

## Planning an AISL Conference

The best way to introduce local librarians to an AISL conference is to get them to attend one a year or two years before you want to host. They will have the flavor and will see how it operates with the different school visits, workshops and speakers.

- Have at least three schools that are willing to help host before committing.
- Notify the AISL President in writing the year you want to host—be flexible as you might be planning two years out if another city also wants the same year—get written confirmation from the AISL President before confirming dates, hotel, & speakers.
  - Choose a chair and co-chair
  - Choose a finance officer—make sure she/he understands all conference funding will run through their school’s business office and NOT AISL.
- Choose a date—Mid to late April has been a good month for previous conferences.
- Review past conferences—keep past registration and conference packets
  - Don’t be shy—ask previous planners for copies of folders, copy of budget, committee wiki access.
  - Plan substance
    - Look at workshops to best maximize professional development that will sell to administrators.
    - Big name speaker can be a draw – but also costly.
  - Build in conversation times, especially after special presentations to allow reflection and further exploration of presentation(s).
  - Allow for flexibility in schedule with optional workshops and open forums for “flavor of the month” discussions.
  - Build in time for unplanned issues: traffic, wayward busses, lost people.
- Don’t forget to show flavor of city.
- Choose a hotel—try selecting a hotel that is close to some of the schools or venues featured at your conference.
  - Look for a hotel that has a suitable hospitality suite that can accommodate the group.
  - Hotel cost is a factor. Keep in mind the national domestic per diem rates <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>—this will help in negotiating with hotel, especially during tight financial times.
    - Block (guarantee) a small group of rooms- 35-50 with the option of opening more as needed –be prepared to give a school credit card for guarantee or provide other arrangements.
- Decide on venue for Skip Anthony Banquet
  - Look at sites that cater banquets.
  - Look at schools.

- Be aware conference hotel might be the most costly – compare before booking—ask about service fees.
- If possible prepare a “Save the Date” brochure, dvd: something catchy to pass out at conference preceding yours.
- Set up a preliminary budget
  - The Board has approved \$5,000 seed money for the conference, plus \$50.00 per registrant.
    - The conference is not expected to make money—but break even.
      - If any funds are left over- should be turned back to the AISL Treasurer for future conferences use.
    - Try to keep registration between \$275 – 325 for affordability
  - Speaker(s) cost
    - Keynote (not a requirement; can have several smaller-name speakers or local programs instead)
    - Skip Anthony
  - Venues cost
  - Transportation
    - Plan on 2 buses for an average group of 90-100 attendees
      - If open to local one day trippers—look at additional transportation costs and options.
  - Meals (typical cost includes 2 lunches, 1 or 2 breakfasts, and Skip Anthony Banquet; ask host schools to subsidize meal costs)
  - Hospitality food, wine and soft drinks
  - Gift bags
  - Registration packets
  - Breakfast or dinner with next year’s planning committee
- Vendors/Underwriters
  - Assign one person to work with vendors
  - Contact vendors 8-12 mos. prior to conference.
    - Use vendor reps and recommendations from local schools.
      - Early commitment gives improved chance of lunch or dinner sponsorship.
        - Ask for payment in the Fall to help with deposit expenses.
        - Limit vendor presentations- ie: half breakfast or lunch time—allow for conversations after presentations.
- Create a Wiki or use Googledocs to foster communication among host group.
- Plan to launch the website early September with dates, registration fee, & hotel site.
  - The more information about special speakers and workshops the better for professional development approval.
    - Offer Early bird registration incentives to bring numbers in early.

- Set the registration cut-off 1 month prior to conference
    - You can always extend registration if you're not full.
  - Consider a local registration fee for one day attendance.
  - Include vendor sponsors on website.
- Contact AISL Treasurer concerning membership payment with registration and or process to verify membership.
  - Note: all attendees must be current members of AISL and have renewed their membership prior to or while registering for the conference.
- Talk to others that have participated in planning—All Board members have been part of planning one of the previous conferences.
- Contact previous conference planners for suggestions and guidance.

## **Nitty Gritty Details to Help**

Possible Steering Committee positions (these can be doubled up)

1. Chair
  - a. Co-chair (assist with vendors and finding underwriting)
2. Finance
3. Registrar
4. School visits coordinator
  - a. Local sights
5. Website and Promotion
6. Transportation
7. Food (includes lunches, banquet and possible dine-around)
  - a. Always include vegetarian options with meals
8. Door Prizes
9. Photographer
10. Swag bags: contact local and national vendors
11. Skip Anthony Banquet table decorations
12. Hospitality Suite Hostess

## **One year out**

- Have in place: Keynote speaker, Skip Anthony Speaker and workshops
  - Use Survey Monkey for workshop suggestions
- Create a logo for event
- Book hotel
  - Book Hospitality Suite
    - Double check food and drink policy in hospitality suite—some hotels allow outside food/drink while others will not—get it in writing
    - Prepare to provide own glasses/paper products to keep costs down
- Brainstorm possible vendors—it's better to have too many than not enough—some will return each year—some will not—Vendors with whom you have personal relationships are good bets for larger funding
  - Consider offering a mini vendor fair during conference
- Have a promotional brochure/powerpoint/dvd to show at conference prior to yours

## **6-7 months out**

- Finalize preliminary budget
  - Set registration fee
- Launch website w/ registration, workshops and speakers info
- Book major transportation
- Drive bus route to time for schedule during time of day will be traveling

- Have speakers, workshops and meal details ready for registration form
- Prepare to launch registration during October/November
- Request seed money from AISL Treasurer
- Begin to remind large vendors of financial commitment
  - Offer ½ lunch sponsorships or full lunch with vendor presentation
- Ask host schools to provide brochure or information sheet about their library
  - Some may need time to create one—all schools have school fact sheets—turn this into a **library fact sheet** with school info secondary

### **1 month out**

- Close registration
- Confirm speakers media needs
  - Send information about registration numbers, schedule, parking to speakers
- Confirm host schools
  - Assign rooms depending on group size workshop, media needs etc.
  - Collect library fact sheet to include in registration packet
- Send vendors information about set-up for “Vendor Time,” registration numbers, parking, set-up time, breakdown time
- Finalize numbers for meals—cut checks for payments
  - Be aware of meal add-ons for late registrations—most food vendors can adapt up to 3 days prior to event.
- Confirm local venues—purchase tickets
- Schedule Bus hosts
- Order flowers/table decorations for Skip Anthony Banquet
- Purchase snacks/wine/soft drinks for Hospitality Suite
  - Find staffing and set hours for suite
- Stay flexible -- timely mini-workshops might be added to address current issues

### **1-2 weeks out**

#### **Breath—**

- Pay as much upfront to reduce multiple checks at one time with your school business office
- Notify host schools for visits and workshops
- Confirm Banquet details
  - Confirm table decorations
- Confirm Transportation – send itinerary to bus company
  - Prepare driving directions sheet to all schools for bus hostesses
    - Include script of interesting facts along way to different schools and/or assign bus captains who are familiar with the area and like to talk!
- Prepare registration packets to include:
  - Nametag
  - Detailed schedule of entire conference

- Reminders of workshop sign-ups
    - Meal requests
  - Alpha list of attendees by state & school
  - Alpha list of attendees with email and school
  - Vendor Recognition sheet
  - Any last minute workshop add-ons or changes flyer
- Plan a stuffing party
  - Stuff swag bags and registration folders
    - Suggested adds: info about local restaurants, shopping, optional activities, local map
- Expect one or two latecomers a week before or at least the plea--- have a policy in place
- Set-up clean up crew for Hospitality Suite
- Verify hotel charges for incidentals—rooms for speakers, equipment, etc.
- Confirm Registration work crew- allow for late arrivals
- Create and distribute list of cell phones numbers of chair, co-chair, registrar, finance, bus captains—to all planning committee members—Just in Case

### **Week of Conference**

- **Keep Breathing**
- Keep to the schedule, smile and enjoy showing off your city and schools

**Remember: Each conference will have its own flavor**

**Revised: 5/11**