

WORLDCON RUNNERS GUIDE

SCOPE

The Worldcon has changed over the years since inception in 1939. 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 little more than 500 people.

In theory, Worldcon requirements are simple. Have a facility where everyone can gather, hold the WSFS Business Meeting, administer Site Selection, and hold the Hugo Awards vote. Everything else (literally) is optional . . . in theory.

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

1. Worldcons should be open to “all fandom,” which means that a U.S.-based Worldcon can expect 5000-8000 people. The Worldcon should be a multi-track event (up to 32 simultaneous items at LACon 4 in 2006), appealing to a broad range of people;
2. The Worldcon committee should consist of amateurs (volunteers), 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.

In addition:

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<http://www.noreascon.org/users/sfrovers/u1/wcrg/index.html>)<http://www.noreascon.org/users/sfrovers/u1/wcrg/toc.html>)<mailto:crg@srovers.org> “World Science Fiction Society”, “WSFS”, “World Science Fiction Convention”, “Worldcon”, “NASFiC”, “Hugo Award”, the Hugo Award Logo, the distinctive design of the Hugo Award trophy, and “Lodestar Award” are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

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1. Due to the pace at which the non-fannish world books conventions, fandom must book the convention further and further in advance. This means that convention committees (concoms) 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 devoting four or more years of their lives. It also results in surprise actions by convention committees who got involved in the Worldcon before they realized the amount of work actually involved.
2. Each Worldcon is financially independent of the others. This means that there is no slack for losing money. A regional convention can usually weather a bad year or two, but if a Worldcon has a bad year there is no way to cover the loss. This makes the budget process, controls over spending, and the estimating of actual final membership (and hence income) the single most maddening aspect of running a Worldcon.¹

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.

Some Key Decisions

A Worldcon board of directors must make several key during its tenure, and these decisions will 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 elsewhere in this Guide.

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 or aggressively will they be increased? Will there be daily memberships? Who gets free memberships? What different categories of rates will you have (e.g., for children, youth, First Worldcon, or something else)? Who is eligible for a free membership?
2. **Dealers Room and Art Show rates**
3. **Children:** Will there be childcare?
4. **Weapons Policy**
5. **Facilities Contract**

¹ In the past 15 years or so, the Worldcon community has helped to deal with this by instituting pass-along funds, whereby a Worldcon commits to share its profit with the next three upcoming Worldcons to help ensure they, too, can at a minimum break even.

6. Divisions and Departments
7. Perks for Special Interest Groups, e.g., SFWA, ASFA, etc.
8. Staff Den/Lounge. Some groups feel strongly that an entity such as the Staff Den / Lounge should exist; others think it is a remarkably bad idea.
9. Minimum number of hours that staff members have to work to be eligible for perks, such as reimbursement or merchandise.
 - a. Programming. 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 or a discounted membership rate?
10. Other Considerations. This is just a short list of some of the other things that a Worldcon committee will need to consider:
 - a. Will your convention have a hybrid component?
 - b. Will your publications be electronic-only, printed, or both?
 - c. Will you have a “sales to members” area? What type of merchandise do you want to sell?
 - d. What badge design will you use?
 - e. Who will design the Hugo Award’s base?