

Facilities Contract

From Worldcon Runners' Guide

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Facilities Contract

Scoping out the situation

Convention Centers

You need a convention center when you do not have the needed facility space within a couple of closely spaced hotels. — Circa 200,000 square feet for a North American Worldcon.

Convention centers do not intrinsically provide benefits that a large hotel does not have, but specifics can vary from facility to facility, e.g., some convention centers have large auditoriums that can be used for major functions. If your hotel is large enough, fine, but for most cities you're going to end up in the convention center.

Multiple Facility Worldcons

Pitfalls of multiple facilities?

1. Complicates facilities negotiation—more contracts to negotiate, more sales managers to change on you, etc.
2. At-con logistics are more complex—may have to run multiple HQ's for ops, programming, etc.
3. If spaced far apart, problems in getting from place to place in a reasonable manner/timeframe.

How to do Space Allocation

1. Put all concom in a room. Issue knives. Close door until facilities allocation is complete.
2. If (1) fails, put one person in charge of coordination, and have that person do a draft allocation. After the draft allocation, have a walkthru with the concom and have each division submit modifications. If the Space Patrol coordinator can't negotiate a settlement, take it to the board of directors. Issue knives. Close door...
3. Do the following:
 - a. Make a written list of each location (room, lounge, etc.) in each facility (hotel, convention center, etc.)
 - b. Make, and revise until it looks pretty realistic, a list of everything which the convention plans to do from the initial on-site set up to the final on-site storage. Use this list to determine which things need a physical space ('to happen' or to be stored until use during the convention.)
 - c. Physically seeing the facility space makes this process much more rational. Do not believe facility diagrams. Particularly don't believe that there are electric outlets where facility plans say there are or that there are no windows in a room just because the plans show windows in other rooms but not in that room. Look, measure, analyze the room yourself (if possible), if that's truly impossible, make a diagram of the room. Specify anything which might make a difference in the usefulness of a room (for example, a program room dedicated to slide shows doesn't work in that room even if the sky light in the ceiling wonderful!)
 - d. Take the list of things which need space and the list of the available spaces, go down the list of things which need space and decide where each item **could go** (here's the painful part) do not make decisions about where it **should go** at this point.
 - e. After going through the entire list of what needs space and where each thing could go, let this be a working document for several weeks to a month or two. Ask lots of people on the committee/staff to look the list over. Have them add things which weren't included in the original list of items which need space.
It is CRITICAL that Programming and Special Events agree on when Special Events needs time for tech rehearsals and room setup changes. All day is way too long, an hour is all too short. Two hours is normally about right, possibly three depending on the complexity of the setup.
 - f. Incorporate the newly added items into the list of where things could go. Then look at the list of things which need space allocated for them. Begin with the things which could go in the fewest available locations. (You may find several which can logically only go in one place.) As space is allocated, you may need to delete locations which would have worked if they had not already been allocated. Work your way up the list from those items with the least flexibility to those with the most flexibility.
 - g. Also, designate one centrally located, but reasonably secure room as the place where boxes which are in the wrong area should be taken. Tell everyone. (This can save hours and hours and hours at a Worldcon of time otherwise spent looking for the missing box(es)!)

Dealers Room and Art Show

Circa 35,000 square feet for each (dealers room area should be large enough to hold circa 250-350 tables with lots of aisle space.) This is usually determined by default, as most facilities have so few large rooms that main function/dealers/art show/films pretty much are obvious to the casual observer looking at the floor plans.

Banquets

If you're going to hold a formal banquet, it would be a good idea to talk to various regionals to see what percentage of a con's attendees are going to banquets these days. Figure your con size, divide the percentage in, and look up in the hotel floor plans which rooms will hold that many with banquet seating—most hotel floor plans give those numbers.

Fee balancing: money versus room rates, etc.

It really depends on the situation. Different hotels and different areas of the country have varying sets of parameters that they are looking for. For example, in some areas of the country (and world), facilities fees are fixed and non-negotiable; in other areas they are waived happily right off the bat.

Some cons like to do lots of food functions—this can make up for a lot of other areas. Windycon, for example, has a history of no banquets under any circumstances (due to a notorious incident at an early Windycon) — this puts it at a disadvantage in that respect.

In the Midwest, charges for tables and chairs in dealers rooms are not uncommon; in other areas of the country they are usually free.

In the end, the facilities liaison must try for a balance that leaves both the hotel and the fans reasonably happy.

Local laws: fire codes, etc.

1. Find people in place. In Chicago we have fans who are doctors, fans who are police officers, and fans who are on the staff of some local hotels.
2. Talk to the hotel. They'll give you a lot of that information (though it will tend to be biased in the hotel's favor)
3. Find out what similar conventions of similar size and makeup have been held recently (e.g. a fraternity gathering) and talk with their facilities liaison.

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Category: Eighth Edition

- This page was last modified on 2 August 2011, at 09:07.