

Thoughts on registration from previous ale committees:

St. Louis (1986) - Use a registration form that you can put directly into a binder that will serve as the registration book. Do not transfer all of the information off of the forms into a computer - this requires at least a double handling of a lot of material at a point when your time is at a premium. Design the form to allow you to tabulate from it the specific information you need (e.g. # of t-shirts and sizes) and to enter any at a later date (e.g. has this person paid? Arrived? etc.). Keep it simple or it will scare people into not filling it out at all; have your team fill out the form themselves before you mail it. If you would like to work up a directory of participants from your registration information, do so as a parallel operation, secondary to your registration efforts.

Fill out the buttons by hand as the registration forms arrive. Make sleeping arrangements for yourselves that allow you to be at the camp early and rested.

Madison (1987) - Registration: Changes - make sure that all changes, money collected and money disbursed are documented. Devise forms and train people to use them. If it is all in a computer, make sure that you have an operator with no other commitments for most of the ale! Deadline - set it far enough before the ale to ensure that you can buy-book number dependent things (buses, t-shirts, . . .). Mailing - get the registration out early so that people have a chance to reply. Ours was delayed and people don't take a deadline seriously if they don't get the mailing early. Teams need at least two weeks from receiving the mailing to reply. Surcharge - encourage people to act early by charging more for late payment or registration and refunding less for cancellation (no charge for direct replacements). \$5 would have been realistic for the 1987 ale to cover the expenses.

Lists of things for registration committee: site map; produce buttons; get and sell t-shirts; coordinate design; check in participants; set up bulletin boards and on-site communication (messages, official info); sleeping arrangements; lost and found; on-site amenities (crutches, first aid); registration paperwork; coordinate travel; designate and staff contact phone. (Beth's note: some of these are designated tasks for other committees for 1990).

Ann Arbor (1988) - It might be useful to know that 40% of the 1988 attendees were willing to pay extra for premium accommodations, 10% preferred to sleep in tents, and the rest seemed content with the one-room cabins. Warning, count beds yourself before signing a contract; our camp actually had 10% fewer beds than we were led to believe.

The idea of a late fee (which we used) was suggested by Oak Apple (1987) and they were right, it kept the number of late registrations very manageable (about 15 people). Asking the teams to total their own numbers and dollars did help. Mail early!! And give deadlines.

There were different views of what registration should be like at the campsite on Friday. One view saw registration as a small reception/party area with people getting out of their cars and checking-in. They would have been given their t-shirts, buttons, maps, cabin/parking directions and generally welcomed. The plan we went with had check-in set up like a drive-through window. As you drove in, we checked your name off a list and sent you off to your cabin with a map. I preferred the plan we used because it reduced bottlenecks and got you settled the fastest, and the dining hall was a good place to hand out t-shirts and buttons and start partying!

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Registration (continued):

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Colorado (1989) - One idea of ours that worked was to put the buttons on the t-shirts beforehand, and then bag them together by team. It means one person can do most of the registration at the camp. Furthermore, it is one more thing that can be done beforehand, rather than at the camp.

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Telephone Calls: if you give out a telephone number, give out the hours you can be reached. This avoids getting woken up at 7:00 a.m. Conversely, when someone calls, and wants an answer, get them to leave hours as well. It avoids playing telephone tag all the time.

Get copies of everything to everyone. When our registrar was delayed getting to camp, we had no one there. All of the housing and registration materials were with the registrar, so even when we got some hosts to the camp, they had no information.

Beth's thoughts on registration for 1990:

Make it so that it is easy in all ways - for teams filling in forms, for you in getting information from the forms to whomever needs it, and especially for how registration at the campsight is actually done. We want to strive to prevent attendees arriving and being greeted by a stressed out person!

I've attached copies of registration forms from previous years. The idea of just xeroxing the form and including it with a package of t-shirts, or whatever else, is a good one. It makes it very clear who's at fault if there are any mistakes. You get what you asked for.

We'll do a tour of the camp at some time in the future, so you can get an idea of the lay of the land. This will have bearing on how to set up registration at the camp. We might (given the site) want to do a drive-in window check-in and have t-shirts, buttons, etc., in the dining hall. This will make more sense when you've seen the site.

Registration Form and Surveys

We designed the registration form and surveys so that different

sections could be given to respective committees. For example, the flight information and dietary needs were on a page that could be cut in half and each section given to whichever committee needed the information. The survey had information for the workshops/mass dance committee in the top questions and information for the social committee in the bottom questions; thus, once again we could simply cut them in half and give the appropriate parts to the correct committees.

We would have liked to have known how many of the registrants were dancers, musicians, or support group members (non-team-members). This information is helpful in knowing whether a team needs help from another team in order to dance out. In addition, it would have been nice to know in advance whether a team that is short members had already arranged to borrow dancers/musicians from another team, and which one! SO . . . we would like to have had the following added to the registration form (in the Summary section):

dancers _____

musicians _____

Is there a particular person/team with whom you wish to tour (attempts will be made to meet requests, but we can't promise anything)? _____

What traditions do you dance? _____

We also thought afterwards that it would have been better to ask for return flight information with the registration form (we only asked for arrival information). Although we didn't have many problems in arranging rides, it would have been nice to be able to organize most of this in advance rather than during the ale.

I would suggest considering an earlier deadline for receiving fees - we had to pay our campsite fee in April, and when we gave a May 1 deadline, everything (except for maybe \$100) came in within a day or two of that deadline. Virtually no one sends the money ahead of the deadline, so don't expect it! It is a little scary to spend the entire start-up amount and be caught with absolutely no money available for a time. It would have been nice to have some money further ahead of the deadline we gave, so you might want to consider when you'll need to pay things to determine what the deadline should be. We had to pay in advance for the site, the buses, and half of the food expense. Late fees keep folks to deadlines, but allow others to still make last minute decisions.

General Suggestions

If I had to do it again, I would purchase an endorsement stamp. Most people send individual checks, not team checks, so there is a LOT of endorsing of checks to be done. Save yourself some work

and get a stamp - the cost is minimal.

I would also suggest that you advertise that no full refunds will be offered after a certain date. When you have to guarantee numbers to a caterer (and pay for them, whether or not they show, since the caterer has already bought the food), you may not be able to afford to offer refunds after a certain date. We had nine people who paid and didn't show. Most of those did not let us know in advance that they were not coming, and we found out during registration at the ale. At that point there was no way to change numbers for the caterer. Luckily, some additional folks registered at the ale, and we ended up with enough funds left over to give refunds, but it might not have been the case. Be prepared for this problem - it had not been mentioned in any previous ale comments, and I was surprised when it happened.

In general, my biggest suggestion is that you choose good committee chairs and let them do the work. Set up a structure for the organization, but don't get involved in the particulars. Certainly offer suggestions based on your knowledge and experience, but let their decisions ride. Just find out whether it has been taken care of, not how. This way there is at least one person who has an overview of the whole operation, but isn't having to take care of concrete tasks at the same time. I realize that this may not work well for everyone - each of us manages in his/her own style and has to work with those available. I was very lucky to have a large group so that I didn't have to work with anyone who has a tendency to not follow through. And this particular style of hands off management allowed me to be relaxed and to enjoy the ale. I think that is very important. Reading all the other entries in this massive book can get discouraging, since a common theme is "don't expect to enjoy yourself." I'd like all future ale czarinas to know that it is possible to have a good time while putting on an ale and that it has been done!! Good luck to all future hosts!

Please feel free to write or call me if you have any questions.

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spring a "15% tip" for the drivers on us just weeks before the Ale. Once again our University of Michigan link worked for us, as we discovered we could charter directly from the University and be well within our budget. This was the hardest budget item to nail down and keep nailed down.

Registration and Mailings

Our letters went out only slightly later than we planned. The first mailing gave us a preliminary head count (about 140) and an idea of workshop/mass dance preferences. I have already suggested to Colorado that future Ales require a deposit to be returned with the first acknowledgment. The deposit would function as additional seed money and force teams to think seriously about the Ale, particularly one far away. The idea of a late fee (which we used) was suggested by Oak Apple (1987) and they were right, it kept the number of late registrations very manageable (about 15 people). Asking the teams to total their own numbers and dollars did help. Mail early!!! And give deadlines.

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Registration

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As far as written materials go, plagiarize. This Ale is enough work without spending the time to come up with new forms or doing totally new letters. We modeled most of our written materials after Ann Arbor's. From year to year, Ales do not change a hell of a lot, so pick the letter(s) you like and rewrite them to your needs. And remember, the readership diminishes in inverse proportion to your verbosity. Inside jokes, stories, and lengthy explanations are fun to write, but no one will read them. In fact, irregardless of how short the letters are, no one will read them anyway, or rather only a few will.

Miscellaneous

Advice to

Committees

Airport Pickup

This was one of our great hassles and I doubt it will be as bad for most future Ales. We had people calling up to the night before to give flight information, which plays havoc with schedules. Furthermore, we had people who would claim that a teammate was coming in, who actually was not. Our coordinator recommended not listening to anyone but the Squire and the person flying, as he was putting pages out all day for people who were not coming, or had changed their flights. One further way of eliminating the problem is asking for names to match to flight numbers. Part of the problem arose, because people would send flights, but without saying who they were.

Flights came in from a half-hour early to 2 hours late. What this meant was that a few flights did not get met at the gate. Thus, in the future, it might be wise to state in the letter a landmark in the airport as a fallback point.