

**The *WPA* Guide
to Planning and Organizing
Regional Academic Conferences**

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Contents

Introduction	25
Phase I. First steps in planning and organization	26
Testing the waters	26
The first planning meeting	27
Who to invite	27
Deciding on purposes and goals	28
Coordinating the work	29
Phase II. Decisions that determine conference structure	30
Scope	30
How long should the conference last?	30
Food	31
Paying presenters	32
Funding	32
Conference-generated funds	32
Institutional funding	32
Outside funding	33
Format, date, and site	33
Mailings	34
Publicity	35
Phase III. Selecting conference content and planning the conference day	35
Session timing	36
Session format and content	36
Greetings	39
The conference-program leaflet	40

Phase IV. The conference day	41
Last minute arrangements	41
Staff selection	41
Registration	43
Socializing	44
Phase V. Evaluation and follow-up	44
Evaluation	44
Follow-up	45
Bibliography	46
Appendix A. Conference-planning calendar	47
Appendix B. Sample call for papers	49
Appendix C. Sample proposal data and rating sheet	50
Appendix D. Sample conference evaluation form	51

Editor's Note. In the spring of 1978, Margaret Furcron agreed to write a brief article for *WPA*, then called the *WPA Newsletter*, based on her experience organizing an annual regional conference at Rutgers-Newark. Her article appeared in Volume 2, Number 1 of the *Newsletter* (October, 1978) as "Eight Steps to Planning a Regional Conference." Since several colleagues around the country have found that brief treatment helpful, *WPA* was encouraged to ask Professor Furcron to revise and enlarge it. The following *Guide to Planning and Organizing Regional Academic Conferences*, *WPA's* answer to the energy crisis, is the result.

We are most grateful to Professor Furcron for taking time from her busy schedule to write this *Guide*. We also want to thank other experienced conference organizers who have offered comments and suggestions: Timothy Donovan, Northeastern University; Carol Edmead, Medgar Evers College; Nancy Lay, City College of New York; Elaine Maimon, Beaver College; and Blanche Skurnick, City College. We hope *WPA* members and others will find the *Guide* useful. The author and the editors of *WPA* welcome further comments, suggestions, additions, and corrections, which we will be glad to incorporate where appropriate in future editions.

Introduction

In the spring of 1976, my department mounted its first regional conference. We entitled it, "Lessons that Teach Reading and Composition in College." We have now held five of these conferences. They succeeded right from the start, bringing together about 200 people for one day each year to discuss their successes and failures in the difficult job of teaching composition and reading, and to learn from other teachers new and better ways to teach. During these five years, faculty from 48 different colleges have been on our program.

I do not know where I got the temerity even to consider such a project. When I started, I had never done anything like it before nor had any of my colleagues. But all of us had been to unprofitable conferences, and all of us had at least once thought, "couldn't I do a better job than that?" Innocent of any conference-planning expertise and ignorant of the fact that there is a body of professionals called "conference planners," we surged ahead. Our experience encourages me to say at once, to all of you who might hesitate, that you need not be timid. Planning and organizing a regional academic conference is a relatively simple, straightforward, commonsensical undertaking. Even the totally inexperienced can, with good clerical support and cooperation from colleagues, mount a successful conference. In our case, we met our goals and much more.

This said, then why write this *Guide*? If conference-planning skill is an inborn trait, why does anyone need instruction? Well, perhaps it's not quite so simple as I have made it sound. We made some mistakes, and we learned a good deal from our experience. I believe that others can profit from both our experience and our mistakes. Also, there are many different kinds of conferences and many different reasons for success and failure. A little knowledge is helpful to give you the sense of the options open to you as well as their practical implications. And knowledge can help you look ahead and plan the pitfalls out of your program.

For these reasons, I have looked into the conference-planning literature, surveyed my own experience and others', and compiled suggestions that seem most useful for anyone planning a regional academic conference a day or two in length with an expected attendance of 50 to 300 people.

There exists a good deal of literature on planning conferences, but most of it is directed mainly to the business community rather than to academics. Nevertheless, much of this material is relevant to our needs, useful, and provocative. I have selected a small bibliography of books on conference planning and annotated it for those who want to go more deeply into the subject or who want to plan a very large conference, with its concomitantly larger problems of site selection, travel and lodging arrangements, scheduling, and funding.

Although the Rutgers conferences have stressed practical pedagogy and have consisted primarily of demonstration lessons, this *Guide* is designed for planners of regional conferences in any academic field in the humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences. Our Rutgers experience has been mentioned in the *Guide* whenever it has general relevance.

It is possible that many of the recommendations made in this *Guide* will seem simplistic to some, and perhaps they are. But if so, then this very simplicity substantiates my primary message: *You can mount a successful regional academic conference, and you can do so on your first try.*

Phase I. First steps in planning and organization

The reasons for sponsoring an academic conference are innumerable. A regional conference might serve to

- improve teaching by introducing new ideas
- help train tutors and teaching assistants
- bring together faculty of regular and developmental programs
- bring together faculty in the same discipline from different colleges
- encourage young faculty to share their ideas and methods among themselves
- encourage experienced faculty to share their ideas and methods with younger colleagues as well as with each other
- introduce the latest research
- evaluate current practices or schools of thought
- introduce the work of an important person in the field

There are other kinds of reasons too, that are often the hidden (but nonetheless perfectly reasonable and legitimate) agenda of most conferences:

- to improve department morale
- to win points for your department or program with the dean or president
- to show off

And there are still other specifically local reasons for holding a conference. Every school, every region has its own needs. But central to what a conference can do to answer those needs is what, centrally, a conference does: it brings like-minded people together to learn from each other and, frankly, to have a good time doing it.

Let us assume that you are a program administrator, department chairperson, or professionally active member of some program or department, and that for some, or all, of the reasons listed above you are thinking about mounting a conference. The idea for the conference need not have originated with you. The initial suggestion for a conference may come from anywhere—a dean, a graduate student, or a faculty member just back from an especially exciting (or perhaps an especially unexciting) conference. Whatever the source of the idea, the person who takes it up—you—will be heavily involved from the outset. From the moment you take it up, the idea and the impetus for carrying it out is yours.

What should you do first?

Testing the waters. Probably the most practical first step to take is to sound out your colleagues informally. This is an important step, because it can give you strength when you get to the asking-for-money stage. It may cause you to revise the goals you dreamed up to start with. And it may discourage you, perhaps unnecessarily. In my own case, an important member of my department told me at this stage that I had had a really bad idea and I'd better forget it.

Hearing that advice, it would have been easy to forget it. In fact, I did postpone further consideration of mounting a conference, but I didn't forget. Other responses buoyed me and I moved ahead, cautiously but steadily. You should do likewise. If you get any positive reaction at all from any quarter, you should persevere. Opposition or indifference often comes from ignorance and inertia.

Hosting a conference may seem like an impossible task to someone who has never done it. The task of organizing such an affair may seem quite frightening. Perhaps this *Guide* will give you the background and direction—and some of the facts—you need to convince the skeptics at this stage.

The first planning meeting. If you have discovered some support in your department or program, you are ready for the next step: a planning meeting.

Right now is the time to consider a crucial question: do you want your conference to be sponsored by your institution alone and regional only in the sense that it draws participants from neighboring schools, or do you want your conference to be regional also in the sense that it is cosponsored by two or more colleges in the region? In answering this question you should keep in mind the many advantages of joint sponsorship, such as greater sources of funding and expertise, increased professional impact, and larger potential for communication among colleagues.

But keep in mind also the disadvantages of joint sponsorship, especially for a first venture. These include more complicated logistics, increased time required for planning and decision making, and increased opportunity for ego conflicts frequent in all cooperative activities. To a large extent these disadvantages can be circumvented by forming a consortium and agreeing in advance that although a series of conferences will be jointly sponsored, the primary responsibility for the planning, organization, and presentation of each will be rotated. This structure retains the advantages of single sponsorship and makes possible long-range planning that can enlarge your scope and enhance your goals.

Who to invite to the planning meeting. Whether or not you decide to involve other colleges in your conference plans, do not be casual in selecting people to invite to your first planning meeting. I have heard of some people not invited at this early stage who held permanent grudges. This animosity can be costly. It can be easily avoided if you make your decisions with a sophisticated and knowledgeable awareness of human feelings and the prevailing political facts at your institution. Invite everyone who might conceivably want to have a say in planning an event of considerable importance to the institution as a whole. At this point it is a mistake to invite only those who you think will be willing to work. Those who won't, or can't, work on the project will fade away after the preliminary arrangements have been made anyway, and you retain their good will by having welcomed their contributions. You will need the good will, too, of your clerical help. So if there is a person who will logically provide the main clerical support for a conference, he or she must also be invited to this early meeting. This invitation is more than a diplomatic one. Contributions during the early stages from your secretary may make the difference between practical plans and utterly impractical ones.

The same can be said for contributions from a person with budgetary authority. He or she can restrain high-flown planning and keep ideas and projections within the bounds of reason, given the institution's resources. On the other hand, at this first meeting it does not pay to be too reasonable. This is a time for brainstorming, for considering all kinds of wild possibilities. Money-minded people can be inhibiting if you do not warn them ahead of time about what you hope will occur by way of idea-generation at this early stage.

Include in your first planning meeting representatives from all levels of your department, including part-time faculty and teaching assistants. It is unlikely that a conference planned by only the senior members or only the junior members of a department is going to get the full involvement you will need for success. Of course, you will have to give some thought to the size of this initial planning group. A small group is most efficient in producing speedy results. But efficiency is a relative matter. In this first phase of planning you are probably better served by a large, representative group that will give you maximum exposure, maximum opportunity to develop enthusiasm, maximum number of people from which to select a working group, and maximum potential for generating ideas.

If your college has both "regular" academic departments and developmental departments or programs in your field, both should be involved in this meeting. Depending on what happens at the first and subsequent planning meetings, one or more of these units may opt out of further participation. But if they are included at this stage, they will leave without hard feelings, and may, if conditions change, return to the fold later. To try to include them at a later stage without having invited them at the start may be impossible. A conference on writing, for example, may eventually emphasize creative writing or remediation or advanced exposition or writing across the curriculum, and this emphasis will determine who will continue to support the conference actively and who will opt out. But from the beginning, all relevant faculty should be consulted. Planning a conference in this manner may even have an added value of helping to reunite factions that have developed within an institution. Whatever happens, you must be on the alert to prevent the widening of gaps that currently exist at most institutions that have a diversity of programs, goals, and administrative structures.

Be sure that you schedule the first planning meeting at a time when those you especially want to attend can make it. Urge them personally to come. If you can not personally invite every person you might like to have come, you may want to consider posting or distributing a flyer that issues a general invitation to everyone who is interested. This will cover your tracks in case there is someone you've forgotten, and may also uncover some valuable hidden talent.

Once you have assembled your Phase I planning group, your tasks are clear. Together with this group you must determine the purposes and goals of the conference, and decide who is going to do the work.

These tasks are clear but not at all easy. You may want to guide the group in the general direction of outcomes you have already decided upon. Or you may want to go into the meeting with an entirely open mind. That will depend on your situation and your style. But you should not be embarrassed to assert your own priorities if you have strong feelings regarding particular aspects of the plan. And if you decide not to try to guide the group, prepare yourself to accept fully the group's decisions. Querulous dissatisfaction resulting from disagreement or misunderstanding at this stage can dog the whole project and result in much wasted time and energy.

Deciding on purposes and goals. The list of possible reasons for holding a conference is, as we have seen, long and complex. Your institution, furthermore, may have some unique ones. Your first planning meeting should explore all of these reasons as fully and frankly as possible. To do the job right may in fact take more than one meeting. In the end, your group should choose several goals that can be

clearly stated and agreed upon, and which everyone can keep firmly in mind as the work goes on. These goals will affect every stage of your planning and work, and they will give a unity to your conference that will make attendance a richer experience than it can possibly be if the purpose of the conference is muddled or unclear. It is equally important to affirm potentially far-reaching goals as well as the more limited, immediate ones. For example, we expressed the goals we decided on for our conference in the following way:

- to provide conferees with immediately practical demonstrations of methodology based on experience and research
- to provide a friendly forum where young faculty members can share expertise with peers
- to bring together the personnel of regular and developmental programs at our own institution and throughout the region for exploration of common interests

Obviously these goals affected our conference format, our mailing list, and our choice of presenters, so we had to make our goals clear to ourselves early in the planning. We became aware also that we could make some important contributions to our own tutor- and teaching assistant-training program through the conference. Other advantages, such as improving our morale and our departmental image might accrue also.

Once again, don't rush this process of early planning. Part of your purpose at this time is to give a say to everyone who could possibly want it.

Coordinating the work. The next task is to decide who will coordinate the work. One person must be selected for this position. All the conference planners I have known, and all the professionals, agree that one person must have final authority on all matters from the dessert at lunch to inclusion of a particular person on the program. This kind of authority cannot be wielded by a committee. Though the coordinator will need help, he or she must be empowered to act alone when necessary.

The coordinator ideally will have certain particular attributes. He or she will have a good memory for details, will be able to delegate responsibility comfortably but with care, and will get along well with a secretary who has time to devote to the effort. Above all, he or she must be totally committed to the project and willing to expend whatever energy is necessary to make it work. This is not the job for someone marking time until retirement or just anyone who has a little extra time. The promise of "We'll all help you" is fine but cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Probably you, who have initiated the project, are the best choice for the job of coordinator, but if you do not fit the description given here in some important way, try to plan for that. If you are poor at details, for example, try to get the services of a secretary with a steel trap mind.

Secretarial help is also important for a good conference. Lack of it can ruin you. As with the coordinator, this is not a job for a group of people. Though several helpers may be needed, one person must have final say in directing the work.

The coordinator and the secretary are crucial elements, but they will need to work with a steering committee. This committee will be very busy at the outset helping the coordinator make decisions about format, scheduling, mailing, and

publicity. The committee will rest for some months while the coordinator and secretary implement these decisions. And then the committee will become very active again, deciding on the presenters, communicating with the presenters, and helping out on the actual day or days of the conference. Volunteers for these tasks can be useful, but there must be a core of people—the steering committee—that the coordinator can absolutely count on.

Sometimes diplomatic appointments to the steering committee are desirable. For example, if a developmental department or program has initiated the conference, at least one representative from the corresponding “regular” department should be on the steering committee. Or vice versa. Of course, cosponsoring institutions must also be represented, even if one college has primary responsibility.

In addition to reliability and energy, the prime virtues, the coordinator might also want to consider in selecting steering committee members such things as the number of contacts they provide for publicity, the number of friends they have in other colleges, and the probable flow of useful or exciting ideas. Remember that the impress of this committee on the final affair will be definitive.

You have now determined your goals and decided on your workers. You have made the most important decisions. But whether you reach your goals, and how you reach them, depends on what happens in Phase II. You have sketched your conference and gathered its architects. What you now need is to design and erect its inner structure.

Phase II. Decisions that determine conference structure

From this point on, many of the decisions you make will be irreversible, so each one needs plenty of discussion. Although the conference coordinator must keep bottom-line authority, he or she should resist the committee’s tendency to say “Whatever you want will be O.K.” Decisions will obviously be sounder if preceded by a thorough analysis of alternatives. Allow time for that analysis and the discussion it requires.

The first of these discussions may already have begun in Phase I. In any case they must begin in earnest now. They concern the interrelated areas of scope and financing. In most situations, it is probably best to decide first on the scope you want your conference to have ideally, and then decide on acceptable modifications if you have to scale down. With this flexibility, you are in a good position to dicker for funding and will impress the money men and women with how reasonable you are, a position that is always helpful in loosening the purse strings.

Scope. When we were at this stage of our deliberations at Rutgers, I received some excellent advice from a dean. “Think big,” he said. “Think of what you’re planning as being an important contribution to the profession.” For our modest department, this was particularly appropriate advice, but it is probably broadly applicable to all neophytes in conference planning. Don’t keep your sights too low if you want to have professional impact.

On the other hand, you must keep your operations manageable. You must begin, therefore, by considering three major cost factors: the length of the conference, food service, and honoraria for presenters.

How long should the conference last? In part, this is a question of how far par-

ticipants must travel. If many of your participants will have to travel several hours to get to the conference, a two-day program may be most practical. But you should not make the decision to run a two- (or more) day conference lightly. A second conference day will greatly increase your clerical chores. You will have to research local accommodations, restaurants, and perhaps even sightseeing or other entertainment. And you will have to transmit this information in your program mailing. Even one additional sheet of paper can make a hefty increase in your mailing costs. (It is this kind of detail—which can sometimes be crucially important—that you or your clerical assistant must have a head for.)

Of course you will not decide on a two-day format unless you can certainly fill that time. Examine your goals again, and the presenters you will probably preselect. If the conference will have a combination, for example, of research reports, demonstrations of methodology, and a key speaker, you can sensibly work out two full days with appropriate balance and changes of pace. But if you are interested in dealing with a single area of concern or a fairly limited topic—a single critical or methodological approach—then it is wise to avoid spreading yourself too thin. The more time you have to fill, the greater the importance of program variety.

In most cases, a one-day conference is probably the most practical and is certainly easier for a first venture. The prime ingredient for success is a rich program and this can come effortlessly with a one-day format. You need not worry about padding.

Food. Whatever length of conference you favor, you will have to decide whether or not to provide food. Almost certainly you will not want or need to be so spartan as not to provide coffee and pastry, at least in the morning. Pastries of good quality will insure you more good will than they would seem to warrant. And hell hath no fury like the Sanka or tea drinker at a conference where these commodities are not provided.

Should you provide lunch? Perhaps not if your institution has a reasonably good cafeteria or restaurant where space for your group can be reserved. That space is important because plenty of opportunity for social intercourse is essential to the success of any conference. Also, don’t underestimate the amount of bad feeling generated by lunch in a crowded and messy atmosphere. Remember that you want your participants to leave with good feelings about *every* part of the day.

If you provide lunch, check the cost carefully. This expenditure will be your biggest and you may decide that so much money for an amenity is not worth it. At Rutgers we decided it was worth it, and participants’ comments have supported this view. However, our registration fee does not cover the cost and we will eventually have to rethink the matter. One conference we know of in New York City made no arrangements for the lunch hour because of the proximity of dozens of restaurants, but this lapse was so sharply criticized by participants that the next year they introduced a veritable party at midday. Experienced planners know these things are important.

Wine and cheese at the end of the day is an attractive feature and is a possible alternative to a free lunch. It is especially desirable at the end of the first day if your conference continues. Some equivalent social occasion is desirable at the end of the second day also, but is probably less important than at the end of the first, if you must choose.

Paying presenters. Some conferences pay an honorarium to everyone who presents. This seems entirely unnecessary. You will probably want to waive the registration fee for presenters, and perhaps provide parking, but some successful conferences do not even do that. However, you will almost certainly have to pay a featured speaker, and a presenter coming a long distance might reasonably expect some contribution towards his or her expenses. Whom to pay and whom not to pay may become a touchy question, so be sure there is a rationale behind your decision.

Funding. Before you start searching for sources of funding, try to get an approximation of your expenses for your most elaborate possible plan, and for your alternatives. Don't forget that you may be billed by maintenance, cafeteria and audio-visual workers. If your conference is on a weekend, buildings may have to be opened, secured, and insured, and pay will be double time. You can plan to avoid some of these costs. Know the possibilities. Decide exactly what, if anything, you want to give the participants: paper and pencil? duplicated materials? free parking? Estimate the amount of paid help you will need for the day, allowing for more than you think. Investigate the cost of a printed registration form and program. Be clear about the cost of postage and make a stab at estimating the size of your mailing list even though you have not yet made that up. Remember that you will probably need at least two mailings and maybe even three.

With some cost estimates drafted, you are now ready to search for money.

Conference-generated funds. My own experience with conference going and giving has convinced me that while a low registration fee or free admission will not increase your attendance, a very high fee will cut it and/or tend to limit it to schools with large faculty-development budgets. The same dean who advised me to think big advised me to charge a high fee on grounds that something you get for little or nothing is undervalued. We thought he had a point and so we did set a fee, but not as high as he wanted. If you do decide on a fee, you might also decide for whom it will be waived or reduced: your own faculty? presenters? students? undergraduates? (One conference committee waived the fee for "students," thinking of undergraduates, and realized to their sorrow that "students" also means doctoral candidates, a large part of their attendance.) Whatever fee you set, it is important that you not depend on it to cover all your expenses. It may do so, but you need the assurance of support to make up any deficit. In your first year this is particularly important as you cannot predict the size of your attendance. You do not want to have to worry about money. Whatever worrying you do should be about quality. In our own case, we have broken even three out of five times (once we even made a small profit), but we continue to be grateful for the promise of support if needed.

Institutional funding. Your own school probably has several sources of money that you haven't thought of. You probably know whether or not your department or program has money you might get, but did you know that most deans, presidents, and provosts have discretionary funds? Also, faculty-development funds may be available for this kind of project. And if your school has a specially-funded developmental program, it is almost certain that the director has the wherewithal to support you, at least in part, if the conference will be useful to his or her faculty. At Rutgers, we were able to get a promise that the dean of the col-

lege and the director of the Educational Opportunity Fund Program would together make up any deficit we might incur.

Outside funding. If you cannot get such assurances internally, or if you need more money than your college can provide, look into outside sources. Local businesses are often glad to build goodwill by contributing to a college program. Your college's administrator in charge of development can surely give you the names of some likely prospects. A few foundations will support conferences. However, an informal survey of 25 foundations found only one that was willing to contribute.

Conference format, date, and site. You must begin now to decide how you want to shape the conference day or days because your first mailing will be a call for participation. Of course, you may have decided not to issue a call, but to select and invite presenters on the basis of what you know about who is knowledgeable, interesting, and up-to-date in the field. In either case, you and your committee will have to be clear about what you are looking for. The decisions we made at this stage were: not to have a keynote speaker; not to have a theme (we couldn't think of one); to concentrate on demonstration lessons exclusively; and to try to get a well-known person in the field to participate as a teacher.

These decisions proved suitable for our circumstances, but of course there are many other possibilities. Except for the decision not to have a speaker, we have not adhered consistently to any of these decisions. Our success in getting Mina Shaughnessy to participate the first year (demonstrating videotapes that had been developed at the Instructional Resource Center of the City University of New York) was one of our smarter moves. Her name on the program was a convincing harbinger of quality, and we all felt that her presence greatly increased the respectability of our developmental department as seen by our own college administration and by others outside the school. Not many individuals in the field can achieve these ends for you and make a valuable presentation too, but searching for such a person may be well worth your time.

Other smaller decisions will have to do with the length of presentations and the date of the conference. As to the former, we finally settled on seventy minutes, but planned to allow some presenters to run over, accommodating this overrun into the time allotted for lunch.

The decision on a date is somewhat more complicated. First you must decide on time of year. Remember that before the conference date you must have a call for papers, a response to that call, selection of the program, notification of presenters, printing of conference program leaflets, and registration mailing with time for return. Holidays will intervene. The whole sequence may take four to six months. (See Appendix A.) We decided initially on a spring conference and have been satisfied with that. It avoids the difficulty of communicating with faculty during the summer. In narrowing the time down to the month and the final day, you will need to consider vacation times of the schools in your region, other possibly conflicting conferences, probability of good weather, whether weekday or weekend, and availability of space.

These last questions, day of the week and space, are related to the site you select. Your own institution seems somehow most suitable as a place for a regional con-

ference, unless there is some special reason to avoid using it, and it is certain to be much cheaper than a hotel or conference center, even on a weekend. However, there is no reason to rule out a nonacademic atmosphere, especially if using your campus facilities would mean crowding, dispersion, or some other unpleasantness.

At your own college, get your room requests in early. You would be surprised at the uses colleges find for facilities you might think you would have free run of on weekends. Once we found that mass testing had been scheduled two years in advance for a weekend we wanted, and another year we discovered that the Girl Scouts were giving a party in the college cafeteria. Also, try to get rooms that are clustered in one area, not spread all over campus.

Mallings. By now you should be ready for your first mailing: the call for papers. Again, you may have decided to omit this step and invite those you want, but for most purposes and for maximum participation, a call for papers makes sense. It will not keep you from exerting tight control over quality. Selection remains in your hands and even with a call for papers your program can still be partly, even mostly, made up of preselected presenters.

Spread your net wide. Ask everyone you know for names for your list. Very likely there are schools within your region that you have never heard of. In our own case we were rather surprised to find 151 relevant programs in our region. Get names of chairpersons or directors of programs. Mailing to both regular departments and developmental departments is good policy, whatever your decision was about including both levels. Each may have something to contribute to, and learn from, the other. Since trying to bring the two areas closer was one of our goals at Rutgers, we were careful to make sure our mailing list reflected this. Effecting the exchange of ideas between college and high school instructors may be something you want to do and this also requires research for names and functions. For example, some school systems have a person who coordinates activities between high schools and colleges. This person, rather than a department chairperson, may be your best contact.

The flyer you send out calling for papers should be as explicit as you can make it. If it is not explicit, you will waste much time responding to calls for information. Be sure to put a name and telephone number on the flyer, but if your wording is adequate there will be few telephone calls. To save yourself time, ask that submissions include a title and blurb suitable for the program leaflet. Set a word- or page-limit. (See Appendix B.) Pay attention, too, to the looks of the piece. It should reflect the quality you intend your conference to have. You may not be able to afford printing but you will surely be able to locate a typewriter with an attractive typeface and a typist who cares about the looks of his or her product. Do not leave the proofreading or inspection of the first copies to come off the machine to anyone not obsessively committed to setting the perfect tone for your conference. Don't underestimate the importance of these kinds of details.

With this mailing, we included a "Dear Colleague" letter that asks the recipient to personally urge the participation of his or her faculty. This goes, with several flyers, to chairpersons and directors. Other mailings are single flyers. Many include personal notes wherever we have contacts. In our first year we mailed about 300. The mailing went out in October and we set a deadline just before Christmas. By prearrangement, we repeated the mailing in December, extending the deadline

until the end of January. This seemed to work well. We abandoned the second mailing eventually, but at first it helped to keep us in people's minds and was good publicity, better than the advertisements you will probably have to take out if you decide not to issue a call for papers. Typing addresses on labels with carbons, or on sheets that can be photocopied, greatly reduces clerical time.

At this point, you can make arrangements with your guest speaker, if any, and with other participants you are inviting, though you may not want these to be final until you have a better idea of the conference day schedule after seeing the proposals. Whenever you do make these arrangements, keep in mind the desirability of getting agreements in writing. A visitor to a recent conference was startled to find her name on the program for presenting a paper, the result of what she thought was a vague and noncommittal telephone conversation some months earlier.

Publicity. You should also be making decisions now about publicity. If you can afford it, you may want to advertise a call for papers in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Many professional journals also accept notices gratis. Spreading the word nationally this way may entice effective and knowledgeable people outside your region to enliven your conference, and in any case, is good public relations for your institution and your region. Also, try to get your flyers distributed at any other conferences that may be occurring during the year. Publicity at any time may increase the number of proposals submitted, though probably you will want to make your biggest push around the time of your registration mailing. At that time, enlist your college's public relations office and any connections you may have. Prepare some provocative press releases. Use photographs if you can. Above all, talk a lot, with friends, with colleagues—with anyone who'll listen and might be interested.

Phase III. Selecting conference content and planning the conference day

By this time you are probably wondering why you ever got into this. You are worried that you will receive only idiotic proposals and that on the conference day no one will come. Hold on. You are on the verge of one of the most satisfying parts of the whole conference-planning process: selecting the program. Proposals will come in, though much more slowly than you would like. Also, some of the worst will be among the first, for some reason. Do not despair. Allow enough leeway so that you can consider a few late ones.

First, distribute copies of the proposals to your committee as far in advance of your proposal-evaluation meeting as possible, but not long enough so content will be forgotten. We have always found it best to read all the proposals at one time, or within a few days, so that our evaluations will be consistent and we can get a feel for the whole program. You will need at least one long meeting, with your secretary present. It is especially important from now on that he or she be privy to all your plans. For convenience, attach a data and rating sheet to each proposal. To cut down on later paperwork and make post-selection tasks easier, this form should include space both for evaluation notes and for the information you will need to get from the participant later if he or she is selected. (See Appendix C.)

The group must make a number of decisions in addition to selection. A workable approach is first to review the ratings on each proposal and divide them into four categories: *yes plus*, *yes*, *maybe*, and *no*. In this step, do not think of anything but quality. Then, consider the following questions:

- How many sessions will there be and how long will each session run?
- How will time be distributed among plenary sessions (if any), paper reading sessions, panels, demonstrations, and workshops?
- Will there be a welcoming session with "greetings" at the beginning of the conference, and if so, by whom, and for what purpose?
- What impression do you want your convention program leaflet to give?

Your decisions about which presentations to choose will be affected to one degree or another by your answers to these questions. Even "greetings" and the conference-program leaflet affect your overall sense of the conference's tone, and thus the choice and "mix" of presentations. And vice versa. That is, although you will certainly have given some thought to these questions earlier, you will not be able to give them final answers until you have examined the proposals submitted to you in relation to the list of presenters whom you have invited and who have accepted your invitation.

Session timing. The question of how many sessions to have is a difficult one to settle before you have any idea of attendance. First you must decide on the number sequentially. Use your own experience at conferences as a guide here. Don't try to cram too many sessions into the day. After much debate, we settled on three session times during a day, beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 3:35 p.m. Though a few people each year have said they would have liked another session, most felt the number was good, especially since it allowed for a relaxed pace and plenty of socializing time, features that have been strongly praised.

Deciding the number of concurrent sessions is more difficult. Too many and your attendance at some may be zero. Too few and you sacrifice variety and lose some good presentations. Of course, the quality of the proposals will help you make this decision. If you have lots of high-quality work to choose from, you should probably move in the direction of more rather than fewer. A large number of sessions gives richness and excitement, and if you can rally a group of people to attend a sparsely attended session on demand, you need not worry. (This kind of last-minute logistics, incidentally, is one of the best reasons for selecting your site so that all rooms are nearby.) We started with five concurrent sessions and eventually increased to six. Our day now requires us to fill 18 sessions.

Session format and content. Decisions about how to present the content you have selected will certainly reflect your personality and circumstances as well as your goals, but it may be valuable at this time to ask yourself what effect you want to have on the participants. Do you want them to become actively involved during the day or to be passive recipients of information and ideas? My bias is toward the former, and I am certain that participant involvement can be achieved by careful planning no matter how scholarly or research-oriented you want your program to be. Professional conference planners tend to agree. One says

One of the superior and unique advantages of attending a con-

ference is the opportunity it presents for personal participation. The competent meeting planner will program opportunities for such participation, and will try to engage each person's mind and attention. If a conference is well planned, it can engage the attention of each attendee, and, through the spoken word and the use of visuals, involve him in a deeper learning experience than is possible through any other mass communication medium. (Finkel, *How to Plan Meetings Like a Professional*, p. 16.)

Perhaps it should give us pause to think that business executives talk about learning in this way. Many academics who give lip service to learning through participation are still prejudiced against it, feeling that it has some unsavory connection with schools of education and cannot lie in the same bed with scholarship. Whatever your own predispositions may be for or against learning through participation, you should consider the effect of participation on the value and importance of your conference. Before you select your program, decide whether you want your sessions to be all participatory (which means demonstration lessons, workshops, seminars, or any format that requires the audience to do something), all passive-receptive (which traditionally means an audience listening to people reading papers, with perhaps a brief time for questions), or a mix.

Do not leave the final arrangement to chance. You need balance in order to leave impressions that will, so to speak, lengthen the shelf-life of the conference. Of course, you made preliminary decisions on this score before you sent out the call for papers, but almost certainly you will have some variety to choose from once the papers come in. Despite the clear request in the Rutgers call to submit only demonstration lessons, we regularly get reports on research and teacher-training seminars, and we have included some of these in our programs to good effect.

In most situations, the most effective design provides a mix of passive-receptive sessions and participatory sessions. Probably the ideal way of achieving a mix is to structure participation into each session. Here are some ways to make passive-reception sessions more participatory:

1. Present a panel with speakers representing strongly opposing views. At the end, ask if there have been any changes of mind. Distribute cards to write the reasons down, collect, and read. Or form small groups to develop questions, collect, and read.
2. Present one speaker, followed by an interviewer, and then questions from the floor.
3. Ask participants to read a paper, samples of student work, or whatever, before the conference. (Note that this format has implications for the registration form and for clerical help.) Then, at the beginning of the session, form small groups to develop questions for discussion by the author(s). This format may actually provoke a good deal of audience participation if general discussion is allowed, and so needs a skillful chairperson.
4. Ask each presenter to prepare several provocative questions on his or her paper. Assign these questions to your colleagues planted in the audience, or have

the session chairperson ask them if there is a lull in questions from the floor.

5. Demonstrate a method of teaching with a group of unrehearsed students. This is risky, but often worth the risk and the effort.

Here are some ways to make participatory sessions more fully participatory:

1. Have the audience assume student roles for an actual lesson. These presentations must be carefully selected, since many lessons that work beautifully with students cannot work with a group of people who already know the answers. Many do work, though, and are also both stimulating and humbling for the conferees who take the role of students. In selecting such proposals, beware of those that require the conferees to do lengthy writing or lengthy reading. Five or ten minutes of either is plenty, and more than that is deadly.

2. Demonstrate collaborative learning with groups of participants. This method is adaptable to so many areas of instruction in every field that more than one session could profitably be devoted to it.

3. Link some lesson sessions to research reports presented earlier. Make sure this is clear in the program. Allow time for presenters to explain exactly how the pedagogy derives from the research, noting also if practical application required any deviation from theory.

4. Tie a clinic session to an immediately preceding research report. Using actual student work demonstrate how it illustrates the research and how the student could be helped.

5. Schedule two or three sequential sessions around one topic. Each could be independent but might provide (with careful explanation) the opportunity for a participant to explore a particular methodology, or theory, in some depth.

While participatory sessions, whether or not directly related to research and theory, can be a very effective learning experience, do not, under any circumstances, include them for their own sake. Nothing is more irritating than sessions where participants are forced into "buzz groups" or some other trendy structure for no apparent reason.

There are many possible formats for presentations and they will occur to you as you read proposals. Think creatively. Do not let the form in which you receive the proposals be the prime determinant of the form of the session. You must shape the session yourself, persuading contributors to present in the way that best suits the total program even if that way was not his or her original intention. Make certain you know exactly what your presenters will do in their sessions and that their timing is careful. Do not let a person whom you want on the program for his or her name intimidate you into accepting too vague a description of the session. Be diplomatic, but be firm.

Share the task of working out the procedural details with presenters. You may also want to share the job of writing rejection letters. You will create much good will if these letters are personal and thoughtful responses to the proposals.

If you have enough staff to provide a chairperson for each conference session, that person can notify the contributors assigned to his or her session that their pro-

posals have been accepted and can arrange with them to shape the presentation according to the planning committee's intentions. The session chairperson will also provide contributors with the names of the other people they will be sharing the session with, agree on the presentation title and description, inquire into the presenter's special needs (such as audio-visual equipment and seating arrangements).

By far, the best way to do all this is by telephone. (Look ahead to the possible cost of long distance phoning when you prepare your budget.) Not only does phoning save a great deal of clerical time, but it also establishes the personal, informal contact that seems to make conferences more satisfying for all concerned. Prepare thoroughly in advance for these phone calls. It is extremely helpful to have a data form at hand when you call. The one we use has already been mentioned (Appendix C). Write a program blurb for each presentation yourself before you call, or make necessary revisions in what was submitted. Ideally this should be done in committee to insure consistency of style. While it is courteous to allow presenters to write their own, they do not often write something you can use unedited. Ultimately, one editor must be responsible for the program-leaflet copy.

In your calls to presenters, ask for names of books they have written or would recommend to other teachers. Add to the list gathered from presenters any titles you are especially fond of, and group them all by publisher. Write or call each publisher, explain your conference, and request a few copies of each for display. Most publishers respond generously to a request of this kind. The display will add to the interest of the day, and you will have accumulated several hundred dollars worth of books.

If you have the luxury of a different chairperson for every session, you can probably delegate a lot of worry about the shape of the presentation, timing, and audio-visuals to that person. But most planning committees are too small for this, and each committee member or department member must contact several presenters. Some of your colleagues who dropped out along the way may be willing to rejoin you at this point, if you have been careful to keep them informed occasionally, formally or informally, about what has been going on.

Keep very close touch with the people working with you at this time. It is hard to do this without seeming to be a nag. But at the same time, as the conference day rolls near, the speed of the work tends to pick up, and you will want to be sure everything is being accomplished in phase with everything else. Here you're a little like a master chef preparing a complex banquet, trying to make sure that every dish is correctly prepared and done at exactly the moment it must be served. And as in cooking, there is always one dish that almost always goes wrong. There has probably never been a conference in history in which all the audio-visual equipment worked to perfection. Probably you should delegate one person to be responsible exclusively for audio-visual equipment in order to minimize blow-outs, foul-ups, and no-shows.

Greetings. Greeters and their remarks can profitably be selected for diplomatic reasons. For example, since one of our goals was to improve the relationship of our developmental department with the rest of the college, we invited the dean of the college, who is also a professor of English, to greet the conferees. Also, since another goal was to encourage professional growth, we made a point of mention-

ing the publications of the presenters, all of which were on display in an adjoining room. After the first year, it was gratifying to be able to mention the articles and books that were outgrowths of presentations at earlier conferences. Whatever the content of the greetings, they should be short.

If you have also decided to have a keynote speaker during the welcoming session, make sure that he or she will make a provocative and effective presentation. If your speaker has valuable material to offer but will not necessarily present it with flair, it is better to have that person speak at lunch. In other words, try to keep the atmosphere light and buoyant to start the day. All the presentations will be enhanced by this opener as a background. Of course, if your speaker at the start of the day is too provocative, you run the risk of upstaging your entire group of first-slot presenters. Considering the risks, a luncheon speaker may be best.

The conference-program leaflet. By now the decisions on your conference program have been made, rooms have been assigned, and copy for the program leaflet (including title and brief identifying blurb for each presentation, and the registration form) has been written, edited, and—if you are fortunate enough to be able to afford it—prepared for the printer.

Professional printing is very desirable. Like the appearance of your mailings, the appearance of your conference-program leaflet says more to more people about the quality and professional significance of your conference than practically anything else you do. If 50 people attend your conference, 150, and maybe a good many more, will see the program leaflets that conferees take home and show their colleagues and friends.

For the first two years of our conference we had a good, but uninspiring, mimeographed program. Then to everyone's surprise a dean offered some money for printing. We found then that there are ways to get high-quality appearance without paying the exorbitant costs of an entirely commercial job. Your art department may be able to help you with design and layout, but do not settle for a less-than-professional looking job. For ours, we exploited a friend and the result was impressive. Many people have commented on its quality and a number have told us that they came to the conference because they saw our program leaflet posted in their departmental office.

If your program leaflet is combined with your registration form—the most time-saving alternative—don't forget to order enough to distribute on the day of the conference.

Be sure to include in your program leaflet:

- a map and transportation directions
- the name and phone number of someone to call for information (probably you or your secretary)
- fees and exemptions or reductions, if any (we exempted members of our own college faculty and presenters, and reduced the fee for undergraduates)
- the name checks should be made out to
- home and office addresses of the registrant, with phone numbers
- an exhortation to preregister

We found that a conference title and a short (two- or three-sentence) statement

describing the purpose and content of the conference is useful, because it tends to focus conferees' attention on the particular issue at hand. If you use such a statement, think it out carefully and make sure that it accurately reflects the nature of the program and also indicates clearly the area of interest or level of student preparation (or both) that the conference concerns. Make a final check of the descriptions of individual sessions. Are they complete and direct enough to enable conferees to make choices?

Phase IV. The conference day

This section will focus mainly on a one-day conference, on the assumption that a conference of two or more days in most cases just multiplies the number of times tasks must be repeated, the energy and attention span you must bring to your work, and, possibly, the number of things that can go wrong.

After your final mailing, you may have little more to do for several weeks, or even months, but wait for returns. This is an anxious period. You will have allowed plenty of time for returns, taking any intervening holidays into account. Still, you will feel absolutely certain that your mailing date was too late, or too early, or that no one will want to come to your conference anyway. From the preregistration returns it will appear to you that you and your colleagues will be attending your conference alone. It may help you to know, though, that this level of response is typical. We have never had more than 20 percent of our attendance preregistered.

Last-minute arrangements. As the conference day approaches, you should be making last-minute arrangements. At this time you should

- Get the conference paraphernalia ready: pads, pencils, folders, name tags, and hand-outs. These amenities are extremely well received. Years later people are still using the folders we supplied at our first conference.
- Double check audio-visual arrangements and be sure you are supplied with extension cords, extra bulbs, and batteries. Do not count on your audio-visual service to think of these things. Check to see if the electrical outlets in rooms work and fit the plugs on the machines you'll be using.
- Line up help for the day before the conference to get pencils sharpened, furniture moved, and the book display set up.
- Keep your spirits up. Try to think of other things.
- Keep your clerical help calm and reassured (do not call your secretary up in the middle of the night for any reason).
- Select your staff for the day of the conference.

Staff selection. Even if you have little or no money to pay clerical staff to work on the conference day, do not despair. Almost certainly, undergraduates, graduate students, and tutors will volunteer if asked. They will enjoy the affair and learn from it, so you need not be embarrassed to ask them to work, even without pay. We found that the amount or existence of pay does not in the least affect the amount of responsibility they are willing and able to assume. They will serve you very well. The only point to take particular care about is to assign the crucial jobs to people who have worked with you before and whose reliability you know first

hand. Also, encourage them to ask questions if they have doubts about what they are supposed to be doing. Make sure you or one of your knowledgeable colleagues is within call all the time.

The ideal arrangement of staff is to have two people in charge and ultimately responsible, yourself and one other person who has been involved with planning and organizing the conference throughout the whole period of preparation. This second person, your co-captain so to speak, should have direct control of

- registration
- room assignments
- audio-visual machinery (unless you have assigned someone else exclusive responsibility for audio-visual equipment)
- miscellaneous equipment such as lecterns, pointers, chalk
- coffee and related matters
- luncheon arrangements

Assign a number of fleet-footed assistants to this person. Here is a sampling of the sorts of problems he or she may have to deal with:

- a presenter doesn't like his or her room and wants to be shown several alternatives
- an overhead projector's bulb burns out and the spare is in a drawer that's stuck
- a presenter needs something duplicated and the nearest photocopier is broken or locked up
- the coffee does not arrive
- you run out of change
- a conferee must use the locked elevator
- Maintenance has forgotten to clean one of the rooms you are using
- Buildings and Grounds has not unlocked one of the entrances to the conference center
- a session is overcrowded and must be moved
- a projection-screen mount is broken
- a presenter wants to get a friend in free
- one of your colleagues forgot to relay the information that an overhead projector is needed

Of course, careful preplanning can keep these kinds of small disasters to a minimum, but no matter how careful you have been, they will occur. Just one can ruin a presentation or change the attitude of your conferees from cheerful anticipation to why-did-I-bother-to-come exasperation. On the other hand, a flying squad of resourceful young people directed from one central location can take care of these matters before they become crises.

With your co-captain handling the concrete aspects of the conference, you are left free to make people feel at home. This is a very important aspect of mounting a successful conference. You become, finally, on the conference day, a sort of academic *maître d'*. You can feel calm and collected enough to do this well only if you are absolutely sure that behind you everything is going smoothly. Your job now is to

- greet presenters and conferees
- introduce presenters to their session chairpersons or faculty contact (and undergraduate aide, if any)
- greet and introduce special guests
- insure adequate attendance at every session
- soothe nervous and flustered presenters

In general, and in every way, play the role of the excellent host. To do this you too will require some helpers. Introducing presenters to their faculty contacts assumes, for example, that you will have someone to find and inform you when each presenter checks in. You will not want, or be able, to hang around the registration table, and your attention will inevitably be diverted.

Once you have met presenters, you will have to assume that a colleague in charge of that presenter's session will take over and serve as an excellent host in your place. You may have to call on especially mature undergraduate and graduate students for some of this work, if there are too few faculty to cover every presentation.

Here is a sampling of the sort of thing you may have to handle:

- two panelists need to find a room where they can do some last minute preparation in peace
- a dean has taken the most attractive of your special guests off into a corner
- two deans are talking to each other about the next week's faculty meeting
- a few conferees who are high school teachers are huddled together unhappily, apparently wondering if they belong here
- a session is so sparsely attended as to be embarrassing and volunteers must be sent into the breach

The last item above underscores the necessity for having a large group of helpers on hand. They can function in innumerable ways: giving directions, for example, pointing the way from the parking lot to the conference center, from building to building, and to the lavatories (never underestimate the capacity of conferees to get lost on a strange campus). Your staff can tour the rooms to check on attendance or report to you if mingling seems to be needed. We have found it useful to give staff members a name tag of a special vivid color so they will be easy to spot.

Registration. On the day before the conference you will have completed all the clerical preparations for registration and, if possible, set up the registration post. Try to place this near the coffee area and also near the room in which the initial convocation will be held. At the registration table, station knowledgeable, friendly people who know how to make change. Establish a line, clearly labeled, for preregistered conferees where their name tags are ready with the rest of the conference paraphernalia. Establish another clearly labeled line for on-site registration. The staff members attending this line should be prepared to receive money, and give receipts, as well as pass out conference materials. Think the process through as carefully as you can. A smooth registration operation is important to getting the day off to a good start.

Socializing. Coffeetime is important and should be long enough to be worthwhile. This is one of the times when fermentation occurs at a conference. The other times are, of course, lunch and the wine and cheese hour, if you plan to have one, at the end of the conference. We have two coffee periods, one mid-morning and the other mid-afternoon. It helps to have the coffee table set up in or near the room where books and other materials are displayed.

Our lunch hour has always been between 12:40 p.m. and 2:15 p.m.—an hour and a half. Without a speaker this may seem a bit long, but it has allowed us some flexibility in letting some of the second-slot morning sessions run overtime if need be, and still have time for presenters and conferees in those sessions to have a reasonably comfortable lunch. It has also given us time to make announcements, such as exhorting conferees to fill out the evaluation forms and issuing a call for papers for next year's conference.

One year we were able to serve coffee and dessert pastries in a lounge after a buffet lunch in the dining room, and this made a pleasant change of pace and allowed for still more mingling. Wine and cheese at the end of the day is a pleasant touch if you can afford it. You may want to ask someone to make some short summative remarks at this time, but they are not necessary. Most people are talked and listened out by then. What seems most important at the end is simply the chance to wind down after what will have been an exhilarating day.

Phase V. Evaluation and follow-up

Whether or not you plan ever to give a conference again, the end of the conference day is not yet the end of the conference for you. Those you depend on for help are going to want to know how it went, and in fact you are going to want to know how it went yourself. You are also likely to want to know what effects the conference has had on the professional lives of those who attended. And finally, you are going to want to make sure that everyone who contributed to planning and organizing the conference knows what a terrific job you think they did.

Evaluation. In one sense, you can count on your conference to evaluate itself. Comments from participants throughout the day are a good guide to how things are going. You probably won't hear negative ones no matter what is happening, but if you hear none or few of any kind, you are probably in trouble. You should be able to sense the mood, especially at the end of the day. Pleased participants will tend to want to linger and talk and this should make you happy, though exhausted. Especially gratifying will be remarks like "Next year..." and "I wish X could have been here."

You can depend, too, on the comments of the conference staff, which should have had at least one representative in each session. If you make it clear that your ego is not involved, you will get useful evaluations.

Unfortunately, these kinds of reports about the conference are not the sort to impress deans and other funding sources. They usually like something in the way of a report on attendance, moneys in and out, and some codification of participants' reactions. For the last, an evaluation form is helpful. For maximum response (and for quantification) design one that includes both check-offs and room for comments. Appendix D is a sample. It has no special virtues, but has

been serviceable. One or two valuable suggestions have always emerged. Though the form is placed in each registration packet, it has been our experience that participants will not fill it out unless exhorted to do so throughout the day. From lunchtime on, staff with smiles and extra copies should be strategically stationed.

No matter how much evaluation you accumulate on the day of the conference, you cannot, from that short view, determine how well you met your objectives. If you have subsequent conferences you can tell a great deal from increases in number and quality of proposals and the like. But even if you do not plan to repeat the affair, you should keep your eyes open for such events as publications resulting from presentations, presentations at other conferences by those who presented for the first time at yours, adoption by your faculty of methodology introduced at your conference, etc. It is not an exaggeration to say that a successful conference can make a palpable difference in your region in many ways.

Follow-up. Your work as host, and that of your committee, does not end with your last bite of cheese and sip of wine. Think first of thank-you letters to all those on your campus who were helpful: cafeteria workers, maintenance workers, audio-visual technicians, or whomever. Think next of thank-you letters to the presenters. This can be a lengthy chore. To do each letter properly you will need positive comments on the sessions from your staff representative and from the evaluation forms.

At some point in your planning you may have decided that you want a permanent record of the conference, either on tapes or in print. There are good reasons for this. If you have been successful, your program will have contained much that is potentially influential and worth retaining. We have attempted to record sessions but have not had adequate equipment to do so, especially since our format has always contained a great deal of audience participation. We have always had requests for tapes, both from participants who had missed sessions and those who wanted to share the session with colleagues. There is certainly a market for tapes, which you could sell at cost or even for a modest profit to help support future conferences.

If you plan to compile the proceedings you must decide whether you want to include every paper or make a selection of the best for possible publication. In either case, a great deal of clerical time will be needed for the project, plus reproduction costs. It is best not to promise anything you cannot be sure of producing. At one conference I attended, fifty cents was solicited to cover clerical costs for compiling the proceedings, but neither money nor proceedings was ever heard from again. Whatever your plan, try to get your presenters to put their session into writing in a publishable form either before the conference or immediately after. This will greatly reduce your editing chores, and will spare you a good deal of nagging later.

If you can include in the proceedings some material from conferees about how their teaching, ideas, critical approach, or whatever, changed or developed as a result of attending the conference, you will add considerable interest to the volume. Contributions of this sort can be called for at lunch on the day of the conference, with a follow-up request by mail. Another way of collecting postconference experiences is through your tutors and teaching assistants if you are using the conference as a training ground for them. We have made a regular and very successful practice of devoting several meetings of our tutorial staff to presenting the gist of selected sessions and discussing applications.

As a final gesture towards your participants, one which will define and underscore the community of professionals with common interests that your well-planned day has helped to forge, try to find the time and money to send each participant a list of everyone who attended. You will find that this list will provoke many professional exchanges you will learn of later. In time you and your committee will understand the full extent and value of your creativity. What Henry Adams said of teachers is true of conference organizers as well: "You can never tell where your influence stops."

Bibliography

Drain, Robert and Neil, Oakley, *Successful Conference and Convention Planning*. Canada: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978.

An exhaustive guide to the large conference that covers all aspects: transportation, food, accommodations, printing, and publicity. Innumerable checklists.

Finkel, Coleman, *How to Plan Meetings Like a Professional*. Philadelphia: Sales Meeting Books, 1972.

Contains much practical advice, especially about the planning process and about the kinds of control the coordinator must exert on individual sessions. Also has a very useful section on the main causes of failure.

Finkel, Coleman, *Professional Guide to Successful Meetings*. Boston: Herman, 1976.

A useful, full, planner's checklist from "establishing objectives" to "acknowledgement of contributions." Directed towards business, but there is a good chapter on "General Interest" and valuable material on structuring individual sessions.

Kindler, Herbert, *Organizing the Technical Conference*. New York: Reinhold, 1960.

A thorough survey with especially useful sections on determining purposes and logistics for a jointly-sponsored conference. A timetable covering conference day minus 12 months to conference day plus four months.

Nadler, Leonard and Zeace, *The Conference Book*. Houston: Gulf, 1977.

Though less detailed than others in terms of step-by-step, day-by-day arrangements, this is probably the most useful since it deals with professional conferences of all kinds and not merely business conferences. A valuable feature is the detailed examples from the authors' own successful and unsuccessful experience.

Appendix A A conference-planning calendar

This model is for a spring conference (on or about April 15). If you adapt it for fall or winter, be sure to take fully into account the unreliability of academics during the summer months.

Also, this calendar is a model for a staff who cannot devote full time to this project. In the unlikely event that you or your secretary have nothing to do besides work on conference preparations, you can move quickly through some of these steps.

April and May (one year before the conference)

- Hold planning meetings to determine goals, scope, funding
- Decide who will do the work
- Decide the nature of the mailing list
- Begin compiling the mailing list on cards

Summer

- Continue mailing list compilation
- Order envelopes, paper, and labels needed for mailings
- Address envelopes

Note: It is possible to start these spring and summer activities after Labor Day, but if you possibly can, allow yourself more time. Brisk movement is usually not possible for an enterprise that will almost certainly be an extra in everyone's schedule.

September

- Determine conference date
- Reserve rooms
- Prepare a flyer calling for papers
- Complete mailing list compilation and typing of envelopes
- Investigate expenses and prepare tentative budget
- File funding applications to outside sources (if needed)
- Obtain financial assurances from within the institution

Note: The last three steps can be made in the previous spring if your planning permits. The more you can do then, the better.

October

- First week: first mailing, with a December 15 deadline for submission of proposals; make arrangements with invited participants

November

- Prepare for second mailing
- Reproduce proposals as they come in for use in selection

December

- First week: second mailing, with January 31 deadline

January

- Research food arrangements and audio-visual service; make commitments where possible

Reproduce proposals as they come in
Order supplies for the conference day: name tags, pads, pencils, folders

February

First week: distribute proposals to the steering committee
Second week: select proposals and plan the conference day; assign a staff member to each presenter; make contact with presenters
Third and fourth weeks: complete all arrangements with presenters; prepare and mail rejection letters; select rooms; prepare program leaflet copy and send copy to printer

Note: This timing assumes a printer who can promise delivery in two weeks. Caution might suggest an earlier submission date, but in planning for that, do not underestimate the length of time necessary for negotiations with presenters.

March

Second week: mail programs and registration forms
Third and fourth weeks: final arrangements for food, audio-visual, and any other services; make a complete check of necessary equipment, supplies, and furniture, recruit staff, arrange for moving furniture if necessary; check rooms for working electrical outlets

April

First and second weeks: prepare name tags as pre-registrations come in; request flowers and greenery from friends; prepare signs and labels as necessary; assemble registration packets
Second week: notify food service of probable number to be fed; secure enough change (and a box for it) for registration
Day before the conference: brief staff; move furniture; arrange book display; decorate reception area and display room with greenery; check lavatories and session rooms for cleanliness and necessary supplies; assemble all equipment (chalk, lecterns, extension cords, screens, etc.); check audio-visual arrangements; check arrangements made with campus police (parking, unlocking); mount signs and labels

CONFERENCE

The day after, or as soon as possible: assemble staff to review all evaluations, oral and written
As soon as possible: prepare list of participants and mail it out; place all these names in mailing list file; prepare thank-you letters to campus help and presenters and mail them; prepare financial statement; prepare full report for submission to funding sources and for the record; make decisions about compiling proceedings and initiate work decided on

May

Start planning the next conference

Appendix B Matrix for a Call-for-Papers advertisement or flyer

Conference Title
Affiliate Institution

On *[date]* the *[institutions and relevant units]* will sponsor a one-day conference on *[topic]*. Sessions at this conference will consist of *[brief description of types of presentation: demonstrations, workshops, paper readings]*.

The conference organizers invite contributions to this conference program. Those who would like to participate in the conference please submit a proposal by *[date]*. Suggested areas are: *[list of specific types of subject matter or topics]*.

Proposals should be designed for *[length of time-slot or page length for papers]*. Keep in mind that your audience is likely to consist of college faculty *[and high school teachers, graduate students]* in a variety of fields, both yours and those related to it. Assume an informed audience but not necessarily a narrowly specialized one. Be prepared for questions and discussion following the presentation.

Each proposal must include

- a title and brief description indicating the purpose of the presentation suitable for publishing in the conference program
- a complete description of the presentation as you will give it, or an abstract of not more than 500 words
- a list of audio-visual equipment you will need
- your name, address, and phone number (home and school)

A committee composed of faculty of the *[institutions and units involved]* will select proposals for presentation at the conference.

Send proposals to *[conference coordinator, address]*. If you need additional information please call *[phone number]*.

Appendix C
Matrix for a proposal information sheet and evaluation form

Institution, conference title
Proposal information sheet and evaluation form

Information

Proposal submitted by:
 Proposal title:
 Proposal type:
 Institution:
 Department:
 Address and phones (home and office):
 Books recommended for display:
 Equipment and special needs (duplication, audio-visual, moveable chairs, lectern, blackboard, other):
 Time slot preferred: most inconvenient:
 Time slot assigned:

Evaluation

Circle: yes plus yes maybe no
 accepted rejected
 Comments:

Appendix D
Matrix for a conference-evaluation form.

Evaluation form
Conference title
Date

It would help us very much in gauging the success of this year's conference and in planning for next year if you would answer the following questions as fully as you can.

1. Affiliation (circle one): 4-year college 2-year college high school
 other (specify)
 What department?
 developmental remedial
2. Have you attended this conference before? No once more than once
 (how many times?)
3. Please rate the program as a whole for value and interest on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high):
 1 2 3 4 5
 Comments:
4. Please comment on the presentations you attended, identifying them by number or name:
5. Did you find the program adequate to your interests and needs?
 Comments:
6. Did you find the facilities and arrangements adequate?
 Comments:
7. We would appreciate any suggestions you care to offer for improving any aspect of the conference.