

## **WORLDCON RUNNERS GUIDE**

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **1.1 PROGRESS REPORTS**

Although you will post your information online as it becomes available, it is still important to create progress reports so that information can be found easily in one place. It's also important to remember that not everyone is computer savvy, and some people just prefer paper.

It is traditional to publish names of new members in each progress report. When publishing membership names in progress reports, it is not necessary to publish numbers as well, but it's useful to do so for voting purposes as voting deadlines approach. It is important to realize that some people do not want their names listed and to abide by their wishes.

Progress Report 0 (zero) will be handed out at the Worldcon where you win your bid. It is usually a one page, double-sided flyer and should list your site location, dates of your event, known Guests-of-Honor, and rate structure. Rate structure usually includes the cost of a Supporting Membership, how to upgrade to an Attending Membership, and the cost of a completely new Attending Membership. It must also give the date through which the rates are valid. PR0 should also be published simultaneously on your website and use social media to advertise that link. If anyone has requested publications to be mailed, then mail those people a copy as soon as possible after winning. Be sure to include ways to reach you, such as a mailing address, website address, and email address.

Progress Report 1 is usually published between two years and one year out. It should contain a list of all current members and their designated class (A for attending, S for Supporting, C for Child, and any other designations the convention may choose). It should also contain pertinent updates, such as the hotels you will be using and when reservations will be open. If membership rates will increase, be sure to list that as well. Highlight any special program/event days and/or times as well as a rough timeline for these during the convention. Will there be anything pre-con (Day 0) to do if you arrive early? What about the day after the convention officially ends? When will the Masquerade and Hugo Awards Ceremony be held? Will programming start at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. daily? Having a basic timeline at this point would be useful for those planning to attend.

Progress Report 2 is typically about six months after PR1. It can be distributed at the Worldcon immediately preceding yours, or just after, depending on PR1's date of publications. It should contain a more accurate timeline for programming and events, more details about your hotel(s), updates to the membership rates, etc. If anything

requires signing up in advance, such as kaffeeklatches or literary beers, then make sure to note the procedure. Some of that can be online pre-con, but some should be in-person at-con as well. Ultimately, that is your con's decision.

Progress Report 3 will be about six months pre-con and contain things that have changed or more detailed information. Progress 4 should be created and distributed shortly before the con. It should contain all final updates that members will need to know in advance. It is important to include local transportation access to your convention: trains, buses, taxis, as well as parking.

## **1.2 SOUVENIR (PROGRAM) BOOKS**

With the increasing complexity of Worldcon programming (and the late date at which it is usually finalized) and the increasing size of "program books," the terminology has evolved from "program book" to "souvenir book" and can run about 150-200 pages—certainly not convenient to carry around.

The souvenir book should contain the following:

- Masthead page, with name of convention, dates, guests, location, mailing address, email address, and a copyright notice. (Suncon left theirs off; it was spotted by Greg Bennett at the last minute, a rubber stamp was obtained, and all program books were hand-stamped!) It has probably happened since then as well.
- Committee and staff list. This should be as complete and detailed as possible, and updated just before the program book goes to press. Often this is the only public credit many con workers get. Each division manager must be kicked and pummeled into assembling and proofing the lists for their people.
- The WSFS Constitution, bylaws, business carried forward from the last Worldcon, and any known motions to be considered at this Worldcon (as of the deadline date).
- An alphabetical list of new members, with membership number and an indication as to who has attending and who has supporting memberships. Some people feel that if members' names were published in progress reports, the reprinting of all those names is a needless waste of space in the souvenir book. Others feel that printing all the names in one place in the souvenir book is a Good Thing, as it documents in the one publication that is likely to be kept by members exactly who joined that year. These days, that can add an enormous amount of pages to the book and may not be worth the cost.
- A map of North America and the World, showing members from each location. For North America, give figures for each state and province.
- A list of past Worldcons, including year, name, chairman, guests, attendance.
- The list of past Hugo winners. This can currently be obtained from the Long List of Worldcons at <http://www.smofinfo.com/LL/TheLongList.html>

- The list of this year's Hugo finalists.
- Introductory welcome from the chairman.
- Photographs and bios of the convention guests. If not a full bibliography for each guest, at least provide a selected bibliography.
- Photographs and bios of TAFF/DUFF winners, along with a short article on TAFF/DUFF. Table of contents.
- An index of advertisers.
- Artist credits for artwork appearing in the book.
- An In Memoriam page. It should list all SF fans, pros, and important people in sf-related pop culture, film/TV, etc. who died during the previous year. Most concons just list the names, but it would be nice if birth/death dates, and a line about the person's significance was included. Steven Silver maintains such a list.
- Lots and lots of ads to help pay for the thing!
- Welcome messages from the city, province/state authorities, governor/premier, secretary, minister of science, etc. (This is optional as such messages may not be available.)
- Code of Conduct and procedures to file a complaint.

## Optional Items

Depending on the size of the pocket program and the number of publications the concom wishes to produce, these items may need to go into another publication. The number of publications a concom wishes to produce is partly a financial decision, partly a decision based on what resources are available. But the information listed below does need to appear somewhere.

1. **Program Descriptions.** A one-line program title is not enough to let people know what to expect. Usually, a paragraph of information is needed, along with a list of the panelists and moderator. Sometimes the pocket program is designed to include this. If not, as complete a list should be printed in the program book. The program book version can be done by topic, and actual times should not be included (that's the job of the pocket program).
2. **Film program Descriptions.** Some conventions have a separate program guide for the film/video program. If this is not done, the program book should contain, at a minimum, a list of films booked as of press time (but not show times—that is for the pocket program.) If possible, a short description of each film, including year, director, writer, stars, historic significance, etc., should be included to whet people's appetites for specific films. The actual schedule should appear in the pocket program.
3. **Restaurant Guide.** Usually this is more useful as a separate publication that can be carried around. The program book might contain an article with detailed descriptions of some of the more interesting places to eat.

4. **Tourist information.** What is local that might be of interest to fans? Rather than detailed articles (which belong in progress reports), make some digest type summaries, as people are not going to read detailed articles at-con. Some prefer that no tourist information be printed in the program book.

### **What Not to Include in the Program Book**

**Fiction.** While in general, it is a bad idea to add fiction to the program book (it adds voluminous space with material that is probably a reprint anyway). There are some exceptions, including:

- If the con ran a short story contest of some type, it is appropriate to print winning entries in the program book.
- If the Guest of Honor had a short story s/he wanted to appear in the program book.

### **1.3 POCKET PROGRAM**

With the advent of technology, a pocket program no longer needs to fit in the pocket; it's on your smartphone! Again, however, be mindful that some people don't use or have smartphones, particularly visitors from another country whose phones work on a different system. There are several advantages to an electronic pocket program: it doesn't take up space; and it can be updated on the fly. There are things to consider, however, for both an electronic pocket program and a paper pocket program.

**A Pocket Program Should Be a Program.** The pocket program should show all information (or as much as possible) that a con member will need to navigate and survive at the con. Remember, the pocket program will be carried around when all other stuff (program book, info sheets, etc.) has been left in the hotel room.

**A Grid is Great.** For easy reference, nothing beats having the programming laid out in grid form, with places listed versus times.

For Pocket Programs being printed, pressure should be brought to bear on appropriate committee members to supply information on their events as early as possible. Progress should be tracked (and appropriate fires lit under appropriate people) at the highest level.

As a "default," the publications committee should start with the information for each department that was printed in the last couple of pocket programs.

**Places Should Be in Their Place.** The rooms used by the con should be listed in order, as explained in the introduction to the pocket program. This allows the grids themselves to serve as a rough map, showing which rooms are close to or far from others.

All of the rooms used by the con at any time on any day should be listed in a format like a two- page spread. Consistency is important to help fans find a given room. Note that the rooms listed should include those for standing functions (art show, dealers, etc.).

**Times Should Be Timely.** Whenever it may not be clear when an event begins and ends (e.g., it runs over two or more time slots), put the times explicitly in the description of events.

When looking for models of a paper pocket program, the one from ConFrancisco stands out as a fine example. It was 130 pages, 4 ½” high by 7” wide, spiral bound on the left, and contained just about everything desired in a reasonable type size! More recent Worldcons have tried different versions of this type with mixed results.

Items that must be in the pocket program:

- The name of the convention, location, dates and logo (if you have one).
- The usual boiler plate on Worldcon-related trademarks.
- The Copyright notice.
- A list of hours of operation for dealers’ room, exhibits, art show, registration, gofers/volunteers, information booth, daily newsletter, sales to members, child care, filking, gaming, con suite, masquerade registration, fan lounge, etc.
- Floor plans of the various facilities used (preferably with an index of meeting room names, and the facility/floor they are located on).
- Grids for all programming, special events, autograph sessions, hour by hour, by day.
- The Film schedule

The above is what would fit into a “slim” version of a printed pocket program—one designed with minimal size and maximum portability. If you follow the ConFrancisco model or are using an electronic program, you might also include

- Code of Conduct.
- A Speaker/participant index. This is so useful, but is almost never done! An index helps people to track down their favorite pro, friends, etc. Please consider doing this!
- A Table of Contents.
- The Convention’s address.
- Artwork to liven up the text, preferably humorous, and preferably related to the con or various areas of the con.
- Badge wearing policies (for admittance to events).
- Lost badge policy.
- Plug for volunteers.
- Smoking policy.

- Alcohol policy.
- Children policy (re: unescorted, etc.)
- Animal policy (guide dogs, snakes, white rats, etc.)
- Weapons policy
- A paragraph or two describing convention events such as Opening Ceremonies, Guest Reception, Dance, Masquerade, Regency Dance, Hugo Awards Ceremony, Closing Ceremonies, Blood Drive (if held), special lunches, etc.
- Map of the downtown area around the con facilities.
- Map and index to the dealers room. If space permits, include a one-line description of the merchandise.
- Descriptions of program items, including panelists and moderator, room and time. Some of the above information may duplicate what is suggested for the souvenir book. So long as the information is identical, it does little harm (and possibly some good) to duplicate items.
- Concise descriptions (including phone, hours of operation, cost) of nearby tourist attractions. Information on the local transportation system (buses, trains, cabs, trolleys, carriages, rickshaws, etc.) and parking.
- Locations of nearby grocery stores, copy shops, costumer supply stores, banks, pharmacies, service stations, churches / synagogues / mosques / etc.
- Note where automated teller machines can be found, and what cards they accept.
- Emergency numbers for police, AAA, highway patrol, suicide hotlines, rape crisis, etc.
- Space for notes, for each person to record his/her daily schedule (and party lists).

Some of the above may duplicate what is suggested for the souvenir book. So long as the information is identical, it does little harm (and possibly some good) to duplicate items.

## **1.4 FOOD GUIDE**

Fans want to eat at conventions, and they want interesting food at low prices. Since most fans are not on expense accounts or writing off their trip, they look for value and tend to avoid the expensive hotel restaurants that usually make out like bandits with large conventions.

For a good number of attendees, it will be their first visit to your city. One of the greatest services you can perform for them is to help them find that great meal with a good crowd of friends that will go down in fannish legend.

The greatest of all printed Worldcon food guides was the one George Alec Effinger did for the 1988 Worldcon in New Orleans, Louisiana. Those who have aspirations of doing a good job at writing a food guide would do well to study Effinger's effort. An excellent online version was done for Sasquan, Worldcon 73 in 2015, Spokane, Washington. Its

online restaurant guide is available at <http://sasquan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Sasquan-Restaurant-Guide-c.pdf>.

A good food guide should have the following characteristics:

- A thorough listing of all eating places within an 8-block (½ mile to full mile) radius.
- Outside of that radius, list the best of each type of cuisine the city offers, along with a guide to any special areas within a reasonable cab ride (Greektowns, Chinatowns, etc.)
- Each restaurant listing should contain: type of cuisine, operating hours, website, telephone number, and some indication of cost. Most common cost guidelines in the U.S. are multiple \$ signs; use one \$ for each \$10 per person of a typical meal. A truly superior guide will contain a couple of sentences to a couple of paragraphs on each place, noting house specialties and/or items to avoid.
- Note any 24-hour or late-night restaurants within walking distance.
- A map of the 8-block radius should be provided, with all street names listed. Depending on how many restaurants are in that area, either place numbers on the map and reference each restaurant by number, or divide the map into grids and give a grid reference as part of each restaurant listing. Some cities have apps that will do this on smart phones.
- Any restaurants with dress code requirements should be noted.
- Handicapped accessibility (or lack thereof) should be noted. How you wish to convey this information depends on what the situation is in the city.

The food guide should be assembled during the year prior to the con, and carefully reviewed and vetted by the committee no more than three months prior to the con. This is because restaurants close and hours change. You want it to be as current as possible. Your local Convention Bureau will probably have sample publications that can give you a running start on the restaurants in the downtown area.

If you wait until shortly before the convention, it will end up being slapped together and will reflect poorly on your city. This really needs to be one of the publications that the largest amount of care goes into!

Checking out restaurants for the food guide is one way various departments and subcommittees can get together and have fun helping out in the overall con effort. **Tip:** design a restaurant evaluation form for concom to fill out when visiting restaurants in the vicinity of the con hotel. You can have a lot of fun with this.

Your host hotels should contain at least one restaurant that has been negotiated to stay open on a 24-hour basis for the duration of the convention. Make sure your Facilities Liaison gets it into the contract.

Inexpensive restaurants within a two or three block area should be especially solicited to have special hours during the con, and/or to offer special coupons or discounts to members. Perhaps they could even advertise in the Souvenir Book or Food Guide. If you play your cards right, the Food Guide could be produced at no cost to the committee! In order to do this, however, you will need to have special solicitation letters (on committee stationery) written several months in advance, and make a major lobbying effort.

Most restaurants in a downtown area are oriented toward lunchtime business for local office workers during the week. Those restaurants that usually orient toward conventions are those that are upscale and appeal to people on expense accounts. They simply do not understand how we differ from business conventions, and it will take a major effort on your part to convince them otherwise!

You need to contact not just the shift manager of your targeted restaurants, but the general manager and possibly even the owners. If the restaurant belongs to a chain, the regional manager should be contacted as well. This whole idea of working with local restaurants requires far more work than most Worldcon committees realize, and the usual effort is too little, too late.

## **1.5 DAILY NEWSLETTER ('ZINE)**

### **Format of Daily Newsletter**

Three commonly-used formats in North America that have been used (in inches):

- a. 8 1/2" x 11"
- b. 8 1/2" x 14"
- c. 8 1/2" x 17", folded to create four pages

There are advantages and disadvantages to each. With 8 1/2" x 11", the newsletter staff often tends to put out an issue as soon as enough material arrives to fill one. With the four-page format, newsletters are needed less often but require more material.

Each issue should be printed on a different color paper, so that when fans see the newsletter, they can tell at a distance whether it is the issue they last read. Issue number is usually placed in the middle of the first page in large format in the background, but at a reduced contrast (watermark) so that the text can be easily read over it.

The layout should be convenient, consistent, and easy to read. The daily newsletter is not the place for a fan editor to try out avant-garde, esoteric layout techniques, i.e., it should not look like *Wired* magazine. The emphasis should be on making it easy to skim.



Two of the most important items that need to run in a consistent location are the party list and program changes (see below.) Items that tend to run in most issues should usually be placed in the same location each time.

Grey-shading boxes and such should be minimized. Given the haste with which this has to be produced, it's all too easy for the grey shading to end up blotting out text or making it difficult to read.

**Schedule for Daily Newsletter** Below is a suggested schedule for publishing, and typical items that would be in each particular issue:

1. Pre-First Day/Beginning of First Day
  - Initial orientation.
  - Notice that badges are required, and notice of the concom's policy on lost badges.
  - Weapons policy.
  - Lost and found location.
  - Newsletter schedule and where to drop off items.
  - Appeal for contributions; list types that are desired.
  - List of all publications available from the committee (pocket program, program book, food guide, film guide, video guide, children's programming, etc.) and where to get them.
  - Describe what a neofan is and point out where neofan programming will be.
  - Initial request for volunteers, with specifics on areas most in need of help.
2. First Morning
  - Final registration count of the night before.
3. First Evening
  - Results of preliminary Business Meeting.
  - Party list.
  - Warning when site selection voting ends.
4. Second Morning
  - Final registration count from the night before.
  - Yet another notice re: site selection, including hours.
5. Second Evening
  - Results of the first day's Main Business Meeting.
  - The upcoming evening's party list

- Notice of the Hogu Ranquet location (see Elst Weinstein)
6. Third Morning
    - The second night's final registration count.
    - Award winners from either the Masquerade or Hugo Awards ceremony (depending on when they're held).
  7. Third Evening
    - Site selection results, including statistics behind the vote.
    - Initial info on winning committee, including Guests, chairman, when/where registrations will be accepted, etc.
    - Results from second day's Main Business Meeting.
    - The upcoming evening's party list.
    - Highlights of Hogu Ranquet.
  8. Fourth Morning
    - The third night's final registration count.
    - Award winners from either the Masquerade or Hugo Awards ceremony (depending on when they're held).
    - The upcoming evening's party list, including an explanation of what a Dead Dog Party is.
    - Special thank-yous to newsletter staff from the editor.
    - Explanation of gripe session and location (with re-iteration of the weapons policy)

Depending on the amount of news available, the size of each issue, and the skills and determination of the editorial staff, two issues could be put out on Thursday and Monday, with the occasional Extra.

Likewise, it is not uncommon for three issues per day on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. There is also a special Masquerade issue and a special Hugo Award results issue.

While Extras are a good idea if there is breaking news or simply too much material, it is best to keep Extras to a minimum, and instead to have fans expecting the newsletter at a given time, so they will get into the habit of looking for it first thing in the morning and before/after dinner, and not have to wonder about whether an issue has come out recently with important information.

Morning issues should be available by 9 a.m., no later than 10 a.m. (ideally, they will have been put together the previous night.) Midday editions should be out around one or two (to catch people coming back from lunch.) Evening editions should be out around 5 or 6 p.m. (to catch people on their way to/from dinner).

## **Boilerplate Items to Include**

**Logo and colophon information.** At the top of the first page of each issue should be the logo/title of the newsletter, along with the issue number, the date and time of distribution. Though the logo/title can be “artsy” depending on the artist who did it, the issue number, day of the week, date and time should be in a large, easy to read font. It should be immediately clear to the reader which issue is being viewed.

It is fannish tradition for each Worldcon to name its newsletter. Usually the name contains a direct or indirect reference to the host city; often the name also has a touch of humor in it. Examples: Lobster Tails (Boston), Daley Planet (Chicago, referring to their well-known mayor). Many Worldcons have fan artists do stylized renditions of the newsletter title with accompanying artwork; fan artists are often amenable to doing this, as it gives them exposure. Be sure to credit the artist doing each issue’s title.

**Party lists.** In order to help fans party-hop easier, party lists should be broken down by hotel, and within each hotel listed from the top party floor down. That way, the fans can figure at a glance which hotel has the parties they want to go to first, and can take one elevator trip to the top, and use stairs (mostly) to walk down from one party to another.

Party lists are one of the most important things people look for. In general, issues containing party lists should place the party list at the beginning of the newsletter on the left side of the page, right below the colophon information. This also makes the list easy to refer to when people are carrying it in their pockets at night.

If possible, leave some blank space after the party list to provide room for fans to make their own additions as they are invited to private parties.

In issues with no party list, run a box in the lower left of the front page announcing when the issue with the next party list will be out.

**Changes/additions to programming, films, etc.** This is important information, second only to where the parties are. Normally, it runs in the upper left of the first page, immediately after the party list (if any), or in the upper right of the first page, immediately below the colophon. If there are no new program changes, a boxed item in the lower right of the front page should announce this.

### **Other items to include:**

- Deadline for next issue, and anticipated distribution time.
- Corrections of any errors in the last pre-con progress report.
- Corrections of any errors in the pocket program.
- Award winners for items in addition to the Hugos, Masquerade and Art Show.

Where to get ice for parties.

- Special notices for events the committee wishes the attendees to take special notice of, e.g., Guest of Honor reception, Meet the Pros Party, etc. Also thank-yous to people the committee especially wants to thank for helping out, or for a generous donation of equipment, etc.
- Crime reports. If there are reports of muggings, pick-pocketing, theft, vandalism, etc., the attendees need to know.
- Critical lost and found items: medication, wallets/purses, small children, etc.
- Requests for translators for non-English speaking fans who need assistance. (Russian and Japanese are the usual ones requested.) Don't run a generic request for translators—wait until you get a request.
- Listings of religious services organized for fans. Be specific about type of service.

Notices of banquet/special event tickets that are still available.

- Requests for volunteers. These notices should be run several times., Include some humor if at all possible. Requests for volunteers for particular areas (e.g., Masquerade gophers) are especially important.
- Volunteer requests should include mention of the tangible rewards available (if any —e.g., teeshirts, den access), and intangible ones (e.g., good way to meet people, round out con experience, give something back to fandom, etc.).
- Emphasize no experience necessary.
- Specific instructions on where and when to report to volunteers should always be included.
- Special notices by the hotels, good (deals on ice, restaurant specials, extended restaurant hours) and bad (corkage rules, noise rules, etc..)
- Also note any special notices regarding how to expedite room checkout.
- If the hotel wants the newsletter to plug its concession stands, etc., do so.
- Shuttle bus schedules and information.
- Registration figures for each day, displayed in tabular form for easy reading. For example:

Friday Total Pre-registered who picked up badges xxx xxxx		
At-the-door new registrations	xxx xxxx One-day memberships sold	Total: xxx    xxxx

Last-minute masquerade notices.

- Special fan auction notices.
- WOOF notices
- Obituaries for fans/pros who died since the program book went to press.
- Birth announcements
- Engagement, wedding announcements.
- Advertise pickup of staff shirts and purchase of convention items for sale.
- Coverage of opening ceremonies.
- Weather reports. The first and last issue of the day should contain critical weather forecast information: whether rain is expected and predicted high and low temperatures. Numbers should be provided in both Celsius and Fahrenheit.
- Any critically important real-world news, e.g., the death of a famous person, high-profile resignations, invasions, etc.

### **Optional Items to Include**

- Some parties have special features or special announcements. If space allows, it's a common courtesy to run descriptive items (within reason).
- Try to find out:
  - a. Oldest fan attending
  - b. Youngest fan attending
  - c. Fan attending who has been at the most Worldcons
  - d. Fan who had the most difficulty in getting to the convention
  - e. Most humorous/strangest button actually being worn.
  - f. Most humorous/strangest T-shirt actually being worn.
  - g. How many past Worldcon chairs are attending, etc.
- Ask for "top 10 list" submissions a la Dave Letterman. There may be some usable submissions.
- Party reviews. Make sure these are non-partisan, i.e., commenting primarily on neat things said or done at the parties, not hatchet jobs on groups that the writer doesn't like.
- Highlights of the Hogu Awards ceremony. Contact Elst Weinstein for this.
- Encourage the various departments to provide interesting statistics, e.g., number of panels/pieces of art in the art show, etc.
- Con Survival Tips:
  - a. Farber's Foot Saver Principle: Sit down whenever you have the opportunity. – Gary Farber
  - b. Murphy's Corollary #636-2: the shuttles will only run on time when you're not in a hurry. Be forewarned. – Ross Pavlac

- c. Spike's Leap of Faith: When approaching a revolving door which has an open segment in front of you, do not stop abruptly and do not hesitate. Step inside or run the risk of being stuffed inside. – Spike Parsons
- d. Fannish etiquette recommends spinning your propeller instead of tipping your beanie. – Marie Bartlett-Sloan

Restaurant reviews or short recommendations. The importance of this is directly proportional to the quality of the conglom's food guide. In any event, reviews should be limited to restaurants that are close (walk or short cab ride), relatively inexpensive and/or specialty ethnic.

- Every couple of days, run the official exchange rates for local currency against U.S. dollar, British Pound, Australian Dollar. If there are places that have especially good exchange rates, publicize them.
- Short definitions of fannish terms that are in common use: Smof, neofan, etc.
- Teasers for items in the next issue.
- Liaison With Other Departments. Other departments in the convention are quite often up to their elbows in alligators. When this happens, notifying the newsletter can fall to a low priority. Be sure to stay in touch with key areas of the con, and if you haven't heard from them in, say, 24 hours, send a reporter over there to see if there are any updates.
- Areas to be absolutely sure to keep in touch with include:
  - a. Chairs
  - b. Registration
  - c. Programming
  - d. Special Events
- In particular, make sure you have specifically made arrangements to have the results of the Hugo Awards ready at the end of the ceremony. Absolute secrecy must be maintained regarding these results prior to then. Make sure arrangements are made to get the final results ASAP to:
  - a. Convention Services/Operations
  - b. Hotel Liaison
  - c. Site Selection

**Make sure the newsletter is proofread carefully.** One of the problems facing the newsletter editor is that s/he is usually an out-of-towner, and hence did not attend committee meetings prior to the con. This makes her/him unfamiliar with committee policies and specific political hot buttons. Also, in the heat of putting newsletters together, poor word choices can be made accidentally, or a dubious source may submit an

inappropriate (or inaccurate) news item that may set off nuclear incident if published. Be sure to spell check each issue. An inopportune typo (“Condigeo”) may cause lots of laughs at your expense.

As a safeguard against this, a con can appoint one or more official reviewers. These individuals must be reachable, and are summoned when the newsletter is 100% complete and literally about to be handed to the printer. In most cases, this is not a great burden to the newsletter staff, and this system has prevented some embarrassing gaffes. It’s customary for the newsletter staff to give the reviewers a couple of hours warning when an issue is almost ready.

### **Equipment for Daily Newsletter**

Have at least two personal computers and two laser printers on hand. This is important because:

- one person can be laying out the current issue while another is on the other machine polishing a last-minute article;
- if one of the PC’s or printers breaks down, there is a backup. While it would be nice if the machines can be networked, this is not absolutely necessary.
- The convention should rent equipment rather than trying to borrow machines from local fans. With rental equipment, the exact hardware configuration can be specified, and the machines are delivered in “vanilla” condition. Insurance is easier to obtain for rented machines; it’s usually part of the rental cost.
- Getting a PC/printer serviced in a hurry can be easier with a PC rental company (assuming you try to find one that provides service on holiday weekends).

### **Printing Method**

If you use machines/supplies donated by corporations, make sure the agreement is in writing and includes guarantees of supplies. Make the donation(s) known to the convention and be sure to write a thank-you letter. One year, Gestetner agreed to provide machines, which they did. They also promised to provide ink and supplies, and reneged on that because it turned out that Labor Day was the date for the annual inventory of the local Gestetner distributor. The con ended up using a local photocopy store.

Nowadays, the printing method of choice is high-speed photocopying. Again, there is a tradeoff. The con can either rent a photocopier or make a deal with a local photocopy store (see below.) The cost per copy cost is quite low if you rent, but make sure the following questions are answered satisfactorily:

1. Is repair service available?
2. Who else will be using the machine? If other departments need photocopies, where will they go?

3. Have sufficient toner and paper supplies been ordered? Can unused supplies be returned afterward for a full refund?

**Distribution Method for Daily Newsletter.** There is a tradeoff here. The more places you distribute the newsletter, the more staff you may need to run around and give out copies. On the other hand, the newsletter needs to be easy to obtain.

If possible, the daily newsletter should be distributed in each hotel in which function space is being used, plus the convention center (if any.) That way, no one will need to leave the building they are in to obtain them. One of the distribution points should be the committee information desk. (The information desk should be the first place that new issues are delivered to, as this is the convention's front line for having current information.)

In addition, copies of the newsletter should be taken to the following departments:

- Headquarters

If possible, a copy should be placed in everyone's mailbox.

- Program Operations
- Convention Services/Operations
- Registration
- Committee Den
- Fan Lounge
- Dealers Room entrance
- Art Show entrance

If there are enough staff and if the physical layout permits, a distribution point at the entrance to the con suite should be considered.

If an Extra is being issued with truly critical news, it might be a good idea to have a staffer go around in areas where fans are congregating to distribute it as quickly as possible.

The first issue should be distributed at con registration as people arrive. If there are staff available, they should be greeting people as they arrive at registration and hand them the newsletter, so they have something to read in line. This helps to set a welcoming tone for the convention.

Putting a distribution point near the freebie/flyer distribution area is probably not a good idea, since the newsletter could get lost in the crowd. Try to ensure it has its own distinctive locations. Some conventions use a system like "Filthy" Pierre's, i.e. cubbyholes for each issue of the newsletter.



Remember, these are all suggestions, subject to adjustment depending on the layout of your facility; don't overdo it on the number of distribution points!

Start with an initial print run of 2,000 and adjust up or down depending on the number of copies actually picked up. Note that it is traditional to over-print, so that fans can pick up the previous if they missed them earlier or want additional copies.

There are two main options for how to place the newsletters for distribution:

1. On a table in stacks. Make sure they aren't next to other paper material so that it is obvious where the newsletters are.
2. On vertical pegboard stands, similar to the freebie table stands.

In either case, a large sign indicating this is a newsletter distribution point should be posted.

A special newsstand-type box can be cute, but does not easily allow for distribution of back issues.

**Hoax Newsletter.** Sometimes a hoax newsletter is produced at a convention. The hoax newsletter generally parodies the title and contents of the official committee newsletter, and spoofs the concom and/or various pros/fans in attendance. It is rumored that this is sometimes put together on the very same equipment as the official newsletter, and often with the cooperation and active participation of the staff. No Comment.

**Local Photocopy Stores.** Both the committee and individual fans will need to do a lot of copying, and it will almost certainly be beyond the capabilities of whatever copiers are provided by and for the committee.

It will therefore be of high interest to inform the members where the nearby photocopy stores are, particularly those that have good hours over a major holiday.

Even more than that, though, because of the huge amount of photocopying, the committee should endeavor to take competitive bids from local photocopy stores to see who will become the "official" photocopy store for the convention. In return for the official designation, the store might agree to extended hours and provide a stipulated discount to committee and attendees, e.g., anyone who shows a con membership badge.

As an example of the savings that can result, a copy job was quoted at several copy stores in the area around the con hotel. The low bid was \$78 and the high bid was \$102. When the closest copy store to the hotel was informed that their bid was above average (\$96) and that the convention would of course be taking its business elsewhere, the copy center said, "Uh, what's the low bid?" When he was told, the manager paused for a minute and

said, “we can match that.” The result was both the lowest price and the most convenient location!

The dirty little secret of these places is that making copies costs them almost nothing but amortization for wear and tear on the machines, the price of the paper and maybe labor (if someone has to work overtime). On the job quoted above, paper accounted for about \$12 of the cost; the rest was for wear and tear, ink, and labor.

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