

Hubert Heinen's Succinct Suggestions for Session Chairs and Secretaries

The following suggestions were my recommendations to the Executive Council of the SCMLA, and so are phrased in terms specific to the SCMLA. Yet *mutatis mutandis*, they apply to any conference.

1. When you are organizing the panel, make sure that the speakers you have chosen are current members of SCMLA, or the panel will not be accepted.
2. Ascertain as early as possible whether your speakers plan to use audio-visual materials, and consult with them about what their specific needs will be. If the speakers plan to use slides or other media, make sure that they arrange to check the adequacy of the projector(s) available and to preview arrangements well in advance of their presentation.
Suggest that they have paper handouts as backups.
Note that equipment costs money to rent, and so many conferences cap the number of setups that will be rented for any one meeting --get your requests in on time.
3. Urge speakers who have quotes and/or references to secondary literature to make all of these available to the audience through hand-outs or projections. The specific sections of passages to be discussed should be highlighted; if there are several quotes, they should be presented in the same order as they are discussed; in addition, there should be some clear means of making reference to them. (Quotes should be neatly and legibly reproduced, preferably retyped or word-processed.) Translations of quotations in languages other than English may make your presentation more accessible to "cross-over" members of the audience.
4. Make the time allowed for talks clear to the speakers well in advance of the session, preferably when accepting a paper. Hold speakers to the time allotted (see point 5).
5. If there are three speakers in a session, each speaker should have no more than thirty minutes including discussion. If four, there would be twenty-two minutes including discussion. If a speaker exceeds his or her twenty or sixteen minutes for presenting a paper, the excess should be deducted from time allowed for discussion. Give a warning. However, in no case should a speaker be allowed to exceed the total time allotted (not even to "read concluding remarks").
6. Unless a session presents two or more papers on very closely related topics, the discussion of each should always follow the respective paper. If, however, the session has been organized around a coherent topic and the papers appear to address that topic coherently, it is often best to hold questions until the end.
7. Keep the business meeting as brief as possible; if it seems likely that the last speaker will be a candidate for secretary, try to schedule the business meeting after she or he speaks.