Attachment 970821c
To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes
(from the Meeting of 21 August 1997)

The following message was sent to the "board bounce" email address. Since it was offered as input to the board, I felt it would be most appropriate to pass it along as an attachment to the minutes. —falh

From: netmouse@summit1.com (Anne K. Gay)
Subject: The Future of Minicon
Date: Wed, 23 Jul 1997 09:06:39 -0500

Greetings. I've been reading the Minicon-L for a few months now and thought I'd make a quick comment:

I attended Minicon 29 and Minicon 32. The main difference between them insofar as panel discussions seemed to be that in 29 the panelists were interested and competent to stand forth on their subject, while in 32 the panelists were all delivered of the right name plates for the table (and on time!)

Basically, this is just one indication to me that on the great rolling, billowy mechanical dragon that is Minicon, the caretakers have gotten more concerned with keeping the gears turning than with the great beauty and majesty of it all.

Discussion on the board has indicated that this is an issue of number and character of attendees, but I would suggest (and strongly) that unless we focus more on the beauty and majesty of it all, the number of attendees may certainly fall but doubtful the character improve.

Therefore, my suggestions are these:

a) Publish a schedule in advance. This was done for 29, it can be done again.

b) Confirm registration. People get VERY ansy when they've gotten no confirmation that their company is expected or their check received. Also, people who've forgotten they registered won't come. (All confirmations sent, so far as have been reported to me, arrived the day of, or after the day of, the con.) And even those who come will already be concerned for the future and management of their dear old Con.

c) Procure able and interested panelists, none of them drunk. I couldn't believe the disgust I heard, from those who recommended the con to me in the first place, on hearing people announce to the room that they had in fact not expected to be on this panel, having replied to Programming that they were unqualified. Then there was another where the whole panel was drunk.

I was also surprised at the response of my fellow panelist when I asked him how he got on the panel—"they asked me and I didn't say no"—not that he wasn't qualified, he was, indeed so, but I was startled to find he couldn't recall the topic and wonder if our panels might not be improved if the person who thought them up were to be informed of who's on it and given the chance therefore to contact them beforehand and get them thinking about the subject and perhaps the plan for the discussion. I mean, I've seen panels which improvised very well, but I've also seen ones which didn't or were carried by one clever or charismatic person only.

d) Get qualified people to volunteer in positions which take advantage of their skills and energy. Provide a good guide to volunteering at Minicon, motivate volunteers on the basis of being involved and meeting the old cadre (including GOHs)—and not on prizes.

I'm working on one of these for the web, but I need more input. I sent email to Theresa, but got no response. If you could move this forward, I'd appreciate it.

And finally (also along the thought paths of Minicon-L), relax. Post silly rules and suggestions all over the halls. Invite people to treat Minicon as their responsibility too. I hereby offer to lead a panel discussion:

"Minicon: Utopia or Dystopia?"

If there's anything else I can do, let me know.

Yours truly,

—Anne K. Gay
netmouse@summit1.com
netmouse@cyberspace.org
www.summit1.com/netmouse