

Publicity and Press Relations

From Worldcon Runners' Guide

Contents

- 1 Publicity and Press Relations
 - 1.1 Flyers
 - 1.2 Advertising
 - 1.3 Press Releases
 - 1.4 Electronic Media
 - 1.5 Local News Media
 - 1.6 Proclamations
 - 1.7 Press Kits

Publicity and Press Relations

Flyers

Flyers need to be distributed throughout the life of your Worldcon at major conventions around the world.

Each flyer should have artwork on the front to attract attention. Change the artwork every couple of months to keep people's attention drifting to the flyer. In particular, change the art whenever the flyer text changes.

Avoid white paper.

Print all flyers double-sided. This cuts down on flyers being snatched from the freebie table for the purpose of having their blank backs being used for signs, notes, etc.

Advertising

Ads should be taken out in all progress reports and program books for existing Worldcons (they'll usually trade, anyway.) Partly from courtesy and solidarity.

Ads should be taken out in major regional con program books to keep the convention in front of people.

We suggest including, in the Worldcon publications, an offer of a half-page ad credit to any legitimate Worldcon bid committee. The value of this credit may be applied against the cost of a larger ad. Also offer a full-page ad credit to any seated Worldcon committee. Note that space will not be automatically reserved.

Press Releases

A press liaison should be appointed early in the process, and regular press releases should be issued, to both fan and mundane media.

Electronic Media

Representatives should be appointed to both CompuServe and Genie, and they should be available regularly to answer questions and monitor rumors.

Regular information files should be made available for downloading. Ideally, progress report text would be made available. Certainly at a minimum, text of the current flyer should be made available.

Local News Media

Contact all local media at least six months prior to the con. You will probably be ignored—they don't want to hear about you until six weeks before the con.

At six weeks before the con, make sure the press gets a well-designed pre-con press kit that entices them to cover the con.

Feed the local gossip columnists "leaks" about special announcements to be made at-con. Note: do not provide the same tidbit to more than one columnist—if two or more run the same item as an "exclusive," they will become very angry with the con.

Proclamations

Getting proclamations from various governmental bodies is a neat form of egoboo and in lower-level government very easy to do.

It provides a possible entree into local news media, and certainly an item of interest for your progress reports and/or daily newsletter.

Just contact your local mayor's office and ask about getting the Mayor to proclaim a Science Fiction Week in honor of the Worldcon being in your city. (This is also something that regional cons can do in their cities)

Likewise, the governor of your state or province is usually more than willing to declare a Science Fiction Week on behalf of a Worldcon.

In the US, it is in theory possible to get a presidential proclamation declaring a nationwide Science Fiction Week. In practice, there are problems:

1. All such declarations must be routed through the House of Representatives, not the White House.
2. All of these bills must be routed through the usual committee and approval process. In order for this to happen, lots and lots of time is required. A key mistake made by Worldcons that have thought of this is to start thinking about it at, say, four months and counting. Wrong. If you want to go for it, start at a year out.
3. Bills of this type are not the highest priority on your congressman's plate. Once you have convinced your congressman's office to introduce such a bill, it will in practice be up to you to kvetch and nag the congressman's office to make sure it keeps moving through the bureaucracy.
4. Even if the bill passes, there is no guarantee that the President will sign it. Groundwork should probably also be laid starting a year in advance with the President's staff, so when the time comes they'll say, "What the heck, Bill. Sign it."

Press Kits

A set of professional-looking press kits should be assembled to be handed out to the press.

Issue press ID and consider escorting them throughout the Con. If they balk, remind them (diplomatically) that this is a private, members only, function and that the escort is helping them rather than the opposite, by taking them where they would not otherwise be permitted. If there is still incredible resistance, and you can overcome the urge to heave them out, at least follow them and take notes. Ask for a copy of any tapes they make (you never know, somebody might even give you one) or consider making your own audio tapes; it helps to keep them honest.

The press kit should include an overview letter with a rough schedule showing what is going on. A sample appears on the following page:

ConFrancisco press release

"canned" news stories for reporters

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 (<http://www.noreascon.org/users/sflovers/u1/wcrg/index.html>) | Table of Contents
 (<http://www.noreascon.org/users/sflovers/u1/wcrg/toc.html>) | crg@sflovers.org
 (<mailto:crg@sflovers.org>)

"World Science Fiction Society", "WSFS", "World Science Fiction Convention", "Worldcon", "NASFiC", and "Hugo Award" are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society (<http://www.wsfs.org/>), an unincorporated literary society.

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