera (a spongy bread) with no utensils; you tear off pieces of injera and use them to scoop up food and sauces (very fannish). Seasonings range from mild to very spicy—you can ask for your level. ARL particularly likes the alicha beghi-yebeg alicha (lamb in a mild sauce) and keih tesbhi-kay watt (beef in pepper sauce). For unknown reasons the desserts are mostly French. They have vegetarian meals. — ARL

**Bertucci's [pizza & Italian]**

799 Main (between Central Sq and MIT)

Bertucci's is a very high-end pizza and general Italian restaurant. (It's not gourmet Italian; it's gourmet pizza.) Excellent food, reasonable prices, great bread, usually crowded. It's a Boston-area chain with probably a dozen restaurants total. This location is larger than the Bertucci's in Harvard Square. — MLO rating: \*\*\*

**India Pavilion [Indian]**

17 Central Square

A good, solid Indian restaurant. It's not gourmet, but I've never been disappointed. Entrees in

the \$6 — \$10 region. Not terribly large. [be sure to note Alice's favorite-coconut soup] — ARL rating \*\*\*

**La Groceria [Italian]**

853 Main

547-9258

A fairly high-class Italian place with excellent antipasto. — MLO rating \*\*\*\*

**Mary Chung's [Chinese]**

464 Mass Ave

864-1991

Mary Chung is an old-line Chinese place which has been around nearly as long as Joyce Chen's and these days is considerably better. It's not large or expensive, and the food is quite good. Generally the spicy food is more than averagely spicy for the Boston area. They don't take credit cards. — MLO rating: \*\*\*

**Mimi's Oriental Grill [East Asian]**

[eclectic selection of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Taiwanese, Mongolian]

950 Mass Ave — Central Sq (towards Harvard Sq.)

Mimi's is excellent and features a wider range of oriental food than the usual Chinese place. The food is uniformly excellent and reasonably (but not cheaply) priced. — MLO rating: \*\*\*\*

**Roka [Japanese]**

1001 Mass Ave

661-0344

A decent Japanese place about mid-way between Harvard and Central Squares. It's downstairs (below street level). — MLO rating: \*\*\*\*

**Near MIT****Bertucci's [pizza & Italian]**

799 Main (between Central Sq and MIT)

Bertucci's is a very high-end pizza and general Italian restaurant. (It's not gourmet Italian; it's gourmet pizza.) Excellent food, reasonable prices, great bread, usually crowded. It's a Boston-area

chain with probably a dozen restaurants total. This location is larger than the Bertucci's in Harvard Square. — MLO rating: \*\*\*

### **Legal Sea Foods** [seafood]

5 Cambridge Center  
864-3400

Legal Sea Foods is a chain of about ten restaurants which give consistently the best seafood in Boston. Prices tend to be high, the restaurants are always crowded (Their web page says they take reservations - or expect an hour's wait at dinner time). Entrees run \$10 — \$20. — MLO rating: \*\*\*\*

### **Royal East** [Chinese]

782 Main St — Central Square  
661-1660

The Royal East is one of the two best Chinese restaurants I know of in Cambridge. It's large, reasonably priced and seems to attract quite a few Chinese students from MIT which is nearby. If you're looking for Chinese, this is where I'd recommend. Parking is difficult, since the only parking nearby is on-street, and there's not enough of it. — MLO rating: \*\*\*\*

### **Toscanini's Ice Cream** [Ice Cream]

899 Main St; also MIT Student Center (84 Mass Ave.)

Undoubtedly the most inventive ice cream make around Boston; wonderfully dense base, intense chocolate and a rotating assortment of flavors (Gingersnap Molasses is a classic) including sorbets. A few other desserts, such as creme "brulee" with a torch. — CJH rating:\*\*\*\*

(The **MIT Student Center** is worth a pilgrimage to see the MITSFS, owners of the largest SF library in the known Universe. Yes, there are several larger collections, but they're private; MITSFS hours are frequent if irregular (mostly evenings).)

### **Café Budapest**

downtown under the Copley Plaza hotel.

One of the best (and most expensive) restaurants in Boston. Hungarian high cuisine and,

IMHO, worth it. Expect to spend \$50/person plus alcohol. — MLO rating: \*\*\*\*\*

### **Riverside Pizza** [pizza, etc.]

350 River St.  
354-8800

Riverside Pizza is probably the closest really cheap eating place to Smofcon. It's two blocks away, crossing the Charles on the River St. Bridge and then two short blocks in from the river. It's a better-than-typical neighborhood Pizza, Subs, Seafood, etc., place. There is a bar attached. I used to work near there and it was a regular lunch place for a lot of people. No one died from it. — MLO rating: \*\*

### **Other nearby places of interest**

- \* McIntyre & Moore (great used scholarly bookstore; Harvard Square)
- \* Wordsworth (discount bookstore; Harvard Square)
- \* Pandemonium Books and Games
- \* Trader Joe's (yuppie grocery; just across the Charles)

### **Interesting things, elsewhere in Boston**

- \* New England Mobile Book Fair (cavernous discount bookstore; Newton)

# Smofcon 15 Members & Fannish Resumes

by John Lorentz

Below is a list of most of the folks who are attending Smofcon this year, along with some information about them. The list has been edited somewhat—if we included *everything* that these people have accomplished, the list would never end!

## Sue Ellen Adkins

PO Box 64372

Sunnyvale, CA 94088

(408) 734-3183

sea@netcom.com

*Home Convention:* none

*Areas of Interest:* In addition to the areas I've worked, desktop publishing (PRs, pocket programs, etc.) and techno-fandom

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1992

*First Convention:* Silicon 1992

*First Convention Worked on:* Westercon 1993

*Conventions Worked On:* Westercons, OryCon (1997)

*WorldCon Experience:* 1993 (art show, ops, masquerade); 1996 (ops)

*Conventions Chaired:* none

*Dislikes:* boredom (except when I'm in ops)

*Comments:* Because of unpredictable health problems, I prefer work that can be done prior to the con; my ability to work at the con can be limited.

## Adina Adler

45 St. Sauveur Ct

Cambridge, MA 02138

(617) 868-0978

aadler@kinesisinc.com

## Claire & Dave Anderson

12 Drew Street

Waltham, MA 02154-2716

(781) 647-5638

claire@daveanderson.com and

dave@daveanderson.com

## Bobbi Armbruster

2334 Beach Ave

Venice, CA 90291-4603

(310) 822-3406

## Bonnie Atwood

6 Possum Hollow Lane

Natick, MA 01760

(508) 653-1077

bonnielee@ultranet.com

## Ted Atwood

6 Possum Hollow Lane

Natick, MA 01760

(508) 653-1077

alchemist@delphi.com or

alkmyst@ma.ultranet.com

*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show, Convention Operations

*Year Entered Fandom:* mid '50's when I started buying it

*First Convention:* Boskone V (1968)

*First Convention Worked on:* Confederation followed by Philcon (1986)

*Conventions Worked On:* Arisia, Balticon,

Disclave, Lunacon, Philcon, Albacon

*Worldcon Experience:* Yes

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone XXXV (with Bonnie)

*Comment:* I did stay out of conventions from

1969 (Boskone VI) until Noreascon 2. Then

Bonnie saw this item in the Middlesex News...

**Shirley Avery**

6142 Waterloo Rd  
Columbia, MD 21045-3101 USA  
(410) 799-7438

[martin.deutsch@jhuapl.edu](mailto:martin.deutsch@jhuapl.edu)

*Home Convention:* Balticon

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1974

*First Convention:* Disclave (1974)

*First Convention Worked on:* DISCON 2

*Conventions Worked On:* Noreascon II & III, Chicon (Last 2), Conadian, Boskone, Philcon, Magicon, New Orleans, Atlanta, World Fantasy Con (Baltimore)

*Worldcon Experience:* Art Show, Move-in, Move-out

**John T. Baldwin**

7700 SW Garden Home Rd #23

Portland, OR 97223

[yastreb@transport.com](mailto:yastreb@transport.com)

*Home Convention:* Currently OryCon, though I'm new to the area and have not yet volunteered to help.

*Areas of Interest:* I'm not too choosy, but I am VERY curious, so I'll try just about anything once or twice. I'm interested in learning all aspects of running a convention, but I prefer positions where I get to move about and deal with Fans and Pros.

*Year Entered Fandom:* '83 or '84

*First Convention:* DalCon <short for Dallas Convention>

*First Convention Worked on:* CactusCon (Phoenix NASFiC)

*Conventions Worked On:* None that come to mind.

*WorldCon Experience:* Worked in Treasury at CactusCon, Gopher at ConFrancisco, Con suite at LACon III, Co-Division Head for Exhibits, Dealers Room, and Art Show at LSC II.

*Conventions Chaired:* OctaCon Co-Chair (it's in Fairbanks, AK. and is kinda small)

*Dislikes:* Lima Beans. People that always seem to know what the problem is, and LOVE to point it out, yet have no CLUE as to the solution.

**Judy Bemis**

1405 Waterwinds Court

Wake Forest, NC 27587

(919) 518-2473

[j\\_bemis@compuserve.com](mailto:j_bemis@compuserve.com)

*Conventions Worked On:* Balticon (security staff 1978); Empiricon (security staff 1978-1979?); Tropicon (Registration 1-5, Dealer room 6, Book Exhibit 7, Co-Chair 8&9, ?10-12, Hotel Liaison 13(part)); Boskone (treasury 1992, ops staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997); Philcon (art show staff 1993, ops staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997)

*WorldCon Experience:* Chicon IV (program ops); Constellation (Program ops (moved from staff to Dept vice head at con)); Lonestarcon ('85 NASFiC) (Program ops?); Confederation (Hotel Liaison staff); Conspiracy (Ops base 1 shift, misc staff jobs); Nolacon (Program Ops office manager); Noreascon 3 (treasury staff, ?); ConFiction (Treasury staff); Chicon V (Budget Office staff); MagiCon (Treasurer); ConFrancisco (Treasury staff); Intersection (Ops staff); LACon (Portrait Gallery, Treasury staff); Lonestarcon (Events office manager)

**Mike Benveniste**

12 Phaneuf St

Middleton, MA 01949

[mhb@mcfi.org](mailto:mhb@mcfi.org)

**Kent Bloom**

1245 Allegheny Drive

Colorado Springs, CO 80919

(719) 522-0387

[Kent.Bloom@InternetMCI.com](mailto:Kent.Bloom@InternetMCI.com)

*Areas of Interest:* Fans, books

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1974

*First Convention:* Disclave

*First Convention Worked on:* Disclave

*Conventions Chaired:* Datclave

*Dislikes:* crowds, noise, confusion, actors

*Comments:* I read a lot of science fiction, and I prefer to socialize with others who also read.

**Drea Branford**

100 Commandant's Way #104

Chelsea, MA 02150

**Seth Breidbart**

PO Box 5157  
 New York, NY 10185  
 (212) 761-1346  
 sethb@panix.com  
*Home Convention:* Boskone  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1972±1  
*First Convention:* 1969 Lunacon  
*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1972  
 (committee)  
*Conventions Worked On:* too many  
*WorldCon Experience:* too much  
*Conventions Chaired:* Lunacon 1988, Lunacon  
 1999  
*Dislikes:* stupid questions

**Ellen Brody**

851 W. Roxbury Parkway  
 Chestnut Hill, MA 02167

**Ann Broomhead**

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**Michael A. Burstein**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1992  
*First Convention:* Arisia '92  
*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 34  
*WorldCon Experience:* Attended LAcon III; been  
 a supporting member of all Worldcons since  
 Magicon

**Nomi Burstein**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1982

*First Convention:* Boskone 19  
*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 20  
*Worldcon Experience:* Attended 2 - Boston in  
 1989 and LA in 1995  
*Dislikes:* Boring panelists (people put on panels  
 that don't know anything about public speak-  
 ing)

**KIM Campbell**

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 York, YO2 4YP GB  
 kcampbell@cix.co.uk or kimc@dircon.co.uk  
<http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~kimc/index.htm>  
*Home Convention:* EasterCon  
*Areas of Interest:* Mostly anything that lets me  
 get in front of a huge audience. In Conrunning  
 terms, keeping security in the "teddy bear"  
 variety and fighting to out wit the "red shirt"  
 brigade, fan politics for fun and profit and  
 trying new things only to discover that I am  
 "good" at.  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1979, via the One Tun,  
 just too late for Seacon '79.  
*First Convention:* 1980 UFPcon, the DeVere,  
 Coventry  
*First Convention Worked on:* See above  
*Conventions Chaired:* Oh No! I've never  
 Chaired a Con! Does this mean I'm not eligible  
 for SmoFcon membership?????  
*Dislikes:* People who either don't listen, or  
 already know all the Right answers.

**Dave Cantor** (but I prefer to be known as Dave C.)

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 Malden, MA 02148-5115  
 (781) 321-4229  
 Dcantor@shore.net  
*Home Convention:* Boskone  
*Areas of Interest:* Treasury, registration, ops, and  
 Monday-morning quarterbacking.  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975  
*First Convention:* Boskone XII  
*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone XII  
*Conventions Worked On:* Philcon, Arisia,  
 Lunacon, Westercon  
*WorldCon Experience:* Noreascon II, registration

co-head; LA Con II, registration pseudo-head; Constellation, treasury assistant; Noreascon III. deputy treasurer; Magicon. head cashier; LA Con III, registration—one of the many seconds-in-command; LoneStarCon, registration—one of the few seconds-in-command.

*Conventions Chaired:* None.

*Dislikes:* Special privileges or consideration for people's friends when there is not enough resource to go around for an essentially first-come, first-served resource, except for convention official guests, of course.

*Comments:* Generally, I don't make short comments. My comments are generally longer-winded than people would consider to be short.

### **Elisabeth Carey**

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lis.carey@worldnet.att.net

*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Programming, press relations, information

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1971

*First Convention:* Boskone 9

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 9

*Conventions Worked On:* Readercon, Noreascon III

*WorldCon Experience:* Noreascon III

### **Michael L. Citrak**

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*Home Convention:* Norwescon

*Areas of Interest:* SF, friends, con-running, computers, costumes, legos

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* PSSTCON 1, 1975

*First Convention Worked on:* PSSTCON 2, 1977

*Conventions Worked On:* Norwescon, Westercon, Orycon, Rustycon, Anglicon, PSSTcon

*WorldCon Experience:* Tear down, masquerades,

bid tables, bid parties

*Conventions Chaired:* Norwescon 17, 18, 19, 20

*Dislikes:* Petty arguing on the SMOFs list, and elsewhere in fandom.

*Comments:* Everyone is the "hero" in their own story...and the sooner one learns that, the sooner one is able to work with that person.

### **Nancy Cobb**

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### **Karen Cooper**

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### **Joni Dashoff,**

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### **Todd Dashoff**

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tdashoff@netaxs.com or Todd.Dashoff@ey.com

*Home Convention:* Philcon, Phrolicon

*Areas of Interest:* Operations, Art Show, Programming, Treasury

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* Star Trek Con-NYC

*First Convention Worked on:* Philcon 1980

*Conventions Worked On:* Lunacon, Boskone, Disclave, Balticon, Minicon, numerous Worldcons

*WorldCon Experience:* Constellation, N3, Confiction, Intersection, Confederation, Magicon, LA Con (II and III), ConFrancisco, etc. (Programming in most of the above; Treasury at ConFrancisco, Program Ops at Intersection)

*Conventions Chaired:* Philcon 1987 (one was enough <g>)



**James & Kathryn Daugherty**

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**Martin Deutsch**

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*Home Convention:* Balticon  
*Areas of Interest:* Art Show  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1974  
*First Convention:* DISCON 2  
*First Convention Worked on:* BALTICON 10 (1976)  
*Conventions Worked On:* Boskone, Philcon, Noreascon II & III, Chicon (Last 2), Conadian, Magicon, Atlanta, New Orleans, World Fantasy Con (Baltimore)  
*WorldCon Experience:* Art Show, Move-in, Move-out  
*Conventions Chaired:* Balticon 11

**Ira "The" Donewitz**

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**Fred Duarte, Jr.**

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**Martin Easterbrook**

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**Elinor J. Fadgen**

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*Home Convention:* Anglicon  
*Areas of Interest:* Programming, Treasury, Registration  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984  
*First Convention:* Panopticon 1985 in New Orleans, LA  
*First Convention Worked on:* Norwescon 1984  
*Conventions Worked On:* Westercon 46 and 50, Norwescon, Rustycon, Dreamcon, Smofcon  
*WorldCon Experience:* Worked in communications & wolunteers in Worldcon of Scotland  
*Conventions Chaired:* Anglicon 97 and 98  
*Dislikes:* Negotiation with media guests  
*Comment:* I love to work on all conventions mainly for the experience acquired and chance to network with other convention runners for suggestions and information. One can never learn too much information and education in the realm of convention running.

**Dale Farmer**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone  
*Areas of Interest:* Ops, logistics, film/video/theatre tech, treasury, art show, and whatever catches my fancy.  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 78 or so  
*First Convention:* August Party  
*First Convention Worked on:* Bosklone

*Conventions Worked On:* Arisia, Boskone, Lunacon, Balticon, Disclave, Worldcons, Philcon, and a bunch of others.

*WorldCon Experience:* many, started in 79.

*Conventions Chaired:* I'm not that crazy.

*Dislikes:* Shortsightedness; petty politics; people who will not change their mind, no matter what evidence is given to them.

*Comment:* Why do I do this?

### **Gary Keith Feldbaum**

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### **George Flynn**

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### **Terry Fong**

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terryf@cam.org  
*Home Convention:* ConCept  
*Areas of Interest:* Programming  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1982  
*First Convention:* Lastcon One (Albany, NY)  
*First Convention Worked on:* Lastcon One  
*Conventions Worked On:* various gaming cons  
*WorldCon Experience:* Finance (staff) and various gopher  
*Conventions Chaired:* ConCept 5,6,7 (vice)  
*Dislikes:* Media Fandom

### **Crickett Fox**

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### **Pam Fremon**

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power.pam@genie.com or pfremon@tiac.net

*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* creative 'n' fun ideas; reaching out to other communities (such as comics fandom)

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1981

*First Convention:* Fanderson I, in York, England

*First Convention Worked on:* Fanderson I

*Conventions Worked On:* various over time

*WorldCon Experience:* chiefly NOREASCON 3

*Conventions Chaired:* Anglicon 97 and 98

*Dislikes:* Standardized spelling. Re: conventions, ...hm; I guess I just hate for them to be over.

*Comment:* Ask a short person and you'll get a short comment?

### **Anne K. Gay**

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### **Deb Geisler**

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dgeisler@acad.suffolk.edu, deb@mcfi.org  
*Home Convention:* Boskone (Arisia -- as program participant)  
*Areas of Interest:* Awkward. In convention running? Almost all of it. Program, facilities, hotel, publicity, publications, art show stuff, hospitality, logistics, registration... wherever there is a need. I'm not to be trusted in treasury; I've no accounting skills.  
*Year Entered Fandom:* 1989  
*First Convention:* Darkover, 1984  
*First Convention Worked on:* Noreascon 3  
*Conventions Worked On:* Arisia, Boskone...I'll pitch in at any convention, but I don't get around much.  
*Worldcon Experience:* Noreascon 3: Chairman's Aide, Studio Film Liaison, Studio Exhibits, Film & Mass Media Programming, Special Events Programming, etc.; MagiCon: "Speaker to Mundanes," Studio Film Liaison, Film & Mass Media Programming, Studio Exhibits,

etc.; Intersection: minor work with pro/program participant registration; LACon3: Newsletter staff; LoneStarCon2: last minute work with Studios & Film Program, exhibits, etc.

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone 36 (1999)

*Dislikes:* Inflexibility disguised as tradition.

Personal opinion disguised as unspecified rumor. Tourists driving in Boston rush hour.

*Comment:* I'm still fresh enough that it's all fun.

### Janice Gelb

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*Areas of Interest:* conrunning (specifically programming), apas

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1977

*First Convention:* SunCon (1977 worldcon)

*First Convention Worked on:* Iguanacon (1978 worldcon)

*Dislikes:* Committees that don't keep track of whether members are doing the job, or that won't take action regarding a member who isn't doing the job; committees that treat professional program participants differently than fan program participants

### Steve Gold

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### Merryl Gross

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### Halmer D. Haag

*(formal; Hal Haag-informal; Hal9000-quite often)*

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<http://www.sigmais.com/halhaag> (this, too, will be changing soon)

*Home Convention:* Balticon (kind of expected that, didn't you?)

*Areas of Interest:* Playing Social Class and/or FLUXX.; Was, and still to some extent - Gaming, Computer gaming,

Con-running (almost any level), Art Show (now am a member of the Incredible East Coast Floating Art Show Crew), I can't draw or sculpt, but I can help show it off and sell it!!!, Was WorldCon bidding (real ones and hoax bidding for fun and profit), Reading: Fantasy, Alternate History, Science Fiction (in that order), Watching Babylon 5 and/or good Science Fiction movies.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984 (I'm really just a "newbie", I guess)

*First Convention:* Balticon 18

*First Convention Worked on:* Balticon 19

*Conventions Worked On:* Every Balticon since #19 - lately doing the souvenir book, "The BSFAN", but running or responsible for all of the gaming for several years; Dragonmeet, Baltimore '87 - Registration - Small gaming con sponsored by a Game Manufacturer, Games Workshop.; Arisia, Lunacon, Disclave, Boskone, PhilCon, WindyCon: mostly in the Art Show; SciCon - I was an agent for several of the Polish artists while I was working for the Baltimore in '98 bid.

*WorldCon Experience:* Attended Noreascon 3, worked as a gopher and loved the entire con experience. personally, the experience could have been better, but what the hey?!; Chicon (1991), gophered again, but was working the Pirates of Fenzance bid heavily - loved the WSFS meeting experience!; Magicon - Art Show Staff, I had left the Pirates bid by this

point, but almost succeeded turning the "95 in 95" hoax bid into a real NASFIC!!; Conadian at Winnepeg in '94 - back with the Baltimore in '98 bid, and worked the Art Show a little, even if Exxxxx Pxxx didn't want or need the help!

*Conventions Chaired:* Balticon 25

*Dislikes:* The attitude that some fen get "You're not as good as me because You haven't read only and all that I've read"

*Comments:* I'm looking forward to my first SmofCon - but for probably all the wrong reasons...

### **Eugene Heller**

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### **Lisa Hertel**

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hertel@world.std.com  
*Home Convention:* Arisia, Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* All

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1976?

*First Convention:* Boskone 1978 or 79?

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone, 1980 or 81?

*Conventions Worked On:* Arisia since start (Concom staff); Boskone since 80's; Lunacon, Balticon (1997), Disclave, Philcon, Albacon (Art Show—Member, East Coast Floating Art Show Crew); Readercon (registration); Worldcons in 1989, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 01; World Fantasy Con 99; Smofcon 15 (Hotel); Regular Member, NESFA; Committee, MCFI; All-round sucker

*WorldCon Experience:* Confrancisco—Art Show; Noreascon 3—Staff; LAcon 1996—Art Show Sales; Intersection—Ops; LoneStarCon2—Volunteers; Magicon—golf course builder (didn't attend); Noreascon 4—Bid Committee

*Conventions Chaired:* Various NESFA relaxicons

*Dislikes:* Fan politics getting in the way of doing the Right Thing

### **Mark Hertel**

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### **Chip Hitchcock**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* mechanics: layout, construction; better flow/obstacle removal, publications? Minimalism—what is most necessary, what will get the most effect for the fewest people/money/goodwill points.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1973

*First Convention:* Boskone 1973

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1975

*Conventions Worked On:* Lunacon, Philcon: art show construction manager

*WorldCon Experience:* Functions Division manager, Noreascon 2 asst. Exhibits Division manager, Magicon led design and construction of art show hangings used at most northeast conventions and several recent worldcons; "purveyor to masquerades on 3 continents" (as description by George Flynn) LSC1, LAcon: art show construction manager

*Conventions Chaired:* BoskLone (1980), Boskone 1987, Lexicon 1978

*Dislikes:* bogus numbers

### **Craige K. Howlett**

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*Home Convention:* BayCon

*Areas of Interest:* Computers, Cooking, Stunts, Testing Lazy-Boy chairs, BBQ'ing, biking and attending a good convention

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1972

*First Convention:* EquiCon 1

*First Convention Worked on:* EquiCon 2 (1973)

*Conventions Chaired:* BayCon 1998

*Dislikes:* Bad Hotel Food, a bad nights sleep, a cat who purrs too loud when you're sleeping, when my RAT thinks my finger is peanut butter and having to think about DEATH.

*Comments:* What ever happened to the old 'family' feeling of attending conventions?

### **Marcia Kelly Illingworth**

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### **Tim Illingworth**

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*Home Convention:* Eastercon, I suppose.

*Areas of Interest:* Ops, Program, and the WSFS  
Constitution. And budgeting.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1973

*First Convention:* Novacon 6, 1976

*First Convention Worked on:* Novacon 10, 1980

*Conventions Chaired:* Camcon:Unicon 6 (1985),  
Contrivance (Eastercon 1989), Helicon  
(Eastercon/Eurocon 1993), Glasgow in 95/  
Intersection (part)

*Dislikes:* Hotel managers who want things done  
their way rather than making money for the  
hotel. Restaurants further than walking dis-  
tance from the hotel. US Immigration, who  
seem to think that intercontinental travel is  
done rarely and by sailing ship, rather than a  
quick weekend jaunt.

### **Saul Jaffe**

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### **Athena & Peter Jarvis**

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*Home Convention:* Ad Astra, Toronto Trek

*Areas of Interest:* Art, Panels, Con Running

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1980's

*First Convention:* Halcon 7

*First Convention Worked on:* Halcon 7

*Conventions Worked On:* Halcon, CONADIAN,  
Wolfcon, Novacon, Communicon

*Worldcon Experience:* Directed 1994 Hugos, ran  
1993 Hugo Party, helped Conadian Bid, work-  
ing on Toronto in 2003 Bid

*Conventions Chaired:* None

*Dislikes:* None, really

### **Scott Jensen**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Treasury, Den

*Year Entered Fandom:* about 1975

*First Convention:* a Star Trek con in NY

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 14?

*Conventions Chaired:* None

**Edward Kramer**

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**'Zanne Labonville**

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*Home Convention:* Arisia and Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show, Masquerade

*Year Entered Fandom:* Questionable

*First Convention:* Boskone 22

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 22 gopher

*Conventions Chaired:* I am not that committed

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*Home Convention:* Boskone, Worldcon

*Areas of Interest:* registration, services, art show,  
film/video, office, rovers, whatever

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1981

*First Convention:* Boskone XVII

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone XVII

*Dislikes:* cliques, not a party animal

**Suford Lewis**

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Lane)

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**Anthony Lewis**

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anthony\_lewis@bio-rad.com

*Home Convention:* Boskone, LexiCon,  
CodClave

*Areas of Interest:* Bibliography, book production,  
proper running of conventions,

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1957

*First Convention:* Philcon 66

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1

*Conventions Worked On:* Many, many...

*Worldcon Experience:* chair, program, hucksters,  
art show auctions, etc.

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone (VII & XIV),  
Noreascon I

*Comments:* Incompetence, "it's good enough".

**Paula Lieberman**

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**John Lorentz**

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*Home Convention:* OryCon

*Areas of Interest:* Admin-type stuff (chairing,  
reg, treasury, etc.). Have also run: art show,  
hotel, dealers, video, publications, guest of  
honor liaison, office, hospitality, and driven  
trucks and hauled tech equipment. Have  
handled pretty much everything except pro-  
gramming, masquerade and gaming.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1977

*First Convention:* Westercon XXX (1977)

*First Convention Worked on:* The PorSFIS  
Symposium ("OryCon 0") (1978)

*Conventions Worked On:* Westercon, Smofcon, CON ("The Generic Convention"), World Horror Convention (1996), World Fantasy Convention (1989), Potlatch, Boskone, Lunacon

*WorldCon Experience:* Noreascon III & LoneStarCon 2 (Reg), L.A.con (Volunteers), ConFrancisco (Business Meeting Chair), Bucconeer (Hugos Admin), MagiCon (stuff)

*Conventions Chaired:* OryCon (1984, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1998); Westercon (1990, 1995), Smofcon (1991)

*Dislikes:* Intelligent, rational fans who can't see that there might be more than one way to do things.

*Comments:* Also the compiler of the Fannish E-Mail Directory.

### **Gary Louie**

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Simi Valley, CA 93062-0179  
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*Home Convention:* Loscon

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show, Historical Exhibits

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984

*First Convention:* Westercon 1985

*First Convention Worked on:* Loscon 1985

*Conventions Chaired:* None, and hoping to stay that way

*Dislikes:* Complaints against the convention or staff or committee that we can not do anything to fix

*Comments:* Friends don't let friends run Worldcons or NASFiCs

### **Perrienne Lurie**

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*Home Convention:* Balticon

*Areas of Interest:* Program, Publications

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1979

*First Convention:* Noreascon 2 (if you don't count a couple of Trek cons in 1976-78)

*First Convention Worked on:* I-Con 1 (NY)

*Conventions Worked On:* I-Con (NY), Disclave,

Worldcons, World Fantasy (Tucson)

*WorldCon Experience:* Registration, Usher, Ops, Green Room, Program Ops (every Worldcon since Brighton)

*Conventions Chaired:* None

*Dislikes:* Reinvention of the wheel

### **Robert J. MacIntosh**

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### **Mark A. Mandel**

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*Home Convention:* huh?

*Areas of Interest:* filk, languages, some gaming (Magic, D&D)

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1963?

*First Convention:* Boskone of '69?

*First Convention Worked on:* Arisia '97?

*Conventions Worked On:* Arisia '97, '98

*WorldCon Experience:* zip

*Dislikes:* people who would rather fight than try to figure out what's wrong

*Comments:* mighod, THIS WEEKEND?

### **Jim Mann**

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*Home Convention:* ConFluence and Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Program, Services, Facilities

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* Midwestcon

*First Convention Worked on:* PghLange (1975)

*Conventions Chaired:* 1 (Boskone)

*Dislikes:* Loud groups of attendees who seem to have no interest in the convention community, but who are just noisy "tourists"

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*Home Convention:* Confluence

*Areas of Interest:* Con-running: Program, Publications, Press, Registration, Newsletter, Database

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1974 (Worcester Polytechnic Institute Science Fiction Association, honorary member)

*First Convention:* 1975 (Jan–Technicon, a college con; March–Boskone)

*First Convention Worked on:* 1975 (PghLANGE)

*Conventions Worked On:* World Fantasy Con 1994 (VIP relations); Boskones (Gophers, Registration (pre- and at-con at different times), Program, Program Book, Information); Confluence (VIP relations, Program staff, Program Book, Hotel Liaison); Smofcon (1986–Staff, 1997–?) ; Westercon (1980–Program Staff)

*WorldCon Experience:* 1980–Noreascon II, Children’s Program (first time done at a Worldcon) and some press relations pre-con; 1982–Chicon, Press relations staff; 1986–ConFederation, Program staff; 1988–Nolacon (While I didn’t work on this con, I “rescued” the Hugo Losers Party from some pros who wanted to stop running it and got Noreascon III to sponsor it. Since then, it’s been traditional for the next Worldcon to sponsor Hugo Losers.); 1989–Noreascon III, Friend’s Liaison (bidding/precon), co-head of Services Division with Jim Mann, some press relations work; 1992–MagiCon, Press Relations Area Head, Pocket Program Editor; 1997–LoneStarCon 2, Press Relations Area Head; 1998–Bucconeer, FanHistoriCon (“interdisciplinary”—some exhibit work, some programming, some weird and fannish)

*Conventions Chaired:* Lexicon, 1985 (NESFA’s summer relaxicon); Boskone, 1988 (co-chaired with Jim Mann); Chococon, 1994 (relaxicon

near Hershey, PA); FanHistoriCon, 1998 (a piece of Bucconeer)

*Dislikes:* People making the same mistakes over and over again...

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*Home Convention:* Saarcon, Coloniacon

*Areas of Interest:* in SF: Hard SF, Space Opera, light Fantasy; in Fandom: international contacts; in conventions: Ops, running panels

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1979

*First Convention:* Klappkonn IV/ Ludwigshafen, Germany, 1980

*First Convention Worked on:* Klappkonn IV, 1980

*Conventions Worked On:* All regular German conventions; Intercon-series in Norway; Quartercon in Norway; various Eastercons in Great Britain; Hillcons in The Netherlands; panelist in half a dozen countries

*WorldCon Experience:* Visited 1987, 1990, 1992, 1995; worked for 1992, 1995.

*Conventions Chaired:* co-chaired: Coloniacon II and IX

*Dislikes:* Incompetence combined with ignorance.

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*Home Convention:* Potlatch (well, it moves, and so do I)

*Areas of Interest:* Events, computer communications, committee management, gaming, fanzines

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984

*First Convention:* 1984 Eastercon/EuroCon, Brighton, UK

*First Convention Worked on:* 1984 Eastercon/EuroCon, Brighton, UK

*Conventions Worked On:* LACon III, LoneStarCon II, Basicon I, various roleplaying conventions

*WorldCon Experience:* 3 attended, 2 worked on. Experienced den mom; gaming panelist; info desk; Hugos front of house; occasional PA to SuperSMOF Standlee

*Conventions Chaired:* none

*Dislikes:* situation comedies

**Skip Morris**

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*Home Convention:* Arisia. Also Boskone to some extent as well, however I tend to end up doing more work at Arisia.

*Areas of Interest:* Originally Film & Video Programming. I've been doing Video Studio/Broadcast work at cons. I also work Registration, Art Show, and Art Show Sales on a regular basis. Lately I've been branching into Treasury stuff.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1971

*First Convention:* Noreascon I

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1972

*Conventions Worked On:* In the last year or two, CostumeCon (the worldcon for costumers) [live video & films]; Lunacon (Film program); Philcon (Treasury staff); Disclave [film staff]; Balticon [Live video plus Reg staff, ArtShow sales staff], Westercon [Live Video], WindyCon [Film staff].

*WorldCon Experience:* Since Noreascon I (1971) I've attended 20 of 27 worldcons. I've attended every out-of-USA worldcon in the last 20 years. I worked at con films at most of the worldcons in the 70's and 80's. I've also worked Live Video at most worldcons that had a real video studio. I got started with video at the Atlanta worldcon ('86?) where I took care of signal distribution (getting the signal broadcast to all the hotels and hotel rooms). The last couple worldcons I've worked Registration and Art Show Sales as well.

*Conventions Chaired:* Two Lexicon's and CoChair of an early SciCon.

*Dislikes:* The fact that Boskone & Arisia are too close together in time in the Winter, while Balticon and Disclave share the same problem during the Spring. (Two of those conventions should get together and trade dates.) A close second is the fact that Boskone is the same date as the SF Film Festival held each year on Boston.

*Comments:* One current interest is to learn

enough about professional video to enable a fannish crew (with amateur gear) to do a job that looks professional and therefore save the con 10-20K in costs (at San Antonio, the video charge for the hired guns came in at \$21,000, my job there was Directors Gopher where I tried to watch and learn everything the professional crew did. I'm convinced a good fannish crew could do the same job for one tenth of that amount).

I predict that Philly in 2001 will win over the Boston bid by a 3:2 margin.

### **Bill Neville**

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### **Patrick Nielsen Hayden**

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*Home Convention:* Minicon

*Areas of Interest:* SF, fantasy, the publishing industry, fanzines, fan history and culture

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* Desertcon 2, Tucson, February 1975

*First Convention Worked on:* Leprecon 1, Phoenix, March 1975

*WorldCon Experience:* Director of Programming, 34th World SF Convention, 1978

*Dislikes:* Eggplant

### **Teresa Nielsen Hayden**

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### **Mark Olson**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Nearly everything.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1967 (if you mean in an organized fashion; earlier if purely reading-type stuff is allowed.)

*First Convention:* Minicon I

*First Convention Worked on:* TanstaffCon one and only; Boskone 18; Noreascon Two

*Conventions Chaired:* Smofcon 3, Boskone 23, Noreascon Three, several local relaxicons.

*Dislikes:* The effect of entropy on my office; mowing the lawn; laundry...or did you have something more specific in mind?

### **Priscilla Olson**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone, Noreascon

*Areas of Interest:* Program, Newsletter, Events, "philosophy"

*Year Entered Fandom:* Does getting very early Star Trek material (pre-Spockanalia) in the late about 1967 count? Otherwise, September, 1969.

*First Convention:* Philcon, 1969

*First Convention Worked on:* Noreascon II

*Other Conventions Worked On:* (See below re: the mists of time...) Assorted Smofcons, Philcon, Lunacon, Balticon, DisClave, +?

*WorldCon Experience:* N3 and Magicon Program. Also helped Intersection's Program.

"Weird Fannish Stuff" in San Antonio, Newsletter at LA. Probably other stuff lost in the mists of time...

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone 29, relaxacons.

*Dislikes:* Raw green peppers? Deliberately rude (fannish) behavior. People making money off fandom who know better?

### **Tony Parker**

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### **Sara Paul**

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**Peggy Rae Pavlat**

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*Home Convention:* Disclave

*Areas of Interest:* science fiction and fantasy;  
working with ideas and people; solving puzzles

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1956

*First Convention:* 1956 Philcon; first Worldcon  
Pittcon in 1960

*First Convention Worked on:* 1956 Philcon; first  
Worldcon Pittcon in 1960

*Conventions Worked On:* lots

*WorldCon Experience:* enough.

*Conventions Chaired:* Disclave '91; 56th world  
Science Fiction Convention; Smofcon '90;  
Vice Chairman 51st World Science Fiction  
Convention

*Dislikes:* rudeness as response to differences of  
opinion or experience

*Comments:* Pre-Planning is just asking for  
Trouble; Blessed is the pessimist, for backups  
are Good

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**Sam Pierce**

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*Home Convention:* Disclave

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1989

*First Convention:* Disclave 1987

*First Convention Worked on:* Magicon

*Conventions Worked On:* Philcon, Lunacon,  
Balticon

*WorldCon Experience:* Art Show Staff: Magicon,  
ConFrancisco, Conadian, LAConIII; Con Ops:  
LoneStarCon2

*Conventions Chaired:* Disclave 99 (designate)

*Dislikes:* Cons that make me feel like I'm a  
servant vs a team member.

**Michael T. Pins**

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**Ken Porter**

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**Brendan Quinn**

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**Rhiannon "Gibbitt" Rhys-Jones.**

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*Home Convention:* I guess I would have to say  
Rustycon, now that there is no more  
Dreamcon.

*Areas of Interest:* my hair is always very interest-  
ing.. never stays the same color... huh?

OH...stuff I'M interested in in FANDOM...  
well.. I'd like to eventually get into writing the  
contracts between the hotel and the conven-  
tion, but I have been unable to apprentice with  
anyone so far. I've been the secretary for  
Rustycon, and I was also head of Registra-  
tion... but I want to expand into anything  
except childcare.

*Year Entered Fandom:* hohboy... umm...1991.  
(yes, she is a newbie!!)

*First Convention:* Dreamcon 6 (the man I was  
with invited me to a three day party, as he  
called it.)

*First Convention Worked on:* well.. I volunteered  
at Dreamcon 6.. but as an actual position, that  
would be Rustycon 12.

*Conventions Worked On:* Well.. Geocon,

Vikingcon, Dreamcon, Westercon, and various cons that I have just volunteered at.

*WorldCon Experience:* not yet. <sigh>

*Conventions Chaired:* ha. ha.

*Dislikes:* I really dislike the fact that a lot of the older, more experienced convention runners sit around and complain that they can't seem to get new blood into the conventions, but then seem totally up in arms when a new person wants to join a convention staff. They suddenly want to know everything about the new person, but will accept an older, more experienced person from another convention virtually without question.

*Comments:* If anyone wants to send in non tax deductible donations to the "get Gibbitt to SMOFcon 15" fund, you may send them to the address above. Make checks out to Rhiannon Rhys-Jones

### **Matthew Ryan**

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### **Ruth Sachter**

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*Home Convention:* now OryCon, was Lunacon/  
Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* art shows, operations, communications in general

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1970

*First Convention:* Noreascon

*First Convention Worked on:* I think it was the 1972 Lunacon art show gopher/door guard/badge checker

*Conventions Worked On:* several New York Star Trek cons, art show staff & co-director for 1975 Many Lunacons & Boskones, several Philcons, already too many OryCons, several Westercons (not all in Portland), 1990 Corflu, Potlatch 5, the Austin & the Phoenix Nasfics, Smofcons (the Boston ones) and more.

Areas worked include guest of honor liaison; operations; office; registration; ribbons; logistics; hotel; publications: progress reports, pocket program, program book, daily zine; staff den; con suite (Smofcon only!); programming; green room; art show, and probably some stuff I've forgotten.

Areas mostly not yet worked in: dealers, child care, gaming, tech, treasury, dances, events, video, films, filking.

*WorldCon Experience:* Torcon II, art show assistant [We (a car full of fans) showed up early--Wednesday I think--having driven up from Albany NY, and looked for signs of fanac--not seeing much (we didn't know many folks yet or probably didn't look in the right bar) Wendy & I settled for finding a room full of folks stapling burlap to wooden frames to make the art show hangings, and became a significant portion of Bjo & John Trimble's art show staff. Worldcons were smaller back then. And now it's John Millard's 80th Birthday!]

Noreascon II (ops staff); Denvention II (ops staff); Chicon IV (ops office manager); ConStellation (masquerade backstage staff); ConFederation (green room assistant head); Nolacon II (ops staff); Noreascon III (1/3 of registration troika); MagiCon (special art exhibit); ConFrancisco (co-vice chair); L.A.con III (co-director ops); LoneStarCon 2 ("Emergency Holographic On-Line Volunteer Coordinator" & assistant division head for Human Resources & Hugo usher; Bucconeer (co-Hugo Administrator).

*Conventions Chaired:* OryCon 18 (1996)

*Dislikes:* Re-inventing wheels, lack of communication, organizational politics

*Comments:* No more short jokes <g>. I have no doubt that the fannish community is my true family and I'm glad to be a contributing member.

### **Robert Sacks**

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**William Sadorus**

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*Home Convention:* Norwescon*Areas of Interest:* marketing/public relations,  
hotel*Year Entered Fandom:* 1989*First Convention:* OryCon*First Convention Worked on:* Anglicon 5 or  
maybe Con 7 which ever came first*Conventions Worked On:* Anglicon, Con 7,  
OryCon, Virgule, Battlestar Galactica 15 year  
Reunion, Westercon 46,48 & 50, ConComCon  
2& 3, SMOFcon 14*WorldCon Experience:* none*Conventions Chaired:* Anglicon 5 & 6,  
Norwescon 21*Dislikes:* Iconoclastic traditionalism and ineffec-  
tual programming*Comments:* Favorite saying from SMOF14 -  
"We're walking, we're walking, and if you  
look over this way, gentlefolk, you will see..."**John Sapienza**

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<http://world.std.com/~sbarsky/>*Home Convention:* Boskone, Noreascon*Areas of Interest:* Ribbons, registration, program,  
online fandom, behind the scenes planning,  
database maintenance, publications, treasury.*Year Entered Fandom:* 1974 (HopSFA)*First Convention:* Boskone XVI, 1979*First Convention Worked on:* Noreascon Two,  
1980*Conventions Worked On:* OryCon, Arisia,  
Readercon, Lunacon, Philcon, Disclave,  
Balticon, Tropicon, Smofcon, Westercon.*WorldCon Experience:* Ribbons, Preregistration,  
At-con Registration, Art Show, Dealers Room,  
Committee Den, Publications, Treasury, Ops,  
Office, Sales-to-members, Site-selection.*Conventions Chaired:* Smofcon 15*Dislikes:* Communication problems that people  
will let get in the way of getting things done.*Comments:* Fandom is my family and other  
conrunners are my close relatives. I welcome  
my friends and family to Smofcon 15.**Mickey Schulz**

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**Robert Schweir**

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**Joyce Scrivner**

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*Home Convention:* Minicon/Reinconation*Areas of Interest:* foreign bidding, publicity, fan  
history, programming, handicap access*Year Entered Fandom:* late 1976/early 1977*First Convention:* Star Trek convention 1973/  
72(?) in New York*First Convention Worked on:* Suncon (Worldcon)  
1977*Conventions Worked On:* Minicons (various),  
local fallcons (various), others*WorldCon Experience:* Suncon, Iggycon, Chicon  
IV, Chicon V, Seacon, Nolacon, Magicon,  
LoneStarCon, LACON I, LACON II, ...*Conventions Chaired:* Not Anokon, Plergbcon,  
couple others*Dislikes:* lack of patience, lack of listening

*Comments:* I'm hard of hearing, to my frustration (and others.)

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*Home Convention:* Arisia

*Areas of Interest:* Mostly worked in Registration,

Ops, other bureaucratic areas, but want to broaden my horizons in the future.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1983

*First Convention:* ConStellation (yee-ha, start with a Worldcon)

*First Convention Worked on:* gopher - Constellation, committee - Arisia '90

*Conventions Worked On:* gopher—"old"

Boskone, Lunacon, Philcon staff-

NotJustAnotherCon (small college con)

*WorldCon Experience:* Gopher at ConStellation,

LACon II, Noreascon 3, ??

*Conventions Chaired:* none (yet)

*Dislikes:* flaky treasurers

*Comments:* Mu.

**Randall Shepherd**

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**Joe Siclari**

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*Home Convention:* Tropicon

*Areas of Interest:* Fanzines & Fan History, Programs, Publications, Hotel Negotiations, Operations, Worldcon bidding.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1965-6 (depends on what you call being a fan)

*First Convention:* D-con (Southwestercon) - 1971

*First Convention Worked on:* Lunacon 1976

*Conventions Worked On:* (Have worked on about

150 conventions. Helped out at many conventions and participated in many programs which are not listed): D-Con (Dallas), Philcon, Disclave, Kubla Khan, Lunacon, Hexacon, SF Teachers Conference (1980, Boca Raton), Swancon 2, ASFiCon (Atlanta), Tropicon (Founder), October Party (Fort Lauderdale), OmniCon (Fort Lauderdale), Windycon, Boskone 21, ConCon (aka SMOFcon I) (Founder), Westercon, SMOFcon, Conference on the Fantastic 9 (Fort Lauderdale); Oasis (Orlando), Travelling Fete 1 (Merritt Island—Founder), Galacticon, Necronomicon (Tampa), SerCon, Corflu, FanHistoricon (Co-founder), BeachCon (DeepSouthCon - Jekyll Island). Jobs include (in no particular order): Huckster, Ops, Film Program, Hotel, GOH Liaison, Chair, program book, program, Green Room, auctioneer.

*WorldCon Experience:* MidAmeriCon (huckster), SunCon (Executive Committee member, Program Director, temporary Treasurer, Publications Editor, huckster), Flushing in '80 bid committee, Noreascon II (Programming Track manager, program monitor), Denvention II, Chicon III & Constellation (Ops), LACon II (Fanzine Exhibit coordinator), LoneStarCon (NASFiC-Ops), ConFederation (Executive Committee, Program Director, Director of Bid Publicity), Nolacon II (Program Ops), Noreascon III (Chairman's Assistant, Guest of Honor liaison, History Exhibits), ConFiction (History Exhibits), Chicon V (History Exhibits), MagiCon (Chairman), ConFrancisco (History Exhibits), Intersection (Program registration, Chairman's Advisor, publicity), LACon III (Sector General Coordinator), LoneStarCon 2 (Exhibits-Assistant, Fan History Exhibits, Interactive Fan Museum).

*Conventions Chaired:* Tropicon (1982-1985, 1987, 1991, 1996), SMOFcon 1 & 6 (1984—actually named ConCon & 1990), MagiCon (1992 Worldcon), FanHistoricon (1994, 1995, 1997), Travelling Fete 5 - 1998

*Dislikes:* Territoriality.

*Comments:* No matter how hard it is, remember Edie Stern's Ten Commandments of Conven-

tion Running:

1. Thou shalt not over-commit.
2. Thou shalt do it in writing.
3. Thou shalt follow-up.
4. Thou shalt not mess with the IRS.
5. Thou shalt honor thy guests.
6. Thou shalt remember to live in the real world.
7. Thou shalt not kill (no matter how stupid the asshole is).
8. Thou shalt steal all good ideas.
9. Thou shalt not panic (until after the convention).
10. Remember, despite being up to your neck in alligators (stobors?), that your original intention was to have a good time.

### **Kurt C. Siegel**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone, Albacon (US)

*Areas of Interest:* Fire Safety, Puns, Real (NOT FILK!!!) Music,

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1986

*First Convention:* Lastcon Fore

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1987

*Conventions Chaired:* Wash your mouth out with soap!

*Dislikes:* Magic! The Addiction, over-zealous filkers & gamers, media fen who think that's *all* there is, book fen who think that's *all* there is, not being able to drink anymore, not being able to eat things with sugar in them anymore. Having to watch my cholesterol intake.

*Comments:* I don't know what I can contribute, but I'll make my best effort to entertain with my ignorance!

### **Michael Siladi**

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*Home Convention:* BayCon, Silicon

*Areas of Interest:* Convention Management,

Hotel Liaison, MIS, and Registration

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1972

*First Convention:* Equicon 72 (Bjo Trimble's 1st Star Trek Con in LA)

*First Convention Worked on:* SpaceCon 2 (1974)

*Conventions Worked On:* Westercon 36,

Westercon 40, and many other WesterCons.

WorldCons, NASFiC's, SiliCon, TimeCon,

Contact, LosCon, SpaceCon, World Fantasy

Convention, and many more.

*Worldcon Experience:* Many positions ranging from Gopher to Special Advisor to the Executive Committee, including Hotel Liaison staff, Party Maven, Rover, Con Ops staff, Commercial Exhibits sales, Exhibits and Registration. Worldcons worked on include: LA Con 2 (84), Atlanta, Austin (NASFiC), ConFrancisco, LA Con 3 (96), and LoneStarCon.

*Conventions Chaired:* BayCon (85, 87, 93, 95, 97), ConStruction (97, 98)

*Dislikes:* Ghosts and "problem" guests/GOH's.

*Comments:* I've lost track of how many conventions I've worked on, let alone attended. I'm trying to put a more comprehensive list together for my Fan Biography since I'm Fan GoH at BayCon next May.

### **Dick & Leah Zeldes Smith**

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*Home Convention:* None, currently

*Areas of Interest:* Primarily literary, with a little media

*Year Entered Fandom:* '74

*First Convention:* Discon II

*First Convention Worked on:* 1975 Star Trek Con (aka Feb Con), NYC

*Conventions Chaired:* None, thank goodness

*Dislikes:* The uncomfortable chairs we're forced

to use by hotels and convention centers

*Comments:* No comment (yet...)

**Robert Sneddon**

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*Home Convention:* Albacons (Glasgow) and Eastercons

*Areas of Interest:* Art show (construction)

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* Seacon 75, Eastercon

*First Convention Worked on:* Seacon 75, Eastercon

*Conventions Worked On:* God, do you want the complete list? I've never served on a committee yet, but I've got plenty of gopher T-shirts...

*WorldCon Experience:* Never worked staff at one, gophered a lot at a few (79,87,89,90,92,93, 95).

*Conventions Chaired:* Absolutely none.

*Dislikes:* Staff members who treat the gopher hole as their own private trout pool. Staff who turn into headless chickens when a problem appears.

*Comments:* I'm coming to Smofcon under false pretences, really, as I've never been involved in planning or programming a con.

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*Year First Entered Fandom:* 1980

*First Convention:* Philcon '79 (and a couple of Trek cons before that)

*First Convention Worked On:* Philcon '80

*Areas of Interest:* communication, planning and organization

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone 34 (1997), co-chair of 25th World Fantasy Convention (1999)

*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Dislikes:* anyone's assumption (my own included) that it's someone else's responsibility to tell them what they need to know. Convention committees need mongooses (mongese? mongice?): "run and find out."

*Comments:* I was recently asked why I (we) do this. "Because it's my chance to throw the party." I'm not a writer, artist, etc. Con-running uses \*my\* skills to create "places" to share interests in sf and fantasy, where conversations and events can happen that wouldn't otherwise be likely. So there's 2 levels to this: the satisfaction of building a complex structure, and the unpredictable fun that fills it when you step inside.

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*Home Convention:* BayCon

*Areas of Interest:* Rules; (Constitutions, Bylaws, Parliamentary Procedure); Conrunning Communications Issues

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984

*First Convention:* L.A.con II

*First Convention Worked on:* SiliCon '89

*Conventions Worked On:* Westercon, BayCon, SiliCon, Eclecticon [of Sacramento], ConStruction, OryCon

*WorldCon Experience:* L.A.con III (Advisor to Chair, WSFS Affairs, WSFS Business Meeting Parliamentarian); Intersection (Site Selection Area Head, WSFS Business Meeting Chairman; ConAdian (Deputy Convention Chairman, WSFS Division Chief, WSFS Business Meeting Parliamentarian, Hugo Awards Base Co-Designer; ConFrancisco (Convention Secretary, WSFS Division Chief, Bulk Mail Department Head, E-Mail Liaison Department Head, WSFS Business Meeting Parliamentarian; MagiCon (NASFiC Site Selection Area



Head, WSFS Business Meeting Timekeeper;  
Chicon V (WSFS Business Meeting Time-  
keeper; ConFiction (Gopher).

*Conventions Chaired:* 3 (including 1 Vice Chair,  
1 Deputy Chair)

*Dislikes:* Bad communications.

**Pat Stanley**

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*Home Convention:* MILLENNICON Dayton/  
Cincinnati, Ohio

*Areas of Interest:* SF Literature, Desktop Publi-  
cation and Graphics Design, Writing, Illustra-  
tion, Convention Planning and Production,  
Miami Valley Fandom for Literacy Board of  
Directors, Convention Attending, Gourmet  
cooking, Interior Design and Herb Gardening.

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1969

*First Convention:* ChambannaCon I

*First Convention Worked on:* MarCon Gofer

*Conventions Worked On:* BaltiCon Gofer; 13

Local conventions: MILLENNICON Minus 15  
through MILLENNICON Minus 3 (in 1985 we  
started the countdown format with  
MILLENNICON Minus 15); Assorted regional  
conventions in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and  
Michigan.

*Conventions Chaired:* MILLENNICON Minus 6  
(1994) Chairman MILLENNICON Minus  
7(1995) Vice Chairman

*Dislikes:* Bad banquet food. Not enough choco-  
late. Not having enough hours in the day to get  
everything done.

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and <http://www.cyberramp.net/~artemis/>

*Home Convention:* SoonerCon and  
ArmadilloCon

*Areas of Interest:* Publications, Art, Bidding,  
e-mail

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* MidAmeriCon (1976)

*First Convention Worked on:* Norman Conquest  
(1982)

*Conventions Worked On:* Chicon IV,  
ConFrancisco, LoneStarCon2

*WorldCon Experience:* Committee members who  
have trouble communicating to other members  
and to convention attendees

*Conventions Chaired:* None

*Dislikes:* "E-mail is proving a valuable tool for  
instantaneous fan communications."

**Diana Thayer**

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*Areas of Interest:* Publications, General Organi-  
zation, Records Keeping

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1986

*First Convention:* Okon (Tulsa, Oklahoma)

*First Convention Worked on:* LoneStarCon2

*Conventions Worked On:* It depends on what you consider "working". I have helped out occasionally at regional conventions, but nothing official, just impromptu filling in at the con.

*WorldCon Experience:* Attended Intersection, LAconIII, LoneStarCon2

*Dislikes:* People who take themselves too seriously.

*Comments:* I take each convention as it comes, as a unique experience--even the ones I have been to for years.

### **Leslie Turek**

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*Home Convention:* Boskone

*Areas of Interest:* Retired

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1964

*First Convention:* Boskone 1

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 1

*Conventions Chaired:* Boskone 6, Noreascon 2

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### **René Walling**

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*Home Convention:* Con\*Cept

*Areas of Interest:* fandom (?)

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1990

*First Convention:* Ad Astra 10

*First Convention Worked on:* as gopher, see above, as Concom, Con\*Cept '92

*Conventions Chaired:* Con\*Cept '96

*Dislikes:* Olives, anchovies and onions on my pizza :)

*Comments:* Hi!

### **Amy West**

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<http://www-rfcc.cse.uconn.edu/www/>

[AmyHome.html](#)

*Home Convention:* Arisia, Boskone, Readercon (publicity/con suite)

*Areas of Interest:* Art Show, Publicity/Publications, Con Suite

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1984

*First Convention:* Boskone 21 (1984)

*First Convention Worked on:* Boskone 21 - Art Show Gopher

*Conventions Worked On:* Albacon, Balticon, Lunacon, Philcon (Art Show Staff)

*WorldCon Experience:* Magicon (1992) - Art Show Staff

*Conventions Chaired:* None

*Dislikes:* Not being able to go to programming while working the con!

### **Tom Whitmore**

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<http://www.dnai.com/~ochobbit> (Other Change of Hobbit website)

*Home Convention:* none/Worldcon

*Areas of Interest:* Ops, meeting styles, getting people to work together -anything with people

*Year Entered Fandom:* uncertain, ca. 1965

*First Convention:* Baycon, 1968 Worldcon

*First Convention Worked on:* Baycon, 1968 Worldcon

*Conventions Worked On:* Baycons, Westercons, Potlatches, SFCon 70/71, too many Worldcons, Norwescon, NASFiC, almost any con I go to (including professional)

*WorldCon Experience:* Newsletter 72, Ops 78 forward including heading it several times,

Masquerade many times at most levels, Program various times, some reg work, Chairman's staff—I really don't remember everything!

*Conventions Chaired:* none solo, but I think I've co-chaired: I honestly don't remember

*Dislikes:* Boring work (being stuck in one place with nobody to interact with).

*Comments:* After a while it all gets blurred together...

### **Winona Whyte-Schweir**

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### **Sally Woehrle**

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*Home Convention:* Anglicon (I used to include Dreamcon as I was on staff for 8 of the 10 conventions)

*Areas of Interest:* 1st love is Hotel Liaison but I have also worked in Reg, Security, Office, Programming, Green Room, Mail Services, Site Selection

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1985 I think

*First Convention:* Norwescon 9

*First Convention Worked on:* Anglicon I (Anglicon 10 was this year)

*Conventions Worked On:* Norwescon, Rustycon, SmofCon 14, media conventions such as MediaWest, Battlestar Galactica 15 Reunion, ZebraCon, Vergule, Who's 7 (in England)

*WorldCon Experience:* Staff for Site Selection at Intersection, other than that various volunteer jobs although I have only attended 4 Worldcons

*Conventions Chaired:* Anglicon II and 8, Westercon 50 (I vice-chaired Westercon 46)

*Dislikes:* People starting up new conventions with a "know it all" attitude. By that I mean asking for advice and then telling you why you are wrong when you give it.

*Comments:* I think this is a great idea and am

looking forward to seeing all the rest of the resumes.

### **Lew Wolkoff**

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### **Richard Wright**

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*Areas of Interest:* I said once to a group that I had done about everything on a con, except Hospitality and Registration. Shortly thereafter, Chris York tagged me to run Hospitality at World Horror. So, I guess I will have to do Reg next, and it looks like I will for Bucconeer!

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1975

*First Convention:* Puget Sound Star Trekkers Con 1

*First Convention Worked on:* PSST Con 1

*Conventions Worked On:* Science and Fan program participant for bunch of cons; Volunteer at many cons

*WorldCon Experience:* Iggie: Asst. Treasurer; Confederation: Security; Noreascon 3: Program Ops; Chicon V: Program Ops Deputy; Magicon: Site Selection Deputy; NASFiC Adm; ConAdian: Facilities Senior Troubleshooter; Site Selection Deputy; Intersection: Site Selection Deputy

*Conventions Chaired:* Norwescon 4-8, Rustycon 13, Westercon 46, SMoFcon 14, some Point 5's, Fort Worden retreat, bunch of professional cons

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### **Nicholas K. Wurst**

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*Home Convention:* Arisia, Boskone, Readercon

*Areas of Interest:* Running around, eating crackers, sticking hands in cashboxes, playing chase in hotel hallways, meeting \*my\* fans

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1995 (prenatal)

*First Convention:* Readercon 8 (1996)

*First Convention Worked on:* Readercon 8 - Con Suite

*Conventions Worked On:* Albacon, Lunacon, Philcon

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*Home Convention:* Boskone, Worldcon, Westercon, Orycon, (more)

*Year Entered Fandom:* 1971

*First Convention:* Lunacon 1971

*First Convention Worked on:* International Star Trek Convention (1972)

*Conventions Chaired:* Lunacon, Codclave, Boskone

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# Bloody Meetings!

## by Martin Easterbrook

*This was written at about the time I became co-chair of Intersection. It is a slightly edited version of an original article for Ian Sorsenson's UK fanzine Conrunner.*

In issue 16 of *Conrunner* Chuck Connor has some very pertinent remarks on one of the major problem areas in running a convention — *meetings*. He writes “As any teacher of business management will tell you, the biggest time destroyer is meetings, and with sub-committees you are doubling your oxygen consumption for half the final product value.”

Unfortunately for most conventions except some ‘small’ ones meetings are your major tool as well as possibly your greatest danger. Therefore they should be treated with the same kind of suspicion and care which Armageddon engineering, the UK fan group which does firework displays including the one at Conspiracy [and later at Intersection itself], uses on its pyrotechnics.

One of the first requirements is to be clear about the purpose of a particular meeting. As amateur and ‘social’ organisations Con committees use meetings for a far wider range of purposes than a business organisation. The style appropriate for one purpose is rarely suitable for another. The most familiar type of meeting is of the ‘company boardroom’ format where the committee make rather formal and specific decisions about the running of the convention and review the work that has gone on to date. However there are other purposes for getting together; long term strategy discussions (what sort of con do we want?) and brainstorming (quick think of 20 new and original program items!), communication (perhaps tech ops and the dealers room should discuss their sharing of the single equipment trolley during the one hour they’ve been given for set up), ‘team building’ and fun (perhaps tech ops will be happier having D West as their new boss after they’ve had a nice friendly game of

poker together?) [I’ve been asked to explain why this is amusing for the Smofcon version. I can only suggest that you come to Corflu in Leeds and try playing poker with D yourself], and finally simply getting together to actually do some work (honest it’ll only take a couple of hours to build the full size King Kong for the opening ceremony!).

Of course what is in fact achieved by such meetings is frequently quite different; time wasting (the progress report is delayed because of the meeting to decide what colour it should be), indecision and personality clashes (“if the rest of you want to do it that way I’ll thceam and thceam until I’m thick”), illusions of progress (we’ve got 10 pages of minutes dealing with the colours of the biros for registration!), and expense (getting 10 people travelling an average of 30 miles each to discuss saving £50 on the con budget).

Again avoiding such problems begins with having a clear idea in your own mind what you are trying to do and concentrating on that. The job of the secretary is to make sure that everyone coming to the meeting knows what that purpose is by circulating a clear agenda in advance of the meeting. If the meeting isn’t going to be a formal one this might simply say “turn up at 3pm. Bring a bottle and ideas for 5 program items” but if that’s what you’ve advertised don’t be tempted to change its purpose unless there is a crisis.

It is also up to everyone else to help the secretary as much as possible. A meeting will be far more productive if any written reports are distributed with the agenda before the meeting. Often a lot of meeting time can be wasted sitting around reading reams of word processor output which is handed out at the start of the meeting (the guilty parties out there know who they are!). Even if you have posted this stuff out in advance it is still of enormous benefit to keep it as short and well focused as possible. Make sure that you highlight

decisions and actions that you need from others on the committee.

During the meeting make sure that someone keeps accurate and concise minutes. Sometimes it is an advantage if the minute taker is not someone who wants to speak a great deal at the meeting as this allows them to concentrate on recording what other people are saying. Writing a good set of minutes is a skilful editing task. A verbose listing of everything that happened simply obscures the important points and is more likely to get tossed aside unread. Also a religious listing of all the arguments that happen at a meeting just perpetuates them. Record the decisions but not who said what about whose mother/favourite author/soft toy. (If these remarks were genuinely witty or sufficiently scandalous you might consider leaking them to my newszine *Small Mammal* [sadly a casualty of *Intersection*] or *Ansible* instead.)

The minutes are intended to help the committee remember their decisions and to pass them on to those who were absent. The most important things are the action items and some secretaries make sure these are distributed as soon after the meeting as possible, with the full minutes following later. As well as the committee there will usually be other people who need to know particular decisions from the meeting. Again the secretary will need to prepare an edited meeting report for them.

This raises the thorny question of secrets and who they are going to be kept from. Generally these come in two categories. Firstly plans for the running of the convention that you want to surprise people with or are unable to disclose at the moment. Secondly there will often be 'personal' information about your guests or helpers which affects the running of the convention. The first type of information can be recorded in documents with restricted circulation as even if a 'security leak' occurs it is unfortunate rather than serious and can usually be 'controlled' with threats of sufficient violence.

The second category represents more kinds of potential trouble than you want to think about. Part of my induction onto the Eastcon committee was the "who is/was/isn't sleeping with who" briefing. To this day I remain amazed at the ability of

fans from such widely different and mutually hostile sub fandoms to have had secret mad passionate affairs with each other.

This is the sort of thing that you don't want to write down anywhere. If this gets out you are going to be the one who will be on the receiving end of the violence. If an author (or agent, or editor) is involved the result may be an even less pleasant law suite because most of their secret scandals involve money and are therefore far more serious than sex. Since this information is now contained in a great secret oral tradition of fandom, more often referred to as gossip, most of it is of course wrong, which makes you even more vulnerable to bloody or financial revenge.

However once the two types of confidential information have been eliminated from your documents they can be safely distributed to a much wider set of people. Most fans are intelligent and eager to help (if you disagree why do you want to run a convention for them?), the more information they have the more they can help. It also helps to reduce confusion. One of our Eastcon problems occurred when we discovered that the projection team was expecting to use some of the same hotel equipment that we had allocated to masquerade lighting because they always used that equipment at the Adelphi and hadn't seen any information to suggest that this time things would be different. If you keep your decisions secret the odds are you won't think them through as well as if you are going to publicise them. You'll only find out where you've gone wrong in the midst of running your convention.

However, like many meetings, we have digressed from the main topic, the running of meetings themselves. It is the task of the chairperson of the meeting to prevent this. Chairing a meeting is a very difficult task and few people can do it well. You must keep the meeting moving without forcing your opinions on it. In particular don't let a topic drag on to the point where people's concentration lapses. The chairperson is there to act as a team coach to the committee not to act as a Stalinesque Dictator (this is the secretary's job). If the chairperson is working properly she/he will often not have time to put forward their own opinions. For this and other reasons the meeting chair

may not be the same person as the convention chair. Chairing meetings is a good skill to have in a convention chair but the two jobs do not necessarily have to go together.

For some (many?) meetings there are alternatives to a traditional chairperson. A whiteboard can be an excellent 'chairperson' for brainstorming sessions where people throw out ideas rapidly. Frequently it is possible to have an independent chairman (or secretary) who has little interest in the outcome of the debate, just in how well it is conducted. Sub areas can use people from other committees in this role which, as a side effect, improves communication throughout the organisation.

The chairperson should also ensure that the meeting respects the areas that have been delegated to sub committees. If you have asked someone to do something for you then trust them to do it. Rehashing their decisions just annoys them and wastes your time. If what they want to do conflicts with some of your decisions let them know why and ask them to rework their ideas rather than simply overruling them. You ought to spend at least one main committee meeting going through each sub area with its committee so that they are aware how they fit in with the rest of the convention.

Also you can use sub committee members in the chairperson and secretary roles of some of your meetings. In any case each sub committee should share one member with the main committee to ensure good communication. Of course once you've got to the size of conventions this multi layer organisation implies then, as Chuck points out, the main committee members should forget about much time to do work themselves. Their job is going to be coordination and they should concentrate on doing that well (unfortunately in the boring old real world they probably will still have work to do that they haven't been able to unload on anyone else).

It is generally a good idea to open up your meetings as much as possible. Doing this allows you to bring in people to help you who may not have the time to become permanent committee members. Don't be afraid to ask other experienced people to come in to a meeting to advise you on a particular topic. If they do come to help you respect their opinions, if they were just going to say

the same things you would then there'd be no point in inviting them.

In conclusion I'd like to see fandom apply its great talent of 'constructive disrespect' to meetings. Lets keep asking ourselves if they are doing any good and if they aren't lets change them until they do.

[Postscript. Written before Smofcon and some time after Intersection.

I don't see any changes to the above that I would particularly like to make. The topic of chairing Internet discussions wasn't covered and that became much more important than we expected. To cut a very long discussion short I think the same principles should have been used for 'chairing' Internet discussions as was used for chairing live meetings. However this is a conclusion I came to after the con so it will be up to someone else to test this theory.

We also found the British 'cigarette break' every couple of hours or so was very helpful when we got into long meetings during the run up to the con. Even in US states where few of the fans are likely to be smokers this is worth bearing in mind. Of course it is even better to keep the meetings short if you can.

I have seen a similar method used extremely effectively at NESFA meetings with a longer break near the end when people can get together in two's and three's for offline discussion of matters which only affect them and then report back their decisions at the end of the formal meeting.

We evolved a system where a small group of 5 or so people from the board of Division Heads would meet about once a month. Discuss urgent issues and propose solutions which would then be circulated to the other DHs by e-mail. In general people liked having fewer large meetings by this method even though we were originally afraid they might object to not being included in the initial discussions.

This also helped in that some of the more wide reaching problems had been discussed by the smaller committee even if they eventually passed the problem back to the full board. This usually meant that a more concise summary of the problem and the possible options was available at the full meeting.

Again this introduces the topic of the interaction of e-mail with the physical meetings. This is still an unsolved problem (as far as I know). In general the impression I get is that e-mail is good for sending out reports before a meeting but that discussions can be far more productive when conducted face to face.

This can be a problem for those who cannot be present at the meeting, for example our US Division Heads and advisors. I think they probably found it disconcerting when one of our full staff meetings took place over a weekend and produced a whole host of amendments to the plans when they had not been involved in the discussion and reasoning behind them.

My favourite meeting was the one to discuss final space allocation. I had been psyching myself up for a great many battles over this but in the end I just retired to the back of the room with a drink and watched everyone sort it out in what I thought was a fairly professional way. I think running good meetings is a team activity. You get better at it as your team gets used to working together and it is worth spending some time at the beginning of each meeting to decide a game plan for that meetings agenda and at the end of the meeting to decide what worked and what didn't as far as running the meeting itself.



# Building the Con-runner's FAQ

Compiled by Laurie D. T. Mann

*Precis: What do we need to remember and why? How applicable are these? What are the minimal bits of knowledge that need to be passed on from year to year (particularly vis-à-vis Worldcon running)? We will start creating a list of items, and begin work on a FAQ project for the weekend! How can we remember? What can we do (besides going to things like Smofcons)? And (maybe the real nub of it all)-why do we keep forgetting? Is it because people like being perverse?*

This is the beginning of what I hope will be an ongoing process on improving convention management. This list is in no way “the” definitive list — if anything this list of con-organizing issues takes the minimalist approach. In preparation for the 1997 Smofcon, a few of us kept saying “Why do cons keep making the same mistakes over and over again?” and “What are the mistakes that no con should ever make again?”

The former question is very hard to get a handle on. In some ways, it's human nature to take the path of least resistance — it's *easier* to keep making the same mistakes than to fix them. Fans have a terrible time with self-assessment and generally don't want to admit “I can do this...I can't do that” so instead many keep doing jobs they aren't capable of doing because all they can see is “I want to do this...I need to do this...” Con committees generally refuse to take the responsibilities of convention management as seriously as they might. To truly manage a committee can risk pissing off other committee members.

In some areas, the “whys” are attached to committee inexperience. You can see this as the conventions do improve over time. But, in many other areas, egos and intramural squabbles are more important than running a better convention. So while I think the “why” question is worth discussing, it probably isn't something we can solve with-

out a lot of soul-searching.

On the other hand, the implementation issues *can* be stored, added to, recategorized, etc. Most convention implementation issues have been honed to a craft if not a science by some individuals and some groups. Running a convention is not rocket science. There is no reason for any competently-run convention in America to be a disaster or to lose much money (barring flood, blizzard, theft, riot, or the con hotel pulling out two weeks before the con).

## Issues for Every Convention

### Overall

- Develop con philosophy (focus, events, special bits to define your unique convention - an ongoing process over the years). Write it down and share it with your committee members, even if it's as general as “Do good, do no harm and throw a good room party.”
- Encourage discussion among areas
- Discourage empire-building
- Create and pay attention to budgets and timelines
- Require area accountability
- Discourage the same people from doing the same jobs year after year
- Encourage all area heads to write their own simple FAQs
- Plan all membership policies well in advance and state them clearly to committee, staff, program participants, etc.
- Make appoints wisely to avoid putting people in positions that they cannot perform competently. History *does* repeat itself.
- Clearly define your smoking rules if they differ from local laws. Many states have severely curtailed smoking areas over the last ten years, but not all.

### Hotel Resume

- Describe layouts and open/close time for all rooms, including furniture and equipment, hotel catering,
- Don't forget to include special needs for sleeping rooms (GoH rooms, hospitality suites)
- Smaller cons generally don't need to worry much about corkage, but large cons need to discuss this directly with the hotel.
- Talk to your hotel rep regularly (at least monthly until four months out, more often as the hotel resume is refined)
- There will always be some blocking problems, but blocking the rooms around the con suite is a particularly critical area. It helps, if possible, for the convention to take a large number of rooms in that area, then rent them out to committee members.

### Keep Records

- Create forms for
  - registration
  - art show
  - huckster room
  - money in (income)
  - money out (expenses)
- Create databases that are compatible for membership and for subareas like program, hucksters and art show to prevent the proliferation of multiple bad addresses. While small cons can get away with notebooks, etc., databases can really help you manage data.
- Create a spreadsheet for the budget. Spreadsheets can also be helpful to manage gopher hours and rental equipment.
- Always note the amount of money sent with each registration, huckster request, art show entry, etc. It may not match the amount the sender claimed.
- Track bad checks and do not accept future checks from these individuals (unless they had made good on the checks immediately upon request).

### Publicity

- Always submit an entry for the local calendars

- Create an informational Web page, preferably one that does not change from year to year.
- Have an E-mail address, preferably one that does not change from year to year.
- Limit mass mailings to one or two and edit your publicity database routinely so you don't waste mailing money in the future. The geographic make-up of the publicity database for mailings should roughly parallel the geographic make-up of the attendees.

### Registration

- Badge type for name and city *must* be legible at a distance — 18pt type, narrow, bold is best.
- Preprint as many badges pre-con as you possibly can, but always have the equipment to make more at the con (or to remake them)
- If people insist on a special badge name, be sure the person's real name is on file and relate it to the badge name
- Small cons do not need to worry about badge security, but larger ones do — do not publicize badge design
- Avoid the unnecessary work of registration packets (except for Program, Volunteer, Huckster Room and Art Show participants). Put most materials (except for badges and program books) on freebie tables.

### Volunteers

- Be nice to your volunteers because you can't put on the con without them
- Tell them what you need them to do
- Feed them (especially when they're working many consecutive hours)
- Don't have multiple gopher holes based on "rank" (though Worldcons may need multiple gopher holes due to their more spread-out nature)
- Accept their feedback

### Con Suite

- Have a good variety of food, from healthy through junk
- Keep the room cleaned up, especially the cheese
- Make sure to have plenty of clean ice

### Huckster's Room

- Have a variety of dealers
- Measure the room and double-check for the location of electrical outlets
- Create a floor plan giving adequate aisle and behind-the-table space
- Give preferred to returning hucksters

### Program

- Have a blend of old and new items and participants
- Always try at least one "off the wall" item
- Create items to complement your guests
- This area must be willing to say *No* to people and make it stick (there are some extremely obnoxious people who think a published work gives them a free ticket to every con in perpetuity — they're abusive to other panel members and to the audience)
- Have staff members observe parts of panels to see what attracted people/what worked/what didn't work and be sure this information gets passed along

### Art Show

- No art show is better than a bad art show
- Measure the room and double-check for the location of electrical outlets
- Requires more people to run it than you think
- Keep the full show open as long as possible
- Run the auction as close to the display area as possible

### Security

- Small cons don't need paid security, but they do need a committee with common sense.
- The main areas requiring some security include dealers, art show and registration
- Doors that can be locked at night and restricted access into exhibit areas during the day are the main security issues
- When cash is transferred, always put the money in a bag or some other container. Larger conventions generally need an off duty cop to help with money transfers (especially registration and art show auction transfers)

## Issues for Worldcons

### Recruitment

- Recruit from all over. No city or state in America can run a Worldcon without non-local help.
- Don't appoint people to high Worldcon positions (like division director and many more visible area heads) when they've failed at the same position for smaller conventions or at other Worldcons. There are lots of jobs in a Worldcon. There are ways to get useful contributions from almost anyone who wants to work. But a willingness to do a job does not mean the person is capable of doing the job. While I don't advocate developing a "Worldcon Runner's Accreditation" or anything like that, committees have got to be more thoughtful about making appointments. Great bidders are not necessarily good area heads. (Note: Sometimes, people who fail at a Worldcon job later do very well at it, but I think they need to run the area successfully at a large regional or co-run it before doing it solo.)

### Communication

- Use E-mail and Web as much as possible, but don't make the non-online folks feel left out.

## Problems That Can Plague a Worldcon

In a mailing list back in 1995, Intersection committee member Fiona Anderson asked: "*What are your lists for the top 20 problems that could hit a Worldcon?*"

I'm not a Worldcon expert by any means, but having attended a bunch of Worldcons over the last 20 years, and having worked in many different capacities for Worldcons, here are what I think the biggest problems are:

1. Hotel/convention center pulling out.
2. Intra-committee feuds (the public ones are often nuisance enough, but the "private ones" can be even more devastating).
3. Committee that does little/no recruiting for senior staff (no one city has the depth and breadth of people to create a complete Worldcon committee).

4. Non-communicative committee members (especially the program folks).
5. Committees formed around political paybacks instead of competence.
6. Fixing the blame and not the problem. (Some groups spend way too much time worrying about the personalities involved and not enough time doing the right thing. Related to that is "pretending a problem won't go away" where the problem still doesn't get fixed.)
7. Some group/individual trying to "hold the Worldcon hostage" over some issue.
8. Permitting one Worldcon area to "take over." The committee, especially the chair, must try to consider what's best for the convention as a whole and not what's best for one area.
9. Fear of innovation. Worldcon committees can be frightfully stodgy.
10. Not planning for various contingencies.
11. Striking a rational balance between spending money freely and being too tight with a buck.
12. Hugo/site selection vote fraud.
13. Not enough gophers.
14. Not enough security.
15. Too many attendees/crashers looking for style over substance.
16. Certain pros/fans who prove the 80/20 rule every damned year... (that 20% of the people cause 80% of the grief...)
17. Insufficiently-stocked con suite and no easy-to-purchase food nearby (a con suite can get away with running out of it's near vending machines that are stocked).
18. Poor room assignments so that people have to dash from one end of the convention center to the other. Cluster similar items together (Art show and art programming; films and media programming...).
19. Not publishing programming/event/exhibit changes at the con.
20. Not doing every bit of communication via the Internet/commercial networks that you reasonably can.

Fiona further asked: "*What are your lists for the top 20 problems that could hit Registration?*"

1. Not enough help.
2. Major database nightmares just before the con or at the con.
3. Using packets/envelopes instead of having attendees take those freebies that they want.
4. Type that's too small on the badge. Names should be huge and all other material should be small.
5. Power failure and no paper backups. "Just in case" of such a problem, Registration should be able to run on flashlights if it has to.
6. Badge forgeries. Don't publicize what your badge will look like pre-con and be sure security knows what the real badge(s) look like. Use clever fonts — anyone can forge helvetica and times...
7. Registration process not properly explained (If you choose to use multi-site registration, the list of *where everyone's* badge is must be at main registration. Or, as I'm sure a few people will chime in "one registration site only for all attendees.")
8. Pre-con, have your registration, hotel & program people work together as much as possible to ensure that records for the same people aren't entered three times. Choose one database, spend some time early on working with it, and be sure everyone uses it.

If you have some "bare minimum" ideas, please send them to [lmann@city-net.com](mailto:lmann@city-net.com) and I'll integrate them into this list.

# The On-Line Registration User's Guide

## by Lisa Hertel

*This article was written by Lisa as part of some course-work, but seemed appropriate to Smofcon. Remember that it was written for non-fans!*

### 1. WHO NEEDS THIS GUIDE AND WHY

This guide is for meeting planners who wish to run a large convention registration with an eye toward minimizing data entry both during and after the convention. The focus is on developing an on-line registration system by using laptop personal computers in conjunction with a network to share resources. Such a network must be simple and flexible, yet durable, inexpensive and easily maintained. This guide is to assist you in choosing the needed software and hardware, setting up an on-line registration system, and to walk you through several test cases.

### 2. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has several sections and sub-sections. The background discusses the need for an on-line registration. The next sections discuss various choices in hardware and software—computers, printers, databases and networks. After discussing the software, there are several example screens. Some notes about testing the system follow. The guide includes a comprehensive glossary and index.

For the computer screens, the font `courier` indicates what will actually appear on the screen. Informational notes are in *italics* and parenthesis (). An underline, `_`, at the end of a question indicates the cursor.

This guide is to assist meeting planners in choosing the hardware and software for an on-line registration system, with several examples. While this guide is not comprehensive, it can serve as a good starting point for most interested persons.

### 3. BACKGROUND

#### 3.1. The Development of Non-professional Conventions

Once the provenance of large commercial organizations, conventions of various sorts are becoming increasingly popular in the private sector. Most of these conventions cater to fans or collectors of various sorts: sports cards, comic books, television shows, even games. Earliest and still foremost amongst this crowd is the science fiction convention, where fans of various types of science fiction, both written and visual, gather together. There is at least one science fiction convention virtually every weekend of the year in the United States. These conventions, even the more commercial ones, often employ volunteers.

Since many of the privately sponsored conventions run on a tight budget, they actively recruit volunteers. The convention benefits by not having to hire people; the volunteers may receive food, clothing (souvenir shirts), free memberships, or just gratitude in exchange. These volunteers are fans who may only go to one or two conventions a year, and are working with little or no training. Thus, their tasks must be as simple as possible.

#### 3.2. Problems With Off-line Registrations

One of the most labor-intensive divisions at the convention is registration. For members who have pre-registered by mail, getting a membership badge is a minor matter when they arrive at the convention. However, for those members who did not enroll by mail, registration may mean long lines to receive a poorly made badge. This initial contact may set a negative tone for the entire convention, and a subsequent loss of future members. Furthermore, entering people into the database after the convention for any future mailings is both tedious and time-consuming.

A computerized system whereby people register themselves as they walk in the door would reduce the staff needed at the convention, and eliminate the data entry time afterwards. By linking the system to a printer, the badge the new member receives is equivalent to that of pre-register members. Loading a copy of the pre-convention master database into each computer eliminates duplicate entries and affords address changes as needed. Finally, the computer reduces the need for extensive paper work.

The perfect on-line registration system must be durable enough to withstand transportation before, during and after the convention. It must be fast and easy to set up, tear down, or fix if needed. The data entry questions must be easily understood by both children and adults. The database software must allow for updates to addresses, and a method of looking up people from the master database. The printer drivers must network together so that several machines can share one printer, without slowing the entire network. Finally, the system must be as economical as possible.

## 4. Hardware

### 4.1. Computer Choices

Your choice of computers may be the most critical one you make. A variety of systems are available, each with advantages and disadvantages. You should consider:

- software availability for the system
- the number of machines available
- the networking capabilities of the system
- compatibility with presently used software and hardware
- portability (for set-up and tear-down)
- expense

There are three types of computers that may suit your needs: minicomputers, the Apple Macintosh (or Power Mac), and IBM PC's. You will need two per two hundred expected at-the-door memberships.

Minicomputers are very expensive and generally only for experienced users. The necessary software is limited in the minicomputer category. You will probably need to find a programmer to write custom software, which is difficult to maintain. Finally, these computers are difficult to find privately owned, and are not a prime choice for on-line registration.

Apple's Macintosh computer is popular among less technical users. The advantage of the "Mac" is its ease of use. Apple also makes two portables—the PowerBook, and the less common Newton. All of Apple's products are expensive. There are fewer business applications written for Apple computers, limiting your choices. The newer, more versatile Power Mac can understand a larger variety of software, but these systems are not yet common.

The most commonly available personal computer is the IBM clone, or PC. The PC has a large variety of software applications developed for it and will run various operating systems, including MS-DOS, Windows, OS/2, and Linux. Some of these operating systems, such as the more advanced Windows programs, have built-in networking capabilities. Many of the newer operating systems require extensive computer resources, and will not work on older or more limited systems. All PCs generally require some expertise to use, although newer operating systems are more "user friendly."

Laptop PCs are generally the best choice for on-line registration. Laptops are smaller, portable versions of desktop computers. They have a built-in battery backup, and the screen tilts for people of various heights. Lightweight and portable, laptops allow for easy set-up or removal, but the small size also invites theft. Another major disadvantage of the laptop is the smaller keyboard. However, there is plenty of good commercial software and compatible hardware available, although space on the hard disk is limited. Networking in to a larger system will solve this problem. Network cards can plug in to an external slot, the PCMCIA port, so that machines do not need disassembling. The hardware is also slightly more durable than a standard desktop system. A variety of business suppliers rent or lease them.

### 4.2. Printers

You need at least two printers per one thousand expected at-the-door memberships. There are four basic types of printers available:

- dot matrix,
- daisy wheel,
- ink jet (or bubble jet), and
- laser printers.

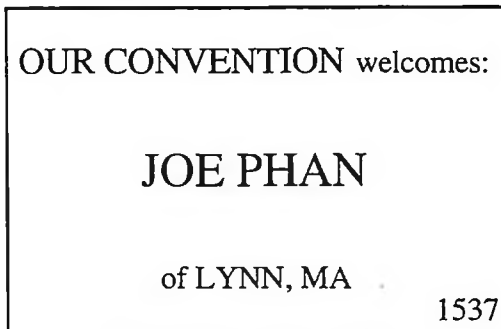


Figure 4.2.1. Sample badge and receipt.

The speed of a printer is rated in pages per minute (ppm), and the print quality or resolution in dots per inch (dpi). Dot matrix printers are slow (1 to 4 ppm), noisy and have a low resolution (150 dpi). Daisy wheel printers, which are similar to typewriters, are also slow, noisy, and print uniformly in one type style and size (font). Neither dot matrix nor daisy wheel printers are good choices unless price is a major factor in your consideration.

Ink jet and bubble jet printers have much better resolution (150 to 300 dpi) and speed (4 to 14 ppm), but cost more than dot matrix or daisy wheel printers. Some can print in color, although it is an added expense, and slows the printer. More expensive still are laser printers, which are even faster (4 to 24 ppm), quieter, and have a higher print quality (300 to 1200 dpi). The major drawback of ink jet, bubble jet and laser printers is that they are page printers, which means they print one page at a time. This is fine for peak periods when multiple registrations are being processed, but a distinct disadvantage at non-peak hours. One solution is a label printer. Label printers are small laser or ink jet printers made especially for single labels. Unfortunately, they are very expensive.

For example, when a registration completes, two labels print: the first for the badge, and the second for your copy of the numbered receipt, as shown in Figure 4.2.1. When a member loses his or her badge, you can quickly find the information needed to make a new badge by finding your copy of the receipt.

Whatever kind of printer you choose, be sure you have good software that allows information sent by individual computers or terminals to queue for the printer. This print spooler must work well with your chosen software and hardware. The printers can become a major bottleneck, and tie up your machines, if the spooler can not meet the load. Sharing a printer across a network can be tricky, so test the system thoroughly, well in advance of the convention, under stress situations.

## 5. SOFTWARE

Good software is crucial to the smooth operation of any system. Be aware that larger and more complex software is more likely to break down. Similarly, software and hardware requiring expertise is harder to work with, and likelier to fail. Finally, newer software is more "user friendly" than older versions.

### 5.1. Databases

There is a multitude of good database software on the market. It is also possible to find home-made databases that will work on a variety of operating systems. If you already have a database, be sure that it is compatible with the other software you choose. If you don't, remember that newer programs are generally easier for non-experts to use and have greater compatibility. However, they also can engender considerable expense. Finally, make sure that the database you choose can comfortably hold all your records. Be prepared for your database to use a large portion of hard disk space.

Two of the more common databases are Microsoft Access and dBase. Access has a pre-built registration package available, and the newest version is moderately easy to use, although it requires some database knowledge. Although it is one of the industry's standards, dBase requires more experience. A Windows program called FoxPro works with dBase to make it easier to use. Older versions of dBase are available that will, with proper programming, work well on old systems. Whatever program you choose, you may want to load it on one master computer, and link it to the others.

### 5.2. Networking Software

Networking your computers allows multiple computers to send information to a single printer. Networks can be a potential problem, however. If possible, store a copy of the database on each individual machine, rather than requiring them to access a master computer. You can use a floppy disk to update the master database periodically, when it won't interfere with people coming to register for your convention. If you use this method, give each individual machine a unique number set (for example, 2000 to 2999 on laptop #2) which you update as needed. Put the receipts in order to assist in finding information for a person who has lost his or her badge, or load this information on to the master computer. Various networking programs and operating systems are available. Some require an Ethernet card and adapter, which require some knowledge to install. Others may use parallel ports and/or serial ports. If possible, choose systems and software that already have compatible networking capabilities. For example, Windows 95™ and Windows NT™ have built-in networking capabilities.

## 6. SAMPLE SCREENS

The following tables are a series of sample screens that you may choose to set up. Designed for people who have never used a computer before, they will work on a wide variety of systems. The annotations are to assist you in following the registration sequence. Each screen serves a specific purpose.

1. The **introductory** screen gives instructions on how to enter data, then asks for the registrant's name.
2. The database searches for the name. The **database** screen confirms the address if the name is in the database.
3. If the person is not in the database, the **second data entry** screen lets the member put him or herself into the database.
4. The **data correction** screen allows for changes in name or address.
5. The **badge data entry** screen is for the person who wishes to have a different name on his or her badge. (This may not be needed for some conventions.)
6. Finally, the **badge set-up** screen allows for a final confirmation before the badge spools to the printer and writes the information into memory.

### 6.1. The Introductory Screen

This is the first screen your registrants will see. Since some people are unfamiliar with computers, it needs to offer basic instructions on how to enter data and be fairly friendly for the technophobic. Finally, it needs to be adaptable to a wide variety of systems. You can alter the introductory message to fit the convention. The screen will not clear until after confirming the data entered.

Figure 6.1.1. The introductory screen.

| On Screen (notes)   | Registrant's entry (notes) |
|---|----------------------------|
| <p>WELCOME TO OUR CONVENTION!</p> <p>Note: After you type your answer, press the enter, ↵ or return key, on the right-hand side of the keyboard. If you make a mistake before pressing enter, use the arrow keys or backspace key to fix it. If you have already pressed enter, you will have a chance to go back before your badge prints. Please press enter to begin._</p> | ↵ (enter)                  |
| What is your FIRST name?_   | Joe (first name)           |
| What is your LAST name?_  | Phan (last name)           |
| Is this information correct? Please type a "y" for yes, or "n" for no (y or n)._  | y                          |
| (If not y, the introductory screen reappears. If y, the database searches for matching names and the database screen appears. If no match is found, the second data entry screen appears.)  | (if n)                     |

## 6.2. The Database Screen

If the registrant is in the database, this screen will appear. For larger conventions with a stable population (one unlikely to change address), the addition of a city or zip code field to the introductory screen will help limit the list of names that may appear. This change is appropriate those conventions who wish to protect the privacy of their data, especially where mandated by law (as in the United Kingdom). As with all the screens, it allows verification before continuing.

Figure 6.2.1. The database screen.

| On Screen (notes)  | Registrant's entry (notes) |
|--|----------------------------|
| The following names were found:<br>1. Joe Phan 190 East St. New York NY<br>2. Joe Phan 205 South Elm Springfield IL<br>3. Joe Phan 21 Norway Lane London UK<br>4. Joe Phan 3216 Western Ave Lynn MA<br>If one of these is you, please type the number in front of it, or type n for none._ | 4                          |
| <i>(If not an available number, the second data entry screen appears.)</i>   | <i>(or other option)</i>   |
| You are: Joe Phan 3216 Western Ave Lynn MA.<br>Is this correct (y or n)?_  | y                          |
| <i>(If n, the previous screen returns.)</i>  | <i>(or n)</i>              |
| Has your name or address changed (y or n)?_  | n                          |
| <i>(If y, the data correction screen appears. If n, the badge set-up screen appears.)</i>  | <i>(or y)</i>              |

## 6.3. The Second Data Entry Screen

This screen appears when the name does not match those in the database. It first offers an opportunity to correct the name, then allows the registrant to enter him or herself in to the database. You can quickly process the information during off-peak hours so the master database will contain the correct name and address in the future. This screen is the most complex one; it must be flexible to allow for a variety of situations. Again, before proceeding the data is verified.

Figure 6.3.1. The second data entry screen.

| On Screen (notes)  | Registrant's entry (notes) |
|--|----------------------------|
| Your name was not found in our database. Do you think you should be in our database?_                            | n                          |
| <i>(If y, the introductory screen appears.)</i>  | <i>(or y)</i>              |
| Please re-enter your correct first name (for mailing).__   | Joe                        |
| Please re-enter your correct last name (for mailing).__  | Phan                       |
| <i>(If the name is different from that originally typed in, the database is searched again.)</i>                 |                            |
| Please enter your current street address, including apartment number.__  | 3216 Western Ave           |
| Please enter your town or city.__  | Lynn                       |
| Please enter your state code (the 2-letter postal abbreviation). If you are not from the US, leave this blank.__ | MA                         |
| <i>(If blank, they are given a larger field for a foreign entry)</i>   | <i>(or blank)</i>          |
| Please enter your correct 5-digit zip code.__  | 01902                      |
| You are: Joe Phan 3216 Western Ave Lynn MA 01902.<br>Is this correct (y or n)?_                                  | y                          |
| <i>(If n, the data correction screen appears. If y, the badge entry screen appears.)</i>                         | <i>(or n)</i>              |



#### 6.4. The Data Correction Screen

This screen allows for changes in name or address. Create backup disks at regular intervals and write these changes to the database as time permits. Advanced programming will allow the old data to appear automatically in the fields to save typing. Finally, verification occurs as usual.

Figure 6.4.1. The data correction screen.

| On Screen (notes)   | Registrant's entry (notes) |
|---|----------------------------|
| The information you want changed is:<br>Joe Phan 3216 Western Ave Lynn MA 01902.<br>Is this information wrong (y or n)?_    | y                          |
| <i>(If n, the badge set-up screen appears.)</i>   | <i>(or y)</i>              |
| Please re-enter your correct first name (for mailing).__  | Joseph                     |
| Please re-enter your correct last name (for mailing).__   | Phan                       |
| Please re-enter your correct street address, including apartment number.__  | 3216 Western Ave           |
| Please re-enter your correct town or city.__  | Lynn                       |
| Please re-enter your correct state code (the 2-letter postal abbreviation). If you are not from the US, leave this blank.__ | MA                         |
| <i>(If blank, they are given a larger field for a foreign entry)</i>  | <i>(or blank)</i>          |
| Please re-enter your correct 5 or 9-digit zip code.   | 01902                      |
| You are: Joseph Phan 3216 Western Ave Lynn MA 01902.<br>Is this now correct (y or n)?_                                      | y                          |
| <i>(If n, the data correction screen restarts. If y, the badge set-up screen appears.)</i>                                  | <i>(or n)</i>              |

#### 6.5. The Badge Data Entry Screen

Some people prefer a different name on their badge, such as a company name or nick-name. The software does not allow nameless badges, to prevent legal problems. The name should be readable from a reasonable distance; use at least a 14 point type size, in a legible font. You may limit the number of characters in each field, or have the ability to print long names in a smaller font size. This screen does *not* verify information, as it is verified by the badge set-up screen.

Figure 6.5.1. The badge data entry screen.

| On Screen (notes)  | Registrant's entry (notes) |
|--|----------------------------|
| Do you want a different name or address on your badge (y or n)?_   | y                          |
| <i>(If n, the badge set-up screen appears.)</i>  | <i>(or n)</i>              |
| What is the first name you would like on your badge? If you only want a single name, leave this field blank.__ | Joe                        |
| What is the last name you would like on your badge?_   | Phan                       |
| <i>(If blank, an error message appears and the question repeats.)</i>  | <i>(or blank)</i>          |
| What city or town would you like on your badge?_   | Lynn                       |
| What state or country would you like on your badge?_   | MA                         |
| <i>(The badge set-up screen appears.)</i>  |                            |

## 6.6. The Badge Set-up Screen

The only purpose of this screen is to offer the registrant a final opportunity to review his or her entry before printing the badge. The final payment message should linger on the screen for about 30 seconds before the program resets to the introductory screen. At the cashier station, the cashier matches the ID to the convention's part of the receipt, receives the correct payment, and laminates the badge or inserts it into a holder before giving it to the registrant. City and state may be replaced by an electronic address, company name, or specialty, if space permits.

Figure 6.6.1. The badge set-up screen.

| On Screen (notes)  | Registrant's entry (notes)                         |
|--|--|
| Is this how you want your badge to read (y or n)?_   | y  |
| Joe Phan<br>Lynn MA  |  |
| <i>(If n, the badge data entry screen appears.)</i>  | <i>(or n.)</i>                                     |
| Please proceed to the cashier to pay while your badge is printing. You will need a photo ID or other form of positive identification to get your badge. Thank you. | <i>(Registrant goes to pay and screen resets.)</i> |

## 7. TESTING THE SYSTEM

Most detractors of on-line registration criticize the lack of reliability of the system. Test your system **thoroughly** well in advance of the convention. Start with a small sampling, and be sure to test every case. Use a copy of your database when testing so that valuable information does not get lost. Test the network on the intended machines if possible. Print several test badges as well, and make sure you have enough equipment to support your peak registration periods. **Always** have a paper-based system in case of computer failure. Print three-part NCR forms well in advance of the convention, and keep them handy; a sample form is shown.

A day or two before the convention opens, set up your system on site, in an appropriate space lay-out. Test the system again, and ask any attendees that may be assisting in setting up the convention to register, if they have not done so in advance. Check your badge set-up. Be sure you have clearly written procedures for cashiers, and directions for those who have pre-registered. If you have **any** problems that would cause delays, switch to a paper system.

### 7.2.1. A sample paper registration form

**REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

BADGE NAME (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

| Please Circle                      |             | For other use |             | Have you been in our convention before? Yes No |  |
|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|--|--|
| Weekend                            | Friday Only | Saturday Only | Sunday Only | Adult  |  |
| \$40                               | \$15        | \$25          | \$15        | ADULT  |  |
| \$25                               | \$10        | \$15          | \$10        | CHILD  |  |
| Pay by                             |             | Mastercard    |             | Yes No   |  |
| Cash                               | Check #     |               | Yes         |  |  |
| ID checked (please initial)? _____ |             |               |             |  |  |

If yes, do we have you under a different name or address?  
Yes No If yes, what was the old information?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you are new to our convention, how did you hear about it?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer initials if ID has been verified

Allows tracking of payment method

Allows tracking of badge type and cost

Optional survey

Allows for later data entry

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

If you are a meeting planner intent on running a smooth registration at-the-door, on-line registration can be advantageous. On-line registration using laptop computers pre-loaded or linked to a master database, connected by a network to one or several printers, offers speed, portability, and flexibility. The system virtually eliminates your need to enter data after the convention, a time-consuming effort. A laptop personal computer running standard Microsoft Windows or MS-DOS software is your best choice for a machine, as it is portable and easy to find compatible software and hardware. A label printer, using laser technology, is the fastest badge printing option, but an ink jet or laser printer is acceptable. Either Microsoft Access or dBase are good choices for a database. Good registration software will consist of a series of screens simple for the attendee to understand. Finally, it is essential that you test the system thoroughly before use, and always have some way to register members if the system should fail.

# Computerized Registration at OryCon

by John Lorentz

*"I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that."*

## Computers are your friends!

Computers have become an ever-present fact of modern day life. Everywhere you go, you see computers—at work, at home, in the car taking you between those places, in the seat tray next to you when you're flying off on vacation. But one place that computers are often *not* found is at registration at your local convention. A surprising number of conventions are still using manual processes to handle at-con registration, using label printers or typewriters rather than computer printers. Other conventions that have used computers at registration have seen long lines, inoperative systems, and nonexistent badges.

OryCon is one convention that's bucked the trend. We've used computers in registration since 1981, and they've been generating the badges at the convention since 1985—and the world has not ended. The computers do not cause massive congestion, interminable lines or frustrated fans. OryCon processes about one person a minute at each station, and the wait is not more noticeable than what's found at conventions with manual registration procedures. So what's OryCon doing that's different?

## Simple is Better

OryCon's typical setup for the last several years has consisted of three standalone PCs, each with its own printer. (This last year, we also had a fourth station in the Green Room.) People fill out a membership form (3x5 card) with the pertinent info, and go to the cashiers. We use the usual bank-type lines, with the attendee going to the next free station. (Obviously, this is just for at-con registration. The pre-registered members go elsewhere to pick up their previously-printed badges.) Each data entry person also acts as cashier, and usually deals with the money in the 15 seconds or so that it takes to print the badge. This last OryCon, the line never

got more than 30 people long.

One pitfall that OryCon has avoided so far is overkill. Instead of networked workstations, we use standalone computer/printer stations. (We did try networking one year. The network failed after about 30 minutes. But the system was written so that all it took to get going again was to reboot the systems in non-network mode. Three minutes later, everyone was working again.) We may try setting up a network next year, or we may not.

Each workstation has very basic needs. Although two of the systems used at OryCon Reg at last month were Pentiums, the other was a slow 486—and there was very little difference in the speed of the workstations. The printers are basic dot-matrix (9- and 24-pin) printers (some of which are more than 10 years old), that print one badge label at a time in large readable type. We also believe in redundancy. We had a spare printer that could be swapped in if needed. If one system went down, we could simply use two stations instead of three. By printing the badge labels individually, we avoid delays caused by batch printing the badges. (One of the few problems that Noreascon's registration process encountered in 1989.) And, frankly, a 9-pin dot matrix printer is more dependable than a laser printer.

The database system we've been using since 1988 is Advanced Revelation, a DOS-based program that—unfortunately—has been abandoned by its vendor in favor of "sexier" systems. AREV, as it's called, can run as easily on a 386 as the latest Pentium II. It has powerful capabilities, indexing to speed up searches and has the benefit that each record is stored separately within the file. This makes it much easier to merge the records later, using a simple "copy" command. It also lets the system generate all badge numbers, and the users don't have to remember to close the database file later, since all information is stored on the fly.

The badges are printed on standard 1" x 3/4" computer labels and stuck on the pre-printed badge cards. By using the imprinted plastic badge frames from Stoffel Seals, we avoid dealing with laminators and fancy technologies. If there's something wrong with the badge—or the attendee wants a different badge name—the card's torn up, a new label is printed and they have a new badge in only a few seconds.

### Have It Your Way

As well as keeping our system physically simple, we try to make it simple for the users also. I am basically lazy—and any year that I'm running Registration, I'm also the major user of the system. This means that the system I've written is going to be as simple and straightforward as possible.

The entry screen is set up to—as much as possible—let the data entry person just keep pressing <Enter>, and end up with a printed badge and a filed record. Since OryCon is lucky enough to have records from all of the previous years available (including the Westercons), everything is integrated into one main database of some 9,000 people. When a name is entered into this year's database, the system checks to see if that person has been at a previous convention. If so, it'll automatically bring up the address information from the last time he/she was here. In the ideal situation, when someone hasn't moved and is using the same badge name, the entry person ends up typing the name, and pressing <Enter> seven times, and everything is filed and printed. (Most of the complications are taken care of during the post-con data cleanup, which usually takes me two or three evenings.)

The system is built with numerous defaults and shortcuts. If the person is paying the standard adult rate, then a couple of <Enter>'s files today's date and the appropriate dollar amount, rather than forcing the user to type all that the information. Since many of our attendees come from Portland and Seattle, it's a lot easier to have the entry person type 'P' or 'S', and let the system fill in the city, state and the first three digits of the zip code.

This setup has been easy enough to use that we've had volunteers with no experience with it

sit down and pick it up in a matter of minutes. And the table-driven defaults behind the screen make it possible to add shortcuts, change default amounts—Even change the database that the screen is pointing to, all on the fly without having to exit and re-enter the system.

On-line/real-time registration is invaluable. If a badge is lost during the convention, we can pull up the record to verify the membership and print a new badge within seconds. (We can also make a note to indicate that a new badge has been issued, just in case the badge becomes "lost" again.) The Art Show software used at OryCon is written using the same system, and the registration file becomes the "bidders" file. The bidder number that people use is their badge number—making it very easy to generate receipts, not to mention helping track down folks who bid on a piece and never show up to pay for it. The post-con wrapup work is much faster when all the folks are already in the system.

And sales for next year's OryCon benefits from this, also. We usually have about 250 people buying next year's memberships on Sunday afternoon of this year's OryCon. We have the system set up so that all we have to do is enter the person's badge number from this year and all information is copied to next year's file (since very few folks move during the weekend they're at OryCon) and a receipt is generated. We usually process these 250 people in about three hours, using one work station.

Obviously, no system is perfect and we've had our share of problems. (There was the year that I discovered on setup that my computer—the only one we had that year with a complete version of the system rather just a runtime module—had a dead power supply. Luckily, I knew some folks that had a very fast turnaround in such repairs, and at-con sales were only delayed a couple of hours.) And I have yet to merge into the master file the names and addresses from the attendees from the last couple of OryCons. (Something about being recruited to run Worldcon registration 1800 miles away about a month before the con—time to do anything else tends to disappear.)

[And I am hoping to rewrite this system to

use something like FoxPro, a package that's still being supported and improved by its vendor. As well as this software has worked for us, I can't suggest anyone else changing to it. While the vendor does still sell AREV, they no longer support it, and the cost they're charging now—\$1395—is triple the price I paid when we started using it.]

But there's no doubt that whatever replaces the system we're using now is going to keep to the "keep it simple" philosophy that we've used at OryCon for so many years. Because it's that philosophy, not any particular software package, that's made computerized registration work for us.

# Boskone 34 De-Briefing Agenda

Tony Lewis

Note: Breaks will be scheduled as seems proper to the topic and tone of the discussions.

## INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Explanation of Debriefing

Chair's Remarks

## GENERAL DISCUSSION OF SPACE ALLOCATION (10 minutes)

Consuite          Program/functions (ballroom)

Services

## PROGRAM & EVENTS (35 minutes)

Main Program    Kaffeeklatches/Filking

Video            Writers' Workshop

Regency tea     Autographs & Readings

Meet-the-VIPs   Musical          Fanhistoricon

Banquet         Punday          Technical

Dragonslair

## ART SHOW & c. (10 minutes)

Art Show        History exhibit

Print Shop

## FUNCTIONS (15 minutes)

Space Cadets    Gaming          Hucksters

## PUBLICATIONS (30 minutes)

Flyers            Pocket Program    Mr. G.

Progress Report   Advertising & Publicity

Restaurant Guide                    Program Book

*Helmuth*        Hotel maps        On-line

## REAL-WORLD INTERFACE (45 minutes)

Hotel liaison    Security liaison    Insurance

Suite Allocation    Press Relations

NESFA Sales & Souvenirs

## FAN-WORLD INTERFACE (30 minutes)

Pre-con reg      Information      Club/Bid Tables

At-con reg        People Mover    Party board

Badges            Con suite        Freebies

## INTERNAL SERVICES (20 minutes)

Services          Office            Plaques

Den                Ribbons         Logistics

Treasury         SBOF

## INTER-AREA COMMUNICATIONS (15 minutes)

only items not covered elsewhere

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Items not covered elsewhere

Boskone 34 Announcements - Davey Snyder

Boskone 35 Announcements - Ted and/or Bonnie

Atwood

Be **HARD** on issues

This is a debriefing on Boskone XXXIV. The purpose of this meeting is to find out what happened to things at Boskone XXXIV so that the good can be continued and to find out *what* went wrong (and **brainstorm** solutions). No one is on trial and absolutely no personal attacks or innuendoes are permitted. This meeting is not run by parliamentary procedure nor by Roberts; rulings by the Moderator are **absolute**. The only procedural motion possible is to remove the Moderator. These rules have been agreed to by the Chairs of Boskone XXXIV and Boskone XXXV and by the President of NESFA.

1. The agenda is proposed. The Moderator is willing to alter the order if necessary to allow people with conflicting schedules to present their information. I will give priority to people who ran areas and worked in them. However, we also want to hear from people who saw the events.
2. In presenting information remember that you are **not** trying to convince people to support an opinion nor vote for a cause. You are presenting observations and reasonable inferences as they appeared to you. If you agree with a previous speaker and have no new information to impart *please do not speak*.
3. Remember that Boskone XXXIV is now history; nothing said here or anywhere else will change what actually happened. Our concern is for Boskone XXXV improvements. Please address issues and events, not personalities. We are trying to brainstorm for the future, not assign blame for any putative problems in the past.
4. It is not necessary that you have a solution to a problem to report that such a problem exists.
5. If you believe you have a solution to a problem or an improvement please state it briefly. Remember, the purpose of brainstorming is not to make decisions nor criticize suggestions, but to get as many ideas out as possible. You can build upon other people's ideas but you can't raze them.

Be **SOFT** on people

6. When you are called upon to speak, please stand, face the majority of the assembly (based upon your location) and speak clearly and succinctly so that the assembly can hear your points. Do not speak until and unless you are standing. Do not stand to speak until called upon by the Moderator by name.
7. All presentations are to the assembly; all questions are directed to the Moderator. Discussions or dialogues that advance the purposes of Boskone are acceptable; the Moderator will make this decision.
8. Do not interrupt the speakers. Given the size of the assembly and the amount of time required by the agenda, not everyone will be able to speak on every issue. I will give priority to the person who ran the area, to people who worked in that area, to people whose areas interacted with the area under discussion. Please listen and gather your thoughts before speaking; by listening, you may note that your question was answered before you had to ask it. By thinking before speaking and by speaking succinctly and to the point, you increase the chances of people listening to you.
9. If a statement is made that is **factually** incorrect or that might be misleading, the Moderator will allow an appropriate person to correct the record provided such is done politely and with the goal of education rather than rebuke.
- 10 In general, disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. People persisting in this will be required to leave the assembly. Do not treat others in a way that you would not want to be treated.
- 11 Written reports, statistics, concepts, etc. will be gratefully accepted by the person or persons recording the meeting.

# How to Build a Hotel Resume

## A Simplified Approach

by Ben Yalow

The hotel resume is the set of instructions given to a facility on how to set up the various function rooms, along with (optionally) some additional text informing them about the special conditions that apply to your meeting. The hotel will then take the instructions you submit, and turn them into a set of instructions on their forms, which will be circulated to their staff, and used as their guide. The hotel staff generally won't see your instructions, or your contract — you need to get everything translated onto their forms, which you can then check before they get distributed.

There are lots of different approaches to how hotels want to get your instructions, so you check with the hotel before you start, to see if they have any particular format they want you to use. If not, then you should develop a style that works for you, and that is as clear as possible to the hotel, since, if given a chance to misunderstand, you can be sure that someone might well do so.

Here's a format I've used for a couple of conventions, along with some sample entries. It needs to be adapted to local conditions, of course, but it can be used as a starting point.

The resume is divided into two main areas. The first part is a bunch of text sections, talking about the convention, and what makes it different. The second part is the day by day, room by room, outlines of what is needed.

For San Antonio, the first part had the following subsections:

- A general introduction, which was about a page explaining what the Worldcon is.
- A list of the key contacts — who the people are, and what their job titles are.
- A list of people who are authorized to sign charges to the convention master account. This often has a lot of overlap with the key contacts, but is often not the same list. For example, the person running con ops for a Worldcon needs to be on the list of key contacts, since the hotel security department needs to know about him, but there is usually no reason to allow that person to sign to master.
- A list of people authorized to have rooms locked/unlocked (some people could do that for any room, others could only do it for their specific rooms).
- Special blocking arrangements, explaining things like party/non-party floors.
- An explanation of how complaints (usually noise complaints) are to be handled.
- Use of freight elevators.
- How information calls are to be handled.
- Special instructions for housekeeping and restaurants.
- Instructions on how to contact the convention if the hotel wants something.



The second part of the resume is a bunch of entries for the various setups. Since most conventions tend to set up a room, and leave it, my preference is to list the convention chronologically, so each room starts getting an entry for the first time the convention picks up the room. On subsequent days, the resume will say "All rooms stay the same, except for the following changes", and then list all of the changes (new rooms picked up, rooms returned to hotel, or changes in setup). Here's a partial for the Riverwalk hotel, for the first day:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Bowie</b><br>10AM-6AM  | <b>Alamo A/B/C</b><br>5PM-3AM  |
| Program<br>Post as: Program   | Dances<br>Post as: Dances  |
| Head table for 5<br>Table mic on stand<br>Theater max seating<br>water station<br>trash station | See diagram<br><br>comfortable chair along back wall<br>6'x30" table<br>chairs along all walls<br>water station between A/B doors; front corner<br>near C/D wall<br>2 large trash stations |
| <b>Milam</b><br>10AM-6AM  | <b>Alamo D/E/F</b><br>10AM-midnight (24 hours)   |
| Kaffeeklatches<br>Post as: Kaffeeklatches   | Gaming<br>Post as: Gaming  |
| U for 15<br>water station<br>trash station  |  |
| <b>F&amp;B:</b><br>1PM:<br>3 gallons of tea<br>5 cakes, 12 slices each                          | 20 rounds of 10 with <b>no</b> tablecloths<br>10 6'x30" along walls<br>2 water stations<br>6 large trash stations  |
| 3PM:<br>1 gallon tea<br>1 gallon coffee   |  |
| 6PM:<br>1 gallon tea  |  |
| Deliver to foyer outside Milam  |  |

Let's look at a few of the entries in more detail. For each room, I list the room name, and the hours it's going to be used, and what's there. I also tell the hotel how to post it on the board, which is available to the public (for places like Treasury, it might say "Post As: Do Not Post"). I then specify things like a head table, and the seating (theater is the usual kind of seating at most ordinary program rooms, with rows of chairs facing a head table). I tell them how many chairs, either by number, or "max", which means set the room to capacity (for more complicated setups, it might be "theater max, two main aisles, three cross aisles", or some other complex set — if it gets too complex, it pays to include a diagram, and say "See Diagram" on the instructions). There's also a section for the Food & Beverage department, telling them what to bring, and when/where to bring it (the part labelled F&B).

On later days, things are often a lot simpler. For example, a few days later, everything is pretty much the same, but since we're changing from Regency Dancing in the dance room, which doesn't need a DJ area, or a dance floor, etc, to Rock Dance, which does, the instructions for that day read:

Note that I listed the F&B for the day, since that needs to be reordered every day, even if the instructions are the same, since, unlike seating, they need *new* coffee, whereas they can just leave the seats the same.

More complicated setups can be much longer — for example, there might need to be additional instructions for the hotel electrical department (power drops for lighting), or engineering (lifts for hanging things from ceiling), or telephone, or any one of a number of other areas. But this gives one general outline on how to go about putting a resume together.

In short, the resume lists each of the things the hotel must provide, in enough detail so that they can provide all of it. If it's not in the resume, it's not going to be there. But, if the resume is right, then the hotel should be able to know everything they need to know in order to execute the plan for the convention.

All setups stay the same except for

**Alamo A/B/C**  
5PM-3AM

See diagram

add 40'x40' dance floor in center of room  
add 20 cocktail rounds of 4 around perimeter  
of dance floor  
add 4' square tables at entrances along front  
wall

**F&B:**

10AM:

1 gallon tea  
1 gallon coffee  
1 gallon decaf

1PM:

1 gallon tea  
1 gallon coffee

3PM:

1 gallon coffee

6PM:

1 gallon tea

## **Matters Arising Out of the Minicon Discussions**

The discussions, both on-line and face-to-face, that have arisen out of the High Resolutionary proposal to reform Minicon have resulted in a number of well written examinations of some of the fundamentals of con-running. I have gotten permission to reprint some of them here, and have added several commissioned pieces on how other conventions dealt with their similar problems.

# The High-Resolution Minicon

## A Proposal to the Minn-StF Board of Directors

### Revised October 2, 1997

Presented by David Dyer-Bennet, Alice Bentley, Steven Brust, Karen Cooper, Liz Cooper, Beth Friedman, Fred A. Levy Haskell, Susan B. Levy Haskell, Lydia Nickerson, and Geri Sullivan.

#### Introduction

In 1991, Minn-StF acted on long-standing dissatisfaction with the state of Minicon by chartering the Long Range Convention Task-Force to investigate future paths. Their report was duly rendered, considered by the Board and the club, and acted on. The chosen action was to attempt to run the Big Minicon better than we had been doing.

That was six years ago. We feel that the experience of the past six years clearly shows that we are not able to adequately run the Big Minicon. Minicon has continued to grow, but its quality has declined rapidly and the personal cost to committee and volunteers has skyrocketed. Each year several departments teeter on the brink of disaster, eroding our reserve of goodwill among fans and Minicon attendees, and requiring heroic efforts from already overstrained committee members to attempt to rescue them.

This can't go on. Some year soon, by a statistical cluster of internal failures, or due to an external cause entirely beyond our control, we'll all go over the edge together. Minn-StF, its members, and its officers cannot afford for this to happen. This proposal is our suggestion of how to stop it.

#### Executive Summary

Six years ago, Minn-StF acted on the long-standing dissatisfaction with the state of Minicon by chartering the Long Range Convention Task-Force to investigate future directions. Their report was duly rendered, considered by the Board and the club, and a decision was made to try to run a "Big Minicon," an excellent, well-focused, large convention. After six years, Minicon continues to

display the very issues of over-crowding, committee burn-out, and departmental catastrophe that prompted the chartering of the task force. This document offers a proposal which will attempt to address these issues.

There has been concern over Minicon's size for more than twenty years. Since 1976, Minicon's size has increased more than seven-fold. There has been considerable debate as to the extent to which this is a problem, but the Long Range Convention Task-Force determined that "A sizable portion of the committee is losing its motivation or 'burning out.'" This turnover persists, and continues to exacerbate the shortage of qualified convention-runners, while Minicon's size requires greater numbers of experienced committee members than were available. There are also too few department heads with "real world" management experience. Minicon has found it necessary to put people with little or no committee experience into positions as department heads, with little support or assistance, thereby burning out in a single year the new volunteers who have traditionally worked their way into such roles. We believe that this is an unacceptable use of our human resources.

We are running Minicon badly. There have been major problems in multiple departments every year for some time, and heroic efforts have been necessary to salvage them (when they've been salvaged), further exacerbating burn-out. Suggestions that Minicons 31 and 32 were anomalous in their failures are neither fair nor accurate: committees have been short on experience and appropriate oversight, and long on overworked members who drop the ball; our talent and experience pool has been shrinking, while the workload continues to increase.

The task-force identified a lack of common vision for Minicon, which the "Big Minicon" proposal was intended to address. Instead, this prob-

lem has increased in the last five years. Minicon is more like the “Revolving Bid Committees” proposal that encouraged different visions for each Minicon by substantial changes in committees each year; but it has not provided those Minicons with discernibly different — or even discernible — visions. Since committees are staffed by anyone who is willing to do the work, rather than by a group with common goals for Minicon, it’s an agglomeration of components with little or no clear direction. As the “Big Minicon” proposal itself warned, “The greatest enemy of the large convention is bland mediocrity. “ Without a cohesive vision, Minicon is pitched to the least common denominator. We believe that Minicon’s focus should be deliberate and considered, not random.

One of the problems with articulating a vision is that it is necessarily exclusionary. Our focus on written science fiction and the fannish community that sprang from it may exclude those whose only interest in Minicon is outside that, but the current “alternative cultures festival” is equally — simply not as explicitly — exclusionary. By providing “something for everyone,” it has ceased to provide a supportive community for proto- and neofen, and no longer recruits new members — the other important capital — for Minn-StF. It has also encouraged — in many cases forced — those interested in fannish community to cloister themselves away from the rest of the convention, which fosters the perception that science fiction fandom is unwelcoming of newcomers. The current model develops Minicon fans, who come to Minicon year after year, but doesn’t develop — and may drive away, given the lack of Minicon focus on the community built around science fiction and fandom — new Minn-StF members. We burn-out Minn-StF members running Minicon, and we fail to recruit new Minn-Stf members by running it. Our current street fair model is not only risking Minn-StF’s future financially, but the health of its membership as well.

All of the authors of this document have strong feelings about Minicon: what it is, where it’s going, and what it should be. Personal statements from many of the authors are included to provide some context for this proposal and their part in it.

We feel that Minn-StF must resolve to take back control of Minicon, rather than letting Minicon control us. We volunteer to do that, starting with Minicon 34. We propose to focus on written science fiction and science fiction fandom, and exercise editorial control over all of what goes on officially at the convention. We don’t propose to limit Minicon’s size by capping its membership, but we will strenuously encourage informed self-selection among its members. We will arrange clear, widespread publicity — at Minicon 33 and throughout fandom — so that all stakeholders are aware of the change and able to make informed decisions about attending.

We originally proposed to use a strong chairman committee model, with David Dyer-Bennet serving as Chair. We have since developed and plan to use an Executive Council and Coordinator model in response to comments from the Exec Selection Committee and the Minn-stf Board. This model for the transition period only; we will work with the Board and the Minicon Committee to develop a sustainable, on-going committee structure and anticipate transitioning to that beginning with Minicon 36.

All of the authors of this document have agreed to accept major responsibilities for the convention, but since we hope to induce many people beyond ourselves to accept major roles in the convention, we will not list specific departmental assignments. We continue to feel strongly that there needs to be substantial discussion with all stakeholders about this proposal: to allow people to vent, to allow them to help us identify and fix flaws in our initial planning, and to educate them about what we’re doing and why. This is important not only to allow members to decide whether they’re interested in our Minicon, but to clarify to our committee members and potential committee members what we are working toward. The Minicon community, of which the committee is one part, is already deeply divided about what is good and bad about Minicon. Adoption of our proposal will cause new shifts in the committee, as continuing with little focus has; but making clear policy decisions will at least allow people to understand what is being done and why, and to make their decisions accordingly. Our

committee must be focused on what is best for the convention, rather than simply what is best for their own department.

While it is not within the scope of this document to detail all of the changes anticipated if our proposal is accepted — nor is it set, without input from our committee — we have some clear starting points.

Operations must continue the work done by Minicon 33 to return from the “security” model. We will reintroduce experienced troubleshooters and discontinue the position of ranger. We also expect to be able to continue the open bridge that Minicon 33 is reintroducing, and feel strongly that it ought to be.

Treasury will produce, use, and enforce real budgets with meaningful line items, and will make its books public.

The Hucksters Room will focus on cultivating hucksters with small press, out-of-print, and used books, and craftspeople producing original fannish crafts. We will recruit hucksters who will enjoy Minicon, but not to the extent of offering memberships or other incentives.

Programming will offer a smaller number of simultaneous items, high-quality panels focused on science fiction and fandom. We will have a few large, community-building events directly related to our focus. We will not have any “extravanzas” or convention television network.

Hospitality will continue to be a centerpiece of Minicon. Our consuite must emphasize conversation space (for smokers and non-). We will edit the allocation of hospitality space (poolside cabanas and suites, if we stay in the Radisson) and plan to recruit party hosts committed to our focus. Minicon 33 has already announced that it plans to implement our idea for seeding the poolside cabanas with author, bookseller, and publisher parties. We plan to build on those efforts after seeing how it works.

Registration must know how many memberships are sold and how many people are in attendance; this information will be reported regularly to the committee, both before and during the convention.

We want the art show to be a first-rate one, worthy of a large regional convention. While this

goal is a multi-year proposition in the making — major artists don’t send originals here, since we no longer have a major art buyers’ market — we will start the process by sharply restricting photo-mechanical reproductions in the art show (and encouraging them in the print shop and Hucksters room) and seeking advice from others on how best to bootstrap the process.

Publications must make clear to all potential members what changes are being made. We will focus our publications on informing those who have stopped attending Minicon that it may be more to their tastes than it has been in recent years, and clarifying to those who may feel disenfranchised precisely what we intend Minicon to be.

If we choose to stay in the Radisson, our changes will require careful coordination with them; if we move to a different hotel, the “breaking-in” process will need careful handling. In either case, our hotel policies must be clear to our members.

There are a substantial number of Minicon fans who have many years of vesting in the current model. While we welcome them to our more clearly focused convention if they would enjoy it, it is our belief that some unknown number of them may not. We hope that if our proposal is accepted, and our convention generates sufficient revenue beyond its goal, that Minn-StF will consider providing some seed money to a group interested in running an “alternative culture festival” of the sort they’ve enjoyed. Minicon as it has been is not sustainable for Minn-StF to run; but we believe that providing some initial support to another group interested in running such a convention is appropriate and just.

This proposal offers a radical redesign of Minicon. We believe that Minn-StF recognized the need for a radical analysis of Minicon when the Long Range Convention Task-Force was chartered. We believe that the last six years have shown that the selection of the “Big Minicon” model did not provide changes sufficiently radical to address the problems that persist in plaguing Minicon, its committee, and Minn-StF. We believe that Minn-StF must address these problems, or risk its own financial and organizational viability. We request the

opportunity to attempt to address these problems, and we commit ourselves to helping to find solutions.

### **“If This Goes On—”**

#### **The Thesis: Minicon is broken.**

This statement is at the core of our proposal. We are proposing radical actions because we believe Minicon must take some radical action in order to survive and to eventually thrive once more.

Fans have complained about Minicon for decades, and the convention has weathered many tumultuous times. So what’s different now? In this section, we’ll answer that question.

It’s hard to focus on Minicon’s problems. The very fact that Minicon still exists — and is so loved by so many — is a strong measure of the convention’s success. Many things have gone reasonably well most years, and in some years — such as Minicon 30 in 1995 — the overall convention has been quite successful by current standards.

Every year, there’s magic to be found at Minicon, and even more magic to be made. However, there is also a multi-year pattern of problems. The frequency and severity of problems is steadily escalating. We believe Minicon must scale back in both size and complexity.

#### **Oh No; Not the Size Issue Again**

Worrying about the size of Minicon has a long and venerable history within Mnstf. In the 1970s we restricted publicity and attempted to control contact with the press. The fear was that major local press coverage immediately before the convention could expand the membership to an unwieldy size. In 1976, the estimated attendance for Minicon 11 was 500. In 1986, Minicon 21, membership had more than tripled, with an attendance of approximately 1600. By 1996, attendance had more than doubled again; attendance for Minicon 31 was estimated at 3564. (Attendance estimates are from “Robert A. Timeline” by Fred A. Levy Haskell.)

Does this growth constitutes a problem? This has been the subject of considerable debate. There are almost as many views as there are members of all Minicons combined. The question facing us now, however, is not just what kind of Minicon we

prefer — the Big Minicon or the Family Reunion — but what kind of Minicon we can sustain.

In 1991, Minicon 26 attempted to deal with some of the perceived problems of size by changing the alcohol policy. This caused one of the largest rifts in our community to date, and led to the formation of the Finger-Pointing and Jeering Committee. The bitterness of that debate lost us active, long-time, hard-working fans. The concern about these losses was so deep that the Board formed the Long Range Convention Task-Force, which made its final report in March of that year. The Long Range Convention Task-Force was the last attempt to date to tackle the size issue in a comprehensive fashion. The results were intended to guide Minicon and Mn-stf for five years. A vote was held after the presentation of the report, and Minn-stf/Minicon decided to make a conscious effort to run the “Big Minicon.” Six Minicons have been held since that report. It is time to look at the results of our efforts, and at the current situation.

#### **The Talent Pool**

There are clearly a lot of talented fans devoted to the success of Minicon. That can be seen in the sheer time and effort spent before, during, and after each convention as we try to make it the best Minicon we possibly can. The task is enormous, and the effort is accordingly high. When things are working right, the rewards are higher still. That’s what attracts people to working on Minicon, and keeps them coming back for more.

Despite considerable individual efforts made in several departments, on the whole, Minicon is losing people to attrition and burn-out. Over the last few years, Minicon has had trouble filling department head positions, including heads for publications, programming, volunteers, Minneapolis in ‘73, child care, and others. In several cases, enthusiastic yet inexperienced volunteers have been put in charge. This is rarely a rewarding experience — for the volunteer or for the convention. All too often we lose committee members as a result. About half of the committee members listed in Minicon program books for the past decade did not return after their first year. This is one sign that the committee itself is broken.

It has also become less common for committee members to move between departments. This was once the primary way capable, energetic volunteers trained for the exec. As a result, several exec members from Minicon 29 on had recent experience in only one or two major departments (specifically operations, publications, and parties). While any experience is valuable, Kay Drache cited the exec's lack of programming knowledge as a major factor in the programming problems at Minicon 31. And finding the necessary exec members or convention chairs has been problematic, too.

### What Needs Fixing?

It's hard to understand how something as wonderful as Minicon can be broken. Yes, lots of fans are complaining but complaining is just another fannish character trait, isn't it? And yes, Minicon 32 lost about \$5,000, but what's one financial loss in 32 conventions? If people didn't like the big Minicon, they wouldn't come, right?

Unfortunately, many fans have stopped coming to Minicon. Local Minn-stf members and friends from afar have given up on both working on and coming to Minicon. It's difficult to quantify how many people have stopped coming, but when Jeanne Gomoll, Dan Goodman, and Spike Parsons all report that going to Minicon is too much of a hassle and holds too little appeal, it's cause for concern. And when Scott Raun (Minn-stf's current president) and Michael Pins (Minn-stf's vice president and Minicon's treasurer) both report they expect they'll stop coming to Minicon if it doesn't change dramatically for the better, it raises the questions of who the convention is for, and if Minn-stf should continue to sponsor Minicon.

Quantifying the financial losses is easier. The current estimate of Minicon 32's loss is \$5,000. Minicon 31 turned over just \$3,000 to Minn-stf. The average directed profit goal has been \$15,000 in recent years. That leaves us with a \$32,000 shortfall over the past two years. The actual shortfall is a little less, as the Board reduced the directed profit for Minicon 31 in support of the Emsh exhibit. But an additional loss could bankrupt the club. Already

we've had to cut back on expenses necessary for the ongoing functioning of both the club and the convention, most notably by postponing the purchase of computer equipment needed for Minicon registration and the OTML.

One of the advantages of the Big Minicon is that when you're big, you can do things smaller conventions can't. The popular Emsh exhibit and NASA displays are two examples of this. But these special events also suffered from a lack of coordination and budget control. Unexpected expenses from each directly contributed to Minicon's poor financial results for the past two years. The Minicon 31 exec handled the arrangements for the Emsh exhibit after a long search failed to turn up a volunteer to coordinate it. This in turn took time and energy away from where it was most needed: the leadership and oversight of the convention itself.

Many fans think Minicon is broken; many others do not. We asked Boston fan Ben Yalow his opinion on the subject. Ben lived through the meltdown of Boskone (aka "The Boskone from Hell") and hopes fandom never has to endure another such meltdown. He believes Minicon is on the brink of meltdown now, and he's doing everything he can to help us avoid going over the edge. Ben wrote:

"I believe Minicon is broken. Any convention where it has been routine to have lots of departments fail, for several years, is broken. And that's clearly been happening.

"For example, Minicon losing money, is a sign that LOTS of places are broken. Finance/treasury is the obvious one — they should have seen that there would be a loss, and done something to stop it (or, at least, alerted the Exec, which should have done something to stop it). And if it was too late — too many commitments had already been made — then everybody should have known that this was going to happen. But it's more than just them — every department than ran over budget was broken, and I bet there were lots of them." (Many department heads never knew their budget for Minicon 32. Glenn Tenhoff took his concerns about the budget to the Minn-stf Board a few months before the convention, but no action was taken at that time.)



“And Registration was clearly broken — people weren’t getting their checks cashed, or their stuff acknowledged.” (Minicon 32 Registration also couldn’t determine how many members we had during or after the convention.) “And Program was clearly broken — lots of people didn’t get their schedules until much too late. And Guest Relations was clearly broken — the fact that they were just being appointed a few weeks before the con is all the proof that was needed.

“When lots of departments are broken, it’s a sign that it isn’t the people; it’s that the convention has become too complicated for the talent pool that puts it on. So you need to (a) find more people, and (b) make the con simpler and smaller. And, since complexity grows much faster than linearly, you can get big wins on the staff/complexity ratio by making the con smaller.

“So the question then becomes how do you make it smaller. You can do it with a limit, of course. But, although that helps, it doesn’t make things simpler, if you keep doing all the same things. And, of course, it’s hard to enforce fairly.

“The other alternative is to focus the con, which means that people who are only coming for things outside the focus should be told that those things won’t be there any more, and they might not want to come back. But anybody who is interested in the focused areas — regardless of what else they may be interested in — will be welcome. And that makes things simpler, as well, since a bunch of different things won’t have to be done at all.”

### **The Cracks are Showing**

Despite heroic efforts, problems are appearing on the user level. (It is a truism that conventions always look worse to the concom than they do to the attendees.) The first edition of the pocket program last year was a serious user problem. It was almost unusable, and required a complete redesign at the last minute. (Thank you, Janet Moe. Janet was still up at 6 a.m. Friday morning, putting a usable pocket program book together.) This error is notable in part because the pocket program guide is a previously solved problem. We know what a good one looks like — we’ve had ‘em be-

fore. Program participants also had a difficult time getting information on when and where their panels were. This is a user level problem with potentially serious repercussions, especially with pros. Pros go to a lot of conventions, and gossip about those conventions at great length. When programming looks unorganized, the pros’ opinions of the convention are badly skewed towards believing the entire convention is disorganized and ill-considered.

Registration also had user-level problems at the convention as well as beforehand. The problems line was a significant bottle neck; waits of up to 45 minutes were common on Friday. There were many instances of missing badges and duplicate badges. There was even a last minute mini-rescue by Geri Sullivan, who drove all over the Cities to get laminator pouches because Registration ran short of them.

The Hotel Suite Ghods took on the enormous task of assigning rooms for every convention member staying in Minicon hotels, which worked out better than many members anticipated. But in the process, those needing suites and cabanas for open parties slipped through the cracks — those notifications did not go out in a timely manner, leaving many party-throwers frustrated and annoyed. Guests of Honor were left wondering what their room arrangements would be — even after direct communications with the Suite Ghods.

In response to the changed environment at Minicon, Operations has evolved. It was once a department whose primary goal was to have its workers be invisible; now it recruits a large number of rangers in order to have a significant visible presence at Minicon. This and other Operations policies have proven to be unpopular with many committee members and the convention membership at large. Some Operations subheads in recent years have even referred to themselves as “Security,” which is a model Minicon and many other fannish conventions have gone to great lengths to avoid.

We believe that these, and other, user-level problems result from the twin problems of burn-out and inexperienced department heads, compounded by the ever-increasing complexity of the

convention. High turnover may occur because working on the convention is not as much fun as it used to be. People whose only fanac is working on Minicon lack the perspective that comes from understanding fandom and seeing how other conventions work.

We have often avoided serious problems only by desperate last-minute efforts and the skin of our teeth. These last-minute bailouts are even more costly in terms of burn-out. Trying to do an entire year's work in the space of a month or so is extremely hard on the White Knight.

We believe that the people running Minicon are making a valiant effort, but that the current Minicon is not sustainable by the existing talent pool, and that efforts to increase it are unlikely to succeed. This is due both to the nature of Minneapolis fandom and the fact that fan-run science fiction conventions around the world are struggling with the same issues, with the same problem of the convention-size-to-talent-pool ratio. We would prefer to do what we can and do it well rather than keep trying to do something we cannot.

### **Committee Burn-out**

The problem of burn-out is not unique to recent Minicons. The Long Range Convention Task-Force said "A sizable proportion of the committee is losing its motivation or 'burning out.'" But like other problems, burn-out appears to be escalating. Minicon 32 never had a publications head, despite Thomas Juntunen asking — begging — near and far. Two chairs/co-chairs (Charles Piehl and Thomas Juntunen) abandoned their position just before or just after Minicon in the past four years. Kay Drache recently got off the exec and off the Minn-stf Board because of burn-out. And all three of Minicon 32's programming heads gave up after one year's experience running that department.

Not everyone is burning out. Those who are happy with the convention and with the work they're doing for it often wish those who are unhappy would go away, take some time off, and leave the running of Minicon to those who are having fun doing it. We wish it were that simple. We all care deeply for the convention, and even those who have withdrawn for a year or two find it diffi-

cult if not impossible to stand silently by while progress reports are stuffed for mailing without hotel room prices, guest of honor names are misspelled, and we ourselves feel unsafe and unwelcome at our hometown convention.

Burn-out has a significant human cost. It hurts the person who burns out, and often hurts the convention affected by the person's burn-out. It can destroy entire fan groups. Fandom is our community, and the people who are burning out are our people.

Burn-out also negatively affects Minicon as an organization. While Minicon has stated repeatedly that continuity, documentation, and mentoring are all high priorities, in general there has been little carry-through on such plans. In part, formal communication like documentation is just not in the Minneapolis fannish nature. We'd much rather do than document. But it's also true that the essential work of running the Big Minicon is so overwhelming that it leaves neither time nor energy for the finesse of documentation, or even the time to help others understand what we're doing, and why.

And, burn-out hurts Minn-stf. We seem to have trouble attracting new members. Could it be that the people most likely to join us are so overwhelmed with the job of putting on the current Minicon that they have no energy left for fanac the rest of the year? How many of the people who have joined the Minicon committee in recent years have become active Minn-stf members or active fans beyond their involvement with the convention?

### **Where Have All The Fans Gone?**

Too many fans have voted with their feet — they just aren't coming to Minicon anymore. No fuss, no furor. Minicon just stopped being important to them.

Many of the fans still coming to Minicon use enclaves and other coping strategies. No longer is the entire convention their playground. Some venture out for a look at "Minicon City" from time to time — yes, even some of the fans have become tourists at Minicon. Others limit themselves to small pockets of safety and magic — the Tor suite,

the Green Room, the PFRC room block, the SEMP, and Minneapolis in '73.

An analogy: the Snotty Elitist Music Party is one example of a survival strategy in the face of overpopulation. Many factors went into the development of the SEMP as a solution. The pressures faced by the open Minicon music party were very like those that Minicon faces, in microcosm: too many good people, and too many unwelcome people. It isn't much fun to wait for three hours for the song "to come round on the gittar," no matter what the quality of the music is in the meantime. In addition, it is difficult and painful to try to work with musicians who do not have the "chops" to keep up. A good music circle, like a good science fiction convention, builds on the work and talent of all the participants. Diversity is a two-edged sword. It can provide an unpredictable synergy, but if the participants are too far away from each other in skill and sensibility, the energy never builds. When the open music parties reached untenable conditions, some people built a smaller party that incorporated elements they felt necessary. While the SEMP lacks some of the wonder of earlier Minicon music parties, it has survived by focusing. But the open music circle in the consuite has not survived. Invitational music parties like the SEMP have been part of Minicon since the early 1980s, but there were still open music circles in the consuite every night of the convention throughout that decade. Some years, the music continued around the clock. The open music circles did not survive the consuite moving to poolside. The scheduled performances in Dark Star are probably a contributing factor.

Conversation is a lot like a music circle. In a good conversation, the participants build upon each other, learn things from each other, and wonderful things are created. Castles in the air. But if the conversation partners have little in common, then they discuss banal things like the weather. "My, but the walls are perpendicular tonight." It is harder to strike up an interesting conversation with a random stranger at Minicon, because there is less likelihood that that stranger will have something in common with you. Conversation is the recruitment tool of fandom. It is the way we build our ties, the

way we bind our community. We do it with the exchange of words. If this is true, what does it mean that the consuite, once the center of Minicon, is usually either too noisy for conversation or is totally depopulated?

The Minneapolis in '73 suite is another attempt to deal with overpopulation. Its primary purpose is to provide a fannish haven. Fans should not need a haven at Minicon. An unintended side effect of providing the Minneapolis in '73 suite is that it creates barriers between old fen and the new fen, rather than abolishing them. The Minneapolis in '73 concept works better or worse based on who the host is at any particular time, but the separation of this enclave from the rest of the convention causes a perception of snobbishness that limits Minneapolis in '73's effectiveness in welcoming neos who find it hard to meet people in the consuite. For every neo who comes to the suite for her first, second, or third penguin sticker, several times as many mistakenly think it's a private party, or that they are otherwise unwelcome.

The fans behind closed doors have run away from the crowds. They didn't run away from the neos. It doesn't even make sense for them to do so. Shun an audience who has never heard your best stories (which all your friends are sick of)? Surely not. By focusing Minicon, we believe we will be providing oldpharts and new fen more chances and opportunities to meet.

The street fair model, though it may appear to be all things to all people, is not as inclusive as it looks. It encourages self-selection in its own way. Fans who prefer conventions where they have a lot in common with the people they meet are less likely to attend Minicon. Fans looking for world-class programming mostly go elsewhere. It's not even a terribly good convention to do business at. It is, however, a great convention if you like migrating drum jams, a slightly lawless sense of "anything goes," or gee-whiz costumes. Whom do we exclude by including "everybody"? We exclude the people who don't go to conventions to be with everybody. We make it hard for people to find their fannish family.

Minicon no longer acts as a recruitment tool for Mnstf. Minn-stf puts a great deal of human

capital into Minicon, and gets almost nothing except cash back. When a MinnStF member burns out at Minicon, he often burns out of Mnstiff at the same time. However, Minicon does not replace our members. MN-stf is becoming moribund. While Minicon may not be the culprit, it certainly does not contribute to a solution, either. If Minicon were turning profoten into neofen, and providing neofen a place to flourish, then the club would have an influx of new blood which might resurrect it. A smaller convention, which was exciting to proto- and neo-fen, a convention where people like Fred felt comfortable in the consuite, could act as a revitalizing force.

### **What About Those Who Aren't Interested in Minicon's Focus?**

We're glad you asked that question. Everyone who is interested in coming to our more focused Minicon is welcome. Our intention is not to exclude people; it's to help Minicon survive and eventually thrive. We're leaving it to people to decide for themselves if they want to be active participants in the new, smaller Minicon.

One of the most difficult things about making changes in the current Minicon is dealing with the issue of vesting. There are some people who have been working on and attending the Big Minicon for a decade or more who, we believe, may not be interested in the type of Minicon that energizes us and makes us want to work. These people have a significant stake in the Big Minicon. They have vesting. They may have sufficient numbers and experience to run their own convention. If they did so, they could develop a vision and pursue their own goals, and we could dance off in a different direction entirely.

A possible solution to the problem of vesting is for the Board to assist affiliated fans to start their own convention. If Minicon 34 earns \$2000 more than the directed profit, we think that it would be beneficial and appropriate for the Board to loan up to \$1000 in seed money to a group that is interested in running a convention more like the street-fair Minicon that they love.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that the uncontrolled growth of Minicon has damaged both Minicon and Mnstf. Minicon is no longer serving Minnstf; the tail is wagging the dog. Minicon has the potential to destroy Mnstf. We believe the budget crisis of Minicon 32 is not an isolated event, but part of a dangerous trend. Our talent pool — with its many strengths and weaknesses — is not adequate to run a Minicon of 3500+ people year after year. Most "large regional" SF conventions are under 2000 members. Many conventions are taking active steps to limit growth, including membership caps (Boskone, Orycon, Wiscon, Novacon), hotel selection (Capricon, Orycon), and other measures. Arisia appears to be holding at around 2000 without any special measures (and it's interesting to notice that a 4100+ Boskone exploded to produce a 900-person new Boskone and a 2000-person Arisia). Worldcon draws on a world-wide talent pool, seeking out fans who have gained experience on local and regional conventions. Yet the Permanent Floating Worldcon Committee is questioning its own sustainability. Minicon is less complex than Worldcon, but often approaches it in size. It is not reasonable to expect that we will be able to recruit and train the number and kinds of fans needed for the Big Minicon to prosper or even endure.

It is our belief that a reduction in size will allow Minicon to retain its talent pool by both drawing back and re-energizing some of our people, and since it will be smaller and simpler we won't burn-out so many of our friends. Making the concom fun, interesting, and fannish will provide an avenue to fandom for new concom members. By focusing Minicon, we can provide a more entertaining and safer environment for a larger percentage of the membership, even though the total number of members is smaller. By simplifying Minicon, we can control the hemorrhage of money that threatens the existence of Mnstf.

### **Personal Statements**

Rather than limiting ourselves to the things we agree on, we wish to present individual personal statements from everybody who cared to write one.

**Lydia Nickerson**

I came up to Minicon the usual way: by car. (I managed to avoid the volcano.) There were a bunch of us in Iowa City, and every year, a bunch of us drove the six hours to Minneapolis. We had our own convention, Icon. It was a gem, a sweet little local convention. Icon was scheduled for October so as to be half a year away from the magnificent behemoth which is Minicon. One convention a year isn't enough, however, to someone starving in the wilderness. Iowa, tame and flat as it is, was a wilderness for me. Empty, scary, with prowling growling rednecks.

It's hard to explain how important Minicon, or fandom, was. It's all tangled up in a past life which, in retrospect, scares the hell out of me. I saved my own life, in the end, but fandom was an integral part of my redemption. People who weren't necessarily Christians, weren't normal, didn't value a completely unexamined morality, who — god help us all — thought! After a lifetime in Fundamentalist Christianity, fandom was clear water in the desert. It was more than home, more than family. It was salvation. Oh, and it was also sex. Don't underestimate the power of good sex.

Getting to Minicon every year was an adventure. What with flunking out of college due to depression, and living with an alcoholic, and being disowned by my family, I was very poor — okay, very poor by middle class white standards. Twenty dollars of disposable money was a marvelous luxury for me. Somehow, I made it to Minicon every year. (I did miss one year: I had a fever of 103, I had been throwing up for a week, and my husband wouldn't let me go.)

Fandom was a safe place. I don't mean that nothing bad ever happened, but the bad things were rare. I ended up at a Minicon in the early 80's with almost no money and no place to crash. I think I had \$20, total, for food and books. (As I recall, I bought a book and 3 hamburgers that weekend.) Knowing I had no place to sleep, I packed a backpack with a couple of changes of underwear, a book to read, and basic toiletries. Friday, I stashed the backpack in the back of a closet in one of the rooms on the smoking side of the Radisson consuite.

I was worried, not about someone stealing my

stuff, but about being accused of taking more resources from the convention than I was entitled to. Of being a parasite. I couldn't think how to manage Minicon. I wasn't good at asking for favors; pride and shame interfered. So, by default, I decided to simply stay awake for the weekend. Ah — you can kind of guess at the results. I was young, but I wasn't that young. I was also, being young, ignoring a slight cold and fever. It was a marvelously fever-bright, fraught experience.

I snuck a shower at 6 am on Saturday. No one was in the smoking side of the consuite, I think there may have been 5 people, total, on the 22nd floor. I reasoned that I wasn't tying up any resources that anyone wanted, and smelling like a camel was not a kindness to the other people in the elevator. The day was colored with exhaustion, low blood sugar, fever, and delight. I was never so happy. Alone, amongst friends. I wasn't terribly coherent, and tried not to get into conversations. But I loved listening. Everywhere, people talking, talking about things that were interesting, or silly, usually both. Gentle drunks and manic punsters. My people. My friends.

Physiology caught up with me somewhere around 2 am on Sunday morning. The music party was still going strong in the smoking consuite. I was too tired and too stupid to venture into a room full of strangers. I went to one of the bedrooms adjacent to the parlor and lay down on the bed. I was delighted to discover that they were playing music by Jefferson Airplane, rather than filk. Even more delightful, they were good. Really good. It did not surprise me then, though it did, later. At the time, it seemed like an inevitable perfection. I didn't sleep. Of course not! But I drifted away on music beautiful, real, intense, and somehow intimately mine, though I didn't know a single one of the players. It wove intricate patterns of light. Perhaps that was my one glimpse of Indra's net. I don't remember sleeping or waking, but four hours later, there was no music, and I felt weary and refreshed at once. I napped a bit more, dreaming of music and light, and then it was time for the long ride home. I collected my backpack from the back of a closet, and went looking for my ride. (Thank you, Fred. That was you playing in the other room. And

thank you, Steven. That was you, too. I didn't know either of you, either by face or reputation, that year. But that's when I met you, though you didn't meet me, and when you gave me something so precious I treasure it still.)

Looking back, there are two things that stand out in my mind. One is the lack of fear. I worried, a little, about my backpack being taken; I was not afraid of molestation. The other thing that stands out is the intense feeling of belonging. For all that I didn't know most of the people, and didn't feel up to conversation for most of the weekend, I felt like I was a part of what was going on. Finally, I had come home.

Times change, and so do people. It's hard to say who's changed more in the last decade, Minicon or myself. Looking at the consuite as it is now, I find it hard to believe that I could leave something in a closet there. And while I am widely known to be able to sleep through anything, I don't know that I could fall asleep in the consuite. Maybe this is just reasonable caution which comes with age. It doesn't feel like it, though. It feels like Minicon has changed. And, oh, but I miss the music in the consuite.

A couple of years ago, I found out I wasn't a troubleshooter. I wish I'd found that out before I did a shift as troubleshooter. In the consuite on the 22nd floor, I found a gentleman badgering a young lady in tears. In the process of trying to discover if there was anything useful to be done, the gentleman threatened to kill me. He was upset because his girl had kissed the wrong boy. I found that I was out of my depth in two dimensions. The threat of physical violence was baffling. This is why I shouldn't be a troubleshooter. But the cause of his distress was even more confusing. Kissed the wrong boy? At a convention? A place where everyone is your friend? I mean, maybe this is cause to drag your beloved off under a staircase and engage in a heart to heart conference. (That's how I spent most of my first convention, Icon V. Yuck!) But the threat of bodily harm, to her and to me, gave me a bad case of cultural shock. He was not my friend.

I don't have any answers, yet. However, I think that refocusing Minicon so that it is both

smaller and the attendees have more in common with each other might help rebuild the sense of community and safety that I miss. At very least, I think it's worth the experiment. We've lost so much. Too many of us are either hiding behind closed doors or gone altogether. There has been a lot of self-righteous moaning about how closed parties are killing Minicon. It is my belief that the doors are closed because it stopped being safe in the consuite.

What I have now isn't the home and family of my dreams. It's a lot more like my childhood home and biological family. Minicon has real problems. It is overpopulated, does not have a unifying vision, its politics are dysfunctional, and it is no longer safe. We've tried denial and acceptance as strategies for dealing with these problems. I'd like to try something else, instead. And if this doesn't work, something after that.

### **Susan B. Levy Haskell**

So what's a Minicon supposed to be?

Minicon is a place where folks who have always been ostracized can find community. It's a place where being different, or odd, or socially unskilled, doesn't cost one one's right to be there. In fact, it's just the opposite: we protect & support our own oddballs; no matter how obnoxious, rude, and peculiar, if you're one of us, you belong. It's a place where the folks whose friends in school were books — 'cause no one else "got it" or was interested — can find friends & family-by-choice.

The problem is that Minicon's support for differences and "alternative lifestyles" caused us to welcome folks who weren't looking for community — just wanted a place to do their own thing & have a fun time with their friends (many of whom they brought along) — then those of us who came to Minicon for a family reunion discovered that it had been crashed by a bunch of people who simply looked like us. They don't love us. They don't want to know the family stories. They don't care who sawed Courtney's boat. They make fun of our eccentricities & all our peculiar relatives — not that we haven't, but we've never excluded them.

Having crashers at the reunion is lousy, but there's plenty of food, & we've all suffered the

pain of being excluded, so what does it hurt? Well, for years it didn't. But now there are so many crashers — some of whom've been coming for years — that many folks don't even realize that it ever was a family reunion. And some of them, I believe, are our family, but have never discovered the connection because they haven't been around when Uncle Roscoe told his stories; or they've been trying to, but haven't been able to find any of the family among the look-alikes. Worse yet, some of our family, who've always come to our reunions, have given up because the crashers think they're odd, or obnoxious, or socially clumsy, and have made them feel unwelcome. And worst of all, some of our relations who missed the little reunions — who grew up twenty years after we did or hadn't heard about 'em, but fit in elsewhere just as well as we did — may be coming to the reunion, never finding the family, and leaving again because it's another place where they don't fit in. And that I consider intolerable.

I'm sympathetic with the folks who've been coming for years and want to keep doing so. They've spent a bunch of years coming to a grand bash, often bringing their friends, and having a wonderful time. They have a tradition of doing so. But I believe that the party that they're having around my family reunion is keeping me from connecting with my family. And it's burning my family out to run a reunion that's become so big & diffuse. So I believe that it's time to remind everyone that this is a family reunion, plan our events around the family, and quit trying to accommodate the folks who aren't interested in being kin. I don't propose that we tell anyone whether they're family or not; let them hear from us what we're doing, and let them decide whether they belong.

### **David Dyer-Bennet**

I feel a bit like Chicken Little. But if those things cratering into the ground around us aren't pieces of the sky, they're something even worse.

I attend Minicon in defensive mode. There's still fun to be had there, but it's no longer available on the surface. It takes place off in corners, and very often in private. Most people I know do the same thing. You don't go to the con suite Sat-

urday night, it's too noisy to talk and there's no interesting music anyway. Stay away from Great Hall Foyer around the masquerade, it's a total zoo. Luckily, friends tell me where the fannish gatherings are, so I can sneak off to the 8th floor of the Plaza Tower, or whatever. I also hang out in the Green Room a lot, semi-legitimately (I'm generally on programming items myself, and so is Pamela), and of course in Minneapolis in 73. Do you do this? Nearly everyone I've asked does.

The real fun at Minicon is no longer out in the open. To survive, it's had to hide itself away, sometimes even behind closed doors. This is bad in a lot of ways, but one of the worst is that it makes it impossible for people new to Minicon to find the real fun. The people who would enjoy the things I enjoy can't find those things. Often, I suspect, they don't come back. Or they decide Minicon is interesting, but not that important to them.

### **Karen Cooper**

I sometimes think of myself as the last Minn-stf member. Oh, I know some new and interesting people have joined the club since I knocked timidly at Pam and David's door in November, 1985. But they are few and far between. Mostly, new people have been brought in through their own connections to Fandom, such as happened for Lydy and some of the other Iowans. Once in a while, Minn-stf gets a new face from Minicon, like um, erm, there was...well, it does happen sometimes, I'm sure of it.

I've been in love with Minn-STF since we first met, and have tried hard to be as good to the club as it has been to me. I've hosted meetings, been an officer and Board member, and worked on our conventions.

My first convention was Minicon in 1986. It seems impossible to describe the immediate sense of belonging and fun and infinite possibility that overcame me as soon as I walked in the hotel door. You all know what I mean. Folks I knew, friends, were everywhere. The consuite was so crowded with interesting people that I had yet to remember to take off my coat when I'd been there an hour. Nate introduced me to someone from New Mexico — could it have been Bob Vardeman? Fred intro-

duced me to Singer and Dorothy Parker. Don Bindas sat next to me for my Dispatcher shift on the Bridge, and introduced me to Dave Clement and Okanogan cider and the Winnipeg in '94 bid. Ellen Kushner came bouncing up to help make Easter baskets. And so on, all weekend long. Everything was possible, everything was magic, it was all there and real, and I wanted it never to end.

I wanted to help. I offered to run Childcare at the New Year's Party in 1986, and went to one, or perhaps two, Minicon meetings, before the 1987 convention. Those meetings were fun, and I learned so much about the convention — what all the departments did, and how they ran, and all the cool ideas for the upcoming convention. Lots of ideas were tossed around, and much advice was given, before the inevitable cries of "Implementation Detail!" began, and we moved on to the next department. As a team, we valued brevity and levity, and everybody, including the lowly head of Childcare, had a good picture of how the convention was put together.

The years change things, as always. The convention got bigger, and we tried to adapt by making policy changes. People got hurt in the process, and left the committee; some left Minn-Stf and have never been back. These wounds scar over, but they don't seem to heal. The committee got bigger, and could no longer afford the luxury of the open committee meeting with its snail's pace. The bigger committee with all its new faces lost its best access to previous experience, and as meetings became less fun, the fun people went to meetings less often. The repeated need to reinvent the wheel left little time, space, or energy for Crazy Minneapolis Fandom to do what it does best.

The Minicon committee wasn't really Minn-stF's any more, but neither was Minicon. Where the consuite had been Minicon's central meeting place and central party, I could no longer find a familiar face there. The bathtub filled with Twinkies was long, long gone. Instead, my good old friends were hiding themselves away in private parties and creating "Fortress Roscoe." We make our little enclaves by hiding from the rest of the convention. We scoot quickly through the hallways from one haven to the next as we avoid the

loud, rowdy crowds. Our little corners of civility become smaller with each passing year. And our good new friends cannot find us.

And out in the greater convention, no one is accountable. Our loose, flexible community standards, as far from codified as they are, are being shredded by obnoxious behavior, the debate on appropriate dress, and ever-growing crowds that have no interest in Fandom. Within the committee, problems include budgets run amuck, grandstanding, and empire-building. Departments limping their way through the weekend has become the norm. We cannot congratulate ourselves on a convention well-run, as we used to — now we heave a sigh of relief that we have survived another Minicon.

There is no doubt that science fiction has become mainstream. Lots and lots of people have discovered SF, found it to be a participatory genre, and leapt in head first. There appear to have been many brain injuries in the process. Nevertheless, the Fandom that created Minicon and all the fannish conventions like it is the Fandom that I love. It is my heart's home and my family. It is still there, under the noise, and spilled beer, and the pile of burned ashes of the dollars we've wasted. I'd like very much to uncover it, and nurture it, and let it flourish again. I want the magic back.

### **Alice Bentley**

In The Beginning (for me) Minicon was a crowded, comfy car ride with Best Friends, some of whom I had not met before. It was reliably running into other people who liked to toss around ideas, and who had read a lot of the same stuff I had — and best yet a lot of stuff I had not yet read. Minicon was a convention where an extra hand was always welcomed, and sometimes needed.

I like what we have now as well, it's kind of cool to see how media fandom has exploded, I remember a similar rush at the 1975 Star Trek Con in Chicago. And it's nice to see a lot of younger people clearly finding a place that they find comfy and secure (or they probably wouldn't have been making out on the couch in the con suite).

But in balancing the two experiences, then (1976 was my first, and I think I've only missed



one since) and now, I find I really miss quite a number of things I enjoyed before. I would like to reasonably expect that everyone would have a shared interest in written science fiction. I felt more comfortable when people chipped in on the chores — sure it's good that it's someone's responsibility to see that it gets done, but it shouldn't be such a shock to ask people to help. I also miss being able to trivially bop around within Minneapolis, we still make our excursions but it's not similar to just jaunting out for a meal or a browse.

Although I've worked a number of other conventions, including Worldcon, I've only ever gofered at Minicon, and usually without "official" arrangement. I can't realistically attend MNStF meetings or concom meetings, but I would still be happy to volunteer to help with the convention in whatever capacity the concom found useful.

Minicon has the resources, the size, the sheer critical mass to pull off things only Worldcon could touch — and the vision and idealism to want to make them happen. Worldcon is a one-shot every time. Minicon has been able to use its continuity of people and purpose to develop not only the sense of discovery and adventure that we can find at many conventions but the feeling of homecoming, of family, even though these are all people you are just meeting.

As each new batch of people get involved, I see the same cycle of problem identification and solution discussion. For the last several years now, the choice has been to take the easiest path, the least bumpy road — after all, this is supposed to be fun; disappointing or aggravating even a few people is definitely not fun (to say nothing of huge crowds to them). To this outsider, it seems like the time has more than come to make a few of the hard choices — realign the convention to match the enthusiasm of people that you most want to be there instead of the largest number of reasonably content people.

And I would be happy to help.

### **Geri Sullivan**

(Provocative title goes here)

Over the past two years, I've written thousands and thousands of words regarding my con-

cerns, beliefs, and attitudes about Minicon. Most of those words have been in messages sent to the Minicon List and are readily available for review through the archives, but here's a 600-word summary to save you the trouble.

Simply put, I believe the following:

1. We have repeatedly demonstrated that Minicon has grown beyond the size and scope of our abilities to manage and run it effectively. While there have been good Minicons during the past 8-10 years, each has been accomplished at the expense of our volunteers, especially exec members and department heads.

2. Things have fallen to the point where we're regularly hurting committee members. They are responding by burning out and leaving in record numbers. It used to be that for any given Minicon, one major department would be on the verge of collapse. These days, rare is the department that isn't on the edge. Even the simple act of working together on the convention isn't building community as it once did. We've devolved to argumentative, department-based empires. Blech. Instead of attracting neos and showing them what fun it is to create the wondrous, mythic beast that is a Minicon, we're pushing inexperienced volunteers off the high dive without even checking to see if the pool is filled. All too often, we're even giving those who bellyflop in spectacular fashion chance after chance after chance, simply because "she's the only one who volunteered."

3. It's easy to point at one year, or one thing, and say, "yes, that was a problem, but we're fixing it." Especially when we have a year like Minicon 32, where the exec, treasury, registration, publications, and programming all experienced major failures while operations, parties, and hotel each failed to measure up to basic community expectations. But Thomas Juntunen is not the first exec member to crash and burn. And significant problems are already emerging on the Minicon 33 committee. Our efforts to manage what we've become continue to fall short of what Anne Gay recently described as "the great beauty and majesty of it all."

As Bruce Pelz wrote to me before Minicon 31,

"that Minicon has had a Basic Problem —

too few (competents) trying to do too much for too many (attendees + incompetents) — has been paid lip service for years now. You (collective) need rather sweeping analyses (plural) and recommendations, preferably from any previously available competents who are no longer available but are still competent.”

4. Minicon has lost most of the fannish cachet we once enjoyed throughout fandom. Our consuite and operations bridge were once recruiting tools. Now they're places to avoid. The few things that still attract trufans to Minicon are being drowned out by the lack of civility and community that dominates the convention.

5. It's become harder and harder to meet people at Minicon, especially people with whom we might form lasting relationships. Minicon du jour also fails to strengthen existing relationships. For example, there's nothing at Minicon that celebrates the multitude of connections between Minneapolis and Winnipeg fandom, or even helps us find each other.

6. The problems aren't just inside the Minicon committee. The Minn-stf Board has failed to take appropriate action several times over. Minicon finances have floundered and a bad exec was left in place even after the Board's directives on the matter were ignored. Minn-stf itself has lost its energy and focus, with longtime members avoiding meetings in droves and newcomers finding little to bring them back.

7. Running something the size and complexity of the current Minicon isn't in our nature. It is simply not something we can do well. We're fans, we're Minneapolis fans. We procrastinate, we don't keep track of things from year to year, we don't pass on information. We used to dance along the path of chaos, but now we mostly stumble, slipping all too often into the mire that surrounds the route. Whew. I'll stop with seven points rather than going for 73. If you want the full 4-part harmony, check the archives or ask me for a print-out.

What's next? Why now?

The problems are many, and striking out in a new direction won't be easy. Our plans for Minicon 34 and beyond won't magically fix things, and following a new path won't mean people stop getting

hurt. We've searched long and hard for a clean, pain-free path, but such a path simply doesn't exist. The change we're pursuing will be traumatic, but we must do our best to build a bright and shining new Minicon lest we lose everything we've stood for over the past 30 years. I want to help build a Minicon that contributes mightily to the overall health of fandom, locally, nationally, and internationally. I want to help build a Minicon that is fun to work on and fun to belong to. I want Minicon to reflect the wondrous people we are rather than one that only exposes our warts to the world and leaves evermore of us among the walking wounded.

Why am I willing to throw myself into the chaos that will accompany a major change in Minicon? I think our plan is Minn-stf's and Minicon's best chance to dance along the path of Crazy Minneapolis Fannishness once more. While much of my fanac today takes place in the international arena, I want to help Minneapolis fandom be the best it can possibly be. I want us all to be proud of Minn-stf, Minicon, and the wondrous community that's been so ill-served in recent years.

### **Beth Friedman**

My first Minicon was Minicon 11 in 1976. It was almost my first exposure to science fiction fandom as well. I came in knowing two people and clutching a piece of paper with Karen Johnson's name on it — she was the person the hotel found to share a room at student rates (which I think were \$6.50 per night!). The consuite was friendly but overwhelming, and the pivotal moment of the convention for me was when I walked past a room full of people singing, stopped to listen, and they invited me in. I haven't seen most of those people in 20 years, but that room party was when I knew that science fiction fandom was “my crowd.”

After graduation (fast-forward through the three awful years where Minicon and MINNEAPA were almost my only relief from the mundania of Cleveland), I moved to Minneapolis and became involved with Minn-stf and Minicon. It's interesting to note, by the way, that at that time there was no differentiation between the Minicon crowd and the Minn-stf crowd.

Over those years Minicon continued to grow. Minicon reorganized its structure (my first years on the concom were the last years of the “working anarchy” model) a couple of times. Meetings became large, tedious, and unwieldy, then either became committee head meetings with restricted attendance or open meetings where no real decisions were made.

I’m not sure when Minicon became the de facto “gathering of the tribes.” I’m even less sure when Minicon started becoming the “Minneapolis alternative culture festival.” I suspect both of these are a result of the lack of focus that Minicon has experienced in the last several years. I do not like the vision of Minicon as the yearly gathering of SF fandom, media fandom, pagan fandom, BDSM fandom, and technoculture fandom (plus whatever I’ve forgotten). If this is what Minicon has become, it’s been purely by accident, and by a decision to avoid making decisions (which is, of course, itself a decision).

After all, if there’s a gathering in one’s town that’s inexpensive, vaguely related to one’s interests, and provides a forum for one’s own crowd to meet, it’s going to attract a great deal of unfocused attention. I don’t think Minicon is trying to be all things to all people, but it appears to be trying to be some things to all people, with the result that it continues to attract more and more of the local unfocused crowd, while losing out-of-towners who find other, more focused, conventions to be more worth their money and time.

I think there’s a big difference between striving toward a particular vision, and drifting along because no one is paying attention to where one is going. And I think there’s too damned much of that latter with regard to Minicon. That’s not evolution or change; that’s cancer.

I’m very disappointed at what Minicon is becoming. A number of people have commented that we’re not doing any worse than most conventions. That may be true. If so, it’s a sad commentary, not on everyone else, but on us. We used to be the best regional convention around—the best consuite, the best operations, and the best publications. Now, all we are is the largest. Frankly, I don’t think that’s anything to brag about.

Minicon has felt more and more unstable for a number of years. For the last three years, at least one department has either needed a major bailout or has had significant problems at the convention. This year, Minicon had an exec member resign a week before the convention, and lost a substantial sum of money. I think we’re burning out our talent at an appalling rate, without anything worthwhile to show for it. I think Minicon needs to decide what it considers important, and prune away the parts that don’t look like a Minicon.

I’m pretty sure that Minn-stf’s goal was never to run a huge mediocre convention. And that’s what I think we’re achieving. If we’re lucky.

I think Minn-StF can do better.

### Steven Brust

Patrick Nielsen Hayden once explained it to me this way: “There are three fannish centers in the country,” he said. “Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. Boston is Law, Los Angeles is Chaos, and Minneapolis is Faerie.” I like that. I wish it were still true.

The last two Minicons I’ve mostly spent making enough money playing poker to pay my hotel bill. This sounds good, but it isn’t. I like poker, and it can even, thanks to Mike Glicksohn, be said to be fannish. But it isn’t what I want to spend my time doing at Minicon. And I wouldn’t, if there were something else to do.

I began attending Minicon at the Leamington, in about 1976 or so. At that time, it was a group of people all throwing a party for each other; now it seems to be a group of people asking others to throw a party for them. The reward for throwing the party was the pleasure of doing a job well, and the pleasure of having your friends appreciate that you did the job well. These days, I see no pleasure at all in helping to throw the party. It would be grand if that changed.

For several years I did recruiting. It was fun, and it was fairly easy, because so many people saw themselves as part of the whole Minicon experience and they wanted to show each other a good time.

For many years I looked forward to the music sessions at Minicon, until it became a choice

between being offensively exclusionary and punishing myself by being where I'd druther not be.

One year someone came up with the idea of using the hotel's TV system to put fun, fannish things on. It was cool. It was cheap. I enjoyed turning it on occasionally. Now it is horribly expensive and high-tech and no one watches it. Somewhere in there it stopped being fannish. Somewhere in there it assumed the form of Law with the essence of Chaos and no trace of Faerie whatsoever.

Minicon has never been known for outstanding programming, and that's all right as far as I'm concerned; but I do remember when panels produced more conversation than how you had been double-booked at a time you had said you were unavailable for two panels you had said you didn't want to be on.

I don't know if there is any way to go back to all that, but if we try, I'll work on the convention again. I can play poker the rest of the year; in Faerie, playing music seems more appropriate.

### Fred A. Levy Haskell

It is said that the Neofan approached the Secret Master and asked, "What is the meaning of Minicon?" Whereupon the Secret Master hit the Neofan with a stick.

I believe that I'm in a unique position to view and comment upon Minicon — having been an attending member of all the Minicons so far. (True, there are, to my knowledge, two other people who have been to all the Minicons, but I think that the level and nature of my involvement over the years has been sufficient to make the claim of uniqueness). I've also been to a lot of other conventions throughout the United States and Canada, including some WorldCons, so I have something with which to compare Minicon.

When we first started putting on Minicon, it was a celebration, a way of giving back something to fandom (as we knew it then, and not just locally — internationally), a way of proving our merit for our WorldCon bid, impressing our friends, meeting new friends, spreading the myth... a bunch of different things. It was something "we" did for "us". And the we who were working together on it consisted of more than just those people who hap-

pened to be "on the committee" that year — we all pulled together to make Minicon a good place to be.

Lately it appears that the prevailing view is that some "we" is putting on Minicon for some "they"; and, further, that everybody is pulling in different directions rather than together.

My "bright and shining new Minicon" will be a karass, not a granfalloon. It will be made up of people who, if they don't already know the meaning and the location of the first use of those words, at least stand some chance of stumbling across it some day.

It is said that the Neofan approached the Secret Master and asked, "What is the meaning of Minicon?" Whereupon the Intergalactic Squash descended from space and stomped them before either could say another word.

Time was, when a mundane friend or acquaintance would, for one reason or another, ask me what "Minicon" was, I'd trot out that old: "A party with (a couple hundred ... a thousand ... fifteen hundred ... a couple thousand) of my closest and most intimate friends." This, of course, is one of those "explanations" that only explain to those who already know, so I'd then try to expand on that statement and relate Minicon to things they might understand.

Well, there's alcohol there, but the similarity between Minicon and a kegger begins and ends there. The liquor is used as a social and conversational lubricant, but the similarity between Minicon and a cocktail party begins and ends there. There's lots of music there, but the similarity between Minicon and a coffeehouse or a concert begins and ends there. People of both sexes meet and or become better acquainted and sometimes even end up in bed with each other, but the similarity between Minicon and a frat party begins and ends there. We have and attend panel discussions, but the similarity between Minicon and an academic or professional conference begins and ends there. Some of us wear funny hats, but the similarity between Minicon and a Shriners' convention begins and ends there. Finally, odd things have been known to turn up in the swimming pool at a Minicon, but they tended to be weather balloons — not television sets....

Unfortunately, none of this seems to be as true about Minicon any more — there's a lot more similarity between Minicon and all those other things than there once was, and I'm not comfortable or happy with that.

It is said that the Neofan approached the Secret Master and asked, "What is the meaning of Minicon?" Whereupon the Secret Master ate a pickle and smiled.

By the time I was done, I had walked all around it and had done a pretty good job of explaining what Minicon wasn't, but still hadn't done a good job of explaining what it was. That seems to remain ineffable. And that's a pretty good point to make — it may sound a bit like I'm saying "Minicon should be like it was," when that's not really what I'm saying at all. But it's the same problem again — I'm having to define what I want it to be mostly in terms of what I don't want it to be. To do otherwise would be scruting the inscrutable; fixing the ineffable....

Added to that is that even if I start explaining what Minicon is to me, it's a lot like that old story of the five blind men trying to determine what an elephant is. That is to say, there are a number of conflicting perceptions which are, nevertheless, "correct," or, at very least, accurate.

It is said that the Neofan approached the Secret Master and asked, "What is the meaning of Minicon?" Whereupon the Secret Master turned and ran away without uttering a word.

In the old days, I would sometimes meet people other than through fandom who would come over to visit. Upon seeing my library (in the dining room) they would say: "Wow! That's an awful lot of books! Have you actually read all of those books? I haven't read a book since I got out of High School." It seems to me that more and more of the people I encounter at Minicon would make these same statements....

It is said that the Neofan approached the Secret Master and asked, "What is the meaning of Minicon?" Whereupon the Neofan hit the Secret Master with a stick.

### Proposal

We feel that Minn-StF must resolve to take

control of Minicon, rather than letting Minicon control us. We volunteer to do that, starting with Minicon 34.

### Focus

To realize our vision of Minicon, we must narrow our focus. We have tried to be all things to all people, and we have failed. The pain of failure is particularly keen because we have stopped being the fine fannish convention we began as; we have squandered our reputation. People who once attended Minicon to revel in the vastly larger society that comprises fandom no longer find such revels possible at Minicon, and no longer come.

Definitions are tricky things. Attempting to define "fandom" or "fan" leads us either to an impossibly inclusive definition (e.g.: "anything two fans do together is fanac") or to an impossibly exclusive one (e.g.: "it's what I point to and say 'that's fannish'"). But we must find some way to scale back. The ever-expanding convention has stretched Minn-Stf's resources beyond the breaking point.

And yet we cannot shut the door on newcomers. We believe that new people (some of them proto-fans) are coming to Minicon, failing to find, among the teeming hundreds of attendees, the like-minded souls of our community, and deciding not to come back. We are hurting ourselves doubly: by running an event more complex than our means, which in itself is harmful, we are also misusing what might be a marvellous resource for enriching our club and fandom in general.

Who, then, are these like-minded souls we'd like to encourage?

Sharon Kahn wrote one of the best definitions we've seen for the people who would be at home in fandom: "Specifically, what we're looking for is: extraordinarily high intelligence, high creativity, independence of thought, a true love of ideas, and an intense love for language and the ability to use it well. You can call these people Fans if you want: I've always thought of them (us) as Space Aliens."

Geri Sullivan said: "Y'gotta read. No, there won't be an admissions test, and you don't need to submit your reading list for the previous year, but Minicon is for readers. The more widely read you

are — inside and outside the genre — the more fun you are likely to have at Minicon.”

Teresa Nielsen Hayden said: “... people who are attracted by the prospect of discussing (say) ‘Similarities of expository structure in science fiction and the historical novel’ are exactly the kind we like to party with (drinking champagne out of Spike Parsons’ sneaker, trying to recreate the Astral Pole Initiation from written accounts — you know, all that serconnish stuff), whereas people who are attracted by large brightly-colored banners saying!!! PARTY!!! PARTY !!! PARTY !!! ... will never be much fun at all.”

Bear in mind that no matter how many of these descriptions we produce, no matter how well, how precisely, we write them, there will be oddballs who fall outside the descriptions but nevertheless belong in fandom. Reading is the mark of a fan, but there are well-loved and -respected fans who read very little. Feeling like an oddball is the mark of a fan, but there are fans who feel pleased and at home in the mundane world. If this essay makes you think you’d be bored at our Minicon, you are probably right; if it makes you feel you wouldn’t be good enough for it, you’re probably wrong.

Consider the delight you find in a new friend who was just as dazzled as you were by the stories in all those library books with rocket ships on the spines. We want Minicon to provide this delight. If you’ve never had the opportunity to feel it, we’d love to give you your first chance.

Geri again: “We expect Minicon members have (or will eventually have) involvement with fandom beyond this one convention. Newcomers welcome — if you’ve never heard of fandom, or don’t know if you want to be a part of it or not, come and find out. We’ll give you a taste and hope you want more.” We want to give new people a handhold in fandom by explaining what APAs are, by telling stories about other conventions, by handing out copies of fanzines, by spreading fannish history and culture. This is why we’re here.

Conversation is the heart and soul of fandom, and will be at the center of Minicon. Our intention is to make spaces for conversations, to provide fodder for conversations, and to attract the sort of verbal, creative, clever people we want to talk to.

It’s been a truism for a number of years that new people bring their friends to Minicon, and we’ve encouraged this. We have made welcome all the myriad local groups with connections to things science-fictional. We’ve handed over entire departments and respectable budgets to people whose involvement in fandom apart from Minicon and whose interest in the lore, the activities, and the common ground of fandom are indiscernible.

This approach has taken much of the burden of running the convention off of Minn-stf, but it has compartmentalized people. Minicon attendees have fewer and fewer reasons to break out of the security of their own social set or even to notice that the bigger, broader world of fandom is still present at Minicon. We believe that some of these folks are very much the interesting Space Alien type, and are “the friends we haven’t met yet.”

We believe that continuing this compartmentalization is bad for the convention, bad for Minn-Stf, and bad for fandom. Our purpose is not, however, to drive away whole groups of people who like a certain television show, or who like to wear costumes, or who want to play music in different ways than we do. We want to break down the walls between our club and all the other groups out there, show people who we are and what we like, and make them feel welcome should they choose to join us.

Creating this bright and shining new Minicon means not being all things to all people. Aspects of the convention that do not specifically help us sort for Space Aliens are likely to be dropped. As we’ve said elsewhere, Minicon in its present state is wearing us out, and we must carefully choose where we expend our energy.

We will emphasize quality over quantity. We will not exclude individuals or groups, but we will exercise editorial control over what goes on officially at the convention.

We will not institute a membership cap, but will attempt to reduce size selectively, by carefully editing the convention and encouraging self-selection among the members. We will arrange extensive, clear, and widespread publicity, starting at Minicon 33, saying that Minicon 34 will be different. There will be heavy publicity aimed at fandom

to attract more fans. In all our publications, we will do our best to explain to all fans, from First Fandom to Middle School kids, from fans who have never attended a Minicon to fans who have attended all of them, and from professional writers to Trekkies, just what it is that we are doing, so that they can make an informed decision whether or not they would enjoy our Minicon.

For this to work, we need a commitment from the Board that the goal of a smaller, more focused, and much better run Minicon will be carried forward beyond Minicon 34. And we need the Board to choose us to run Minicon 34. We, in turn, commit ourselves to more than a single year of involvement.

### Numbers

We don't know how many people will choose to come to a focused Minicon, nor do we know how large a convention Minn-stf can sustain. We're guesstimating 2000 members, though anywhere from 1200 to 2800 wouldn't be a huge surprise (we'll have a better idea, of course, closer to the convention, when the reaction to our publications starts to appear). The first year of major changes is always the hardest to predict accurately. Because of this uncertainty, we'd like to budget for a very low must-make profit, with a very high likelihood of making far more, rather than aiming our best estimate at a higher figure. Pre-registration rates may rise significantly (but not to levels higher than typical for a large regional convention). If the size reduction goals are not successful, even higher profits are quite possible.

### Committee Structure

The structure we propose is intended as a transitional committee structure. Changing Minicon is a difficult task, and the type of leadership best suited to attempt this is not necessarily the type of leadership that would be best for a sustainable Minicon. The Executive Council cum Coordinator is intended to guide the concom and the convention for approximately two years. During this time, we will gain a great deal of experience and information directly applicable to future Minicons. We expect to move into an ongoing committee

structure (supported by the committee and approved by the Minn-stf Board of Directors) by Minicon 36.

Don Bailey has said that any structure will work if you have the right people. We agree with this assessment. We believe that the biggest strength of our committee structure is not the formal chain of command, but rather the people involved. Throughout this proposal process, we have worked well as a team, discussed serious questions, had significant disagreements, and resolved vital issues.

Our discussions of focusing and filtering have revealed, not surprisingly, a wide range of opinions.

Each of us has the Florida problem; we each remember a different "Golden Age" of Minicon. We know different people within the current concom, and have different perceptions about what has and has not worked in the past. Our work styles are very different. In the course of putting this proposal together, working with the ESC, and revising our proposal, we have worked through a number of potential communications problems. We have developed a "change token" system so that we know who is responsible for edits and decisions on a particular piece at a particular time. We have discovered that for our group, e-mail is a very efficient mode of communication. We have been able to pass information, comments, and control to each other in ways that made it easier to get the work done, without losing track of what needed to get done, or who was doing it.

We have developed good formal and informal channels of communication.

It is necessary, however, to specify the `_formal_` chain of command. It is important for the Board to know who is responsible, so that they can provide appropriate oversight. It is also important for people outside of the Executive Council to be able to accurately identify decision makers, so that ideas and objections don't get lost in a maze of "that's not my responsibility."

We propose an Executive Council (EC) made up of the ten people who authored the High Resolution Proposal: Alice Bentley, Steven Brust, Karen Cooper, Liz Cooper, David Dyer-Bennet, Beth

Friedman, Susan Levy Haskell, Fred Levy Haskell, Lydia Nickerson, and Geri Sullivan. Although we are already a diverse group, we believe that we need a broader range of opinion and experience, especially from people who are currently involved in Minicon. We will add additional members by consensus. These additional people must have served as a department head for a significant department at Minicon or have had a position of similar responsibility with another fan-run SF convention.

We expect to choose additional EC members from the current concom. However, we want to be able to remain flexible and be permitted to choose from outside that talent pool. While the Minicon concom is our most valuable resource, we don't want to be unable to capitalize on unusual opportunities, either.

The EC will be responsible for choosing all department heads. We are strongly in favor of single department heads, with subheads as appropriate or necessary. We wish to make one person, rather than two or more, responsible for each department, as we believe this simplifies communications issues and enhances responsible behavior. However, we will make exceptions as seems wise. There are certainly examples of duos or trios who work much better as co-equals than in a hierarchical structure or by themselves. In those cases, however, the EC must be sure that we are not squandering talent or causing unnecessary communication problems. The EC will also be responsible for firing department heads, should that become necessary.

Policy will be set by the EC, normally in consultation with department heads and other concom. We anticipate that most policy discussions will happen at concom meetings, and we will actively seek input from the concom. If extraordinary circumstances arise, it may be necessary for the EC to make a policy decision that is not supported by the remainder of the department heads. This is a frightening prospect, and will be approached carefully.

However, in order to adhere to our vision of a focused, fannish Minicon, we acknowledge that it may be necessary. Tough decisions may have to

be made, and if so, they must be made by the persons responsible: the EC. These decisions will be made, however, in the open, with input.

The Coordinator serves at the pleasure of the EC. David Dyer-Bennet is our choice for this role. He has previous experience in a similar position, and has an in-house secretary (Lydy). The Coordinator will be responsible for developing a master schedule, in consultation with the concom, and making sure that the schedule is met. The Coordinator will discuss budgetary priorities with the Financial Officer (FO) based on policy decisions of the EC. The Coordinator will be especially responsible for keeping track of inter-dependencies between departments and overall structural issues. He will ensure that the various departments are having constructive conversations about those interdependencies, and mediate as necessary.

The Coordinator will implement policy set by the EC on a day-to-day basis. His job will be similar to that of the exec, without the responsibility of setting policy. If necessary, he will make decisions with policy implications if there is no time to consult with the full EC. Decisions of this nature will be reported to the full EC, and may be overridden if necessary. We do not expect this will be required often; indeed, we hope it will never happen.

The FO will discuss budgetary priorities with the EC and the Coordinator, develop an overall budget that reflects those priorities, and help department heads create budgets that reflect these priorities and goals.

The FO will also do planning and forecasting for the master budget (and work with department heads on departmental budgets), based on the policies and priorities set by the EC, and report to the Coordinator.

The FO will report to the Coordinator.

The Bookkeeper, otherwise known as the Treasurer, is responsible for the day-to-day handling of the financial paperwork. He will report to the FO.

During Minicon, the Coordinator will function as the "exec on duty" at all times. He will be available 24 hours a day via beeper or cell phone, and any situation that requires quick response will be routed to him.



It is unlikely that it would be practical to convene the full EC during the convention, as it would be time-consuming to assemble all the members, and would require pulling many different department heads away from their departmental responsibilities; they may well have crises of their own. Crisis calls that cannot be handled at a departmental or lower level should be very rare, assuming competent department heads. The Coordinator will keep a log of calls and decisions, which will be available for review by any member of the EC or the Board.

We will also be forming a non-voting advisory council, referred to as "The Pros from Dover." We will be communicating with them via e-mail and personal contact. These will be people inside and outside of Minicon with significant experience and expertise who can provide insight and advice. We anticipate that Ben Yalow, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, and Patrick Nielsen Hayden will continue to serve as our Pros from Dover, along with experienced locals.

### **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate (What I Tell You Three Times is True)**

The biggest challenge that the High Resolution Proposal faces is communication. Based on our experience so far, we believe that this is a huge, but surmountable problem. Our first draft,

although flawed, has garnered positive responses from a wide variety of people, including some from whom we expected negative responses.

Working with the Exec Selection Committee to refine the focus (which resulted in the "Focus Statement") has been a valuable lesson in effective communication. We have found that one-on-one communication of our dreams and goals works best. Unfortunately, this is not possible for the majority of people who will be affected by the proposed changes. Because of the size and complexity of the problem we are working on a plan to help us manage communications flow. We will need to utilize many voices and many media if we are to be effective.

We believe that communication is something which flows both ways. A top-down, hierarchical flow of communication breeds discontent and re-

sentment. Minicon 34 will be a delicate year, with much old pain at the forefront. This means that listening has to be at the very center of our communications plan. Listening, however, is not sufficient. We must also respond, as honestly and rapidly and as possible. People who have contacted the concom must get feedback so that they know they have been heard.

This portion of the proposal will not address intra-concom communications. That is not because it is not important (in fact, it is vital), but because internal communications will be addressed in the committee structure portion.

### **You'll Be the First to Know — Telling the Concom**

We need to start telling people what's up as soon as we know ourselves. If the Board approves this (revised) proposal, that's our starting date.

Our first and top priority following the Board's approval of this proposal is to coordinate with Minicon 33, working with them to manage communications and minimize potential damage. We will listen carefully to their concerns; the success and well-being of Minicon 33 is the top priority at this point.

We will make personal contact with a significant portion of the current concom, primarily by phone and email. We will contact every named department head or subhead within one month of our meeting with the Minicon 33 exec. We intend to have a full slate of department heads by Minicon 33 and to reconfirm each of those positions by May 15, 1998 (one month after Minicon). Additionally, we need feedback from the current department heads as to what kind of problems and pitfalls we may encounter, even from those who do not like the Hi-Res proposal, perhaps most especially from them. It is important that the current concom have a realistic understanding of what the future of Minicon is as soon as possible, so that they can factor that into their own planning. A change in Minicon starting with Minicon 34 will affect Minicon 33. The current concom need one-on-one communication. They have a lot invested, and a lot at stake. We have demonstrated that of all the communication options available, individual con-

tact works best. It is our best, perhaps only way to create buy in and enthusiasm.

Within two months of our meeting with the exec, we will have made contact with 80% of the people listed on the concom list. Recruitment is important, but this contact will also focus on getting feedback from these people. We are aware that some of the most valuable feedback will be coming from concom members who will not work for us, at least not in the first year. Every person contacted will be asked if they are familiar with the Hi-Res (Revised) Proposal. A copy will be sent to anyone who requests it. We will allow the people contacted to comment extensively, and take notes. If they prefer to contact via email or snail mail, an acknowledgment of that commentary will be returned via the same medium. The Resolutionaries will create a log for these contacts, which we will be willing to turn over the Board if they would like to review it.

After we do our one-on-one communications with the concom, we plan to hold a public meeting for Minn-stf and Minicon members. (If we hold it at a Minn-stf meeting, it would further help Minicon people get/maintain their voting rights.) The exact agenda would be determined based on how our other communications had gone/were going. But at the very least, we will further introduce ourselves and our plans for Minicon 34, and invite input and suggestions. We'll also ask for input on our Minicon 33 communications ideas.

### **Hello, World, a Problem in Coordination**

There are both benefits and drawbacks to sending out a PR prior to Minicon 33. At current time, there are significant external communications which are ongoing about the High Resolutionary Proposal. Should our (revised) proposal be accepted by the board, that communications traffic would not only continue, but would increase as people got in touch with us to ask questions or voice concerns. Sending out a PR would help provide authoritative information and would therefore help slow the rumor mill. However, it could also increase anti-social behaviour at Minicon 33 from a small minority who feel that this is their least Minicon at which to be rowdy. The drum jam pro-

ponents are almost certain to be confrontational at Minicon 33 if they understand that it is their last year. The benefits and risks need to be evaluated in conjunction with the Minicon 33 exec and committee. All pre-convention communications will be subjected to this collaboration.

We will not accept pre-registrations at Minicon 33 for Minicon 34. We do not want people to register for Minicon 34 until we have had some chance to explain to them what will be different, so they can make an informed decision about whether or not they want to attend. The model for Minicon 34 is informed consent. People who register at the convention may or may not have been exposed to enough publicity to understand the changes.

Comment cards would be responded to prior to PR 1, preferably within 90 days of the end of the convention.

Responses from the postmort are due at the same time as responses from comments at the convention: 90 days from the end of Minicon 33. Ninety days seems like a long time, but we must allow for post-con burnout and consultation based on the feedback. The timeline will be made very clear to anyone making comments so they know when to expect a response.

If the first open forum is held less than 60 days after the convention, then the deadline for the response for that first forum should be the same as for at the con and post mort responses. (That is, 90 days from the end of the con.)

We have not yet decided the number of PRs that we will be sending out. This is partially a budgetary constraint. At present time, we envision either 3 or 4 mailings.

The mission of pre-con publications will be to describe our new, bright shining Minicon in such a way that people will know, just from the publications, whether they would have a good time or not. To do this, the publications have to be (in no particular order), interesting, literate, funny, intellectually challenging, honest, illo'd, precise, descriptive, and fannish as hell. Pamela, Steven, Fred, and Geri have all agreed to help work on this. We hope to tap the talents of Laurel Krahn, as well, who is an exceptionally good writer. We hope to

draft Ken Fletch and Derek Dasenbrock to do illustrations, although we haven't asked them yet. We already have a lovely illo from Laramie Sasseville, and we think she may be willing to do more. Patrick Nielsen Hayden has promised to help, and we hope to inveigle him into writing copy for us. And there are others. Print communications are crucial to our success and we'll put our best talent to work on making them sparkle.

### **Meet on the Web**

We believe in the internet. A lot. The web site will be updated and maintained. It will provide easy, email access to most, hopefully all, department heads. Minutes and discussions that can be handled via email will be, both for cost considerations and for speed considerations. A number of the Resolutionaries are on the Minicon-L, and expect to remain there. While the Minicon-L is not our primary communication venue, it is certainly one more avenue to reach people, and will be used as such.

## **Departmental Discussions**

### **Operations**

Operations is an especially critical department for any greatly-changed Minicon. There's a much-greater-than-normal risk of people deliberately causing trouble, plus a greater risk of the committee itself not having planned everything right.

Operations has been a major problem area for at least the last five years. It has devolved into a "security" department, which is an entirely different function. Perhaps the emblematic change is the degradation of troubleshooters to "rangers." We need to restore the troubleshooter position, and staff it with clueful people with the right people skills.

The closed-bridge model evolved in response to problems with workload on the open bridge as the convention grew. It may or may not be the best solution to that problem, but since our conventions will be significantly smaller, we should easily be able to return to an open bridge.

Minicon 33's attempt to fix Operations appears to have been subverted and derailed. The experienced co-head put in as a resource has somehow ended up as a sub-head with a strictly limited

technical brief.

### **Treasury**

Treasury is basically simple, if painstaking. You track cash, and you track expenditures against approvals, and you keep records of it all, and you make regular reports. Minicon needs to be much more open with financial figures than it has traditionally been, and department heads and the committee need to get frequent (at least monthly), clear, reports of the current situation.

The "finance" position is a good idea. This used to be part of the treasurer's job, but as workloads have increased, the benefits of separating anything separable loom larger and larger.

We will produce, use, and enforce real budgets with sensible and meaningful categories (not just "party supplies"). We will produce frequent and up-to-date reports to make it possible for departments to stay within their budgets. We will adjust budgets as needed to fit reality; but the solution to a problem is not to ignore the budget, it's to fix it.

We will work with the Minn-stf Board in developing our financial plan. In specific, we will need start-up funds and the club has a limited ability to provide those at this time. We're happy to take a silly, fannish approach to this problem — we may well hold a bake sale. But whatever we do, we'll keep the Board informed, starting with providing the first draft of our financial plan within 90 days of the Board's approval of our bid.

### **Hucksters Room**

We want to refocus the Hucksters Room. The first-come first-served model currently being used has the advantage of being perceived as "more fair" by the hucksters than a selective model. The disadvantage is that it does nothing to prevent the slide towards the mediocre.

We would like a Hucksters Room with used, out-of-print, small press, and collectible books: books that can't be found in every B. Daltons. We would like to see original, fannish craft, such as Darlene Coltrain's or Giovanna Fregni's jewelry. We would give the head of Hucksters the authority to select hucksters, and backup from the chair to address complaints. The Executive Council would discuss the goals of the convention with the

head of Hucksters, and encourage the head to recruit hucksters who sell items that enhance the focus and vision of Minicon 34. Most importantly, the head should recruit hucksters who would have a good time attending Minicon 34. The recruitment, however, should never extend to offering free memberships or rooms. We are trying to recruit members, not bribe merchants.

Based on Minicon's past performance as a mercantile venue and the number of hucksters in the fannish population, we expect to be able to fill the available space. We will use a selective model to reduce the number of hucksters in direct competition with each other. We believe that by emphasizing excellence, we can re-energize the venue. These two factors may cause an increase in member spending. Decrease in sales will come from decrease in membership. Number of tables sold will be tied to pre-registration numbers so that the hucksters can have a reasonable expectation of a profitable convention.

### **Programming**

Programming has labored far too long under the "scheduling" model. We will run programming on the "editorial" model, in which the job of the department is to assemble a mix of high-quality programming items that meet our goals. Several fans on the SMOFs mailing list have suggested intellectually stimulating programming ideas from both all sf & fantasy genres that will trigger ongoing conversations — that's what we want.

Our scaled-back, focused approach will mean considerably less programming — perhaps four tracks plus readings. It will mean fewer "main-stage" or "extravaganza" events — we won't have a masquerade, for example. With the smaller convention and fewer main-stage events, there will be no need for a convention television channel on the hotel system. These changes will save several thousand dollars. We'll work closely with our guests and build program items that play to their interests and talents.

### **Parties**

Hospitality is the key to a Minicon in the grand Minn-StF tradition. Much of that feeling comes from the work of the parties department. Our hospitality areas will emphasize conversational space,

where people can get to know each other and have those fascinating late-night conversations you remember 10 years later.

People have different requirements for conversations, so we will provide spaces with different atmospheres (oxygen only; provision will also be made for the nicotine-breathers) to serve people with different preferences. At this time the Radisson does not have facilities for chlorine- or methane-breathers. We will investigate the facilities in other hotels, but so far Minicon receives very few registration inquiries from such entities.

We will edit the allocation of hospitality space (poolside cabanas and suites, if we stay in the Radisson) and plan to recruit party hosts committed to our focus. Minicon 33 has already announced that it plans to implement our idea for seeding the poolside cabanas with author, bookseller, and publisher parties. We plan to build on those efforts after seeing how it works.

### **Registration**

Checks must be cashed, confirmation cards sent promptly, and new addresses made available for other Minicon and Minn-StF mailings in a timely fashion.

It is an important part of registration's job to know how many memberships have been sold and how many people are present at the convention, and to report this information to the committee regularly, both before and during the convention.

### **Art Show**

We want to begin moving the show from one that is dominated by photomechanical prints, with essentially no original work by national name artists, to one composed nearly entirely of originals, with a good proportion of first-rate work by new and established artists.

Reaching this goal will take some time. There are circular dependencies — major artists don't send originals here, because this isn't a convention major art buyers attend. And why should they, since there isn't any major art for sale here?

As a beginning, we will sharply restrict photomechanical prints in the show (they're perfectly welcome in the Hucksters room, and we'll probably continue the print shop as well). We will publicize this change, and seek advice from others on

how best to bootstrap the process of becoming a major art show again.

### **Publications**

Publications will have a very heavy load to carry, since we need to make clear to all potential members what changes are being made to the convention. We will also be doing considerable out-of-town publicity to attract back fans who used to come to Minicon from far away, and reach new members who would like the changes.

The words they contain are the real content, but the appearance of publications is important. Bad appearance deters reading in various ways, and interferes with communication. Publications costs have risen dramatically over the last 5 years; they can probably be driven down again.

### **Hotel**

Our changes will require careful coordination with the Radisson, if we stay there, or else we'll have to break in a new hotel (if we move). Either way the hotel department will have its hands full. A smaller convention at least means fewer room requests to process, and perhaps less need to hand-optimize all the room allocations.

it is particularly important that our members understand accurately how room allocation decisions are made. hotel is one of several departments widely seen as unhelpful and uncommunicative by those on the "outside", especially by people trying to throw open parties. this must be addressed.

## **Appendix**

A Clarification and Revision of the original High-Resolution Minicon Proposal

September 8, 1997

Three weeks ago we published the High-Resolution Minicon proposal to refocus Minicon, starting with Minicon 34. The proposal was presented to the Minn-Stf Board, the Minicon 34 Executive Selection Committee, and the fannish and Minicon communities. We have received a variety of responses, nearly all of which confirm our observation that we must scale back Minicon; but many of which have caused us to reexamine some of our strategies for doing so. We thank everyone who has taken the time to respond for their thoughtful — and thought-provoking — comments. This

document is intended to explain some of the issues we've reconsidered, clarify our positions where they need clarification, and address concerns that we've heard expressed.

The most pressing issue that our responders cite is the need for very clear communication. Most of those who have responded recognize that we aren't intending to exclude anyone whose interests include science fiction and fandom; but we must find more ways to communicate that we're excluding activities not people who may participate in them. All Minicon committees decide what they will and will not include; we are proposing to make that very explicit from the outset, rather than by default.

Our initial communication, our proposal itself, outlined our intentions, as well as the need for them. It has successfully generated discussion locally and elsewhere about how to refocus the convention without excluding the very people we seek to keep. One of the issues we must keep foremost in our minds is that the fen we want to continue seeing at Minicon — or see return — are often those most sensitive to messages of rejection, whereas the people who aren't interested in the community are likely to be less so. We have learned that each of us is more effective at communicating our goals and plans to some people than to others; we recognize that we must speak with a variety of different voices.

Generally, our communications with the current committee have been in personal conversations. Many of them are interested in working with us on Minicon 34. Some have reservations about parts of our proposal — and some are very enthusiastic (like the four of our authors who are on the current committee ;>) — but we have received confirmation that we needn't concern ourselves with wholesale revolt. We have also received support and offers of aid from many past committee members who no longer work on Minicon; they are eager to work again on a Minicon they're putting on for their friends (the ones they know and those they've yet to meet).

Our proposed committee structure has been of concern to the Exec Selection Committee. The ESC has said that it is too likely that a single ex-

ecutive will be distracted by a faltering department; they are concerned about the Chair "white-knighting" one department while the rest of the convention receives too little attention. In fact, at least one of the ESC is inclined to return to the original Executive Committee model, wherein a variety of department heads serve. While we don't concur (our proposal states that an Executive Committee is an inappropriate use of our human resources), we are aware of their issues, and propose an alternative that we believe will satisfy their concerns and ours. We propose to use a variation on the common Worldcon model: the authors of this proposal would comprise a convention Executive Council, at whose pleasure our Coordinator will serve. Other members of the Council would take on specific departmental responsibilities. In the event that the Coordinator requires replacement (or simply re-monstration) for inattention to the convention as a whole, the Executive Council can act; but they would not be required to spend precious time in routine oversight of departments other than their own.

We have heard concern that we are excluding media fen from Minicon. While most of those who have read our proposal recognize the distinction between excluding people and curtailing the activities that cater to them, we want to clarify our position. We neither want nor intend to exclude people who want to be a part of Minicon. We have shown, however, that Minicon must become less complex; and in simplifying it, we will be excluding activities that may be the sole reason some people attend Minicon. That's the reality, and we are unwilling to deny it. Without being explicit about it, the "alternative cultures festivals" have excluded people who came to Minicon for community; we feel that that's not being forthright with the community, and will not continue that pattern. We will continue to work to communicate to everyone whether they're likely to enjoy our Minicon, but we will not deny that some will not.

We have heard it alleged that we're going to "kill" Minicon. We're certainly proposing radical surgery. But Minicon is on its way to explosion now, and the gradual solutions we've been trying for years have been ineffective. We must make radi-

cal changes to fix Minicon. We must find ways to reduce its complexity and its size before another catastrophic failure destroys Minn-Stf along with Minicon. And those who say that our goals are achievable by less radical means have shown no evidence that this is so.

# More on Minicon

by Laurel Krahn

## Where I'm Coming From

I'm not sure when I first tasted science fiction. I think it was probably *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet*, but I could be mistaken. Later, I found *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, and fell completely in love. It was much later that I discovered novels based on media SF. . . and then I found magazines and fanzines and read about these things called conventions. Somewhere in there, I started exploring the Science Fiction section of local bookstores and libraries. I read quite a bit, but could never find the time to read as much as I'd like.

When I found BBSes and online services, it was a revelation. Finally I could talk to other people who shared my interests. And I even got to converse with some of my favorite writers online. I got turned on to more writers, and then I heard about Minn-stf. Later on, I heard about Minicon and other area conventions.

The first conventions I attended were Creation conventions. They were cool, for what they were, I didn't know any better. When I attended a fan-run media SF convention, *PolarisCon*, it was a revelation. And then there was Minicon. Wow.

My first Minicon was Minicon 24, almost ten years ago. I was only there for a day, and I didn't stay very late. I was too shy to open the big doors to enter the rooms where panel discussions were happening. But I read my program book and met some online friends in person for the first time. I listened to Opening Ceremonies on the radio, the night before, to get myself in the mood. I sat in the video room and watched people and read flyers and was completely amazed at what was around me.

After my first taste of Minicon, I vowed to return for the whole con the following year. I read and reread the program book, often kicking my-

self over the Cool Stuff I missed. I read any and all fanzines I could get my hands on. And I read books by folks whose names I recognized from the program book, fanzines, and online SF discussions.

I think I had maybe an hour of sleep during Minicon 25. I was there from start 'til well past finish. With some friends in tow. I discovered music parties (where I stayed all night, each night). I volunteered as a twinkie and a badger, if I remember right. I attended a lot of programming, including Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the Masquerade. I hung out in the consuite a lot. I was busy, busy, busy, because I loved so many parts of Minicon, it was overwhelming. I enjoyed written and media SF, I enjoyed the music, I liked attending stuff, but I also really enjoyed volunteering. I didn't want to miss a thing... I didn't miss a thing, well except sleep and food...

At Minicon 26, I volunteered and I got to the convention even earlier and stayed later. I did sleep, though. And I ate a bit more. I was also on a panel for the first time.

Since then, my involvement with Minicon has varied. I was living in South Dakota or other points west for most of the last 8 years or so. Sometimes I volunteered officially, other times I just pitched in wherever it looked like something needed doing. I'm pretty sure I could've earned a t-shirt each year they were available, but I rarely bothered to write down the hours I worked. That's not why I did it.

I love Minicon. Even though I've hated parts of it for the last few years. It's gotten worse each year, really. But I still go, because it can still be fun, there are still lots of things to see and do, and lots of people I like. But, well... I'll get to the problems in a bit.

I've also attended (and worked at) other conventions during this time period: Reinconation,

Fourth Street, the 1993 World Fantasy Convention, and Wiscon.

I've attended the occasional Minn-stf meeting for the last twelve years or so. Not very many, to be honest, mostly because I was out of state.

But I knew of Minn-stf from the Minicon program books. And from asking people about it online. And attending meetings. I found it difficult, at first, to get information, and I didn't find the group very welcoming initially.

More on that later.

It should be noted that I'm currently not affiliated with any proposal for Minicon 34. I'm not on the Minn-stf Board. I'm serving as Minn-stf's Vice President in charge of Data Processing, though far I haven't really done anything in that capacity (hardware and software issues, problems with transition, etc). I'm working for the Publications department for Minicon 33, though my heart isn't really in it at this point.

### **Minicon is broken (but most don't realize it)**

I think most people involved with Minn-stf agree that Minicon is broken. I suspect that the majority of people who attend Minicon do not feel it's broken. There may be bits of it they don't care for, but I suspect most consider it a really cool convention and/or party, and make a point to attend it each year.

Remember, most people who attend Minicon are not on the Minicon (internet discussion) mailing list. Most people who attend Minicon don't attend Minn-stf meetings. Most people who attend Minicon are not active in the fannish community. Most people who attend Minicon do not volunteer. Certainly the majority do not volunteer beyond a few (or several) hours during the course of the convention.

How would they know Minicon is broken? Especially if it is their first or fifth Minicon? What can they compare it to? Most don't attend any other conventions. At the most, they attend Creation conventions — which are a completely different animal from fan-run conventions.

If you merely attend Minicon, without volunteering, without talking to people on the concom or people in Minn-stf... you can have a good time.

If you've never attended another convention, it would still be a "gosh wow" experience.

But the people whose first Minicon was Minicon 32 had an extremely different "gosh wow" experience than I did at Minicon 24. Or that someone else did at Minicon 17. Or 5.

It may have been a gosh wow "look at all the interesting people" or "look at all the cool things to do" or "wow free guinness" or all of these things combined. Maybe they did feel they found their family, or a home they didn't know they were looking for.

But that family and that home isn't as safe or as close-knit as it was five years ago. Or ten. Or twenty. They can't miss it, because they never experienced it. And it's hard to understand what you haven't experienced. Especially when there aren't people around to try and convey it in a pleasant way. Or you don't know who to ask. Or lack the patience to listen.

I understand a bit of what Minicon was like before I started attending, because I've read a lot of accounts of the early days of Minicon. I've read old fanzines and program books. I've talked to people who were there. And I notice the changes since my first Minicon and can extrapolate how my Minicon may differ from how it was five years before I started attending. I've listened to my friends gripe and groan and cry over the decline of Minicon, while others tell them they're just not open to change, that Minicon still is this wondrous place where magic happens.

Magic still happens at Minicon. It's much more likely to happen there, than in the mundane world. So to those only used to mundania it's pretty darn cool. But it's not all magic anymore. It's not as magical as it once was, or could be again.

When I first started attending conventions, I was most impressed by how diversity was embraced at the convention, and how there was a definite sense of community. At conventions where I didn't have a hotel room or much money or food, total strangers would express concern for me, offer me a piece of their pizza. Or tell me if they knew someone who was looking for a roommate or was planning a dinner expedition.

People I didn't know would talk to me, and we'd easily find some interest we shared and could



talk about. Strangers would hand me food or toys or bizarre little notes. People would hug me or give me a backrub. Sure, it took awhile for me to get used to that. It certainly wasn't like my life in South Dakota. But in certain circles at Minicon, it's cool, it's okay. Most, if not all, were people who were part of the community, who shared a love of Science Fiction and Minicon itself.

But now, that circle is a minority at the convention. Yeah, there are still plenty of cool people there, but it's harder to find them in the crowds.

And people aren't as concerned or polite as they once were. You need only look at the increase in vandolism and simple trash, to see the change. It's not a change of mere numbers, it was still pretty impressive when 2,000 or 2,500 people could keep the hotel so clean during the course of the convention. 1,000 more people shouldn't turn the hotel into a pit, if they're the right people.

### **The Right People**

Part of why Minicon was so magical to me, was because anyone and everyone was accepted. It was a place open to diversity, that would embrace those who were mocked or picked upon in the mundane world. It was a place where people looked beyond the surface, more interested in ideas than appearances. We'd forgive undersocialized people, because we were too, or had been. We knew everyone starts somewhere. We certainly understood shy people. People who might be considered "Wrong" or on the outside in the mundane world, were part of the family at Minicon. No one was wrong, no one was "Right," that wasn't the issue. We focused on what we had in common, and celebrated the differences that made us unique, rather than shunning them.

So yeah, it hurts to say that we need "The Right People" at Minicon, because that implies that some people are wrong. Fans who've been shunned are generally reluctant to shun others. We want to celebrate differences, not chase people away.

But it's time to face facts. There's something wrong when many people no longer feel safe at the convention. There's something wrong when the disabled are mocked in public spaces at our convention. There's something wrong when people are

teased for reading books at the convention. There's something wrong when the floors of the consuite are sticky with garbage and the halls have trash scattered around them.

One could argue that it's sheer numbers. Or that society itself is going downhill. Manners aren't what they were. So what!? We don't have to stand for that in our community. Why should we be like the rest of the mundane world? We weren't before.

### **Not Enough Right People**

We don't have enough people to run a convention of 3500+ people. We probably don't have enough people to run a convention of 3,000 people. It's time to face that fact.

Please see my previous email about Volunteering, if you haven't already, or if you aren't sure what I mean.

When volunteers are burnt out and unhappy, that is a big sign that Something Is Wrong. Minicon should be fun.

I remember reading the communications log from a past Minicon in an issue of Rune. Must've been a Minicon in the early twenties... Minicon 22? 23? 21? Anyway. It was interesting. Problems happened and were dealt with. People had fun. People got silly. It was a team, a community, a family effort.

These days, the comm officer is behind closed doors, and is generally swamped. There's no time for fun silly log entries. There aren't backrubs and balloon parades and such stuff, or if it happens, very few people know about it.

### **Communication Problems**

We've got a lot of communication problems. How are people supposed to find their family if they're hiding in private parties? Or behind locked doors in a private part of the Minicon Bridge? How do people read about Minn-stf if it's not mentioned in the Minicon program book? Or if we don't have a publications department (like last year)?

People who have attended Minicon for a couple (sometimes more) years, do not know what departments we have at Minicon. They don't know what a Gopher or a Twinkie is. They've never been

to a Minn-stf meeting (and don't know that they're really parties, darnit). They don't know that the Convention Committee works on the convention year round, for free, because they care about it.

These people haven't heard the stories... of benches in elevators... of invasions by mundane debaters... of Minneapolis in '73 and lime jello and dodos.

Many people try to volunteer, but are never contacted. This is a HUGE problem.

How do you think these people feel when they later hear that Minicon is broken and it's largely because we don't have enough volunteers? How do these people feel when they hear Minn-stf members or concom members saying that not enough people care about Minicon?

How would you feel, if you'd checked the "I'd like to volunteer box" on your Minicon registration for the last three years, but were only contacted once (and then they never followed up, so nothing came of it)? Or were never contacted?

I *know* that many people care about Minicon and want to volunteer who haven't been contacted or haven't been given the information they need. I know there are a lot of people out there who would attend Minn-stf meetings if they knew about them — if they knew what and where they were.

Sure, some people don't care to volunteer or to learn more about Minicon, Minn-stf, or fannish history. You could put a zillion articles in program books, and they wouldn't read them. You could try to engage them in conversation and they'd zone out or walk away. Fine, that's their loss, maybe they aren't part of our family. We would've had them, they chose to walk away.

But my heart aches for those people who are trying to find out more. They're out there. I know they are. I was one of them, and I found it very hard to get involved. Your average shy fan may know what house the Minn-stf meeting is at, and may be told that it runs from 2pm until late. But showing up at the house of someone you don't know all alone, not knowing how many (if any) people will be there at the hour you show up.... is very difficult. Walking into a room of strangers, in an unfamiliar neighborhood, in a house that is not your own..... is a big scary leap.

Most people don't even get that far. They don't know what happens at Minn-stf meetings. Or how long they last. They think "meetings" are solemn serious business affairs. Maybe word has spread that the Pool party is a pool party. But most don't realize the other meetings are parties, too.

Maybe some people try to attend the Minicon committee meetings. They're held in a public place. But picture what these meetings must seem like to someone who has never attended one before. Who has limited knowledge of Minicon or the departmental structure. Who doesn't know anyone in the room. Are they welcomed? Does someone bother to pause and see if people have questions? Do we explain what the departments do, what heads are, who they are?

No, we don't.

### Family Feuds

We've got in-crowds and out-crowds and all sorts of cliques involved with Minicon now. Departments don't work well together. In some cases, they fight with each other. We've got media fans fighting with book fans. We've got old-timers fighting the new crowd. We've got... well, all sorts of groups fighting each other.

What happened to our family? I guess we've got a bunch of family feuds going on. And we've got non-family members tugging on us all, too, draining our strength and resources.

Some family members have left the fold over the years. Many are on the verge now. They've got the rest of their fannish family, if they're lucky. But losing Minicon would leave a huge gap in my life.

But right now, it's an open wound. A gap would be preferable to a wound that never heals (and becomes infected and well... yeah yeah yeah... maybe i need to amputate it to save the rest of me. Forgive the drawn out gruesome analogy).

I'm tired of seeing people fight with each other, when they should be working together. When they have more in common than they realize.

We've got huge communication problems, have I mentioned that?

I think the proponents of all Minicon proposals currently on the table want the same thing. A

healthy Minicon. They have more in common than they have different.

They sorely need someone to translate, I guess.

### My Translation

I wasn't at the Minicon meeting this past Sunday, but I hear it was bloody. Lots of tears and lots of pain fell for all to see.

I really suspect many were blindsided by the High Resolution (a.k.a. Gang of Ten) proposal. I bet some committee members were insulted and/or surprised to find that many feel Minicon is broken.

For that matter, the proposal to end Minicon surely shocked people.

Many are new to the concom this year or in recent years. Many don't attend Minn-stf meetings or read this mailing list. I've mentioned this before. Even some of those entwined in making Minicon 33 may only know their department or what small areas of the convention they glimpsed the previous year. Many are not privy to the Big Picture. Many haven't attended the convention long enough to realize that the magic they find at Minicon is diminished magic compared to other years. Maybe they've been happy in their magical corner of Minicon and didn't wander through the areas where the cracks were showing.

If you feel Minicon is broken, ask yourself how you would feel if someone told you that, years ago, when you felt Minicon was healthy and magical. Ask yourself how you would feel if someone proposed to cancel Minicon, even for just a year, or to change it dramatically. Ask yourself how you would feel if you'd only attended Minicon once, had just found this wonderful magical place, only to find that it was broken and dying—that some people wanted to shut it down or change it significantly (even though you had a great time and were eager to return and stay longer that time).

You'd be upset. You'd be outraged. You'd feel like you were kept in the dark about all this. That you didn't have a say in the matter. You might feel helpless. What if you thought Minicon was the only convention out there? What if it were your only tie to fandom?

If you feel Minicon should exclude media programming, ask yourself how you would feel if someone proposed eliminating book related programming from Minicon. Or fannish programming. You'd be upset, wouldn't you? Outraged?

Maybe you'd feel that others were saying the fans of written science fiction weren't real science fiction fans. Weren't as important or cool. Certainly weren't welcome at Minicon.

Now, you might say, "then I could go to another convention like Wiscon or Readercon or ...". But remember, many people who attend Minicon haven't attended any other science fiction conventions. Many don't know much (if anything) about other science fiction conventions. Maybe they don't think they could possibly be as cool as Minicon. Minicon may be the only convention they know.

If you feel that Minicon is a fine and good thing, works just the way it is... Remember that you may not be familiar with the way Minicon was a year ago or five years ago or ten years ago. Remember that Minicon is the property of Minn-stf. Remember that those who say it's broken may know something you don't. Maybe there are aspects of Minicon you don't know. Perhaps there's behind the scenes information you haven't seen. Maybe you don't have the whole picture. Give them some credit, they wouldn't say it if they didn't feel and see it. Most people don't want Minicon to disappear, they want it to be better. In fact, I don't think anyone wants it to end, but some are so desperate they think that may be the only way to save Minn-stf and friendships and themselves.

If you feel Minicon just needs a few little changes to fix things and get it back on track, think about how you'd feel if someone told you that when you saw huge problems with Minicon. What if you felt Minicon was on the verge of collapse, that your friends were in pain, and then someone told you "nah, Minicon just needs a few little changes." Wouldn't you be frustrated?

What if you see the problems but others don't? It's frustrating.

Basically, we all need to put ourselves in the others shoes.

Stop for a minute and do that. Think about it. We've got a very diverse group of people who cares about Minicon. What seems obvious to you, isn't obvious to someone else. What's common sense to you, may not be to them.

Think how this must look to those on the outside looking in.

Think about the many hundreds of Minicon members who would be shocked to find out that this is happening. If I didn't read the Minicon mailing list, I probably wouldn't know. Maybe a friend would've emailed me the news. Or I might have happened to visit the Minicon webpage. If it's possible for committee members to almost miss the news, well. Many Minn-stf members probably don't know.

### Where I Stand

I strongly believe that Minicon is broken. That something drastic must be done.

I also love Minicon and would be sad if we had to call it off for a year or more.

But, because I love it, I would do that if it meant salvaging it for the long term. If it meant recapturing some magic and if it meant that volunteers could have fun again. I don't think that the people who work on Minicon should be "rewarded" by having nervous breakdowns or financial difficulties or losing friendships.

Of all the proposals on the table, I feel the High Resolution proposal is the most complete. That it addresses the most issues. And that it is the most realistic.

I understand why it's met with some opposition. I feel the High Resolutionaries have communicated quite well, but I also feel that they need to get more feedback (and questions) from the Board and the Exec Selection Committee. They want to engage in dialogue, they've tried to anticipate questions, but they can't anticipate every possible question from a diverse group like this one. Certainly not in the short span of time they've had. I feel that they're willing to do whatever it takes, and that there are many many people who are willing to work with the Gang of Ten, for the long haul, over a period of at least five years. Probably more. If they succeed, it'll be fun again and volunteers

will have fun and they'll get more volunteers and so on.

I also feel, that anyone with enough information, can understand (and recommend) that proposal. I don't feel it excludes media fans, though I see how it may seem that way on the surface. It needs to be refined a bit (as I understand it, they're working on it). And we need more productive communication between \*everyone\* who works on and/or cares about Minicon.

I feel that the concom for Minicon 33, THIS YEAR'S MINICON, needs to communicate well, to everyone, where things stand — realistically — with Minicon. I believe it is possible to communicate what Minicon once was, how it's broken now, and what we need to do to fix it. I also believe we need to focus on educating Minicon attendees about fandom, Minn-stf, and other conventions. We absolutely have to respond to requests for information. We need to provide information so people don't have to ask. We need to respond positively to people who express interest in volunteering to work on Minicon.

The proposal for Minicon 33 promised Fun and some changes. So far, I haven't seen much evidence of change, not really. Believe me, I've been looking. I want to see it. Some change has occurred, but it's not enough. We need more people. We really really need better communication.

It cannot be fun without more people playing to their strengths.

We need someone dedicated to responding to all requests for information. Someone who calls the volunteers and is \*excited\* to tell them about Minicon.

Frankly, Minicon needs a liaison to it's members. We need a friendly information desk with more than just maps of the hotel. We need a volunteer department that's excited and dynamic and good at matching peoples skills with positions with Minicon.

People who work in the volunteering department shouldn't ask people where they want to volunteer, perhaps they should ask what they like to do, what their skills are. Then they can tell them about positions they think might work for them and let them choose.

Everyone involved with Minicon needs to stop making assumptions about other people. We need to stop stereotyping and stop assuming everyone knows what's going on and what departments do.

We need to fix Minn-stf. And communicate better with each other and with other fan groups.

I'll probably think of more steps later, but I'm tired now and short on time.

We can fix Minicon. But not if we continue the way things have been. We need some kind of break. A fresh start, with a proposal that proposes noticeable change.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laurel Krahn (laurel@pobox.com) Minn-stf  
and Minicon member

# Fan-run Conventions

## by Elisabeth Carey

*A couple of months ago, the Smofs mailing list was convulsed with email about the High Resolution Minicon proposal and issues derived from that discussion. One particularly interesting thread discussed just who has the right to determine the nature of a particular convention, some writers taking the position that the paying membership owned the con, and could dictate policy to the con committee. Many people responded to this point, but Elisabeth Carey's response was particularly well put:*

Most fan groups that run conventions are not running them for the benefit of some other group which has prior claim on the con; they're running it for the benefit of themselves and whoever cares to join them in what *they* consider a good con. Those "political and community organizations, professional associations, businesses, charities, and other volunteer groups" that you mention aren't in the same situation; there's a pre-existing group which exists for other purposes, the convention is put on to advance the interests of the group and not for its own sake, and, particularly in the case of businesses and professional associations, professional convention organizers are being *paid* to organize the convention for them. In that sort of situation, the "con organizers" don't have any stake in the convention. They have very little right to an opinion on what should happen there; they're just being paid to do a job.

At fan-run sf conventions, the organizers are not being paid to do a job. They're not only *part* of the community; they're *the* part of the community most directly involved in the convention and the part of the community that has the *greatest* stake in it. If it's not a con they like, they have no reason to be working on it at all, and your attempt to shift "ownership" of the con out of the hands of the people who create it and into the hands of people who only show up to enjoy the result, is intellectually dishonest.

# ORYCON: Trying to live within our means

by Ruth Sachter

OryCon (Portland, Oregon) started in 1979 with an attendance of 525. By OryCon 18 in 1996, the year I (nervously) chaired, we had reached 1,600 and imposed a membership limit.

OryCon is your basic general purpose regional science fiction convention with a strong program. It was apparently an idea whose time had come as attendance doubled for its second convention and stayed close to 1,000 for several years. 1984 saw a scaled-back edition of under 500 following the 1984 Portland Westercon but the 1985 membership doubled again and the growth curve was underway. The con was held at several different hotels in the first years mostly in downtown Portland. I wasn't around for those conventions but some of them had the usual "downtown" security problems.

In 1987 it moved to the Columbia River Red Lion (now Doubletree) where it has been ever since (both a blessing and a curse). This location is one of the elements that has helped the convention maintain an even keel. The hotel is actually on Hayden Island in the Columbia River (across from Vancouver, Wash.) about 7 miles from downtown Portland. It's the standard "Red Lion" design of a central function space core with sleeping rooms in radiating wings, all three stories high. There is reasonably decent bus access 7 days a week and, of course, easy access by car—right off Interstate 5. There are assorted restaurants (fast, family & better), a supermarket, and a shopping mall a few "blocks" away from the hotel so attendees aren't stuck with what the hotel (and its sister property the Jantzen Beach Doubletree) has to offer.

It's a good spot which is partially why the convention has stayed there so long. Very few people are likely to wander in off the street but our attendees can get there. The other reason is that there's nowhere else to go that would not significantly change the nature of the convention. Port-

land has, like many other cities, a very limited number of hotels with sufficient function space for our type of convention. OryCon could return to the downtown Portland Hilton where it was in the early 80's but our costs would increase tremendously both for the con and the attendee. The Hilton is your standard vertical, fairly upscale (a recent remodeling) property and we would again have security problems and culture clashes with non-convention attendees since we would be only a part of the business in the hotel. Nothing else comes close other than the Doubletree property near our convention center which has so much business that it can pick and choose and charge all the market will bear.

So it is clear to those of us running the con that we want to stay within the confines of the Columbia River Doubletree and keep the convention manageable.

A little background. OryCon is run under the sponsorship of Oregon Science Fiction Conventions Inc., an 501(c)(3) umbrella organization. Membership is open to those who have been active committee members of OryCon or other OSFCI sponsored-events (Westercons, Smofcon, Potlatch, Susan C. Petrey Scholarship Fund, etc.) defined as holding two committee positions in the previous four years. Convention chairs are neither elected nor appointed: whoever wants to run the next OryCon comes forward with a proposal\* to run the con (general outline of intended direction, GOHs, budget, policies, committee recruits to date) which must be accepted by the Board and then he or she signs a management agreement\* with OSFCI. It's mostly worked pretty well with the right number of people coming forward or being pushed each year into chairing the convention. The OryCon chair is seen as more of a coordinator (*primus inter pares*) and the usual combination of event/group momentum and inertia keeps it that way.

So as the attendance grew steadily during the early 90's, the group started talking about controlling membership. The nearest other major convention, Norwescon in the Seattle area, is much larger and has a very different feel. We didn't see OryCon moving in that direction. Awareness of other conventions that ran into problems with periods of unchecked growth such as Lunacon, Boskone, and Balticon, and what they went through spurred the discussion, as did awareness of our own capabilities for managing a convention of a certain size. The decision was made to have a (at the time unpublicized) membership limit of 1,600.

Meanwhile, OryCon continued to grow about 10% a year, filling all available function space in the hotel (including a number of sleeping rooms and the few suites that we take over for more function space), and all the bedrooms the hotel would allocate (including a block of 50 at the Jantzen Beach hotel across the parking lot), it became clear to us that the membership cap that had been in the background was about to come into play.

The growth stems from a combination of factors: good word of mouth about the convention, not just locally but nationally, including among the professional community (OryCon attendees read books and like literary programming); continuing local population growth; and the recent loss of a nearby convention that was held only a few weeks earlier.

Last year, as the memberships came in at a steady rate we could tell we were going to hit the wall and we started to publicize the cap on our fliers, webpage, and by word of mouth to area fan groups. Registration kept careful track of numbers; membership transfers increased; and, special arrangements were made on occasion to carry memberships forward to the next year to free slots for others. The pre-reg/at-con ratio changed drastically: it was usually about 50/50 but this year almost 1,200 of the 1,600 were in advance (with about 200 in last week of pre-reg.)

At con they kept coming and I nervously watched the registration numbers. We didn't really want to have to close the doors leaving frustrated fans out in the rain. So we let in as many as possible—a bit over the 1,600—finally closing registration about noon on Saturday. Fortunately

there were no major incidents or vast numbers of folks ghosting.

We planned this year's convention with the cap in mind: all publicity (the little that we do) mentioned it prominently and budget lines were tracked carefully as there wouldn't be any unexpected at the door surpluses. Meanwhile pre-reg kept right on track running about 15% ahead of previous years. A graph on the webpage showed just where we were. The basic message was get your memberships now—we don't know how many will be available at the door and almost 1,300 of the 1,600 were pre-reg. The chair emphasized the need to stay within the budget especially as the registration numbers were skewed to the lower rates and our expenses for pre-reg and progress reports were that much higher. We had a limited number of one-days available for Friday and Saturday and we didn't count little kids towards the cap. Doors were open until Saturday afternoon but people calling for information were being told that we were full. Final membership count including no-shows turned out to be slightly under 1,600 but that was fine. Most comments on OryCon 19 have been positive (other than about changes made by Doubletree corporate).

We survived our second year of no growth with the basic realization that we need to think about re-engineering some of the convention. The numbers of program participants have steadily increased but since OryCon gives comp memberships to the participant and a guest, the ratio of program participants to paying members cannot continue to expand. Do we want to think about trimming our invitation list or imposing a minimum activity requirement with all the attendant problems of each? The art show at its largest ever and dealers room are both selling out.

Next year is OryCon 20 with a very attractive slate of GOHs and there's no reason to believe that we will not max out attendance. Our expenses are not decreasing so rates are going up moderately across the board. Pre-reg is starting higher and has a steeper rate of increase. OryCon has always allowed for membership transfers and for OryCon 20 we will experiment with refunds to help manage the fixed membership base: we will offer refunds up to the end of pre-reg with a \$5



“restocking” fee. Dealers and art show rates are also increasing. And OryCon will still be one of the cheaper conventions in the area.

So far, OryCon has been getting almost enough at-con volunteers and new committee members that we’re not into major burn-out but we have definitely moved to needing a “staff” level now as opposed to the previous committee/volunteer model. Working with a full hotel requires more effort. The present OryCon is running only a couple of hundred people smaller than the last Westercon we ran (1995) though shorter in duration and required elements.

Of the fannish groups and interests represented at OryCon, there is no single constituency that we want to point at and discourage in an attempt to make more room for others. OryCon went to a weaponless convention ten years ago in order to stay at the hotel and security problems decreased drastically at that point. The vampires (Camarilla) not only make sure their members buy memberships, behave, and work on the con but run their midnight conclave under Roberts Rules of Order! Will the natural turn-over in membership be enough to keep things from getting stale or not?

To look at these issues and more, we are planning several brainstorming sessions which will be open to all interested parties, committee and attendees. We’ll publicize them through our webpage, committee newsletter, e-mail, and word of mouth. We’re also starting an open e-mail list (our ISP offers 2 free lists) and a committee-only list since almost everyone on the last OryCon committee had email access and about 700 of our members listed e-mail addresses.

Those of us running OryCon will be the ones who make the decisions but we hope that we can continue to encourage more new people to become part of that group. We urge those who want more radical change to start their own conventions and have done our best to help some recent attempts (we couldn’t do much for the group that thought OSFCI kept a secret set of books and actually made loads of money running OryCon). There are also several start-ups planned for next year in various Washington cities and, with any luck, one or more of them will help take some of the pressure off OryCon.

Like all conventions, OryCon is an ongoing experiment that’s shaped partially by its chair and committee and partially by the expectations of the attendees. We’ll know how successful our no-growth scenario has been once we read about it some years from now in future Smofcon proceedings.

\*samples available on request

## Lunacon '78 — A Con that Shrank

### by Ben Yalow

In recent years, there's been a great deal of discussion about how a regional convention can become unmanageably large, and what it can do to bring it back under control. While this is normally thought of as a problem for the 80s and 90s, the first of the major regionals to be forced to deal with the problem was Lunacon, which ran into this in the mid-70s

In the early 70s, Lunacon was the largest regional regularly run by a club. Its attendance hit 1600 in 1973, at a time when the Worldcon was only about 50% larger. It was held in a downtown hotel, rotating among the few downtown hotels with enough space and rooms to hold it, but which were still cheap enough to be afforded by a fannish budget.

However, for the people involved with running the convention, it was clear that Lunacon was having serious problems. Increasingly, the membership was changing — the non-local fans, with their stronger ties to the larger fannish community, were choosing not to return, and the fraction of unconnected locals was constantly increasing. Furthermore, there had been a constant increase in improper behavior, generally associated with unconnected locals, ranging from parties getting so disruptive that the hotel, correctly, shut them down, to acts of vandalism, including damage to the hotel, and things such as tear gas being set off in a program room during a slide show.

Lunarians, the club that runs Lunacon, decided that this had to be corrected. Furthermore, since the prices of downtown hotels were constantly increasing, there were potential long-term financial problems, as well. One option, which addressed the behavior problems, was to increase the staff presence throughout the hotel, but this was only partially successful, and required a lot more staff, and was felt to be inadequate as long-term solution. And this didn't address the costs prob-

lems at all. I was elected to serve as Lunacon 78 chairman on the basis of making radical changes to solve the multiple problems confronting Lunacon.

The solution adopted was to move Lunacon to the suburbs. This had disadvantages in that the hotel was significantly less accessible to local fans, since it was no longer on the subway, and many New York locals don't drive, and the younger ones can't do so. However, we did pick a location near a bus route, so locals did have a mass transit method of getting to the con. We were also able to get better room rates, and free parking, thereby lowering the costs for the non-commuters we wanted to attract. We did recognize that would probably be lower attendance, since Lunacon would no longer be an easy to attend cheap party in a convenient location.

This shrinkage caused significant financial threats to Lunacon and Lunarians. A significant fraction of the costs of a convention are relatively fixed (independent of the size of the con). A GoH costs the same, and the hotel, once booked, is pretty fixed in cost — if anything, it gets more expensive for a smaller con, since you usually get fewer comp rooms. While these costs can be initially controlled (for example, choose fewer, or cheaper Guests of Honor), these decisions need to be made long before you know how the proposed changes will affect attendance. In Lunacon's case, the actual attendance in 1978 was less than half of the attendance in the prior year.

In order to deal with this effect, Lunacon had to keep much more accurate track of its finances than it had been doing. The budget that year was more complete and detailed than in prior years, and people were asked to submit expense reports more promptly, so that overruns could be spotted sooner. And all committee members were made aware of the finances, so that they were less will-

ing to throw money at problems, since they knew we didn't have any. Furthermore, we had correctly assumed that most of the losses would be in the at-door segments, and, in fact, the pre-registration dropped far less than the total attendance. Despite all of these controls, Lunacon suffered its first loss in many years, but it was minimal, and was easily covered from past accumulated surpluses.

However, despite all of the financial difficulties, the convention was an overall success. There had been extensive advance publicity about the changes, so people knew what to expect if they came. The shrinkage of the fannish contingent was reversed — most of the people who didn't come back were those with little connection to fandom outside Lunacon. And, in future years, Lunacon attracted an increasing number of those fans it was trying to attract, and the size grew slowly over the next decade.

In summary, Lunacon had to confront the problems of its own successes of the early 70s. It made the decision to change the convention, in order to change its membership to one more in line with what the club wanted. It massively publicized the changes, so as to avoid surprising people by giving them a different con without notice. It instituted tighter financial controls to monitor its finances, and hold its losses to a minimum (one year of minor losses, after which it rebounded). And, in the end, Lunacon was a changed convention that Lunarians were much happier with.

# The Rise and Fall of the Large Boskones

## by Mark Olson

Let me start off by declaring my prejudices as best I can. I started attending Boskone in 1970 when I was in grad school, and Boskone was my favorite of all the Big Five East Coast conventions (I regularly attended them all.) I moved to Boston at the end of 1979 and joined NESFA. I helped out with Boskone starting in 1980 and at Noreascon Two and became a Regular Member around 1982. I've been active in NESFA and have worked on Boskone ever since.

In the early 70's, Boskone was one of the Big Five East Coast conventions (along with Disclave, Balticon, Philcon, and Lunacon). It was not the largest, though it may have been marginally stronger in Program than the others. Like the others, Boskone grew steadily through the 70's and seemed to be growing even faster as Noreascon Two (1980) approached. (I did not attend Boskone from 1977 through 1979 because I was living in the Midwest.) The last pre-N2 Boskone was around 1600 people and was simultaneously a strain on the committee and a great source of pride to the club.

When I arrived in Boston, just before N2, a constant topic of conversation (secondary to N2-planning, of course) was what to do about Boskone's size. The 1980 Boskone was moved to a smallish suburban site as part of the prep for N2, but the first post-Noreascon Two Boskone was back at the Sheraton Boston and grew to 1800 people.

I believe that it was that summer when Jim Hudson and Richard Harter convened a day-long "Wither Boskone?" retreat at the Lewis's new house in Natick to discuss how NESFA might cope with a convention which had grown beyond the club's expectations, and which many feared might grow beyond its ability to manage. The retreat talked and eventually came up with the near-unani-

mous finding that NESFA ought to shrink the con and move it to a suburban location. (The phrase I remember is "a small Boskone in the countryside".)

Many people afterwards said that they had felt pressured or forced to come to that conclusion, and that they really didn't believe in it. In the event, I do not remember NESFA seriously looking for a suburban hotel (though I do vaguely remember visits to the Newton Marriott and the Hyatt Aztec in Cambridge which might have happened about then). In any event, Boskone stayed downtown, though it moved from the Sheraton to the Park Plaza for 1982.

Growth continued. The management skills developed during N2 enabled NESFA to keep its balance and by 1984, Boskone had reached 2800 people. (That's official members, of course. No one knows how many 'ghosts' there were, but if subsequent years are any indication, it may have been in the hundreds.)

One feature of those years was the even faster growth of the Big Ops model. (Big Ops is a convention-running model in which almost the entire convention is run at con by an Operations department. Each individual department runs itself, but anything out of the ordinary and all interdepartmental matters were handled by Ops.) Big Ops, unsurprisingly, attracted many of the most energetic con-runners to itself, frequently to the detriment of the other departments. By 1984, departments like Hucksters and Program — once the center of Boskone — were regarded as dull, dead-end areas, to be avoided by people who wanted to be Powers or Important. This produced an appallingly dull convention — the 1983 Boskone's Program pretty much collapsed and mostly didn't happen.

(I should declare a prejudice here: I was appalled by Big Ops and was one of the harshest crit-

ics of that model. If you want a favorable view of it, find someone else. I regard contributing to the elimination of Big Ops at Boskone as the most useful thing I've ever done in fandom.)

The excesses of Big Ops at the 1984 Boskone allowed us to decisively cut it back. In 1985, we inaugurated the Services department which took over the necessary functions of Ops and put the responsibility for inter-area communications and coordination squarely back in the laps of the committee. It worked and we regained the idea of a committee and the areas again became strong — Boskone has never again been tempted to go with Big Ops, and in fact has continued to refine the Services concept. But that's the subject of another essay, on another other day.

We were in a vicious cycle. Boskone was growing and getting rowdier, and we could see that it was slipping out of control. While we tried minor things (like de-emphasizing the film program) which we thought might slow growth, we also worked very hard to create 'people sinks'. A people sink was an event or activity designed to soak up some of the excess people floating around by giving them something to do. You can see the problem immediately, and we saw it then: People sinks by their very nature are attractive. Each people sink we created ameliorated the crowds a bit this year, but attracted even more people next.

In 1985, Boskone moved to the Copley Marriott, which in retrospect was probably a bad decision. It's true that we were straining the Park Plaza's capacity and the Marriott — a new hotel which had open only months before — was much larger. But the Marriott was also a *much* more upscale hotel and while it actively solicited our business, Boskone's membership had gotten too young, wild and scruffy to be a very good fit. It's hard to see how a mid-80s Boskone could have established a harmonious long-term relationship there.

The 1985 Boskone grew to around 3400 official members, was large, varied and rather wild. I was co-running Services with Jill Eastlake and remember being very stressed. (And this was the deliberately laid-back Services!) The 1985 Boskone was easily the largest SF con in the world that year (Worldcon was in Australia.) That's a critical point:

While a significant fraction of the committee wanted to get off the tiger, we were *unanimous* in our pride that Boskone was so large and so well-run and growing so fast. Boskone had gotten the name "Winter Worldcon" and we wore it with pride.

This schizoid attitude was, I think, key. Much of the committee was uncomfortable with the way things were going, but no one knew how to end it without destroying the good parts, too, and we all took considerable pride in what we had built. The club found it impossible to make a decision, so things just kept on going — and kept on growing.

Another issue was money. NESFA was making a considerable sum each year out of the giant Boskones — it takes real mismanagement not to. NESFA has always had management talent, and more importantly, has respected it and has deliberately tried to nurture it. By 1985, NESFA was in search of a clubhouse — in fact, just the week before that year's Boskone we had opened negotiations on a building (which we ultimately didn't buy). This meant that even if NESFA had the will to shrink Boskone substantially, it couldn't do so without finding another source of income or finding a way to live without the income. Yet another conflicting motive! Jill Eastlake, who was President of NESFA at the time, set up a study committee to find an alternative source of money for the club, but nothing practical ever came of it.

I was chosen to chair the 1986 Boskone, and when I went to the Marriott to negotiate a contract for 1986, I was told that they weren't interested in our business.

(Incidentally, this points out a mistake we were making: traditionally, the Boskone Chairman did hotel relations and was the hotel interface, and we normally waited until *after* Boskone to work out a contract for the next year. In retrospect, both were dumb ideas, and both contributed significantly to our problems. The qualities which make for a good convention chairman do not necessarily make for a good hotel negotiator or liaison, so our interface to the hotel was spotty at best, had no year-to-year continuity, and nearly always was amateurish. Waiting until after Boskone to negotiate the next year's contract made us vulnerable to short-term overreactions on the hotel's part. We have since learned better.)

The Marriott's decision to give us the old heave-ho was based on a number of things: the general rowdiness of the con, the mismatch between our members and the hotel's target clientele, problems which occurred during the con, unprofessionalism on our part in some of our dealings with the hotel, but most of all — in my opinion — the XXX movies Boskone showed in the wee hours of the morning in the film room. Jill and I were called before the hotel's GM on Sunday morning and given a *very* severe lecture about how this was unacceptable at the Copley Marriott. (The XXX movies had evidently become a fixture of the film program, though I don't think that most of us knew it, and I'm certain that it was never approved by the club.)

Had the other problems not occurred, we could probably have dealt with the XXX problem; had the XXX movies not been shown, we might have been able to convince the Marriott to give us another year. The two together, in my opinion, was just too much.

Fortunately the Sheraton Boston wanted our business and since it was the only other hotel in town big enough to handle us, we moved there. (I knew that I was inexperienced at hotel negotiations, so I asked Don Eastlake, our best hotel person, to do that job for my Boskone.)

The 1986 Boskone grew again to around 4000 official members and wasn't appreciably worse than the previous year, but I think a significant part of this was because the Sheraton was a larger facility and some of the problems were diluted. The committee was stressed out, but we survived Boston 1986 and contracted with the Sheraton for 1987.

Before going on to the Boskone from Hell, I want to digress a bit on how we saw things in the mid-80s, since our perceptions — wrong in some cases, right in others, I think — are what drove our decisions.

The fundamental thing we had to understand was why we were growing as we were — we'd been growing at 10% to 20% a year for ten years by 1985. Most of the people who had opinions, felt that the growth of cons was the result of the influx of 'media fans'. Now this was not a foolish

notion, since the explosive growth of SF cons was pretty clearly related to the success of Star Trek, Star Wars, and 2001. SF was changing from an outcast to an accepted part of society, and many, many new people were joining fandom.

We believed that these media fans — who frequently didn't have much in common with us more traditional fans, being mostly interested in watching re-runs of their favorite films or shows — were responsible for the explosive and clearly unwieldy growth of Boskone. (This was an opinion widespread in fandom at the time, and not just a local, Boston, aberration.) We spent a significant amount of effort trying to come up with a way of making Boskone less attractive to the hordes of media fans without costing us what we valued. We got nowhere.

In retrospect, I think we completely misunderstood the problem. The real problem in those years wasn't the hordes of media fans (though their sheer numbers contributed, I don't think they were intrinsically more of a problem than other kinds of fans); it was the hordes of youngsters, frequently without memberships, who flooded into Boskone for the parties and the chance to run wild, and who had little or no interest in *any* aspect of fandom.

Many of them probably first heard of Boskone through friends who had a primarily media-related connection with fandom, but they didn't come for SF or for fandom. (After the Boskone from Hell, one of our members, a high school teacher, asked students at his school if they'd heard of Boskone and a disturbingly large number had heard of it as a wild weekend with easy drugs and booze.)

Hindsight is always 20:20, but foresight rarely is. Assuming that the fundamental problem was perhaps 1000-1500 anonymous, young, wild non-fans, what could we have done about it, even if we'd understood it? At least, what could we have done about it without the cure being as destructive of what we valued about Boskone as the disease? I'm still not sure that a really workable solution was possible — at least not without starting in the early 80s.

Another problem — which still is with us — is the fragmentation of the SF community at conventions. I doubt that fandom has been truly uni-

fied in a great long time, but the development of segments of fandom interested in disparate, almost disjoint, things certainly adds to the strain. Had the fans (media, book, con-running, etc.) at the giant Boskones felt a real sense of community, I think that the random rowdies could have been contained, and the vein of proto-fans amongst them might have been captured for fandom.

The 1987 Boskone became known as the Boskone from Hell not long after the con. Its problems were due to an unlucky combination of further growth — it had around 4400 official members and as many as 500 ‘ghosts’ — a last-minute decision to let people write whatever names they wanted to on their badges, and a newly-modified and very sensitive fire alarm system in the Sheraton combined with very cold weather which caused numerous false alarms itself. The days and nights were punctuated with fire alarms, which set hotel, committee and convention members on edge — for months afterwards, some committee members would be woken up at night by nightmares featuring fire alarms. The level of stress experienced by most of the committee at-con had reached a new high.

A few days after that Boskone we were informed by the Sheraton that we were not welcome back.

This presented us with a major dilemma: We’d been kicked out of the Sheraton and the Marriott, and the other two large downtown hotels, the Westin and the Park Plaza, were about half the size we needed. We immediately opened negotiations with them, and discovered that the Park Plaza didn’t want us, either. The Westin was willing to take us, but their rates were high enough that we didn’t feel we could use their facility. (Even if we’d been willing to hit fandom with a 50 or 70% jump in room rates, we ran the substantial risk that we’d not be able to fill our block at those rates and would thus get hit by ruinous penalties.)

We started looking more widely and in a couple of months’ effort, we’d uncovered three other choices: A site in Marlboro which consisted of a small convention center across a large parking lot from a barely-adequate hotel with overflow hotels in easy driving distance, and sites in Springfield, MA and Hartford, CT. Each of the three

would support a con up to as many as 1800 people.

The largest suburban Boston site would have held around 1300 people, max. There were no remotely viable facilities on the T.

We chose Springfield because of the three sites, its facilities were by far the best. It was over an hour from Boston, but Marlboro was a half-hour away and Hartford was further.

I make no apology for that decision. I think we did the best anyone could have done under the circumstances.

Where we *did* make a serious mistake was in how we handled the move.

To recap, Boskone had grown vigorously despite our admittedly feeble attempts to curb its growth. The 1987 Boskone was 4400++ people, and our new facilities could hold perhaps 1800 people comfortably. We panicked, and instituted draconian measures to get the size of Boskone down to a size which would fit.

Basically, we believed that if the first Springfield Boskone blew up like the last Boston one did, or even if it was noticeably rowdy, that would be the end of SF cons in Massachusetts for years to come. (The Springfield hotels were aware of our problems in Boston, and it took some effort to persuade them that we could bring the convention back under control.)

We had reasons for it, but in retrospect, it’s clear that we badly overreacted by sending out a letter which appeared even harsher than we intended which was itself harsher than we needed to be. (George Flynn, in fact, believes that the simple fact of the move to Springfield would have brought the numbers down to a size that the facility could handle.)

The aftermath of the growth and collapse of the giant Boskones still reverberates in Boston fandom, but along with the ill effects, there has been one very good result: Boskone is once more a fun convention to work on for me and for a lot of other people. Even if we’d — somehow — managed to keep riding the tiger of the giant Boskones, I think few of the Boskone committee would have survived many more years of the kind of unrewarding stress that the giant Boskones caused.

## Volunteering by Laurel Krahn

On 9/18/97, at 9:37 AM, Geri Sullivan wrote:

*At 8:42 AM 9/18/97, Kurt Griese-  
mer wrote: I'm even one of those  
mentioned as having : 'no previous  
management experience being thrust  
into Department Head positions'  
though I take much of the blame for  
having my first volunteer position be  
as a Department Head. How STU-  
PID! How NAIVE! One cannot really  
imagine the bile and venom that ac-  
company failure at a heartfelt task,  
both inside and out.*

Naive enthusiasm is a powerful and wondrous thing. I *hate* that Minicon enables and encourages people to take on department head positions in such circumstances. It's setting us all up for pain and failure.

Yup.

I quoted the above because I felt it was worth seeing again (Good stuff, Kurt and Geri).

Usually, I'm out there encouraging people to volunteer to work on Minicon. Even if it's their first Minicon or first convention. Because it's a great way to get involved, to get to know the con, to get to know a bunch of cool people.

However (this is a big, all caps, large font, italicized However).

When you first volunteer to work on a convention, any convention, you should start small. Certainly with something that plays to your strengths, skills, talents. By small, I mean with a role that involves a relatively small time commitment and doesn't involve management (these roles are still important — there are no truly "small roles" at Minicon, every volunteer is important). And you

should volunteer because you want to learn, want to help out, because you care about this cool gathering of people. (Yes, even if it's your first Minicon or first convention, you can care about it. After the first few minutes of the convention, it may feel right... like home... and you'll want to be a part of things, to help it be healthy and strong).

Do not get pressured into volunteering. Do not volunteer because no one else will take the job. Do not volunteer because you think it will get you fame or fortune or free stuff. Do not volunteer because you want to make a Name for yourself and impress everyone (or someone). Do not volunteer because you want to play the martyr. Do not volunteer because you want a T-shirt, a keychain, pin, or mug.

You should only volunteer because you care about the convention and the people who make up the convention. Volunteer because you want to do something you enjoy, for a convention you care about. Play to your strengths. If you see how a talent or skill you possess could help make a convention happen, volunteer to use that talent for the convention. But only if you can realistically commit the time it takes to do the job right.

Never head a department without having worked in that same department in some capacity previously. Ideally, you should work your way up, be a subhead, then a head-in-training, then a Head. You should have advisors who have been Head of that Department before.

Ideally, you should have some management experience before taking on the role of Head of any major department for a large convention. (Yes, management experience gained as subhead or Head in training does count - as does "Real World" experience).

If you aren't having fun as a volunteer, you aren't doing it right. You aren't playing to your



strengths. You don't have a good fit with the position, department, concom or the convention. You should figure this out early in the game. And you should stop. If you don't like being a gopher, you may not like working elsewhere in the Operations department, for instance. To name but one example.

Has anyone ever surveyed Minicon volunteers? It would be interesting to find out what percentage can say they truly enjoyed volunteering for Minicon. And it would be interesting to see what roles they filled. I think there's someone who could be happy in any given role. But I've seen a lot of unhappy, stressed out volunteers in recent years. They aren't having fun. And they often don't get to enjoy the rest of the convention. This is Not Good. And it's a sign that we've been doing things wrong for awhile.

Frankly, if we don't have enough bodies to fill all the roles it takes to put on Minicon, to do it happily and healthily... I don't think we should have Minicon. We should change Minicon so that people can enjoy it, from all sides (as a volunteer who works many hours, one who only volunteers for an hour, or one who doesn't volunteer at all). If we don't have the people with the skills, talents, and desire to build it, why bother? We end up forcing people into positions they aren't ready for (and then burning them out or harming their reputations or health). We end up with people filling roles they don't enjoy or excel at.

Sigh. It's not Good.

Minicon has survived as long as it has, at the expense of good hearted people, who loved the convention and were willing to jump in and play the role of a White Knight, even when it was detrimental to them, and to the convention itself. Good intentions often keeps the knights from seeing how it hurts the con, but it does. Good hearted people have been talked into playing roles because no one else would fill them or there wasn't anyone else to take the head position so they did, even though they had no experience in that department.

Sometimes, of course, people can jump in at the last minute and do something they enjoy, because it needs to be done, and it works out. That's happened, too. With more communication, it could be less stressful for all involved, if communica-

tion were improved, and everyone got to know each others strengths, so they could play to them. So someone could fill a role, not at the last minute, but earlier in the game.

Another rough eleven cents from someone in a hurry on a break from work...

Laurel Krahn (laurel@pobox.com) science fiction fan (books, media, fanzines, all that goodstuff) member of minicons 24-33, occasional concom member mnstf member and erstwhile VPDP

# On Finding Fandom

## by Laurel Krahn

Karen Cooper posted a really great list of ways to get involved with fandom (or to find out more about fandom). Bravo! :-)

Honestly, if you can't find the stuff, you aren't looking hard enough (I don't mean that as a slam, either, I know how easy it is to get busy and not read Minicon program books or fanzines or search for things online, etc).

I first read about Minn-stf online, ten or so years ago, when things were in some ways harder to find in the online world. But I found a BBS called Terraboard on the recommendation of someone who knew I liked "that science fiction stuff". On Terraboard, I found lots of information about Minn-stf and area writers, and via the SF Echo on FIDOnet, I found out even more. Via other BBSes and the internet I found the SF-LOVERS archive... and the SF-LOVERS mailing list, the first sf groups on Usenet. I talked about Star Trek stuff on Q-link (a precursor to AOL) before I found all this other stuff. You've probably heard this story by now, but there are other details that are relevant to these worries about folks not finding fandom or feeling excluded.

I heard about Star Trek conventions in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, and in magazines like Starlog. And I heard about other conventions in all sorts of places that are easy to access even if you think you're all alone in your love for science fiction—bookstores, libraries, newspapers, magazines.

I first read about Star Trek fandom in a variety of paperback books that are easy to find at bookstores or Star Trek conventions. Most notably, I was in love with Joan Winston's description of the first Star Trek conventions in her nifty book "The Making of the Star Trek Conventions" as well as stuff in "Star Trek Lives". Among others (last I checked, some time ago, the latter book is much easier to find than the former).

I've tracked down fanzines and magazines and conventions and all sorts of information since

then. Online, offline, with the help of friends or on my own.

I found fandom. Which is pretty amazing considering the fact that I attended a private Lutheran school in a rural Minnesota town and didn't know anyone else who liked science fiction. Okay, later on I found out that some of them also liked media science fiction, but that was after I found the magazines and the books and so on. People in South Dakota find fandom. Anyone in the U.S. can find it, IMHO, if they want to. Heck, even if they don't know it exists. I sure didn't. Star Trek fandom has gotten much more high profile than it used to be, it's hard to miss Star Trek cons these days. Or episodes of the many shows. And fans who don't care for media SF can find out about conventions online or by reading SF publications, which are available at most bookstores and newsstands.

You know, I found my first Star Trek novel at a drugstore in the wire racks, it was the first I heard of Star Trek books. I bought most of my books via book clubs or the library book sale to that point, hadn't really ventured into the SF section of bookstores. Maybe didn't realize there was one (that changed fast and was a revelation, I hadn't really thought of SF as a genre to that point, that it might have space designated to it in a bookstore).

Interesting that I'm now on some of the same mailing lists as Ben Yalow, someone whose name I knew before I really found fandom, when it was simply a cool thing I read about in Joan Winston's book, it seemed all so far away and glorious and too cool to be true. Gosh Ben, you aren't a fictional character after all! ;-p

These days, Minn-stf has a webpage ( <http://www.mnstf.org/> ) as do many other fan organizations, fan run conventions, and other such things.

Fans from all over the world talk in rec.arts.sf.fandom, as well as in other groups in the rec.arts.sf and alt.fandom hierarchies. Plus on mail-

ing lists like this one, smofs, timebinders, and others. And I think sf-lovers is still out there somewhere. :-)

There's the Sci-Fi channel, which... well, while I hate the name and some of their programming, it does provide information about some segments of fandom. And their website provides even more pointers, and they covered the most recent World Science Fiction con, giving it tremendous exposure.

You can't go a few feet without stumbling on merchandise related to shows like Star Trek, Babylon 5, The X-files, etc. Or related to movies. Any media science fiction. And media tie-in books are being written in mass quantities, some by really good SF writers (it's how I found John M. Ford's books, for instance).

Yeah, yeah, I know, but what about the true fannish fandom stuff. The nitty gritty. All those BNFs who are smoffing and pubbing their ish and lord knows what else. It's there to find, just look around. Fanzines of all kinds are reviewed all over the place. You can find fannish information at just about any convention (yes, even the media ones) if you look hard enough. You certainly can find fans, who can then give you a fanzine or tell you about a really cool book or suggest you attend a smaller con like Reinconation. And if you don't know what you're looking for, haven't heard of fandom, you'll stumble on it pretty easily, if it's for you.

I fell in love with the idea of fans communicating and working together, almost instantly. When I first read essays by fans about Star Trek in the Best of Trek books, when I read Joan Winston's descriptions of working on the first trek conventions, when I attended my first convention and felt welcome (even tho I was too shy to talk to anyone else) and part of the group. When I wandered into a music party at Minicon... well I just knew I was home. I experienced joy, often quietly, in those moments, and yearning for more of \*that\*. And the yearning kept me searching for more information. And that made it all the more sweet when I found a pile of old fanzines at Wiscon a few years ago or realized at the 1993 World Fantasy Convention that some very cool people actually knew

me and liked me after all these years and I didn't really know when it all happened. When I had to face the fact that I wasn't a complete outsider anymore, that maybe I was <gasp> a part of fandom.

The moments have been many, and they've been cool. If I'd been recruited to be a fan, if all the knowledge had somehow been handed to me on a silver platter... it might have overwhelmed me. And it wouldn't have been as fun, as sweet, as finding things the way I have.

Yeah, I think fans could be better about pointing other fans in the right direction. I'm resolute that information about Minn-stf must be in the Minicon 33 program book. It's usually the case, but when it's not there, it's a major league blunder, IMHO. And I'd like to see some people write essays about Minn-stf for the program book, something beyond ye olde history, which has been there before, but a bit about what it all means to them or what Minn-stf is like currently or what they'd like to see it become. Perhaps yet another fannish dictionary is in order or a step by step guide on how to get involved in fanac. I dunno. I'm open to ideas (and to essays).

But you can only do so much. Fans have to find their own way. And fandom isn't for everyone. If the current animal doesn't invoke wonder and joy when you first encounter it, perhaps it's not true love, perhaps it's not for you. You'll find some other group that gives you that feeling, with any luck. Or you'll create your own group. And sometimes it takes a while to get to know fandom before it's love. Other times the more you know, the more disillusioned you get. As always, YMMV (your mileage may vary). Just don't try to wedge yourself into fandom if it's not for you. It'll bend a bit to accomodate you, we each help make it part of what it is, but in some cases, you're better off finding that other group where you belong.

Sometimes it's a matter of timing, too. Fandom may be right for you at a certain time or all times. You may be right for fandom at all times or some times. Hopefully, they line up. :-)

I've been a part of various areas of fandom, over the years, in various ways. Star Trek fandom fit me well when I was high school, when I hadn't yet discovered other fannish stuff. Now, while I

like Star Trek alright and have fond memories of it, I can't see myself being particularly active in most segments of Star Trek fandom, it's not for me just now or has become something that doesn't fit me.

There are people on this list that I've known for many years, and it's been interesting to see them grow and change and fit (or not fit) into fandom as I've gone through the process myself. Some of us share paths, others take them at different speeds or take entirely different routes.

I'm thinking it's really spiff that Leslie Powell is here on this list, impressing a lot of folks I know in the way that she has. Not just 'cuz I know and like Leslie from way back, but because it's cool to see a bit of that process. 'Twas cool to watch Ishmael Williams find fandom at that Reinconation a few years back, since I knew him before I found fandom, when he was one of the first folks I knew who also really liked Star Trek. And it's neat 'cuz they've done it in their own way and in their own time. No one led them here, there weren't large street signs telling them "walk this way." Fans find fandom in their own way, they can ask some questions and do some research and wander around a bit, maybe someone helps them out a long the way. But it's all part of a story they can tell months or years later, perhaps to help the next batch of folks on the path.

It's not easy to know if someone will be a fan or not. I can think of folks I know who found fandom and didn't like it or didn't get along with it. Makes it difficult to know where to hang the recruitment posters. And, frankly, when folks who don't fit at all with fandom bang up against it or make fun of it, hurt it in some way, it's painful and frustrating. Sometimes it leads to good change, learning, good questions. But...well, I'm not sure I want signs up for the world at large. If so, they have to be written a certain way, so that they only appeal to those who might get it.

Is this elitist? Nah. Just going for a target audience. But fans aren't easily defined so... it's tricky. Better to put up some signposts in what seem logical places and be helpful to those fans who stumble along the path, than to put up billboards \*everywhere\*.

Running out of steam, time to grab some lunch. :-)

Oh yeah, thank you all you fabulous folks who were (and are) kind to me as I go along my occasionally merry way. I'm very blessed.

best,

Laurel Krahn (laurel@pobox.com)