Wish we'd met in Birmingham.

Organising the last Intergalactic S.F. Convention on Zygon was a real nightmare. It was a black hole for entertainment, the Chairman gave me a rocket over the transport arrangements, and the food was only fit for a K9. It was a close encounter of the worst kind.

Now I'm thanking my lucky stars for Birmingham. I knew I'd landed in the right place when I saw the choice of over 120 conference venues, superb hotels, spectacular entertainment, and I was over the moon with the interplanetary cuisine.

That's why this humble alien came down to earth and clipped the coupon.

My next Convention will be out of this world!

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Introduction

Welcome to Conscription.

This programme book has been handed to you, hopefully together with a copy of Con-Runner and various other bits and pieces.

Being the first con-runners conference it is difficult actually to think of a good introduction to the programme book. As you can gather this programme book is not typical of the traditional convention, but neither is Conscription. To reiterate a point made in our PRs, Conscription has not been set up to teach fans how to run conventions. Rather, it is in existence as a forum to exchange experience, and to provide discussion.

The contents of this programme book follow on the series of articles published in our PRs. We have a broad selection of articles, including one by Maggie Dalton giving the hotels view of conventions.

There will also be a post con publication which will summarise the results of discussions at the convention. This may be a joint publication with ConRunner.

The committee wish to point out that the opinions expressed in each article are those of the author in question, and are not to be considered as expressing the view of the committee or of the convention.

We would like to thank everyone for their help in getting the con together. Particular thanks go to all those who submitted articles and those who helped produce the publications. With thank in advance everyone who has agreed to take part in the programme as speaker, session chair or seminar group facilitator.

Concerning Committees - The Internal Structure of Conventions

Tim Illingworth

So there you are, in the pub, and someone's just had an idea - "Let's run a Convention!". The best thing to do at this point is shoot him, and save yourselves two or three years of hard work for no discernible reward. But you've all been drinking, and agree. How do you go on from there, and minimise the work while maximising the pleasure? What you now need is to set up an appropriate committee structure for your type of convention. This article sets out some of my thoughts on the subject.

First, of course, you have to define your convention - what theme (if any), what size where and when it will be held, what facilities it will offer and how much programming to run. The expected size, whether you go for an 100-person 'local' con or a 6,000-member Worldcon, is the main factor in how much work is involved and what sort of committee is needed.

Committee Size

In my experience, the committee ought to be about 4% of the projected final membership. By 'committee' I mean all those involved in the pre-con organisation that makes it happen - people who run individual programme items are not included, nor, necessarily, are those who drive the vans to pick up the equipment, but the people who organise those people certainly are.

These figures are based on the existing practice - they give a committee of 8 for a 200-person Unicon, 30 for a 750-person Eastercon-sized conven-

tion and 240 for a 6000-member Worldcon - all of which sound about right. For example, Contrivance currently has 29 people working at committee (not main committee) level.

COMMITTEE MATTERS
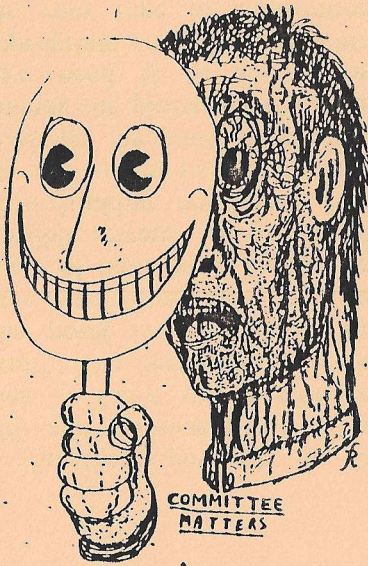
A number of other factors will affect the size - the committee needs to have at least six members if the convention is to be at all organised - a convention of twenty people with no programme or con-provided facilities can get away with a committee of one, but as soon as the convention starts doing much for its members the committee needs more people, in order to have appropriate skills, sufficient diversity and enough energy to get the work set up and done. The more programme streams a convention has, the larger the committee necessary to plan and run them, but this decision is largely a function of the convention size, and so is already accounted for in the 4% rule. Games rooms, video rooms and newsletters are all factors which increase the necessary committee size.

Now, small committees running small conventions can run efficiently when all the members are together, but no committee of 30 members can ever hope to reach a decision (not even to go down to the pub), so it needs to be split into appropriate parts. It is my view that the largest workable committee has ten members, and even that's getting a bit too large for comfort.

Committee Structure

The sub-committee structure is necessary not only to break down the workload, (which is heavy) but also

because people will resign from the committee. This is a regrettable fact of life (Contrivance has had two resignations so far) but it is possible to take precautions by ensuring that at least two of the main committee know about everything.

For large (500-1000 member) conventions, experience suggests a three-level structure (which sounds much worse than it is!). At the top is the main Committee, which has overall reponsibility for the convention. The members have no specific brief, but look after their own areas of interest. Below this are the sub-committees, each of four or five members, about half of whom are members of the main Committee and who therefore tend to talk about its work at main Committee meetings. At the bottom are the sub-contractors - people with responsibility for one specific area of the convention (book room, art show, etc) who are not on a sub-committee. These people should report to a specific main Committee member who is on the appropriate sub-committee.

For medium (300-500 member) conventions the sub-committee level can be omitted - working with a main committee and the sub-contractors.

Super-giant conventions (Worldcons) may need to add more levels - eg of subcontractor subcommittees - in order to make things managable. It is important to remember that formal communication paths must be defined and used, otherwise major problems will arise.

Personnel

Now that the size of the committee has been defined, you have to decide what jobs need doing, and who should do them. It is vital to get this right at first allocation, otherwise you can wind up with people with the best intentions in the wrong jobs. The usual recruitment method starts with about three to six people in a pub or party, all of whom will want to be on the main committee. Accept this, but remember that it is better to expand the committee to bring in specific skills than to give jobs to unsuitable people because they're there.

For each committee, there are three jobs that have to be done to make it work. Firstly, one member, usually the chairman, should act as a kicker, making sure the rest of the

Committee get on with things. Secondly, someone else should take the committee minutes - you may rotate this among the other members, but make sure it gets done. We ran CamCon entirely without minutes, but that was a small con with a committee who tended to talk together at least twice a week (and I wouldn't do it again!). Lastly, a list of action points outstanding should be produced and updated after each meeting. This is probably best done by the kicker or a permanent secretary, as it really has to be the same person all the time.

Sub-Committee Areas

Now that you've got your people, what areas should they be concerned with? I've listed below the areas and committee sizes that we are using for Contrivance - obviously this is only a guide to what is appropriate.

Publications

(5 members, 4 main committee): Produces the PRs and the Programme Book, as well as any other publications and publicity material. Get the final PR and the Programme Book done by different people - it's too much for one.

Programme

(7 Members, 5 main committee) and *Fan Room* (3 members, 1 main committee): It's their job to make up the programme ideas and arrange them into a workable form. The members include a films specialist. We also have brain-storming sessions in the main Committee to think of ideas.

"Tech, Ops & Logs"

(7 Members, 3 main committee): This covers the following areas:

- Ops

The day-to-day running of the con, including shift rotas, the green room and crisis management. Gophers that move.

- Stewards

Check membership badges, guard the art show and book room etc, and quieten down potential trouble. Gophers that sit still.

- Logs

Getting things to the con, and taking them away afterwards. *A separate subject from Ops.*

- Tech

Looks after technical equipment (e.g. amps, mixers, projectors).

It also covers those sub-contractors who require equipment or transport organisation.

Site

(3 members, all main committee): Handles the negotiations with the hotel and other aspects of the site (eg local shops, conference centre). For more details see Roger Perkin's article.

Finance

(3 members, 1 main committee): Not so much a sub-committee, more a working arrangement to keep the money and databases in step. Meets when necessary, like after a major convention.

Travel

(4 members, all main committee): Whilst obviously necessary for us, this wouldn't usually apply, except for cheap rail fares.

In addition, we have sub-contractors for the dealer's room, art show, games room and newsletter.

This set-up translates fairly readily into an on-the-day organisation, with some sub-committees adding more people and others having finished their jobs and releasing people to deal with other aspects of the convention. That, however, is a subject for an article in its own right - and I've got a committee to run right now.
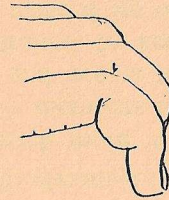
Computer databases for large SF conventions

John Dallman

A few notes on running membership lists on a computer. I'm running the Contrivance list and researched the subject fairly thoroughly with Colin Fine (who ran the Conspiracy database) and Roger Perkins (who ran it for Beccon '87), as well as asking a few other conventions mentioned below.

1. Do you need a computer-based system?

For basic record-keeping, you don't. A loose-leaf binder will do the job quite well.

The real advantages of a computer system are:

- It can print address labels. This is a major advantage, once you've tried writing them by hand.

- You can keep a backup copy - in fact, you have to. Data stored on computer is a bit easier to lose or destroy than paper, but you only have one copy of the paper list.

- You can check how much money you should have. This is necessary - mistakes are going to be made.

Some disadvantages are:

- It's much more 'secret' from the other members of the committee, and access to it has to be controlled to keep it from getting messed up or misinterpreted - no joke, this, there have been serious committee arguments started by misunderstanding the contents of a membership database.

- You rely on an expensive bit of equipment to keep things running. This will only break down when it's very inconvenient.

2. Who runs it?

Get somebody who is pretty dedicated. A lot of regular work is required and it's unlikely that you'll be able to hand over to anybody else with any ease at all. In the worst case, you'll have to rekey all the data (assuming you have a print-out that is, and haven't lost it all), so pick somebody who is capable, reliable and unlikely to gaffiate.

Contrivance discovered that the database person does not have to be a member of the main con committee. We found this out when I resigned from the main committee, but had to keep on with the database owing to the impossibility of finding anybody to take it on.

If the database isn't a committee post, it needs frequent contact with the committee to check things are OK - Contrivance only found a subtle bug in the accounting through frequent contact.

3. Running the mailing address

It is very nice if you have somebody willing to both open and reply to all the post and keep the membership list up-to-date. Follycon managed that. Conspiracy tried it and

only managed as well as they did because they had a large reserve of willing and computer-literate labour in Cambridge.

Beccon had Mike and Kathy Westhead working together to open all the mail, reply to it and type it into the computer. Roger Perkins then did all the rest of the computer work - both homes had compatible computer systems. This way of doing it is nice, but involves trusting each other not to mess up the database.

Contrivance has Tim Illingworth opening, logging and answering mail. Things to do with membership then get passed to me in batches, to be entered and then passed onto Roger Perkins, who checks the mail against my computer printouts and archives it all.

There's no best system. Use whichever procedures you're completely sure will work, but keep checking!

4. Computer hardware

The choice is usually between using a machine at work and a home computer. If you do use an employer's machine, be very sure that you'll have free use of it until a year after the convention date and that

nobody has any right at all to prevent you doing it. You'll also need it for unreasonable amounts of time just before the convention.

Only Worldcons are rich enough to consider buying a microcomputer, so most of us have to look at any home machines around and try and decide if they're up to it.

Raw computer power is not very important - if you didn't have lots of time to waste, you wouldn't be doing the job in the first place. The crucial measure is the amount of floppy disk or hard disk space you've got available, ON A SINGLE DISK. This is the limit on the size of the database, and you'd better be generous in deciding how much you'll need. A good rule of thumb is 1K (1024 characters) for each member - don't laugh! You won't believe how fast it vanishes, and the disk space for holding the database program and all its add-on files has to come out of that too.

Out of the home computers I've noticed fans with, what might do the job?

- Sinclair Spectrum, Commodore 64 and most 8-bit computers. Don't even try it. You'll be wasting your time, unless your convention has under 100 members and you're naturally brave, ingenious and motivated.

- Sinclair QL Don't try it unless you've got disk drives. With them, it should be fairly feasible.

- BBC Micro With the biggest disk drives, this is feasible, just about. Beccon used BBC micros with twin 400K drives and found them adequate, but the database software not all one would want. They used a database program with a special trick for treating the drives as a single 800K drive, and thereby had space for an Eastercon.

- Amstrad PCW. Wincon are using this, with LocoScript on an 8256, which is just about OK for a small con. For anything bigger, you would need the PCW 8512, so as to have a 720K drive There are some decently powerful database programs available too, although you'll have to use CP/M with them.

- Atari ST and MacIntosh. Eastcon are using MacIntosh. I haven't seen a con run on the Atari, but it should work fairly well. You might get away with a single floppy disk drive, but a second drive or a hard disk would be a good idea.

- IBM PC and similar. These seem the most popular for the job at present. Follycon and Contrivance both use IBM PCs and Conspiracy used an Apricot, which has about the same capabilities. A hard disk or floppy disks larger than the standard 360K are necessary for a large convention and a good idea anyway.

5. Software

- Database

This is the 'usual' way of doing it, and what I'll mostly write about below.

- Spreadsheet

With a powerful spreadsheet program, and enough memory to hold the entire membership list as well as the program, keeping one membership record on each spreadsheet line is quite attractive. Follycon did this with Lotus 1-2-3. Things to watch for are ability to print address labels and decent searching and sorting. Memory can be awkward with large cons - Follycon were hitting troubles with 900 members in a 640Kb IBM. For a fairly small convention, it is much easier than a database.

6. Using a database

A full-power database management system rather than a 'membership list' program is best, as the latter programs tend to be rather limited.

All databases work in terms of 'fields' - the individual numbers, dates and groups of words that the data naturally divides into. Naturally to you, that is, as you have to set up a description of a membership record in terms of the fields it contains before you can put any data in. Fields are almost always of a fixed length, which wastes storage, but makes life so much easier for the database system that it's well worth it.

- Data to hold

a) Name and address

Don't stint yourself on the field sizes for the name and address. I have 30 characters for surname and 25 for forename, three fields of 25 characters each for address, plus 30 for the town names and 20 each for the country, postcode and country. I've needed all of that a few times with the Contrivance list. Trying to organize the addresses closely isn't wise for addresses in the UK. Simply treat them as lines of text. Don't forget you have to allow for badge names - I use

a separate field for them - and for fans who don't have forenames (eg, Tibs).

b) Dates of everything

1) Date of buying pre-supporting membership

2) Ditto, supporting

3) Ditto, attending

4) Date of last change of address

5) Date room booking form received

6) Date Alterations to room booking received

7) Date of last alteration to the record, supplied by the program rather than the user, to catch omissions.

c) Receipt Numbers

If you can number all your receipts and type the numbers in, it's obviously very useful in sorting out the inevitable mistakes.

- Indexes

There are two normal ways you can arrange things into order in a database - you can sort the member records into order of, say, surname, or you can use a program that keeps an index of which name is where in the data. The second is the one to use - sorting takes ages and you have to re-sort each time you add data.

The obvious index is by membership number, but you'll also want to index names, and possibly parts of addresses.

a) Indexing Names

Now, one field may not hold all the information you need to get the records in the right order or select the ones you need. Any decent database provides the ability to work with several fields at once. This can work by just telling the program which ones to use and letting it set up the details. Most databases, however aren't quite that subtle and require you to create imaginary fields, often called 'overlay' fields. These consist of hunks of the membership record that don't hold any data of their own - they hold other fields. You can then index the overlay fields just like a normal one. For example, to get names in the right order, create separate fields for surname and forename, like this:

| Surname | Forename |

Now, if you were to index the surnames, it would be quite random if "Bill Smith" came before or after "Jim Smith". If you created an overlay field

called 'Fullname', you would have:

Fullname	
Surname	Forename

So:

Smith	Bill
Smith	Jim

is now in the right order.

b) Grouping members

It's very helpful for the budget if you can print address labels so that people who live at the same address come out on adjacent labels, so you can send PRs in one envelope and save postage. Two ways of doing this come to mind:

1) Index the addresses. This is simple and effective, but a little crude.

2) Create an extra tag. This could be the first few characters of the surname you choose to attach to the group - the joint surname for people with the same name, whatever you chose for people with different ones. You then have another overlay field, called, say, 'labelname'. You print labels in the order given by that field, but keep the membership list in order of names. The tag is blank when only one member lives at a given address.

c) Countries. The postage right for overseas members is easier if they all come out together. It's easy to do this by extending 'labelname' again, so that it consists of:

Labelname			
Country	Tag	Surname	Forename

Leave the Country field blank for UK members.

- Useful and vital features

Some points to watch for in selecting a database

a) Automatic indexing

Make sure that all the indexes are kept up to date as you enter and alter data. If you're even slightly unsure of this, you'll have to re-index, which is a fairly lengthy process.

b) Restructuring

You won't get the fields and indexes right the first time. Make sure the database can alter the structure of the database, preserving the data you've already typed in.

c) Multiple files

Most databases can cope with several files at once, enabling you to relate different sets of data to each other. Use this

with great restraint! For example (Conspiracy did this) it's tempting to create abbreviations for things like country and country names to save typing and to read the proper names out of a special file you've created for doing it. The hassle this caused wasn't worth it. It is probably best to keep one file for all the membership data, and use other files for other well-defined functions. For example, A database of who's on which program item can be very useful. If you identify people by membership number, you can read their names and addresses out of the membership file, saving typing them all in again.

d) Programming language

To get a general-purpose database program to do all this clever stuff, programs have to be written. These done in specialized languages, supplied as part of the database package. Most packages include program generator software that will ask you questions and generate basic data entry and label printing programs ready to use. The capability of these, and the programming language that they write in, varies pretty widely.

e) Notes field

You will need some way of keeping odd notes on members, of things that don't fit into fields. A note field is a special type - it is kept in a separate field, so that you don't have to allocate, say, 200 characters of note space for each member, most of whom will never need it. Note fields aren't vital, but they save keeping file cards of odd data.

f) Copy Protection

Don't buy a copy-protected program for anything serious. Ever.

- Usable programs

Conspiracy used dBase III, which is the market leader, powerful, but expensive and not as easy to use as some. It is setting the standard for features, and there are several compatible programs that cost much less. I use TAS-Plus, which isn't as powerful as dBase, but easier.

In general, any 'business' program should be OK.

G. The Data Protection Act

Registering your computer system under the Data Protection act isn't very expensive, but the forms are complicated.

A convention should be exempt from registering if:

- It is "an unincorporated members society".

- Members give permission to be held on a computer database

- You only keep the mailing list of members on the machine.

I used to have an 'information' category of member, which consisted of addresses of convention listings and the like, to make sure they got all Contrivance's progress reports. The Data Protection registry informed me that this constituted promotional information, and required registration - I just took it off again. The registry takes stalls at lots of computer shows and will answer questions there.
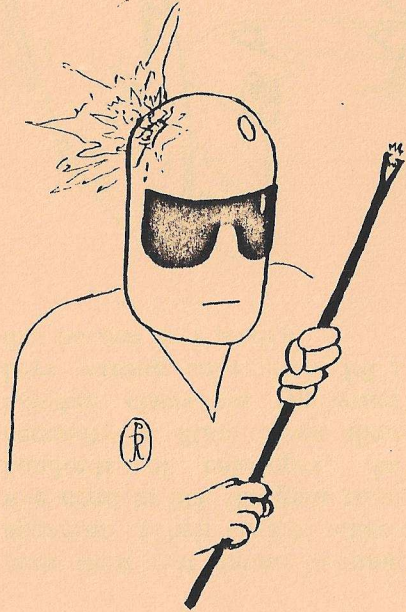
[SECURITY MATTERS]

They Also Serve
'Who got us into this mess'

Martin Easterbrook

'Con running' in this country has become identified with the phenomenon of at-con gophering and 'operations' which seemed to begin spontaneously at Seacon 79. Of course, someone must have been 'con-running' before this date, otherwise where did all the conventions come from? The convention fairy? A charitable service put on by Hotel managers to help relieve their boredom?

SF has long speculated on the possibility of races living secretly amongst the rest of humanity: vampires, slan, BSFA members. The existence of conventions suggests another of these sub-races, the convention committee. This elusive creature rarely reveals itself in the light of day, being more preoccupied with such mundane activities as earning a living. Only in the dead of night does their real nature become apparent. (Their terrible addictive need to lick the gum from hundreds of envelopes, the necessity of filing down their horrible claws on typewriter keys writing convention PR's that no-one ever reads).
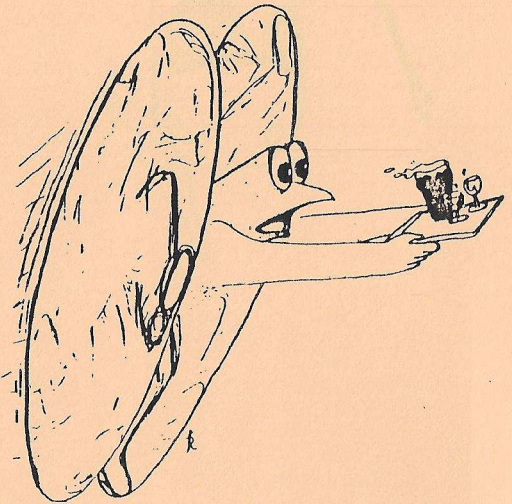
Gophers and Ops serve these mysterious creatures in the same role that Igor served his master Dracula. However Igor didn't go around complaining about the grotty old castle that Dracula had booked, or telling everyone that, from the way the program had been set up, there was no way that he could get the main hall blacked out by dawn.

Dracula required a regular supply of blood and young virgins to sustain him through the dark night. Likewise the convention committee needs its ration of egoboo and young virgins. However the fannish version of Igor does have a taste for a tender young neck with a hint of garlic seasoning. If he's going to have to carry the coffin around all the time he wants to be on the credits.

For the committee this is unfortunate. Just when they are most exhausted by their efforts during the immediate run up to the con and most in need of their due share of fame or notoriety along come the gopher crew and take over all the high profile, sexy jobs like sitting on the registration desk and shifting the chairs. Meanwhile ops is discovering that while the committee may

have booked a fantastic guest of honour and a superb set of films there isn't a felt tip marker pen in the place.

Often the only thing preventing the 'at con' gophers and the committee from indulging in mutual extermination is the knowledge that the roles will be reversed at the next convention when they exchange jobs.

The system appears to work in that the committees and the gophers are back for every convention. Of course Dracula is back for every new Vampire film as well and the end of a con now seems to leave the committee in the same kind of state as he is at the end of the previous film.

Conventions have grown too large and too complex for anyone to regard running them as a pleasurable hobby. If we aren't going to burn out our best people we need to spread the load more evenly. The committee pre-con and ops/gopher 'at-con' separation of jobs should aid this rather than producing further work for both, as it does when areas of responsibility of the two are ill defined.

I suggest that a convention should have at least two com-

mittees; a pre-convention committee which handles all planning and an at-convention staff. (Actually I think there should be three groups as I believe that the American practice of a bid committee has some advantages, but that is an argument for another time).

The pre-convention committee should include one to three members who are responsible for organising the at-con staff before the convention and making sure that they carry out the pre-convention plans as far as possible during the convention. The pre-convention committee should hand over to the convention staff during a period of two to three months before the convention. They should not be scheduled for any organisational tasks over the convention itself (with the probable exception of hotel liason duties). They should, if they wish, be very active and visible programme participants and should also spend as much time as possible with the guests at the convention to make sure that they are having a good time.

(Please note that the above suggests that they should not be scheduled for any at-convention activities. I am not so naive as to believe that this will mean they end up with nothing to do, but it might help to keep the load on them down to a reasonable level.)

The pre-convention committee should have the status, ceremonial duties and final control appropriate to a ruling royal family. The convention staff become their loyal civil service. The DCM becomes the 'prime minister' responsible for seeing that the actions of the civil service correspond with the intentions of the committee. The DCM should remember however that a civil service type of organisation performs best when left to find its own means to carry out a well defined goal ("invent an air force", "devise a way of governing India" etc).

I don't propose replacing old Igor with Sir Humphrey but rather with Mycroft Holmes. Perhaps with his help Dracula could decrease his stake in the proceedings enough to enjoy his turn at the bat next time.

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If you want more info, Maggie will be speaking at CONSCRIPTION on Saturday afternoon - otherwise just phone she'll be pleased to hear from you.

Membership/Registration

Pat Brown

Membership secretary is one of those apparently simple jobs that actually require a great deal of careful organisation, particularly for a large convention. To do the job well it is essential that you think carefully about how you are going to organise things well before you start taking memberships. Once you are 300 members, in it is too late to back-track and change your system.

First things first: what equipment do you need? It is possible to handle up to about 300 members on a card index system or similar manual system, but much more than this and you will need computing facilities to handle the data. You don't need a mainframe machine (although my first con was run using an IBM 370). Even a humble BBC micro with disc drives will handle a small to middling con; a twin disc Ammy will handle a middle sized con, and a PC clone with hard disc is a mem. sec's dream. If you are a programming expert you're welcome to write your own database program, in which case you don't need me to tell you how to go about it. If you're not an expert I suggest you buy a ready made database program, and it funds allow, a word processing program. Suitable software is available for most common machines, but ask for expert advice before purchasing and be sure that what you buy will do what you require.

Other equipment. For a small con buy a cardboard concertina type file. For a big con, buy a filing cabinet! Seriously, you need some way of keeping the enormous quantities of paperwork in some sort of order and if funds permit a proper filing cabinet is ideal. It is often possible to obtain

second hand filing cabinets from office suppliers. I also find a set of desk trays useful for keeping work-in-hand in order.

Envelopes and paper are the other major items of expenditure at this stage. Find your nearest commercial stationer - envelopes are MUCH cheaper by the gross. Consider buying your total envelope requirement in one go if funds permit as you can often get bigger discounts on larger quantities. It's worth calculating the total weight of envelopes plus PRs and enclosures and if necessary adjust the items you are posting to avoid sliding over into a more expensive weight band for postage. The lightest weight envelopes are usually poor value as they are more likely to tear apart in the post, particularly if they are well stuffed. For plain letters, get the cheapest small envelopes you can find.

Pens, pencils, typewriter ribbons etc are obvious. I find it useful to have a small plastic tool box in which I put all the writing materials that I am taking to the Con for use on the desk. For the con, throw in some sellotape, blue tack, rubbers, pencil sharpeners, a

couple of marker pens, paper clips, a stapler and staples (don't let the repro room lay hands on it!) and a note pad.
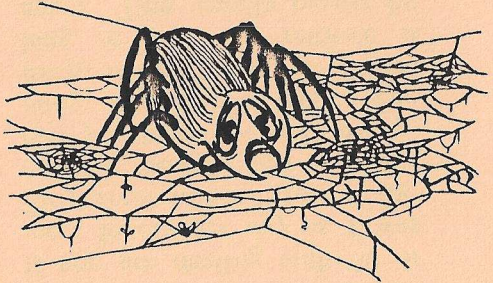
ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING

Computing

Before you set up your database, consider exactly what you are going to want to get back out of it. Obvious things are name, address and membership number. Desirable are badge names and status (i.e. supporting, attending etc.). If you have sufficient computing

power consider storing information concerning offers of help, entries for competitions etc. This makes it easy to print off the relevant lists as you need them. If you are running a VERY large con, the Post Office does cheaper deals if you can pre-sort your mail into post code order so you might consider making this a separate field on the database.

Against these desirable items, bear in mind that all these things take up valuable computer space, so do your sums first.

Your disc drive will only ever wipe a disc if it contains 300 names and you do not have a copy. Get into the habit of taking back-up copies frequently. Losing 300 names and details does not do your blood pressure any good, and furthermore it will happen on the day before the con when all your paperwork is 200 miles away. (You DID keep all the paperwork, didn't you?)

Having spoken briefly about computing, comes the dreaded ....

Paperwork

Pat's rule of paperwork No.1. Keep EVERYTHING, no matter how insignificant it seems. The letter you throw away will be the only one you need later on. Write or stamp a date of receipt onto all letters etc you receive. When you send out a reply, receipt or whatever, record that on the back of the original letter. You can keep seperate register if you like but I find it works well to record all actions on the original piece of paper. Doing it this way ensures that if you suddenly come across a letter you forgot to file you can tell immediately what you need to do with it. Don't omit this, no matter how trivial it seems. If you are dealing with 30 or more letters per day as I was for several weeks before Folly-con it is the only way to ensure that you have answered everything that needs a reply. File things in any order you like so long as you can retrieve it again. This usually means by alphabetical order of surname, but you might like to sub-divide things into categories such as new members, hotel queries, stupid questions etc.

Pat's rule of paperwork No.2. Do everything possible on the day it arrives. You can deal with 30 letters (most of which will be hotel bookings or new members) in a couple

of hours, but if you leave it to the end of the week it will take you all weekend to catch up.

For a large con I find it useful to have a stock of pre-printed postcards for standard replies, eg "We received your cheque", "We have received your hotel booking", "We have received your competition entry" etc, or for a 2 or 3 line reply. Headed paper is nice for longer letters if the budget will stand it. I find I use a large quantity of A5 size and rather less A4.

POST is one of the large expenses. It is well worth trying to ensure that you do not accidentally go just over a weight band into a more expensive band. Check your weights before agreeing to distribute "just one more" flier with a mailing.

Get copies of the Post Office Guides to posting articles both in the UK and abroad. Both are available free from large Post Offices.

If you are sending large quantities of mail in one go, the P.O. will frank them for you to save you the trouble of licking all those stamps. Letters must be bundled in 25's, all the same weight, foreign letters separately. Simply take them to the Post Office and hand them over. You will be asked to pay at the counter and will receive a full receipt.

When buying stamps or any other service from the Post Office, get a receipt. Your treasurer will thank you for it.

If you are sending a PR or souvenir book without any other loose enclosure it is considerably cheaper to send it by printed paper rates. You must NOT seal the envelopes (hence the need for no enclosures) and the envelopes must be marked "Printed Paper". Get a rubber stamp made up - it will be worth it.

Have a rubber stamp made up, with a return address on it, to stamp on the back of all the envelopes you post out. It can prove useful, for example I read one application form as "106". On its return I had another look and tried, successfully this time, "10b".

If you need to know that a particular letter has reached its destination, eg for hotel bookings, send it by recorded delivery and pay in advance for "AR" (Advice of Receipt). You will then receive a postcard telling you that the item has been delivered. It saves on arguments later if you can prove

that somebody DID get your letter/cheque/whatever.

In general I have had very little trouble with the postal services except for that which goes through central London. Most letters take 2-3 days 2nd class, but letters through London regularly take 5-7 days 2nd class and a small but irritating number vanish completely.

Hotel Bookings

This job is often done by a separate person, but if you can handle the workload it makes sense to have membership and hotel bookings run from the same address. This keeps all the admin. paperwork in one place and makes it easier for people to make queries.

It is ESSENTIAL to keep good records of hotel bookings. If possible keep copies of all the original booking forms you receive. There's always one idiot who arrives at the hotel insisting that they booked one thing and the hotel has something different in their books. The only way to stop the argument is to produce the original form. Discuss with the hotel the question of sending out confirmations of booking. They should send to all people who book but some hotels are reluctant to do so for convention bookings. Persuade them to do so if you possibly can. If they decline to do so, refer all the queries you recieve on to the hotel. With any luck they will get fed up with worried fans telephoning them. If your budget will run to it send out a postcard acknowledging receipt of hotel bookings to the individuals concerned. Keep a register of each batch of bookings you forward to the hotel, and send all bookings by recorded delivery. Discourage people from booking direct with the hotel and ask the hotel to refer any queries to you. This way you can keep tabs on it all. Get on the good side of the head receptionist; they can make your job easy or hell depending on their whims. In fact most hotels are perfectly helpful and efficient, but the occasional one is not and will swear that black is white unless you can prove otherwise.

Organising hotel bookings sometimes has its amusing side. I've seen separate forms from 2 people who wish to share a room with each other, one requesting single beds, the other a double! Then there's the person who thinks they are

sharing with a second person, whilst the second person has already booked to share with a third person! Diplomacy is the name of the game. Write a polite letter to all concerned explaining the situation and asking them to please tell you what they would REALLY like you to book for them.

Other Tasks

One of the other jobs easily run by membership is that of compiling lists ᵥof potential helpers. (You should put a box on one of your forms asking people if they would like to offer help and of what sort). Forward lists to appropriate comittee members responsible for other parts of the con, and make sure that you nobble some good help for the desk first! Sort out a desk rota about 6 weeks before the con and send out forms to the people on your list asking them if the shift you propose is agreeable to them.

Running the Desk

The more you can prepare in advance the easier it is to run the desk efficiently. Make up all badges, stuff envelopes and pack in boxes. I like to file in alphabetical order of real

surname. People forget their membership numbers and badge names can cause all sorts of confusion. At a big con you may find it easier to seperate the cash desk from the handing-out-the-loot desk to speed up throughput. The cash desk should hold all the membership packs for supporting members who still owe money. In the main files place as A4 size card with name and number. Hand the card to the member concerned and send them to the cash desk. At Follycon I tried a system of putting coloured stickers onto envelopes to indicate people who had expressed an interest in the tea party or planetarium visits. It was them simple to ask the person concerned if they were still interested and if so to point them at the cash desk. I also stapled a card to any envelope where there were special instructions. For example, you may wish to offer a welcoming drink to your guets on their arrival, and whilst you may recognise Terry Pratchet, your desk gopher may not know him from Adam. (Or for that matter, Eve). Terry drinks gin, by the way.

However you decide to organise things, run it on the

KISS principal, ie Keep It Simple, Stupid. The less cross-referencing of unwiedly computer printouts you have to do the better. Don't make things unnecessarily complicated. You DON'T need to mark people off on a list as they arrive. Wait until the rush has died down then mark off all of the envelopes you still have left in the boxes.

Finally, you will always get some *@#$% pain in the @>!*. My favourite is the person who posted his hotel booking form for Follyon on the Tuesday before the con, then arrived Fridy fully expecting to have a room booked at the Adelphi! (His letter actually arrived on Wednesday morning as I was leaving Bristol). He then proceeded to create a fuss when he had to go elsewhere. Adopt an attitude of resignation, paste on the smile and keep your temper. If all else fails have the offending fan ejected by security.

PUBLICATIONS
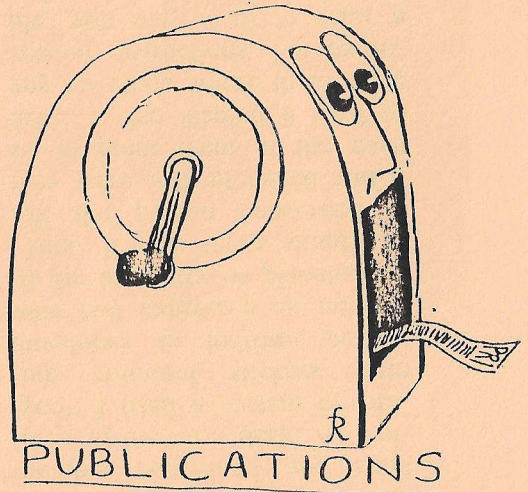
Unicon and the Future

Rob Meades

The purpose of this article is simple - to encourage discussion on the future of true Unicons. I say true Unicons, and by this I mean Unicons that fit both the letter and the spirit of the Unicon charter.

I should explain what I see as the 'spirit' of the Unicon charter: The charter implies, but does not state, that the committee of the convention should consist, in the majority, of students. The original Unicons at Keele University were started by the students because they could not afford to go to the other SF conventions that were run at the time. This is the central principle - to provide an in-expensive but good value convention.

The charter states that the Unicon should be run in a higher education establishment, but this is only to ensure the availability of cheap accommodation and (hopefully) a student committee. The function of the charter is to provide continuity for Unicons in the form of hand-over funds and the steering committee, which consists of nominated members from the previous seven UniconS. Should there be no bids for Unicon, by the terms of the charter, the steering committee must collectively leap onto its white horse and gallantly save the day.

This is all very well, but it is difficult to see how the steering committee could do a great deal to save the Unicon tradition. The responsibility lies with student SF groups and the undergraduates within them who are willing to take the risks involved.

These risks take two forms. That of failing or reducing the

grade of your degree and that of leaving yourself with and even more impressive debt to pay off when you leave college. The former depends upon the personalities involved and does not accountably alter with time; the second is worthy of further examination.

The first Unicon, held at Keele University during the summer vacation in 1980, had a turnover of around £2000 and made a small profit, much to the surprise of those involved, who were convinced that they had signed their next five years earnings away. They had planned to break even at 170 members but had about 200 members before the convention was over, partly due to a surfeit of walk-ins.

This is all the more surprising when one considers the effect that the disastrous MAN-CON, the 1976 Eastercon held at the student Hall of Residence, must have had on fandom as a whole (see James Steel and Bridget Wilkinson's 'Consequences' for an account of the great event). In spite of this, Unicon 80 was a success and a tradition was born.

In the balmy (?) summer of 1980 there were few other conventions around to distract the wandering fan and the '79 British Worldcon had brought a hoard of fans out of the closet in hungry search of conventions.

The situation today is somewhat different. Albacon also takes place in the summer and may drain some potential membership from Unicon. One might suggest that students make up the bulk population of Unicons, and that most could never afford to travel to an Albacon in any case. But how many students actually attend an Unicon? I can't answer this question with certainty, but would suggest that they make up less that 50% of the membership, most of those who do attend being from the college holding the convention. The only real source of income to any convention is its membership, so given a relatively small number of students specifically attending the Unicon, another convention being held at about the same time leads to difficulties.

In 1980, most colleges were only beginning to see the money-making potential in conferences. The conference circuit is now well established, and considering the state of higher education funding, must

Unicon and the Future

have become an useful source of income, employing otherwise idle buildings during the summer vacation. While conference facilities may be improving, costs and demand are rising correspondingly.

The standard of organisation and presentation of conventions in general is now very high. There exists a pool of Gophers, Tech Ops people, and other experienced groups who are willing to make their skills available at the drop of a pint. Above all, Conscription bears witness to the seriousness with which we are now taking conventions.

Given all this, how does the Unicon fare?

Table 1 shows a selection of the major elements of income and expenditure, plus the cost of a single room, for the last four Unicons. From this table, the only element that has been continuously increasing is the cost of films, though the film hire situation has now stabilised somewhat. It is extremely difficult to draw any conclusion from these figures since each convention is peculiar in its own way - one cannot compare like with like. Only Camcon and Connote8 shared the same venue, New

Hall in Cambridge, and these demonstrate an obvious increase in site costs.

I was recently involved in a committee putting together a bid for the 1989 Unicon, called Reconnaissance. After making enquires on four different sites we were forced to call the bid off - suitable sites were either booked solid or prohibitively expensive for a con of typical Unicon size.

Briefly, the four sites were the University of Birmingham, the University of Kent (in Canterbury), Coventry Polytechnic and the Royal Holloway and Egham New College. At Birmigham the only pratical site was scheduled to be redecorated in the summer of '89; Canterbury was fully booked. At Coventry, the function space was available free of charge, but proved to be unsuitable. It might have been possible to hold a single stream con, with book room and art show, there, but we felt that fans today expect at least a second/workshop stream and would not be prepared to go down one flight of stairs, across a courtyard and up another three flights of stairs to get to the bar.

Initially, Egham looked promising, containing two workable sites. However on closer examination it became apparent that the cost of function space, though on a par with Birmingham, was too great - around £800 for an usable set of rooms (double the cost of New Hall). And the only weekend that the college was free in '89 was Albacon weekend.

We based our calculations on an attending membership of 150, which, if you glance at table 1, is a reasonable pessimistic estimate. We came up with a cost for the convention of £2000. This results in a membership fee of £14, which is considerably higher than the Wincon fee of £10. Since we would be running against Albacon, we did not feel that we could increase our membership estimate and we had little hope of negotiating the site costs down (the weekend we went to visit the Egham site 500 Italians were moving in for a week - what chance us 150 Brits?).

We started our bid too late to examine any other sites and decided to call a halt, though our committee still exists and we firmly intend to hold Reconnaissance, but not as an Unicon.

Bearing in mind that an Unicon should be run by a student fan group, and would probably be tied to their own college, what are the chances of finding and enthusiastic group of students at a college with cheap, adequate, conference facilities? The chances have always been quite low. To my knowledge there has never been a seriously contested Unicon bid. However, I would suggest that the odds are deteriorating.

Despite these gloomy comments, Unicon is reasonably healthy at present. I recently received a letter from Nicon in Northern Ireland who are bidding for Unicon 10. They seem to be well organised and, above all, enthusiastic. They must, to some extent, have their own captive audience, and can quite cheerfully clash with mainland conventions without noticing any difference in membership numbers. Rumour has it that a bid for Unicon 11, again at New Hall, is already in the pipeline.

Still, I believe that there are things to be done. Unicon is a fannish thing, and student groups have to be in contact with fandom before they can

even think about bidding. Fandom, perhaps in the form of the Unicon steering committee, should aim to make contact with college groups. College groups might then be encouraged to contact each other (a surprisingly rare thing in my experience), raising the chances of locating a suitable site. Unicons should lead more in the Wincon direction, offering cheap rooms, otherwise there is little point in using colleges at all. Comparing the room fees from last Novacon (£20) with those of Connote8 and you might wonder how many students want to come to a small convention when they can spend just a little more to go to a much larger convention.

Below is a list of the major financial elements for the last few Unicons. I have ignored hand-ons from previous Unicons since these are, in principle, untouched by the receiving convention. Also, I have included the room rates, which I see as a major cost to the convention member. All figures, barring room rates, are rounded to the nearest £5.

OXCON

Attending Memberships:	£1100 (140)
Function Space	£575
Publications/Publicity	£150
Films	£150
Room Rate	£14

CAMCON

Attending Memberships:	£1610 (210)
Function Space	£240
Publications/Publicity	£280
Films	£145
Room Rate	£16?

CONSEPT

Attending Memberships:	£1435 (175)
Function Space	£325
Publications/Publicity	£210
Films	£280
Room Rate	£11

CONNOTE8 †

Attending Memberships:	£1175 (150)
Function Space	£395
Publications/Publicity	£?
Films	£?
Room Rate	£?

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† At the time of going to press, we were unable to contact the author for the figures for CONNOTE8.

The Hotel's View of SF Cons and Trek Cons.

Maggie Dalton

I have been involved in several of both types, being the hotel person committees have dealt with. The smallest was a mini-con for 60, the largest a major one with 1100 attendees. I have also been involved in various social events run by individual clubs, birthday parties, Christmas "do's" and last year a great New Years Eve bash.

99% of the time, I have really enjoyed my involvement, and I count various of the committee members now as my friends, not just business associates.

Henry and Hugh have asked me to put pen to paper on the subject of con organising from the hotel's point of view. As ever with an article of this nature, I must speak (or write) in very broad and general terms. Not all of what I will say has applied to any or all the committees I have dealt with - some not at all. I have also included points which may not be my own personal view, more the views I know are taken by hotel managements - again in general.

First and foremost, it is important for organisers to remember that although fandom may be recreation for them, from a hotel's point of view it is strictly business. This being the case, it is vital that the initial approaches should be of a business-like nature. This does not necessarily mean typed letters in formal terms, but remember that in most walks of life, business and otherwise, first impressions count. I know from committees I have spoken to that the first hurdle most encounter is getting hoteliers to take them seriously. You will help yourselves a lot

by remembering that, in the first instance, you may have to sell the idea to the venue, as opposed to the venue pushing for your business. I will never forget the first committee I met - had I been the type to make instant judgements, I would have written them off immediately as no way being able to come up with what they were saying they could.
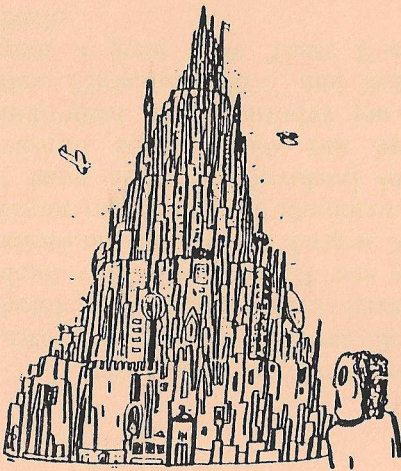
THE HOTEL

As it happens, that first committee were the most

organised and professional I have ever dealt with - which just proves the point. Regardless of how you dress socially, remember that at your first meetings with new venues it might be an idea to turn up looking like business buyers. Have a written or typed list of what you are looking for. And please remember that for most hotel sales and management people, you will be a definite departure from their normal type of clientele! Be gentle with them!

The movement itself may consider the idea of keeping records, obtained from hotels and venues, of the numbers and revenue involved. Show your average general manager a bottom line with a few noughts on it, and he will bite your hand off!

This already sounds to me like hard work, considering that all you want to do is give hotels and venues the opportunity to make money. However, although I have already noticed a definite change for the better in management attitudes, it's still a matter of selling yourselves to them. The reasons for this are manifold, but remember a few points. You will generally be asking

managers to tie up their entire hotel (in the case of major cons), in most cases for many many months before you even make the bid. Lose the bid and he's back to square one, admittedly with plenty of time to re-sell but there's already been a major investment of hotel time and therefore money by the time a committee is ready to bid. I have been fortunate in never being party to a losing bid, but had I been, my personal disappointment would have been nothing compared to my general manager's! (I want to emphasize here that I do realise that committees losing a bid must be devastated, considering the time and expense they will have invested. But always remember: for you it is recreation first, for hotels it is business.)

In order to win a bid, a hotel manager will have had to make various "guestimates" on what prices he will be able to offer 18 months to 2 years hence. Worse, he has then got to sign to say he will honour these prices. This on its own is enough to put off the meeker amongst us. Having then won the bid, the unfortunate chap sits on his empty hotel, contractually committed to trusting

you to fill him up. Nerve wracking stuff! I know there's a lot of late bookers in the movement, but they must be educated into organising themselves a bit more.

After all, having taken the booking so far in advance, you can understand the managers (particularly in overspills) getting increasingly nervous when numbers are not up to scratch with only a matter of months to go. Try asking a travel agent to hold a holiday for you for two years, confirm the price that much in advance, then wait until 2 months before the departure date to find out whether or not you will take it up. If attendees know they must book early, or risk having to pay extra, I'll bet they will make their decisions a lot earlier. It would make life easier for con organisers too, to know numbers six months in advance. Get pre-payment on room rates (as you would if going on holiday) and you are really in business.

The committee's got money in the bank, paying for expenses and earning interest (for charity I understand). The attendees have the major expense out of the way before they arrive, therefore having

more money in their pockets to spend at the con. Good news for dealers (no dealers, no con, so I am told) and good news for hotels. Which brings me to another point - often sore - food and drink.

Breakfast - most commercial hotels serve breakfast in their restaurants. Their restaurants usually seat only 1/4 to 1/3 of the amount of beds they have; fine in the normal course of events, since even in a "full" hotel few of the rooms are used as twins, and anyway, all the residents have different requirements; they are going to different places at different times. With cons, not only is every bed in the place in use, you are all due at the same place at roughly the same time. I have opened restaurants at 7.00a.m., trying to spread the load so everyone can have had breakfast by, say, 10.00a.m., if that's the first programmed event. Nothing major happens till 9.30a.m., then everyone wants breakfast! You cannot do much to get round this. Few people want to get up really early, and you cannot tell them too. You can ask them to be patient, and limit the menu, NOT so as to treat attendees as second class citizens, quite the

contrary, to ensure they get the best service possible.

Also, perhaps encourage continental breakfasts in rooms, if they are available, AND VERY IMPORTANTLY, ask them to eat and leave, out of consideration to others waiting for a seat. The one thing you cannot forget is that although most of your attendees are fiercely individual, at the end of the day, you are a group, and certain concessions must be made to this fact, for your own comfort.

Cash food - this is one of the biggest gambles you are asking venues to take. You cannot guarantee, or even estimate with any accuracy, how many will eat, how much they will eat and when. Managers can find themselves in a no win situation. You want food at reasonable prices, therefore his profit margins are cut. You do not know how much food you will need - he needs to overcater, another profit cut. Then he needs the staff to cover all eventualities. By the time he is finished, the food is on as a favour, because there is not a lot of profit in it at all. Ways around this are a great matter for discussion - I wonder if we will ever get to a situation

where cons are "full board"; again like foreign holidays. Discussion needed in detail on this subject.

Bars - usually very good, but here in particular records from a previous venue would be valuable beyond words. Managers are by necessity conservative souls. Tell them they need 100 gallons of coke and a dray full of real ale and they want proof!

There are other points to remember too when considering venues. Bank holidays and summer weekends are very much off-season (therefore cheap!) in the majority of large commercial cities, London being of course the notable exception. Nothing's ever cheap there! Also, access and location will make a big difference to the expense incurred for attendees. Northern fans may not be able to afford the money, or indeed the time, to travel way down South, in the same way Southern fans may not travel too far north. British Rail will do special discounts for con attendees, but be careful; in some cases there are better deals available over the counter.

From my own point of view, admittedly slightly biased

in view of my current job, I truly believe that serious committees should consider using experienced and professional help right at the beginning to negotiate the best possible deals for them. Selling anything is a professional job, and cons are no exception, and for the reasons explained the movement does need to sell itself to hotels and other venues. Cost-wise, you will need to consider how much you would spend anyway on phone calls and visits, trying to find suitable venues.

If you win the bid the professional help won't cost you a penny - the hotels pay! This may chill several members to the bone, but how about electing one member of the movement as a professional con advisor? Your bid system need not change, it's just this one person will be on all committees, mainly in an advisory capacity. It will be an almost full time job I guess, so payment will be involved. Surely there are enough members for a central "slush fund" to be provided? I look forward to some - no doubt heated - discussion on this.

The Room Party Of The First Part....

Roger Perkins

Since 1980 I have been involved in negotiating with a number of hotels for the use of their facilities, which has given me the opportunity to refine what is needed - not that I do not expect to discover further ideas!

What I want to address here is not the deal you make with the Hotel (and for hotel also read conference centre, university etc.), but how that deal should be expressed - in other words THE CONTRACT.

Generally, I think it is true that hotels do not expect to have a very formal contract - an exchange of letters is usually all they want - but you should insist on setting up a proper document, incorporating everything you have discussed and amended as the relationship develops. If the hotel objects to having a contract document (as has happened), try calling it an Agreement, or Agreed Summary of Discussions, or some such - the title is fairly unimportant.

Many people, as is often evident at business meetings, assume that this is so you can sue the hotel when they fail to perform. My advice, except in the most extreme case (and I mean far worse than Conspiracy) is to forget this as an option. Even if you win, the cost and trouble involved is likely to be out of proportion for an amateur organisation. If they do something dramatic, like cancel your booking, claim against your insurance and let them sue!

The real purpose of a contract is to ensure that both the convention and the hotel understand clearly what their responsibilities are, what they have

agreed to do, and who is in charge of what aspects. When difficulties arise (and they almost invariably do) they can often be resolved very easily if you can produce a document - signed by both parties - to prove the agreed position.

Thus the contract should be looked on as an operational, rather than a legal document, and the contents will reflect this emphasis.

Of course, there is another reason; although the hotel is probably used to dealing with "professional" conferences, much of the organisation of such events is handled on a very casual basis, and the hotel will usually be very impressed if you present them with a for-mal contract - though to achieve this particular end appearance is more important than content, so you need to get it properly word processed and printed out on a good printer.

So, what are the contents to be?

1. WHO.

The name of the conven-tion and the hotel, with their addresses.

2. WHAT.

Details of the event.

3. WHEN.

The dates over which it runs.

4. WHERE.

Details of the facilities to be used.

5. HOW MUCH.

What (if anything) are you paying for the function rooms? What happens to the charge if a room is not available for part or all of the period promised? What is the cost of bedrooms - and make sure the occupant is responsible for this - and when is payment required?

For those without a back-ground in contract law, one thing you must avoid (though often mentioned at business meetings) is a penalty clause, as these are banned under English law. What you can have, if it is necessary and the hotel will agree to it, is a dam-ages clause; e.g. if 10% of the function space is not provided as promised, the total charge will be reduced by 20% in con-sideration of the additional inconvenience and expense this will cause.

6. INFORMATION

There is a whole list of information needed by both sides, which can usefully be

included;

6.1. Plans of the hotel.

6.2. Details of fire regulations.

6.3. Where & how posters can be displayed.

6.4. How room bookings are to be handled.

6.5. Room checkout times.

6.6. Organisation charts and duty rosters for the con and the hotel.

7. FOOD AND DRINK

When will the bars be open? What prices? (Watch for con bar prices higher than those in the public bar)? What hours for breakfast? At what times will food be available, at what prices? Will there be a vegetarian option (including breakfast)?

8. SECURITY.

Clarify who is to handle security, and what the procedures are in the event of problems. Who will be responsible for locking function rooms - and who has the authority to ask for them to be opened?

Obviously this is only a rough outline, and even that may not apply in all cases, and the details will certainly vary enormously.

I have reproduced below a "generic" contract which may stimulate some ideas. If you would like a copy on disk, either BBC View or ASCII, or IBM (3.5 or 5.25) Wordperfect or ASCII - just send me a formatted floppy disc.

My address is;

8 Fairlop Court,
Fairlop Road,
Leytonstone,
LONDON
E11 IBG

Roger Perkins
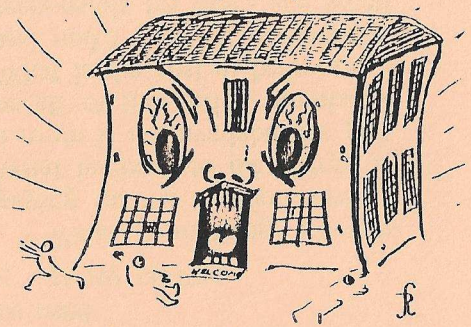
THE HOTEL
[LIASON]

THE HOTEL CONTRACT

This Agreement is made the   day of   19??, between the Hotel Enormous, Very Long Road, Bigtown, (the Hotel), and the Committee of SFCON, The Slums, Nowhere, (the Committee).

This Agreement, including Annexes B to E hereof, may only be modified by the agreement of both parties in writing.

INTRODUCTION

The Committee will organise a Science Fiction Convention at the Hotel at Easter 19??, over the periods set out below.

The Hotel shall, in consideration of anticipated sales of accommodation and other services to members of the Convention, provide, at no charge except where otherwise specified, the full facilities of the Hotel for this Convention as set out elsewhere in this Agreement.

DEFINITIONS

"The Hotel" is the Hotel Enormous, Very Long Road, Bigtown,

"The Committee" is the Committee of SFCON as set out in Annex A hereto.

"The Convention" is SFCON, the ??th British National Science Fiction Convention.

"Convention Members" are those persons who possess membership of the Convention as recognised by the Committee, whether resident in the Hotel or elsewhere.

FUNCTION ROOMS

The Hotel shall make available to the Committee for the purposes of the Convention the various function rooms and facilities of the Hotel, and for the periods, as set out in Annex B hereto.

The Hotel shall supply, to the Committee, architects plans of the function rooms, by ??

The Committee will be free to make uses of non-union operators for all its equipment and non-union staff for its other operations as needed.

The Committee shall use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that the Convention complies with all applicable local fire regulations in force at the time of the Convention. The Hotel shall supply a copy of such regulations to the Committee not later than ??

The Hotel shall allow the Committee and Convention Members to place displays and posters in both the public and exclusive areas of the Hotel, providing that such do not endanger or inconvenience the users of such areas and do not damage the fabric or decor of the Hotel.

The Hotel shall supply the Committee with ? Hotel Pagers free of charge.

CATERING

The Hotel shall provide catering facilities for Convention Members in accordance with the details set out in Annex C hereto.

BEDROOMS

The Hotel shall supply to the Convention Members accommodation over the period Friday ??? to Sunday ??? inclusive, at the rates as set out in Annex D hereto.

Room Bookings will be made on a personal basis by the Convention Members, but will be co-ordinated by the Committee who will issue a booking form to all Convention Members during ??

Acknowledgement of bookings will be made by the Hotel direct to Convention Members.

The Hotel shall not accept bookings, other than through the Committee, for accommodation during the period Friday ??? to Monday ??? inclusive without the prior agreement of the Committee in writing (which shall not be unreasonably withheld).

Payment for accommodation and any other charges incurred will be the responsibility of the Convention Member making the booking, who will be required by the Hotel to make payment in full on departure.

The Hotel and the Committee will agree arrangements for payment by the Committee for the accommodation of guests of the Committee.

The Hotel will supply to the Committee ?? Suites free of charge for the use of their Guests.

Checkout times for Convention Members resident in the Hotel and checking out between Friday ??? and Tuesday ??? inclusive shall be 12.00 hours.

BAR FACILITIES

The Hotel shall make available to Convention Members at the times specified, the bar facilities detailed in Annex E.

The Hotel and the Committee shall agree a procedure whereby the Committee or its representatives may charge drinks in any of the bars set out in Annex E to a Committee Account.

The prices in the bars set out in Annex, E shall be not more than the lowest prices prevailing in the Hotels bars during the two months preceding the Convention.

Drinks purchased by Convention Members may be transported between the bars and function areas of the Hotel.

ORGANISATION

The Committee shall supply the Hotel with a copy of the duty rosters to be used by the Committee during the Convention.

The Hotel shall supply the Committee with a copy of the management structure of the Hotel, and of the duty rosters to be used by the Hotel during the Convention.

The Committee shall provide its own Security for the Convention; the duty security managers of both the Hotel and the Committee shall be shown on the duty rosters referred to above.

In the event of any disturbance or complaint arising during the Convention the Hotel will notify the appropriate Committee duty officer before taking any further action.

Signed	....	....
Name	....	....
Position	....	....
Date	....	....
For	The Committee	The Hotel Enormous

===

ANNEX A - THE COMMITTEE.

Joe Phan   Chairman
U. Write   Secretary
A. Meany   Treasurer
A. Sucker
Y. Knott

===

ANNEX B - THE FACILITIES

The Hotel shall make available to the Committee for the purposes of the Convention the exclusive use of the following rooms:

ROOM	USE	FROM	TO	STATUS	REMARKS.
Big Hall	Programme	Standard	Standard	B	400
Nice Room	Lounge & Food	Standard	Standard	C	Food not Thursday.
A. Room	Green room	Standard	Standard	C	
X. Room	Programme	Standard	Standard	B	
Big Bar	Main Bar	Standard	Standard	C	
Sml Room	Displays	Standard	Standard	A	Art show
Syndicate 1	Committee	Standard	Standard	A	
Syndicate 2	Storage	Week before/after	Standard	A	

OTHER FACILITIES

Convention Members shall also have access, on a non-exclusive basis, to the following additional facilities, on the standard terms for Hotel residents.

Fitness Centre.
All Hotel Restaurants.

NOTES.

"Standard" times for start and finish of availability are 00.01 hrs on Thursday ??? to 23.59 hrs on Monday ???.

STATUS refers to the Security level applicable to each room during the Convention, as follows:

A - Security will be the responsibility of the Committee, who will hold a set of keys.

B - These rooms will be handed over to the Hotel for locking when not required by the Committee. The rooms should only be unlocked on the instructions of a member of the Committee or nominated representative.

C - These rooms are not required to be locked.

Included Facilities

The availability of each room shall include the use, at no extra charge, of all built in facilities and services, such as:

Public address systems (excluding microphones).
Tables and chairs,
Lighting facilities,
Projection booths,
Electricity,
Heating,
Porterage.

The Hotel shall supply a detailed list of such facilities, with technical information where appropriate, to the Committee by ??

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ANNEX C - CATERING.

Breakfast:

The Hotel shall provide its standard full breakfast to Hotel residents during the following hours:

Up to and including Thursday ??? - Hotel standard hours.

Friday ??? to Monday ??? - 8.30am to 10.30am.

From Tuesday ??? inclusive - Hotel standard hours.

This breakfast shall also be available to non-resident Convention Members at a rate to be agreed.

Snacks:

The bars shall make available a selection of sandwiches and filled rolls: menus and prices shall be agreed with the Committee.

Times of availability shall be agreed with the Committee, with a view to ensuring that some provision is available during all bar opening hours.

Main Meals:

A cafeteria style service will be made available in the ??? Room, with menus, prices and times to be agreed.

Restaurants:

The Hotel has the following restaurants, which will be open during the Convention and available for use by Convention Members.

(To be inserted)

Vegetarian options.

Breakfast, snacks (including rolls/sandwiches) and main meals shall include at least one vegetarian option of equivalent value, which shall be changed at reasonable intervals.

Special diets.

The Committee will advise the Hotel of any persons who have notified special dietary requirements. The Hotel will endeavour to supply such requirements.

===

ANNEX D - BEDROOMS.

The applicable room rates per night, including breakfast, are as follows:

Type   No. available   Rate

===

ANNEX E - BAR FACILITIES.

The Hotel will provide a Real Ale in the ??? bar, at the same price as the standard bitter.

The bars will be provided as follows:

Location	Opening	Closing
A Bar	10.00am	02.00
B Bar	10.00am	19.00
C Bar	11.00am	30 minutes after end of programme.

The above times are provisional, and may be revised when the detailed Convention Programme is available.

In all cases, closing times are earliest, and bars will remain open beyond these times if there is sufficient custom; the Hotel will agree with the appropriate Committee representative, and also call "last orders", before closing any bar.

Fun, Desperate Fun

Paul Kincaid

It's the programme we're talking about. The part of the convention seen and remembered by most of the attendees. We grow old and blasé, skip the programme for the bar, and forget that we all started out religiously taking in every word uttered from that stage. For many con goers the programme is far and away the most important part of any convention. Those of us who have grown old in the ways of conventions, and have graduated to organising the damned things ourselves, might be discomforted if we were ever to find out just how many attendees would be prepared to junk the rest of the convention so long as we gave them wall to wall programme.

Yet the programme is often the most ill-organised and certainly the most ill-conceived part of the con. The only honourable exceptions to this rule that spring immediately to mind are the Mexicons, because of a committee decision taken right at the start of the whole procedure that the programme came first in everything. The whole committee is always involved in devising and organising the programme, the longest committee meeting is the one devoted to arranging the time-table.

But that is very much the exception. More usually one or two people are saddled with the programme (often, one suspects, because they still confess to reading SF and maybe know the odd author), and the rest of the committee has nothing to do with it. The major, the most public part of their convention and they abdicate responsibility for it!

Still, what can you expect when it has been a matter of pride among the fans experienced enough to stage a con-

Fun, Desperate Fun

vention that they don't go to the programme? And why not? Because it's always boring. And why is it always boring? Because it has been hived off, because the committee has not taken the interest they should in organising it.

We have an endless regress here. It must be broken somehow.

The key is the programme itself. If it is challenging, inventive, and entertaining, then people will want to go and see it. Including the committee. And more people will be inspired to play a part organising it next time around. And so it goes.

The trouble is that the majority of programmes seem to be thrown together without a moment's thought. A good programme demands a very creative input. What we get instead is a few famous names sat up on the stage as a sop to the punters, discussing the same things they have discussed at the last half dozen conventions. They're bored, and the audience is bored.

What do we do about it? We begin by recognising the four basic constituents of any successful programme, all of which must be given equal weight and consideration. They are: the performers, the programme items, the staging, and the time-tabling. I'll consider each of these in turn, occasionally drawing on examples from Mexicons not because Mexicon necessarily got them all right, but because my experience organising the programmes for the first two Mexicons has honed these ideas.

The Performers

The programme is an entertainment. The people who take part in the programme, often for no reward, are perforce performers. It is the committee's responsibility to ensure that they get people who can perform.

A dozen or so writers turn up regularly to conventions, their names are familiar even to those who don't actually keep up with much modern science fiction. Just as regularly, convention committees think all they need to do is put some combination of those dozen up on stage and leave them to get on with it. How many still expect to get Chris Priest onto the programme though he retired from performing several years ago because he was always a nervous and unhappy
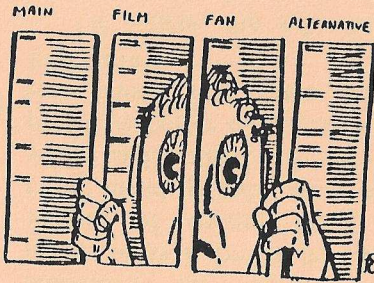
speaker, and anyway was bored with doing the same thing at convention after convention?

PROGRAMMING

MAIN   FILM   FAN   ALTERNATIVE

There are others who are always happy to perform but shouldn't be allowed within a mile of a stage. You have to take risks when introducing new people to British conventions, but there are ways of checking. At the very least a simple phone call, which

should be part of the basic preparations of any convention, will give you an idea of speaking manner. And you can ask people who know. But there isn't the mechanism for calling upon that knowledge.

We need a directory that future committees can call on for basic information on possible programme participants along the lines of: poor speaker, good extemporé speaker, good only when reading a prepared speech, and so forth. Such a directory would also be useful for providing information on which subjects a speaker was interested in, which other speakers would be either sympathetic or antagonistic, and the like.

Because, of course, it is not simply a matter of getting the right guests. A programme that consisted solely of individual speakers would be deadly dull. We are looking for panels, and a panel is not just a selection of people thrown together at random. A lot of thought has to be given to the dynamics of the group. The convention going writers in this country, for instance, include some who are close friends, others who have nothing whatsoever in common. If you put

Fun, Desperate Fun

together a panel of the latter you face a resounding silence, if the former then the whole thing could be far too chummy to produce anything of interest to an audience.

It needs very careful consideration of a whole string of interrelated questions. Will the panelists have anything interesting to say to each other? Will two people with antagonistic views produce a lively debate, or will one personality overwhelm the other? Can we set two strong personalities off against each other, or is it better to have a variety of styles? Does this panel need people who agree with each other, should that panel be better balanced, could this panel degenerate into a bitter row?

Of course, the selection of a chairman/moderator is vitally important. You need someone able to control the proceedings, and the participants, who can get the conversation going in fruitful directions, and change directions when it starts to dry up, who can make sure everyone gets his say, and no-one dominates the thing.

It all calls for knowledge of how panels work, and of the people involved (or for some such directory as I've suggested). It calls for the nerve to do something different with the people on hand, and the imagination to see new directions or untapped potential. And, of course, it all depends on what you get the performers to do.

The Programme Items

This is where you get to be original. Or should be. The hoary old chestnuts are wheeled out so often that I occasionally despair of what is supposed to be a creative bunch of people. It is not hard to think of new ideas, what is hard is coming up with a new slant on the tired and familiar ideas that are the mainstay of too many conventions.

There are two different but complementary routes to follow.

In the first instance you start with the people, and the ideas develop from what you know of them and their work. Thus, if you have Jan Mark as a guest, it is a little pedestrian to have a programme item simply about children's fiction. But if you know that both Jan Mark and Gwyneth Jones have written for adults and for children, and both have rather different views on the subject, then set-

ting up a dialogue on that contrast might well produce something worthwhile.

This demands a very close familiarity with the works of your guests, but you have no business inviting anyone to a convention unless someone on the committee at least has sufficient knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, their interests and obsessions. And it's vital to be able to spot those seemingly insignificant coincidences between the work of two very different writers that can be the spark for an unexpected but successful panel.

And a word of warning: don't spend too much time canvassing your guests to find out what they want to do. You are asking them to come up with interesting programme items when they have not been thinking along those lines, and they probably won't have all the relevant factors in mind to come up with a hit. Furthermore they are liable to suggest things that hinge on private obsessions which have either been given more than sufficient airing at conventions past, or are of such minority interest that they won't attract an audience. This can suggest other directions to pursue, but it is not a cheap and easy way to construct a programme.

The second route starts with the idea, then finds the right people to develop it. This gives you the opportunity to be fresh not in the choice of subject but in the people who discuss it. For instance a discussion on cyberpunk at a recent Novacon was not a startlingly original subject, but setting two unlikely protagonists onto it, David Brin and Kim Stanley Robinson, was electrifying. This, of course, goes back to what I said earlier about knowing the dynamics of a panel and who to put on it.

But you must be flexible enough for your choice of subject to change the composition of the panel, or for the choice of panel to change the subject. You are looking for a combination of people and subject that is exciting, unusual, and entertaining, and you have to be prepared to do a lot of juggling with the pieces of the jigsaw before you get the perfect fit. Rule of thumb: if you've seen exactly the same line up of panelists before, change at least one of them. If you've come across the same subject before, find a different perspective, or

drop it.

The Staging

There is another piece that has to be fitted into the jigsaw: the audience. It is no good having the most scintillating panel, if there's no-one in the audience. And it's no use attracting a full house if you send them all to sleep within five minutes. The audience are the people this is all about. You are playing to them, you are playing for them. You have to bear them in mind at every stage while you are devising your programme.

For instance, audience participation can be vital to the success of most programme items. I've been on more than a few panels which proved less inspiring than they should have done, which have been rescued by questions from the audience.

You cannot count on audience participation. There is certainly no way you can force it. But there are things you can do to encourage it. The best way is to ensure that you have a sparkling programme item that captures the attention and imagination. But you can also seed the audience with questions, though this oftens comes across as artificial and shallow, and can have the opposite effect to that desired. Better to make sure that if there is someone who you know has strong opinions on the subject under discussion, then that person is kept informed about the panel - when and where it is, who's on it, etc - so they are in the hall at the time and therefore likely to initiate debate spontaneously. You need a moderator who knows how to encourage questions from the floor and can bring questioners in at the earliest opportunity.

And there is a lot you can do with staging. The old style setup, with the panel in a line behind a table high on a stage, can create a formal atmosphere and set a barrier between audience and panel which means the panelists have to work that much harder to break it down. At Mexicon II we experimented with a lower stage, and easy chairs for the performers grouped in a semi-circle around a low coffee table. More like a TV chat show. It relaxed the performers, removed the barrier, and made everyone feel more like they were taking part in the proceedings.

There's probably a lot more that could be done in this line. Maybe arranging the audience

in curves, maybe even a 'theatre in the round' style presentation, but that will have to wait for other conventions to try. The only sure thing is that the programme organiser has to think about a lot more than just getting people to perform.

There's also the question of room size. The familiar knee-jerk reaction is to stick everything in the biggest room available. That can be the most stupid way of presenting a programme item. Just because you think it's an important item doesn't mean everyone will go to it. Mexicons had the best rate of audience attendance of any con I've seen, and we never counted on more than a third of the attendees wanting to see any item. Sometimes you will fill a big hall, more often you won't.

If you have 50 people in a hall that holds 500 it makes the room feel cold and empty; put them in a room that's supposed to hold 40 and it's hot and exciting. I know which one is more likely to generate a good panel discussion. You have a lot of juggling to do, but in general you can afford to hold most programme items, even at an Eastercon, in rooms that are much smaller than is the norm.

Even if some rare event should prove astonishingly popular, it's far better to have people standing around the wall and spilling out of the door than it is to overestimate demand and have your speakers feeling embarrassed and awkward in front of a near-empty hall.

The Time-Table

There's one more piece of the jigsaw: the time-table. When an event is staged can play as big a part in its success as the nature of the event. How often have you decided to miss items on a convention programme simply because of its timing? You've arranged to go and eat. It's too early in the morning, or too late at night. It clashes with something else. Or you just don't feel up to facing a structuralist examination of the works of E.C. Tubb at 9.30 in the morning, or 9.30 at night come to that.

Mexicon devotes a full committee meeting exclusively to arranging the time table, because this is the shape and the heart of the convention. And it is a long, slow, intricate job.

The programming sub-committee will present a selection of ideas to fill twice the

time available. These will have been roughly divided into three groups: lightweight pieces more appropriate to the morning when people are still waking up, more demanding and stimulating pieces that will work best in the afternoon, or pieces that are more entertaining for the run down to the evening. The day does not have to be so rigidly divided, but it makes sense to hold generally to these rough guidelines. After all, it would be ridiculous to hold a key-note speech first thing in the morning, or expect people to follow, or even participate in, a complex argument late at night.

There's more to bear in mind. Even in a single strand programme you need to be constantly asking questions like: should we put these two similar items next to each other, or does one provide a perfect introduction to the next? Should we break at this point for a quiz? When are we going to fit in the films? Will breaking down the equipment for that item interfere with the start of the next item? You have to build up a rhythm of climaxes and quiet moments, of drama and interest ascending and descending.

Add one or more strands to the programme and you are adding a whole new dimension to the problem, but essentially the task is identical. You have to build a programme that will entertain the audience, and suit their various moods throughout the day. It is impossible to get it exactly right, but we can get closer than a lot of conventions have even tried.

Then you have to juggle the performers. Simple things to start with, like making sure they're not on two things at the same time (that has happened to me), or even on two things that follow each other in the same hall. Remember, the performers are convention attendees too, they must be allowed time to rest and enjoy themselves. Then you need to look across the whole of the programme. Anyone at an average convention who is on more than three programme items is probably being asked to do too much. At the same time, if you've enticed some special guest along and they're only speaking once, then they're being under-used. At this stage you should still be juggling the actual make-up of the panels, and it is not unusual to find some items changing consider-

ably just because of where you want them to be and who is involved.

Eventually, of course, you get it all planned. You've contacted everyone you want to perform to check that they're willing to do the item with the other people scheduled to be on it. You've confirmed dates and times. With a bit of luck it is all signed and sealed with a month or more to go before the actual convention. But that's not the end of it. You need the flexibility to cope with emergencies, no-shows, late arrivals, accidents. Items that just aren't working should be wound up quickly. Those that are working well should be allowed a little flexibility to over-run. But you have a time-table to keep to, and pro-grammes that consistently run late are a sure sign of sloppy work somewhere along the line.

What does this add up to? The programme is one of the most important parts of any convention, and requires creative thought and meticu-lous, hard work. It is not a job that should be left to one per-son, no matter how small the convention. You need at least two to bounce ideas off each other, spark new ideas and counter any individual obses-sions and blind spots. But the sub-committee is essentially the clearing house for ideas and the point of contact with per-formers. It is the committee as a whole that should be prepared to work on finalising, organising and running the pro-gramme. In a very real sense the programme is the conven-tion, and if the committee is not prepared to put in the ideas, time and effort to pro-duce the programme they have no right to be running a con-vention in the first place.

Games Room

Marcus L. Rowland

Introduction: Nine Months Later.

Having been "volunteered" to run the games room at Beccon 87, I wrote a report on the problems I'd encountered, which appeared in ConRunner after Conspiracy. There were a few snags about this report, notably the fact that I wrote it in three hours the day after Beccon and didn't really express my thoughts as clearly as possible. I'm running the games room again at Contrivance, and need to get my act together on organization, so it's a help to do it in writing. This is essentially my original report, with new thoughts in italics (*like this*) at various points.

It's worth remembering that SF conventions aren't primarily games conventions. This is something I tended to forget during Beccon, unfortunately this carried over into my report. Eastercon organizers, in particular, should remember one important point; the con usually takes place either a week before or a week after GamesFair, a weekend con at Reading university (in 1988 it's the weekend after Follycon), and the most fanatic gamers will probably go to GamesFair rather than Eastercon if they can't afford both. Although there is quite a lot of overlap between the two types of fandom, events run at SF conventions should probably be aimed at less committed gamers; the sort of person who likes an occasional game of Dungeons and Dragons, or would like to know more about the hobby, rather than people who will spend all their time in the games room without any prompting.

The Beccon Report Revisited.

1: Programming.

Although we decided roughly what we wanted to do quite early, I forgot to rope in anyone to help with the items we intended to program. This led to several problems.

Initially we had intended to run panels and workshops related to the two competitions we ran (see below). Sloth and amnesia led to these panels being more or less forgotten; instead, we posted rules on the first day and let players get on with it!

Since I knew that John Dallman intended to continue his Unicon discussion, the main programming I intended to arrange was some demo games. Once again amnesia set in, and I forgot to ask anyone to run them. Luckily there were several volunteers, but we would have had more with more advance warning. Several people were willing, but had left their equipment at home. The format used (an introductory talk followed by a game) seemed to work fairly well.

The obvious omission here was forgetting to put any advance information in the PR's. I could have asked for volunteer referees and speakers, published the rules, etc.

Since these activities all took place in the games room, it would probably be unfair to schedule many more items there; each item disturbs the people who just want to get on with their games. A few main programme items tied in to the gaming theme, which helped a lot. As I had nothing to do with arranging them, and can't take much (any) credit.

2: Sponsors.

If you are going to put on a good show, or run competitions, it's a good idea to get some sponsorship. I tried about 18 companies; unfortunately only five were even potentially helpful. These were:-

Games Workshop Ltd. (White Dwarf etc.)

Games Workshop gave us six White Dwarf subscriptions and a copy of their Warhammer role playing game with two supplements, to be used as competition prizes, and several posters. They did not impose any conditions about the nature of the competitions.

TSR UK Ltd. (D&D, Marvel Superheroes, etc.)

TSR gave us two games, D&D modules, and some sf story collections for prizes, plus a load of pens which tended to vanish as soon as they were put out. They also gave us huge quantities of display material, from posters to window stickers and mobiles. TSR did originally suggest that we might like to run tournaments based on their own games, but were prepared to sponsor our written competitions instead.

TSR should be even more helpful now; they are making a big push in the UK, and now sell their magazine, The Dragon, at 95p rather than the former £2.95. The Dragon runs a games convention listing column which occasionally includes SF and Fantasy cons; unfortunately they missed Beccon, but I hope to bring Contrivance to their attention in 1989.

Mersey Leisure Publications (Adventurer Magazine)

This company gave us some back issues, a couple of small posters and some badges which we eventually used as consolation prizes in the competitions.

Adventurer folded towards the end of 1987.

Mayfair Games (a US company producing the DC Heroes game etc.)

Mayfair sent us some posters advertising the "Watchmen" module for DC Heroes and also offered us some coupons that could be exchanged for games by mail order.

Unfortunately they wanted us to run a DC Heroes tournament for the coupons; since we were not prepared to do this (no experienced referees, and few players), I sent the coupons back.

Steve Jackson Games (A US company producing Car Wars etc.)

Steve Jackson Games also offered to sponsor competitions, again they had to be based on the companies own games. Unfortunately, the prizes were dollar coupons, without any easy way to exchange them in Britain, and dependent on running Car Wars or GURPS tournaments. Accepting would have caused a lot of problems, so I sent them back.

Unless companies expressed an interest when I wrote initially, I only contacted them once. I seem to have written to most of the companies that did express an

interest three times, though I was in correspondence with all of them on other matters throughout the period, and mentioned Beccon repeatedly. See appendix 1 for the main pre-con letters. Companies that donated prizes etc. were sent a report after the con, see appendix 2. In the event no-one really did much with this, apart from a brief mention in Adventurer.

Local sponsorship, and involvement of local games clubs or companies, might also be a possibility; unfortunately I didn't think of it until after the convention! The NEC is a little isolated in this respect; there are no game manufacturers in the area, and the nearest shops are in Birmingham.

One unfortunate event has shown the dangers of incautious sponser-seeking. I put the Beccon committee in contact with Fantasy Chronicles, an Irish games magazine. Beccon ran two advertisements for the magazine (in a PR and in the programme booklet), in return for which Fantasy Chronicles published an advert for the con. Fantasy Chronicles appeared for the last time in late January 1987, then repeatedly postponed publica-

tion of the next issue. After Beccon it became apparent that the magazine had folded without paying its contributors, and without refunding subscriptions. It's to be hoped that no-one subscribed as a result of seeing the PR or programme book advertisements.

3: Fan Activities.

I hoped to get a good range of games fanzines on display, and wrote to various fanzines a few weeks before the con, as well as having had some publicity in various game magazines several months in advance.

Unfortunately only one fanzine responded. It looks like an earlier and more intensive campaign is called for.

4: Accessories.

TSR supplied about 80 biros. During the con all but one disappeared. These were free, but a good supply of cheap biros or pencils is ESSENTIAL, even if they have to be bought. Items we should have ideally provided include graph, lined and scrap paper. I had one lucky break; I attended a wargames convention a week before the con, and found a stall selling shop-soiled dice. The dealer offered "a handful" for £1. I got about fifty in a variety of shapes and sizes for

£2. Most were usable, though none were perfect, and we put them out on the tables. Approximately half (mostly the expensive types, such as D30's) disappeared during the con. This loss rate seemed fairly acceptable. The remainder are available to any con wanting them
and went to the Follycon committee.

5: Competitions.

We announced two competitions, for trap and scenario design, but made several mistakes;

i. Exact details weren't announced until the con, so that entries couldn't be prepared in advance. Since it was a written competition, we effectively stopped most people from submitting typed entries, and gave the entrants (and the judges) a lot of legibility problems.

ii. One competition attracted much better entries than the other, and was attempted by more people. In hindsight we should have really gone for a single competition, since the low response to the traps competition meant that some poor entries won prizes.

iii. I didn't find judges until the con. Terry Pratchett and Ashley Watkins kindly agreed to be press ganged, but I should really have asked them in advance.

iv. We did not have prize certificates ready until a few minutes before the awards were made, and there was a bit of a rush to get the winners' addresses before they left. I also forgot to return entries to the authors, and had to arrange to post them back after the con.

In all of this we completely forgot copyright problems. At least one entry described an idea that was potentially suitable for professional publication; and the authors should have been advised to keep copies as proof to authorship.

As an example to this problem, two to the entries included ideas that were vaguely similar to a scenario I wrote in 1985, which has not yet been published. It's possible that the entrants will see this, when and if it is published, and assume that I have stolen their ideas.

6: Tournaments.

We didn't run any. I don't really think that this was a mistake, since they are a lot of hard work and would monopolise the games room for several hours. We could have got

more sponsorship if we agreed to run particular games under competition rules. Draw your own conclusions, remembering that you will need to find several referees.

7: Security.

There wasn't any. We left the room open at all times. Apart from the missing pens and dice, and some posters that were apparently cleared by the hotel (or some of the fans) during the closing ceremony, there were no problems. I think that an open policy is a much better idea than attempting to impose any form of discipline, but it does mean that the games room must be accessible from the public corridor, and must not allow access to any secure area. Game players tend to prefer odd hours (I saw one game in progress at 2am), so an "open all hours" arrangement is best. All the companies who supplied posters etc., were warned that we would not be providing security; it was suggested that the art show or book room could be used for valuable displays, but no one took us up on this.

8: Stewards/Gophers.

These were not used. Once or twice a day I wandered in and asked people to lend a hand clearing the beer cans etc. away and tidying up; it seemed to work reasonably well.

For some reason the hotel staff stayed out of this room throughout the con, apart from emptying ash trays once or twice. A tray of dirty teacups and crockery was left in one corner and stayed there from Thursday to Monday; probably they would have been removed if I'd asked, but this somehow failed to occur to me or anyone else throughout the con.

Conclusions:

I suspect that there would be more problems with a larger or rowdier con having a lot of day members. Fortunately Beccon was isolated enough for a relaxed policy to work. I don't want to lay down any hard and fast rules for future cons, but it would be a pity if cons went back to the "one empty room with tables" style of games room, or tried to add so many programme items that the players left in disgust. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have a games room and an adjoining (possibly lockable) room for panels and workshops if sufficient space was available.

A few months after Beccon, Conspiracy provided

several games rooms, including displays owned by various companies, a lecture room, etc.; unfortunately the presence of the displays meant that the suite was locked at 8:00 pm, leaving gamers to play in the corridors. This caused problems, especially on the last night when some airline pilots were staying at the hotel and objected to the noise. It's unfortunate that no room was available outside the suite.

Some ideas for future cons;

1: Model making workshop.

2: Figure making/painting workshop.

On further thought 1 and 2 are probably not good ideas, since similar events are run at games conventions; they would probably not appeal to the majority of attendees, and dedicated gamers have other outlets for these activities.

3: Improvised theatre (get someone who knows about this to teach players a bit about characterization).

Brian Ameringen's "Alien Encounter" game is another way of introducing this idea; there are also several actors with an interest in the hobby.

4: Guest celebrities.

Again, these are a common feature of games fairs etc.; unless someone is REALLY well known (and not just to fanatics) is available, this is probably not a good idea.

5: Panels on religions and/or ecology for fantasy or SF. Get a theologian, ecologist, etc., then see if they can come to any conclusions. A possibility for Jack Cohen's help?

6: Computerised aids to gaming (universe generators etc.); discussion of usefulness, programming, etc. I suspect that this is very much my own minority interest, and would raise all sorts of security problems if computers etc., were brought to the games room for this one event.

I hope that all this will give readers some ideas for their own conventions. If nothing else, you can always set out to be completely different from my idea of a games room, and prove that I got everything wrong.

Appendix 1: Sample Letters

This letter is typical of those I sent out introducing the convention to various companies; it was accompanied by a photocopied letter from the Beccon committee.

Dear --------,

As you'll see from the enclosed letter, I've been asked to organise the games room for the next year's British Science Fiction Easter Convention, to be held in the Metropole Hotel at the Birmingham NEC over Easter Weekend. In recent years most British SF conventions haven't done much about games, apart from providing rooms and tables. The organizers of Beccon have asked me to try and arrange something slightly better. Unfortunately there are some constraints on what can be done;

1: The room probably won't be very large; while the size quoted in the enclosed letter is an approximation, I'm told that there may not be room for more than five or six tables.

2: The rooms won't be locked at any time, or have security available, so displays and models can't be protected. However, room is available in the art show, as indicated in the letter, and trade stalls can be hired in the book room. These facilities will have good security.

Bearing these factors in mind, what I'd like to try to do is provide as much information about games as possible, for the use of anyone who isn't familiar with the hobby. Publicity material and posters would be welcome, as would pens, pencils, paper, character sheets, etc. Discontinued but usable products and other samples would be greatly appreciated.

Please remember that there won't be room for huge amounts of material in the games room, and that it's unlikely that much can be returned after the convention.

If anyone from your organization is planning on attending the convention, maybe they would be interested in running a game. If the room is large enough a talk or panel discussion might be arranged. The organizers would also like to put at least one games item on the main program.

Finally, I'd greatly appreciate any other ideas you might have for the games room; at this stage I need ideas more than anything else.

If you have any material for the games room, or any other ideas, please drop me a line at the above address. For any other matters relating to the convention (eg. advertising, sales space, etc.) please contact the convention committee

at the Northolt address in the enclosed letter. Please also use their address in any publicity you give the convention - I don't want hundreds of membership forms coming through my front door.

Sincerely. etc.

This next letter is typical of those that eventually went out to everyone who expressed interest in the first letter. It was accompanied by a publicity pack. With hindsight, there might have been a better response if the first letter had been accompanied by better publicity material.

Dear --------,

Here, somewhat belatedly, is the publicity material on the Beccon SF convention I promised some months ago. Many apologies for the delay; there have been endless problems with printing and distribution.

As you may remember, I'm helping to organise the games room at this con, and need lots of nice ideas to make the games room interesting and appeal to newcomers and older hands who've dropped out of gaming. Essentially, the ideas we've come up with to date are;

1: A workshop panel on dungeon design, consisting of various people pontificating about theme versus random elements, internal logic, etc., followed by a competition to design the best single dungeon room (no more than 500 words, 1 diagram). This is obviously primarily for D&D, since we expect most attendees to be familiar with that game if anything.

2: A more generic scenario design workshop and panel; what makes a good scenario, plot elements, subplots, etc. There'll be another competition, this time for the most interesting scenario outline in 500 words (no pictures).

3: A main programme item, in a hall seating 4-500, a "what happens if you meet and alien" live action thing. This was tried out at a university convention this summer and worked reasonably well. The idea it that four players meet an alien in an isolated part of the world and have to find out what it wants, if it's a threat, etc. No prizes for this one, just a chance for players to look like idiots, and for various actors to wear silly helmets and try to boggle the team. I wrote a couple of scripts last time,

but hopefully someone else will be doing it next year.

The pack will tell you far more than I can about the aims of the convention and other activities planned for the Easter Weekend . It should be fun, and I hope that you'll be able to make it. Membership details etc., are in the pack. Any publicity you're able to give would be appreciated. I hope that this is of interest, and will do my best to keep you posted on future developments.

Regards, etc.

This last letter went out shortly before Beccon.

BECCON -The 1987 British Science Fiction Convention

Dear --------,

There's now less than a month to go to the Beccon Sf convention, so I'm writing to remind you of our game room needs;

1: Display material; Posters, magazines, covers, etc., we don't mind displaying advertising if it's reasonably relevant to the hobby, and not too blatant, sexist, etc. As I've previously said, we can't promise to return anything, and the games room won't have security, so please don't send anything irre-placeable.

2: Prizes; We are running two competitions, one for dungeon design and one for scenario design. Suitable prizes would be games, modules, gift vouchers, magazine subscriptions, figures, etc.

3: Bits and Pieces; Pencils, paper, character sheets, etc. As in (1) above, anything sent to us may well vanish into a black hole, so please be sure it's totally expendable.

4: Anything else you can think of (please, please, no inflatable dragons, unless they are very small and totally expendable).

Please send all reasonably portable items to me at the above address; anything bigger than a boxed game or a poster should really go direct to the convention committee, at;

191 The Heights, Northolt, Middx., UB5 4BU.

Please try and send things to me before Wednesday 15th April; I'll be leaving London fairly early on Thursday.

With your help, we hope to make BECCON a convention to remember.

Sincerely, etc.

As well as sending these letters, I was in fairly regular

contact with most of these companies throughout the period, and tried to make a point of mentioning Beccon at least once in every telephone conversation and letter.

Appendix 2: Post-con correspondence

This letter is typical of several I sent after the con.

Dear --------,

Enclosed please find a short report of games room activities at the convention. Please feel free to quote it and pass it on to (your magazine), though I should mention that I'm sending copies to various other magazines.

All the gifts you sent were greatly appreciated, and the prize giving was one of the highlights of the closing ceremony. I think that it's fair to say that a good time was had by everyone.

I hope that you won't object if I pass on your name to whoever is organizing the games room for the next year's UK convention; I'm not sure who it will be at the moment. Incidentally, the 1988 convention will be in Liverpool, the 1989 convention will try St. Helier in Jersey. It's stretching the definition of UK a little, but seems to be the only site available that year.

Once again, my thanks, and thanks from the convention committee.

sincerely, etc.

(This is my post con report, as sent to various games magazines and fanzines, none of whom made much use of it.)

Beccon, the 1987 British Science Fiction Convention; Marcus L. Rowland

Please note that copies of this report have been sent to several magazines, games companies etc.

Over Easter approximately 800 SF fans gathered at the Metropole Hotel, in the National Exhibition Centre outside Birmingham, for the annual national SF convention. Events included talks, a continuous film program, panel discussions, scientific talks, games and quizzes, and huge range of SF-related activities. As part of these activities I was asked to help organise games room programming and competitions. This report only covers game-related activities in detail.

The Games Room

We were given a small hall adjoining the Art show, which could hold around fifty players. Various companies (TSR, Games Workshop, West End Games, and Mersey Leisure Publications) provided posters, leaflets, stickers, pens, badges and magazines. Disappointingly, only one fanzine (Superhero UK) and one convention (Konacon) replied ot our request for display copies and advertising material; a shame, since several attendees wanted to know more about games fandom. Even without many fan contributions, we eventually ran out of room for display material, and had to spread down the corridor outside the room.

Once the convention began, the games room was used fairly intensively. There were at least two games in progress at most times, more in the evenings.

Games Room Programming

Recent Easter conventions haven't had much of a program in the games room. However, we were able to persuade several GM's to give short talks about their favorite game systems, followed be demonstration games. The games covered included Paranoia, Ghostbusters, Traveller 2300, a "systemless" SF/Horror game and Toon. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped at very short notice.

Another popular item was a round-robin discussion on plot and character development, chaired by John Dallman (former editor of the fanzine Trollchrusher) and Gary Stratmann; it attracted approximately thirty players, lasted more than two hours, and ranged over a very wide range of topics.

Three items were run in the main convention halls. On Friday, Ashley Watkins chaired a wide-ranging panel discussion about the nature of role-playing games, their future, and common problems. About a hundred people attended the panel.

On Sunday, Brian Ameringen ran an unusual live role playing event called "Alien Encounter", in which teams of four players were confronted by various odd aliens and asked to make contact. The script writers included authors Ian Watson and Dave Langford. The game was followed by a panel discussion, featuring John Brunner, Ian Watson and

Ian Sorenson, who discussed the possibilities and difficulties of real contact with aliens. A large audience attended these events, and there were some lively arguments. Other items related to live role playing included a panel on Sf and Fantasy fancy dress design, and a costume workshop.

On Monday, an early main programme item was a talk on the past, present and future of war-gaming systems, including a demonstration of the original H.G. Wells "Little Wars" rules. Hugh Mascetti ran this lively item.

The Games Room Competitions

Fairly early on we decided that a conventional games tournament wasn't practical; the games room only held five large tables, and it didn't seem fair to monopolise it for several hours. Instead, we decided to hold two written games competitions; one on trap design, the other on scenario or campaign design.

Unfortunately, the rules weren't advertised it detail before the convention, so most entrants only had two days to work before the competitions closed on Sunday. Despite this there were thirteen entries, most of a very high standard, judged by Terry Pratchett (Author of "The Colour of Magic", "Strata", etc.), Ashley Watkins and myself. We were given some extremely generous prizes by Games Workshop and TSR UK, presented at the convention's closing ceremony. Judging was extremely difficult, and we were eventually left with a tie for second place on both competitions.

The **Great Beccon Trap Competition** asked for a trap design, for any game system, in no more than 500 words, with any number of diagrams. There were only a few responses, suggesting that most gamers preferred the complexities of the scenario design competition. All were aimed at Fantasy campaigns.

The winner was David Wood, of London, with a simple water trap that could cause a lot of problems. Joint second place went to Guy Robinson, of Kent, and Akheel Ahmad, of Glasgow, for two vicious spike traps. All three won a year's subscription to White Dwarf, a copy of TSR's D&D scenario "Up the Garden Path", and a collection from TSR's Amazing Stories magazine.

The **Great Beccon Adventure Competition** asked for an outline of an adventure, scenario or campaign, with a consistent plot capable of sustaining a few hours play, and broad appeal to experienced and new players. A 1000-word limit was imposed. The entries covered a very broad range of themes, though about half were fantasy.

The winner was "Tower of the Mega-Orc", by Steve Jones of Birmingham, an unusual fantasy campaign with a horrifying SF element, possibly inspired by the film "Westworld". In joint second place were "Blue Dragon Island", by Mike Figg of London, an extremely funny fantasy idea, and "Paranoid Star Trek", by Ray Grivan of Birmingham, a wide-ranging adventure combining elements from two very different SF systems. Two of the three winners were neighbors, suggesting that there is a very good games group somewhere in Birmingham. All three winners received a year's subscription to White Dwarf and a copy of TSR;'s D&D scenario "Up the Garden Path"; additionally, the winner chose Games Workshop's Warhammer Fantasy Role Playing

System and two modules, while the runners up shared TSR's Advanced Marvel Super Heroes, plus powers supplement, a copy of TSR's Basic D&D rules, and TSR's Snarfquest graphic novel.

Other Events

A full report of this convention would have to cover approximately 200 hours of programming and unplanned events in two main hall, five meeting rooms, and a cinema, all crammed into four days. Attendees included many famous authors and celebrities; guest of honour Keith Roberts, special guest Jane Gaskell, John Brunner, Dave Langford, Ian Watson, Iain Banks, Gene Wolfe, artist David Hardy, Terry Pratchett, Bob Shaw, and may more. Important events included the presentation of the annual BSFA awards, and the £1000 Arthur C. Clarke Award for best novel of 1987. Winners were as follows;

BSFA Awards;

Novel   The Ragged Astronauts   by   Bob   Shaw. (Gollancz)

Short Story Kaeti and the Hangman by Keith Roberts (In "Kaeti and Company", Kero-

sina books)

Media Aliens

Artwork The Clocktower Girl by Keith Roberts (frontispiece to "Kaeti and Company")

Arthur C. Clarke Award

The Handmaiden's Tale by Margaret Atwood (Jonathan Cape)

1988 and Follycon

Next year's Easter Convention will be Follycon, to be held in Liverpool. For full details write to Follycon, 104 Pretoria Road, Patchway, Bristol. I hope that whoever runs the games room will receive as much help as I did.

Appendix 3: Competition Rules

The Great Beccon Trap Competition

Role playing games began as a chance to pit your wits against the fiendish ingenuity of the Dungeon Master, and have a long tradition of horrible and devious traps. We want you to continue this tradition by designing the nastiest trap you can imagine. Try to make it lethal but fair; we're looking for something that an intelligent player could avoid or survive. A trace of humour would also be appreciated.

The Rules (Such as they are)

1: Entries must be no more than 500 words, with as many diagrams as you like.

2: Don't use the rules of any particular game system; we don't intend to wade through dozens of books to check if it will work or not. Think generic.

3: Traps can be for any type of game; fantasy, SF, superheroes, spies, modern horror, etc. If they require a particular environment (for example, free fall, or a world where magic works) please mention it.

4: Marks will be awarded for originality, style, wit, fairness, and anything else that appeals to the Judges. We'll throw out anything that's an obvious rip-off from a well-known game module or supplement.

5: PLEASE write legibly; we won't mark anything we can't read.

6: All entries must be marked with your name and membership number; the prizes include magazine subscriptions, which can't be awarded if we

can't trace your address.

7: Entries must be handed in by 3.00pm on Sunday 19th April. The winners will be announced at the closing ceremony, and notified by post if they aren't present.

The Great Beccon Adventure Competition

Although dungeon-bashing is now a little unpopular, there are still plenty of people who don't seem to do much else in role playing games. We want you to counter this trend by writing an outline for an adventure, scenario, or campaign, with a consistent plot that's capable of sustaining a few hours of play. What we'll be looking for is something that will be enjoyed by newcomers and well-established players; try to make its appeal as broad as possible.

The Rules (such as they are).

1: Entries must be no more than 1000 words, with no diagrams unless they are absolutely essential.

2: (As trap competition)

3: The outline can be for any type of game; fantasy, SF, superheroes, spies, modern horror, etc. If it requires a particu-

lar environment (for example a flat world or a world populated entirely by robots) please mention it.

4-7 (As traps competition)
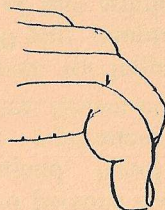
"Don't worry it'll be alright on the night!" (or how to interface the ideas with real life).

John Stewart

Conscription has been born out of the aftermath (?) of Conspiracy. As has been mentioned before there is a general feeling that convention committees should learn something from the summer of 87. However there is the question of how much of what went wrong at Conspiracy is preventable and how much is an inherent risk of running SF conventions. The following tries to suggest that while the risks are there, they can be avoided.

The Wetware

You will note later in the article that I differentiate between a large and small convention. This mainly because, for small conventions (about a couple of hundred people),

unless they try to be very ambitious, can get away with one or two persons forming the "fix-it" squad, handling such items as equipment in the wrong place, blown bulbs etc.

However, for large conventions (800-plus people for the purposes of this article), applying any "rules of thumb" to give the percentage of attendees who will be helping tends to produce a vast list that resembles a small army. Unfortunately, as will be mentioned further, these vast armies do not tend to appear; at least, not in the vital days before the beginning of the convention. Or rather not without a lot of hard work.

One idea that has grown in the last couple of years, and

was particularly effective at Follycon is the concept of small dedicated teams, both before and at the convention, targeted upon individual areas of convention activity. Thus a con has a dedicated lighting crew, sound crew, team of projectionists etc. Running in parallel with these at-convention teams are other groups (though not necessarily of different people) whose task is to organise the various facets of the convention that have traditionally been handled entirely by the con committee. Thus rather than running around in ever decreasing circles or resigning due to the pressure, the committee performs the role of a board of directors, who take executive decisions and guide the whole, while leaving the actual mechanics to others. Of course, it is important that the main committee knows what the various sub-groups are doing; while vast reporting structures can be set up, generally the simplest method is for each sub group to have a member who is also a main committee member. This should allow the quick spotting of potential clashes between the plans that various sub groups are formulating, although there is still likely to be a need for combined meetings of sub groups (e.g. programming and technical) to sort out the requirements for each programme item.

A point that ought to be borne in mind is peoples' abilities to handle particular work loads. Generally it is better for the overall good of a convention that people shout 'help' when they find themselves unable to meet deadlines. Assuming that just because a task has been delegated it is being done is a mistake; some form of report back is needed.

Thus fandom may have found an answer to the old problem of the completely overworked committee, and hopefully this leads to better conventions as the work involved is spread among more people, while still giving a convention with the flavour intended by the committee. However, there remains the problem of ensuring that there are enough people around at the convention during the set up period, that transitional time when the planning and organisation is over and the activities move from peoples' homes and work places and to the actual convention site. Unless it is

"Don't worry it'll be alright on the night!"

well planned this is the period when there are likely to be very few people around and yet it can be the most labour intensive time of the whole convention, though again it is worth treating large and small conventions separately.

TECH
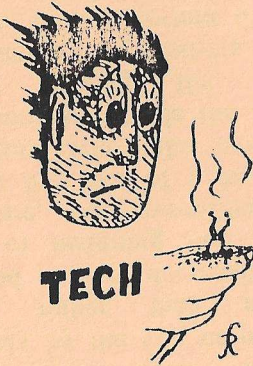
For a small convention the main pre-con period may be little more than the morning of the day that the convention starts. It is likely that, though in pure percentage terms the number of people required to turn up early is similar to a convention of many thousands, the numbers in terms of warm bodies is no more than ten or fifteen people excluding committee. With numbers of this order it is perfectly feasible for each individual to be telephoned or otherwise contacted the day before and their attendance at the correct time and place checked.

For larger conventions and especially in the case of Euro and Worldcons the pre con set up period is likely to be three to four days before the published start, and the number of people required is likely to be one to two hundred. The logistics of handling this quantity of people should not be underestimated. Even for an Eastercon the numbers could be in the order of 40 - 50. Although nearly all of these people will be intending to pay their own hotel bill for the period of the convention, it is going to be a bit much to ask them to pay for the extra days (though some no doubt would), especially if the site is such that cheap accommodation is not available. Thus if a convention is planning to spread the set-up work load over several days before the event, the costs of accommodation needs to be

thought about very early on so that it can be costed into the budget. Alternatively, it might, in some locations, be possible to make use of much cheaper accommodation in the run up days, though distance and other details still need to be taken into account.

Conspiracy was mentioned at the beginning of this article and I think that, judging from the reports after the convention, for those actually involved in helping at the convention the biggest grouse was the amount of work piled on people. However, as one who was from an early stage involved in the operations side of the convention I know that a lot of the above was considered, and a great deal of planning went into various aspects, and yet! Therefore, as far as the manpower/operations side of a convention is concerned, I think the main point to be appreciated by those involved is that it is going to involve a large amount of hard work, but that you should not be afraid to scream HELP!! to your colleagues in the con when in trouble, and if anyone utters the immortal words "It'll be alright on the night!" take them to one side and introduce them

to the thumb screws.

The Hardware

Having solved your manpower problems there still remains the task of obtaining the various items of equipment and consumables that modern conventions seem to require. Some of this has been covered by various people in the progress reports so this section will concentrate of those aspects that I feel may not be so obvious.

Again, small conventions may well find that, as their requirements are normally much simpler, they can get all of the equipment they need from the stock normally held by a site that presents itself as a convention centre - though they really should establish whether the items are actually owned by the location or are being hired in. It may, if the items are being hired in, be cheaper to hire directly, though again this is something that needs careful consideration as it is possible that, if a good relationship exists between the hire firm and the venue, the standard of service given is better than that which could be obtained directly from the same firm.

"Don't worry it'll be alright on the night!"

For larger conventions the same points about reliability of kit, ease of access to the hire sources, etc. still apply. But other items may need to be considered; one of these is that the amount of equipment being hired from a single supplier may have a large monetary value and the supplier will therefore be ·interested in the general "soundness" of the organisation to which they are hiring. This concern may appear in several forms, ranging from a desire to know whether or not you ("the event") is a limited company, to a requirement that you hire their technicians to look after the equipment during the hire period. It is worth noting that, for the few conventions that have had limited company status, it has proved (as far as hiring equipment goes) to be of dubious advantage. Albatross Ltd may at first seem to a potential supplier like a good sign, but they tend to be more nervous of companies that have only been in existence for a few months than they would be of supplying an event where the organisers were totally liable. This is of course one reason for the argument that fandom should try and keep a Science Fiction Ltd going

rather than keep resurrecting it for each large convention in the UK. The requirement to hire technicians with equipment is normally one that makes it impossible to deal with that firm. It is very easy, given the odd hours that conventions keep, for the manpower component of such a hire bill to be greater than that for the equipment itself.

Generally in dealing with suppliers from whom you are going to hire a lot of kit, the rules are, give them plenty of notice, specify EVERYTHING (including all the little bits such as connecting leads, nuts, bolts etc) and then double check nearer to the event. The problem that most conventions have is that being, effectively, one off events, mistakes show and no amount of financial compensation afterwards can really help.

At the convention itself, keeping track of the various pieces of equipment really involves a system that has been worked out before the convention. For some cons it may be possible to duplicate kit so that each function room has the items it needs from the beginning and nothing is ever moved. (In this case equipment

should be labelled with the room it is supposed to be in and either suitable warning against moving or an exceptions procedure .i.e. under what dire conditions it may be moved and under whose authority.) Alternatively, if it is intended that equipment will be moved around the con, then both the time required and the person to do this should be programmed into the convention schedule. (It might also be useful to affix to each piece of equipment its own timetable, so that if all else fails (WHAT!!) a volunteer can be found to move it with the minimum of instructions.)

If all else fails read the destructions!

Although biased to operations and technical, what both these sections have been saying is that a good convention is neither a matter of luck (though some of this may be very welcome), nor of the "It'll be alright on the night" philosophy (this is very unwelcome), but rather a very large amount of advance planning and hard work.

"Don´t worry it´ll be alright on the night!"

Membership List

	Membership at 26/8/88		
1	Henry Balen (f)	34	Maureen Porter (f)
2	Hugh Mascetti (f)	35	Ye Gerbish (f)
3	Laura Wheatley (f)	36	Martin Tudor (f)
4	Gary Stratmann (f)	37	Dave Angus (f)
5	Jay Felton (p)	38	Larry van der Putte (f)
6	Fiona McArthur (p)	39	Wilf James (s)
7	Fiona Anderson (p)	40	Mark Meenan (p)
8	Caroline Mullan (f)	41	Paul Dormer (f)
9	Chris Cooper (f)	42	Susan Francis (f)
10	Bernard Peek (p)	43	John Fairey (f)
11	C J Suslowicz (p)	44	Ian Sorensen (f)
12	Martin Easterbrook (p)	45	Malcolm Reid (s)
13	Margaret Austin (p)	46	Chris O'Shea (f)
14	Colin Fine (p)	47	Rob Meades (f)
15	Doug McCallum (f)	48	James Steele (f)
16	Paul Oldroyd (p)	49	Peter Smith (f)
17	Martin Hoare (p)	50	Valerie Housden (f)
18	Vince Docherty (p)	51	Jane Smithers (f)
19	Roger Robinson (f)	52	Marcus Streets (f)
20	Bernie Evans (p)	53	Brian Ameringen (f)
21	Jonathan Cowie (f)	54	David Brown (f)
22	Steve Linton (f)	55	L W Reeves (f)
23	Pat Brown (f)	56	Simon Beresford (f)
24	Roger Perkins (f)	57	Dave Ellis (p)
25	Iain Dickson (p)	58	Steve Glover (s)
26	Angus H C Scott-Brown (f)	59	Alice Kohler (f)
27	Tim Illingworth (f)	60	Patrick A Lawford (f)
28	Mike Figg (s)	61	Kim Campbell (f)
29	Stephen Davies (f)	62	Matt Bishop (f)
30	John Stewart (f)	63	Lisanne Norman (f)
31	Andrew N Morris (f)	64	Mike Gould (f)
32	Kathy Westhead (f)	65	Linda-Claire Toal (f)
33	Tom Taylor (f)		

f = full member   s = supporting   p = pre con publications

Notes

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For more information, please contact Alison Higgs, Conference Manager, The Pump Room, Bath BA1 1LZ. Tel: Bath (0225) 461111 ext 2734.

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