

# ANNUAL MEETING MANUAL

The manual below was created by the late Robert F. Bode of the South Central American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (SCAECS) and has been circulated on the C18-L E-Mail list. Additions in brackets are by Ted Ruml of WSECS. (Because NEASECS holds its annual meeting in the fall rather than the spring, I have changed the seasonal expressions in the headings of the sections to meet our practices. – John H. O'Neill)

## Up to Two Years in Advance of the Meeting

Determine the composition of your organizing committee. There is a lot of work to be done, so consider a committee of at least five people:

- Choose one person to know who is responsible for what and how it is all coming together at the end and to be responsible for organizing or coordinating last-minute problems just before and during the conference itself. This is the person who must know where everything is, must sign all receipts during the conference, and must handle everyone's problems as they arise during the meeting, like the absence of a speaker, the fact that the air conditioning is not working in a particular room, the absence of needed audio-visual equipment, etc.
- Choose one person to be responsible for business and bookkeeping.
- Choose one person to make and be responsible for "contractual relationships" such as agreements with plenary speakers, hotels, etc.

Set a date for the meeting. Check schedules so that you don't compete with football weekends on your own campus or religious events, like Easter, and check with the ASECS Coordinator of Affiliate Societies [Heather McPherson, hmcphers@uab.edu] to be sure that you don't conflict with another group's already-scheduled meeting.

Determine your format, the number of seminars and whether or not you will have plenary speakers. Remember that the potential audience for each seminar can become very small if there are many concurrent sessions. Estimate the potential size of the audience for each seminar of a group of concurrent seminars by dividing the number of seminars being held at a given time into the expected attendance for the entire meeting and then divide that figure by two. The

Secretary can help in estimating the size of your attendance based on previous meetings.

Plan what you can delegate and what you want to retain control over yourself. Look to see if there exists a group on campus, such a Continuing Education, which will help you set up the conference and even run the majority of it for you.

Arrange for the necessary secretarial help, equipment and supplies; needing the services of a secretary for about half-time during the two months around the organizing of the program and the last two months before the meeting is not unusual. No departmental secretary has enough slack in his/her schedule to manage all of this.

**Money:**

Beg early. Look for money from departments whose members are or might be members of the society, from your dean, and from the university itself. Commitments of actual cash are very difficult to get at this point; look instead for a definite interest or willingness to produce money when it actually becomes available. Consider inviting departments, etc., to "sponsor" certain activities by asking them to pay for and perhaps arrange the activity in exchange for having the department credited for the activity in the program.

Meeting facilities (make reservations now; this isn't as early as it seems):

**Convention Facilities:**

Determine whether meetings will be held on campus or at a hotel. When considering which is more economical, include costs of a shuttle between the main hotel(s) and the meeting location into the cost of campus convention facilities, and consider what "extras" (such as free rooms for plenary speakers or free meeting rooms) a hotel may throw in if you designate it the convention hotel and encourage those attending the meeting to stay there. Try to find something cheaper "nearby" for graduate students, etc., but supply information about how to contact that hotel instead of using your organization to make those reservations because it still allows you to negotiate with the convention hotel on an "exclusive" basis.

**Hotel Rooms:**

- Request convention rates. Bargain, especially if you have several suitable hotels available. Get local help from people who have done this before; they may know right from the beginning how far they can push the hotel for better prices.

- Consider package deals in which you get the meeting rooms for free if you have a certain guaranteed number of participants staying at the hotel.
- Consider alternatives you can fall back on at the last minute if your main plans should alter for some reason (e.g., if the hotel burns down).

#### **Meals and the like:**

- Arrange with the caterer and the supplier of your facilities the date, time, location, menu, and cost of the "banquet" and any other event, such as a wine and cheese party, which will require catering. Note: Attempt to set costs at even dollar amounts or at least at numbers easily multiplied, e.g., \$10 rather than \$9.95. This assists the secretary in the maintenance of his/her mental health.
- Also, arrange times, location, and cost of "complimentary" coffee, etc., for coffee breaks during the meeting.

#### **Plenary Speakers:**

- Plan to pay an honorarium of at least the speaker's travel and lodging expenses; you will probably need to pay something besides this. If you are paying actual expenses (whether or not there will be any additional sum), set a date by which you must receive an estimate of the expenses so you can include it in your budget. It is often simpler and less embarrassing to agree with the speaker on a set amount and let him/her pay his/her own expenses. This avoids dealing with such comments as "I can't fly tourist."
- Pursue your desired speakers early; their schedules are often full far in advance.
- Look for interdisciplinary speakers; several university departments may be willing to share the cost if they can see a relationship between a speaker and their disciplines.
- Consider the drawing power of "names" when choosing speakers; people may come to hear a particular speaker who might not come simply to attend the meeting.
- Investigate sources of outside funding for plenary speakers. The organizers of the SCSECS 1988 meeting got the Arkansas Endowment for the Humanities to support having Maynard Mack come to Arkansas and give a series of

addresses to different groups; he addressed SCSECS as part of the series of lectures.

**Non-meeting activities:**

- Approach the university theater group or drama department and/or the music department to see if they will schedule an activity which will both benefit the educational program and interest the members of the society.
- Approach the library and university or local museums, etc., to see if they will mount an exhibition tied in with the meeting which would interest the members of the society.
- Check schedules to see if any events are already planned, such as a concert, for which reduced-price admission can be obtained for meeting attendees.

**Spring of the year before the meeting  
(one and one-half years in advance):**

Determine who will print your program (this will require making some decisions about the probable length and format of your program), how much it will cost, and how long it will take. Have a fairly definite idea about when copy will be supplied so you can get a firm commitment from your printer.

Set the deadlines for submission of seminar topics, submission of papers to seminar leaders, submission of list of papers by seminar leader to you, and submission of abstracts to you (that is, if you plan to have abstracts. People seem equally divided on the usefulness of abstracts distributed at the meeting; everyone agrees that they are a terrific amount of work for the organizers.). As you set the second deadline, consider the deadline you will need to meet in printing your program and having it ready by the time you plan to send out meeting information. As you set the last deadline, consider the time required to type and reproduce the abstracts. If it is feasible for you, consider supplying paper presenters with a form on which the abstract must be typed and from which the abstract can be reproduced. This saves a great deal of time.

Issue the call for seminar topics. (I can give you mailing labels for our own mailing list, and ASECS will supply you, gratis, mailing labels for the states you want to blanket.) Send acknowledgements of accepted seminars as they come in unless it looks as if it will be necessary to wait until later on and choose the pre-determined number from among the submissions.

### **Fall of the year before the meeting (one year in advance):**

Send a write-up on the meeting (a description of the meeting which will make people want to come) for publication in the Newsletter.

Get a copy of the ASECS mailing list, which is available sorted in various ways. Contact the ASECS office to determine what you will need. ASECS will also supply some handouts, such as information about submitting papers read to *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*.

Publicize the list of approved seminar topics and issue the call for papers (spring issue of the Newsletter and an additional mailing). Along with the call for papers, poll members for forthcoming books so that copies of their books can be displayed at the meeting. ASECS-affiliated societies will also issue a general call for papers in their newsletters, although they won't publish the list of topics, if you notify them in time. In addition to the newsletter publication, it is usual to mail out the call using a selection from the ASECS list.

Arrange for a book exhibit. Scholar's Choice (500 Helendale Rd., Suite 210; Rochester, NY 14609; 800-782-0077) will try to supply specifically requested books and books by people on the program. The American Association of University Presses (1 Park Ave; New York, NY 10016; 212- 889-6040) will arrange an exhibit through the University Press nearest the meeting location.

### **Spring of the year of the meeting (six months in advance):**

Get firm commitments for monetary support by following up earlier promises of money from involved departments, your dean, and the University itself.

#### **Develop a budget and set the registration fee:**

- Consider the cost of speakers and their travel expenses, of facilities, of items such as coffee for breaks, and of events such as a wine and cheese party (the "banquet" and other serious meals should be self-supporting by ticket).
- Consider that for one reason or another some of the people on your program will not pay the conference fee. Some will be there gratis (such as plenary speakers) or at a reduced rate (graduate student members, etc.). Others will have the nerve to look you in the face and refuse to pay while drinking the

wine you supplied. [This has become less of a problem with the dawn of e-mail: you can fairly easily dun program participants who haven't paid by the registration deadline, and you can have an increased fee for those who register at the door. Also, with more efficient means of reprography these days, you can delete folks from the program much more easily than one once could.--Ted Ruml]

Send form letter to seminar leaders with information about what they must tell their participants and what they must supply you with, giving deadlines for the latter. Include copies of the information form and the abstract sheet, if there is one, to be sent on by the seminar leaders to their participants. Have seminar leaders determine if any of their readers will need any equipment, such as audio-visual, computer, etc., and get specific details on what kind of equipment they will need. Acknowledge receipt of information from seminar leaders.

Distribute cost information for participants as soon as possible. Note: this doesn't have to be very detailed, but could include the cost of rooms at the hotels, airport limo charges if they are unusually high, etc. Having this type of information at this time helps in asking for travel money at some institutions.

[Build an e-mail list, first of program participants, and then add other registrants. This will allow you to get last-minute bulletins out about changes in the program, road construction, weather, or whatever. Using this list can build a sense of community for the conference before the conference even begins. Either "suppress the recipients' list" or blind copy the recipients to help maintain privacy and to save the recipients from having to scroll down a long list of names.--Ted Ruml]

[Set up a website for the conference if you have the technological wherewithal, but don't rely exclusively on the website to get information out.--Ted Ruml]

Design a one-page registration form listing the cost and categories (if any) of registration, the cost of each individual event, and a place for payment of dues. Keep the amounts simple (e.g., \$5.00, \$5.50 rather than \$4.95); this saves a great deal of time in the bookkeeping which will follow.

**Arrange to get student help for the meeting.**

Schedule the seminars; try to avoid scheduling topics of similar interest at the same time so that they don't have to compete for an audience. Check that rooms which will use audio-visual equipment are easily darkened; schedule talks that use audio-visual equipment into one room on a consecutive basis to avoid moving equipment.

Notify the participants as soon as possible where they will appear on the program so they can make travel arrangements.

Finalize the menu and cost of the "banquet." Determine if it will include refills on the beverages you've selected so you'll know when somebody asks for seconds.

### **Summer Before the Meeting: the Last Two Months:**

Mail programs, registration forms, and hotel information. [By all means post this information on a website if you have one, but don't rely exclusively on the website for registration.--Ted Ruml] Tell distances in time to walk or "two blocks" to alternative lodging. Include instructions and information about local transportation, especially for the airport. Bulk mail can take up to four weeks, so if this is to be done by bulk mail, start earlier in learning how to group, sort, etc., the material according to the Post Office Rules.

Arrange for the printing of tickets for events, such as the "banquet."

Arrange to acquire the block(s) of tickets for events which are not a part of the meeting but which will give a discounted price to meeting attendees (a play, concert, etc.).

Arrange for the "printing" of placards listing the events for meeting room doors.

Arrange for the typing, printing and binding of abstracts. Note: This activity takes a disproportionately large amount of time, and may be omitted altogether if need be.

Arrange for the drawing and reproducing of any maps you think necessary.

Get firm commitments for student help.

Make a packet for each registrant containing name tag, book of abstracts (if you are using them), tickets for events paid in advance, maps (both inside the facilities and between separate buildings) to events if necessary, notepad and pencil, local brochures, and any other goodies you have acquired. Arrange the packets alphabetically.

Registration can take forever if the people at the table have to assemble these packets on the spot for more than a few last-minute registrants.

Arrange for audio-visual, computer, etc., equipment, including extension cords, spare light bulbs, and lights for lecterns in rooms which will have to be dark to use the audio-visual material. Locate a secure place where the equipment can be kept when not in use and determine who will be responsible for placing it in the appropriate locations when it is needed. Find out how to darken rooms in which audio-visual equipment will be used. NOTE: Determine what to do to get additional equipment in a hurry. It ALWAYS happens that someone who did not bother to respond when you asked if anyone needed audio-visual equipment will expect you to know that they would need it "just from the title of my paper." Prepare yourself for this experience; the offending reader will treat you as if you are at fault and will not be reasonable when he/she tells you so.

Arrange for staffing of the registration desk. Make sure the people at the desk know

- location of all events and how to get to them;
- location of phones and restrooms;
- how to reach emergency medical aid;
- how to reach the person in charge;
- where the money is to be kept (a secure location).

Arrange for a lectern, chairs, a table, a pitcher of water and glasses in each meeting room.

Be aware that some degree of despair is normal at this point in the process.

### **Each Day of the Meeting:**

Be emotionally prepared for surprises. For example, organizers of the 1991 SCSECS meeting at Texas A & M were stunned to discover that the wall adjacent to the banquet facility was being torn down by means of jackhammers and had to move the address scheduled for after the meal to another location. What could have been a disaster (the address was on Mozart and the speaker used numerous musical selections to illustrate his points) simply gave everyone a good laugh because of the way it was handled.

Check that the heat/air conditioning is on.

Check on the presence of any transportation you are supplying.

See that the registration desk is set up and staffed.

See that rooms are unlocked.

Post signs on meeting rooms stating what will occur in that room next (changed for each seminar).

Check for the presence of lectern, chairs, a table, a pitcher of water and glasses in each meeting room.

Before the beginning time of each block of seminars, check for the presence of audio-visual equipment where it was requested.

Check to see that the coffee, etc., is located as arranged.

Make sure that the Muzak is turned off in the meeting rooms.

After the meeting:

Thank everybody

Pay Bills

Pay honoraria, if any.

Send dues and any proceeds from the meeting to the secretary-treasurer.

Pat yourself on the back.