



## AAH Meetings Guidelines

### Phase I: Anticipating a Meeting

If you wish to host a Meeting, get in touch early with the President a *minimum of three years before you anticipate being able to host a Meeting*; it is certainly prudent to contact the President of the AAH very early in order to express an interest and to make inquiries about whether a meeting in your proposed venue has potential and whether the year you anticipate has been taken. It is the President's job to see the interests of the AAH as a whole. One major part of this is balancing geographical locations; another is ensuring that potential Meeting sites are in fact viable. Meetings are thus lined up three to four years in advance. Three years is the minimal time it takes to plan a Meeting thoroughly in any case. Among other things, accommodations and rooms need to be reserved early, and administrators usually are more willing to commit funds years in advance, when there is less immediate and specific pressure for money.

Date: There is no date that suits everybody. The AAH has discussed the issue numerous times and always kept the traditional time of late spring. Early May has proved widely acceptable; a slightly later date might be chosen to make dormitories available, an earlier date to suit specific local conditions, although earlier many members are still teaching and later some are already engaged in their summer projects. Many regional Classical Associations and other professional organizations have fixed dates for their Meetings; conflicts should be avoided where possible. Religious holidays such as western Easter, Orthodox Easter, and the first two nights of Passover should be avoided as well.

If the president encourages your informal invitation, the next step is to explore the potential with the appropriate authorities at your institution and obtain a letter from them to the AAH committing the institution to proffering a formal proposal at the appropriate moment in the timeline (*two years before the date of the proposed Meeting*). This preliminary letter would represent the implicit promise that (a) you have the support of your chair and colleagues, (b) that you can arrange the support [financial and otherwise] of your institution, and (c) that you can work out the necessary logistics. You will have the time between the issuance to this letter and the AAH Meeting two years in advance of the Meeting date to organize the specifics. This preliminary letter will be *at least one year in advance* of the invitation tendered to the membership (and two years before the date of the proposed Meeting).

Getting Organized The job of organizing an AAH Meeting is too big for one person; get help early and organize a committee of local colleagues and students. Secure the **cheerful** collaboration of the department administrator. Make a list of what you will need, where you can get it, and who will be in charge of it. Use the special talents and expertise of your colleagues and students. Above all, *delegate, delegate, delegate*, but keep track of these assignments. Your own primary job is not to do the running but the thinking and checking.

- If your city/metropolitan area hosts other universities/colleges you might try to tap their (personnel and financial) resources as well.
- Universities often have conference offices staffed by people whose job it is to put on Meetings, (although they often are not the most efficient and cheapest source). They may be able to obtain corporate discounts. If you can use a hotel, the staff will be experienced in setting up Meetings and will be happy to do the work for you (although this might be an

expensive way of doing it). Local chambers of commerce or visitors' bureaus are delighted to help you assemble information and to make suggestions.

- Plan carefully how you (or rather, the departmental administrator or another of your aides) will keep records (of mailings, registrations, funds, etc.).

Your first and most daunting tasks are the most mundane; you must secure Meeting room(s), hotel space, provide for food service, and arrange transportation. While doing so, keep the following parameters in mind:

1. Our Meetings run from Thursday evening through Saturday evening or Sunday morning, unless a different schedule is approved by the membership.
2. Usually, the Meeting encompasses an opening reception on Thursday night, held where convenient in a special place such as a museum or monument; several paper sessions; the business Meeting; and a festive banquet.
3. The hotel(s) should be located in convenient proximity to the location of the Meeting area or transportation should be arranged to offset this.
4. The schedule should not include concurrent paper sessions.

Departures from these norms should only be considered in consultation with the AAH President. Much of what makes the AAH Meetings unique and what inspires fierce loyalty on the part of its members is rooted in these customs. Variation in format might add to the attractiveness of the program, but any radical departure from tradition should be run by the membership at the business Meeting the year before the Meeting you are hosting. In any case, these parameters have predictable ramifications that should govern all of your arrangements. The following are chief among these:

- 1) Meeting Rooms: Do you have a Meeting room both available and large enough for 125 attendees over the course of Friday, Saturday and Sunday morning? If there are classes ongoing at your institution during the projected dates, this may cause you problems for Friday sessions. If not, what about the hotel or perhaps in an off campus setting? This may be an opportunity to show off a community asset as a panel venue. Some Universities charge for the use of space; some do not. Hotels and off-campus venues almost certainly do. Keep in mind that booksellers and other vendors will want to attend the Meeting and they will require a securable space to set out their wares which is not far removed from the panel locations. The publications committee will need a convenient and accessible place to meet on Friday or Saturday before the business meeting.
- 2) Food service: Traditionally, the host institution offers at least a reception at the beginning and a banquet to registrants. In addition, it has become customary to provide beverages and snack items during break periods and at the beginning of the day. Keep in mind while preparing your budget that the banquet should not appear as a separate item on the registration form; it is an integral part of the Meeting, and graduate students and junior faculty should not be in the position of questioning whether they should shell out the money for it. There can also be logistical problems for attendees seeking reimbursement from their home institutions if the banquet fee appears as a meal charge instead of a registration charge.

Costs can be reduced by using volunteers and existing staff rather than paying the overhead of conference centers and services. Negotiate early with Catering or Food Services of your institution, your hotel, or a local restaurant for decent low-cost meals. A personal meeting with the director of Food Services can result in a personal touch and special solutions that are not contained in the printed materials. These costs will vary on a per person basis. *Be sure to note timelines for notifying the appropriate service of your final head count. This will affect the deadline for conference registration.*

Keep in mind that some participants will have special food requirements (diet, vegetarian, kosher). Request such information on the registration sheet, and ask also which participants would prefer fresh fruit to a rich dessert. Similarly, breadstuffs provided at breakfast and coffee breaks should include some non-sweet items such as bagels for those who cannot eat sugar, and preferably some fruit as well. Tea should always be available in addition to coffee for morning and breaks.

- 3) Accommodations: Experience shows that high housing costs are a major factor in reducing participation by younger, lower-salaried members. Hence it is desirable to offer a range of accommodations, from cheap to more expensive. If multiple hotels are utilized, they should be in close proximity to one another where possible.
  - You should arrange transportation from the hotels to the Meeting venue(s) unless the sessions and other events are held within a short distance of the hotels. Even where distances are short, you must ask members with limited mobility to advise you in advance of their needs.
  - Negotiate with hotels for convention discounts and exploit existing arrangements entered upon by your institution.
  - Many potential participants are on a tight budget; they will choose dormitory accommodations if these are offered. Likewise, room-mate services provide an attractive option for many registrants, not just graduate students.

Please remember that the host is responsible for providing accommodation for the President and Secretary-Treasurer of the Association (but not for their travel). When you do your earlier negotiation with the hotel, factor this in. You can reasonably expect to book at least 40 or 50 rooms; in addition to using this to negotiate a favorable rate, you can also negotiate with the hotel to provide these rooms for free.

- 4) Transportation issues: You should also keep in mind issues like transportation to and from the airport, between hotel and Meeting locations and provisions for graduate students and junior faculty. The more painless (physically and monetarily) these movements are, the more attractive will be the prospect of attending the Meeting and the more pleasant will be the memory of it.
- 5) Budget: The sooner you have a grasp of these costs the better. In summary, your projected costs will include charges for Meeting rooms and equipment (computers, slide projectors, microphones, etc.), full cost of the reception and banquet (and perhaps a light breakfast before the morning sessions, perhaps even some lunch and coffee breaks) subsidies for accommodations for the officers of the AAH and to some extent for junior faculty and/or

graduate students, transportation, printing, copying and mailing expenses. telephone, etc— Unless you have an extraordinary budget, refrain from offering Honoraria or travel expenses.

Seek advice from experienced colleagues in your institution about how best to make the financial arrangements. Each institution has its own sets of procedures, but very often you will be asked to set up a separate account for the income and expenditures. Sometimes this makes bookkeeping easier; in other places it is better to avoid it (because it means much more paperwork for months before and beyond the Meeting) and to run all expense and income through an existing departmental account.

- 6) Funding Obviously, registrants will pay a fee. Historically, these fees average around \$65.00-100.00 per participant. However, do your best to hold registration fees and any additional expenses (for lunches etc.) as low as possible. Ask recent organizers about the fee they charged and about their experiences. Some have found a substantial discount for early registration very effective, others not. Conversely, one must also have a provision for late registration. You can expect, depending on the venue and program, somewhere between 75 and 125 registered participants.

Institutions usually are willing to contribute a subsidy to such Meetings. Begin this conversation **as soon as you can**. When approaching your Dean or Provost, estimate your costs as accurately as possible. Be as modest as possible but aim slightly high; he or she will be delighted when you come in under budget. Solicit subsidies also from your own and related departments and other local sources that may be available (other academic institutions, non-academic organizations).

The Invitation: You have emerged from the Provost's office unscathed and with a letter to the AAH membership in hand. You are ready to proceed to Phase II.

## Phase II: Making It Happen

Phase II begins with the AAH Business Meeting *two years in advance of the proposed date*; here you issue a formal invitation to the membership, setting forth the advantages of Meeting at your institution, agreeing on a date, discussing transportation and lodging, etc. Assuming that the membership agrees—and with the mundane parts all arranged, you may now turn your attention to the program of the Meeting.

Program: Remember that you expect participants to pay handsomely (registration, flight, transfer, hotels, incidentals) to come to your Meeting (no matter how generous your budget allows you to be); hence it is your job to offer them something in turn that is worth their while and money. The planning and shaping of the program is the area where good advice is most helpful. You should assemble an advisory committee, which naturally will consist mostly of local colleagues at your own institution and nearby ones. Its members will assist you in picking panel topics, selecting invited speakers and discussants, and assessing the submitted paper proposals (which has the advantage that the committee, not you personally, is responsible for

rejecting paper proposals). They might also serve as moderators of panels. It is traditional to invite the organizer of the last Meeting to serve as moderator of one panel as well.

- The choice of panel topics is decisive for the attractiveness of the program which in turn greatly influences the turn-out. Try a good mix of central and marginal, traditional and innovative. The Secretary-Treasurer and the AAH Historian (currently Gene Borza) should have a list of previous Meetings and their programs.
- Organizers and their committees should exercise strict control over the quality of papers and panels. If the organization of a panel is delegated to one person, this should be someone who is able to organize and demand quality from the speakers.

Call For Papers: *One year before your Meeting*, you will have committee and panel members in place. By the time of the Meeting previous to your own, you should have drafted a call for papers.

- Prepare a list of all the organizations, institutions, and persons outside the AAH who should be notified of the Meeting. Newsletters (APA, AIA, AHA, Women's Classical Caucus, etc.), certain journals (e.g., ARB) and various lists on Internet (in the US and Canada) are important places to advertise the Meeting, call for papers, and eventually the program. Inform yourself early of the deadlines of these Newsletters and send in your notices in time.
- A Meeting of the AAH is not an insignificant event. It is an important opportunity to present our profession and discipline to the public at large. Try to get not only your institution but also local organizations and media interested in it. Be aggressive and innovative in exploiting this opportunity.
- In your advertisements, mention e-mail and surface mail address, telephone, e-mail address etc. where information may be obtained and interest in participation may be registered. Set a clear deadline for registration. Only those registered will receive further information (below).
- Every effort should be made to attract younger members of the Association and profession.

Caveat Emptor: No one wants to be at the mercy of unsolicited submissions, the number and quality of which may vary greatly. Experience shows that our Association is too small to guarantee a sufficient number of unsolicited high quality papers. Hence a combination of invited and submitted papers in some or all panels might work best. (Again, the attractiveness of the program will be enhanced by featuring a few prominent members of our trade.)

It is also understood that local circumstances may require organizers to plan invited papers or sessions. At the very least, have a plan "to beat the bushes" for additional papers if you don't seem to be getting submissions in sufficient numbers or sufficient quality. Make sure to reach an appropriate gender balance and a reasonable balance between younger and older speakers. Remember too that although you do not want to give an unduly prominent role to members of your own institution, still arranging the program offers an opportunity to showcase a couple of your own graduate students.

- To encourage submissions, the call for papers should include the names of any scholars whose participation has already been solicited and who have agreed to speak at the Meeting.

This is the period of greatest anxiety for our organizers. It is typical that academics will procrastinate until the last moment before they send in their submission. *Hence, it is prudent to have the call for papers published and promoted as early as possible and the deadline for*

*submission early enough to promote the finished program to prospective attendees.* Therefore, set the deadline for submissions a little earlier than needed (because of inevitable delays), but not too early (nobody likes very early deadlines). A deadline of around November 1 will enable you to send the program to the Secretary-Treasurer for inclusion in the December newsletter; it also allows you to react constructively to any situation (for example, by inviting additional papers). Make sure to mobilize your organizing committee in time to finalize the program by the first week in December. Don't panic if submissions do not trickle in throughout the summer and fall: remember, most of the paper proposals will come in near the end. Finally, this deadline will also encourage members to make their travel arrangements earlier. Be prepared to extend the deadline if need be.

Tweaking the Program: Remember, *only one session should be scheduled at any given time.* The size of the Meeting is conducive to plenary sessions which contribute to enhancing the cohesion of the Association. On the other hand, this also means fewer papers. Off set this by enforcing time limits; twenty minutes are sufficient for some topics, insufficient for others. Flexibility in this respect might solicit more interesting papers by more prominent speakers as well.

- Nevertheless, organizers should impress on their speakers, repeatedly and insistently, the importance of observing the *time limits* (for example, by informing them about the number of double-spaced pages commensurate to their time slot). Moderators might contact the speakers on their panels shortly before the Meeting and again on the day before the performance to remind them of the time limit. With such preparation, moderators can then be asked to be strict in enforcing the time limit.
- If you invite discussants to respond to papers, make sure they receive the papers sufficiently in advance of the Meeting (three weeks seems an acceptable minimum).
- Banquet speakers are problematic: some have worked, others not. If there is a banquet speaker, the speech should be short and on the light side. Under no circumstances should there be a heavy paper on top of heavy food and lots of wine.
- Under any circumstances, avoid the temptation to overload the program. The more papers, the shorter they have to be. To schedule more than three or at most four papers in a panel usually invites disaster; occasionally two longer ones may be just fine. *Allow for sufficient discussion time.*
- If you wish to give an opportunity to highlight research and projects that may be unsuitable or too numerous for papers you might also arrange a poster session in a suitable area near the plenary sessions.
- Overall, much of the charm of the Annual Meeting results from the idiosyncratic nature of the program and location. Most members enjoy the unique character of our individual campuses, and many of the most successful Meetings have exploited the character and setting of campuses and localities. Non-campus activity should be used with discretion, and usually only when there is some special local feature.

### Phase III Promotion and Odds and Ends

AAH Logo: We now have an official logo that should appear on your advertising, call for papers, and program, even if you develop a special logo for your meeting. The Secretary-Treasurer and Web Coordinator can send files of the logo for use in advertising.

Website: As soon as possible after the AAH Meeting prior to the one you are hosting, create a meeting website, or contact the AAH Web Administrator, who can create a meeting website for you. The website will include, minimally, the Call for Papers, registration, and accommodation information. Add to the website when available details concerning travel, accommodations, registration, etc. are available. The Secretary-Treasurer should also be sent the call for papers during the summer so that it may be distributed to the Association's electronic listserve and newsletters. The fall Newsletter is really too late for members to initially learn the topics that have been chosen for the Meeting, but it will contain the information nonetheless, and if any other information about the conference is available at that time, send that to the Secretary-Treasurer by Labor Day as well. In general, consult closely with the Secretary/Treasurer to keep a steady stream of information coming to the membership. Remember, the AAH exists primarily to support the Meeting and will do all it can to promote the success of your Meeting

- By December of the year prior to your Meeting, send to the members of the Association (and others who have expressed interest in participating and becoming members) information about place and date of the Meeting, travel, accommodations, preliminary program etc. Members of the Association can be informed via the December newsletter, the program website, and the electronic listserve; a special surface mailing is not normally necessary.
- Allow late registrations, if necessary at a higher fee.
- Prepare an information package for registered participants, including the final program, names and addresses of participants (including e-mail addresses), plans of campus and city, a list of local restaurants, list of attractions (sights, museums, etc.).
- For many participants, the trip to the place of your Meeting will be a unique experience. They might like to see more than the campus and hotel. One organizer scheduled a visit to a nearby Air Force Museum during the Meeting, others offered informal trips to interesting sights on the afternoon after the Meeting; yet others informed participants of special events that were going to take place during the Meeting and required advance booking. Such information will be appreciated.
- Inquire early enough about special media needs of speakers and have a clear understanding about whether the institution or the speaker will provide computers and other needed equipment.

Abstracts: Many registrants appreciate seeing abstracts before the Meeting. The easiest way to do this is to link abstracts to the website, as soon as they are approved for the program. Any distribution of abstracts will dramatically improve the quality of discussions at the Meeting. In addition, or alternatively, organizers might, upon request, distribute in advance a limited number of the full papers.

Business Meeting: The Business Meeting is a constitutionally indispensable part of the Annual Meeting. One hour usually is sufficient; many business Meetings are much shorter.

- According to the AAH Constitution, it is necessary that the scheduled time of the Business Meeting be announced in advance of the Annual Meeting in order to permit sufficient time for the perusal of potential changes to the Constitution.
- As many participants as possible should be enabled and encouraged to attend the Business Meeting. Hence, it is incumbent on the organizer to schedule this Meeting at a convenient

time so that participants are induced to attend rather than stay away or leave. If possible, the Business Meeting should follow directly upon a paper session, with a break of a few minutes in between. The Business Meeting usually has been scheduled on the day of the banquet, immediately after the last paper of the day. In addition, it is the organizer's responsibility to include this information in the circulated announcement of the program sent to members with the invitation to the Meeting.

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