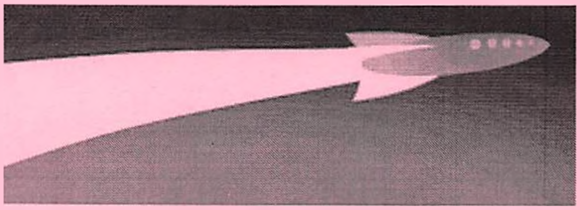
SMOFCON 31 BOOK

2013

Toronto, Canada



Compiled by Patty Wells

{Smofcon 31 Book}

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Introduction – Patty Wells

And the first question you are asking yourself is why is this page pink?

Smofcon is an idea. How do you capture the experience of running conventions, our wonderful, complicated, full of crazy happenings conventions and share them?

Obviously, we have formal panels and workshops, and informal conversations while socializing. We also can have the experience of knowing that several thousand pieces of paper were still leftover from Anticipation. What do you do with all that stuff after a Worldcon? Well, it can be auctioned off/sold, given away, passed on to another convention, or it can be waiting around to be used for a Smofcon book.

Oh yes, the book. You want to know about that too. When I was a young fan, I attended a Smofcon and received a three ring binder with some useful articles in it. One article answered a question I'd had for ages, but had never asked, making me very fond of the Smofcon book concept. Somewhere along the line we stopped doing this.

I know there are other places to collect fan run convention data, but I pitched the concept of reviving the book to the runners of this year's Smofcon to see if we are still interested in collecting our own information in this way. They graciously said yes, and several people graciously agreed to write articles for it. They picked different topics, came from totally different sets of experience and background, and yet all were willing to share some of their fannish experience. For this we thank them.

For other sources of articles, I think the first place you should look is at any article in Argentus Presents the Art of the Con <http://efanzines.com/Argentus/Argentus-SE2.pdf> , courtesy of the wonderfully useful Steven Silver.

Would we like to do more of this? Do you find it helpful? Does it give you ideas of things to do yourself to help train people, or something that will help with your own con at home? For this book, I have done little editing, and more compiling of useful information. Some of the articles are very detailed, and suitable for taking home to any con to help someone get started with a job.

Should we do this again another year, and most importantly, would you be willing to share your talents if we do?

What to Work on Early on a Large Convention – Patty Wells

Having been on the roller coaster that is chairing a Worldcon, as well as running some divisions and done equivalent work on Westercons, I have seen one thing that I think would help Worldcons be more effective in being pulled together.

It's simple; we all know it, but we don't get it done. What parts of the Worldcon planning and work can be done before the voting is finished, and what can be done in the first year? The last six months is more like a freight train speeding at you than a roller coaster. Two months before the con, the train is carrying nukes. It is the last time on earth that you need to be putting together any details that could have been finished a year before. Not so coincidentally, when I was talking to people about their participation in this book, I asked some of them to address these key items. I'll note the salient articles as the items come up.

Which things should you work on first? What should you have in place before the con announces it's GOHs at the business meeting? The easy answer is the things that you can and the things that will be infinitely screwed up if you don't.

Let's start with the finances. Bruce Farr has submitted a wonderful article on setting up a Worldcon treasury. He addresses all the important items, like dealing with your stakeholders (voters) and how you process the money. If the money is accounted for from the day your receive it (and you figure out how the bid money collected is tied to this (supporters), you are less likely to be sitting a few months out wondering if you have enough money to do that GREAT THING that will make your Worldcon special.

A budget plays into this too. Do you have the beginnings of one? Do your key people understand early that they will need to produce budgets that resemble financial reality as best they can, so they know what money they have to spend for the con itself?

You have invited the greatest GOHs ever. Have you collected interesting information on them? Do you even have the GOH liaisons, or at least one, set up to do so? See Steven Silver's excellent piece on GOH liaisons. These guests are not going to change, or so we hope, and early is a good time to find out all about them, and what they would find the most special ways to be honored.

And when you collect this information, it would be nice to put it up on a website. What can you have ready when your con is announced, and are you prepared to switch from a bid site to a Worldcon site? What should it have on it?

Well, included in the book is a suggested list of what areas should appear on a Worldcon website. This list comes from London, but is based on information used for Worldcons before it (11 and13). What do you know that you can include to begin with? GOHs and some information about them, the city that the Worldcon will be in and why it will be so much fun (mostly taken from a bid site one hopes), what information you can give on the facilities, what information you can give on what a Worldcon is for those folks who've never attended one (available from most previous Worldcons and most people are more than willing to share).

On the member side of the house, a volunteer form up early helps bring in the help you'll need later. Even if you don't have anything like complete information (and people don't expect that) having a section for members with additional concerns (childcare, will disability services run as at previous Worldcons) would like to see that you know they are there and will provide more details at some later time.

If you look at the London list and article, what can you see that you would add for your Worldcon, and does it give you ideas on what things you want to see on the website first?

And when you have this website, it would be nice to have some plan to let everyone know that it is there and that your con is there. One of the parts we tend to let go until very late is social media and to some extent a marketing plan. This can be a big miss and I thank Elizabeth McCarty, Megan Frank, Laurie Mann, and Colin Harris for adding information here.

For people who are local and are used to cheaper, local cons, it may be hard to make the case that they want to spend the big bucks a membership can cost towards the end. However, a plan for social media and marketing implemented early on, and targeting people you want to come to your Worldcon can pay off in more memberships and therefore more certainty for your budgeting process. If you are waiting for those memberships to come in at the door, you can't use that money to bring in that GREAT THING.

Finally, among the work that can be done early is what you can do with facilities. You want good contracts in place to be signed the week after you're awarded the convention, replacing those provisional, "if we win" ones. But following that you can go on working with the hotels/facilities to make sure you set up the best business environment possible. See Kris Snyder's article on this.

And now let's bring this back to the chair(s). There are a large number of assumptions in doing this work early. And most of these fall on the chair(s). Do you have people who can do social media and web sites? Did you think about this when recruiting for a bid committee?

What is the vision you as a chair want for a Worldcon? You need to be able to communicate that to a webmaster, a social media director, even a facilities head for them to get you what you want when the process starts. Have you taken this information and put it into a timeline to see what parts you want done when? As chair, you're directing the action.

In your vision, do you have parts of the convention that you'd like to do across division lines (and to take it one step further back, have you mapped out most of what areas will be in what divisions to know this)? Warren Buff discusses cross divisional work in a Worldcon, stating the special needs and extra planning to get an idea worked across divisional lines.

But mostly, there are a few thousand details that if they are done early will not need so much attention in that critical last few months before the Worldcon. Because our cons are so complicated and fannish, there will always be thousands of details and hundreds of budget decisions to be made in the last few months. You can get some of that out of the way so fewer things get lost in the vast inbox from the dark side. It won't make the job of the last six months easier, but it will pay for itself with information out earlier and with fewer mistakes made in those pressure cooker last months.

Treasurer to the World(con) -Bruce Farr

First question I have for someone writing an article like this is...who are you and why are you writing it? I'm Bruce Farr, CPA (for 26 years) and have been Treasurer, Budget Director, Treasury Office Manager, or worked in Treasury at Worldcons about 22 times (including Budget and Treasurer for 2015 Worldcon, Sasquan) as well as at several locals, regional, and NASFiC's. The "why" is because Patty Wells asked me to.

The following are some thoughts around starting up the Worldcon Treasurer function and the care and feeding of the function in the years to and past the convention.

REPORTING STRUCTURE

Reporting upwards, who do you report to in the convention hierarchy? Treasurer could report directly to the Chair or it could be through a Vice-Chair who then reports to the Chair. This is important as it lets you know the path of communication and approvals of various sorts. I personally believe that Treasurer and Treasury should be a Division unto itself (with some optional functions hung off of it) as keeping the convention healthy should have a focus and status that is beyond consideration of the size of staff and complexity of the organization.

Reporting downwards, you need to work out with your boss what is in the scope of Treasury. Memberships and Registration? I personally believe it should be within the Treasurer's scope, but sometimes it's attached to another Division. Having it report to Treasury makes control over funds received a bit easier.

MAIL ROOM

Whoever is responsible to pick up the snail mail for the convention needs to set up a process to ensure that monies received are controlled. This may mean a delegated deposit of those funds for the Treasurer by the Mail Room, but definitely would include passing on to the Treasurer, Memberships, Dealers Room, and others an accounting of checks received. They may keep originals of documents on file, and pass on copies to Treasury.

CON STAFF (PRIVATE) WEB SITE

Treasury often sets up a Wiki for its own internal documentation of processes, forms, etc. with access restricted to Treasury staff. In addition, the general Staff web site can host the posting of reimbursement forms and any other information to be shared with the Staff and Committee.

BUDGET

Just a few brief comments. An article could easily be written just focusing on budgeting...

First, consider recruiting someone who can focus just on that area. A good starting point for an initial budget would be the actual expenses and revenue for a Worldcon of similar size in recent years, of course adjusting for known differences.

Those differences include:

- Convention or hotel function space rental costs, hotel room rental costs
  - Likely that there are already tentative agreements in place which will help fix what those costs should be
- Estimated number of members and membership rates (if known or else estimated)
- Union requirements or other services and rentals that may have to be added or can be deleted
  - Equipment/fixtures that may be free or have to be rented compared to the prior year, such as free internet versus having to rent from a designated provider
- Scaling up or down, based on anticipated memberships/size of convention for art show and dealers revenue, con suite costs, publications costs, others costs
- Corkage required where the Green Room, Staff Lounge, Con Suite will be located

The process of maintaining the budget, once it's been created, if a matter of updating Actual revenue and expenses as they are incurred, Committed costs as we sign agreements or get potentially firm values known, and Estimated for those expenses and revenue not yet incurred or committed. At least once a month it's good to survey changes in the above categories (when added together they equal the "Forecast" for that budget line and post actual revenue and expenses, commitments known, and redo the Estimates for changing actual and commitments and better information.

Also important is to work out a routine of budget submission to the Chair and any others once it's been completed for the budget cycle (suggested at least once a quarter more than a year out, and monthly for at least the final six months). The process of developing the budget, besides surveying commitments, actual, and changing conditions (like numbers of memberships), also entails circulating the budget to Division Heads, Department Heads, and Chairs/Vice-Chairs in advance of submitting to the Chair for an approved budget for that cycle.

While the budget reflects current plans there should also be notations of additional requested funds. This can allow flexing of the budget as funds become available. This is especially important so that at-con there can be any needed changes without a last-second scramble to see what can be done to reign in or expand spending.

When going from one cycle's budget to the next, note proposed changes and any justification for those changes. That way the Chair, Vice-chairs, and others can see what's potentially changing.

BANKING

Bank accounts usually are set up by the Corporate officers. Make sure that there are local branches where the Treasurer is located to ease issues in dealing with banking. Also make sure that bank statements are available to the Treasurer and that the Treasurer is on the account. Best that the Corporate officers do not write checks on the account. However, deposits may need to be made by Corporate or Mail Room people designated so that checks are not having to be mailed about. Try to segregate use of accounts used for the Bid versus the Convention.

BID MONIES

Determine with the Corporate Treasurer who will account for bid expenses and income. Usually the net funds remaining are given to the convention. Also, presupporters are usually given a discount on their membership to the convention, which helps justify a funds transfer to the convention from the bid accounts.

At some point, usually after the convention makes sufficient monies and the convention approves this to be done, there may be a reimbursement to people who spent money on behalf of the bid. This should be defined as to what kinds of expenses and backup paperwork required, and when it will be done, by the Convention Chair and included in the convention budget. It usually is done post convention and depends on the amount of money remaining after all other reimbursements are made including membership refunds to program participants and staff, as well as reimbursements of contingent reimbursable such as travel for the Chair and others.

PRE-SUPPORTERS

Pre-supporters are usually given a reduced rate membership. Sometimes there is a deadline by which they have to buy the attending or supporting membership to get that rate. Therefore it's a good idea to ensure you have a good list of those people so you can track whether they are entitled to the reduced rate. The Pre-supporter list is also a good publicity mailing list to solicit memberships, of course.

VOTERS – AT YOUR CONVENTION

The convention is responsible for conserving voter funds for those votes taking place at-con. Those funds are managed by the Site Selection staff. This will include accounting for the votes, keeping a list of who voted, and determining the funds to be turned over to the winner.

VOTERS – FROM THE BID

Voting monies are turned over, along with information on who voted, to the Treasurer of the winning bid. It's important to ensure that funds turned over tie to the votes cast. Also, make sure to get a file of the host site's members to save data entry time and effort.

CREDIT CARDS

The Corporate (or Bid) Treasurer will have set up credit card and/or Paypal accounts. On winning the bid, you'd need to determine whether to change to a different bank/vendor and ensure it's tied into the convention's online membership system.

I've found that if you indicate you are a non-profit corporation (US or whatever National government approved), there are often favorable rates available. It's important to model various options to take into account percentage fees, transaction fees, and any monthly fees. You might also want to consider having both a merchant processor (through your bank, Costco, or other) as well as Paypal. Square of course is also heavily in use. All should be tied to dump into your convention checking or savings account. The credit card processor can give your Webmaster coding to allow real time web based processing of credit cards. Tied to that is consideration of Registration system information giving membership data that ties to the credit card transaction.

Related to memberships and credit cards, also consider online processes (using credit card processing) for:

- Dealers Room fees
- Art Show panel and table fees
- Handicapped Access rentals (scooters, wheelchairs, etc.)
- Programming Fees (such as tours, Kaffeeklatches, etc.)

Usually convention merchandise is done through a third party provider (t-shirts, etc.). However, that can also be tagged on with a separate process using the same credit card and/or Paypal coding.

On the disbursement side of credit cards, a debit card (restricted to the Treasurer) can be important for immediate cash needs. A regular credit card will be good for Web purchases. Added credit cards or Staples or other store cards might be needed for Office Supplies or other uses. Again, of course, control over those cards and the purchases made is critical.

HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER AGREEMENTS

Make sure that you have a copy of them. Be sure to review for issues that can affect the budget. Clarify uncertainties and reflect those in budgeted "contingency" and relevant budget line item estimates. Plug yourself into the process of contract review to ensure that due care is taken to ensure fiscal responsibility. This also applies to related agreements for "decorator" and "equipment rental".

FINANCIAL CONTROL FUNCTION

An important duty of the Treasurer is to ensure that control is kept over funds received and spent. So the Treasurer should be the final approver of disbursements. Also important is to account for and make sure of the security of monies (in all forms) and assets and conserved.

CHECK REQUESTS

Form needs to be designed to allow for requests for:

- Cash advances (usually checks to the person they can cash and account for later)

- Checks to be mailed out to pay a vendor, or to be sent on to the requestor or others
- Checks for reimbursement of personal funds already disbursed

Form blank should be circulated through the convention web site (ie get posted as a downloadable document), Wiki, and other means so that it is available readily. The format of the form isn't so important, it's important rather that it gets out there so people can get their funding and things can happen. The design should allow specification of:

- Requestor
- Date of request
- Payee of check
- Address for mailing the check
- Purpose of the funds requested
- Budget line(s) or other clear designation of where the funds will be charged (good to get department and line items description as well as the budget line item)
- Blanks for person requesting to sign (though email from that person may suffice) and for their next level of approval to sign (again, email from that person may also suffice). Need to set up policy of who needs to approve various $ levels of payments.
- Any section for Treasury to note check # written, date, amount, or other information needed internally

FINANCIAL SOFTWARE

This should be worked out with the Corporate Treasurer to ensure that the output meets requirements for State and Federal reporting. Keep in mind that reporting may have to be done to conform to the organization's fiscal year rather than just for the total life of the convention to date. My personal recommendation is Quickbooks. Reporting structure should be tied to the departments and income/expense lines of the budget to simplify reporting.

THE BOARD

Worldcons usually have a corporate Board that represents the legal entity and provides some level of oversight for the convention. It's important to ensure what the relationship between the Board and the convention is regarding approvals of budgets (usually delegated to the convention), opening checking and savings account, and other matters where the Treasurer has to interface with the Treasurer for the corporate Board. It's best to insure that a high level of autonomy exists so that the convention can conduct its business without an intrusive level of oversight. You'll need to insure that bank accounts needed are opened (usually has to be with participation with the Board Treasurer and/or other Board officers). Need to make sure that checks and deposits go through the Convention wherever possible so that the Convention duties are not subsumed by the Board.

CONTINGENT REIMBUSEMENTS

Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Division Heads, and others often expense money on behalf of the convention which is reimbursable depending on whether the convention makes money. These amounts should be included in the budget, but "below the line", at some point in the budget process. This usually includes required travel, hotel rooms, and other required costs that the person pays for with the hope that it will be reimbursed if funds are available. Best to define the policy at least to the point that people are aware of what might be reimbursed so they can track it for presentation once the call is made for presentation of bills post-convention. The amount to be reimbursed depends on how many funds are available, and this is usually done after all other bills and reimbursements are made except for bid expense reimbursements.

CASH REQUIREMENTS AT CON

While the Treasury Office Manager is overall in charge of controlling cash at con, the OM or their staff usually gets the cash from the Treasurer. Best to contact all Divisions as well as departments that are likely to need cash at con well in advance of the convention to determine amount of cash needed, and what denominations. Cash needs at con:

- Tips disbursed by Convention's Facilities Staff during the convention (of course, usually small bills)
- Tips disbursed by Green Room, Con Suite, Staff Lounge, or other departments needing facility or hotel services (of course, usually small bills)
- Change requirements for At-Con Treasury (including any petty cash)

Worldcon Treasury Office usually has in place detailed procedures and forms for cash disbursement. These are used when cash is initially funded for impressed account (such as a petty cash).

AT CON TREASURY

It's normal practice for someone with experience in running at-con Treasury to do this. Reasons include that they know the forms and processes previously used so that wheel reinvention is minimized. Also, they know the people available (there's a fairly large floating group that work in many Worldcons) and can be a big help in recruiting.

Keep in mind that a lot of the normal forms and supplies used are available to be shipped to each North American Worldcon from whoever stored the material from the last North American Worldcon. This may include a large safe (if it's ever been found), calculators, and lots of supplies. Best to check the inventory from the prior Worldcon, if available, or have someone check out what's there with whoever is safekeeping the supplies. Most important is to rent a large (3 or 4 foot tall and about1.5 to 2 feet wide) safe to keep critical cash, change, deposits not yet made, etc.

Functions of Treasury at-con include:

- At-con check disbursement. Usually done by Treasurer, but Treasury Office can keep a supply of the forms for those needing checks, as well as receiving requests for checks and holding the check for future handing out.

- At con cash disbursement. Usually done by At Con Treasurer or Cash Office Manager (the person controlling the safe). You'll need a form for disbursement of cash, and impressed funds to start the convention or each batch (such as Registration and Art Show batches). It can be reimbursed by taking money (with receipting for same) from funds from Registration etc. This can include starter funds for Registration, Handicapped Access, Art Show, and disbursements for tips and other at con purchases.

- Accounting for funds received:

  Registration monies using forms and process worked out with Registration. This will include periodic pickups during the days or as needed to account for funds received versus membership form value totals.

  Dealers Room payments

  Art Show payments (and most important, auctions) – Treasury often provides a person to help with the Auction to account for funds

  Change back from cash advances from departments along with an accounting for funds used

- Deposits of monies received. Cash not needed to replenish accounts such as petty cash or change funds can instead be put down on hotel or convention center master accounts.

All information should be made available to the Treasurer and Budget person so they can review, approve as needed, and post to the Budget.

At the convention, the budget is usually kept updated and is presented at least in summary form to the daily Division Head meetings. This will let the Chair and others know if there is a need to either tighten up if revenue is low or expenses higher than expected, or to allow added expenditures if there is sufficient surplus.

Guest Liaison - Steven H Silver

Modified from the ISFiC/Windycon Guest Liaison Guide

**Note, although some Windycon specifics have been removed, others have been included and may not be applicable to all cons, although feel free to borrow.*

The purpose of the Guest Liaison is to offer a single point of contact between the convention and the Guest, to make arrangements for the Guest, and to generally ensure the Guest has an enjoyable time at the con and feels honored.

That said, because of the complexities of interaction between the Guests of Honor and Programming and the Artist Guest of Honor and the Art Show, the Programming Chair and Art Show Director should be given direct contact information for the Guests of Honor early in the convention planning process.

Honoring the Guests

It shouldn't need to be said, but the thing to remember is that you are honoring the people you are bringing to the convention. They should leave at the end of the weekend feeling as if they've been fêted, well treated, and want to come back. That means listen to them, make them the center of attention where possible, and do little things to improve their stay. I know of one Guest of Honor who felt that he was treated poorly, ignored at Opening Ceremonies, his work not put front and center, and was left feeling that many of the concom either didn't like him or didn't want him as guest of honor. He no longer goes to conventions. You don't want anyone to feel that way about any convention. Pay attention to their expressions and body language as well as their words. Many guests will say what they think you want to hear in an effort to be agreeable. Try to figure out if it is what they really want.

If possible, find out the Guests birthdays (you can check at http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/calindex.html) and arrange to send them a card on their birthday. Try to get the cards signed by the con com at a meeting prior to sending if possible.

Each Guest of Honor and Special Guest is also entitled to one of the con T-Shirt. Make sure to let the Guests know so they can get their shirts during the course of the convention.

Guest Categories

Conventions has several categories of Guest who the Guest Liaison will deal with. Most notable are the Guests of Honor and Toastmaster, but there are also Special Guests and Guests. The following description comes from the Windycon Guest policy, which can be found at http://www.isfic.org/Policies.asp.

Guests of Honor

Guests of Honor are the top-tier of guest at Windycon and should be selected for their perceived draw. A Toastmaster should receive the Guest of Honor package.

The Guests Liaison may be asked to offer the initial invitation to the Guests of Honor. At the time the invitation is offered, make sure the Guest knows they can bring a guest and find out if they plan to and who that guest is. Upon acceptance, also find out their preferred airport. When the invitation is issued, it is important to state a please respond by date, then follow up shortly before the date if you've heard no response. After the date you should send a note making it clear the offer has expired and is going to someone else, expressing the hope that they might consider coming another year.

Their job is to work with the Guests of Honor to arrange schedules, transportation, and receive any information we need from the GoH, to make sure the GoHs know everything they need to know, and to act as the Guests advocate to the convention.

They should be offered the following:

- Transportation for two (airfare, train, gas money, etc.)
- Transportation from airport to hotel (O'Hare preferred, Midway or Mitchell as backup)
- 1 hotel room for 3 nights
- 2 meals at the Thursday night dinner
- a *per diem* totaling $150
- 2 Windycon memberships
- ISFiC Press contract

In return, Windycon should expect the guests of honor to do the following as appropriate:

- Provide a biography and pictures for the web site and program book
- Attend Opening Ceremonies
- Present a speech for Opening Ceremonies
- Minimum of three panels
- Autographing
- Attend Closing Ceremonies if it doesn't conflict with travel plans
- Provide program book cover art, badge art, and fillos (if artist)
- Work with ISFiC Press if a book is contracted (for author and artist)

Special Guests

Special Guests may be invited at the discretion of the Windycon chair and should be selected for their perceived draw and support of a theme (if any).

The Guests Liaison may be asked to offer the initial invitation to the Special Guests. Their job is to work with the Special Guests to arrange schedules, transportation, and receive any information we need from the SG and to make sure the SG know everything they need to know.

They should be offered the following:

- Transportation for two (airfare, train, gas money, etc.)
- Transportation from airport to hotel (O'Hare preferred, Midway or Mitchell as backup)
- 1 hotel room for 3 nights

- 2 meals at the Thursday night dinner
- 2 Windycon memberships

In return, Windycon should expect the special guests to do the following as appropriate:

- Provide a biography and pictures for the web site and program book
- Attend Opening Ceremonies
- Minimum of three panels
- Autographing
- Attend Closing Ceremonies if it doesn't conflict with travel plans
- Provide fillos (if artist)

Guests

Guests may be invited at the discretion of the Windycon chair and should be selected as people who have generally supported Windycon and live relatively locally.

The Guests Liaison may be asked to offer the initial invitation to the Guests. The liaison should be prepared to make the guests hotel reservations and make sure the guests are aware of the times of the banquet.

They should be offered the following:

- 1 hotel room for 2 nights
- 2 meals at the Thursday night dinner
- 2 Windycon memberships

In return, Windycon should expect the guests to do the following as appropriate:

- Provide a biography and pictures for the web site and program book
- Attend Opening Ceremonies
- Minimum of two panels
- Autographing
- Attend Closing Ceremonies if it doesn't conflict with travel plans

Airlines

The Guest Liaison should contact the guests to find out if they have a preferred airline (and frequent flyer mileage number), find out if there are any time constraints, and preferred airport. About 5 months before the convention, the liaison should start looking for airfares, paying attention to sales. Be sure to consider both O'Hare and Midway for airlines. According to experts, the best time to purchase a ticket is Tuesday afternoon, around 3:00 p.m.

When the Liaison is ready to purchase a ticket, they should make a reservation and call the guest with the departure and arrival times for all flights to get the guest's confirmation that the itinerary will work. Once the guest's approval is received, the Liaison should purchase the tickets, forwarding a copy of the tickets to the Guest and a copy of the receipt to the treasurer for reimbursement.

If at all possibly, flights should be scheduled to arrive in Chicago on the Thursday before the convention no later than 3:00 and should depart Chicago no earlier than 6:30 on the Sunday of the Convention.

Check with the Guest to find out if they want to extend their stay in Chicago by arriving early and staying late. While Windycon will make the flight arrangements, the guest will be responsible for covering any additional nights. The liaison, however, should offer help in making lodging arrangements for those additional nights at the guest's expense.

Ground Transportation

The Guest liaison should make all ground transportation arrangements from the airport to the hotel and back. This can mean arranging for a limo (which can be pre-paid, including tax and tip). Many limo companies will need the guest's flight information as well as cell phone numbers. Make sure you let the guest now the limo company's procedure, which may include calling a number upon arrival to let the limo company know the pick up is ready.

If a con-member is selected to pick the guest up at the airport, the con member should be chosen carefully. They should have a clean, reliable car and be a safe driver. The guest should not have to be concerned for their safety or worry about whether or not the car will break down. If a con-member does the pick up, she should park and meet the guest in baggage claim holding a sign indicating the Guest's name and the name of the convention. The con member should be dressed nicely as well. The Fencon Guest Liaison in Dallas brings a reproduction of one of the Guest's covers, pieces or art, or similar identifiable work to help find the Guest, which the Guest is asked to sign and which is then placed in the charity auction.

If possible, the Guest Liaison should arrange to be in the lobby to greet guests when their limousines arrive and to be in the lobby for the guests' pickups on Sunday.

Web Site

Guest liaison should ask the Guests of Honor for a short biography suitable for the website and a photograph to accompany it. This should be done at the time of the invitation to the convention and forwarded to the Webmaster as soon as possible so the website can go live.

Sales to Members

The Guest Liaison should contact the Artist Guest of Honor about getting artwork suitable for use on a T-shirt about 6 weeks before the convention. This art can be original or reprint, the choice is the artist's. It should be sent to the Chair for approval and then forwarded onto the T-shirt manufacturer. The Guest Liaison should also make sure the names of all Guests of Honor and Special Guests are sent with the artwork. Frequently, Windycon shirts have the names of all programming participants on the back. The Guest Liaison should contact the Programming Chair to get a listing of all program participants to send along with the T-Shirt art.

Publications

All publications material listed below should be received and forwarded to the Publications Chair by the end of September, earlier if possible.

Cover Art

As early as possibly, the Guest Liaison should find out if the Publication Chair wants a wraparound cover or not and ask the artist guest of honor for a piece of artwork that is appropriate for the cover. This art can be original or reprint, the choice is the artist's.

Fillos

Publications may also require fillos, or filler illustrations, from the artist. These should be sketches or line drawings that will reproduce well in black and white.

Pictures

The Guest of Honor should get a photo of the GoH for use in the program book. This could easily be the same photo as used for the website, but should be at least 300 dpi for printing purposes.

Biography

The biography for use in the program book should be written by someone who knows the Guest of Honor. We are looking for a chatty biography about 700 words long that tells a little about the Guest in their role in SF, but also talks more about them as an individual. The Guest Liaison could either ask the guest to recommend someone to write the bio, or select someone on their own. The invitation to write the bio can either be issued directly by the Liaison or can go through the GoH and should be requested no later than the beginning of July. If the guest is unable or unwilling to provide a name, or the person turns down the invitation, this gives the guest liaison to find a backup person. It needs to be given to the Publications editor by the end of September.

Art Show

This category mostly applies to the artist, but it is possible Special Guests or other Guests of Honor will have works to exhibit. Generally, the Art Show is handled directly by the Art Show Director, who should be given contact information for the Artist Guest (and other appropriate guests) early in the planning process.

Art Auction

Although many cons has its own staff of auctioneers, sometimes the Art Show Director or the head of auctioneers wants to invite one of the guests to be a guest auctioneer. This request will be funneled through the Guest Liaison.

Dealers' Room

Some Guests are interested in having a table in the dealers' room to sell their books, art, etc. If a guest requests this, the Guest Liaison should inform the head of the Dealers' Room to make sure there is a table for the Guest. The Guest Liaison can also offer a table to a guest with the approval of the head of the Dealers' Room if such an offer would be appropriate for the guest. Since guests are also expected to sit on panels and do other programming, the Guest Liaison should also make arrangements, if possible, for someone to staff the guest's table in the Dealers' Room when the guest has other duties.

Registration

The Guest Liaison should inform registration of the names of all Guests of Honor, Special Guests, Guests, and Guests of those guests, along with providing addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers so full information on the Guests can be included in the registration database and badges made.

Hotel

Once the Guest Liaison knows who the guests are and whether they will be bringing guests, they should provide the information to the Hotel Liaison. They should also let the Hotel Liaison know arrival days and departure days (Guests of Honor and Special guests should receive Thursday through Sunday, Guests should receive Friday through Sunday, but let the Hotel Liaison know if they want to extend their stay on their own dime). The Hotel Liaison will need to know if the guest want a king size bed or a double room. The hotel is a non-smoking facility. The guests will be asked to provide a credit card on check in to cover any incidentals.

If possible, after meeting the guest in the lobby, the liaison should walk with them to hotel registration and make sure they get their room promptly. Please take the guest to their room and offer to give them a tour of the facility at their convenience.

Banquet

All Guests of Honor, Special Guests, and Guests are invited to the banquet on Thursday night. There is generally a cocktail hour from 6:30-7:30 followed immediately by dinner. The guest liaison should find out the entrée options from the Hotel Liaison and get orders from all guests, noting any food allergies the guests might have.

During the cocktail hour, the Guest Liaison, Chair, and Vice-Chair should all receive cash from the Treasurer to cover any drinks any of the Guests want. Although all three positions should feel free to mingle, they should also make sure to stay close enough to the bar that they can pay for any appropriate drinks.

At the banquet, the Guest Liaison should provide a list of all guests present to the Chair so the guests can be recognized.

Following the banquet, the guests can pick up their badges in the dessert reception. If possible, the Guest Liaison should arrange to get all the Guest of Honor and Special Guest badges so they do not have to wait in a potentially long line.

Per Diem

Each Guest should receive a per diem totaling $150 for the weekend. The Guest Liaison will receive checks for each guest from the Treasurer at the banquet and should disburse these checks to the guests as early in the weekend as possible. Have a sheet of paper for each guest to sign indicating receipt of the check. If the guests would prefer to have cash, they may bring the check to the treasurer who can cash the check, presuming Windycon has the reserves to cover it at the time. If possible, arrange with the treasurer to have cash at the beginning of the weekend specifically for the purpose of paying the per diem.

Programming

Generally, the Programming is handled directly by the Programming Director, who should be given contact information for the guests early in the planning process. The Guest Liaison should request copies of the guests' schedules before the convention to make sure the guests have their schedules and so the Guest Liaison is aware of where the guests are supposed to be at any time during the convention.

Green Room

Make sure the Guests know the location and hours of the Green Room. They should stop by the Green Room to pick up their schedules to sticker to the backs of their badges. When you give the guests their badges, you should also give them their ribbons.

Prior to the convention, find out if the guests have any dietary restrictions or desires which should be conveyed to the Green Room so the Green Room can be tailored to the guests' tastes.

Special Events

Opening Ceremonies

Opening ceremonies are held on Friday evening. The Guest Liaison should make sure all Guests of Honor and Special Guests are attending. The Guest Liaison should also provide the Chair with a list of all Guests and professional authors/artists who are expected to attend the convention. Working with Programming, the Guest Liaison should ascertain which are in the room at the start of Opening Ceremonies and let the Chair know who is present.

Make sure the guest knows they are expected to speak for a few minutes at opening ceremonies on a topic of their choice. The Toastmaster should be given the names and biographies of all the other guests of honor and special guests about a month before the convention so s/he can prepare remarks.

Masquerade

Held on Saturday Night, the Masquerade may want one or more of the guests to act as a judge, especially if any of the guests have costuming experience. This invitation will be funneled through the Guest Liaison.

The Masquerade also requires a half-time show and the Masquerade may ask that the Guest Liaison invite one of the guests (particularly if there is a filker) to provide the Half-Time Entertainment.

Closing Ceremonies

Windycon Closing Ceremonies are generally short without much for the Guests of Honor to do. Nevertheless, if their travel schedule permits their attendance, we would like them to be in the audience for Closing Ceremonies. A 6:30 departure should allow guests to attend Closing Ceremonies and still make it to the airport in time for their flights.

Science Fiction Music Exhibit: an exercise in cross-divisional cooperation – Warren Buff

For LoneStarCon 3, one of the big ideas I wanted to try in the exhibit hall was an exhibit on science fictional music. The concept was to give fans a way to listen to a large number of songs while taking in visual information about the songs, their origins, significance, and so forth. My original proposal included a proof of concept of how I could have done it without help, using low-budget (and fairly low-tech) materials. The exhibit would have been broken down into segments, with the songs for each burned onto a CD and placed in low-cost portable disc players, while text and images for each song would be displayed on foamboard behind the player. Thankfully, other divisions were paying attention to what we were hoping to have, and through our cooperation, we were able to produce a much higher quality exhibit. The process of getting there illustrated several keys to good inter-divisional communication.

The first of these is to **start talking early**. There are enough details that folks will need to pay attention to within their own divisions and departments to eat much of the planning time they have for the convention, and inter-divisional projects are easier to put off than your own. For the SF Music Exhibit, we began discussing the project on the DH list around a year out, with a few side conversations at the December and February DH meetings. It was at the February meeting that a plan really took shape. We checked with Events that our ASCAP/BMI license would cover the exhibit, while establishing that Tech would take responsibility for the A/V components of the exhibit while IT would handle the hardware and software, with Exhibits responsible for the content.

That brings us to the next important lesson: the success of collaborative projects depends on the **clear division of responsibilities**. While the chaos of multiple people doing the same work would result in wasted efforts, the true risk lies in the possibility of all parties believing that a critical piece of the project was someone else's responsibility. While many hands were involved in setting up the exhibit, the primary responsibility for A/V design fell to Paul Kraus (with lots of help from Warren), computer hardware design went to Steven Staton & David Brummel (on site), software came from Don Wright, gathering content was my purview, and Christopher Hensley wrestled that content into a format we could use.

Along the way, we had a few Skype calls with most of the team, which would ideally have had the whole team (but schedules are a tricky thing). These sorts of conversations, with time in between for ideas to percolate, are critical for the project.

They both serve as time for brainstorming and strengthen the team's cooperative mood. In these meetings, we discovered some of the limitations of the Raspberry Pi's audio output and came up with some interesting options for building controllers (which were ultimately not implemented due to Don suffering a medical issue before the convention).

Ideally, one member of the team should be the **project manager**, preferably someone **who has the time to devote to the project**. While multiple members of the Tech team were assigned to Special Tech, Abby Noyce volunteered to be the ~~designer~~ Project Manager for this exhibit, and made sure everyone else did their assigned tasks. Taking lead on the content design was probably not the wisest thing I did as a division head, but I was aided in this by crowd-sourcing the writing and access to YouTube at my job (to check out songs I'd not heard of). Once we arrived in San Antonio, I handed off the exhibit to Christopher, who saw it through to completion (though I was asked for one bit of input – whether we could make use of a gigantic monitor that Tech's supplier had brought along just in case). Having clear managers was critical to the success of the project.

As the number of people involved in a project increases, the need for a clear timeline becomes even stronger. Our deadlines were cut rather close, but the entire team knew that they were hard deadlines, without the option of slippage. While we missed the deadline for making controllers for the secondary screens, we were still able to set those to random play and connect the headphones as planned. We also ran into a limitation of the Pi Presents software which prevented us from displaying text with images (it was possible, but not without a greater number of hours than we had available). We were still, however, able to display the text and play the songs, which was our primary goal.

Knowing which goals were critical, and which were things we could allow to slip, allowed us to complete the project in spite of software limitations and losing people points to medical issues. We knew the relative value of these components of the project thanks to having set out with a clear vision for it. Soon after conceiving of the exhibit, we had a firm understanding of how many songs, what they should represent, the style of text to accompany them, and what sort of physical layout we wanted. With these firm goals in mind, we were able to design A/V and IT which could support them, and the content generation for the exhibit was preceded by a process of whittling down the song list. A clear vision with realizable goals gives inter-divisional projects a blueprint for success.

In our review of the project, Paul Kraus and I came up with some additional advice for folks working on cross-divisional projects. If you need something from other divisions, you need to tell them. They won't always know, or magically find out; **open lines of communication are critical**. And on that theme, keep talking. Until the project is complete, you need to actively communicate if you want it to succeed. It is also important that the division and area heads ~~in charge of the project~~ aren't the only lines of communication. Everyone involved needs to be able to contact any member of the team that requires.

This isn't just a matter of import for special projects, though. Cross-divisional communication is also critical to internal service divisions and departments such as Tech, IT, Operations, Treasury, Logistics, and Member Services. Ultimately, much of the convention's staff will need to be involved in cross-divisional work. We would do well to remember this, rather than allowing ourselves to focus on our own primary responsibilities to the point of isolation. None of us benefits from a convention divided into fiefdoms, and the lessons of the SF Music Exhibit can aid in the sort of communication that keeps the team working across divisional lines.

Organizing a Conference Press Office - Laurie Mann, me@lauriemann.net

This is general information on organizing a Press Office for a conference. There are a few differences for Worldcons, which I'll cover later in the essay.

Press Office Duties

Prepare accurate information/press releases

for the press, highlighting

certain events and individuals

Help arrange interviews (this is particularly

important for Worldcons)

Help press navigate the con

A Year Before the Convention

Write a basic paragraph or two about your convention and aim it at potential convention attendees. most of the efforts of the Press Office are to attract people who've never been to a con before. The Press Office also needs to remind occasional con attendees the convention exists.

Work with the Website to include this basic information about the convention. Particularly for smaller conventions, the Website, social media and press person maybe the same person, but, if they're not, they should communicate frequently.

Organize an electronic mailing list. The E-maillist should have E-mail addresses for:

local newspapers/sites

arts papers/sites

college papers/sites

libraries

SF clubs in your region

TV/Webcasts (just send them the last two press releases)

One important thing to start doing one year out is to look for online calendars in which to list your convention. Look for local arts calendars, library calendars, general convention calendars, and regional club calendars. Don't forget general SF calendars like Locus. Make a copy of what you write for each calendar site and note the site's URL so you can go back and make updates if convention information changes.

Keep an eye on regional events-related Twitter feeds and Facebook pages if there isn't a social media person.

Set-up a Dropbox site with high-resolution photos of your guests, your con chair, and a few commonly-attending writers/artists/scientists along with a few general convention shots. The sooner this is available, the better. When the press has access to high resolution photos pre-con, they will use them. A Dropbox account is a good place to include the bibliographies for your guests if this isn't available on the convention Website.

For local conventions, you don't need to send out many press releases. Four is probably a good number. For larger conventions, you want more focused press releases, but for small conventions, write general releases to help introduce local people to your con:

Press release 1 (about a year out) - a little

about the convention, who your guests are,

location, any special events, registration,

con URL & info or press E-mail address

Press release 2 (about six months out) -

reminder the con is coming, when

registration rates go up, any new guests,

con URL & info or press E-mail address

Press release 3 (about two months out) -

artists & panelists planning to attend,

any special events/program items.

registration & one day rates

con URL & info or press E-mail address

Press release 4 (about one week out) -

final reminders, who's coming, where

at-con registration is, at-con reg

rates and one-day rates

con URL & info or press E-mail address

Each release should contain a little information at the end, explaining how professional press can get a press pass and how to access the Dropbox account. It's important to distinguish between pro press and fan press because almost every fan could be eligible for a press pass. Limit press passes to professional journalists covering your convention for a TV station, newspaper, radio station or major commercial Website. State your convention's press policy clearly in each press release and on the Website. In the months before the convention, be sure to follow-up with any member of the press (fan or pro) who expresses interest in covering the convention. Try to set up pre-con interviews with the guests if the guests or willing or with the convention chair.

About Six Weeks Out

Check to see which members of the local press have contacted you. If you haven't heard from a major TV station or newspaper, reach out to them. In particular, if you've seen a reporter who appears to be interested in science fiction, technology, science or art (or, a book editor if the press outlet still has one) contact them directly. Many newspapers make it easy to find their reporters' archived stories and E-mail addresses.

If local press folks are willing to cover your convention and contact you in advance, prepare a list for Registration so they can pick up a badge. Generally though, many press people don't decide until the last minute. Be as polite and accommodating to the latecomers as you are to the people who've contacted you in advance. Especially if you're working on a local con, it can take years to develop a good relationship with the local press and it should be cultivated.

About Two-Three Weeks Out

If you can get some of your guests interviewed pre-con, this is a good time for the interviews to be in the paper.

At the Con

Before the con starts, make up a quick info sheet about the con that you can hand out to reporters. The info sheet would include guest photos, information about what's happening the first day of the con and how the press can reach you. Always include your E-mail address and phone number. Focus your press push on the first day of your con. Work with the Events/Program people to see what early items you should promote to the press.

Try to have enough staff so that professional reporters always have an escort. However, don't make an issue if you see pro press, especially TV reporters, at the con without an escort. TV reporters in particular tend to drop in at cons unannounced and leave quickly. It's helpful to have a press office, but if you don't have space for one, having an area of the Information Booth for press can work. A small office for interviews is helpful, but the smaller the convention is, the less necessary this is.

Considerations for Worldcon Press Office

Visit the LoneStarCon 3 Press Office Web pages at http://www.lonestarcon3.org/media/index.shtml to see the kind of information provided to the press for a recent Worldcon.

Worldcons have more news and need more frequent press releases. But you have different kinds of audiences for Worldcon information, so you're really better off maintaining three different

E-mail lists:

Fan: Websites, clubs, newszines, blog - this

list gets all press releases

Local: TV/radio/newspapers/professional Websites -

this list get certain releases during the last year, especially during the last two months

Mainstream: New York Times, USA Today, Publishers Weekly - this list gets Hugo-related releases

Contact me@lauriemann.net if you'd like up-to-date fan and mainstream E-mail lists.

You want to target press releases so that press outlets are less likely to consider your E-mail as mere spam and are less likely to ask to be removed from your mail list. But when someone asks you to remove their address, you should always do so.

Most of the fan releases should be focused on a certain topic, like upcoming deadlines, new guests, special events and the like. The local press releases are more general as you're introducing local media to the idea of a Worldcon and its history.

The general mainstream press outside of your locality is only interested in Hugo information.

Worldcon Website Press Support

A good Dropbox site with high resolution photos of your guests and some of the other panelists is very helpful. You should have that online at least one year out. Work with the Webmaster to build a press area on the site. Save all of your press releases here, and have information about what your convention plans to do to support the press. Be sure to encourage the press to sign up in advance. While they don't always, many of them will. A press sign-up form should look something like this:

Name:________________________

Affiliation:________________________

E-mail:________________________

Cell Phone: ____________________

Member status:

Professional press: Work for a newspaper, radio or TV station, assigned to cover convention eligible for professional press pass.

Fan press: Blogger, Web developer, photographer and so on -- required to buy membership.

Your membership number:____

Both pro and fan press should receive Press Office support, by helping to arrange interviews and by providing press seating at events. It's helpful to encourage the press to interview guests, Hugo nominees and major panelists starting 2-3 weeks out. But, no matter how much you promote early interviews, you get most interview requests a few days before the Worldcon. One thing Worldcons should consider - while most guests come in the day before a Worldcon starts, it would be extremely helpful to the Press Office to bring in your "most interviewable" GoH at least two days early and make them available to the press.

Press Office

At a Worldcon, a Press Office is not just an area name, it has to be a physical location.The closer the Press Office is to the action,particularly to the Exhibit Hall, the better coverage you will get. It is extremely helpful to be somewhere near a small, quiet room that can be used for interviews, but don't let the need for an interview room drive the location of the Press Office. The more remote a Press Office is, the less it will be used. So put your Press Office in a corner of the Exhibit Hall or near the Exhibit Hall. Work to find a small, quiet room nearby that would be good for interviews.

Press Office needs:

a small printer/scanner/copier

reliable Internet access

laptop(s)

office supplies

copies of conference publications

4 rectangular tables and 8 chairs

extra power strips (so press folks

can recharge laptops/phones)

Press Office is not a very expensive area to run - roughly $500-$1,000 over the last few years.

Kick-off Press Conference

Worldcons have done a first day press conference with varying success. I think it's worthwhile to do as it brings all the guests together (sometimes for the first time) and it's a great opportunity for sound bites. If your con starts at noon, you want to have the press conference at 10 or 11 - just before the guests get extremely busy.

Special Seating for Events

There tends to be a press seating area of about 40 seats at the Masquerade and Hugo Awards. You generally need two staff people to keep an eye on this. It's helpful to have a sign-up sheet so you can better plan the number of seats to reserve.

Information Desk 2.0 by Adam Beaton

Information is, and has always been, the key to the ideal convention experience. It is a tool used by membership and staff alike to keep the convention experience running smoothly. From the location of a function room, to the time of an autograph session, to ascertaining the length of the registration line, information is the convention's coin of the realm. We as convention runners have learned that the best kind of convention member is the well-informed convention member. A well-informed convention member needs minimal assistance from convention staff, which frees up time for both the member and the staff. The member can plan their day and enjoy it without needless pauses and excess decision-making which can take away from the overall time at the convention, while the staff can focus their attentions on other matters. Occasionally, however, there are times when convention members have a question or lack needed information. It is in these matters that the traditional Information Desk fills the knowledge gap.

The traditional Information Desk generally exists in one centralized, physical location. The desk has multiple binders of papers and maps full of necessary information that can answer just about any question a member could ask, such as, "Where is the nearest bathroom?", "Where can I get a good steak?", and "When does the panel on blowing up the moon start?" The Information Desk staffer, if they do not know the answer outright, must search through the binders to find the relevant information. For decades this has been the system used to help answer members' questions about the convention. However, within the last fifteen to twenty years two inventions have been created and embraced by the public that conventions, and their Information Desks, have not taken full advantage of for the benefit of their members. Namely, these two inventions are the Internet and smartphones.

This paper will operate under the assumption that the reader is familiar with the concept of the Internet, as it has become an integral part of the world community. A smartphone is defined as a cellular telephone with built-in applications and Internet access. In addition to digital voice service, modern smartphones provide services such as, but not limited to, text messaging, e-mail, Web browsing, still and video cameras, MP3 music players, video playback and calling. In addition to their built-in functions, smartphones run myriads of free and paid applications, turning the once single-minded cellphone into a mobile personal computer.

Studies have shown that over half of all Americans own a smartphone[1], and worldwide there are over one-and-a-half billion smartphones in use and growing[2]. This is a trend that conventions can take advantage of not only for its own benefit, but the benefit of the entire convention membership at-large. With that in mind, and with the knowledge we now have, we will now put together a new kind of Information Desk which we will call, "Information Desk 2.0."

To start, Information Desk 2.0 will consist of two equally important parts; namely, dissemination and collection. While most readers will be familiar with the idea of an Information Desk disseminating information to the membership, some readers may not be familiar with the idea of an Information Desk collecting information (or performance metrics) from the membership. To collect performance metrics on the convention, Information Desk 2.0 will conduct surveys of members regarding various aspects of their convention experience. Each convention will naturally have its own criteria to measure the performance of the convention against a critical success factor, but Information Desk 2.0 will likely ask such general questions as:

"What panel/workshop/event did you attend and find the least appealing? Why?"

"Was the layout of the convention difficult to navigate? If so, what part was the most difficult?"

"Were there any issues with convention staff that negatively impacted your experience? If so, what were they?"

Naturally there are many other questions and wordings of questions that can be asked. For example, Information Desk 2.0 could have specific questionnaires for each panel, workshop, and event and for each panelist to specifically pinpoint what, or who, was favorable or unfavorable. Such information collection can, and will, be done during the convention; however, Information Desk 2.0 will likely conduct the majority of information collection near the end of the convention on its last day. Information Desk 2.0 will also make sure that such surveys and questionnaires be made available on the convention's website, especially after the convention has concluded. How the collected performance metrics are used in overall convention strategy goes beyond the scope of this paper. A well-run convention, however, should be able to use the collected metrics to increase the overall quality of the event for the benefit of its membership.

It is dissemination of information, however, that Information Desk 2.0 will make good and judicious use of new and emerging technologies. As previously stated, more and more individuals own, or will own, a smartphone. This means that it is highly likely that the vast majority of convention members will also own, or will own, a smartphone. With so many members carrying around personal communication devices, Information Desk 2.0 will utilize those devices while also allowing members themselves to use their devices to request necessary information.

While having a physical presence is, and will always be, important for some members, in many cases a member may have a question and not wish to walk a great distance to the Information Desk for the answer. In some cases, the member may even be completely lost and not know the physical location of the Information Desk. Information Desk 2.0 will allow members to use their smartphones, or even non-smart phones, to call from whatever location they are to ask their question. The member-in-question may even use text messaging to text their question should talking out loud not be an option in their particular location (during a panel discussion, for example). Information Desk 2.0 will advertise via the convention's website, signs throughout the convention, and on all convention pass-out materials, its phone number for members to call with their questions. Rather than using a convention staffer's personal phone, Information Desk 2.0 will use its budget to purchase an inexpensive pre-paid cell phone that will be used solely for the purpose of receiving calls and texts from members with questions. Such phones and pre-paid plans can be purchased and used for as little as thirty total dollars[3], which will not impact the total convention budget negatively.

Information Desk 2.0 will anticipate common questions and offer solutions before the questions are even asked. For example, one of the most common questions asked of any Information Desk is, "Where is 'X' located?". Information Desk 2.0 will use IPS (indoor positioning system) technology to provide not only maps of the function space, but utilize the member's smartphone to show precisely where the member is in the function space while providing a route to get from where they are to where they want to go. Companies such as Wifarer (http://www.wifarer.com/) and Indoors (http://indoo.rs/) offer IPS solutions for as little as $520[4].

Information Desk 2.0 will be connected to the Internet at all times, which allows for a variety of services for convention membership. For example, Information Desk 2.0 will create a searchable database that can be accessed by both staff and members that will have as much relevant data as possible so as to answer any questions either staff or members would have about the conventions. The database will also include a "cheat sheet" page with the most common questions asked, such as, "Where is the nearest bathroom?" to speed the process of looking up answers. In addition, Information Desk 2.0 will also have an Internet chat room available for anyone who wish to ask questions online but choose not to call or text the Information Desk.

Should a major update to the convention schedule occur, or an announcement needs to be made to the membership, Information Desk 2.0 will advertise via the convention's website, signs throughout the convention, and on all convention pass-out materials, to sign up to the convention's major social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook. By getting members to sign up for those services, they will receive real-time news updates and can even function as pseudo-satellites of Information Desk 2.0 by passing along the information to other members via word-of-mouth.

As mentioned, having a physical presence will always be important to a percentage of the membership. Should a convention use multiple hotels, or use a convention center and a separate hotel, Information Desk 2.0 will have multiple physical presences for the convenience of the membership. For example, if Convention X takes place in a convention center and uses three different hotels for sleeping rooms, the main Information Desk will be located in the convention center, with three satellite locations in the lobbies of each hotel. The various Information Desk 2.0s will be connected to one another via the Internet and also cell phones to update one another or to ask questions amongst themselves.

It is also important to remember, however, that using new methods does not necessarily mean the complete abandonment of old methods. Despite the popularity of inventions such as the Internet and smartphones, there will always be a percentage of the convention membership who cannot, or choose not, to use them. Information Desk 2.0 will still have items such as paper handouts and large physical maps for members who choose to opt out of the electronic means of information dissemination. The main idea is to realize that there is no one perfect method of spreading information to individuals. Rather, the best approach is to use many different methods to reach the most amount of people.

A few of these ideas have already seen successful implementation. For example, many large anime conventions, such as Baltimore's Otakon, have been using Twitter to update their membership at-con about new information since 2008 with great success.[5] Many different kinds of conventions (fan run and professional) have used multiple information desks for years. In addition, the new ideas mentioned in this paper will see implementation via this paper's author at Detcon1, the 11th occasional North American Science Fiction Convention (NASFiC).

By continuing to use tried and true methods, coupled with proper use of technologies such as the Internet and smartphones, we can transform the traditional Information Desk into Information Desk 2.0, edging us closer to the ultimate solution for proper implementation of the Information Desk. We can now have our members well-informed, and even use individual members to inform other non-informed members without them ever having to physically walk to the Information Desk for the answer. So what is the ultimate solution of the Information Desk? Now the Information Desk isn't just in one location.

Information Desk 2.0 now is everywhere.

[1]Aaron Smith, “56% of American Adults Are Now Smartphone Owners,” 5 June 2013, Pew Internet

http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Smartphone-Ownership-2013/Findings.aspx

[2]Heather Leonard, “There Will Soon Be One Smartphone For Every Five People In The World,” 7 February 2013, Business Insider http://www.businessinsider.com/15-billion-smartphones-in-the-world-22013-2

[3]“2014 Best Prepaid Cell Phone Reviews and Comparisons”, 10 Top Ten Reviews

http://cell-phone-providers-review.toptenreviews.com/prepaid-cell-phones/

[4]“520 USD All-in-One Package”, Indoors

http://indoo.rs/iosversion/

[5]"Otakon News/Updates: Article Detail From Twitter"

<http://www.otakon.com/news_article.asp?id=848&utm_source=otakon.com&utm_medium=RSS>

Speaker to Hotel: fundamentals of the convention facilities relationship - Kris "Nchanter" Snyder

In the past couple of years I've taken to doing facilities work for conventions, and it's been like a fish taking to water. I've worked many other areas of conventions –registration, tech, programming, dealers, and various management positions – at events both large and small, and facilities is, by far, my favorite. The other jobs I have held in fandom have given me the breadth and depth of knowledge to be able to take on facilities work. If you think you want to get in on facilities, my first piece of advice is to work in several other departments -- it's important for all of us, no matter what area of convention work you specialize in, to have some experience with other areas of convention.

I see my job as "walking the line" between advocating for the convention with the hotel (or other host facility) and advocating for the property with the rest of the convention committee. When I'm doing the job correctly, everyone feels I'm on "their side" and that I'm advocating FOR them, not working against them. That's really the core of a good liaison's job – making sure everyone is heard and represented fairly, and maintaining the balance between disparate needs where everyone feels that they win.

You can have a great facility in terms of number of spaces, layout of the function space, mix of guest room types, but if you don't have a friendly relationship with the staff, or even worse, have and adversarial relationship with the facilities staff, you're going to have a difficult convention. Conversely, sometimes (hell, most of the time) we end up in space that aren't the ideal convention hotel for our event, but if the staff is friendly and accommodating, it can turn a site that started as a 6 or 7 into a 9 or 10.

Don't move until you have to. Seriously, 9 times out of 10 the correct choice is to stay with the facility you're in, and to work with the devil you know. Only move if the relationship with the staff has irreparably soured, or you have really truly outgrown the space. While the grass on the hotel lawn down the road might look greener from here; a better layout of function rooms, maybe they are offering $10/less a night for their room rates, the thing that can really make-or-break a convention hotel experience is the staff. I'd rather have a mediocre facility in terms of layout and repair, with an AMAZING staff that really enjoys the convention's presence, than an AMAZING physical facility with an indifferent staff.

So how do you build a good relationship with a facility? The same way with anyone else – give them the benefit of the doubt. Go into any points of contention with the attitude that this is clearly just a misunderstanding. Be patient and be willing to explain not only what you think you need, but WHY you need it. Most people will bristle at an "I know best" attitude, especially when what you're asking for is outside of their normal sphere of working. Taking the time to explain what you need, why you need it, and to answer any questions, will go a long ways towards not only avoiding misunderstandings (the root of so many conflicts) but towards building a positive relationship with a facility.

Another thing to remember is that while (most) of the conventions we work on are not-for-profit entities, and we all do things out of our love for the communities, the subject matters, and fandom, the management and staff of the facilities are doing it, primarily, for money. While it's important to get the best deal possible, and we don't want a host facility to gouge us or our attendees, we should not infringe on their ability to make money off our event, or around our event. If the hotel approaches you about another group wanting to use some of your contracted space during your setup time, don't tell them no off-hand just because they have already agreed to turn it over to you – evaluate if you really need the space that early.

For example, Arisia picks up all of our function space, according to the contract, by 1pm on Thursday so that we can setup. Earlier this fall, the hotel was asked if they had one of their larger breakout rooms available to rent for an all-day meeting on Thursday, and asked us if we really needed the room. While we need some of our spaces that early, many of the rooms that just serve as programming spaces we don't really start using until mid-afternoon on Friday, the first day of the convention. I was able, at no real cost to us, to let the hotel rent that space to another paying group (we get our function space provided complementary due to the number of room nights we pick up). Had it been one of the ballroom spaces, where we spend much of Thursday doing intensive setup, we would have had to say no, but where it didn't negatively affect us, it only increases the good will between us and the facility to say yes.

When developing a relationship with a hotel, especially a new property, you should also mention the various ways in which your event will help them to make money. Given the way hotel accounting works (which is a topic worthy of its own essay) the fee for function space is the least of their priorities, and is often set up, accounting wise, as a "loss leader." The guest room rate and occupancy level is at the head of the pack -- everything else in a hotel is a secondary function to getting "heads in beds." Secondary to room occupancy revenue, food and beverage, both in terms of catering through the banquets department and also use of their restaurants and food outlets. If you have an established event, explain the group's general meal patterns, and work with the facility's staff to figure out the best way that they can both make it easiest for your attendees to eat and make money at the same time. If you have a late-night-dinner group, no one will be happy if their restaurant closes down at 9, but you don't want to insist they stay open until 11 if they won't do enough business to make a profit.

If possible, collect data from your current facility, or from a similar event, that you can present to your new potential host facility. Hotels are naturally skeptical of the claims that all groups make when trying to book a rooming block or event space, not just the more casual fan-run conventions. This is especially important when looking for a host facility for a traveling annual event, like Worldcon. Talk to past event facilities leads (most of them are friendly and willing to chat) and get numbers so that you walk into a sales meeting. While it's harder to establish patterns when a variable like moved location or moved date is thrown into the mix, that's actually why it's important for you to bring that research to the table as it may be more difficult for the facility to do its own research about your group (and trust me, they will research your group. I have amusing stories about a recent site visit for securing a relationship with a new hotel.)

For annual events that don't move between cities, another way to work on the relationship with a facility, and stress that you want a true ongoing partnership with the property, is to go for a multi-year contract. A multi-year contract is an especially useful tool when you're moving to a new property, because it gives both the convention staff and the facility some breathing getting to know each other without the impending pressure of "if this doesn't go perfectly, they may not wish to repeat this deal next year."

There are many factors to determining the best facility for your particular event, and not matter where you end up, it's probable that you'll have to make some compromises. If you already have a relationship with a hotel, take stock of the situation and consider carefully before you pick up and move, as the grass isn't always a green once you're on the other side. Good information, clear communication, and friendly relationships are the keys to a great experience with any facility that your convention ends up in.

Managing the Twitterstorm - Do's and Don'ts of Social Media Triage – Colin Harris

Online storms are not special to conventions or fandom - they are an increasingly common part of the landscape for any event, organization or high profile individual. This short article suggests some simple do's and don'ts to help conrunners navigate these fast-moving rapids.

The World ... is Changed
What fascinates me more than anything else about this topic is that we live in a time of phenomenal change for online social interactions, and this is creating the world's largest ever experiment in human behaviour and psychology. Facebook is nine years old; Twitter is seven years old; and of course in terms of material penetration you can take a couple of years off each of those numbers. And these technologies have created a new paradigm - the exponentially-expanding bubble where news and discussion rapidly expands from direct stakeholders to large numbers of people who have no connection with the original event. Moreover, it is often the case that the third- or fourth-hand news is taken as automatic truth because the ultimate recipient received it as a relay from someone they see as a reliable source. The result is often collective concern, or even outrage, propagating rapidly from in some cases a single report based on a very subjective view of a particular situation.

Of course we also see other, even less pleasant, scenarios taking advantage of the same technologies (e.g. cyber-bullying of both children and adults) and it seems to me that these things are all symptomatic of a situation where social and behavioural etiquettes have not caught up with the technology. I am fairly sure that at some point, these societal etiquettes *will* catch up (e.g. at some point people will start to realize that it's too easy to over-react, and learn to be more appreciative that social media are an unreliable narrator) - but until then, we need to find some practical solutions when the problem occurs in our backyard.

The Challenge
The challenge we face is to decide how to respond when an incident blows up online. This could be on almost any topic - in the last couple of years we've seen online storms relating to harassment, diversity, access, and racism (among others). These are of course all important issues which need a response; the question is, how should you react when the Internet is acting like a dog with a bone, latching on to one specific point (which may not be factually correct, or the whole story) and spreading that point wider and wider, louder and louder?

1. Early Warning
The fundamental reality about these storms is that they are unexpected and fast-growing - and the wider they have spread, the harder it will be for ANY response to be heard. (More likely that it will be drowned out by the expanding ripples of repeats of the original story, by now on their fifth, sixth or tenth relay). So the first aim is to spot them early, while they can be dealt with. And this means quickly - even an hour can turn a local conversation into a runaway. So aim to have a social media team which is well connected to plenty of key bloggers and feeds, and also has alerts set up and queries to monitor your hashtag. Ideally have people in different timezones too.

2. Quick Decisions

The next challenge is to make a quick decision on the response. Our organizations are not very good at this - we are not used to command and control structures, and we're often scattered around time zones and with a variety of work commitments. Where a government or corporate would call an immediate crisis meeting, we're playing tag trying to get the right people to talk to each other about options.... THIS DOESN'T WORK.

While we're thinking about what to do, the noise level and bubble is still expanding. So be clear in advance about how has authority to decide on an initial response - this should be at least two people, if not three, each of whom is ready take a decision.

3. Respond or Ignore?

Now the issue has reached someone in authority, the first decision is simple: respond, or not. While it's always tempting to respond, sometimes one just has to ride out the storm. Where is the conversation going? Are there facts to be corrected? Will a response pour water on the flames, or gasoline? Is there a need to persuade people?

The key considerations here are generally (1) will the issue blow itself out on its own or is it gathering pace? (2) is the storm going to result in damage to the event or its reputation if allowed to continue? (3) can a response be made which will improve things/redirect the debate?

4. The Holding Response

A holding response is often very effective where the situation is complex or the convention needs time to work out its position. Stay silent, and the online community may feel their concerns are not being heard. Act quickly, and it can slow things down and buy time.

A good holding response makes it clear that the concerns have been heard, and gives a specific timescale for a fuller answer - this really needs to be no more than 24 hours or people will become very restless.

A holding response also starts to put the convention back in charge of the situation. If you stay silent and then respond later, it may be perceived that you didn't want to face the issue, and were being forced into it, which will further colour perceptions.

5. Clear, Factual, Forward Looking

Having made a holding response, investigated, checked the facts, and decided that a longer answer is needed, it's now time to issue a formal statement. What is important here is to be clear, focus on facts, and above all be forward looking. That is, concentrate on what you plan to do next, and when you will do it by. Do not get drawn into the more emotional part of the debate not matter how intense the online discussion has become; it will only end badly.

6. Be Humble

We all put a huge amount of effort into running conventions and we all like to be well thought of. Being misrepresented or accused of something you didn't do is an unpleasant experience and our basic spirit of fairness makes us naturally defensive. Therefore it is very easy to fall into the trap of explaining how the issue happened, how your intentions were misunderstood, how you did the best you could, etc.

THIS DOESN'T WORK.

When people are baying for blood, starting a response with anything that sounds defensive or apologetic simply draws more anger. What people are looking for is an apology or an acceptance that there is a problem - so defuse the situation and give that to them. It's far more difficult to stay antagonistic in the face of a humble response - and as things calm down, there will still be chances to put your side of the story out there.

7. Boosting the Signal

When the furore has gone really wide, it can be hard to get your response heard - it's frustrating if you've put out the right statement and all you're getting is more people coming in fifth-hand to dogpile on you.

Signal boosting is very helpful here. If you have good relations with someone with a high profile who has been involved in the discussion, contact them privately, talk to them about the reality, and ask them to point to your statement. If your statement is not yet finalized, but you want to slow things down, a controlled leak ("sources at the convention tell me that they'll shortly be announcing ....") can also be useful.

8. Stay Strong, Stay Alert

If all has gone well, and you have committed to the right actions, then things should gradually calm down. Of course, it depends on the issue: if there's been a genuine incident of concern (e.g. a serious harassment incident) then debate will go on. But if things are handled well, the emphasis will move from an attack on the convention for its inaction or failings, to an acceptance that the convention has behaved appropriately and a discussion on the wider issue as it affects fandom.

Summary

The key recommendations in this article are simple to understand but hard to do well:

- Time really is of the essence; the faster you react, decide, and communicate, the easier it is to manage the conversation.
- Recognize that you're dealing with an expanding bubble of righteous indignation - which after a few steps draws in people who may know nothing about the actual incident beyond what they have read in a couple of tweets or posts. This hive mind is not rational and not sympathetic to your pain.
- Let go of the emotion; be humble; be willing to apologize sometimes even if you have not done anything wrong.

If you'd like to hear a case study of how these techniques work in practice, I will be talking about how LoneStarCon 3 handled the "Song of the South" issue on a panel at Smofcon.

Social Media – Megan Frank

Social Media is one of the best and worse things to happen to fandom, and since the line between the two is so often blurred, it's no wonder we so often get is wrong.

The Good

Technology has been making connecting in fandom and running conventions easier for years, but social media has taken the best things about the internet and fandom and combined the two. For years, fandom was limited to a certain extent, by distance. That changed with the internet and even more so after the wide-spread use of email. Work because easier and faster to do no matter the location. However, friendship has elements that are hard to replicate in email. Sure, you can have the three hour conversation on obscure topics via email, but the little things; aside glances, private jokes and sharing of stupid pictures (especially during the holidays) is harder. That's where social media shines. Once upon a time, the best way to get the news out about a fannish event or convention was word of mouth. Conversations in the consuite, at closing ceremonies or at a club get together. This technically hasn't changed, we've just now added social media channels to our repertoire.. Instead of posting flyers, we share statuses and viral pictures. We don't have to worry about these being taken down or covered up and because so many fans are connected, it's like running into a fannish telephone pole or laundry mat board every time you log on. Fans all over the world, can connect with and discover conventions that they never knew they wanted to go to. Social media helps these conventions get their names out and allows them to compete with all the thousands of other things vying for our time, attention, and money. Especially larger for-profit conventions that have more money to spend on advertising. It gives conventions, to a certain extent, a level playing field.

And of course, instant feedback is so much easier with social media. Problems that conventions didn't even know they had can be identified and solved quickly with the input of fans and experts pitching in. Conventions can now have a better understand of what fans want and expect from them and communication with fans in a more organized fashion.

The Bad

Fans are not new to the internet, and perhaps with good reason are suspicious of the next great thing that will allow them to connect with others. A number of fans aren't willing to get involved with the more common social media channels because they've burned by past experience with platforms like LiveJournal that abused members' trust. With the consistent complaints about privacy issues, it's no wonder fans stay away from joining websites where they are essentially being asked to document their entire lives.

However, because the upcoming generations of fans are so dependent on these channels for communication, it's important to encourage connection there to make sure that the fandom that we know and love is passed on to future fans. Clearly, social media isn't the only way to nurture these connections, but clearly it is a strong and useful tool.

The biggest problem with social media is that it dissolves one of the great pillars of fandom. "To complain is to volunteer." We've always deal with those that wish to pile on to a problem instead of trying to find a solution, but now that it is so much easier to pile on, and share something inflammatory we're seeing many more mountains made out of molehills. Normal problems that would eventually be solved by having enough people look at the situation are never addressed because conventions are too busy dealing with damage control that becomes a permanent crisis.

The Ugly

The biggest problem with social media is that it dissolves one of the great pillars of fandom. "To complain is to volunteer." We've always deal with those that wish to pile on to a problem instead of trying to find a solution, but now that it is so much easier to pile on, and share something inflammatory we're seeing many more mountains made out of molehills. Normal problems that would eventually be solved by having enough people look at the situation are never addressed because conventions are too busy dealing with damage control that becomes a permanent crisis. This state can be extremely damaging to not just the convention, but also to the fannish group that supports it.

It should be noted that the root of this behavior, is actually positive. As many people are coming together to stand up for something that they love and see a problem with. For instance, gender issues and harassment are front and center because enough people stood up and said "We won't accept this behavior any longer."

These situations can be extremely frustrating and hard to bear, as it feels like the entire universe is coming down on you, which is why I would suggest the following plan of action when dealing with a Social Media Storm.

The first, and most important thing, you can do is to let your superior such as your Division or Department Head know there may be, or is a problem. It important to know that letting your DH know that there might be a problem, even if one doesn't develop. It's always better to not be taken by surprise.

The next thing to do, is to take a break, albeit a short one. It's easy to feel like the entire world is coming down on you when thousands of people on Twitter are screaming in your virtual ear. It's even harder to remember when upset, that somewhere, behind a computer, is a real person having to read all of the hate mail for a company. This is easier when one is getting paid for it, but not all that much, and it's good to have some chocolate on hand. It's very important that this break is short. five minutes of BuzzFeed kittens usually does the trick for me. These storms can get away from you quickly and it's important to keep up.

After your mini-vacation, take a minute to honestly try and see the other side of the situation. Most of these blow-ups don't happen over nothing, though they are vastly out of proportion, so it's good to see if there is a problem to be solved under all the screaming. Converse with your DH, or if needed, your Chair, and decide on a plan of action that addresses the problem in a way that is true to your convention's spirit and good for your attendees.

Not everyone is going to agree with your decisions, and that's okay. You should try and explain the entire issue if you can, because Jo Fan wont have the information that you have. It's easy to assume that the wrong decision has been made, if you don't have all the information. Nevertheless, unless there really is a better decision to be made, stick with your choices. You can't please everyone and flip-flopping may in fact, hurt more.

And then eat all the chocolate.

Four Tips for Running Social Media

In closing, I'll leave you with four tips that I have come up with from working on social media: Know Your Plan, Know Your Con, Have a Team, and Make a Calendar.

1. Know Your Plan – Social Media is a versatile tool in the Marketing/Promotions toolbox, however, it can't do everything. It's important to know what the overall plan is for your convenient is and what your goals are.

2. Know Your Con – Remember when using social media for a convention, you are the most public face of the con, with the possible exception of the con chair. Everything posted,

should fit with the spirit of convention. The best way, in my experience to present a convention online is for the convention to essentially have it's own personality online as it makes it easier for members and potential members to connect. Memorizing the FAQ section of the convention website will save you time and a number of emails or phone calls.

3. Have a Team – No man is an island, and running social media is hard. Approximately 80% of the US population has a Facebook account and 67% identify as active users. Maintaining the profile of a convention will take just as much time as running your own feed, so having multiple people covering all your bases is essential. Communicating to your staff the personality of the convention is just as important. You don't want to confuse the public about what kind of convention you are.

4. Make a Calendar – This is the step that will seriously cut down on the work you have to do. Marking out a calendar that includes all of your important dates and events coming up will help you gather contention in advance so you aren't rushing the morning up, trying to put together copy. Thinking about these things a week or so out, will cut down on your stress. Also, if you need help or have to step away from the social media work – and it can be grueling – it will be much easier to communication the important bits during the transition. Especially if you include a description of the convention's personality for others to work off of.

Social media is a hard job, and often thankless and more than a little brutal. But helping to the build the online community for a fannish group or event can be very rewarding. It allows you to make friends and connection with an extremely varied group that you would perhaps not have run into before.

London's List of Pages for the Website to be Used as a Sample

Home	House icon only (per Chicon)
At a Glance	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/glance/index.shtml
Sitemap	Per http://renovationsf.org/sitemap.php
Mobile App	Form early 2014 when we know what we're doing ...
Get in Touch	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/contact-us/index.shtml
FAQs	High level FAQs and links to FAQs that appear under other headings e.g. Membership / Hugo
Membership	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/memberships/index.shtml, rates and types
Online Registration	Join now!
Membership List	Search the member list per e.g. http://renovationsf.org/memlist.php - NOT JUST A HUGE PAG
Member Demographics	Per http://renovationsf.org/demographics.php
Transfers and Address Changes	Policies and procedures, per http://renovationsf.org/transfers.php
Membership FAQ	
Who's Coming	Intro page similar to http://renovationsf.org/guests.php
Iain M Banks	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
John Clute	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Malcolm Edwards	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Chris Foss	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Jeanne Gomoll	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Robin Hobb	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Bryan Talbot	Detailed page, may have further sub-pages at L3 with interviews, etc
Also Appearing	Point to artist, dealer lists, INCLUDE program participants here.
Program Participants	Dynamic page which allows browsing of participant bios
What's Happening	Programme and Events - grouped as these are "scheduled" items
Highlights	Will be very thin to start with but covers all con not just program/events
Schedule	From mid 2014 - covers all con not just program/events
Programme	Overview only
<Area x>	Pages for sub-areas. If we get too many, thse move down to Level 3
Program Volunteer Form	Offer to be on program
Program Idea Form	Suggest an item
Masquerade	
Masquerade Registration	From early 2014

Film Festival	need an overview from Louis ...
<Event X>	More pages for particular highlight events - linked from overview and highlights pages
Exhibits & Hospitality	grouped as these are "placed" items rather than "scheduled" items
The Exhibit Hall	
Dealer Zone	
Dealer Registration	Rules and registration form (probably online)
Art Show	
Artist Showcase	Online gallery of exhibiting artists
Art Show Registration	Rules and registration form (probably online)
Special Exhibits	
<Exhibit X>	Pages on specific exhibits
The Hospitality Hall	
Fan Tables	
Hugo Awards	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/hugo-awards/index.shtml
1939 Retro Hugo Awards	
Hugo Awards Ballot	Online ballot - from 1 Jan 2014
Hugo Voter Packet	From May 2014
Hugo Trophy and Base	Per http://renovationsf.org/hugo-base.php
Hugo Awards FAQ	Per http://renovationsf.org/hugo-faq.php
Hotels and Travel	
About ExCeL	Site orientation (not ideal here, but not sure where else it goes!)
Our Hotels	
Room Booking	From Jan 2014. Overview and link to Infotel.
Party	
Planning	From Jan 2014
Food and Drink	Local options + broader food and drink in London
Local Services	Amenity lists (needs local research) - shops, dry cleaners, churches, etc etc
Getting Here	Travel to London, air, rail, car
Getting Around	Start with London - the Underground, Congestion Charging, Taxis ...
Getting Around the UK	Rail, road, general ideas
Driving in the UK	Update from http://worldcon.org.uk/interaction/driving.htm

Tourism	Overview and key Internet resources
Maps	
For Members	Sub-pages are alphabetically ordered since there's no more obvious sequence ...
Childcare	Only a holding statement for now
Code of Conduct	Inc links to recording and weapons policies as well as anti-harassment etc
Disability Services	Or do we want to call this Access?
Merchandise	Few pics + links to Offworld
Publications	Planned pubs, etc
Volunteers	How to volunteer and why you should
Volunteer form	
WSFS Business Meeting	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/wsfs/wsfs-bm-2013.shtml
WSFS Constitution	Take from LSC3 for now, update after LSC3 BM
WSFS Standing Rules	Take from LSC3 for now, update after LSC3 BM
WSFS ROCE	Take from LSC3 for now, update after LSC3 BM
Business Passed On	May not need this - depends on what happens in Texas
WSFS Site Selection	
Bidder Filings	May not need this - depends on number of bidders. If 1, include on main Site Selection page.
About Loncon 3	
Committee and Staff	Also link back to volunteers again
Meet the team (multiple pages)	Committee/team bios go in here.
Press and Media	
Downloads	Downloadable banners etc
Press Releases	Archive of all press releases
Press Registration	Press policy and registration form
About Worldcon	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/about/index.shtml
Previous Guests of Honour	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/about/previous.shtml
Worldcon in London	History of Worldcon in the UK and especially London
Your First Worldcon	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/firstworldcon/index.shtml
Fanspeak	Per http://www.lonestarcon3.org/about/fanspeak.shtml

Making Your Website Effective -Colin Harris

Websites look such simple things… and yet they are rarely well done. What is particularly disappointing is that many of the most common failings are both basic and easily avoidable. And what makes it important to do better is that the website, especially for a one-off event such as a Worldcon, is a critically important part of the picture. As a marketing and communication tool, it is the single most visible element of the convention until the day the event actually starts; and for the conrunning community it's a key barometer of competence - an indicator that the committee has its act together.

Here's a few of the more common things that can make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful website…. nominally in relation to Worldcons, but in reality most of these points apply to any convention.

Hit the Ground Running
One of the most common and yet ironically most avoidable failings on Worldcon websites is NOT TO BE READY ON DAY ONE. It's not as if we don't know when the vote happens… and yet many Worldcons launch almost apologetically with the barest skeleton of basic information. Astonishingly, this even happens with some *unopposed* bids.

Why is this so bad? Two reasons. Firstly, there's a surge of outside interest when a new Worldcon is elected, and you need to make the most of the people who'll come and check out your site in this initial period. Many won't be back again for many months - perhaps for a year (until you become the current convention). Secondly, as noted above, the website is one of the most visible products of the convention - and initially, along with PR0, it's almost the ONLY one. So it's one of the things the regulars will use to gauge whether the committee seems to have its act together. Get this wrong, and you're already on the back foot.

Danger - Construction Site
Even if you do hit the ground running, the reality is that Worldcon websites expand progressively as detailed plans develop. Interim pages that have an initial overview of ideas and information are a good idea - empty pages saying only "Under Construction" or "Coming Soon" are to be avoided at all costs! The promise of information draws the user into clicking through to a page, only to then leave them with nothing. See the later section on "Help People Plan" for another common failing.

Know Your Audience(s)
Worldcon websites have (at least) three audiences and the website structure and content needs to work for all of them - which requires a delicate balancing act.

1. Existing members, who are looking for updates to keep them excited and (in the final year) help them plan their trip.
2. Potential members who are already familiar with the event, who will be looking to understand what's different or special this year that should make them want to join.
3. New fans who don't know much (or anything) about Worldcon and need to have the basics explained to them.

A good website will use intelligent navigation and signposting to help new fans get an overview in plain language, without inflicting standard information on to experienced browsers.

Brand, Brand, Brand
The website, along with the Progress Reports and advertising material, defines the visual brand of the convention. If anything, the website is the most important of these, given that Progress Reports are primarily for existing members. So it is essential to think about the messages your website is sending - intentionally, or not. Things to think about here include:

- Color scheme
- Iconography, not only the logo but other graphics (see e.g. the Mercury / space program graphics used by Chicon 7)
- Language. Hucksters' Room or Dealers' Room? Costume Program or Cosplay? Such choices immediately send messages to parts of your audience about what kind of event you are, and whether it's one they may enjoy.

A good brand needs to be applied consistently - this builds weight and impact over time. It also needs to be an accurate reflection of what you're selling. Let's go back to costume or cosplay as a perfect example. It is tempting to start talking about cosplay as a quick way to become more attractive and in tune with the large numbers of cosplayers who are so much a part of the major media conventions; but are we misleading them about the experience we're offering? A good brand doesn't just market arbitrarily - it is targeted to engage the right audience which helps ensure everyone has a good time at your event.

All Roads Lead to Rome
Worldcons are complex beasts, and even well designed Worldcon websites inevitably become complex webs of pages spanning a multitude of activities and information. It's therefore essential to make it easy for users to find the information they are looking for, quickly and efficiently. This is not as simple as it sounds. For instance, it's common to have a stream of requests from Divisions suggesting that you should put information X on the home page, because it's important and easy to find - but the home page is "prime real estate" which needs to be kept uncluttered and focused on a small number of really critical items. There are FAR more items worthy of being foregrounded than can actually BE foregrounded. And of course it's also true that what is important varies massively between members. Childcare and Access are just two areas that are very important to some people and almost irrelevant to many others.

It's also important to remember that people have different preferences in terms of finding information. In my experience the best solution is to offer as many ways as possible of navigating the site - and allow each user to use the one they prefer. Navigation should also be "fault-tolerant" by doing as much as possible to help people who make the wrong guess about where a particular piece of information can be found.

In practice this means:

- Using a clear menu-structure (with drop-downs or equivalent, so that you can easily "see" as many menu items as possible without having to leave your current page - like having your headlights on full beam when looking ahead on the road at night)

- Providing a site map and (highly recommended) an A-Z at-a-glance index (see e.g. http://www.lonestarcon3.org/glance/index.shtml).
- Providing a free text search option (I consider this essential!)
- Using standard terms where possible - renaming things creatively might *seem* very creative ("I know, let's use 'Diagon Alley' instead of 'Dealers' Room' "), but it soon becomes confusing when applied to menus and navigation. Use it within page content, by all means, but not when helping people find their way.
- Thinking about the most likely guesses people might look when looking for a page. If the page is actually under heading A, but could have been under headings B and C, make sure that the pages for B and C include redirects ("Looking for X? You'll find it here in section A").

Help People Plan
Most members are not going to check back to your site every day; they will thank you deeply for letting them know when important information is going to become available. Another of my pet hates is vague references to something "coming soon". Soon at the time the page was last updated, perhaps, but who knows when that was? As a general principle, any statement about a future page change or announcement should give an actual date for the change, or at a least a date when a further update will be available - and if the latter, it's then essential to GIVE some kind of update when it was promised.

For potential convention participants - dealers, artists, program participants, etc - this is all doubly important. The timeline for these groups does vary somewhat from year to year, so it will help them to explain your approach and when things are expected to happen. Giving specific planned dates for the release of information on childcare, accessibility information, and of course the opening of hotels, is also important, and will help reduce member stress.

Always Leave 'em Wanting More
The nirvana of marketing and promotions is to have people *always* talking about you. In practice, a realistic aim is to keep reminding the world about your convention at regular intervals. A continual stream of news and nudges about a variety of topics builds up a critical mass of awareness and interest within the target audience.

When it comes to the website, therefore, the best strategy is to plan ahead and spread updates out into a steady stream. This has several benefits. Firstly, it gives each update time to breathe; put out several at once, and most may be overlooked while one grabs all the attention. Secondly, it builds up an assumption in the user that "if I come back, I'm likely to find something new - so it's worth coming back regularly." In contrast, long gaps between updates may result in people thinking "not much happening here, I'll leave it for a few months".