



Vice President's Column MAC Meetings and Symposia Update

By Joshua Ranger, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

People always ask me, “Who are you, and why are you eating off my plate?!” but that, friends, is a subject for another day.

Other people ask me, “What is the workload for a cochair of the Fall Symposium or Annual Meeting?” This, though, is a great question for anyone thinking about hosting a MAC event.

The short answer is that it’s equivalent to planning a wedding: either a big, fat Midwest wedding to be officiated by a minor bishop and held at the biggest hall in town (the Annual Meeting), or a small destination wedding solemnized by your roommate who has been freshly ordained by the website of the Universal Life Church and held at the park around the corner (the Fall Symposium). Seriously, if you are cochairing a Local Arrangements Committee (LAC), there are a lot similarities. You have to worry about hotel spaces, reception venue, food, drink, parking, transportation, the invites, and yes, even bored children. If you are cochairing the Program Committee (PC), it’s like the ceremony, which includes securing over a hundred participants to read the liturgy. And, if you are planning a Fall Symposium, it’s all of that just on a smaller scale and with fewer second cousins involved. Yes, it’s a lot of work, but in the end, it’s incredibly rewarding (although it’s not as tax- or estate-friendly). OK, I won’t belabor this analogy any longer.

In all seriousness, our cochairs—whether serving on the Local Arrangements, Program, or Education Committees or organizing the Fall Symposium—take on the incredible responsibility of fulfilling MAC’s core function: providing engaging (and fun!) group learning opportunities. Of course, these individuals count on critical assistance from other committee members and our wonderful “wedding” planners at AMC (OK, I promise I’m really done now) to help them.

Although the LAC’s efforts begin two years in advance, the major portion of its work typically starts as the previous meeting ends. It remains steady through the summer and fall with a lot of calling, writing, coordinating, editing, deciding, cajoling, fund-raising, researching, contracting, and more through the duration of the year. Things get a bit more intense, amping up in January, and of course, it’s all hands on deck immediately before, during, and a bit after the meeting itself. For the PC, work intensifies

in the summer and fall and then again during the meeting and immediately after. Planning a Fall Symposium can be a bit front-loaded a year out and then gets more intense once registration starts.

Through it all, the importance of communication cannot be overstated. We have meetings, check-ins, and lengthy e-mail chains. Availability for quick back-and-forths is essential to making the process go smoothly. During the meetings themselves . . . well, let’s just say it’s good to remember some comfy shoes and your caffeine of choice.

So, yes, it is a lot of work, but what about the rewarding part? Well, I’m glad you asked. You’ll bring people—friends and colleagues—to your community for a chance to showcase your local collections, cultural gems, restaurants, and hang outs. You’ll develop new capacities in logistics, coordination, group work, and organizational leadership. You’ll get the satisfaction of knowing that during YOUR meeting something incredible happened: he just had something click, they were inspired to do something new, she learned about a new job, someone made a friend, a sale, a wonderful impression. Finally, you’ll give back to MAC and earn the gratitude of everyone who attended and benefited from the meetings.

I probably don’t need to add that all of that makes the work worthwhile. If you are ready for a great challenge, MAC needs you. Let us know if you want to take MAC to the altar (see there, I said I was done, but I wasn’t).

Finally, I want to add that, as my term as your vice president ends this May, this is my last column. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve MAC in this capacity and to work with so many wonderful meeting cochairs and their incredible committees. We’ve pulled off some really, really great meetings, and I look forward to attending those I’ve worked on that are yet to come. Hope you are, too. Here they are:

- 2020 Annual Meeting: Des Moines, Iowa, May 6–9, Des Moines Marriott Downtown
- 2020 Fall Symposium: Indianapolis, Indiana, October 9–10, Indiana State Library
- 2021 Annual Meeting: Madison, Wisconsin, April 13–April 18, Concourse Hotel