

# Introduction

## From Worldcon Runners' Guide

# Introduction

This is intended to be a collection of wisdom about how to run a contemporary Worldcon. While much of what is here is applicable (to varying degrees) to running regional conventions, the focus is firmly on Worldcons.

This first edition is a **draft** and is not intended to be a comprehensive document. It is a first step, an attempt to collect some initial information, and put together a skeletal outline for future editions.

An earlier article on this subject elicited a scoffing comment, "There's nothing special here. That's just common sense!" True, but:

1. Worldcon committees and individual members do not often show common sense. Even the best of us have had occasional lapses.
2. Many solutions look like common sense only after they have been proposed and tested. The process of arriving at a solution is often arduous and strife-ridden.
3. Some Worldcons are won by committees with relatively little experience in running Worldcons. To these committees, some of the issues mentioned in this guide could well be things that they never thought of. Thus, a forewarning is provided.

Though efforts have been made to keep the advice general, the focus is largely upon Worldcons run in the United States. First, US Worldcons tend to be significantly larger, and hence more complex. Second, there are more Worldcons in the US than elsewhere (largely a reflection of the fact that the majority of worldwide SF fandom is in the US.) Third, most of the contributors here are primarily familiar with US Worldcons.

There is a chapter devoted to the unique situations encountered by Worldcons outside of the US, and we hope that in future editions this will be greatly expanded by contributions from people familiar with the problems of non-US Worldcons.

A distinct problem in formatting this guide arises in recommending the "correct" way to solve a particular problem. There is often no one absolutely correct way to solve a problem. Indeed, in some situations, there are maybe four or five solutions with largely positive results (but some negative tradeoffs) and maybe a dozen solutions with largely negative implications. In addition, the "most" correct solution is often greatly determined by factors external to the problem itself (e.g., current financial condition, personnel availability, etc.) In some cases there is loud and vehement disagreement by well-meaning people with experience in conrunning as to the correct solution to a particular problem.

I have therefore chosen the following mechanism for describing the different ways a problem can be approached:

1. If in the editor's opinion, one solution is usually clearly the best, it will be designated as "recommended."
2. If there are other approaches, then "dissenting views" will be noted. In such cases, names of key partisans of the recommended and dissenting camps will be named in parentheses.
3. If there is no one clear "best" solution, the options will be presented as "Options include."
4. If a particular option has historically proven to be a big mistake, it will be noted as a "disastrous option."
5. When relevant, positive and negative tradeoffs involved in all of the above will be given.

Likewise, much of the experience here is shared by many people. When it is important to the reader to know when a particular bit of advice or anecdote is specific to one person, it will be placed in quotes and the author's name given at the end in parentheses.

References will be made to various Worldcons of times past. Sometimes the reference will be by year, sometimes by city, sometimes by convention name. To aid the neophyte reader in figuring out what happened when, an appendix listing Worldcons by year, name, and city is provided.

Also please note the following:

#### Key Problems

##### Perennial Problems

are problems which have plagued more than one Worldcon committee, and which are quite likely to plague yours if you're not careful. Often these are problems with no one clear "best" solution, or a "best" solution that requires special skills, lots of money, or lots of man-hours.

##### Key Liaison

is an indication that this area of the convention is in practice tightly linked with one or more other areas of the convention. The people involved in key liaison roles had better be able to get along with each other. If they are not getting along, consider it a warning sign of problems ahead.

As mentioned above in the discussion of non-US Worldcons, this guide is intended to be dynamic and to grow over the years. Please send written feedback, suggestions, and anecdotes to: [crg@sflovers.org](mailto:crg@sflovers.org) (<mailto:crg@sflovers.org>)

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