

Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society

ANNUAL MEETING GUIDELINES

The Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society holds its conferences every year, generally in the spring, covering the period from Wednesday evening through Saturday noon. Holidays are to be avoided.

A successful conference can be a memorable and enriching experience for all when undertaken with conscientious planning and attention to detail well in advance of the event.

Candidates for hosting a MAPS conference should begin their ground work two or more years in advance, attend at least one conference and consult with the MAPS officers about their intention to invite the annual meeting to their facility.

The MAPS Program Committee, chaired by the President-Elect, helps with conference planning and offers advice. They should be informed and consulted regularly during the conference planning. The MAPS Officers and Board are also eager to help.

The following guidelines are intended to help you formulate plans and carry out a successful Conference.

I. Basic Organization

- A. Early in the planning, find people to perform the various duties needed. Be sure you can depend on them.
- B. Set deadlines for tasks to be completed and be adamant about meeting them.
- C. Put in writing all tasks, schedules, people and phone numbers and give out copies to all that need to know this information.
- D. Be firm about making arrangements and agreements with hotels and caterers and obtain copies in writing.
- E. Copies of all contracts must be reviewed by the Program Committee prior to signing.
- F. Copies of all conference materials (including registration packet) will be reviewed by the Program Committee prior to printing.

II. Meeting Announcements

- A. The hosts for future conferences are announced when accepted by the Board and appear in the Conference section of the Web site.
- B. The President will announce the site and host of the next conference during the business meeting of the preceding conference. At that time, the host will be given an opportunity to discuss the plans for the upcoming conference and introduce their facility.
- C. Subsequent information about the conference will be posted on the Web site. Special featured events, speakers and announcements should be sent to the Program Committee for posting on the web.
- D. The conference pre-registration mailing to the membership should be received no later than the end of January. (See Pre-registration Mailing)

III. Accommodations-Conference Center/Hotel

- A. Accommodations should be as close to conference activities as possible.
- B. The host should reserve a block of rooms at least six months before the conference and arrange to hold enough rooms to accommodate at least 65% of the membership (approximately 80 rooms). Ask about the minimum number of room reservations required for price breaks on conference facilities (for example, a free hospitality suite may be provided for a certain number of rooms booked).
- C. Hotel room cutoff dates must be clearly identified in the pre-registration mailing and on the Web site.
- D. The host should examine rooms, parking, food and beverage services and banquet/meeting rooms carefully before selecting the hotel. There should be facilities for fast breakfast service in or nearby the hotel.
- E. Check the facilities for meeting and conference rooms to be sure they meet your requirements for seating capacity, A/V equipment and adaptability. Be aware that some hotels charge additional fees for these services; make sure to ask specifically if this is so.
- F. In determining time and space constraints, consider the possibility of concurrent sessions for delegate presentations. (NOTE: Vendor presentations shall not be scheduled concurrent with any others.)
- G. Most hotels/motels will handle the details of room reservations for you. Be sure to periodically monitor room reservations for potential price breaks.
- H. Work to complete a contract agreement as early as possible to lock in venue spaces for the conference.

IV. Meals

- A. The host should arrange for the Margaret Noble Banquet usually held on Friday evening of the conference.
- B. Group lunches may also be planned.
- C. The host should arrange morning and afternoon refreshment breaks. When possible, place refreshments near the vendor exhibit area.
- D. Be aware of hotel/restaurant requirements for final guaranteed counts on meals.
- E. Meal tickets will be issued at the time of registration. A head table(s) should be provided to seat 12 to 15.
- F. Provide a list of nearby restaurants for other mealtimes in the registration bags.

V. Transportation

The host is responsible only for members' transportation to official meeting functions.

- A. Unless otherwise indicated, members are responsible for all transportation to and from the hotel.
- B. In announcements, the host should advise members of all public and/or private transportation to the hotel from airports, train and bus stations.

VI. Publicity

Conference information will be available via the MAPS Web site, The Constellation, and the official pre-registration mailing. Notify editors of other planetarium association newsletters about the conference. Publications related to science teaching and museum news should also be considered for publicizing the conference.

VII. Financials

- A. The conference registration fee is initially established by the estimated conference budget divided by the estimated number of attendees (approximately 80). Adjustments can be made based on known sponsor support.
- B. Financial sponsorship from vendors is a major source of conference income.
- C. Consider other sources of funding such as local businesses, foundations, etc.
- D. Expenses
 - 1. Photocopy all receipts of conference supplies you purchase, and label items. Send originals to Treasurer for reimbursement.
 - 2. Meal/catering deposits and final payments will be paid by the MAPS Treasurer.
 - i. Meal fees may include gratuities and tax.
 - 3. Any cocktail hour preceding the Margaret Noble banquet can be on a cash bar basis unless sponsored.
- E. Revenues
 - 1. All checks should be made payable to MAPS.
 - 2. Checks may be sent to the Treasurer every couple of weeks during pre-registration.
 - 3. All monies are to be made accountable to the MAPS Treasurer before the end of the conference.
- F. Refunds
 - 1. Registration cancellations shall be refunded according to when they occur.
 - i. full refund for a cancellation 30 days prior to the conference
 - ii. full refund minus a \$25 handling fee for a cancellation less than 30 days prior to the conference.
- G. Invited speakers may be offered special financial considerations for participating. (See sec. Conference Agenda- Invited Speakers)
- H. Delegates should be encouraged to stay in the conference hotel for price break considerations. Fees for hotel rooms, meeting rooms and hospitality suites may be reduced or cancelled with a sufficient number of attendees. Be aware that if hotel minimum requirements are not met, some costs may increase.

VIII. Pre-Registration Mailing

- A. Pre-registration is necessary for planning logistics. To encourage members to pre-register, an additional late charge of \$25 will be added after a specified date.
- B. This mailing should go to all MAPS members and may also be sent to planetariums outside of our area, manufacturers, possible conference vendors and sponsors, and other interested parties.
- C. Member pre-registration packets are mailed in January.
 - 1. The conference mailing should state where and when the meeting will be held, necessary hotel or motel information, pre-registration information and fees, theme of the conference (if any), preliminary agenda, a call for papers and workshops, and tourist information.
 - 2. Use different colored paper for different types of registration forms.
 - 3. Date stamp pre-registration forms as you receive them and indicate if there are any payment issues.
 - 4. Registration forms should include a business address to aid in nametag production.
- D. Vendor pre-registration should be kept separate from member pre-registration and mailed in November.
 - 1. The MAPS Vendor Policy will be included in the Vendor registration packet.

2. The Vendor registration form needs to include the following wording: "By submitting this form, I acknowledge and accept the Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society Vendor Policy."
- E. All registration checks should be made payable to MAPS. Attach photocopies of checks to the registration forms as they arrive. You may send checks to the Treasurer every couple of weeks during pre-registration.
- F. All who register and/or participate in the conference must be current MAPS members. The registration form should have a section for new or lapsed members to pay dues.
- G. Registrations of members' guests should be based upon level of participation. Full participation requires full conference fee; Attendance at meals/events requiring transportation will be charged as appropriate.

IX. Conference Registration

- A. Have people available to organize and stuff registration packets prior to registration.
- B. A registration table or desk must be provided by the host for the first three days of the conference. A MAPS Board member or officer must be at the table at all times. The remaining personnel should be staff provided by the host and/or MAPS Board members.
 1. Major business will be carried out at the registration desk:
 - i. Confirm pre-registered attendees
 - ii. Register late comers and collect their fees
 - iii. Hand out nametags
 - a. Be sure name tags list the person's name and company or location.
 - b. Person's name shall be printed in at least 32 point font.
 - c. Clearly distinguish Host/Staff, Officers, New Members, and Invited Speakers with ribbons, stickers or prominent labels.
 - d. If grouping for events is necessary, clearly identify the individual groups.
 - iv. Hand out conference packet bags pre-stuffed with useful materials.
 - a. Tourist information
 - b. Area eateries for on-your-own dining
 - c. List of sponsors and levels
 - d. List of pre-registered attendees with full contact information
 - e. Conference program/schedule
 1. Design the program so that it is easy to use.
 2. Bind the schedule
 3. Consider including a reduced ready-reference version
 4. Include presentation abstracts in a separate section.
 - f. Note-taking paper and pen or pencil
 - g. Floor plans of venues and directions
 - h. Conference evaluation form
 - v. Hand out receipts
 - vi. Hand out meal tickets
 - vii. Sign up members for any optional activities
 - viii. Serve as a general information center

X. Conference Agenda

- A. The MAPS Business Meeting should be scheduled prior to the last day of the conference. There should be no other events scheduled simultaneously.
- B. Specific time should be designated for MAPS committees to meet. For example, breakfast meetings, "free time" meeting, or even a designated block of time in the official schedule. However, these meetings should not be concurrent with other conference activities such as vendor exhibit time.
- C. Receptions
 - 1. A welcome reception Wednesday evening with refreshments should be arranged if possible.
 - i. Schedule new member recognition/orientation sessions during the conference. An orientation can be set up prior to/part of the welcoming reception. Recognition should be made on other occasions, such as the banquet, business meeting, or other appropriate venues.
- D. Paper Sessions
 - 1. All paper proposals shall be reviewed by the Program Committee.
 - 2. Vendor presentations should be blocked together.
 - 3. Papers should be limited to 15 minutes, and time should be allotted within this for set up and questions from the audience.
 - 4. Prior to conference, notify all presenters of acceptance of presentation, designated time slot, and availability of requested equipment/facilities.
 - 5. A paper session moderator will be assigned by the MAPS officers to keep each session on schedule.
- E. Workshops
 - 1. Workshops that demonstrate and promote products/services for sale by the person(s) giving the workshop will be designated as Vendor Workshops and clearly delineated on the Workshop Proposal Form.
 - i. Only those registered as a vendor may submit a Vendor Workshop Proposal Form.
 - ii. Provide vendors with membership evaluations of their presentations.
 - 2. Workshops may be 45 minutes to an hour in length.
 - 3. Workshops may be scheduled concurrently with other workshops and/or paper sessions if necessary.
 - 4. Check with workshop presenter for any limitations in space/number of attendees and make appropriate accommodations.
- F. Panel discussions should be built around a single topic with the session lasting 45 minutes to an hour including audience participation. Three to six panel members and a moderator should be carefully chosen.
 - 1. Examples of a panel discussion:
 - i. members/vendors discussing how to include planetarium professionals in the consideration of facility installation/upgrades.
 - ii. New members/seasoned members interact on questions/philosophies of planetarium business
- G. Enrichment Sessions and Field Trips
 - 1. Tours of facilities of interest like NASA, nearby astronomy facilities, or museums are examples of enrichment sessions. They enhance a planetarian's over-all knowledge of the relationship of a planetarium to society. These sessions may be scheduled during the conference, or as pre/post visits.
 - 2. Local planetarium visits make excellent side trips. Arrange a session to see a show or public program if time permits.

H. Invited Speakers

1. Each conference can have up to two (2) invited speakers, the Margaret Noble Address speaker, and one additional speaker. Speakers should be selected for their ability to address an audience with something to say that is relevant to planetarians.
 - i. Invited speakers and one guest will be exempt from conference expenses including transportation, meals, lodging, registration fees, etc. Honorariums shall not exceed \$1000.
 - ii. If the conference schedule permits, additional speakers may be considered. Any additional honorariums and travel expenses for these speakers can be considered if funded by sponsors other than MAPS.
2. The Margaret Noble Address presenter should be a planetarium person. Consider speakers with enthusiasm, humor, and dynamic qualities. The Margaret Noble Address speaker shall be approved by the Board.
 - i. The Margaret Noble Address speaker shall be notified well in advance of the conference to adequately prepare the presentation.
 - ii. Prior to the introduction of the Margaret Noble Address speaker, the history behind the naming of the address will be read. The history is found in the MAPS Executive Handbook.

I. Vendors

1. Guidelines for vendor demonstrations, paper sessions, and workshops are listed in the MAPS Vendor Policy document.
2. A convenient exhibit area must be provided for vendors according to the MAPS Vendor Policy document. Vendors associated with the planetarium field can display products, exhibits and services. The conference schedule should be arranged so that there is ample time for the delegates to go through the exhibit area.
3. Every effort will be made to place all vendor exhibits at the same location.

J. Social Sessions

1. Taurus Incidents are held in hospitality suites in the conference hotel in the evenings after all official activities of the day.
2. Ensure that non-alcoholic alternatives are available at social sessions.
3. Other social sessions which allow planetarians to swap ideas, compare experiences, and socialize in less formal settings can include cash bars, cookouts, tours, etc.

K. Door Prize Give Away

1. The Program Committee is responsible for soliciting door prizes. Provide the Program Committee with a list of any potential local or locally known donors along with contact information.
2. Door prize give away should be held on the final day of the conference to encourage delegates to stay.
3. One door prize of a certificate covering the registration fee for the next MAPS conference will be given to a new member (only). A drawing to award it should be conducted at the banquet or other fully attended general session prior to that.
4. The Program Committee will send thank you notes to all door prize providers.

XI. Important Tips to Keep the Conference Running Smoothly

- A. KEEP THE MEETING PROGRESSING ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE.
- B. Have a person(s) to answer phones before and during the conference.
- C. Have people on hand to run errands, help with A/V needs. You will also need a car and driver to take equipment or handouts, etc. to conference center.

- D. Schedule a photographer in advance to take a group photo or other publicity photos early in the session if photos are to be distributed during the conference.
- E. Make audio or videotape recordings of guest speakers, panel sessions and other sessions to aid with production of Conference Proceedings if possible.
- F. Have signs posted to identify the locations of the registration table, venues, and sponsored events.
 - 1. Assign a person(s) to change and move signs as needed.
 - 2. Prepare signs to post at each event, e.g. a break session, identifying any vendor sponsor(s) for that event.
 - i. If a vendor or sponsor's contribution does not entirely cover the cost of a conference event, then signage will state "financial assistance for this (coffee break, etc.) provided by (vendor name)" instead of "sponsored by".
- G. Communication is critical. Provide a list of contact phone numbers of organizers, key functionaries and Board members to one another so that questions and problems can be addressed promptly. Also include emergency numbers and numbers of any CPR-trained staff that are present.

CONFERENCE DEADLINE CHECKLIST

- ___ Secure conference hotel by the end of June

- ___ Provide conference information for publication in Autumnal Equinox edition of Constellation by the first Friday in September

- ___ Arrange Board visit to conference hotel in October in collaboration with President Board to approve all contracts and speakers at this time

- ___ Distribute Vendor Invitation by the end of November

- ___ Distribute conference pre-registration packets by the end of January
Separate registration packets will be sent to vendors.

INSERT CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

- *Insert specific details here*

INSERT SAMPLE FORMS

- *Patty will provide*