

# **Guidelines**

## **For**

### **Planning a Successful ICCP Conference**

#### **Background**

Every four years an international conference is convened to gather cloud physicists and their students for sharing ideas and results garnered from theoretical and observational studies. The International Commission on Clouds and Precipitation (ICCP) is charged with the oversight of this meeting by selecting the venue from proposals that are presented at the quadrennial meeting, conducting a site survey of the venue one or two years prior to the launch of the conference, and organization of the scientific program and review of submitted abstracts several months before the meeting begins.

It is the responsibility of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) to arrange for all of the logistics that are associated with the week-long meeting: meeting rooms + audiovisual equipment, oral session recording, meeting room assistants, poster areas, coffee breaks and lunches, a banquet, activities for accompanying spouses and children, visa assistance, lodging recommendations, etc.

There has never been a formalized guide to help those who prepare proposals for conference venues, or for those who are selected, to provide some instruction for the associated logistics. In order to better assist future planning by those who propose and those who conduct these meetings, to avoid some of the unfortunate maladies of past conferences and to highlight those aspects that were clear favorites by attendees, this guide has been assembled by the ICCP executive directors (Dr. Andrea Flossmann, president, Dr. Greg McFarquhar, vice-president, and Dr. Darrel Baumgardner, Secretary/treasurer) with invaluable contributions from Dr. Graciela Raga, head of the 2008 LOC for the Cancun, Mexico meeting, Dr. Heike Wex, head of the 2012 LOC for the Leipzig, Germany meeting, and Dr. Keith Bower, head of the 2016 LOC for the Manchester, United Kingdom meeting.

**NOTE: This guide is not only directed to LOCs, but also to the members of the ICCP commission whose responsibility it is to provide guidance to the LOC and to be actively engaged in those critical activities related to designing a successful scientific program, selecting dynamic invited speakers, reviewing the submitted abstracts in a timely fashion, and providing critical feedback to improve the general atmosphere of the conference. The segments of this guide that are directed to the commission **will be highlighted in red as they are not the responsibility of the LOC.****

## Overview

Prior to tabulating and summarizing, point by point, the salient components that are needed for the execution of a successful conference, some of the previous conveners have offered a number of useful observations based on their personal experiences. Their names will not be attached to specific comments, either here or further on, but sometimes the conference itself will be used as an example to highlight or demonstrate a particularly memorable feature of a meeting that future conveners should keep in mind.

First of all, how do we define a “successful” conference? A successful meeting is one from which the majority of attendees leave, carrying positive memories of:

- Interesting and new results presented in concise but captivating talks;
- Auditoriums that are well ventilated, have the screen easy to see by all attendees, good acoustics, easy to access and with exits located that minimize disturbing speakers or other attendees.
- Plentiful opportunity to interact with colleagues outside of the auditoriums.
- Memorable banquets with food and entertainment special to the venue
- Poster sessions that promote discussions throughout the week and that allow adequate space for poster viewing and interactions.

Previous conveners have these general recommendations to convey:

- Flexibility and preparedness are key factors. Murphy’s Law (<http://www.murphys-laws.com/murphy/murphy-true.html>), i.e. “If anything can go wrong, it will” has been experienced by every convener. Being prepared well in advance of the meeting commencement, then staying flexible throughout the conference, will help you adapt and respond.
- Hire a professional company, with a known good reputation, to handle as many of the details as possible. Doing so makes a huge difference in how well all aspects of the meeting go: web page design, construction and maintenance, audio-visual equipment, handling of the online payments of abstract and registration fees, catering, lodging, etc. Don’t try to do everything yourself. That being said, do not assume anything, i.e. keep a vigilant eye on the conference contractor to be sure that they have completed all tasks and provide the services that you agreed on, on time and within budget. **The lowest bidder is not always the best option.**
- If possible, solicit funds from the local government or private companies to help offset costs and to have the funds that are necessary for the arrangements before the registration fees become available.
- Every effort possible should be made to make the poster sessions attractive and accessible so that those presenting these posters feel that they are given equal exposure as those who give oral presentations.

## **Pre-Conference Activities**

### ***Announcing the conference***

Getting out early information about the conference is critical. Given the dozens of annual conferences that scientists and students can attend, which are related to their studies, as well as the availability (or limitation) of travel funds, it is essential that news of the ICCP conference is disseminated early and widely, **at least 18 months before the event**. The ICCP commission will send notices to the ICCP email list, post it on the ICCP website, and announce it on the ICCP Facebook page. It is the responsibility of the LOC, however, to find other methods to contact potential attendees. There are numerous publications such as those by the AGU, EGU and AMS, to name a few, that have specific announcements of such meetings; however, it is also essential that prior to the publication of these announcements, that there is a functional website for the conference. More on that below. It is prudent for the LOC to investigate what other conferences, those whose scientific content might be complementary to the ICCP and may already be scheduled, before selecting the date for the ICCP conference.

### ***Conference Website***

There is no hard and fast rule on what makes for a functional website. The first page should be simple with the basic information needed to inform the person browsing of the essential facts: Who, What, Where and When.

- Who is organizing this meeting The ICCP and the LOC (actual names of the organizers can be on this page but are normally linked to another page).
- What is the meeting about A very brief summary of topics.
- Where will it be held Not only the geographical location, but a few descriptive phrases that act to advertise its attractive features.
- When The dates need to be fixed as soon as possible, but definitely before publishing the web site. Important dates should also be clearly visible here, especially those related to the abstract submission, early registration and end of registration.

Having a professional company develop and maintain the website cannot be emphasized enough; however, a personal touch from the LOC that highlights those features that are special to the location should be considered. For example, the 2008 website had a unique Mayan design featuring the rain god, Tlaloc. All buttons that are displayed should function, even if they just go to a page that says it is under construction or waiting for more information. The main page should have tabs that display the following information with links to the pages with further detail:

- Venue Links to the description of the meeting facilities including the number of people accommodated, distance from lodging, features such as on-site coffee shop,

gift shop or other useful amenities (wi-fi, accessibility) and highlighting of local attractions.

- Abstract submission Links to the description of the submission process and any fees associated with the submission.
- Payment Links to the page where fees are paid for the abstracts and the registration. This must be thoroughly tested prior to any use by participants. Means of payment should be with credit cards, debit cards and maybe PayPal. Choosing the right contractor to handle the conference makes this aspect of the website easy. If not, it can be a nightmare. On-site registration has been possible in the past but will need to be approved by the commission.
- About the meeting Linked to the page that lists the topics that will be covered by this meeting.
- Visa requirements Linked to the page that provides detailed information about who is required to obtain a visa, the procedure for obtaining the visa, how much time in advance a visa should be applied for and the cost of the visa.
- Local Organizing committee Linked to the page with the names and backgrounds of the LOC. This is sometimes listed on the main page.
- Contact Us Linked to the page with information on how to obtain more information about the conference and to be put on a mailing list with future announcements about the meeting.
- Scientific program Linked to the page that will at first only list general topics but will be populated with more detail as abstracts are reviewed and accepted for oral and poster presentations.
- Sponsors and Exhibitors Linked to the page that describes exhibiting possibilities and costs. Sponsors and exhibitors should eventually have their names and logos posted on the first page. If a sponsor, such as the local university or city government is known at the time of the launch of the website, their name and logo should be on the principal page.
- Lodging options Linked to the page with a list of hotels and, when available, student housing. The lodging page will have price ranges, distance from the hotel to the conference and links to the hotel websites. If special arrangements have been made between the LOC and hotels for discounts, these should be included as well.
- Dining Options Linked to the page listing cafes and restaurants along with a description of the types of cuisine and price range.
- Getting there and getting about Linked to the page with information on how to get to the city of the conference by airplane, bus or train and, within the local area, how to get around using local public transportation.

- Guide to presentations Links to page that provides information for both oral and poster presenters, e.g. the types of media for uploads (online, memory sticks and CDs) and file types accepted (PDF, Powerpoint). In additions, tips for successful oral and poster presentations should be given, as well as the acceptable size of posters. If poster presenters can send their presentations to a local printer prior to the meeting, this should also be highlighted as it is quite convenient not to have to carry posters on long flights.

### ***Conference Facility***

The number of meeting rooms, their occupancy and the area needed for posters is somewhat dictated by the number of attendees. In general, the number and size of the meeting rooms, and the associated support personnel and equipment is listed below, based on experience from previous conferences.

- Primary auditorium An auditorium with a capacity of 600. Will be used for plenary sessions and during days with or without parallel sessions. Optimum features: inclined, multiple aisles to minimize the number of people you have to pass to reach a seat (end seats are always taken first), exits at the rear, multiple projection screens if the auditorium is wide. Accessible power outlets are a nice addition is possible. Well ventilated!! Not overly cool but definitely not too warm. Space in front for speaker and chairpersons.
- Secondary auditorium seating 300-600. Same features as principal auditorium.
- Tertiary auditorium Seating 200-400 with same features as principal auditorium.
- Locations Auditoriums should be close enough to one another for easy transition during parallel sessions.
- Audio/Visual Auditoriums require well tested audio systems with no feed-back, adjustable lighting that can be lowered during the presentations, strong projectors that reproduce the colors of slides correctly,
- Laser pointers High-powered green LED or laser pointers with backup batteries or additional pointers.
- Session timers Highly visible, easy to use timers. In 2008, a system was used that was a count-down timer that appeared at the bottom right corner of the presentation itself. The time remaining need to be clearly visible to the speaker and chairs. All the better if they also have an audio warning as some speakers tend to forget their time.
- Assistants Trained, technical assistants in the slide preparation room, auditoriums and at the registration desk are essential for keeping the meeting running smoothly. At the registration desk they help answer questions, direct attendees to auditoriums, bathrooms, etc. In the slide preparation room they help presenters with any issues regarding special needs like playing back animations. In the auditorium

they assist the chairpersons with initiating presentations and then they carry microphones to attendees asking questions after a presentation. Each auditorium needs at least one assistant who knows how to operate all of the lights, projector, microphones and computer for starting the presentations. There needs to be at least two mobile microphones carried by the assistants to take questions after the talks. These personnel can be students but they have to be trained prior to the meeting.

- Auxiliary meeting rooms A selection of meeting rooms that seat 20-50 people. The ICCP commission meets on Sunday afternoon before the conference and Wednesday evening during the conference. Requires seating for 25-40 people. Other groups often request space to hold small side meetings.
- A slide preparation/check ready room Should have at least six laptop/desktop computers and personnel to help speakers check their presentations.
- **Note on presentation uploading: There are a number of approaches to loading presentations on the auditorium computers. The most secure is if these computers are networked and the loading is done in the ready room by the technician and the presenter. The organization of the presentations should follow a plan that is easy to understand, e.g. presentations can be put into folders organized by day and by session. Last minute uploads should be discouraged.**
- Poster area or areas These locations and their floor space are critical as there are always more people with posters than with oral presentations. Optimum strategy is to provide enough space for poster viewing throughout the whole meeting and enough space in front of the posters for small groups (2-5, including presenter) to discuss the poster and still allow people to pass.
- Exhibition area Exhibitors will be provided with tables, chairs, access to electrical outlets and sometimes booths where they will have their material on display throughout the conference. This area should be within easy access of the auditoriums and poster areas with signage that shows where it is.
- Wifi Availability throughout the facility, although accessibility in the auditoriums is not a necessity. Usual practice is to have a special conference password.
- Session recording The LOC should consider this option. Given that Powerpoint already has this as a feature, it might be fairly easy to implement with technical assistants assigned for this purpose.
- Bathrooms There should be many and accessible. Cleanliness is a given.

### ***Dining amenities***

- Icebreaker This is traditionally offered on Sunday evening following registration. It can be conducted at the conference facility or at a different location that is

convenient to where participants are lodged. Usually includes finger-food and a variety of drinks, with and without alcohol. The quantity of alcoholic drinks that is provide gratis depends on the level of financial support provided and the cost of registration. Some conferences provided the first alcoholic drink gratis via some type of ticket, then attendees could buy additional. Venues are often historic sites such as city halls or museums.

- Coffee breaks One in the morning and one in the afternoon. Consists of coffee, tea and water, usually accompanied by pastry and fruit in the morning and fruit with cookies or cake in the afternoon. Their locations should be close to the auditoriums, multiple tables for easy and rapid access and seating areas or places to place the cups and plates nearby, if possible. Some conferences have had sufficient space to serve the coffee in the poster area to promote more attendance at the posters.
- Lunches Usually provided in a number of ways and included as part of the registration fee. In 2008, the lunches were a buffet served at the poster viewing area. This was well received. Box lunches are also a possibility. Whatever method is chosen, it is always important to have a variety of choices that encompass dietary preferences. If a cafeteria is used, it must be within easy walking distance and be able to provide for a large number of people efficiently.
- Breakfast Although not a usual offering, this was provided buffet style in 2008 since the meeting was in a hotel and this gave participants an extra chance to look at posters since breakfast and lunch were served in the poster area that also had sufficient seating.
- Banquet This is one of the highlights of the ICCP meetings and almost always reflects the local culture in some way through the type of food or entertainment. The banquet is traditionally held on Thursday evening. Careful planning is essential to make this event a success and one that participants will remember for years afterwards. The layout of the tables, the number of chairs per table and the accessibility to where the food is served (almost always buffet style) requires careful thought in order for the attendees to be able to hear what is being said during the awards ceremony, invited talk and any special performances related to the local culture. A seating area reserved for commission members and their partners is a usual feature. The possibility of reserving seats or tables has been a possibility in the past. There is usually a cash bar(s) available and a variety of drinks served at the table. Given the elevated level of noise due to many people talking, the higher the ceilings the better. Any entertainment should not last more than 30 minutes.
- ICCP meetings The ICCP commission usually meets on Sunday afternoon prior to registration then again on Wednesday evening. The LOC should be prepared to offer coffee/tea/water/juice and light snacks for the Sunday meeting and a buffet or similar dinner for the Wednesday meeting.

## ***Visas, Lodging, transportation and Excursions***

- Visas Given that many countries where conferences may be held will require visas from some attendees, it is the responsibility of the LOC to inform participants of visa requirements. This is best done through the website, but the LOC should have a person assigned to respond to questions. In addition, some attendees will require letters of invitation that the LOC is responsible for writing. **Attendees from some countries must prove that they have an accepted presentation at the meeting. This is one of the many reasons for requiring early abstract submission and rapid reviews.**
- Lodging The LOC researches the local lodging possibilities and posts these on the website. In some cases, hotels wishing to attract clients will offer special discounts for those attending the conference. The LOC needs to post names, price range, special discounts and distance from hotel to conference. In those cases when the conference is being held on a university campus, and student housing is available, this information is also posted on the website along with any requirements for occupancy. **Note: If hotels are offering discounts for conferences attendees, clarify any special caveats, e.g. minimum number of attendees registered at hotel to receive discount.**
- Transportation Information should be posted on the website about local transportation and how to get to the general area by aircraft, trains or buses. Some conferences have offered the attendees bus passes that allowed either free or discounted rides on the local buses or subways during the duration of the meeting.
- Excursions Many attendees will be accompanied by their partners or children. The LOC should work with local travel or tourist agencies to offer sight seeing options for these accompanying family members. Many participants enjoy traveling with their families on the weekend following the conference and having these agencies available is a useful side benefit. In 2008, the tourist agency had their table next to registration and offered a variety of options for tours of the local area around Cancun.

## ***Registration and Conference material***

- On-line registration Attendees register on-line prior to the meeting. The timing of this is important as it allows the LOC to better plan for the catering, auditorium size, banquet, etc.
- Fees Recent conferences have charged a fee to submit an abstract and another for registration. The abstract fee can be refunded as part of the registration fee. **This should be a discussion between the LOC and ICCP commission.** As an incentive to encourage attendees not to delay registering, an early registration discount can be offered. As part of their exhibition fees, sponsors and exhibitors will be give entrance to the meetings and banquet. **Deadline dates for abstract and registrations need to be posted on the website as early as possible.**

- Conference material On Sunday and throughout the meeting there should be tables where registrants pick up their lunch and banquet tickets, payment receipts, name tags and, as an option, a bag to put these in. Given the desire to promote environmental responsibility, the LOC may decide to provide recyclable bags, rather than the more traditional ones. The 2008 LOC provided backpacks with a colorful, Mexican style design that could carry laptops in addition to the conference literature. The 2012 LOC provided hemp bags that were recyclable. Recent conferences have not printed books of abstracts but have put them on CDs or memory sticks. Any last-minute changes to the program, i.e. additions or withdrawals, are usually provided in printed pages. Sponsors will sometimes pay to have their literature included with the conference material. Provision should be made to print new name tags on-site in the case of incorrect information on a participant's badge, that should have their name, affiliation, hometown and country.

### ***Abstracts, Abstract Reviews and Scientific Program***

- Abstracts The ICCP commission has to decide what information to provide conference attendees to guide the preparation of abstracts, specifically: 1) length, 2) format (provide a template), 3) content (graphics and references?) and 4) keywords selected from a predetermined list of topics. This information should be ready to put on the website no later than **9 months** prior to the meeting.
- Abstract submission The dates for submitting abstracts must be decided on by the commission but the start of submissions should be no later than **9 months** prior to the meeting and the deadline for ending abstract submission should be no later than **4 months** prior to the meeting. The commission should decide if late poster submissions will be permitted.
- Abstract registration The LOC/website must be able to process the documents and payments, accepting either Word or PDF submissions and assigning automatically (or by the LOC) a registration number to the abstract that the person submitting will use for all subsequent actions concerning the abstract. Multiple submissions by the same person should be allowed as long as the abstracts are different.
- Abstract reviews The purpose of the review process is twofold, to assess if the subject of the material fits within the conference and to select oral and poster presentation. Given the large number of abstracts that are submitted, the review process needs to be designed such that not only are the abstracts equally assigned to commission members, but there should be very clear guidelines that help the reviewer to select which abstract material would be most appropriate for oral presentation versus that which is better suited for a poster. **It is recommended that prior to the start of abstract submission, a sub-committee is formed to develop these guidelines.**
- Scientific Program The scientific program lays out the topics and schedules for oral and poster presentations. The number of oral presentations, including those that

are invited, will depend on how many oral sessions the commission decides to allow. This process has been largely ad hoc in the past. **It is recommended that a sub-committee is formed to expedite this process.**

- **Invited Speakers** Whether or not to have invited speakers is a topic that should be discussed by the commission. Presentations that are a review of the state of the science in various cloud physics areas of interest, particularly those that discuss the most current and outstanding results and highlight gaps in our knowledge, can be very effective depending on the person who is giving the talk. Speakers who focus only on their own work should be avoided.

### ***Awards***

- **Lifetime Achievement** The commission should select from a list of proposed scientists, who have made major contributions throughout their career, for receipt of an award commemorating their contributions at the conference dinner.
- **Poster awards** These awards are given for a number of different achievements and help highlight the poster sessions. In the past there has been a best student poster award and a best instrumentation award. Prizes have been monetary but the commission should consider other possible achievement awards and the type of prize.
- **Student Oral Presentation** When selecting oral presentations from the abstracts, preferential consideration should be given for students and young scientists. Awards have been given in the past for best student oral presentation.