

WisCon 22

May 22-25, 1998
Memorial Day weekend

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20 April 1998

Dear WisCon 22 Program Participant,

WisCon 22 is coming up fast! You only have a few days to get back to us if you have any problems with the enclosed schedule, because we will need to begin work immediately on the layout of the *Granddaughter-of-the-Mother-of-All-Pocket-Program-Books*. So, **PLEASE look over the materials in this packet RIGHT AWAY, and respond by April 27.**

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This packet contains information on each of the programs for which you have been scheduled. This includes the program's title, description, date and time, and the names of your fellow panel participants. Those presenting papers at WisCon will find the name of the person sharing their program slot, along with the title of that person's paper. Authors doing readings will find the name of the author sharing their program slot. Please note that if you have signed up for the writers' workshop, you will receive information about it from the workshop coordinator, Amy Axt Hanson. The writers' workshop is scheduled on Saturday morning, 10-11:30 am.

We worked hard to accommodate the arrival and departure times of those who were able to tell us about their transportation plans when they filled out their program participant questionnaire. However, it is possible that we made some errors as a result of the large number of programs and panelists we've had to juggle, or because we did not know when you would arrive. Please let us know if we have **scheduled you for a program when you will not be at the con!** We will try to re-schedule that program event to a day and time when you can still participate, but it may be necessary to remove you from the panel if shifting it creates further conflicts.

Also enclosed is a directory of all WisCon 22 program participants with contact information for all participants. **Please make use of the email addresses, phone numbers or addresses to contact your fellow program participants to plan your program with them.**

If you and the rest of your fellow panelists want to re-write the program description which will be printed in the pocket program, we can make changes if you get them to us before the April 27 deadline. Also, if you and the rest of your panel decide someone else on the panel is better qualified to be moderator than the person listed, we would be happy to make that change in your program's listing in the pocket program, as well—providing we get that change before the April 27 deadline. (The moderator is the **FIRST** name on the list of panelists.)

A note to moderators: All programs at WisCon 22 will be 1 hour and 15 minutes long. Nevertheless, we realize that some programs will run out of steam before 75 minutes have elapsed, and we do not want you to stretch your program uncomfortably beyond its natural ending point. If you feel that panelists and audience have run out of things to say, please feel free to end the panel earlier than its scheduled time. However, we encourage you to think of WisCon's longer-than-usual panel lengths as an opportunity to explore your topic in greater depth than is possible during the usual one-hour program. We include an excellent letter of advice, written by Laurie Marks, about how to make use of WisCon's 75-minute program slots.

There will be a 15-minute break between programs; also, meal breaks have been scheduled from 11:30 am–1:00 pm (lunch) and 5:30–7:00 p.m. (dinner).

A note to those who requested time to read from their work: As expected we received many requests for reading time. We have paired two authors each in 10 programs. Also, we have scheduled two programs on Friday, called "Writers you may not have heard read aloud." One will be in the afternoon and one in the evening. Five writers have been scheduled in each of those programs and will have about 15 minutes reading time apiece. Unfortunately some of you have already told us that you do not plan on arriving at the convention until Saturday. We hope you will be able to change your plans in order to do a reading. If you cannot, please let us know and we will remove your name from that program. We're sorry but we will not be able to schedule additional readings for later in the weekend, although you have the option for scheduling *yourself* in the spontaneous programming room when you get here. Look for the sign-up poster in the hallway outside Conference Room 1 (near the registration table).

Upon your arrival at the convention . . . Registration will be open by 1:00 pm on Friday, May 22 (possibly earlier). Please register, pick up your Reg Packet, and check your schedule—which will be printed for your convenience on the back of your nametag. This schedule will most probably match the one included in this packet. However, in a few cases, we may have made a change or two as a result of your own request or that of another program participant. If you have a problem with your schedule, please bring it to Jeanne Gomoll, Scott Custis, or to the at-con Program Ops Chief, Spike Parsons. One of us will work with you to find a solution to the problem.

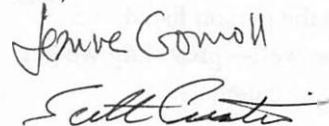
Please visit the Green Room, located in room 623 (Senate) on the sixth floor of the Concourse Hotel. This room is set aside for you and other program participants to use as a place to relax, enjoy a beverage or snack, and meet with fellow program participants for some last-minute stragegizing on your upcoming panels. We recommend that you make a date with your fellow program participants to meet there 10–15 minutes before the start of your programs. If you are the moderator or the sole participant of any program, you will need to stop by the Green Room to pick up the name tents for your panel, and bring them with you to the program room.

Do you need any special equipment for your program? If you have not already discussed your equipment needs with us, please contact us as soon as possible. We will rent an overhead projector, screen, and slide projector for use by program participants, but if we do not know about your requirements well before the con, you may discover that this equipment has already been reserved for another program at the same time your program is scheduled. If you have other equipment needs and fail to let us know ahead of time, we may not be able to provide you with this equipment at the convention. So, *please* contact us right away. If you want to run through your slides on WisCon equipment before your panel, you may contact Program Ops Chief, Spike Parsons at the convention, and she will help you schedule some time with the equipment when it is not needed for other programs.

A membership reminder: if you have not already purchased a membership, remember that you *must* do so. WisCon does not offer free memberships to its program participants. However, you can expect a *refund* of \$20 after the convention. WisCon memberships cost \$40 until May 1, 1998. After that date, you must wait until the convention, and buy your membership for the at-the-door rate of \$50.

Do you have any other questions? Please contact us using the phone number or email address listed above for Scott and Jeanne. If not . . . we'll see you at the con!

Best,



Jeanne Gomoll and
Scott Custis
WisCon 22 Programming

Attached: Your program schedule, Letter from Laurie Marks,
Minicon Moderator's Tip Sheet, Program participant Directory

Dear moderators:

You may find with the traditional question-and-answer panel format that both your panelists' energy and your audience's attention will start to flag before your 75-minutes are used up. Therefore, I have volunteered to share with you some teacher's tricks for keeping your panel energized.

1. Rather than follow the question-and-answer format for the entire 75-minutes, plan a panel which will regularly switch gears. For instance, you might start with one of the panelists giving a presentation, then have the other panelists respond and ask questions, then take audience questions, and then go back to another presentation.
2. Contact the other panelists in advance and give them a simple "assignment" to prepare and present. Ideally, this assignment would give each panelist an opportunity to hold the floor for several minutes, and to perform as much or as little as she finds comfortable. For example, last year, I asked the members of the "can writing be without gender" panel to select a non-gender-specific passage from a book and read it out loud. I asked the members of the "revisioning writing" panel to come in prepared to tell a story of a time when the experience of writing was nothing like what one might expect.
3. Give the panelists and the audience something concrete to discuss—a common "text." The panel topic will necessarily be abstract; you can counteract this abstractness by actually reading portions of text out loud and then discussing your topic as it relates to that specific piece. The same thing can be done visually—if it's impractical to show slides or video clips, then assign panelists to describe scenes in vivid detail instead. Or orchestrate a low-key performance which then can become the concrete focus of the discussion.
4. Orchestrate audience involvement beyond the asking of questions. Last year in the "can writing be without gender" panel, I polled the audience after each reading to see whether they thought the character was male or female, and why. In the course of the presentation, we concocted a pretty interesting list of reasons why people assume a character is one gender rather than the other. For the "revisioning writing" panel, at the beginning of the presentation I asked everyone to devise a metaphor for their writing experience. Audience members shared their metaphors, explained them, and then the panelists made comparisons to their own experience. It was memorably relaxed, intimate, and hilarious.

I hope these suggestions help you to start thinking in some new directions, but if you're drawing a blank on what to do for your particular panel, I'd be happy to help out.

Laurie J. Marks

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MINICON MODERATORS TIP SHEET

by *The Minicon 25 Programming Committee, Sharon Kahn, Co-Chair*

Disclaimer: These guidelines and suggestions are the distillation of a series of brainstorming sessions. In other words, this document was originated by committee. So if it waffles, backpedals and blatantly contradicts itself, that's just the way it goes. The project was started and organized by 1990 Minicon Programming Co-Chair Sharon Kahn, and involved many people's input. Dave Romm volunteered to take the mass of data, add his further input, organize and format it for the Mac, and give it to Sharon for final revision. What you see here is Dave's file, adapted to html, not Sharon's final, though changes were slight. E-mail me for the original 6pp file in MS Word 3.1 (Mac). Copyright 1990, 1995 by the Minnesota Science Fiction Society, Inc.

Presumably, you are looking at this document because you are planning to originate a programming item, moderate it, or both. If you are entering this process sometime after Section 1, it is strongly suggested that you find out what the originator of the panel had in mind, and what, if anything, has been communicated to the panelists so far.

Section 1: DEFINING THE PANEL*

TOPIC: Exactly what is the point? Be specific. Come up with a 1-3 sentence description that will leave no doubt in the mind of all the panel participants what they will be talking about. This description will also appear in the program book.*

PURPOSE: Why are you doing this? To inform? Entertain? Showcase a GOH? Spark a group discussion? Stir up a controversy? It has been suggested that there are only two possible purposes for a panel: to inform or to entertain (with the best panels, of course, accomplishing both.) *

TITLE: There seem to be 3 general approaches to titles:

- (1) Explicit: "Collaborations: How It's Done, Why We Shouldn't Do It, and Why We Keep Doing it Anyway"
- (2) Clever: "Worldcon Envy: Does Size Matter?"
- (3) Hybrid: "Lime Jello, Myth or Reality: The Origins of Fannish Legends"

The entire topic is surprisingly controversial, actually. But everybody agrees that titles should not be overly generic, for instance "Women in SF" or "Fantasy or Science Fiction?" The more specific the better.*

SIZE: Experts suggest an ideal panel size of 5 including the moderator, rarely fewer than 4 or more than 6. Remember, 60 minutes divided by 5 panelists means 12 minutes for each person, assuming the audience doesn't participate (ha!).*

FORMAT: Now you know what you are doing and why, let's talk about format.

Panel, Discussion Group, Debate, Free-for-all? This should be decided on far enough in advance to put in the program book.

Question Policy: Audience questions can be encouraged throughout or only taken during designated question period(s). Be sure to make the policy clear to all panelists (and then to the audience during the panel). **Facilities:** Do you need a large room, a small room or an intimate space? Will you be seated behind a long table, around a round table or just chairs facing an audience? How many microphones will you need? Do you need special equipment like a slide projector or overhead?*

CONSIDER MODERATOR STYLE: There is no single "best" way to moderate a panel. The style you use depends not only on your personality, but the topic and purpose of the panel, the personalities of the panelists, and what happens when the bullets start flying. In Section 3, you will find a list moderator styles that have been observed in action at conventions that are now history. We had fun identifying these and we hope they provide food for thought. **Section 2: PRE-PANEL PREPARATION***

MAKE YOURSELF A CRIB SHEET FOR USE DURING THE PANEL. Including but not limited to: Panel title, 1-3 sentence description. At least 3 questions that can be asked during the course of the panel. A starter question or two and then keep several emergency questions handy. Panelist names and pertinent info about each (names of books, etc.).*

READ SOMETHING BY EACH PANELIST, if possible. If not, at least know their latest book or a recent accomplishment.*

TALK WITH THE PANELISTS BEFORE THE CON, if possible. Let them know if you will be gathering in the Green Room before the panel.*

MEET WITH THE PANELISTS AT THE CON, either one by one or in a group. The Green Room is available for this purpose. If you can't meet in the Green Room, at least spend a few seconds before you convene to introduce yourselves.*

IN THE GREEN ROOM

Review panel description, purpose and format with the participants. If you haven't already, introduce yourself and each other. Check with the participants: Anything you've thought of since we last talked? Anything in particular I should ask? Anything to avoid? Get preferences and suggestions. If panelists seem to need warming up, try out one of your Questions on them. If they're shy, feed them several questions so they can think about their answers for a while. There are refreshments in the Green Room which participants can take to the panel. Relax.*

GETTING STARTED

Arrive on time. A few minutes early is OK. If you're arriving from the Green Room, arrive all at once; it really impresses the audience. Sit down. If possible, arrange the tent cards yourself so the panelists are where you want them. Feel free to move people if they've beaten you to the seating arrangements. You may choose to sit at the end of the row of panelists instead of in the middle. It will make it easier to keep an eye on everybody. Start the panel by establishing rapport with the audience. The traditional opening is "Hello? Hello? Is this mike on?" If it is, smile and continue. If it isn't, turn it on (or otherwise make arrangements to be heard). Identify yourself and briefly describe the panel. Introduce panelists, referring to your notes as needed. Give the ground rules ("If this goes according to plan..."). Be sure to address Question Protocol (questions taken any time, or only during specified question period). Throw out the first question. Think carefully about who to address it to! The first questioner will set the tone for the panel. Some possibilities: The most senior GoH, the person with the most experience, the quietest person on the panel, the person who originally proposed the idea for the panel, the person most likely to set the tone you are striving for. Play out the question, giving everybody a chance at it.*

FINISHING UP

Finish on time! Give a 5 or 10 minute warning that time is running out. Issue a summing-up question. If you have to interrupt the last person, do so. "I'm afraid we're out of time. Thank you all for coming." Thank the panelists for participating. If a discussion is still raging, suggest that the discussion can continue in the spontaneous programming room [or any open site, including the consuite or the bar]. Announce the next panel.

Section 3: MODERATOR STYLES

We present these as examples for your consideration. Most moderators combine elements of more than one style. The style used for any panel depends on the personality of the moderator and the interaction of the participants. Some of the building blocks for a style can be found in the Section 4.

EVEN-HANDED: Keeps things moving, involves everyone, facilitates discussion without taking sides or expressing opinions. A good even-handed moderator can moderate a panel on a topic he knows nothing about and isn't even interested in.

NURTURING: Much like even-handed, but even more so. Especially attentive to quiet panelists who need to be drawn out and encouraged to enter the discussion.

PARTICIPATING: Joins in the discussion and expresses opinions, but without taking over or dominating the

panel. At times, panel may appear to be a round-table discussion with no one moderating. However, the moderator is in fact leading the discussion, raising questions, encouraging participation by everyone and dealing with interruptions. This style is difficult to pull off. You must be able to split yourself into 2 people—the moderator and the participant. Do not call on yourself more often than any other participant.

TIGHTLY REINED: A moderator who naturally tends toward Participating Moderator trying very hard to function as an Even-Handed. Produces tremendous dramatic tension as audience waits for moderator to crack.

QUESTIONING: Intensely interested in the topic, but hasn't made up his mind how he feels about it yet and is hoping to gain insight into the subject (frequently a difficult or controversial one) by questioning the panelists.

PROVOCATIVE: This moderator believes that life is a bit dull without conflict. Specializes in questions like, "I sense that you may have some disagreement with the last speaker," and "You aren't going to let him get away with that, are you?"

Not to be too judgmental or anything, we do hope you avoid elements of the following styles:

IGNORANT: Not only knows nothing about the topic of this panel or the people on it, he didn't even know he was moderating it until about 5 minutes ago. (Best solution is to admit your ignorance ["But I find the topic fascinating!"] and get the panelists to suggest appropriate questions, perhaps when you have them introduce themselves.)

FAILS TO FACE THE PANEL: Runs dull topics into the ground, interrupts discussions just as they're getting interesting, lets one panelist dominate the time, doesn't prompt reticent speakers, cuts off panelists in mid-sentence but lets audience loudmouths run on forever, etc. **OUT-OF-IT:** Too sleepy (or otherwise underbrained) to pay attention. Calls the panelists by their wrong names, misremembers their books, gets the topic of the panel wrong and/or is still trying to get in the last word from the previous panel.

Section 4: THE ART OF MODERATING

Prepare in advance, but go with the flow. Don't be afraid to alter your original plan radically if it seems like a good idea. But do have a plan. Maybe more than one. Keep the level of energy high. Be aware when a question or topic has run its course and be prepared to change direction. Play devil's advocate if things get dull. Refer to your prepared questions when you need a new topic. Watch the audience. Start taking questions if too many hands are up; pick up the pace if people start to fidget (or leave). Repeat questions from the audience, especially if the room is large. Pay attention to the panelist's answers and ask follow-up questions if appropriate. Pay attention to the people farthest from you: They may be participating less. Seat shy or quiet panelists close to you. Pay attention to body language. Watch for signs of impatience, annoyance or general disagreement with the last speaker (frowns, muscle tension, leaning forward, leaning backward, folding arms across chest). If a light bulb suddenly goes on over someone's head, call on them quick before they forget the idea! Use body language. Lean forward slightly and make eye contact to encourage a shy panelist. To cut someone off politely: lean back, catch their eye. If that doesn't do it, slowly reach toward the mike. Prompt the audience, if necessary. Lead the applause or laughter, but squelch any which goes on too long. Remember: The audience didn't come to see you. Sometimes the moderator's main job is to stay out of the way. This happens more often than you might think. Be firm. Don't lose control of the panel or audience. Have fun. Encourage the panelists to have fun too. If the panelists enjoy themselves, so will the audience.

Moderator Emergency Kit

WHEN THE CONVERSATION GRINDS TO A HALT

"Let's open the panel to questions from the audience."

"What's the greatest challenge for you in your work right now?"

"Is there anything we're leaving out here that needs to be addressed?"

"What's the biggest controversy in this area?"

"What's the greatest misconception people have about...?"

“How did you handle this problem when you were working on... [insert book title or character name from author's work]?”

“What made you decide to tackle this subject?”

“Speaking as a [person not normally involved in this area] what's your perspective?”

“What's the question you are most tired of hearing on this subject, and what would you like to say about it so you never have to answer it again?”

Ask another person on the panel the question.

Ask a follow-up question.

Ask a different person to comment on another panelist's answer.

SQUELCHING THE PANEL

“Excuse me, but we have wandered far afield...”

“Getting back to the original topic...”

“That would be a good subject for another panel.”

“Excuse me, but we haven't heard from [reticent panelist] in a while.”

“Let's take a question from the audience.”

SQUELCHING THE AUDIENCE

“No comments from the peanut gallery.”

“In order to make the best possible use of our panelists, we're only taking questions from the audience, not statements.”

“We're only taking statements from the audience, not questions.”

“Oh, let's not always see the same hands.”

“Thank you for your interesting suggestion. You may be right.”

“You're making some rather broad generalizations.”

“OK, OK, I think I understand the question. Now, which of our panelists wants to handle it?”

“Would someone in the back please call hotel security.”

MODERATOR MANTRAS

It's only an hour.

This has never killed anyone yet.

I do not have to go home with this person.

It's okay to do this — I'm the moderator.

Hey, this is a nice looking tablecloth!-

MODERATOR PREPARATION NOTES (write these notes for yourself before the panel.)

Day and Time

Room

Panelist Intros (including yourself)

Starter Questions

Emergency Questions and notes

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