

# The Scope of the Problem

## From Worldcon Runners' Guide

# The Scope of the Problem

## What We Are Facing

The Worldcon, she has changed.

It seems like just a few years ago, when a dozen or so buddies could put a Worldcon together over the course of a year in their spare time. Of course, that was when a large Worldcon was considered to be one with more than 500 people.

The theory is real simple. All you have to do is have a facility to get everyone together in, hold the WSFS Business Meeting and award the Hugos. Everything else (literally) is optional...in theory.

But—Fandom, for better or worse, has (through its Worldcon balloting) simultaneously demanded two irreconcilable features in Worldcons:

1. Worldcons should be open to "all of fandom," which means that a US-based Worldcon can expect 5000-8000 people. The Worldcon should be a 3-ring circus, with lots of tracks of varied events, appealing to a broad range of people.
2. The Worldcon committee should consist of amateurs, in the sense that the committee should not be salaried. In addition, there is a strong "underdog sympathy" streak which has sometimes resulted in enthusiastic but inexperienced committees finding a Worldcon in their hands.

To this, two other complicating factors make things even harder:

1. Due to the pace at which the mundane world books conventions, fandom must book the convention farther and farther in advance. This means that con committees have to be able to hold together and work together in harmony for longer and longer periods of time. This increases stress and makes it harder to get commitments from people who don't particularly feel like throwing away five years of their life.—It also results in surprise actions by con committee members who got into the Worldcon before they realized the amount of work actually involved.
2. Each Worldcon is financially independent of the others. This means that you have no slack for losing money. A regional convention can usually weather a bad year or two, but the situation when a Worldcon has a bad year is much more problematic. This makes the budget process, controls over spending, and the estimating of actual final membership (and hence income) the single most maddening aspect of Worldcon running.

The current situation appears as if it will continue for a while. Some fans actively acknowledge the need for an increased professional face, but this is balanced by the suspicion of handing the Worldcon over to any one individual or group. So it goes.

## Key Decisions to be made by the Board of Directors

Below is a list of the key decisions that a Worldcon board of directors must make during its tenure. These decisions are special in that they have a high-profile impact on the convention's image in fandom and/or on the convention's finances. They will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

In some cases, the decision is logically made by a lower level manager (division or department level), but because of its importance it must be ratified (and perhaps even modified) by the Board of Directors.

1. Registration Rates

What will the rates be, how often will they be increased, and how aggressively will they be increased?

Will there be daily memberships? Who gets free memberships?

2. Huckster and art show rates

3. Children: childcare and children's rates

4. Weapons policy

5. Facilities Contract

6. Organization of divisions and departments

7. Perks to give special interest groups such as SFWA, ASFA, etc.

8. Policy on free memberships.

9. Policy on whether to have a committee den, and if so, who can enter it.

Some groups feel strongly that an entity such as the committee den should exist; others think it is a remarkably bad idea.

10. Minimum number of hours that staff members have to work to be eligible for reimbursement.

11. Programming:

- a. Should programming be mandated to make use of every pro who volunteers? If not, what is the policy to be?

- b. What are the number of program items that program participants must be on in order to be eligible for reimbursement.

12. Program Book/Souvenir Book

- a. Decide whether to structure the at-con major publication as a "Souvenir Book" to be read later, or a true "Program Book" that is to be made use of at-con.

The recent trend has been towards a Souvenir Book format, with program information done as a separate, smaller publication.

- b. Copy count of progress reports and program books to print.

13. Logo.

14. The appearance and type of merchandise to be sold in the sales to members area.

15. Badge design

16. Hugo award's base design

**...to be continued...**

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