The First Year

From Worldcon Runners' Guide

Contents

The First Year

Convention Office

If your group is not fortunate enough to own a clubhouse, some sort of central office is recommended. A central office can serve the following purposes:

1. Place to put the computer(s) where more than one department can make use of them.
2. Central mailing supplies repository. Also an area where mailings can be done (and paused for the night) without messing up people's homes.
3. Photocopying center. The amount of photocopying needed for a Worldcon is greater than even the most generous employer will let one get away with.

A trade-off decision needs to be made between expense of having an office right away (rent, need to 'furnish' and there is temptation to get the needed things right away rather than slowly and inexpensively, volunteer time) versus the convenience of having an office early.

The location should be convenient for a reasonably large percentage of the 'local' committee/staff members.

It should be located in a reasonably central part of town in a low-crime area, as it will be common for unescorted staff to be coming and going late at night.

A telephone should be installed or use a dedicated mobile phone, with voice mail, and the number provided as a standard information number. The recording on the machine should be kept updated with mailing address, current rates, etc.

Technology has now made it possible to obtain a telephone number which can be forwarded so that it can be answered at various people's houses. You need to take into account obtaining a number which can be forwarded, without a long distance charge, to the convention office and to the Information Desk during the Worldcon.

Table of Organization and Recruiting

You will need someone to pick up the mail, and/or email, on a regular basis. You will also need someone to process the mail and/or email on a timely basis. You will need someone to create and maintain the convention's website and social media accounts. Each of these positions will need a backup. These positions could be under the Chair/Co-Chairs or under Division Heads such as Member Services or similar name.

The sooner you can recruit your division heads, the better. Program DH, for example, will have to begin working on the software system to be used for tracking program participants, guests of honor, etc. Some systems work with both Registration and Programming for a single source of data. Programming will need software to schedule the fans, pros, etc. that will appear on the program schedule. Events DH will need to track folks who wish to be involved with specific events, such as Masquerade, Hugo Awards Ceremony, various dances, etc. Facilities DH will need to coordinate with all divisions on which division gets to use what function/meeting space. Hospitality DH will need to work with all staff for planning Staff Lounge/Den contents as well as Consuite.

A typical Worldcon will have one or two chairs and twelve divisions under them organizationally. Sometimes Worldcons will use Vice Chairs (such as Chicon 7 and Sasquan) to lighten the load by reducing the number of divisions reporting to a VC vs the Chair(s) directly. Besides Division Heads there should also be Deputy Division Heads as backup. Then for each Division there are multiple departments or areas sometimes called Area Heads with Assistant Area Heads as their backups. Staff work for the AH/AAHs and Volunteers work for pretty much everyone. Having someone coordinate fans who want to volunteer from winning the bid to running the con is important, serving as the AH for Volunteers and having an AAH as a backup.

Recruiting should happen from winning the bid until the con occurs. Div Heads will want to recruit their Area Heads and they will want to recruit Staff. Staff is someone who is willing to commit to a minimum number of hours worked from pre-con to at-con to post-con. Some Worldcons require Staff to work at least 16 hours, other cons are higher or lower. Staff usually get a discount on membership costs while Volunteers usually don't as they don't typically commit to enough hours. Coming up with the perks for being Staff or higher should be determined early and committed to throughout the pre-con to post-con.

Computers

Almost any computer can be used nowadays for use with Worldcon. Windows, Macintosh, Linux all support most of the software tools currently available. Add in Android and iPhone for mobile users for plenty of choices. Many systems are now online, so with a web browser you can access anything from anywhere. The old debates about hardware, software, word processor, spreadsheet, database, etc. are pretty much moot. Worldcons will select their software preferences and staff supporting that Worldcon will use what they prefer.

Setting up the Finance Division

The Finance Division Head typically has a DDH and several AH/AAH staff. AH duties might be to enter the financial data for the convention into an accounting software package which can then be exported to an

income tax return generator such as Turbo Tax or similar product. QuickBooks Online is a common accounting software package that non-profits utilize. AAH duties might be to handle one or both software packages with a backup. Other AH duties might include pre-con registration, at-con registration, and/or post-con registration. AAH duties could support these functions. Additional at-con duties would involve starting cash boxes for areas like Art Show or Registration, collecting funds throughout the event, then closing out these cash boxes either daily or at the end of the event. When the convention ends there will be lots of things to do. Each Worldcon reports their results to the following Worldcon Business Meeting (WBM) and, if funds remain that haven't been dispersed should a profit occur, then continue to report to each suceeding WBM until all funds have been donated. If a profit does not occur, then one final report is sufficient. Other data to be reported is how many persons of each registration category were tracked. This is standardized by a group of Worldcon fans who then post it online for future analysis and planning purposes.

- This page was last modified on June 29, 2024.