

# Services

## From Worldcon Runners' Guide

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## Services

### Layout of Convention Headquarters

#### Access to HQ

HQ is a cool place to be. It's like hip and happening. If you're in HQ, you must be important. Therefore, lots of people try to get into HQ and hang around, often for frivolous reasons.

While there should be a reception area in HQ, the actual access to the room should be such that it is difficult for unauthorized people to get beyond the reception area.

#### Rogue's Gallery

A Worldcon brings together many, many people who have never worked together before, and in many cases who have never seen or heard of each other before. In particular, many important local fans are usually unknown to the out-of-town volunteers.

To make it easier to track down people who have accidentally turned off pagers, a rogue's gallery can be easily assembled by using a Polaroid camera and a large piece of signboard.

## Pigeon Hoodles

Lots of messages and notes will be given to lots and lots of committee members. The HQ must have either a set of pigeon hoodles (aka pigeon holes) or a set of hanging file folders to put messages in.

## Paid Security

In addition to Badgers (fans who stand at doors to check for badges), there are some locations where it is desirable to have someone in a uniform who is being paid to guard. The rule of thumb is: large quantities of money or valuable material.

Worldcons have a more visible profile than they used to. The local publicity not only brings in new fans, it alerts local criminals to the fact that a large convention is in town.

Once one decides to use professional security, the question then becomes one of whether to use off-duty police officers or security guards from a firm (e.g., Andy Frain.) We strongly recommend using off-duty police for several reasons. Fans are not easily intimidated, and Andy Frain type guards often deserve their Barney Fife image. The power of arrest and the ability to carry a real pistol are advantages that cannot be understated. After all, when do you really need people like this? When there is a serious, real-world attempt to steal money or valuables from the convention.

Paid security should be in at least three locations: the entrance to the treasury, by con registration (which handles large amounts of cash in the course of a day), and patrolling the art show / dealers / exhibit area at night.

## Communications

Be sure you have enough pagers. Think of everyone who might conceivably need one and add 25% both unforeseen need and equipment failure. Ditto walkie-talkies and cell phones. NOTE! Keep spare batteries in ConCom and have everyone do a battery check at least once a day.

Be sure to test out pagers and walkie talkies at least three months prior to the convention, to determine where "dead" areas in your facility are. If you have the woe of running a Worldcon spread across more than one facility, make sure your equipment is capable of punching through from one building to another. Tests should be done far enough in advance to be able to make alternate plans if your original source of communications gear does not have equipment capable of doing the job.

A sample pager briefing form is on the following page:

Chicon V Beeper Issue Sheet & Instructions form goes here.

## Rovers

The introduction of rovers, particularly during the evening party hours, has been a valuable addition to keeping things under control. Rovers provide a calming influence, a committee presence, and subliminally give fans the message, "hey, we're all here to have fun and things are under control."

Selection of rovers is critical. Certain personality types are not suited for roving, as their presence may exacerbate a situation rather than smooth things over. A walkie-talkie is also one of the most visible "I am important" status symbols at a con. When screening volunteers, be sure to check with past Worldcon services staff to find out who has worked out well and who has not.

During party hours, rovers should regularly make tours of the hotels that parties are in. They should start at the top and meander down, one floor at a time. Each open party should be briefly visited, and the status of the party communicated to HQ. This gives the shift supervisor in HQ a feel as to how the con is going, and when things are winding down.

## Gofers

Gofers are the backbone of the convention. If you treat them right, you have the conrunners of tomorrow; treat them poorly and you'll discover personally just how much physical work is involved in con-running.

Prior to the con, a Gofer head and an assistant need to be appointed to do recruiting and sift through volunteer forms. It is a vital PR task to reply to people who send in volunteer letters—do not just assume they will show up at-con ready to work. People get psyched if an immediate thank you goes out, and they get a briefing newsletter a couple of months before the con.

At con, at least two shift supervisors will also be needed.

The gofer pen (the room where gofer HQ is) should be comfortable, with tables, chairs and couches, and a soft drink supply. It should be as inviting as possible, to encourage gofers who currently do not have work to do to come and hang out—having some gofers on hand for an emergency phone call is highly desirable.

Some sort of ID for gofers should be provided; buttons with special artwork are common. T-shirts are sometimes provided (free or at cost) to gofers putting in more than X hours of time.

All gofers must be briefed on exactly what the minimum number of hours will be to be eligible for reimbursement should the concom have funds afterwards. Once the concom has set this number, it should NEVER raise it.

A specific problem is that often there are not enough gofers on teardown day, because many experienced gofers have gotten into the habit of putting in lots of time early in the con, then once they hit the quota of number of hours needed for reimbursement, wander off to enjoy the con. Cons should consider providing some extra incentive, such as "time and a half" for working on teardown day, t-shirts for teardown staff, etc. Put thought into it—by the last day of the con, everyone is dragging, and you need all the help you can find.

## Logistics

The job of logistics is to get the physical material needed to and from the con. This primarily (but by no means solely) consists of moving the contents of the convention office to the various departments.

## Timesheets

Exactly who must fill out timesheets depends on your con's mechanism for membership/room reimbursement. In general, staff should not need to fill out timesheets, as the department head and assistant department head should be on the ball enough to figure out who is working and who isn't. Thus, normally only gofers should be filling out timesheets. They should be required to be signed by an assistant department head or above.

In the end, the department head is responsible for reporting upwards to the division manager who put in what hours and to make recommendations for who gets whatever level of post-con perks are to be handed out. Thusly, each division manger is responsible for collating and evaluating these reports, and editing them into a final set of recommendations for all from that particular division.

At most Worldcons, the time when labor is scarcest is during teardown. This is partly because people have already started going home (or being tourists), and partly because of the tendency of a lot of volunteers to put in massive hours at the beginning of the con until the minimum hours required for reimbursement is reached, then show up only occasionally, if at all. A solution that has had some success is to go the route of business and offer time-and-a-half or double-time credit for hours worked after, say, noon of the last day of the con or on the day after the con officially closes.

During the months before the Worldcon, write to people who have offered to help and tell them when and (specifically) where it would be helpful if they checked in to help (during set up and tear down.) Don't assume that since they wrote and volunteered that they will show up to help if there is no follow up on the offer. Politeness counts!

A sample timesheet (designed by Steve Gold) is on the following page, followed by a parental waiver form:

Timesheet goes here

Parental waiver form goes here

## Staff Briefing

A pre-printed staff briefing should be given to all con staff.

This should include:

1. Policies and rules on timesheets, including minimum time to be eligible for reimbursement.
2. Policies for access to committee den.
3. Key phone numbers (HQ, gopher hole, etc.)
4. A warm thanks from the committee.

(<http://www.noreascon.org/users/sfrovers/u1/wcrg/toc.html>) | [crg@sfrovers.org](mailto:crg@sfrovers.org)  
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