

CORFLU 2019 IN DC

What rough Corflu, its hour come round at last, slouches toward Falls Church to be born?

Corflu 36 Names

There are several options for Official Corflu Name. There's **Corflu Trump**, of course (or possibly **Corflu No-Trump**). The sum of the digits 1-36 is 666, the Number of the Beast, so possibly **Corflu of the Beast** (my current favorite). 36 is the smallest square triangular number other than one, and is also an Erdős-Woods number. I don't think **Corflu Square Triangle** quite works, but I haven't ruled out **Corflu Erdős-Woods**, because we're not out of the Woods yet. So for now, it's **Corflu of the Beast**.

Committee

Michael Dobson (chair)

Ted White (programming)

Patti Ross (treasurer)

Curt Phillips (awards)

not to mention The Usual Suspects (or should it be The Usual Gang of Idiots?).

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Corflu in DC! Come See Your Laws (and Your Sausages) Being Made!

Corflu in the Capital! This is a bid proposal for the 2019 Corflu, to be held in the Washington, DC, area. And no, it's not TrumpCon.

DC is a great place to visit, no matter your opinion of the US government (current or otherwise). In addition to the Smithsonian museum complex (including two Air & Space Museums), there are numerous other museums ranging from the Phillips Collection to the International Spy Museum to Dumbarton Oaks.

Not too far away there's Mount Vernon, and a bit farther away is the Gettysburg battlefield. Baltimore, about an hour north, has numerous attractions as well.



We're All Doomed (editorial)

In a moment of misplaced sercon-infused enthusiasm at the Richmond Corflu a few years back, I suggested that having a Corflu in the DC area would be nice. And so my troubles began.

..... Instead of forgetting all about it the next morning, as real friends would have done, Ted White and Frank Lunney took our conversation as my agreement to chair a Corflu.

The last convention I ran was a one-day Carolina Minicon in Charlotte back in 1972, so it's all new to me. I am assured by All and Sundry that it really isn't that hard, but when people say stuff like that, I start to sweat. I live by Hofstadter's Law: "It always takes longer and involves more than you expect, even when you take into account Hofstadter's Law."

Of course, any convention is only as good as the people

We specialize in the cuisine of distressed nations (your country falls apart so your countrymen open up restaurants in DC). The inspiration for Uncle Tom's Cabin is in north Bethesda, and the gravesites of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald are only a couple of Metro stops away.

The current committee consists of **Michael Dobson** (chair), **Patti Ross** (treasurer — see below), **Ted White** (programming), and **Curt Phillips** (awards). We are counting on many of you to perform your regular convention functions: **Andy Hooper** (auction and possible play), **Bill Burns** (website), and **Rob Jackson** (online Corflu). Corflu, of course, is only as good as its members, so we hope you'll join in to make it the best possible.

A Few Modest Proposals

Corflu has its traditions, but there's always room to try out a few new ideas or special activities. The big two are below; you'll find some others scattered through the remaining pages.

A Week-Long Convention

Official Corflu will be three days, as always, but normally a fair number of us (especially the British) use the occasion for some touring-type activities, whether in the host city or in the region. We'd like to make this a bit more formal. We'd prepare a list of potential activities, starting the Monday before the convention, and for those activities that get enough interest, make necessary pre-arrangements.

We'll host at least one (and possibly two) parties prior to the official start, one of them at my house in nearby Bethesda. If budget permits (see next proposal), we'd like to have a hospitality suite available at the hotel for people to meet and hang out in the evenings. (The bar is always available, of course, but a room option would be, we think, more congenial.)



Bringing the Tribe Together (or, Hectoring People Until They Agree to Come)

Let's face it. There are a limited number of remaining opportunities for us to get together, and too many of you that we only see once in a while. I'd like to urge all of you to send an email to people you'd like to see at the convention, in the hopes that some people will get quite a few requests. We are, after all, effectively the Worldcon for traditional fanzine fandom.

We will also offer a **Prodigal Fan Membership** (\$25 off) to anyone who hasn't been to Corflu for at least three years, and try to figure out additional incentives depending on the budget.

The more people you want to see decide to come to Corflu, the more likely you are to come as well. Yes, East Coast Corflus tend to be smaller, but let's not settle for that. Crossing the Rockies doesn't mean you'll turn into the Donner Party.

Sponsoring Memberships (or, TrumpCon Lives!)

Of course, things like extra hospitality suite nights cost money. Taking our inspiration from my TrumpCon bid at the Chicago Corflu, I'd like to propose a Sponsor-level membership. In general, we've always striven to keep membership rates and hotel costs low. However, different attendees have different means, and perhaps some of you might be willing to pony up some more money to become a Sponsoring Member. This would allow us to add some luxuries to the convention experience, such as more hospitality suite nights, trophies for award winners, improvements in food or other facilities, or even assistance to bring more of our favorite people together.

I'm willing to start; I normally spend around \$300 on an airplane ticket which I will add to the Corflu treasury for this year.

2019th Nervous Breakdown (or, a Project Management Plan for Corflu)

"No battle plan survives first contact with the enemy," wrote Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, and by a similar logic, no project plan (or plan of any sort) survives first contact with reality.

That's not to say that planning is without value, but it's the act of planning, rather than the plan itself, that provides the majority of the benefit.

My day job, as some of you know, is teaching project management, and one thing I tell people is that the more you have no clue what you're doing, the more important it is to develop a plan. Given that I don't have a clue what I'm doing, I figure I should follow my own advice, and thus this document.



This is sort of a hybrid of a project proposal, project charter, and project plan (I'm not particularly a purist about these things), and its big purpose is to encourage all you experts to weigh in, tell me what I'm doing wrong, and set me straight. Future progress reports will have a lettercol, so you'll have a chance to weigh in.

It's mostly written for my own benefit. It helps keep me organized. But I hope you'll find it useful as well.

A Man, A Plan, a Convention — Corflu!

The first step in managing any project is to figure out what the hell needs to be done. A project consists of a number of work packages: things that need to be done (deliverables). That's different from activities, which are the things you have to do (work). You need to have the deliverables in order to list your activities.

In the trade, this is done in the form of a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). In its most common form, a WBS looks something like an organization chart, except it organizes the work rather than the people. The work is broken into big chunks, then little chunks, and so on until the individual elements can be assigned to people who will (in theory) get the job done.

The biggest challenge in developing a WBS is making sure you haven't forgotten anything, which is why it usually takes more than one draft to get it all committed to paper. If a necessary work package doesn't appear in the WBS, it won't show up in subsequent planning steps, and you usually find out at the most awkward possible time that it really does need to be done. That's why it's a good idea to do a draft WBS early and give other people a chance to figure out what's wrong with it.

A preliminary WBS for Corflu 36 appears on the next page. I've got two goals in mind: first, to make sure I haven't left out anything; and second, to start figuring out who is going to take charge of getting each work package done.

While some of the blocks are self-explanatory, it's useful to provide some description and commentary. (This is technically known as a "WBS Dictionary," but I hate the term so I won't use it. Forget I even mentioned it.)

Because some jobs have traditionally been done by certain people, I'm assuming the Usual Suspects for certain jobs. Check the Committee list to see if your name is mentioned, and let me know if there's an issue. If there's something you'd like to do, let me know as well. Most importantly, if you notice something missing, please tell me.

Corflu Work Breakdown

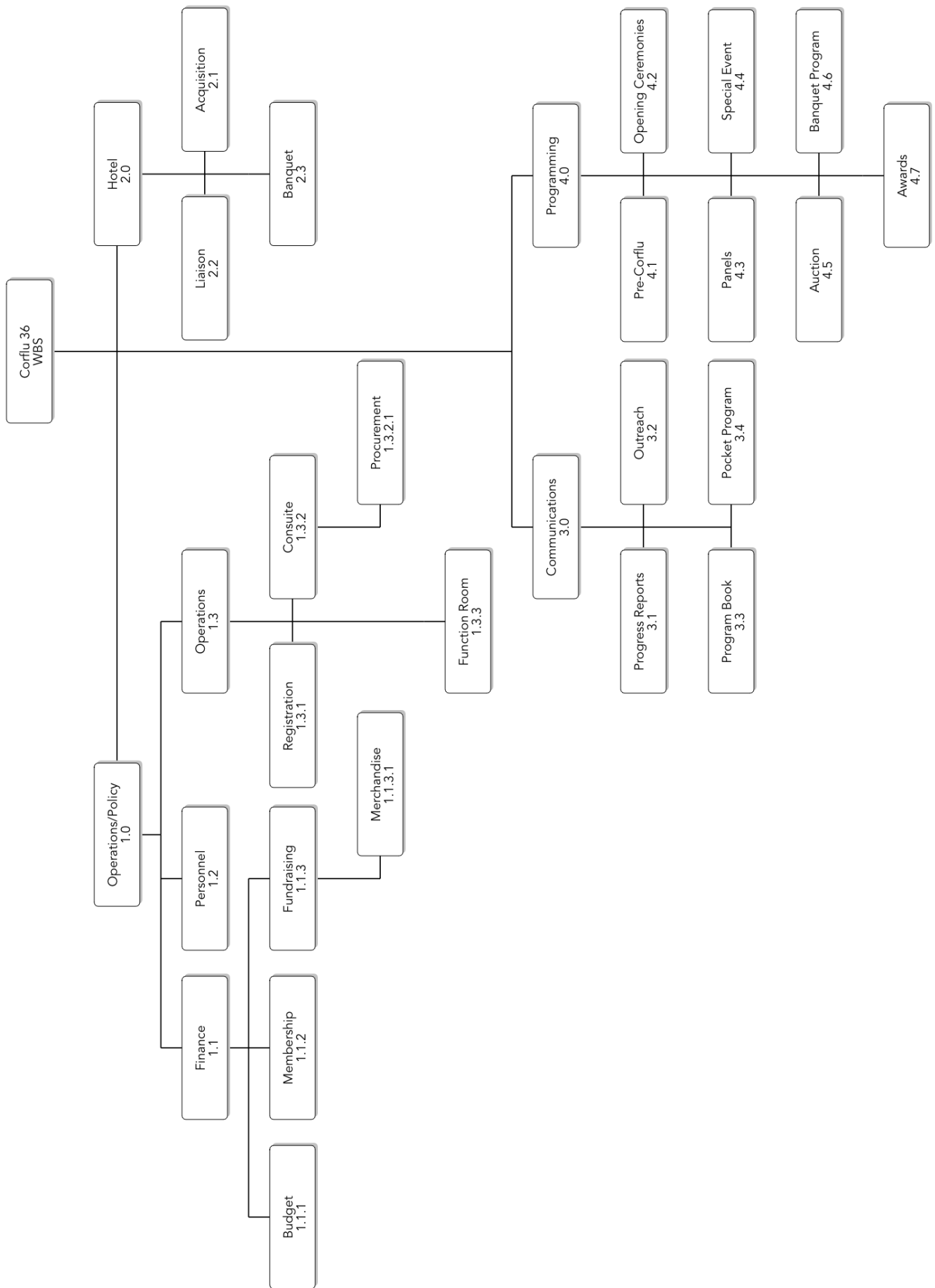
The top block on the WBS is just the name of the project, so it doesn't require anything else. I've broken the project into four main deliverable areas: Operations/Policy, Hotel, Communications, and Programming. Under each, I've listed the various functional areas and work packages that need to be done.

Operations/Policy (1.0)

This is usually a catch-all category in a WBS, sometimes labeled "Project Management." Some policy issues (finance and personnel) start well in advance of the con, and general "operations" stuff done during the convention itself.

Finance (1.1)

As Watergate's Deep Throat famously said, "Follow the money." From what I've been told, Corflus are more likely to lose money than to make any, and while I can deal with that up to a point, I'd sooner the convention paid its own way



as much as possible. In the event there's money left over, passing it along to the next committee is easy enough to do.

I have a part-time admin, Patti Ross, who already does various bookkeeping tasks for me, and I've volunteered her to be the treasurer of the convention. She's done a number of events for various clients, though admittedly not one involving fandom.

Budget (1.1.1)

The first part of making sure the convention at least breaks even is preparing a budget. There are fixed costs (hotel function room and consuite, etc.) that aren't particularly affected by the total membership, and variable costs (consuite food & beverages, name badges, banquet) that fluctuate based on membership numbers.

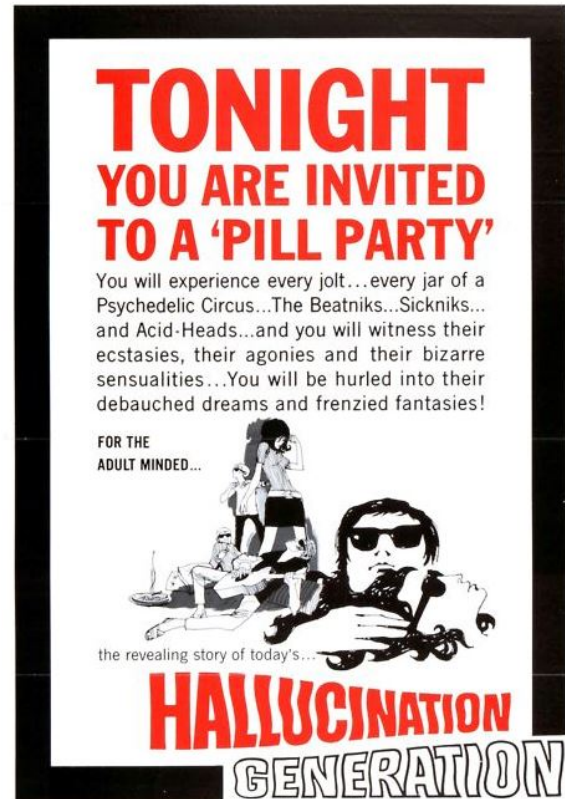
There are three (actually four) sources of income: membership fees, merchandise sales, and fundraising (share of auction proceeds, money from previous Corflus, etc.). The fourth source, of course, is my checkbook. Obviously, I prefer the other funding sources.

Membership (1.1.2)

Membership fees constitute the largest single source of convention revenue, but there's a catch-22: if the membership rates are too high, attendance suffers, meaning the fixed costs have to be amortized over fewer attendees. Given that some of us are on fixed incomes, this is potentially a big deal.

Corflu 35 is charging \$75 US for attending. That seems reasonable enough, but I haven't done the numbers yet.

The supporting membership is pretty profitable for the convention, now that progress reports and other materials are electronic. All you get is the



program book (3.3), and you pay a bit of a premium for it. Toronto is charging \$20 US.

Regular attending membership rates traditionally escalate as the convention gets closer, on the grounds that cash upfront is more valuable than cash later. There's a fair amount of money that needs to be spent before anyone shows up.

The Prodigal Fan membership rate for people who don't come very often will be built into the budget, but I don't expect it to affect us much. After all, each additional person only affects variable costs, so the discount rate should mostly offset itself

The sponsoring membership rate would be between \$75 and \$100 more than a regular attending, if we end up doing that. In addition to the honor and glory of supporting one's fellow fans (a fan in need is a fan indeed), there would be some special benefits, ranging from a special name

badge to perhaps a limited edition Corflu logo item.

If we go that route, there'd also be a "supporting sponsor" rate.

Credit cards. I'm already set up with Square (including Squareup), Paypal, ApplePay, and Venmo, so we'll be able to accept credit cards or email transfers for membership, merchandise, etc. Swipe fees are fairly low (nonexistent in some cases).

Other Income (I.I.3)

There are two additional sources of income for the convention, fundraising and merchandise. Oh, and shakedown fees for people who don't want to be guest of honor. Mustn't forget that. (Sponsoring Members get that as an extra benefit if they want it.)

Fundraising (I.I.3.2)

My understanding is that at least some part of auction proceeds are donated to the convention, but I'm unaware of any other contributors.

The Corflu Fifty fund, while nominally part of Corflu, is run independently by Rich Coad and Rob Jackson. We're happy to promote the fund in progress reports and elsewhere. When the recipient is selected, perhaps there are some ways the con can make it a bit more special. Maybe we could automatically upgrade the winner from regular attending to sponsoring, or something like that.

I know that sometimes fundraising for TAFF or other fan funds takes place during Corflu, and we are happy to support that.

Merchandise (I.I.3.1)

I'd like to think "outside the T-shirt" for Corflu merchandise. I only wear my Corflu T-shirts at

other Corflus, meaning I've already acquired a lifetime supply. On the other hand, the great shoulder bag I got in Austin gets regular use And who couldn't use a real **Mystery-Man Mask?**

I just finished a term chairing the merchandising committee for the West Point Parents Club in my area, and was amazed at the range of items available.

I'm open to ideas, and in fact may end up with more than one item — and that's in addition to whatever we cook up for sponsoring members.

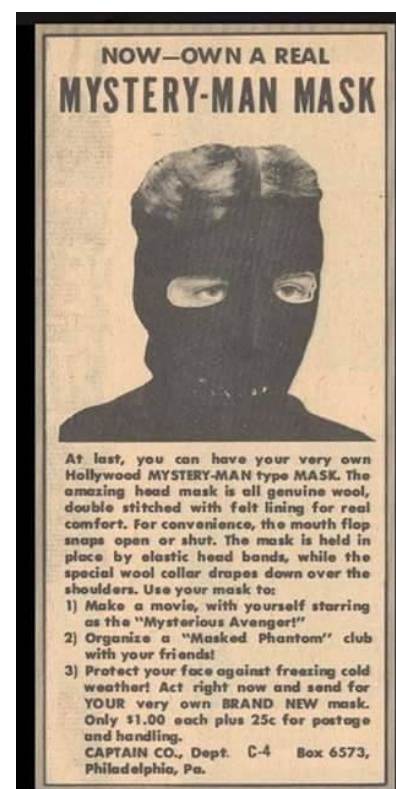
Personnel (I.2)

Someone (sometimes more than one someone) needs to handle each of these items. In many cases, there's already someone who takes care of it: the auction, awards, Corflu Fifty, etc.

I'll be reaching out to past Corflu committees in order to track you all down and put you to work. Depending on the budget, we might even have a special merchandise goodie for you.

Operations (I.3)

The operations category contains the work done immediately prior to and during the convention itself.



Registration (1.3.1)

We'll have to buy the necessary supplies and make (we don't need no stinkin') badges in advance, assemble the membership packets, and provide a table and credit card reader for the actual registration. The registration table will also sell merchandise. Someone will need to handle the onsite registration work, but it shouldn't be difficult or take long.

Consuite (1.3.2)

By far the biggest and most important job during the con itself is managing and stocking the consuite, so finding the right person or persons for the job is essential. Recommendations? Advice? Volunteers? Bueller?

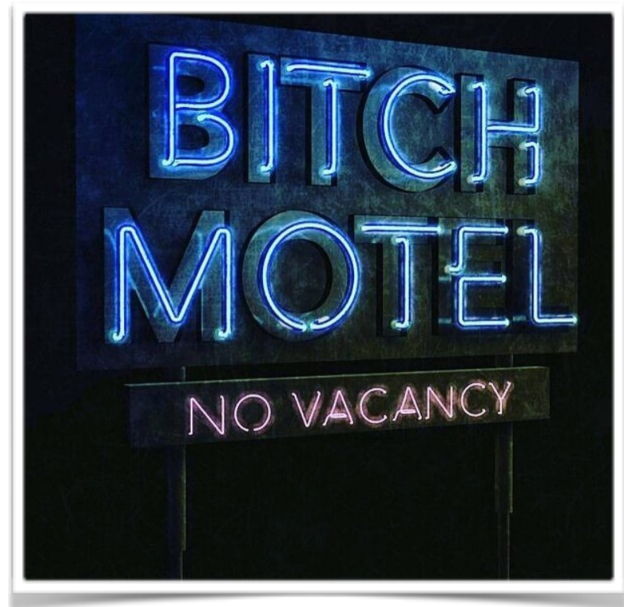
Procurement (1.3.2.1)

This is another major budget item, involving everything necessary to feed and water the ravaging hordes. A big part of this will be accomplished before the convention itself starts.

Function Room (1.3.3)

The function room is pretty straightforward, though we'll need extra tables for merchandise/pre-auction display, along with either security for the room or a process to gather up and store everything in the evening.

One thing I've noticed is that the function room is usually pretty barren, and when there's no programming going on, nobody wants to hang out there. Given that we have possession of the room for the entire con, I wonder if it's possible to use it better. We could put together a display of photographs from previous Corflus, for example. At the Richmond Corflu, I remember we did an



affinity diagram with PostIt notes showing all our fannish connections. Anything to use the space better.

Hotel (2.0)

Work involved in getting a hotel, managing liaison with the hotel, and organizing the banquet are the major items in this category.

Acquisition (2.1)

A good hotel is reasonably priced, conveniently located, and has the necessary hospitality functions.

We don't really plan to get serious about the search until early February, but by the time of the Toronto Corflu we should have the hotel, rates, dates, and other information ready. We do have a few preliminary venues to check out, though.

Hilton Garden Inn, Falls Church. This is Ted White's recommendation. It's a newer hotel, relatively inexpensive¹ (\$140-160/night) and there

¹ Hotel prices were taken from Travelocity for spring 2018 dates (they don't have 2019 dates available in their system). They aren't negotiated rates or official information from the hotel, and are just here to give you an initial feel.

are restaurants nearby. It's not particularly close to Metro, though.

Hyatt Regency, Bethesda. Located directly above the Bethesda Metro station, it's the most convenient public transit option and it's a more upscale hotel. Rates appear to be around \$170. It's in easy walking distance of Bethesda's restaurant district, with a wide range of food choices within 5-8 blocks.

Residence Inn, Bethesda, and Hilton Garden Inn, Bethesda. A few blocks away is the all-suite Residence Inn, rates in the \$150-160 range. The Hilton Garden Inn is across the street, prices similar to the Falls Church venue.

William F. Bolger Center, Potomac, Maryland. The Bolger Center is a conference resort owned and operated by the US Postal Service. I've taught a number of seminars there, and it's a truly wonderful place. The conference rooms are very high quality, and the food service is exceptional. There are free shuttles to Bethesda and the nearest Metro station, but cars are recommended if you want to do much in the way of touring. Rates are in the \$170 range, and some hotel plans include free meals (which at the Bolger are a really good value).

It would be a very unusual choice for a Corflu, and I'm not necessarily saying it's a good idea to hold it there, but it's definitely worth some investigation.

Again, we're at a very early stage in the process, so don't be surprised if the winner is None of the Above.

Liaison (2.2)

This item covers all hotel dealings after acquisition except for the banquet. That probably falls to me.

Banquet (2.3)

This is logistics, food service, and hotel, not banquet programming. I was initially curious, though, why the banquet is such a big deal. The food is usually indifferent and all the program items could easily be handled elsewhere.

Ted explained that the banquet is a key bargaining chip with the hotel, providing us with discounted or free function space. If we don't have a banquet, our fixed cost of meeting rooms/hospitality suite will be higher. On the other hand, the cost of the banquet is a major factor in membership rates.

If there are additional reasons for the banquet, or if it's something enough people enjoy for its own sake, there's no need to visit this further. However, if the only reason for a banquet is to lower other convention costs, do you think it's worth it? Depending on what I hear, I'll look for prices with and without the banquet to see what the difference is. I'd particularly appreciate hearing from those of you who've gone through the process.



Communications (3.0)

Convention publications, publicity and outreach, and website fall under this heading.

Progress Reports (3.1)

We're off to a flying start on this one, given that this sort of counts as a progress report. Or a "lack of progress" report. There will be a second report in time for the Toronto Corflu, once we've got hotel and membership rates established. I'd plan on another one sometime in the late fall of 2018 (the theme will be begging for more volunteers, I expect) and another a month or two before the con.

Random Jottings 15, due Corflu 2010, will contain the after-action report. (See Item 3.3.)

Outreach (3.2)

In addition to progress reports, there's a Corflu website that I believe Bill Burns maintains. We'll need to provide him with up to date information for it. We'll also need to provide various fannish news outlets (*Ansible*, *File 770*) with convention details.

Let me reiterate something I mentioned earlier: let's make an effort to contact people and invite them to come, especially people we want to see but who seldom make it. The bigger the gathering of the tribe, the better the convention.



Program Book (3.3)

Given that I'd be producing (and paying for) *Random Jottings* 14 for the 2019 Corflu regardless, there's no reason not to make it into the Corflu 36 Program Book without adding to the budget. My

preliminary idea is to make it into a fanthology of sorts, and ask each of you to select a piece of fanwriting you particularly like, and write a page or so as an introduction.

I'd also like to make *Random Jottings* 15 (the 2020 issue) into a proceedings book. Instead of asking for complete convention reports, I'll ask each of you to write up a particular aspect of the convention, such as a report on a panel. The cover would be a group photo of attendees, and I'd add an interior photo section as well, so take lots of pictures.

Pocket Program (3.4)

Of course, we'll have a pocket program and a guide to restaurants and other local activities.

Programming (4.0)

While Ted will be in overall charge of programming, I do have some thoughts on the matter.

Pre-Corflu (4.1)

A number of us, especially the British, make Corflu part of a regular holiday. With that in mind, I'm thinking that we should make "pre-Corflu" a bigger part of the experience. Given the wide range of activities in the DC area, we could make arrangements for anything you might want to do. Why do catch-as-catch-can arrangements? Want a backstage Smithsonian tour? An art tour of Baltimore? A visit to the Gettysburg battlefield? Music? Dumbarton Oaks? Non-Mall DC museums? Georgetown pub crawl? A performance of the Capitol Steps? The oldest continuously operating airport in the US? Following the spirit of the last Chicago Corflu, we'll have parties at our house in Bethesda and at Ted's house in Falls Church.

Opening Ceremonies (4.2)

GoH selection and introduction activities.
Shaking down unwilling attendees who want to avoid being GoH.

Panels (4.3)

I imagine we'll have the usual range of panels, but I have to say I don't like them very much. One or two people usually dominate and no one has time or opportunity to make a point fully. I'd like to encourage more solo presentations. I have a projector, so we can show PowerPoint presentations. I know Steve Stiles does a program on comics, John D. Berry has stuff on layout and typography, and I've done a little bit of speaking myself.

Consider this a "Call for Papers." You'd have around 30 minutes on a topic of your choice. Make your pitch.

Special Events (4.4)

Sandra Bond's game shows, Andy Hooper's plays, and other special events should be considered. We probably won't do a repeat of LA's Game Night, but I could bring some boardgames (*Settlers of Catan*, *Ticket to Ride*, etc.) that are relatively short duration and easy to learn. That may be another thing to make available in the function room. There's normally room for a few more tables.

While we're on the subject (and because I forgot to give it a separate WBS block), there's the online Corflu presence that Rob Jackson historically leads. I am assuming he'll do it again, so he's drafted.

Auction (4.5)

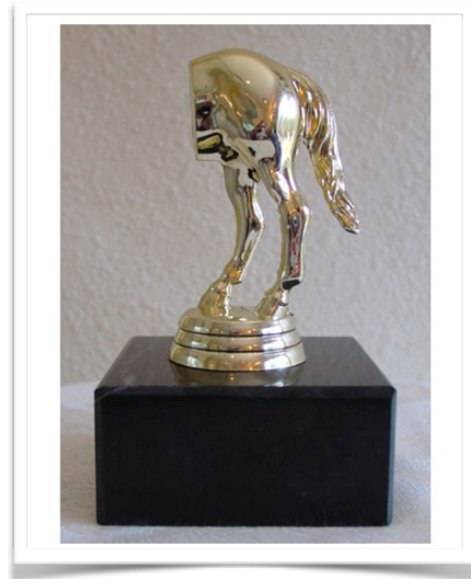
Andy Hooper usually takes care of this, as I understand it, so I've drafted him as well.

Banquet Program (4.6)

Ted leads this effort, as usual.

Awards (4.7)

Curt Phillips has asked to run the 2019 awards program. If our budget will stand it, I'd like to have some nicer trophies for the winners.



Your Thoughts

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Care to volunteer for something? Have an idea for a pre-Corflu event? Want to do something on the program? Have hotel thoughts or ideas? Have an opinion on the banquet?

Remember, I don't have much of a clue about any of this, so if you want it (don't want it) at Corflu, please let me know.

Timeline

Here's a rough timeline of what needs to be done for the convention.

Phase	Dates	Actions
Pre-Bid Report (this one)	December 2017	(This) Announce bid, propose ideas for feedback, create plan.
Bid Package	May 2018 (at or just before Corflu)	Hotel under contract, dates selected, membership fees established, requests for program book contributions, system for accepting and registering members
Progress Report 1	Late Fall 2018	List of potential pre-Corflu activities and registration for them, general updates and announcements, merchandise pre-ordered, announcement of new committee members, pleas for more help, warnings of impending disaster
Progress Report 2	2-3 months out	Final program decided, pocket program started, program book underway, merchandise ordered, scramble to finish everything in time
Pre-Pre Con Phase	1-2 weeks out	Membership packets, name badges, all non-perishable items prepared

Phase	Dates	Actions
Pre-Con Phase	1-2 days out	Food & beverage shopping, final scramble
Corflu	D-Day	Assault the beaches at Normandy
After-Action Report (probably as part of RJ 15.)	Later	Finish up the accounting, turn stuff over to the next Corflu, issue final report, collapse

Letters

There aren't, of course, any letters yet, but upcoming progress reports will have plenty of opportunity for you to weigh in. Please do so.

See you in Toronto, I hope.

