

WORLDCON RUNNERS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This website 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 Worldcon.

This is an evolving website and is not intended to be comprehensive. It is an attempt to collect some useful information and avoid past mistakes.

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

1. 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.

Though efforts have been made to keep the advice general, the focus is largely upon Worldcons run in the United States since (a) U.S. Worldcons tend to be significantly larger, and hence more complex; (b) there are more Worldcons in the U.S. than elsewhere (largely a reflection of the fact that the majority of worldwide SF fandom is in the U.S. though this is changing); and (c) most of the contributors to this guide are primarily familiar with U.S. Worldcons.

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

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situations, there are maybe four or five solutions with largely positive results (but some negative tradeoffs) or 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 con-running as to the correct solution to a particular problem.

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

1. If there is no one clear “best” solution, the options will be presented as “Options include.”
2. If a particular option has historically proven to be a big mistake, it will be noted as a “disastrous” option.
3. When relevant, positive and negative tradeoffs involved in all of the above will be given.
4. 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 con-running as to the correct solution to a particular problem.

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.

There are many references in this Guide to various Worldcons of times past. The reference might be by year, by city or by convention name. Please refer to <http://www.smofinfo.com/LL/TheLongList.html> for a detailed list of previously held Worldcons.

Also please note the following:

Key Problems are problems that have plagued more than one Worldcon committee, and are quite likely to plague yours if you’re not careful. Often these are problems with no

one clear “best” solution, or a solution that requires special skills, lots of money, or lots of people-hours.

A Key Liaison Role 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 must be able to get along with each other. If they are not, consider it a warning sign of problems ahead.

As mentioned above, this guide is intended to be dynamic and to grow over the years. Please send written feedback, suggestions, and anecdotes to: guide@wsfs.org.