

# **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.

The following guidelines are intended to help you formulate plans for a successful Conference.

### **I. Basic Organization**

- A. Early in the planning stage find people to perform the various duties needed. Be sure you can depend on them. The MAPS Program Committee exists to help you with conference planning and offer advice. They should be informed and consulted periodically through the time of the conference. The MAPS Officers and Board are also eager to help.
- 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 getting arrangements and agreements with hotels and caterers in writing.

### **II. Meeting Announcements**

The host should announce his plan to hold a meeting to the membership during the business meeting of the preceding meeting. The first conference mailing to the membership should be received no later than four months prior to the meeting. The second mailing should be sent not later than two months in advance, and may be addressed only to those who pre-registered after the first mailing.

The first 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. The first 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.

The second mailing should include a more thorough agenda, road maps and information phone numbers.

### **III. Accommodations—Conference Center/Hotel**

- A. Accommodations should be as close to conference activities as possible.
- B. 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. Half of the rooms will be for single occupancies. Many members will arrive the night before the conference begins.
- C. 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.

- D. Check the facilities for meeting and conference rooms to be sure they meet your requirements for seating capacity, A/V equipment and adaptability. Consider the possibility of concurrent sessions.
- E. Some hotels/motels will handle the details of room reservations for you. Be sure to establish a method of checking the number of those reserved when you need it.

#### **IV. Meals**

- A. The host should arrange for the Banquet usually held on the last official evening of the conference. A group lunch may also be planned. The host should also arrange morning coffee & Danish as well as afternoon coffee breaks.
- B. Arranged, group meals should be held in a private room. Make reservations five to six months ahead with rough numbers. Almost all of the registrants will attend the group meals. Guarantee your number a week or a few days before the conference, as many members register at the last minute.
- C. Contracts may be signed by the host. Deposits and final payments will be paid by the MAPS Treasurer. The fees will include gratuities and tax. Any cocktail hour preceding the dinner can be on a cash bar basis unless a sponsor can be found.
- D. Meal tickets may be issued at the time of registration to assure that no one sneaks in. A head table may be provided to seat 12 to 15.
- E. Provide a list of nearby restaurants for other mealtimes.

#### **V. Transportation**

The host is responsible only for members' transportation to official meeting functions. Unless otherwise indicated, members are responsible for all transportation to and from the hotel. The host should advise members of all public and/or private transportation to the hotel from airports, train and bus stations.

#### **VI. Publicity**

- A. The Constellation, MAPS's newsletter, is a direct line of communication with the membership. It is published four times a year at Equinoxes and Solstices. Send conference information to the Editor as early as possible. Notify editors of other planetarium association newsletters about your conference. Publications related to science teaching and museum news should also be considered when looking for sources of publicity.
- B. Your institution may have a PR person that can contact media for coverage of the conference. The media may be interested in an interview with conference delegates or guest speakers.

#### **VII. Funding**

- A. The conference fee is the basic source. Planning should go on well in advance to determine the necessary fee.

- B. Letters to sponsors may be accompanied by a regular conference mailing and/or exhibitor's information and should be mailed out four months prior to the conference. You may request a cash donation or a door prize. Some sponsors like to fund a specific event or supplies, like coffee breaks or conference portfolios for each attendee. The previous year's conference hosts should provide you with their list of sponsors. Brainstorm with your staff about new companies or people that could become sponsors. Check with the MAPS President for taboo companies, which should not be included in any conference activities.
- C. Fees from displayers/exhibitors (if you decide to have them) can be another source of conference income.
- D. Costs can be reduced by encouraging delegates to stay in the conference hotel. Fees for meeting rooms and hospitality suites may be reduced or canceled with a sufficient number of attendees.

### **VIII. Registration**

- A. Pre-registration is invaluable for planning logistics. To encourage members to pre-register, tack on a late charge after a specified date. Previous conference host should supply you with a sample form.
- B. All checks should be made payable to MAPS. Photocopy the checks in groups as they arrive.
- C. All who register and participate in the conference must be MAPS members. Those who did not pay their dues in January must pay the membership fee at registration or pre-registration.
- D. A registration table or desk must be provided by the host for the first two days of the conference. A MAPS Board member or officer must be at the table at all times. The remaining personnel may be MAPS Board or staff provided by the host.
- E. The major business to be carried out at the registration desk at the conference should be:
  - ◆ Confirm pre-registered attendees
  - ◆ Register late comers and collect their fees
  - ◆ Hand out conference packet
  - ◆ Hand out receipts
- F. Serve as a general information center
- G. All monies are to be made accountable to the MAPS Treasurer before the end of the conference.

### **IX. Conference Agenda**

- A. Business Meeting

The MAPS Business Meeting should be scheduled on the second day of the conference. There should be no other events scheduled simultaneously.

## B. Paper Sessions

1. As we approach a higher level of professionalism, we increase the need to screen papers. A papers committee should review all papers to be presented. This function will be assigned by the officers of MAPS. Products and services for sale should not be presented or endorsed in papers.
2. Papers should be limited to about 15 minutes, and time should be allotted within this for set up and questions from the audience.
3. A paper session moderator will be assigned by the MAPS officers to keep each session on time.

## C. Workshops

1. Workshops, if well planned, can allow participants to get involved in the presentation.
2. They may be 45 minutes to an hour in length.

## D. Panel Discussions

1. Panel discussions offer an opportunity for many viewpoints and can be entertaining and useful.
2. The discussions should be built around a single topic with the session lasting 45 minutes to an hour including audience participation. Panel members should be carefully chosen and the total amount of participants should number 3 - 6.

## E. Enrichment Sessions

1. Tours of facilities of interest like NASA, 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 or after the conference.
2. Local planetarium visits make excellent side trips. Arrange a session to see a show or public program.

## F. Invited Speakers

Speakers for banquets should be selected for their ability to address an audience with something to say that planetarians can relate to. The Margaret Noble Address presenter should be a planetarium person. Speakers with enthusiasm, humor, and dynamic qualities are a must for banquets. Well known, dignitaries and others of great merit can appear elsewhere during the conference. Transportation and other expenses should be considered when selecting guest speakers. Consult MAPS officers about your options.

## G. Exhibitors

A convenient display area must be provided if exhibitors will be invited. Exhibitors associated with the planetarium field can display products, exhibits and services. Schedules should be arranged so delegates can easily go through the display area. Fees are normally collected from exhibitors (or they can donate a door prize(s) of a particular worth in exchange for their space). Their space may be defined as a table or block of square feet. They should also be provided with chairs, electrical outlets and conference publicity. Some exhibitors will purchase adjacent blocks and some may want to rent video or other equipment from the conference center or local A/V company.

The exhibiting fee can be per day or for the entire conference. Some exhibitors will register as regular conference attendees and some will choose not to. A separate

registration form can be generated. The host may have each exhibiting company sign an agreement which could include a disclaimer on security of their property, time constraints and clean up, and fees.

#### H. Social Sessions

1. Taurus Incidents are held in hospitality suites in the conference hotel in the evenings. MAPS will sponsor these if no other sponsor is found.
2. Other social sessions can include cash bars, cookouts, tours, etc., and allow planetarians to swap ideas, compare experiences and socialize in a less formal setting.

#### I. Door Prize Give Away

1. Host is responsible for soliciting door prizes.
2. Door prize give away should be held on the final day of the conference to deter people from leaving early.
3. Make a list of all door prize winners and their prizes.

#### J. Tips to Keep the Conference Running Smoothly

1. Keep the meeting progressing according to schedule.
2. Make conference agenda booklet/schedule easy to use.
3. Have a person/s to answer phones before and during the conference.
4. Be sure name tags list the person's name and company or location.
5. 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.
6. Schedule a photographer to take a group photo or other publicity photos early in the session if photos are to be distributed during the conference.
7. Make audio or videotape recordings of guest speakers, panel sessions and other sessions to aid with production of Conference Proceedings if possible.
8. A person/s to organize and stuff registration packets. Don't forget a complete list of delegates attending the conference.
9. Pre-registration forms should include a business address to aid in nametag production. Use different colored paper for different types of registration forms. Stamp a date on each pre-registration form as you receive them in the mail. Also mark if they have paid correctly. You may send checks to Treasurer every couple of weeks during pre-registration.
10. Photocopy all receipts of conference supplies you purchase, and label items purchased on both. Send originals to Treasurer for reimbursement.
11. After the conference, give a list of all attendees and their fees to the Membership Chair so that their list may be updated. Make lists of supporters, etc. for next year's host.