



Australasian Association of Philosophy

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www.aap.org.au

Advice for AAP Conference Organisers July 2008

Organising an AAP Conference is both a rewarding and time-consuming activity. This document has been developed in order to provide a formal approach to conference organization, and to supplement the existing informal tradition whereby incoming conference organisers are provided with invaluable assistance by the previous year's conference organisers.

This document is in two parts:

- A. Requirements of conference organisers, including AAP Conference policies
- B. Helpful hints and tips from previous conference organisers

A) Requirements of conference organisers, including AAP Conference policies

1. Dates for the conference

The Conference is normally held during the common week in July- starting with the first Sunday in July and finishing on the following Friday. Conference announcements and the like are posted on aphil mailing list. Conference information and registration is conducted via a website set up by the host institution. The conference website should be set up by the January before the conference at the latest.

2. AAP Meetings held at the Conference

i) AGM: The annual AAP AGM is held at the conference. A room needs to be scheduled for 2 hours for approx 30-50 people. The timing of the meeting is left to conference organizers. However, the preferred time slot is directly after the last paper of the day, and before the conference dinner. If this is the case, please choose a location for the AGM that is close to the papers and the conference dinner. The AGM time and location should be printed on the conference timetable.

ii) AAP Council meets twice during the conference: on the Sunday the conference begins (between 2 and 6 pm) and later in the week, usually Wednesday or Thursday lunchtime. Rooms need to be booked for both meetings. The meetings usually comprise 10-12 people. Catering, sandwiches and tea/coffee, is appreciated for both meetings. The Association normally meets these catering costs on receipt of an invoice to the AAP Treasurer (<http://aap.org.au/contacts/officers.html>). If alternative billing arrangements are preferred, please contact the Treasurer.

Photocopying etc for these meetings is arranged prior to arriving at the conference. However, sometimes there are last minutes changes and additions. Access to a photocopying facility, in such circumstances, is appreciated.

3. Conference policies

i) Registration fees: Conference organisers set Registration fees. As a matter of convention conference organisers offer a subsidised registration to students and unwaged/retired. This is subsidised from staff/waged registration and is generally half the waged registration fee.

ii) AAP membership subsidy: The AAP collects an amount from each non-members registration fee - in recent years this has been in the order of \$25 waged / \$10 unwaged from each non-member. Conference organisers collect this on behalf of the AAP. The difference between members' and non-members' registrations is paid to the AAP by means of a cheque sent to the AAP Treasurer, at the organizers' convenience. The treasurer's details can be found at: <http://aap.org.au/contacts/officers.html>.

It is preferred to present this subsidy as a discount to members. Suggested wording for the Conference registration page is as follows:

“Registration fees include a \$25/\$10 (waged/unwaged) discount for AAP members. AAP membership is by subscription to the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*. To receive a discount on conference registration, join the Australasian Association of Philosophy by filling in the membership form at www.tandf.co.uk/journals/offer/rajp-so2.asp. You will then be entitled to register for the AAP conference as an AAP member. You will also receive many other member benefits, including a subscription to *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.”

In order to cross check the eligibility of registrants who seek the AAP membership subsidy, conference organisers are asked to provide the AAP's Executive Officer with a list of those registrants, preferably, prior to the commencement of the conference. The AAP web site provides information about membership at: <http://aap.org.au/membership/index.html>. Questions about membership can also be directed to the AAP's Executive Officer. Contact details are available at: <http://aap.org.au/contacts/index.html>.

iii) Postgraduate travel subsidies for conferences:

Conference organisers are to budget at least \$5,000 to subsidise student travel and accommodation. The availability of such a subsidy is to be announced by the organisers beforehand, and, bearing in mind the criterion of need, the funds are to be allocated as the organisers see fit. Should it be requested by the organisers, Council will provide in advance a float of \$5,000 to assist with the provision of this subsidy, with the float to be repaid by the organisers. (Postgraduates for this purpose are those enrolled in research postgraduate degrees in philosophy in Australasian universities.)

(Passed AAP AGM, Melbourne, 9th July 2008)

iv) AAP Conference profits:

If there is a profit from the conference, Council expects the conference organisers to allocate to the AAP any financial surplus from the conference, (i.e. the balance of funds remaining after all conference commitments have been met, including, e.g., ex gratia payments to volunteer assistants). Any profits will be spent by the AAP for the benefit of the profession.

(Passed AAP AGM, Melbourne, 9th July 2008)

v) Acknowledgement of traditional owners:

Council strongly recommends to conference organisers that an acknowledgment of traditional owners is made at the opening of the conference, and if appropriate, a welcome to country.

(Passed AAP AGM, Melbourne, 9th July 2008)

4. *Management of Papers*

i) Acceptance of papers: As far as the acceptance of papers goes, organisers set a deadline for submission and anyone who submits an abstract by the due date will have their paper accepted, all things being equal.

ii) The scheduling of papers is left up to conference organisers. The AAP suggests that you take the following points into consideration when organising the schedule:

- Try not to schedule too many parallel sessions so as not to split the potential audience into very small groups.
- Hold plenary sessions as the first session in the morning.
- Offer a choice of paper times. It is strongly encouraged that a choice of paper times is offered in order to increase attendance at student papers. A choice should be offered between long and short sessions (for example 80 and 55 minute sessions), which run contemporaneously (that is, the long papers at the same time as the short papers etc). In practice, well-known philosophers tend to request long sessions and students tend to request short sessions. This results in greater attendance at student papers, than would be achieved by a uniform model. Those concerned about possibly attracting a small audience should where possible opt for a short session, where competition with well-known speakers would probably be less. It is also suggested that conference organisers make participants aware of this during the paper submission process.

- Advise paper lengths which provide ample time for discussion. For example, an 80 min session would comprise a paper length between 40-50 minutes, leaving 30-40 minutes discussion and a 50 minute session would comprise a paper length between 20-25 minutes, leaving 15-20 minutes for discussion.

iii) Workshops on professional development and the like are offered at the Conference. One workshop, offered annually, is the Graduate Career Workshop. The workshop requires a double session. A medium to large room is required, the workshop usually attracts between 30 and 50 people. It is preferred that the workshop be scheduled in the afternoon so that participants can go to drinks and continue discussion. The event is organised by Mark Colyvan: mcolyvan AT mail.usyd.edu.au

iv) Chairing sessions:

- Conference organisers are asked to strongly encourage participants to sign up as chairs for papers and to ensure that all papers have a chair assigned to them.
- Conference organisers are also asked to remind chairs of papers that they finish their sessions on time. In this context, you might also consider advising participants that papers should last no longer than 2/3 of the session, to allow for adequate time for questions.

5. Annual events on the program:

i) Presidential address: The Conference opens with the Presidential address on the Sunday evening, presented by the outgoing President of the AAP. This address is followed by a welcoming drinks session at which some food is offered.

ii) Conference Dinner: The conference dinner is by convention scheduled on Wednesday or Thursday evening. There are speeches at the conference dinner by the AAP chair and others. Amongst other things the winners of the annual AAP Media Prize and AJP Best Paper Award are announced.

6. Provision of technology and back up.

i) Many speakers require some form of technology in the presentation of their papers, whether it be overhead or data projectors. In addition to providing these facilities, there needs to be someone competent on call to help sort problems with equipment. If speakers need to bring their own laptops, and not just memory sticks, they should be told this in advance. It is helpful if this information, and a request as to what technical facilities are required by each speaker, is included on the conference registration form.

For plenary sessions in large theatres, including the Presidential address, radio mikes, or else a number of standing or roving microphones should be provided. A microphone is required for speeches at the conference dinner.

ii) Conference participants will expect some form of email and web facility. This may be provided at the conference location or in nearby location, such as libraries or the like.

7. Provision of child-care and special needs registrants:

Organisers should give assistance, at least to the extent of information, to those requiring crèche facilities. There is a long-standing Association policy to attempt to cater for participants who are in any way disabled. The AAP strongly suggests that when the conference is advertised that organisers gather information on anyone who has special needs, which should be met once that person has registered.

8. Additional suggestions:

- i) If the conference is located far from a convenient airport, special transport should be considered.

- ii) It is highly desirable that there should be a bar conveniently available for people to go to after evening sessions. It helps to nominate a location. Similarly, farewell drinks after the last session are a good idea.

Of course other questions and matters will occur when organising such an event. Please feel free to contact the AAP's Executive Officer or a member of council with queries. Contact details are available at <http://aap.org.au/contacts/index.html>.

A) Helpful hints and tips from previous conference organisers

How to Survive Organizing an AAP Conference

Some reminiscences, war stories, and tips from Alan and Renée Hájek

The AAP conference at the ANU had some 270 participants, most of whom gave talks—the biggest in the AAP’s history, we were told. There were times when we felt the conferences are now reaching such a scale that the organizers might need some professional help. Failing that, do all you can to surround yourselves with competent, hard-working volunteers who are cool under pressure and who have many hours of time to donate!

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Let’s begin with the behemoth, the single most difficult aspect of the entire process.

The schedule

Scheduling the talks, while meeting all the constraints, was like trying to solve a Sudoku puzzle – except it was more like Monster Sudoku, and there was no solution that met all the constraints. They included:

- fitting talks into streams
- fitting talks into timeslots of the right length
- balancing topics, minimizing clashes between talks in the same areas
- minimizing clashes between members of the same department
- avoiding clashes of ‘big name’ speakers
- accommodating individual constraints (e.g. late arrival, early departure, baby-sitting)
- assigning rooms to accommodate audio/visual needs
- anticipating audience size when assigning rooms of different sizes

We had the combinatorial genius of Dave Chalmers on hand to provide major help, and still it was something of a nightmare. It’s crucial that the ‘tentative’ version that initially goes out be pretty much right. Ours was, and still there were various complaints. We revised it accordingly, and there were more complaints. (Particularly annoying were the ones of the form: “but I would have liked to see so-and-so’s paper, because I find that an interesting topic, and now I can’t”.) It was literally impossible to please everybody. Each change that you make has repercussions for many speakers—in our case, up to 16 of them, since we had 8 parallel sessions—as new clashes may arise. Each subsequent change has a domino effect.

We recommend:

- Request abstracts to be submitted no later than mid-May.
- Think twice about offering many streams.
- Consider the radical solution of having the speakers assign *themselves* to an open timetable, available at the web site. This gives them an incentive to sign up early, and it allows them to make hard judgment calls of prioritisation themselves. It would save you a ton of work, and maybe later recriminations as well!

- Don't publish the schedule in the collection of abstracts; copy the schedule separately. We were making changes to the schedule up to the last minute – indeed, even throughout the conference. (And still people complained...)
- Have a big master schedule posted in a prominent place at the conference headquarters, with up-to-date changes marked.

AAHPSSS

Our conference was complicated a little by its *de facto* serving also as the annual conference of the Australian Australasian Association for History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science (AAHPSSS). They had a separate stream on our schedule, and that seemed to work well. We don't know whether this will happen again, but you might like to think about liaising with them.

Web site and data base

You can save yourself a lot of work by setting up an informative web site early in the process. We were surprised how early we were getting requests about the web site – months before we had it up and running. Ours included: links for abstract submissions, electronic registration and payment options, accommodation options, a list of cafés with opening hours, parking suggestions, a map of the campus, things to do in Canberra, the schedule (once available), a link to the *AJP*, and information about getting wireless access.

We found it very helpful to have a complete data base, with the name of every participant, their payment status, their AAP membership status, gastronomic preferences, scheduling constraints, A/V needs, and so on.

Keynote speakers

We booked ours a year in advance.

Parking

We were surprised how some people considered it their birthright for us to organize parking privileges for them at the conference site. Needless to say, this lay well beyond our powers. You might give parking information on the conference web site.

Publishers

You will probably coordinate with the various publishers well ahead of time. They approached us first. We charged \$300 per table, and a further \$50 for a storage locker, for the week. You will need to have a place where their books can be delivered and stored. Moving all their boxes into place at the start of the conference was non-trivial; you should organize a team of burly porters.

The publishers offer money for the right to insert their flyers in the conference satchels. We recommend that you take it, and use it to buy decent-sized satchels. Ours were too small, and there was not enough room for their advertising. In the end, we displayed it on the registration desk. Most people didn't bother taking it (who could blame them?), and we ended up throwing most of it out.

Make sure the publishers are centrally located. Ideally, they would set up shop near Mission Control, by the registration desk and coffee. We didn't have room for them

there, and we had to make a lot of extra publicity for them so that they wouldn't feel neglected. They need a locked space to leave their stuff overnight.

Accommodation

We were frustrated by our negotiations with the student dormitories for on-campus accommodation—they were reluctant to commit to freeing their rooms for us well ahead of time, preferring to keep their options open as long as possible. So we approached many hotels instead, asking them to offer special conference rates, and to reserve large blocks of rooms for us. This required some diplomacy—they tended to want these blocks to be prepaid well in advance, but we had no credit card to foot the bill, even temporarily. We managed to get them to hold rooms for us until about a fortnight before the conference, and we repeatedly urged participants to book early. You will also want to find discount accommodation for students.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

Mission Control should be well signposted, and at all times someone should be in attendance. People will expect free coffee there. (We began by charging a nominal fee, but soon thought better of it.) It's good to have access to a phone – at least a mobile – so that people can call in with their emergencies, and you can try to resolve them on the spot. Be ready to advise people how to make last minute print-outs, photocopies, and transparencies. It's a good idea to have technically savvy people on hand to trouble-shoot audio/visual glitches. We did, and still there were problems.

Directions to all the lecture rooms should be clearly posted. Solicit volunteers to provide water jugs and clean glasses for each speaker before the talks, and to clean up rooms, straighten chairs afterwards.

Receptions

You will doubtless have an opening reception, and perhaps ones for the keynote speakers. We struggled to find a large enough space. You should get clearance for alcohol ahead of time.

Security

We also had security issues—some of us became impromptu bouncers when we realized that people with no conference affiliation were gate-crashing the opening party and entering a building that would normally have been locked at that time. Make sure that all lecture rooms will be open at the times that you need them. We didn't have any problems in that regard, but we heard horror stories of a conference a few years ago at which all the rooms were still locked when the sessions began on the first day. Special arrangements may need to be made for evening lectures.

Money

Participants who are members of AAP have a reduction of their registration fees. Many people who were not nonetheless thought that they were! Try to get as many people to register in advance, so that such disputes are resolved prior to desk. The AAP should provide you with an up-to-date list of members. You should be able to provide official

receipts with the relevant tax details. We were somewhat stymied because the ANU staff normally in charge of financial matters were on holiday during the break between semesters. You should be prepared for both tax and credit card payments. The people at the registration desk will end up with lots of money on them. You may want to think about security when walking around with it.

Activities

Our schedule was so jammed that we decided against taking an afternoon off for an excursion. We were planning to organize a trivia night, but we simply ran out of time and energy.

Conference dinner

Many people still wanted to sign up for the conference dinner at registration. You may want to give them until, say, the Tuesday to pay for the dinner, but then be prepared to close the gates firmly. Clarify with your chef what you mean by “vegetarian”—ours insisted on preparing fish dishes for some of our vegetarians. (We swear this is true!) Have a vegan option on the menu.

AFTERMATH

After the conference is over, you may think you’ve finished—but you haven’t! We had to chase up quite a few people for their payment. In some cases, despite repeated promises, it wasn’t forthcoming. In a couple of cases we simply gave up.

Add to this list!

We hope that future organizers will add to this list to make life easier for the next round of organizers.

We found organizing the AAP to be a lot of work, but we thought it was a good thing to have done—*once!*