Attachment 970918a To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes "Re: Not-A-ReinCONation"

At 3:50 AM 9/6/97, Sharon Kahn wrote:

<Exchange between Sean and Neil deleted in the interest of conserving a few electrons and a bit of scrolling on what is sure to be a long, chatty message>

>Yes, let's keep our eye on the ball here. One reason I keep reading
>this list is looking for "new blood" (or, to put it another way, new
>friends). Guess what—an opportunity to meet in person is about to
>present itself!
>
>Every year for, oh, about 20 years (?) Minnstf has been sponsoring
>not one but two conventions—one in the spring (you've heard of
>that one) and one in the fall. The fall conventions have been a
>varied lot, but they're small and friendly. For the past 4 or 5 years,
>the fall convention has been called Reinconation, and has had as its
>theme the idea of reviving the best parts of what Minicon used to be
>when it was smaller. This year, the committee sort of ran out of gas
>when faced with finding a hotel, and decided to have a series of
>parties instead of a real convention. It is called, predictably enough,
>Not-A-Reinconation.
>
>It's not invitational, but if an invitation makes it less scary, let me
>issue one. The Saturday night party is at my house, and I would like
>to invite you, Sean, and any of those friends that you mentioned that
>you can drag along. I'll also be inviting people from work that I
>think would fit in, and the couple that lives two houses down from
>me, and other people that occur to me, so you won't be the only
>person there who doesn't "know everybody."
>
>My NAR party is on Saturday, October 25, at Dreampark—
>4002 Pillsbury Avenue South, Minneapolis.
>
>Maybe a member of the Concom would like to publish additional
>info about NAR?

Sure. You bet. Please be advised I'm doing this from memory. David Emerson is preparing a flyer that we expect will go out with the October Einblatt.

The flyer will also go out to every member of ReinCONations past that Steve Glennon can dig out of records from the last couple of years. Those addresses may leave a little something to be desired.

I will also have a supply of flyers, so if you're pretty sure you won't get one, let me know and I'll see we send one your way, either by doing it myself or with the help of a friendly volunteer.

Here's the schedule as I remember it:

Friday night, October 24—Welcoming party at David Emerson's and Barb Jensen's. Dancing in the attic. Starting time to be announced.

Saturday noonish, October 25—Sushi expedition to the place in St. Paul that was the traditional 4th Street Monday sushi place. Meet there, I believe.

Saturday, 1:30 pm or whenever you're done with sushi—*Idea #11* collation at Toad Hall. One or more driving tours of fanhistorical sites that aren't there any more will depart as a van or other vehicle fills.

Again, an invitation isn't needed for any of Not-A-ReinCONation, but if you're more comfortable knowing you've received one, please consider this my invitation to all Minicon-L subscribers to come to the collation party at Toad Hall: 3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis. 825-3558. But please do let us know you're coming if you can.

However, if you'd rather surprise us with your presence—HEY, BEN! HEY, PATRICK!—that would be welcome, too. Several out-of-towners could save me the cost of mailing the fanzine in the process…. HEY, PATRICK! Bring Teresa, too. Jon Singer and Martha Beck are still welcome, too, of course.

Saturday night—Party at Dreampark, as Sharon mentioned. I forget the precise starting time, but it's something like 7 or 7:30.

Also, we don't know how many people will be at Not-A-ReinCONation. If it ends up being larger than Dreampark can hold, we'll keep an overflow party going on at Toad Hall until things get small enough to congregate in one place. There's no registration fee for Not-A-ReinCONation—there will be a contribution jar at each household where you can contribute cash to defray the hosts' expenses if you don't bring party munchies to share, which is the fannish norm. But an RSVP is requested—we do need to know how many people plan to participate in some or all of the weekend's events. We may need to add another party household or two to the daily schedule….

Sunday, 11 am—Dim sum expedition to the Peking Garden (or whatever the Chinese restaurant at the junction of University and Washington Avenues is named). Again, meet at the restaurant. Break into table-sized groups.

Sunday afternoon—Plans need to be confirmed before I'm comfortable announcing them. We've got a Plan A that we've already gotten some support of but still need to verify, and we've got a Plan B in case the first doesn't work out. Another driving tour or two will depart from whatever site we end up at.

Sunday evening—No dead dog party is being formally scheduled, but I think we're rather hoping one will spontaneously form during the course of the weekend.

Other tidbits: Some fans coming in from out-of-town will be staying at Minneapolis fannish households. Steve Glennon is compiling a short list of convenient and/or indulgent commercial accommodations for fans wanting or needing them. (Hey, if I weren't hosting one of the parties, I'd be interested in checking into a couple of these places for the weekend! HEY, JOEL! Willow could come visit Apache, right? Oh, well…another time.)

A closing caveat—I'm rather swamped right now, so while I welcome questions about ReinCONation, I may be slow about responding to them and I may also forward them on to other committee members to increase the probability of a coherent reply.

Hope to see you at Not-A-ReinCONation!

Geri [HEY, KAREN! Are you sure you and Bruce have to go to Ditto and Octocon? We'll *miss* you. How about if you two throw a Not-A-ReinCONation room party in Cincinnati, thereby casting the net of the event even wider? Tell Bowers since he couldn't come to Minneapolis, we wanted to bring Minneapolis to him.]

HEY, EVERYBODY! Please don't interpret my liberal use of individual names to mean I only want to see people I know. Heck, one of the greatest delights of Not-A-D-Con back in 1986 was that while I used the Wimpy Zone Fan Fund to introduce Patrick and Teresa to Minneapolis fandom du jour, the success of the fund enabled Martha Beck to be introduced to me. I really hope 11 years from now we'll all be able to trace some keen, treasured friendships to their roots at Not-A-ReinCONation as well as some warm, zany memories.

Geri Sullivan   gfs@toad-hall.com
==================================
*Busted my TAFF cherry by nominating
Ulrika O'Brien and proud of it.*

Attachment 970918b To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes
"Some thoughts on Minicon—the various proposals" and "Re: Paths & Outcomes"

*Note: Some of the following four messages were sent by Ben Yalow to the Minicon-L discussion list, others were sent to Geri Sullivan. All were printed out by Geri Sullivan, brought to the Board Meeting of 18 September 1997, handed out, and referred to during that meeting. Emphasis and **emphasis** is by Geri. —falh*

From: Ben Yalow <ybmcu@PANIX.COM>
Date: Mon, 08 Sep 1997 14:24:15 -0400
Subject: Some thoughts on Minicon—the various proposals
To: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Cc: raymond@macalstr.edu (Victor J. Raymond)

In general, I've tried not to comment in detail on how I think Minicon should be run. After all, it's been a number of years since I've been in Minneapolis, instead of England, on Easter weekend. This means, of course, that I only have second-hand reports, rather than my own impressions, on what a modern Minicon is like.

However, I've read all of the stuff on Minicon-L, and the complete GoT proposal from the web page. So I think I'm familiar with the general proposals, and would like to comment a bit on how I think they will work out.

One thing that seems to be pretty clear is that there is a concensus that Minicon, as it currently exists, is broken. The recent financial results, or the program problems, or any one of a number of other issues are clear signs of a convention that has significant problems. And my discussions with other Minicon attendees, both posters to this list, and others, seem to confirm that opinion.

From my discussions with Victor at Boskone, and with other members of the current Exec in the phone call mailed to this list a number of months ago, I think it's clear that the current Exec also believes it's broken. And I believe that they have steps planned which should, given time, be able to slowly fix some of the problems with Minicon.

*As I see it, Minicon is not making most efficient use of the resources available to it—there is a pool of conrunning talent that is not able to be deployed in its optimum configuration, due to a number of management issues. And **these are being significantly addressed in the plans of the current Exec, and in their proposals for upcoming Minicons. I think that these are likely to help, and should certainly be implemented, no matter what the decisions about the long-term are.** I believe that good management principles—delegation, collective responsibility, and open communication—help a con, no matter whether it's 400 people or 4000.*

However, in looking at Minicon, I keep seeing echoes of Boskone, just before the meltdown. Each year, we worked at developing better management systems to let us handle the crowds that were showing up, many of whom had little connection to the fandom that the committee was interested in. In the end, however, we had a the equivalent of a supersaturated solution—everything stayed dissolved and invisible, but when the wrong minor thing happened, then everything broke down at once. And it took Boskone years to recover from that, and we still are suffering some losses. But, overall, we're much better with a thousand person Boskone, and an Arisia, than we were with a 4000 person Boskone. We have the management talent to put on the sort of Boskone we want to attend, and one which makes enough money to help support NESFA, without killing committee members in the way that the larger Boskones were. And even though they make less money (financial management has always been a

relative strong point of NESFA—the membership is so involved with everything that it's very unlikely that we could have the sort of financial difficulties that Minicon did without alarms ringing everyplace), that's OK—in fact, it's far more predictable a cash stream, so we can plan appropriately.

In many respects, Victor's proposal #1 most closely resembles what NESFA did to deal with its problems with the huge Boskones. It makes no fundamental changes, but improves the execution. And I believe that it's likely that it will succeed at that mission.

The question, however, is whether that will be sufficient to fix Minicon. And that's an unanswerable question. I think it will— but only if nothing happens to cause everything to collapse suddenly. *And it will take time—there needs to be a committment to keep applying proposal #1 not for another year, but for the rest of the decade, and well beyond that. So, **unless people are prepared to commit for another half dozen years to continue to work on Minicon, in rather difficult jobs, then the proposal is likely to fail.***

And that's the risk in proposal #1—it takes a long-term committment, of major people resources, for a long time, and enough luck so that nothing goes wrong during that time frame, since the resources to handle the problem won't be there. If MnStf feels that this is a wise risk, then it would be hard to claim it was unreasonable.

The other primary alternative is the GoT plan. In some ways, it's rather similar to what Boskone was forced into after we were thrown out of the Sheraton, and forced into a site far outside Boston, and which would only hold a third of the people who had been to the last Boston Boskone. So we *had* to shrink, and refocus.

We did it badly. We spent too much time thinking about the refocusing we needed to do, without spending enough time figuring out how to communicate the new message. So people came out feeling hurt and rejected, and that wasn't what we intended to do. We *wanted* to say, "this is what interests Boskone will be addressing, and anyone interested in these is welcome, and anyone who isn't interested in those things won't find anything they want at Boskone". But it read like, "if you're interested in anything other than these things that Boskone is interested in, then we don't want you".

And it will be very easy for the GoT proposal to get the same reading. So, if that's what is decided on, then I think it's absolutely vital for all of the best writers that Minicon can assemble to work on the publicity releases that accompany the refocusing. And then get your friends to read it—and then get outsiders to read it, and see if it still says what you want it to say.

I think that many of the changes are very wise, assuming they're done properly. Things like getting rid of the "security" model, and restoring the troubleshooters, and the open bridge, can work well with the other proposals as well.

As with Victor's proposal #1, this will also be a multi-year effort. A culture doesn't change in a year—Minicon 35 would revert

to Minicon 33, unless the changes proposed for 34 are followed through for a number of years. So, as before, there needs to be a committment by those involved to be prepared to work on 35, 36, …, and to keep working until the changes do take root.

So the GoT proposal is also a high-risk proposal. If the communications is mishandled, then everybody will be upset. I suspect that, even if it's well handled, lots of people will be upset, including many who there was no intention to upset.

I think that it's sufficiently high risk that it should only be approved if it is really clear that nothing less will do. Unfortunately, it may well be the case that this correctly describes the state of current Minicon.

I hope this helps. Feel free to ignore, or comment, as appropriate.

Ben Yalow   *ybmcu@panix.com*

From: Ben Yalow <ybmcu@panix.com>
Date: Tue, 09 Sep 1997 14:57:12 -0400
Subject: Re: Some thoughts on Minicon—the various proposals
To: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Cc: raymond@macalstr.edu (Victor J. Raymond)

At 03:05 PM 9/8/97 -0500, Joel Rosenberg wrote:

>>From Ben Yalow on 02:24 PM 9/8/97 -0400:

>**The Quoted Message Begins***

   <snip>

>>… overall, we're much better with a thousand person Boskone,
>>and an Arisia, than we were with a 4000 person Boskone.
>
>I think I hear resonances of a split Minicon proposal here. Since I've
>never been to an Arisia, I don't know how much of an overlap there
>is—either in committee or membership—with Boskone. Ben?

When Arisia was founded, it was by people who were convinced that NESFA had made, at least, a tactically wrong decision, and, according to a significant fraction, an immoral one. So it included essentially none of the NESFA (or Boskone) people. After a number of years, the Arisia group began to change, and a number of NESFA members began to work on the convention, even to the extent that this year's Boskone chairman was their Art Show director last year. But the extent to which NESFA overlap is acceptable varies, depending on the feelings of the Arisia chairman, and their corporate structure (which is more complicated than I can summarize easily).

There's a pretty low overlap between the two cons in membership. Arisia offers a number of things (for example, a masquerade) that Boskone doesn't. So that people who are interested in going to cons with those things don't go to Boskone. We concentrate much more heavily on the program—there's a lot more program at Boskone than at Arisia, even though Arisia is a larger con. And the Boskone program is more focussed on written SF/fandom/art than the Arisia program is, so we don't have the variety of things to offer, even there, but we have a much larger program in the areas we do focus on.

>>We have the management talent to put on the sort of Boskone we
>>want to attend…
>
>I do keep harping on this point, because it does keep coming up.
>NESFA is much heavier in management talent than MnStf is.

And the other key point is that we put on the con we want to attend. And we like the program, so we put on a program with lots of items we like to attend.

   <snip>

>>And that's the risk in proposal #1—it takes a long-term
>>committment, of major people resources, for a long time, and
>>enough luck so that nothing goes wrong during that time frame,
>>since the resources to handle the problem won't be there.
>

>And that's where I think I disagree with Ben. I'm not sure that there
>are the resources to handle things even if they go reasonably well.
>Victor's comments about MnStf being broken are on point here. In
>this way, it's very different from Boskone before the meltdown,
>where a viable organization ("There is no NESFA group mind") had
>bitten off more than it could comfortably chew. In a sense, MnStf—
>as it used to be in the Good Old Days—doesn't exist, and certainly
>isn't an, err, well-regulated militia.

That's one question I can't answer—only someone who looks at the troops on the ground can decide what they can handle.

>>If MnStf feels that this is a wise risk, then it would be hard to claim
>>it was unreasonable.
>>
>>The other primary alternative is the GoT plan. In some ways, it's
>>rather similar to what Boskone was forced into after we were
>>thrown out of the Sheraton, and forced into a site far outside
>>Boston, and which would only hold a third of the people who had
>>been to the last Boston Boskone. So we *had* to shrink, and
>>refocus.
>
>I think you're right, of course. But in a sense, it may have been a
>good thing for Boskone to lose the Sheraton. After the Boskone
>from Hell, would there have been sufficient motivation in the NESFA
>Group Mind to cut back the size of the convention if the Sheraton
>hadn't said "so long, and thanks for all the fish"? My impression—
>and, again, I wasn't privy to a lot of what was going on—was that
>there wasn't.

Actually, there was a great deal of discussion going on, both in meetings, and in the APA:NESFA. Some of the "Whither Boskone?" APA issues were huge—dozens of pages discussing the problems, and trying to figure out how to deal with them. And lots of them were called, "Wither Boskone"—but we were trying to do so *without* upsetting any of the current attendees, who we hoped would leave by attrition, rather than by active committee decisions. It did have the problem, however, that we wanted to ensure that anyone who wanted to come, could come, so even measures like a hard cap were generally frowned upon, since we thought that could also be viewed as unfair.

>>We did it badly.
>
>Well, suboptimally, perhaps. I thought the Manns caught a lot of flak
>for making some hard decisions that had to be made, one way or
>another, and I understood what you folks were getting at.

Most of the decisions were reasonable ones. Most of the communication was badly mishandled, and this meant that any messages we wanted to convey were lost in the shouting.

For example: Our new hotels were terrified of the teenagers looking to party that had been such a problem at the BfH, and they insisted that we restrict minors. So we did—we said that no minors without parent or guardian would be admitted. But we wanted to be sure that the teenagers who were interested in fandom would still be there—so we put in lots of waffle words. We said:

"We don't want to exclude teenagers who are really interested in SF, so there are a few exceptions to this rule. Teenagers who have worked at Boskone, or another major convention, or who belong to an established SF club (such as NESFA, MITSFS, the Lunarians, etc.) which has other members attending Boskone, or who are known to us are definitely welcome. (If you are interested in SF, join one of the clubs in your area. If you don't know how to find one, contact us.)"

In short, we tried our best to lay out a roadmap to not exclude anyone. But, a decade later, we still hear that we totally banned minors from Boskone.

I wish we had better writers—I'm glad you do. Whatever decision is reached, communication will be vital, and we failed at it.

   <snip>

Ben Yalow   *ybmcu@panix.com*

From: Ben Yalow <ybmcu@panix.com>
Date: Tue, 09 Sep 1997 15:08:23 -0400
To: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Subject: Re: Some thoughts on Minicon—the various proposals

At 06:34 PM 9/8/97 -0600, Geri Sullivan wrote:

>At 2:24 PM 9/8/97, Ben Yalow wrote:
>
>>In general, I've tried not to comment in detail on how I think
>>Minicon should be run. After all, it's been a number of years since
>>I've been in Minneapolis, instead of England, on Easter weekend.
>>This means, of course, that I only have second-hand reports, rather
>>than my own impressions, on what a modern Minicon is like.
>>
>>However, I've read all of the stuff on Minicon-L, and the complete
>>GoT proposal from the web page. So I think I'm familiar with the
>>general proposals, and would like to comment a bit on how I think
>>they will work out.
>
>Ben, as usual, you are a gem. I knew we (Minn-stf, Minicon, and all
>of the proposers) could rely on you for a careful, considered
>evaluation of the situation and the alternatives. You've done a
>terrific job of pointing out both the risks *and* the requirements for
>whichever path we end up following.
>
>I greatly appreciate that you stepped back and responded to the
>whole picture rather than just the GoT proposal.

I'm glad I could help on this. I know I'm handicapped by not having
seen Minicon firsthand in a half dozen years, but I'm glad I could try
to distill, from general principles and from discussions with people,
some of the overarching ideas.

>Since you're on Minicon-L, I'll presume you've seen Susan's posting
>from this afternoon and therefore won't clutter up your mailbox
>with another copy. If I'm wrong, please let me know and I'll send it
>your way.

I did. It clearly addresses some of the issues, and I hope it help calm
some of the concerns.

>In another 45 minutes, the Exec Selection Committee and the
>Resolutionaries are sitting down and talking together for the first
>time since we presented our proposal. I look forward to the
>opportunity to improve our communications with them, and to work
>further on the whole question that is Minicon. The interesting times
>continue….

*In my heart, I think that Victor's proposal is the one I'd like to
see, if I thought it stood a reasonable chance of working. But I
don't think that there's enough of a group of people willing to
make the long-term committment, and able to avoid burnout.
And all it would take is one piece of bad luck, and the slow
drawdown fails, and things explode.*

*Boskone was lucky—we had the depth of talent pool to let us survive,
and we had just won the Worldcon, so we *KNEW* that we had no
choice but to come through somehow. And the Boskone from Hell,
since it had well over a thousand more members than we planned for,
made a ton of money, so we could throw money at some of our
problems, where we didn't have the people to throw.*

*I don't know if MnStf has the depth to survive that kind of explosion.
And I'd hate to lose Minicon, and MnStf—they play an important role
in my fandom, even if I don't get there much.*

>Again, thanks. Whatever direction we choose, know that you share
>in any success we achieve.

My pleasure. I just am very glad that I can help.

>Best,
>Geri

Ben Yalow   ybmcu@panix.com

From: Ben Yalow <ybmcu@panix.com>
Date: Thu, 11 Sep 1997 01:50:20 -0400
To: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Subject: Re: Paths & Outcomes

At 03:57 PM 9/10/97 -0600, Geri Sullivan wrote:

>G'day, Ben,
>
>(Can you tell I had e-mail from Aussies this morning? Ian Gunn &
>Karen Pender-Gunn are asking great questions about the care and
>feeding of a Worldcon fan lounge. When I'm able to devote the time
>to answering them, I'll be developing something that can go up on
>the L.A.con III and/or SMOFs web pages for others to refer to.)
>
>I'd like to follow last night's conversation with a bit more about
>paths and likely/possible outcomes for each of the plans currently
>on the table. Due to my note-taking sensibilities and personal
>attitudes, I missed an important bit of information from the
>beginning of that discussion. And when I look at the whole picture,
>it raises some interesting questions. So here goes:
>
>As I understand it, you believe consensus is vital to the health and
>well-being of the Minneapolis fan group. That's consensus not just
>within the Board, but consensus within the Minicon committee and
>within the community as a whole (to whatever degree that can be
>achieved). The consensus is so important that it's worth sacrificing a
>year or even two in order to achieve it. Have I understood correctly,
>or am I exaggerating your position?

I believe that there is too little talent available in the potential
Minicon concom pool to continue to sustain Minicon at its current
size. And I also believe that shrinking/refocusing/etc. it to a
sustainable size is a *very* complex task, that will, during the
transition, probably be as difficult as sustaining the current big
Minicon. So that, if the shrinkage is to be handled effectively (by any
of the paths), then it's likely to need most of the available talent.
Which means that you need to have enough concensus around
whichever plan is picked to be able to pull it off successfully—since,
if there isn't enough consensus to keep people participating, I doubt
if any plan can be made to work.

Ideally, you want concensus among the attendees, as well (or, more
important, among those you want to keep coming, or start coming),
but that's harder to measure. And, if you're putting on a convention
that you, as a committee, would want to attend, then you can serve
as proxies for the attendees—but be aware of when/where you're
serving as proxies.

Furthermore, having seen what happens when a group splits, it's
really not pretty. It hurts people—and that can last for a long time.
That's not something I would like to see for my friends, nor is it in
anyone's best interests.

So, for either pragmatic/Minicon reasons, or community reasons, I
think it's vital to develop the concensus, in whatever way is possible.

>Here are the paths you outlined as I understood them. Please
>correct/clarify if any huge bits are missing or convoluted.
>
>Continuity Plan
>
>Path 1) Everyone agrees to pitch in for 5+ years to achieve this plan.
>
>   This looks so unachievable that I failed to write down the
>anticipated outcome of this path. I assume the plan either succeeds
>or fails, with the expectation being that it will succeed if we can get
>everybody behind it. You also anticipate that Minicon 33 will fail by
>any reasonable set of measurable outcomes we might be able to
>devise for it. (Side note: we might, however, also be able to identify
>specific measurable signs of successes within that failure that could
>provide some reassurance that we're making progress and that next
>year will be better.)

It *could* work—it depends on a lot of luck (no meltdowns), and a
lot of hard work. And you're in a better position than I am to guess if

it's unachievable. If it is to work, you need a set of long-term goals, and long-term plans, and a buy-in by everybody on how to match the talent to the task list. And I'm not in a position to say whether M33 will fail, because without a metric that defines "failure" (other than a meltdown is a "failure"), I can't say that. Which is why I keep coming back to the need to define what the expectations are—what constituencies are there, and what are their definitions of "succeed" or "fail"?

>Path 2) We continue to pursue current plan, but we use goal posts—
>setting external and internal measures—to evaluate progress along
>the way, with the agreement to switch plans for the convention
>2 years following any measured failure. (Again, it's believed that
>Minicon 33 will fail to achieve those, so what we've gained by doing
>this is the consensus needed for any plan to succeed and the price
>of that consensus is one year.)

My impression is that the slow transition might well not succeed. But, as I said, I could be wrong there. If it *does* succeed, then it's a win, pretty much by definition. If it doesn't, then it costs a year, unless there's really a major meltdown (which is a risk for each additional year you run under the old model, but better managed).

And be very careful of the passive voice trap. "It's believed" isn't a meaningful thing, unless there's a concensus definition. Otherwise, "X believes" is the only meaningful statement.

>Path 3) Minicon 33 melts.
>
>   (We pick up the pieces, or we don't.)

And a high risk part of the meltdown comes from the slow burnout of people who might be able to fix the problem, if they were all working on things, and were fresh. But each year that people burn out a bit more, the likelier it becomes.

>Resolutionary Plan
>
>Path 1) The Resolutionaries get the bid, but don't get consensus that
>our solution is needed (or the right one) and a whole lot of people
>leave. You believe the remaining talent pool wouldn't large enough
>to achieve any reasonable success, or to do much of anything other
>than fail.

With either plan, I still think it's likely to need some sort of concensus, and to keep most of the people working, if the transition is to be managed.

>Path 2) We get the consensus and the plan fails. We described
>failure as the convention staying too big and unmanageable given
>our skills and lack thereof in that area.
>
>Path 3) God's dumb luck strikes the hard way—we try to shrink,
>don't do it fast enough, and we melt. (We pick up the pieces, or we
>don't.)
>
>I'll point out that none of the Resolutionary paths end in success. Do
>you see a Resolutionary path to success? Is there a credible Path 4
>that says we get the consensus, pay the necessary prices to shrink
>fast enough, and retain enough of the talent pool to last until we
>have a sustainable Minicon? Presumably one we want to run and
>attend? Or do you believe the only consensus that can lead to
>success is one based on the Continuity Plan?

There were a few paths left out—mostly, I was discussing the complications, not the successes. There *is* a resolutionary path that leads to success—the changes are agreed to by enough people (and, of course, for a long enough time), and the convention transforms itself to a smaller, better Minicon. It needs excellent communications, both internal and external, in order to ensure that the people who come to the new Minicon are the fans and proto-fans that make the convention worthwhile, and the people who aren't interested in the new Minicon leave without disruption. And it also requires that they don't scare away the people that you don't want to scare away—protofans who get the (unintended) message that they won't be welcome, etc.

>Let me also state my confidence that you would be willing and
>happy to see a whole new outcome emerge from the magic of
>Minneapolis fandom. The assumption is that it is *possible* (though
>by no means anticipated, likely, or even equal to the chance of
>being struck by lightning or winning the lottery) that whatever plan
>is chosen, the outcome could be something none of us anticipated
>or even thought of. Neither of us thinks the space aliens are going
>to moor their spaceship next to the zeppelin and announce their
>existence to the world by fixing Minicon. But y'know, if they did,
>we'd go, "Wow. Neat. We never thought of *that.* "

Absolutely. My skills (to use (I think it was) Patrick Nielsen Hayden's metaphor) are primarily those of Law, although I've spent enough time in Chaos that I can work comfortably in LA. But I don't think of myself as part of Faerie—I can appreciate it, but I can't produce it.

>Does size really matter?
>
>You stated that it's not a question of size, but a question of the ratio
>of size to talent pool. Minicon does not have the talent pool to
>sustain its current size, and that it is not reasonable to think we can
>strengthen our talent pool to the degree that would be needed to
>run a 3,600-person Minicon. In specific, you mentioned that
>Worldcon is now drawing from a worldwide talent pool, sucking in
>as much of the emerging talent as possible, and that the Permanent
>Floating Worldcon Committee is uncertain that *it* has the talent
>pool necessary to sustain Worldcon, even with the whole world to
>draw on.
>
>We didn't get deeply into what size Minicon we *do* have the talent
>to sustain (presuming we can get that talent to work on the
>convention). You touched on the point that it's *not* a linear
>relationship.

Exactly. A Worldcon is structurally more complex than a Minicon; it's longer and does more things. So it needs to spend a certain amount of overhead in its organizational structure that a Minicon doesn't.

>At this point, it's my impression that we don't know what size we
>have the talent pool (and potential talent pool) to sustain and that
>we can't predict it. We do know that it's smaller than 3,600, and I at
>least think it's at the very least 1,000 people fewer and more
>probably 1,500-2,000 people fewer. But even those numbers are
>picked from my hip pocket based on gut level observations and
>feelings. What I believe we (the whole community) *can* agree on
>for the next 2-3 years is that we do not want a membership cap. We
>want to give people the opportunity to self-select out of the Minicon
>we want to run, and that we'll wait until after we've done that (or
>done our best to do that) before re-evaluating the question of
>size-to-talent-pool ratio. We're also willing to live with the budget
>and planning uncertainty—we're willing to plan and run whatever
>size Minicon we get for Minicons 33, 34, and 35. We hope they get
>smaller, and we're limiting our focus with the intention that doing so
>will make them smaller. (And even more importantly, that it will
>make them something we want to run, and that we want to attend.)

Exactly. A membership cap leads to all sorts of additional communications issues (for example, if Jim Young gets a strange job mission, and, because he'll be in MSP rather than Nigeria that weekend, decides to show up late, and all of the memberships are sold, do you sell him one—any answer will cause issues with somebody). There's no need to further complicate those tasks—there are enough problems with the communications without trying to get new ones.

>Okay, that's it for now. You'll notice I've added the Resolutionaries
>to this message—you're welcome to respond to all of us, or to
>whichever one(s) of us you want.
>
>Again, thanks a million. Thanks a hundred million.

Glad to help.

Ben Yalow   ybmcu@panix.com

Attachment 970918c To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes "Re: In response."

Do you mean that people who've volunteered at many Minicons own a larger portion than those who've volunteered at just one or two?

To which RapierOne@aol.com (Sean Novack) had replied:

By all means, yes. Imagine Minicon as a corporation. I, for example, as a person who has attended Minicon for the last 6 years, introduced dozens of other people to the Con, and now am finally taking an active interest in how it is run may hold 25 shares under this system:

Year of paid attendance—	1 share
Get someone else interested—	1/2 share
Actively Communicate—	2 shares
5 Years Attendance—	5 shares

That's all well and good, but you aren't going to get rich holding 25 shares of ANY company (Even Microsoft). If you want to assign a point system for the different board positions, all the ways you could volunteer, I'd say any board position should be 25 shares in of itself. However, a large group of people each with a small amount of shares adds up quickly. (Kind of a nice checks and balances thing, huh?)

Then we had Kurt's response, which Geri read at the Board Meeting:

From: Kurt <truk@PioneerPlanet.infi.net>
Date: Thu, 18 Sep 1997 08:42:00 -0600
Subject: Re: In response.
To: Minicon-L@mnstf.org

RapierOne@aol.com wrote:

>Year of paid attendance—	1 share
>Get someone else interested—	1/2 share
>Actively Communicate—	2 shares
>5 Years Attendance—	5 shares

I was amused by this. I don't know how long this response will take to get out as I have my son here helping me type ;)

You forgot:

Active involvement:

Running a room party	: 1 share
Volunteer (any)	: 2 shares
Sub-Head (any)	: 4 shares
Dept. Head	: 5 shares
Exec	: 7 shares
White Knight*	: 10-15 shares

Hmm. Ok why is this amusing? I have attended ohh…6 Minicons since my introduction to fandom. I was brought into the community through music, not SF, though I had a small collection at the time, mostly Heinlein, Asprin, and Tolkein (I know! It's just a fact, that's all).

For the First 5 Minicons I have to abdicate any and all of my shares. Why? I mean heck…we ran an SF themed party complete with a weird Fanzine (The Galactic Herald, which caused quite the same kinds of pain to its writers and editors as Minicon does every year) one year, and came and enjoyed Minicon almost every year quite a bit (ignore grammatical inconsistencies here). However…I knew nothing about MnStf. I knew nothing about the ConCom, the Exec, who these nice people were that delivered party favors or asked for help at various times…in short, I came to THE BIG PARTY. I had a small inkling about the fact that Minicon was an SF convention…but

disparaged those activities that I thought would be incredibly DULL (read: Korsakoff's). I even promoted Minicon as a huge PARTY loosely wrapped around Science Fiction but with no real emphasis on it. We even MOVED up to the MPLS area in part because of this impression of Minicon. Now I READ SF as a regular part of a balanced diet and can almost hold a discussion on various subjects and authors…but that had nothing to do with attending Minicon directly…though the result of attending Minicon was meeting these musicians of whom at least one was a writer and hey didn't I read 'To Reign In Hell' while I was stationed overseas…?

What the hell is my point? I am supporting the Hi Res proposal by highlighting my view of the personal failings of the previous Minicons. I felt no ownership of those Cons I attended-they were simply a PLACE TO GO to HAVE FUN and SKIP EASTER DINNER for me. It was a place to go to play and listen to musical magic…to try capture something elusive…like the thesis of this letter…

So there. That's why I find any presumption of ownership among attendees humorous. I simply don't think that many attendees care one way or the other about 'true ownership'-it just simply wouldn't occur to them to care.

I'm even one of those mentioned as having: 'no previous management experience being thrust into Department Head positions' though I take much of the blame for having my first volunteer position be as a Department Head. How STUPID! How NAIVE! One cannot really imagine the bile and venom that accompany failure at a heartfelt task, both inside and out.

If I went through it once (and I did, so there), then imagine the heartbreak people feel as year after year they see _their_ Con slipping away…forcing them to make the painful decision not to attend or, worse at times, attend and have it thrown into their faces that this is simply NOT the Con they created and enjoy.

Hmm. There is the point that I don't mention abdicating my ownership of at least one Minicon I attended. I bled for that one. I hated it. I own it. That one. Only that one.

The people that sweat and bleed for it, those that care and love it, those that know it inside and out-they own it. The rest of us are just pikers.

This is my opinion, rambling as it is. Pare it down (the con, the opinion, whichever). If you think it's working, it's not. If you think it can be fixed, it can. It's going to hurt, but not as much as continuing to let it bleed.

Kurt Griesemer
—
"Real courage is risking something you have to keep on living with, real courage is risking something that might force you to rethink your thoughts and suffer change and stretch your consciousness. Real courage is risking one's cliches."
Amanda Ziller from Tom Robbins 'Another Roadside Attraction'
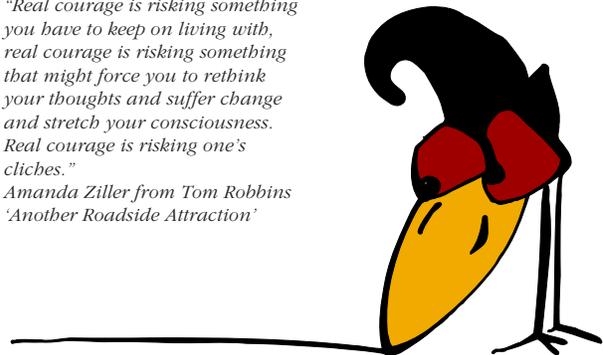
Attachment 970918d To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes "Communication"

From: Fred A Levy Haskell <falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Fri, 19 Sep 1997 15:57:41 -0500
Subject: Communication
To: Minn-Stf Board of Directors <board@mnstf.org>, Exec Selection Committee:;, hrc.@maroon.tc.umn.edu, Minicon_Mailing_List@maroon.tc.umn.edu

I've been thinking about last night, and it occurs to me that, in my attempt to make myself perfectly clear, I probably made =something= or other perfectly clear, but Roscoe alone knows what. I should probably stick to writing.

Assuming, of course, that I can do any better in writing. *sigh*

Okay, look, here's how it is. For years and years and years, I always looked forward to Minicon with joy and excitement and anticipation. What new friends would I meet there? What old friends would I see again? What interesting conversations would we have? What silly conversations would we have? What special magic would we make this year? What special magic would others make and let us share in this year? You know, like that.

For the past few years, however, as Minicon approaches, I regard it with fear and dread and anxiety. Will I be able to find anybody to talk with, be they old friend or new? How often will I have to deal with apparently mundane people who will make me feel geeky and odd and uncomfortable and like I'm at a mall rather than at an sf convention? Why do I have to wade through them to find the tiny island outposts of fans who all respect each other, even though we're all geeks and we don't even necessarily all like each other? How am I gonna manage to make some magic amidst all this negative energy?

The point is, Minicon, in the direction it's been heading the last bunch of years, costs me more and more and more and the payoff is smaller and smaller and smaller. If there isn't a major change for the better soon, it's no longer going to be worth the cost and effort. So I'll probably quit going.

This isn't a threat. For it to be a threat, I'd have to believe that I mattered, that I made some kind of a difference. And that's at least part of the point—I no longer believe that I matter or make much of a difference at the current form of "Minicon." I'm not playing "you won't have J/e/f/f/ B/e/r/r/y/ erm… Fred to kick around any more" here; that game requires that you think you'll be missed. I believe I'd be missed about as much as an elephant would miss a gnat. I'm having a hard time enjoying Con, and I won't be much missed…. why should I continue to show up?

There are some who say that all of this is because I've become a fossilized, boring, old fart. Well, maybe so. Maybe the change is in me. Okay. Then the right thing is certainly for me to get out of the way of Progress and quit bitching about the lousy time I'm having. But what if the problem isn't with =me= at all?

When the subject of change comes up, I keep hearing people talk about all those people who are going to quit coming and/or who are going to feel excluded if a change is made. Okay, fair enough. That's certainly true. But that isn't a fact in a vacuum—it has to be balanced against the people who =have= quit coming or will quit soon if things continue as they are and/or who feel or are starting to feel excluded.

NO MATTER WHAT DECISION IS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF MINICON, =some= number of people are going to feel excluded, =some= number of people are going to quit coming. So it is inherently unfair to think, "Oh my, course X is going to lose us a bunch of people, we'd better not change much," because not changing things will =also= continue to lose us a bunch of people. People will be lost =either= =way=. You know, you and I and Con don't currently give much of a rip whether I find something else to do on Easter weekend—part of my point was that if anybody else can be thought of as being "like" me, they're the ones who have been lost and will probably continue to be lost if things continue unchanged or with only minor changes. I'm trying to help you identify and put a face on the people you have lost and are losing and will continue to lose if Minicon =doesn't= change, because so far it sounds like you have a much clearer picture of the people you think will be lost if it =does= change.

Does this make any better sense?

I hope so.

Thanks for your attention.

Fred A. Levy Haskell | *"Though I could not caution all*
falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu | *I yet may warn a few:*
                | *Don't lend your hand to raise no flag*
                | *atop no ship of fools"* —Robert Hunter
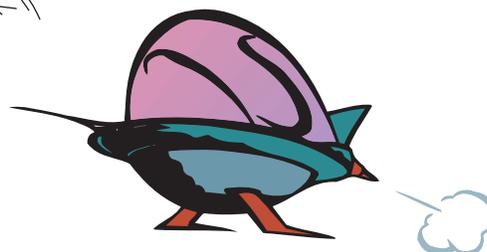
Attachment 970918e To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes
"Board responsibility" and
"Clarification of Board responsibilities"

Hi, all!

I sent essentially this to the hrc, but I think it's important that the whole Board see it. Fred mentioned to me when he got home that there's question as to whether I was correct in my assessment that the Board would be responsible. As I said below, for a written opinion from a non-profit lawyer with a bunch of experience, call Charley Ravine (rhymes with "the vine").

At 6:14 PM -0500 9/18/97, Geri Sullivan wrote:

>Actually, legally, I believe Board members are protected. Or the
>court battle would be long and ugly. Read your Articles of
>Incorporation and By-Laws; talk with Susan.

Karen told me about this after Charley Ravine, MAP's Director of Legal & HR Services, had left for the evening, but I can tell you generally from our board training & orientation seminars what the law is:

The Board of an organization has a responsibility for financial oversight. This includes a responsibility for making sure that oversight is happening. If the Treasurer runs off with the cash & you had no formal method of oversight, you're on the hook. If you join a Board, you adopt the responsibility—even if you had no knowledge that the organization was in trouble—it's your responsibility to investigate the agency *before* accepting the position.

In the case of a fundraiser-gone-bad like Minicon, there's a history of failure of proper oversight, & a history of the Board permitting those who fail to manage the convention properly to repeat their errors. The fact that the Board made a specific set of requirements of one of 32's Exec, and then didn't pull him when they weren't followed, is going to look especially bad. Given Judy's (the accountant's) comments about Minicon's & Minn-Stf's books, it behooves the Board to do something radical to fix the oversight problems. Since we raised a bunch of longer-term mismanagement issues in our proposal, it behooves the Board to address them directly *in*some*way*that* *makes*it*into*the*minutes*. Given the problems that are known to at least two of the Board members about the financial oversight of 33 (specifically, that six months before an event with an eighteen-month planning cycle, there are six major departments without budgets in), it will be considered to be another example of fiduciary irresponsibility to permit the management of 33 to be named as the management of 34. There's also pretty assuredly a problem with any tack that doesn't substantially change the way Minicon is run.

I'm not a lawyer. I do work with one with 20+ years of non-profit legal experience. If you want his opinion informally—like, I'll ask him—I can get that tomorrow; a written opinion is possible within a short time—Charley will know how long, I don't—for a nominal fee (probably $100). If you—or someone else on the Board—wants to call him, he's at 647-1216, ext. 228.

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

Hi, all:

I just spoke with Charley Ravine about the liability issues for folks on the Board. Here's a clarification, & some correction.

The Board members in such a situation *may* be able to protect themselves by having their votes of opposition recorded in the minutes. It's a start, but by no means fool-proof. Charley suggested that resignation over the issue (before there's a problem, "the sooner the better") is really the only safe course.

The personal liability of the Board may not come up unless there's an IRS liability; other creditors my be stuck. Usually this issue comes up when the IRS bill is due & the agency can't pay. However, if someone—a creditor or club member—asks the Attorney General's office to investigate (or sues), there could be non-tax liability assessed to the Board members. This is much less likely; it'd require substantial debts—or substantial mismanagement—to be worth filing. This would be much more likely if the club still had substantial resources to squander.

When I mentioned the by-laws issue, Charley rolled his eyes & said: I *hate* it when attorneys leave that in: it misleads officers & Board members who *aren't* protected by it because of their fiduciary responsibility, and it isn't necessary to protect members.

So, there it is in a speedy nutshell. I've also told him that someone may call, so he's got a little prep.

-susan

P.S. I asked him about how long it would take to incorporate a new 501(c)3 to run it, in case the Board opted to offer it to another organization. It'd take about one month (or less, if folks're speedy) to incorporate, & three-&-a-half to get the 501(c)3 letter from the IRS.

-susan
—

Susan B. Levy Haskell   Information Technology Services Director
sblh@mapnp.org   MAP for Nonprofits
voice (612) 647-1216 x229   2233 West University Avenue, #360
fax (612) 647-1369   St. Paul, MN 55114-1629

Attachment 970918f To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes
"Some Notes for the Board About Minicon—October 7th, 1992"

Some Notes for the Board About Minicon
October 7th, 1992

Having had some time to think about running Minicon, I have a few thoughts to share with the Board about the ~~damn thing~~ convention, and who gets to run it.

The Bid Process
Bidding for Minicon tends to bring out factions from within the organization, factions that have co-existed for some time. Many of the disputes between factions have been about focus (literary sercon/parties, music, adventure, for example). In the context of a general committee, everybody got a little bit of what they wanted, but not their entire wish list.

With bidding however, once a particular faction or group gets picked, they have a fair degree of freedom in implementing their agenda—and this can have both positive and negative effects. It's my belief that the negative effects are in the long run more deleterious than the positive ones (see below).

How Decisions Are Seen
"Never ascribe to malice what can be explained by ignorance or neglect." Not a bad rule to live by. Unfortunately, the bidding process can work against this. Once a bid is chosen, there is a perception that somebody has "won" and is therefore "in-the-loop" and the others have "lost" and are therefore "out-of-the-loop." It becomes easier to say of decisions about the convention that get made afterwards, "those idiots in charge, they're just out to get rid of us/piss somebody off/etc." when you are out of the loop than if you are a part of the con committee.

Recommendation: If you are going to take bids, ensure that the winning bid seeks outside opinions, and has a process to include outside and/or dissenting opinions. It would also be useful if decisions that get made are accompanied by some explanation of the rationale behind them.

Having A Stake In Minicon
If Minicon is MinnStF's convention, as I believe it is, it works best when the entire membership sees itself as having a stake in running it. If people can "opt out" because their faction or group didn't win the bid, then that means that there are fewer potential members of the volunteer pool, particularly at the management level. But the more insidious problem is one of maintaining organizational ownership of the con. Many fans have multiple group memberships, with the result that MinnStF is not always their "home" or primary group affiliation. Having different factions within MinnStF run Minicon opens up the question, "who are we, anyway?" This also makes it harder to maintain the informal traditions of MinnStF and Minicon that make the convention memorable and worthwhile.

Recommendation: Make sure that there is a process after picking the winning bid to include everybody in MinnStF who is interested in helping run Minicon. This doesn't necessarily have to be done by the winning bid committee, but probably will fall to them to do.

Management Continuity
Let's face it, folks. Minicon is big enough that several departments have their own hierarchies, promotion ladders, and mores, folkways, etc. The primary examples of this are Programming, Parties, and Operations. People get involved in one, climb up the promotional ladder by dint of working on Minicon several years in a row, and eventually hope to become part of the leadership of their department. The bidding process throws that all into doubt, as people face the possibility of being intentionally cut out of the loop.

What is important to remember is that this process of departmental advancement exists semi-independently of the Executive Committee/Chairperson. Strong personalities in these and other departments have a big effect on who works on Minicon, with little regard for the top level. There is a long-term consideration in that the people involved in each department are its institutional memory; when they go, so does part of how we remember what we've done.

Recommendation: Pick *only* the top level of the convention, and insist that they work with the current department heads or candidates, unless there is a clear reason to make a change. This would recognize the stake that people have in the department they've been working in.

Looking For Some Balance
Regardless of any other criteria you use, I think that you need to ensure that whoever is in charge has worked on Minicon from several different angles. To use an obvious example, Eric Heideman, despite his long-term commitment to working on Minicon, does not have the diversity of experience necessary in an Exec member or Chair—and I don't think you could rely on somebody else to provide it, were Eric part of the Exec.

Minicon is a big beast, and works because it is broadly based, both functionally and philosophically. I would say that there is a fundamental difference between being a department head and being an Exec member, particularly now. Department heads are expected to argue for their departments and staff, while the Exec or Chair has to balance out the demands on the resources of the convention. Being narrowly focused on a particular agenda does not work at the top, and not everybody knows that (even me, sometimes).

Recommendation: Require potential Exec members of Con Chairs to have headed more than one major department, and to have done so effectively and successfully. It's a pretty mechanical way to try for balance, but otherwise you would have to look for a philosophical temperament that is balanced and even-handed in candidates.

What Do I Really Want?
I want a Minicon that works for MinnStF, *and not necessarily anybody else*. I suspect that this is where I have the biggest disagreement with Eric/Greg/Sybil/Joe, et. al. MinnStF is liable for Minicon, runs it every year, ensures that it happens, and is the organization that benefits most. Make Minicon serve the needs of MinnStF first, and anybody else second. As the Board, you get to decide what MinnStF needs (more parties with good music come to mind); aren't you lucky?

Beyond running it for MinnStF, I think Minicon ought to not overbalance too far in any direction. That means that sercon literature considerations are one interest among many, including good music parties, fanzine fandom, and lots else. Any bid that stresses one of these elements to the exclusion of others is not going to appeal to the broad membership of MinnStF; people *like* a little bit of everything. So don't accept a bid that has only a narrow appeal.

Recommendation: Vote for me; I never lie, and I'm always right (paid for by the Victor Tirebiter for Political Solutions Committee, Sector R). Seriously, pay attention to MinnStF first, and anybody else second. While you're at it, make sure bids have a broad appeal (including to *me*).

—*Victor Raymond*

Attachment 970918g To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes "Volunteering (was Re: In response)"

From: "Laurel Krahn" <laurel@startribune.com>
Date: Thu, 18 Sep 1997 14:29:56 -0500
Subject: Volunteering (was Re: In response)
To: Minicon-L@mnstf.org

On 9/18/97, at 9:37 AM, Geri wrote:

>At 8:42 AM 9/18/97, Kurt wrote:
>
>>I'm even one of those mentioned as having : 'no previous
>>management experience being thrust into Department Head
>>positions' though I take much of the blame for having my first
>>volunteer position be as a Department Head. How STUPID! How
>>NAIVE! One cannot really imagine the bile and venom that
>>accompany failure at a heartfelt task, both inside and out.
>
>Naive enthusiasm is a powerful and wondrous thing. I *hate* that
>Minicon enables and encourages people to take on department head
>positions in such circumstances. It's setting us all up for pain and
>failure.

Yup.

I quoted the above because I felt it was worth seeing again (Good stuff, Kurt and Geri).

Usually, I'm out there encouraging people to volunteer to work on Minicon. Even if it's their first Minicon or first convention. Because it's a great way to get involved, to get to know the con, to get to know a bunch of cool people.

HOWEVER (this is a big, all caps, large font, italicized However).

When you first volunteer to work on a convention, any convention, you should start small. Certainly with something that plays to your strengths, skills, talents. By small, I mean with a role that involves a relatively small time commitment and doesn't involve management (these roles are still important—there are no truly "small roles" at Minicon, every volunteer is important). And you should volunteer because you want to learn, want to help out, because you care about this cool gathering of people. (Yes, even if it's your first Minicon or first convention, you can care about it. After the first few minutes of the convention, it may feel right… like home… and you'll want to be a part of things, to help it be healthy and strong).

Do not get pressured into volunteering. Do not volunteer because no one else will take the job. Do not volunteer because you think it will get you fame or fortune or freebies. Do not volunteer because you want to make a Name for yourself and impress everyone (or someone). Do not volunteer because you want to play the martyr. Do not volunteer because you want a T-shirt, a keychain, pin, or mug.

You should only volunteer because you care about the convention and the people who make up the convention. Volunteer because you want to do something you enjoy, for a convention you care about. Play to your strengths. If you see how a talent or skill you possess could help make a convention happen, volunteer to use that talent for the convention. But only if you can realistically commit the time it takes to do the job right.

Never head a department without having worked in that same department in some capacity previously. Ideally, you should work your way up, be a subhead, then a head-in-training, then a Head. You should have advisors who have been Head of that Department before.

Ideally, you should have some management experience before taking on the role of Head of any major department for a large convention. (Yes, management experienced gained as subhead or Head in training does count).

If you aren't having fun as a volunteer, you aren't doing it right. You aren't playing to your strengths. You don't have a good fit with the position, department, concom or the convention. You should figure this out early in the game. And you should stop. If you don't like being a gopher, you may not like working elsewhere in the Operations department, for instance. To name but one example.

Has anyone ever surveyed Minicon volunteers? It would be interesting to find out what percentage can say they truly enjoyed volunteering for Minicon. And it would be interesting to see what roles they filled. I think there's someone who could be happy in any given role. But I've seen a lot of unhappy, stressed out volunteers in recent years. They aren't having fun. And they often don't get to enjoy the rest of the convention. This is Not Good. And it's a sign that we've been doing things wrong for awhile.

Frankly, if we don't have enough bodies to fill all the roles it takes to put on Minicon, to do it happily and healthily… I don't think we should have Minicon. We should change Minicon so that people can enjoy it, from all sides (as a volunteer who works many hours, one who only volunteers for an hour, or one who doesn't volunteer at all). If we don't have the people with the skills, talents, and desire to build it, why bother? We end up forcing people into positions they aren't ready for (and then burning them out or harming their reputations or health). We end up with people filling roles they don't enjoy or excel at.

Sigh. It's not Good.

Minicon has survived as long as it has, at the expense of good hearted people, who loved the convention and were willing to jump in and play the role of a White Knight, even when it was detrimental to them, and to the convention itself. Good intentions often keeps the knights from seeing how it hurts the con, but it does. Good hearted people have been talked into playing roles because no one else would fill them or there wasn't anyone else to take the head position so they did, even though they had no experience in that department.

Sometimes, of course, people can jump in at the last minute and do something they enjoy, because it needs to be done, and it works out. That's happened, too. With more communication, it could be less stressful for all involved, if communication were improved, and everyone got to know each others strengths, so they could play to them. So someone could fill a role, not at the last minute, but earlier in the game.

Another rough eleven cents from someone in a hurry on a break from work…

Laurel Krahn (laurel@startribune.com)
science fiction fan (books, media, fanzines, all that goodstuff)
member of minicons 24-33, occasional concom member
mnstf member and erstwhile VPDP (honest, i'll fetch the camel Real Soon Now)

Attachment 970918h To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes
"Minicon Focus ideas"

Below is different attack on a Minicon focus statement. It's very rough and full of my own prejudices, which I expect to get smoothed out. My purpose is to give you some more ideas on how to explain what you want and to show you an approach to create a very specific focus statement. Here it is.

====

Minicon is used as a fund raiser by the Minnesota Science Fiction Society and several other groups, but it's real purpose and value is to serve as a gathering place for local and non-local fans.

Many people tell us they appreciate the variety of activities and interests at Minicon. We need to reduce that variety somewhat in order to do a reasonable job on the things that remain. We cannot reasonably expect to satisfy every interest of every person who attends Minicon. The focus of Minicon is laid out below in broad categories with specific items listed as included or excluded.

Included items can be expected to appear at Minicon regularly. Excluded items will not appear on the official program nor will significant public space or time be allocated for them. Items which are neither included or excluded may appear from time to time but will not appear two years in a row.

It is very important to note that the excluded interests are not being called "unfannish" or "bad" or "not worthwhile," nor are people who have those interests being told to leave. They are simply interests that Minicon will not attempt to support. The included interests represent the common interests of the members of the parent organization, the Minnesota Science Fiction Society. They do not represent all the interests of those members.

The abbreviation "SF" is used below to mean science fiction, science fantasy, and fantasy fiction.

SF Literature
    Included:
        Published stories from 1800 to the present
        Translations of literary works to other mediums
        Practical considerations of writing or publishing
    Excluded
        None

SF in Television, Movies, Video
    Included:
        Items with a related series of books
        Items that advance the quality of ideas
            or presentation in their respective media
    Excluded:
        Items with only marginal connection to SF
        Half-hour situation comedies on television
        Items requiring people who require an appearance fee

Costume Fandom
    Included:
        Unique, well crafted costumes with an SF theme
    Excluded:
        Costume as theater (No skits or presentations)
        Duplicates of costumes regularly appearing elsewhere
    Optional
        Creating costumes for children

Art Fandom
    Included:
        Original fine art with SF or astronomical themes
        Humorous art

    Excluded:
        Portraits of actors
        Craftwork

Fan Lifestyles
    Included:
        Fan history
        The Fan Fair
        Fan publishing
        Fan conventions
    Excluded:
        Religious services, including drumming
        Weddings
        Public displays of bondage, sadism, or sex
        Politically oriented speeches or panels

Music:
    Included:
        Original works by fans (AKA filksongs)
        Live traditional or modern folk or rock music
    Excluded:
        Disco-style dances
        Excessively loud music events
        Drum Jam
        More than one dance event

Science
    Included
        Panel discussions on science, technology, or related policies
    Excluded
        Speakers who require fees

At 4:31 PM 9/17/97, DJBAILEY@SKYLER.MAVD.HONEYWELL.COM wrote:

>Below is different attack on a Minicon focus statement. It's very
>rough and full of my own prejudices, which I expect to get
>smoothed out. My purpose is to give you some more ideas on how
>to explain what you want and to show you an approach to create a
>very specific focus statement. Here it is.

Don, thank you for your work on this. I'll take a copy to tomorrow's meeting so any Board members who aren't caught up on their e-mail will have a chance to see it. I particularly liked:

>Costume Fandom
>   Included:
>   Unique, well crafted costumes with an SF theme
>   Excluded:
>   Costume as theater (No skits or presentations)
>   Duplicates of costumes regularly appearing elsewhere
>   Optional
>   Creating costumes for children

Experience so far indicates that "included/excluded" language is explosive, but I really like the specificity embodied in your approach.

Is it okay if I share your message with the rest of the resolutionaries?

Geri
Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
=================================
"Geri, your level of mentation will increase
as you get some sleep. I promise, by December
you'll be five."—Lydy Nickerson 9/6/97

Attachment 970918i To The Minn-Stf Board Meeting Minutes (Other Messages Sent to the "Board Bounce")

From: "Joel Rosenberg" <joelr@bigfoot.com>
Date: Wed, 20 Aug 1997 10:43:51 +0000
To: minicon-l@mnstf.org
CC: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: M34 Proposal

Here's why the Exec Selection Committee and the Board are going to go for the Gang of Ten's proposal:

1. Melioration—or, if you want it catchy, Revolution via Evolution—is being given the best shot it's had in years for M33. If it's ragingly successful—and Minicon badly needs a raging success—its successes are likely to be incorporated in M34, and the people responsible for those successes are absolutely certain to be eagerly sought after by M34, no matter who is running it. If M33 is ragingly successful, folks on the concom will (by definition of raging success) be energized to hang around and work on M34, rather than be burned out. (By way of NESFA example, note what Leslie Turek did on the Boskone immediately following the Worldcon she ran. That wasn't just an important political statement—although it was—but it was clearly fun.)

2. Approving the Gang of Ten's proposal dramatically increases the both the chances for success of M33 (yes, M33), and the likely degree of that success. Implicit in the proposal is an offer by the Gang of Ten to involve themselves in the Minicon process as of now—as long as they see Minicon moving in a useful direction.

Several members of the GoT are heavily involved in M33, but several (most?) aren't. People who aren't interested in further banging their bloodied heads against a wall (Hi, Geri) are volunteering to put their shoulders to the wheel.

This is pretty damned exciting, if you ask me.

3. Of the Gang of Ten, there's at least five obvious department heads who, at present, do little if anything on the concom. Nobody thinks that Minicon is overburdened with potential department heads; simply saying yes to this proposal adds a bunch, and demarginalizes some obviously useful folks with the stroke of a pen.

Doesn't sound like a close call.

It is by the goodness of God that in our country
we have those three unspeakably precious things:
freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and
the prudence never to practice either of them.
— Samuel Clemens

From: Lydia Nickerson <lydy@ddb.com>
Date: Wed, 20 Aug 1997 12:14:43
To: joelr@bigfoot.com, minicon-l@mnstf.org
Cc: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Re: M34 Proposal

At 10:43 AM 8/20/97 +0000, Joel Rosenberg wrote:

>Here's why the Exec Selection Committee and the Board are going
>to go for the Gang of Ten's proposal:
>
>1. Melioration—or, if you want it catchy, Revolution via Evolution—
>is being given the best shot it's had in years for M33. If it's ragingly
>successful—and Minicon badly needs a raging success—its successes
>are likely to be incorporated in M34, and the people responsible for
>those successes are absolutely certain to be eagerly sought after by
>M34, no matter who is running it. If M33 is ragingly successful, folks
>on the concom will (by definition of raging success) be energized to
>hang around and work on M34, rather than be burned out. (By way

>of NESFA example, note what Leslie Turek did on the Boskone
>immediately following the Worldcon she ran. That wasn't just an
>important political statement—although it was—but it was clearly
>fun.)

I don't understand how this is an argument in favor of the Minicon 34 proposal from my gang of ten. Seems to me, this is more an argument in favor of letting the current Exec do it again.

>This is pretty damned exciting, if you ask me.

"May you live in interesting times, come to the attention of powerful people, and get what you ask for."—Ancient Chinese Curse

Yes, it's exciting. It's also nerve-wracking. It is a measure of how concerned we are that we are proposing this. The last time anyone tried anything this exciting as Minicon 26, with the "no alcohol in the consuite" issue.

It's really quiet here, which worries me. We _need_ discussion and debate. Passive surrender ain't in it. Excited support would be even better than vocal opposition, but either would be preferable to a resigned silence. I hope that people are just thinking, rather than giving up. This paragraph is ENTIRELY Lydy's opinion, and should not be thought of as representing the group mind of the "High Resolution" proposal. (I'm beginning to get a split personality, what with being involved in Minicon 33 and a proposal for Minicon 34 and having opinions of my very own which aren't reflected by either of those. Or as the person with multiple personalities at the Schizophrenic Cafe said to the waiter, "I'll have whatever I'm having.")

From: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Date: Fri, 22 Aug 1997 06:14:30 -0600
To: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Cc: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Community building/reality checks

To: The Minn-stf Board, Minicon 33 Exec, and Minicon-L:

One of the things I like about working around the clock and sleep deprivation is that ideas seem to come to me more freely when I've been up all night. Especially after being up all night most nights for a couple of weeks.

I think this is a good one. Then again, I'm not in any position to judge until I've slept on it. So tell me what you think.

The Minn-stf Board has received around 40-50 survey responses from Minn-stf members so far. We announced that responses would be shared with the Board and with interested parties.

What I'd like to do is have group "survey response readings" at the end of the next Minicon meeting and at an upcoming Minn-stf meeting (with it announced in advance that survey responses would be read there). This would be in addition to our attempts to tabulate what is basically essay-based data.

The value in the surveys is the individual expression of a broad range of feelings about Minicon, with some repeating themes. I've read every one that's come in so far—there's funny stuff, heartwarming stuff, concerns clearly expressed, and valuable information about what rocks peoples' socks about Minicon. I'd like to share this information, and doing so in a group is a little community builder all on its own.

At the readings, we could pass the surveys out to all who wanted to read them aloud for the entire group. While names are attached to

many of the surveys, we'd not identify the names of people who responded anonymously to avoid anybody trying to figure out which anonymous response went with which responder.

Enough natter—you get the idea. It's a different approach to the vision exercise we did back at the June Minicon meeting. (Or was it May? Whenever, it was a darned good thing, and we ought get those vision statements published in such a way that we keep them in mind. I don't get to the Web page all that often; perhaps DDB has already set a bunch of the statements to cycle through there as he planned. They need more visibility.)

Oh. That's right. I said "enough natter."

Later,

Geri
Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
===================================
"On the Internet nobody knows you're a frog"
URL (not mine): http://frog.simplenet.com/froggy/

[Note: Geri Sullivan forwarded the following message to the Minn-Stf Board and the Minicon 33 Exec, with the following note. "FYI, wanted to make sure the Board and Exec saw Janet Moe's posting to Minicon-L. I also have Jeff's posting, which Janet mentions, if anyone needs a copy of that."]

From: Janet Moe <moexx012@gold.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Wed, 27 Aug 97 11:02:47 -0500
To: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Minicon-D Digest V97 #188

After having received several responses to Jeff's posting, I feel I must clarify something.

We USED to do Minicon for much, much less money and provided about the same amount of support. But, after several years of being accused of 'ripping off' Minicon, trying to take over Minicon, stealing Minicon's equipment (even though it wasn't Minicon's equipment), having our equipment damaged, etc., etc., we got tired of having our teeth kicked down our throats and we quit.

For our friends we do offer deep discounts. Minicon has proven itself not to be our friend. Nathaniel Damron of DPS used to do Minicon for next to nothing as a favor to us. He's had such a bad time, he won't do Minicon for next to nothing anymore. In fact, the only reason he does Minicon at all is because we asked, very nicely. He is giving Jeff and myself a very nice discount ($10,000 for a show that he would rent for over $40,000). Nathaniel doesn't need Minicon as a client, he's doing quite well doing shows for Aveda, KISS, the We Festival, etc.

The only reason we came back (for Minicon 30) was because a close friend of ours was running the Masquerade and she asked us to do it. We did, and had such a rotten time that, when we were asked to provide a quote for the next year, we quoted what we felt would not be acceptable to the Minicon committee. We were, quite frankly, very surprised that it was accepted. To put it quite bluntly, we have discovered, the hard way, that when we do something for free, or at a deep discount, for fandom, we're looked upon as the scum of the earth and told 'if you were REALLY a professional, you wouldn't be doing it for free.' When we charge more money (for the same equipment and services) we get less s**t. Go figure.

Please keep in mind what exactly we have been tasked to do:

1. Provide tech support for the 'main stage' of such quality that it can be broadcast via closed circuit TV to the Radisson South. The original reason for broadcasting the masquerade on closed circuit TV was to avoid 2,000 people trying to cram into a room that seats 500. Broadcasting on closed circuit television, by definition, requires a certain level of lighting, sound and video. Otherwise you get very, very bad video (like the year when the MC's magenta colored dress looked orange on the TV in one of the hotel rooms). The sound requirements are driven by the Radio Show and Band, if there is one. The Radio Show requires a 12 to 24 channel mixing board and two

DAT decks—one to record, one to playback sound cues. The DAT deck is because the show is recorded for later broadcast on KFAI. For masquerade, we only use 7 channels, 5 for playback decks, 2 for microphones.

2. Provide all A/V set ups for programming. This may not seem like much, but when you count the number of microphones in use by programming, and figure that the Rad South charges $40/day/mic and we're only charging $20/weekend/mic we're giving Minicon a deep discount. We also provide slide projectors, carts, screens, overhead projectors, etc., etc. at the same level of discount.

If you priced the show we do at Minicon at commercial rates, it'd cost $55,000. We do it for less than 25% of that cost. We don't set the requirements, all we do is quote a price and provide the equipment necessary to do what we've been asked to do. It's up to the Minicon Exec to accept the quote.

We'd be more than happy if M34 decides not to do a main stage. It would mean we could go somewhere else on Easter weekend, and we wouldn't have to haul equipment out of our basement.

Janet
_____
Janet L. Moe
moexx012@gold.tc.umn.edu

From: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Date: Wed, 27 Aug 1997 16:06:00 -0600
To: board@mnstf.org
Subject: Survey results: A quick tally

I just scanned the survey results received to date to see if there were any general trends in responses about the convention staying as is.

Keep as is: 17

Want significant change: 20

Specific comments about committee problems: 14

My placement into "keep as is" and "want significant change" is based on my own gut-level interpretation of the responses; other Board members might evaluate the responses differently. In general, "YES, YES, YES, YES AND OH GOD YES" counted as a "keep as is" response while "Ghod, no. It'll kill us. Minn-stf will die" went in the "want significant change" category.

There were a handful of responses that didn't fit in either category— "If it gets much bigger I'm afraid it will burst" in the concerns section followed by as is and comments of "Smaller? Or at least no bigger. Otherwise, same…Smaller? Less big? Fewer people? Did I mention this already? Really, it's a great con."

Likewise, "I think it's quite possible that leaving things as they are is the safest course of action for Minicon (any attempt at making MAJOR change(s) runs the risk of sending the convention off in the wrong direction or ending the convention completely.) _Although this is unlikely the best course of action for MN-Stf._"

Remember, the response pool is still small (around 11%). It *feels* to me that those I consider "longtime Minn-stf members"—David Cargo, Judie Cilcain, Denny Lien, Fred A. Levy Haskell, David Dyer-Bennet, DavE Romm and newer "core" members like Terry Garey, Scott Raun, Karen Cooper, Lydia Nickerson, Kay Drache, and me are strongly of the belief that things need changing (all of the above are in favor of change with the exception of DavE Romm, who thinks everything is fine). But we haven't yet heard from far more longtime Minn-stf members, including other members of the Board itself.

Geri
Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
===================================
"On the Internet nobody knows you're a frog"
URL (not mine): http://frog.simplenet.com/froggy/

For what it's worth, I think the Board, as a matter of policy, ought to only consider those proposals that have advocates. Seems to me to be unfair to those folks who have advocated different proposals for Minicon 34 to consider these sort of free-floating quasi-proposals.

It's also unfair to the proposals themselves.

A good idea—and I presume that the Exec Selection Committee and the Board wants a good idea—deserves a proponent.

I think there's much potential in a split Minicon, for example.

It would permit Minicon to continue moderate growth, as the Minicon 33 exec at least once thought possible and possibly desirable (see their original proposal), by splitting the convention into what I'll call Minicon Classic and the Alternative Lifestyles Convention.

It would permit the devotees of an SF/fannish convention to have a Minneapolis convention—possibly even called Minicon (this is, it seems, very important to some)—on the traditional Easter weekend, with all those benefits, both financial and traditional.

It would permit those out-of-towners who want to come to Minneapolis for a convention over Easter to make plans long in advance, knowing that eventually they could choose between the ALC and Minicon Classic.

It would enable those folks who feel disenfranchised by Minicon becoming something other than the ALC to have their ALC, complete with drum jam and rave, and gathering of the various clans. It would let those who find value in tech-heavy extravaganzas to have that, as well as the logistical and financial benefits and burdens of Masquerades and so forth. It would take much of the strain of written SF and written-sf-fan-related programming off a committee that has found that to be, often, merely one special-interest among others. (I think it's fair to say that most—certainly not all, but most—of the SF-writing crowd would choose a well-run Minicon Classic over a well-run ALC.)

It would, in other words, let those who want to have "con" have "con", while those who want to have Minicon could have a Minicon that more resembled a Minicon from a bygone era.

The split Minicon, for example, if it had a proponent, the proponent might well see the difficulty in trying to run to separate conventions lashed together by taking place in adjacent hotels.

There would be no apparent economies of scale to putting these cons next door, and the only benefit would appear to be for to those of the ALC who would also like to sample a Minicon, without actually choosing to spend their weekend doing one rather than the other. Further, it would limit the growth of the ALC by taking the Sofitel out of the picture, and I think that's contrary to the spirit of the ALC, and wishes of its advocates.

In fact, it seems to me that a real proponent of the split Minicon might well want to have the conventions running the same weekend, yes—that would take some of the load off the ALC of the one-interest-group-among-others—but, ideally, at different ends of the Metro area.

That would also deal with the difficulty of using the Sofitel as the Classic Minicon hotel, as the Sofitel has never been as friendly to parties as those who like the Classic Minicon idea would probably want.

But since the Split Minicon doesn't have any active proponents, there's probably more in its favor that hasn't occurred to me, and it'd be a shame to think one has considered such an idea without some advocate making the best case on its behalf.

At 11:19 AM 8/30/97, Joel Rosenberg wrote:

>For what it's worth, I think the Board, as a matter of policy, ought to
>only consider those proposals that have advocates. Seems to me to
>be unfair to those folks who have advocated different proposals for
>Minicon 34 to consider these sort of free-floating quasi-proposals.
>
>It's also unfair to the proposals themselves.
>
>A good idea—and I presume that the Exec Selection Committee and
>the Board wants a good idea—deserves a proponent.
>
>I think there's much potential in a split Minicon, for example.

Thanks for your comments about the need for proposals being considered to have proponents, and for your comments on the split Minicon proposal, which doesn't currently have such proponents. I've printed them out to take along to the next Board meeting along with the other proposals posted to the Minicon list.

First, of course, the exec selection committee gets to sort all this through.

Geri
Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
==================================
"On the Internet nobody knows you're a frog"
URL (not mine): http://frog.simplenet.com/froggy/

Hello, all:

Please forgive the multiple copies of this you may be receiving; it's important to me that you all see it. This is being distributed to the Minn-Stf Board, the Minicon-L mailing list, the authors of the High-Resolution Minicon proposal, and a miscellany of other people who have seen our proposal and who, I think, ought to be involved in the discussion. If you're unsure how you came to be on this list, it's because I blind-copied you as someone I thought might be interested, who would have interesting and worthwhile things to say. (If, by some chance, you haven't seen a copy of our proposal, it's at http://www.ddb.com/change-minicon.)

I'm concerned about a variety of nit-picking and red-herring chasing that I perceive in discussions about our proposal, but I'm particularly disturbed by the perception that we are excluding media fen (or costumers, or any other particular group). As we say in our proposal, we do not intend to exclude *anyone* who wants to be part of our community, but we *must* reduce the complexity of the convention.

In conversation with a member of the Minicon 34 Executive Selection Committee last night, I was told that we were not permitted by the Minn-Stf by-laws to exclude media fen. When I said that we didn't intend to, I was told that by prohibiting media-based theme parties in convention-controlled hospitality space that that was precisely what we were doing. It is not; and the thinking that underlay his statement causes me to write this today.

It is a fundamental premise of our proposal that we must restore the community of Minicon. To do that, we *must* de-balkanize Minicon. Media-based theme parties, a large masquerade, Minneapolis in '73, and any other enclaves within (and primarily apart from) the convention are anathema to our goal, and *must* be done away with. We are precisely as exclusive of media fen as we are of fanzine fen,

gamers, and costumers; anyone unwilling to be a part of the greater community is beyond our resources to afford.

We have to start our refocusing by eliminating those things that provide haven *away* from the rest of the convention; fen who have primary interest only in those things must be encouraged to run their events somewhere else. Our focus on written science fiction is indeed radical; we *must* prune back to the roots of our connection with fandom so that we can start rebuilding community. If we're to sustain Minicon and Minn-Stf, we must recognize our common bond, and build from it as a group. All of us—the authors of the High-Resolution Minicon proposal as much as everyone else—must give up our enclaves and havens and hidey-holes at Minicon, if we're to save it.

I haven't spoken with the rest of the authors of our proposal on this, so I speak only for myself, but I believe that all of us accept this as fundamental. If our proposal fails to say it well enough, blame us for our rush to say all of what we needed to say, in time for community discussion. None of us wishes to exclude anyone for their interests, only for their lack of them.

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

What Susan's message highlights is the fundamental disagreement between the Gang Of Ten and the Meliorists.

I would strongly encourage both the exec selection committee and the MnStf Board to consider the fundamentals, as well as the specifics of the three proposals (that I'm aware of, at least) that actually have proponents.

I'd take exception to Susan's implication that what has gone on is necessarily Balkanization, although in practice, that would be hard to dispute.

The Worldcon model, with a multi-ringed circus, is what in many ways Minicon has tried to be for a number of years. And I think that he is what the Meliorist faction are moving toward, at least as in interim step: a large convention, with written science fiction and its fandom featured, but which nevertheless accommodates a myriad of other interests else as well.

There's nothing wrong with Worldcons—but doing them well is an incredible amount of work.

As they say: "friends don't let friends run Worldcons." It's evident to me—I maybe wrong, but it is evident—that MnStf simply doesn't have the human resources necessary to run a 3500-person Worldcon every Easter.

Or, at least, not a first-rate one.

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your additional comments regarding the High-Resolution Minicon proposal; I understand that you are trying to make an honest attempt to clarify aspects of your proposal that you feel might have been misinterpreted. That's a good thing, and I appreciate it.

Speaking for myself, I'm not sure there _is_ "nit-picking and red-herring chasing" going on, but an honest attempt to understand just what is intended in the High Resolution Minicon proposal. I am sorry if it appears that way, but the Exec Selection Committee is in the process of examining _all_ of the proposal made and asking questions about each of them. Once that process is done, I expect we'll be making a recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Victor Raymond

Please forgive my "cc:the world" reply, but it will save me a lot of time, and I will keep it short and respect *your* time as well, I hope.

On Sun, 31 Aug 1997, Susan B. Levy Haskell wrote:

>Hello, all:
>
>Please forgive the multiple copies of this you may be receiving; it's
>important to me that you all see it. This is being distributed to the
>Minn-Stf Board, the Minicon-L mailing list, the authors of the
>High-Resolution Minicon proposal, and a miscellany of other people
>who have seen our proposal and who, I think, ought to be involved
>in the discussion. If you're unsure how you came to be on this list,
>it's because I blind-copied you as someone I thought might be
>interested, who would have interesting and worthwhile things to say.

Thank you for thinking of me; it is very good of you. While I wish everyone well who is working to build a better Minicon via the proposal and ideology route, I'm afraid I must excuse myself from such discussions.

I'm really grateful that you (you-Susan as well as you-everybody-cc'd here) value my contributions and think I might have interesting and worthwhile things to say. It means a lot to me that you asked, even though I must respectfully decline to join the current hard work being done to refine the theory from which the practice may proceed.

I hope no one takes this personally; it's not meant to be personal, except perhaps personal towards me. Y'see, I have a whole bunch of rather distressing health things to deal with at the moment, so I'm rationing the number of stressful areas of interaction at the moment. This area has been, unfortunately, one of the stressful ones, and I'm much more confident about my ability to do a halfway decent job of being able to keep my friends in (my own personal) high stress months than I am about my ability to phrase my opinions tactfully enough that they don't turn my friends into Mr. Hand Grenade after he is no longer your friend, for those of you who remember the comedy routine with that line in it.

As far as I know, I'll be working on this upcoming Minicon in the Green Room as per previous agreements. As long as this nice email note is so handy and all, I can tell those of you to whom I've not been lucky enough to speak in the last little while that I continue to search for some apprentices to train in as future Green Room hosts. (Those of you who are volunteers in the GR will recall that last year, the ones I'd been grooming for three years did their first co-head stint and then told me that they thought the job was a little too big for them, much to our mutual sorrow and the convention's loss. Fortunately, their enthusiasm for subheading is undimmed.) If you know anyone who is secretly Martha Stewart crossed with Marmee of _Little Women_, or otherwise GR head material, you'll have my everlasting gratitude if you point them in my direction so I can fulfil my dream of retirement.

Why retire? Well, because it's time for me to be a regular, convention-attending, fun-having, discussion-following, panel-moderating (but not committee-position-holding), ish-pubbing fan at home. I've been doing that all along at the other conventions in other states to which I go, and I'd dearly love to try it here too. Sometimes it takes the two-by-four of a little too much stress to make me get off the dime and

put my shoulder to the wheel and strike while the iron is hot (she said, tumbling metaphors in something the size of a small cement mixer), but ultimately this decision is about something that will (I hope) result in a more fun Elise both at Minicon and everywhere else. I hope that's a public good, at least in some incremental fashion. We does what we can, and alla that.

Anyhow, I said I'd be brief, and I wasn't. Please pardon this sleepy Lioness, and accept my good wishes for your endeavors, M-word related and otherwise. I am profoundly grateful for your kindness as I learn to deal with my physical and emotional limits in a difficult time, and am also grateful to all of you for the amount of fun and serious thought you bring into my life. As I'm doing some serious counting of blessings lately, the latter stuff has been particularly noticeable, and if I haven't thanked you yet, I should oughta.

Thanks,

and see you on the funway.

—
Elise/Lioness/Ellu Leijona
Now in stock: prime grade A words (please specify by weight or by volume)

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Sun, 31 Aug 1997 22:54:38 -0500
To: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Cc: board@mnstf.org, Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Misunderstandings about our proposal

At 9:26 PM -0500 8/31/97, Victor J. Raymond wrote:

>Speaking for myself, I'm not sure there _is_ "nit-picking and
>red-herring chasing" going on, but an honest attempt to understand
>just what is intended in the High Resolution Minicon proposal. I am
>sorry if it appears that way, but the Exec Selection Committee is in
>the process of examining _all_ of the proposal made and asking
>questions about each of them. Once that process is done, I expect
>we'll be making a recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Hi, Victor!

Forgive me for not clarifying: when I wrote that, I was referring to some of the discussions that have been taking place on Minicon-L, & didn't think to make it explicit. Many of the discussions on the list are getting at interesting points; but often they address implementation details rather than concepts.

The point that caused me to write, however, was a comment from a member of the Exec Selection Committee. My interest was in correcting a basic misunderstanding of our position and our proposal. While the point appeared to have been understood by the readers of Minicon-L, it had clearly been missed by at least one of your members, and went uncorrected through the two ESC meetings (which is why I thought it important enough to raise).

While we're on the topic of proposals, and since you apparently don't read Minicon-L, I'll steal the excellent point that was made on the list about "unsponsored" proposals—those that have no proponents or potential committee outlined: I think it behooves us—both the Exec Selection Committee & the community at large—not to waste time examining such proposals, since the Board couldn't possibly accept one without a committee to support it.

Lastly, since you aren't reading Minicon-L, let me send you my comment on the "Split Minicon" proposal you introduced. (To the folks on Minicon-L: please forgive the repost; I thought you ought to see the rest of the correspondence.)

Thanks, Victor! & sorry again about not clarifying the red-herrings!

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

———————————

Hello, all:

Forgive my intrusion, but I need to address one erroneous point in the "Split" proposal. I appreciate Joel's point that unsponsored proposals shouldn't be considered; but any discussion that takes place should be with full understanding of its circumstances.

>…
>Minicon 34 / Proposal No. 4
>Submitted by Victor Raymond
>
>Minicon/Maxicon, or The Split Minicon Redux.
>…
>- "Classic" Minicon: a smaller, print-oriented SF convention, with a
>specific appeal to fans who would prefer a convention that felt like
>decent Minicons in the past. This convention would be located in
>the Hotel Sofitel.
>…
>
>Positive Elements
>…
>
>- There is a ready committee core for the "Classic Minicon"
>convention; the proposal put forth by DDB, et. al.

Well, no, actually. I speak *only*for*myself* on this, but I have offered to take a role in working on Minicons 34+ because I believe that Minicon and Minn-StF are at enormous risk—financially and otherwise—because of the size and complexity of current Minicons. This proposal calls for an even more complex meta-convention—with much greater requirements in human & financial resources—rather than the admittedly-painful scaling-back I think is necessary. I would have no part of it.

I will point out that our proposal explicitly requests that if it is accepted, and if we make substantially more than our financial goal as set by the Minn-StF Board, that the Board consider providing seed money *to*some*other*organization* to run a large, complex convention. That seems only equitable, since there are legitimate stakeholders in Minicon who won't find ours appealing. But I believe that the large, complex, convention that Minicon has become is demonstrably not sustainable by Minn-StF.

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Mon, 1 Sep 1997 23:29:31 -0500
To: "Sharon Kahn" <dreampark@pobox.com>
Cc: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Misunderstandings about our proposal

At 11:15 AM -0500 9/1/97, Sharon Kahn wrote:

>Susan Levy Haskell writes…
>
>>It is a fundamental premise of our proposal that we must restore
>>the community of Minicon. To do that, we *must* de-balkanize
>>Minicon.
>
><snip>
>
>>We have to start our refocusing by eliminating those things that
>>provide haven *away* from the rest of the convention; fen who
>>have primary interest only in those things must be encouraged to
>>run their events somewhere else.
>
>>I haven't spoken with the rest of the authors of our proposal on
>>this, so I speak only for myself, but I believe that all of us accept
>>this as fundamental.
>

>If this is, in fact, a reasonable statement of how the Gang of Ten
>feels, I now realize that I do not support this proposal. While I am
>in sympathy with the impulses behind it, and would probably enjoy
>the result if it were 100% successful in achieving all the stated
>objectives, that is not what I see as the most likely outcome.

I'm sorry to hear it, Sharon, but I understand completely. I believe we
won't be successful the first year, & I'm not certain that we're going
to be successful, period. I do believe that we're in far greater
jeopardy by allowing the current trend to continue than we are by
trying something; and whatever we try must be radical enough to
effect real change quickly. & *if* we're allowed to try, & *if* we don't
succeed in two or three or four years, then we'll need to try the next
idea (whatever that'll be).

>What is all too likely, imho, is ending up with a convention that has
>all my beloved "safe havens" stripped away from it, but that hasn't
>successfully pared the main convention down to the core values I
>am looking for. In other words, the worst of both worlds.

The image that keeps coming to me—it'll make sense to you, I think,
but may not to a bunch of the folks on Minicon-L—is of the Tarot
card Death: I think Minicon of the last many years has been Death
reversed, & we need to turn it on its head. The stagnation &
murkiness & inertia needs to be fixed—and I believe it *can* be—but
it'll require a bunch of pain & tearing-down to renew it.

I suspect that the reason that you're comfortable with the status quo
& I'm not boils down to something you mentioned in your response
to Sean Novack on the list:

>… I used to be of the "Minicon is just too damn big" school, but
>since I have learned how to find my own happy little enclaves
>inside the larger Minicon, I have been having an absolutely
>marvelous time. Although what I have started referring to as the
>"Poolside Circus" is not a very good filter for true fannish
>characteristics, it still works to some extent. I know, from personal
>contacts, that there are a lot of true fans wandering around out there
>in the Circus not yet knowing their true nature….

I have happy little enclaves, too, but it tears me open to know that
there're trufen—or "Space Aliens," I like that better in this context—
walking around the "Poolside Circus," who never find their own. It's
true, I'm pretty soppy, but I literally weep about this—I'm cryin' as I
write, fer Ghu's sake—but I don't think the neo- & proto-Space Aliens
are staying around at Minicon, or finding fandom. Would you have? I
know I wouldn't. & that just makes me sick.

It's true that my primary interest in changing Minicon is to keep from
enabling my friends & my community to destroy themselves & the
club trying to harness the dread leviathan that Minicon has become,
but we're not serving our highest purpose in running the convention:
we're not keeping the door wide open for the ones who come after.
And *we* get called exclusionary—sheesh! I know that sounds
pompous & holier-than-thou, but I readily admit to having been born
with a soapbox, & it's really how I feel.

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

From: skzb@wavefront.com
Date: Tue, 2 Sep 1997 11:50:02 -0500
To: sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu, board@mnstf.org
Cc: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Misunderstandings about our proposal

Very well said, Susan.

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Mon, 1 Sep 1997 23:52:31 -0500
To: sraun@iaxs.net
Cc: Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Pardon my ignorance…

>>[In response to David Dyer-Bennet]

>Sharon Kahn replies

At 1:50 PM -0500 9/1/97, Scott Raun wrote:

>>… What disturbs me is the suggestion that we need to eliminate all
>>the "safe enclaves" (like Mpls in '73, the institution that has kept
>>many of the oldtime fans alive for the past few years) before we
>>have demonstrated that we can replace them with anything more
>>satisfactory.
>
>I must have missed something in the original proposal—I didn't see
>anything that was specifically aimed at eliminated Mpls in 73, SEMP,
>or whatever someone's personal "safe enclave" is. They may try to
>convince some of the hosts of such to do something else—but what
>wording specifically eliminates such parties?

I believe that Minneapolis in '73 was among those special interests to
be eliminated—primarily because we want it to be unnecessary—but
no one's intending to do away with parties. I said, speaking for
myself, that we need to get rid of all of our safe-havens for this to
work. I believe it *can* work, but not if those of us who are seeking
community at Minicon are holed up when we try it.

>>>And, second, that when I am off hiding in my safe enclave, I
>>>don't *get* to meet the new people, because they can't find my
>>>safe spot; and they don't get to meet me, or Fred, or Susan, or
>>>Steven, or Pamela, or Karen, or you, or most of local fandom. So
>>>they never discover that fandom exists.
>>
>>Guess what! There's another option! Don't spend all your time
>>hiding in your safe house. Use it as a starting point for exciting
>>trips out into the Circus (or, as Barb and David were calling it,
>>Minicon City).
>
>I'm sorry, but I'll have to disagree with you and agree with DDB
>here—here we touch on why I like Minn-StF, am significantly
>uncomfortable at a small out-of-town convention, will almost
>invariably be found hiding somewhere at Minicon (frequently my
>room).
>
>I'm shy. I almost literally CANNOT walk up to a complete stranger
>and start a conversation. I can join a conversation that someone I
>know is having with someone I don't know. Therefore, for me to
>enjoy a con in anything other than audience mode, I have to have a
>local minima of people I know. And the only place that's currently
>happening is the enclaves, and there isn't significant new blood in
>the enclaves. Therefore, I am not getting to meet new people.

Exactly! & what are most of us "Space Aliens" doing?—We've got our
noses in our books. & how many of us would come back to the
Minicon that exists in the '90s if we weren't already part of the
community?—I don't believe many of us would. So with our current
Minicon model, we're selecting *against* new Space Aliens. They may
be coming, but if they're like us, they're leaving again as soon as
possible.

>I believe the High Resolution Minicon model would be to my
>personal benefit. If it succeeds, I just might be able to make a
>significant number of new friends—because my old friends would
>be out being a catalyst, instead of all concentrated in little groups.
>
>As such, I'm willing to work to try to make the High Resolution
>Minicon a success.

Thank you, Scott. I'm delighted to hear it.

>… NO ONE HAS WALKED UP TO ME OR CALLED ME AND SAID,
>"HI, I'D LIKE TO HOST A MINN-STF MEETING." A number of
>people have allowed that they would be willing to do so when they
>were part of conversation where the topic came up—but that's it.

Fair enough. It's a conversation we need to have & another problem
of long standing that we need to solve—but if we can fix Minicon, we
can fix the Universe! (she says, with wry amusement that she believes
it.)

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell
sblh@maroon.tc.umn.edu

*[NOTE: An email message was received by the Minn-Stf Board asking whether we have
a mission statement and, if so, whether a copy could be made available. This was Geri's
response. —falh]*

From: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Date: Wed, 3 Sep 1997 03:34:16 -0600
Subject: Re: mission statement

The Board doesn't have a formal process for figuring out who's going
to answer any specific email message. :-) (They don't come in all that
often.) So I figured I'd give it my best shot.

If you're asking for a Minicon mission statement, I don't think there's
a formal such beast in existence. Not that the Board has, anyway. The
proposals for individual Minicons sometimes have mission statements,
or something that alludes to a mission, such as the Minicon 33
proposal, which asks:

"What Do We Stand For?

"FUN! FUN! FUN!"

Followed by a page of elaboration regarding the basic beliefs guiding
this year's exec. ("Programming must not suck," etc.)

Minn-stf itself does not have a formal mission statement. Back in 1972
when the club was organized into a non-profit corporation, the
articles of incorporation included a purpose statement, which may be
of some assistance. It's important to remember that the following was
written in the legal form required for the incorporation.

****
Begin excerpt from articles of incorporation
****

FIRST AMENDED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
MINNESOTA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

The undersigned, for the purpose of continuing a corporation
pursuant to the provisions of the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation
Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 317, adopt the following Amended
Articles of Incorporation.

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of the corporation shall be Minnesota Science Fiction
Society.

ARTICLE II—PURPOSES

A. The permanent objects and purposes for which the corporation is
established are exclusively educational, literary, and charitable, and in
furtherance of such purposes and for no other purpose and in
compliance with the meaning set forth in Section 501(c)(3) of the
Internal Revenue Code.

B. The purpose of this corporation shall be to promote science fiction
in all forms of speculative, literary or artistic expression, which lead
to the enhancement of either science fiction or related fields and to
plan, design, arrange, or sponsor the development of social and
physical environments for the advocates of science fiction and its

related speculative literatures. Said environments include provisions
for meetings, conventions, publications, and lectures, as well as
facilities for the storage and operation of equipment for the
organization, reproduction, and distribution of any media of artistic
expression used for promoting science fiction or its related
speculative literatures.

****
End excerpt from articles of incorporation
****

There's a bit more to Article II—it covers that we have powers
permitted by law that are consistent with our purposes, and that we
won't use our organization to influence legislation or participate or
intervene in any political campaign for a candidate for public office.

Does this adequately answer your question?

Best,

Geri
Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
===================================
"On the Internet nobody knows you're a frog"
URL (not mine): http://frog.simplenet.com/froggy/

From: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>
Date: 4 Sep 1997 00:17:58 -0000
To: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
**Subject: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with
Minicon**

This message is going to the Board and to the Exec Selection
Committee members for whom I have email addresses, which turns
out to mean the Minicon 33 exec list. This does not appear, at the
moment, to include Cat or Kay, for which I apologize.

There's been some discussion floating around as to whether Minn-
StF's bylaws allow certain aspects of the Minicon 34 proposal I and
others have put forward.

Of course they do.

The argument I've heard is that we're required to give equal
promotion to all forms of SF. This is both nonsense, and something
we've never done before. The bylaws *allow* us to deal with all
forms of SF.

Furthermore, if they *did* require us to promote all forms equally, let
me point out that our proposal advocates encouraging the formation
of other conventions dealing more with the other forms. Nowhere in
the bylaws does it state, and nobody has suggested that they mean,
that *each individual* activity of Minn-StF must promote all forms of
SF equally; if they did mean that, then TOTU and RUNE Press would
be forbidden, because they deal only with written SF.

The relevant bits seem to be:

****
Begin excerpt from articles of incorporation
****

>FIRST AMENDED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
>OF
>MINNESOTA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

<snip>

>ARTICLE II—PURPOSES
>
>A. The permanent objects and purposes for which the corporation is
>established are exclusively educational, literary, and charitable, and
>in furtherance of such purposes and for no other purpose and in
>compliance with the meaning set forth in Section 501(c)(3) of the
>Internal Revenue Code.

Note the emphasis on literary here in the primary statement of our
objectives and purposes.

>B. The purpose of this corporation shall be to promote science
>fiction in all forms of speculative, literary or artistic expression,
>which lead to the enhancement of either science fiction or related
>fields and to plan, design, arrange, or sponsor the development of
>social and physical environments for the advocates of science fiction
>and its related speculative literatures. Said environments include
>provisions for meetings, conventions, publications, and lectures, as
>well as facilities for the storage and operation of equipment for the
>organization, reproduction, and distribution of any media of artistic
>expression used for promoting science fiction or its related
>speculative literatures.

This is basically carefully crafted verbiage to allow us to run Minicon,
and to do anything vaguely stfnal at it that we want, and to own fun
toys (equipment) that can be used for that sort of thing. It defines
what we're allowed to do much more than what we're required to do.

Does the board have any official opinion on these issues of
interpretation? Preferably official opinions informed by consultation
with counsel? Have we in fact been operating in violation of our
bylaws for the last almost-30 years, and just coincidentally nobody
has noticed until now? What plans are we making to bring media SF
into its proper place in Minn-StF, if this really means what a couple of
people seem to be saying it means?

—
David Dyer-Bennet   ddb@gw.ddb.com, ddb@ddb.com
Me: http://www.ddb.com/~ddb (photos, sf)
Minicon: http://www.mnstf.org/minicon33
Join the 20th century before it's too late!

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Date: Wed, 03 Sep 1997 22:30:27 -0500 (CDT)
To: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>
Cc: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
**Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with
Minicon**

Dear David,

Thank you for your comments regarding the by-laws; I have a few
observations that might be of interest.

1) Article II. A.—the phrasing in this article is specifically to be in
compliance with IRS regulations, and therefore the "literary" reference
you make is, well, not _necessarily_ the result of a filial devotion
alone to the concept.

2) Article II. B.—this is much more the essence of what MinnStF is
about, and I tend to agree with your assessment that it is more
permissive than prescriptive. _HOWEVER_, the "all forms" portion
does suggest that an openness to various aspects of SF besides books
is indicated. Once again, we're forced to piece through the intentions
of a previous generation of by-laws drafters. Nothing wrong with that,
however.

— BTW, the point I make under 1), above, is based on my somewhat
extensive body of consulting work for other non-profit organizations,
and the references gathered from my attendance at a MSBA legal
seminar last fall on non-profit law. No, I am not a lawyer, but I do
have some standing as a non-profit consultant.

<smile>

3) I guess I feel like you are prevaricating a little with you previous
note about "encouraging the formation of other conventions"—maybe
I am misremembering, but isn't this to be done _outside_ of MinnStF?
If you mean that this ought to be done by MinnStF, should a
concomm wish to be formed for said other conventions, then I retract
what I've said.

4) Your point regarding TOTU and Rune Press is, I am afraid, a good
case of reductio ad absurdam. _Of_course_, were the by-laws solely
prescriptive and absolute, these things would be forbidden. But that
misses the point, the very crux of the argument—which is technically
the "argument of the beard"—at what point do we cross the line from

"promoting science fiction in all its forms" to _not_ "promoting
science fiction in all its forms"?

It's a real argument.

And one on which reasonable people may disagree. If, for example, it
is felt that we're not living up to this provision of the by-laws, or
actively working against it, then there might be cause for concern. If
you feel that this _isn't_ happening, it doesn't do much good to
dismiss the opposing viewpoint as somehow unattainable.

<shrug>

Mostly, I think your analysis of the "permissive vs. prescriptive"
aspects of the by-laws is correct. However, you may be missing the
deeper debate about how do we best live up to the mission of the
organization. Probably not, but this _particular_ set of arguments do
not show that in a way I feel would be of benefit.

Victor

From: skzb@wavefront.com
Date: Wed, 3 Sep 1997 23:46:52 -0500
To: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>, board@mnstf.org,
exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
**Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with
Minicon**

David, arguing based on facts and logic isn't fair. Cut it out.

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 12:11:03 -0500 (CDT)
To: skzb@wavefront.com
Cc: board@mnstf.org
**Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with
Minicon**

Dear Steven,

Very funny. <chuckle> But, as I said before, not very useful.

<shrug>

Victor

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@mapnp.org>
Date: Thu, 4 Sep 1997 13:24:43 -0500
To: RAYMOND@macalester.edu
CC: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
**Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with
Minicon [f**

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>

>Dear David,
>
>Thank you for your comments regarding the by-laws; I have a few
>observations that might be of interest.
>
>1) Article II. A.—the phrasing in this article is specifically to be in
>compliance with IRS regulations, and therefore the "literary"
>reference you make is, well, not _necessarily_ the result of a filial
>devotion alone to the concept.

That's true, Victor, specifically because the IRS wouldn't grant status
to a primarily media-based organization.

>2) Article II. B.—this is much more the essence of what MinnStF is
>about, and I tend to agree with your assessment that it is more
>permissive than prescriptive. _HOWEVER_, the "all forms" portion
>does suggest that an openness to various aspects of SF besides
>books is indicated. Once again, we're forced to piece through the
>intentions of a previous generation of by-laws drafters. Nothing
>wrong with that, however.

Well, no, we could ask them; they're all still around. But, more
importantly, as I'm sure you learned in your non-profit law class, the
"all forms" portion is in Article IIb is there for precisely the same

reason as the "literary" in Article IIa. We're avoiding trouble with the IRS in the event that we sponsor something that might include a "non-literary" form.

It seems to me that you're the one prevaricating, Victor. Remember, David's reply was in response to the allegation that our proposal was unacceptable, by the by-laws (which really is patent nonsense). It's true that David's TotU example is reductio ad absurdum, but only because it's precisely the same argument that's being made when anyone suggests that *our* proposal is in violation of the by-laws (articles of incorporation, actually). I believe that's the point he's trying to make.

If we really want a legal opinion about this, Charley Ravine is perfectly willing to help. (For the Board & Exec, Charley is MAP's Legal & HR Services Director; he's a lawyer with about 26 years in non-profit law.) But I can assure you, from *my* experience consulting with non-profits, that there is no legitimate argument here to make.

>[…]
>
>4) Your point regarding TOTU and Rune Press is, I am afraid, a
>good case of reductio ad absurdam. _Of_course_, were the by-laws
>solely prescriptive and absolute, these things would be forbidden.
>But that misses the point, the very crux of the argument—which is
>technically the "argument of the beard"—at what point do we cross
>the line from "promoting science fiction in all its forms" to _not_
>"promoting science fiction in all its forms"?
>
>It's a real argument.

No, Victor, it's not. Not as the Articles were written.

>And one on which reasonable people may disagree. If, for example,
>it is felt that we're not living up to this provision of the by-laws, or
>actively working against it, then there might be cause for concern.

Nope. That one I can assure you is inaccurate. If we *hadn't* used "all forms" in Article IIb, then a panel on Babylon 5 *might* put us in jeopardy—which is precisely why they're written that way—but a concentration—on written SF, particularly—is of no concern at all.

>Mostly, I think your analysis of the "permissive vs. prescriptive"
>aspects of the by-laws is correct. However, you may be missing the
>deeper debate about how do we best live up to the mission of the
>organization.

It's my impression that Minn-Stf has no mission statement; am I wrong?

>Probably not, but this _particular_ set of arguments do not show that
>in a way I feel would be of benefit.

But nor do yours, Victor. Remember, Victor, David was responding to a thoroughly specious claim that our proposal violated the Articles; if his arguments appear a little odd, it's because he's defending against an absurd assertion.

-susan
—
Susan B. Levy Haskell   *Information Technology Services Director*
sblh@mapnp.org   *MAP for Nonprofits*
voice (612) 647-1216 x229   *2233 West University Avenue, #360*
fax (612) 647-1369   *St. Paul, MN 55114-1629*

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 13:51:46 -0500 (CDT)
To: sblh@mapnp.org
Cc: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with Minicon [f

I think if you ask Charley, you will find that there is little distinction between a media-based organization such as, say, the USS Nokomis, and MinnStF. And as far as the "all forms" clause goes, vs. the "literary

organization" phrasing, if you rely on "literary organization" as justification in one paragraph, you can't very well object to using the "all forms" justification in the next.

As I said before, reasonable people may disagree about this. And, as I pointed out to David, it's less about legalisms than it is about sense of purpose and mission. Which is a much stickier wicket.

Victor

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 13:55:12 -0500 (CDT)
To: sblh@mapnp.org
Cc: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with Minicon [f

Dear Susan,

I would suggest referring to the Articles of Incorporation and the By-laws for specific instances where a mission statement can be found. <sigh> I _believe_ there is a Statement of Purpose, which may serve in that stead, but I don't have it in front of me.

Let me be _very_ clear: I largely _agreed_ with DDB about the "permissive vs. prescriptive" nature of the by-laws. Where I am having difficulty is with the question of how do we live up to the mission of the organization—and _that's_ where a real disagreement lies.

Please take a moment and read _carefully_ what I am saying.

Victor

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@mapnp.org>
Date: Thu, 4 Sep 1997 14:59:03 -0500
To: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
CC: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws

That scintillating conversationalist, Victor J. Raymond, wrote:

>Let me be _very_ clear: I largely _agreed_ with DDB about the
>"permissive vs. prescriptive" nature of the by-laws. Where I am
>having difficulty is with the question of how do we live up to the
>mission of the organization—and _that's_ where a real disagreement
>lies.

Hi, Victor!

Let's try again: I was responding to your reply to David's wide open response to an allegation that appears to be floating around the ESC, specifically, that our proposal is unacceptable because it "violates Minn-Stf's by-laws." Sounds pretty absurd, right? I sure think so. But we're responding to an allegation that's coming out of the Exec Selection Committee, that no individual on the committee seems to take!

Let's have a sensible talk, Victor. The authors of our proposal have been suggesting to the folks on the ESC who've been contacting them that we all need to sit down together & talk. I think we're all friends here; we ought to be able to sit down together & sort out what kind of issues there are, without all this.

It's my perception that you're defending some absurd positions—Victor, I don't believe that you think our proposal violates Article IIb, but you just defended a position suggesting that it might!—& I think we need to address that. I tried to point out in mine—point-by-point, as you'd done in yours—that the argument is specious, but if you don't hold that position, then David & I have misunderstood communications from the ESC contacts who've contacted us. I'm pretty sure that we can all have a much more productive conversation when we all figure out what issues there *really* are. I think we're chasing phantoms; and I think there's too much of substance to discuss, to be wasting time on those.

>Please take a moment and read _carefully_ what I am saying.

I have, Victor. But if you read carefully what you were saying, I think you'd be chagrined. ;> Are you really intending to defend that our proposal may violate the by-laws? I don't think that's what you—the ESC—meant, but that's what's in the script you're using when you contact us. So, as I said, let's all sit down & talk through what the issues really are, so we can find some resolution. Okay?

-susan
—

Susan B. Levy Haskell   *Information Technology Services Director*
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From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@mapnp.org>
Date: Thu, 4 Sep 1997 15:06:01 -0500
To: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
CC: board@mnstf.org, exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Minn-StF by-laws in regard to what we may do with Minicon [f

That scintillating conversationalist, Victor J. Raymond, wrote:

>As I said before, reasonable people may disagree about this. And, as
>I pointed out to David, it's less about legalisms than it is about sense
>of purpose and mission. Which is a much stickier wicket.

But that's not true. Reasonable people can't disagree about whether our proposal violates the Articles of Incorporation. If mission is the topic, then the ESC members who've been calling us to chat have misunderstood what *they're* supposed to be chatting about.

-susan
—

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From: Windy Merrill <arrowadv@earthlink.net>
Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 11:10:42 -0700
To: ddb@ddb.com
Subject: Minicon 33—specifically the Masquerade

David,

not being sure just who or where to email, and since your email address is plastered all over the web pages, I wanted to mention a rumor I have heard rumbling about. The large vague part of the rumor is that MnStf wants to refocus the con. Which is fine—it is very big, and we are getting some very interesting elements. But, the part of the rumor that concerns me is the attachment that says that MnStf is considering killing the Masquerade. Disclaimer: I have no idea how accurate this rumor may or may not be. I hear from people who should be in the know that it is complete bunk. And then I hear from other people who should be in the know that this idea has been talked about.

Yes, I could come to Con-Com meetings and find out for myself—but I'm also a RenFest geek and that makes Saturday meetings hard.

At any rate, to be brief and blunt, I would like to state (just in case the rumor is NOT bunk) that I would be very very saddened to see the Masquerade die. I have a blast doing it, and it is the big reason I attend Minicon. But, lest you think I'm one of those fringe elements that really has nothing to do with the core con ideas of fantasy and scifi—I am an avid F/SF reader, and love going to panels, being on panels, talking about books/movies in the halls and the general fannish fun. So, speaking as a true "fan", please don't take away Masquerade!

Addendum: I noticed there was no department head listed for the Masquerade on the Department page. This leads me to wonder, how exactly does one become a department head, and what are the duties of said head and any added sub-heads??

Should you have time for a reply, please reply to

wmerrill@arrowschweber.com

Thank you for your time!

Windy Merrill

From: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>
Date: 5 Sep 1997 21:23:30 -0000
To: board@mnstf.org
Subject: Postage meter costs

Did you know that it's costing us 2.85 cents per piece to use the postage meter? Probably more than that; that's just the cost of the ribbon cartridge used in the current meter.

—

David Dyer-Bennet   *ddb@gw.ddb.com, ddb@ddb.com*

From: gfs@toad-hall.com (Geri Sullivan)
Date: Fri, 5 Sep 1997 19:05:15 -0600
To: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>
Cc: board@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Postage meter costs

At 3:23 PM 9/5/97, David Dyer-Bennet wrote:

>Did you know that it's costing us 2.85 cents per piece to use the
>postage meter? Probably more than that; that's just the cost of the
>ribbon cartridge used in the current meter.

Youch!

That seems much higher than anything I would have anticipated if I'd ever given it any thought. Thanks for bringing it to the Board's attention.

Geri

Geri Sullivan gfs@toad-hall.com
=================================
Busted my TAFF cherry by nominating
Ulrika O'Brien and proud of it.

From: Dean Gahlon <dean@visi.com>
Date: Sat, 6 Sep 1997 01:28:48 -0500 (CDT)
To: ddb@gw.ddb.com (David Dyer-Bennet)
Cc: board@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Postage meter costs

>Did you know that it's costing us 2.85 cents per piece to use the
>postage meter? Probably more than that; that's just the cost of the
>ribbon cartridge used in the current meter.

Just how much do ribbon cartridges cost? And how long do they last? If we got 1000 pieces mailed per ribbon cartridge, that would mean that the ribbon cartridge cost $28.50. I can't now recall having signed any checks for the ribbon cartridge on the postage meter since we got it; this could either mean that we have had to replace the ribbon cartridge and I've forgotten it, or else that the ribbon cartridge that came with the meter has lasted for longer than these numbers would seem to indicate. At a size for the Einblatt mailing list of 360, that would mean that we'd be replacing the ribbon cartridge slightly more often than every 3 months. If we got 10000 pieces per cartridge, that would put the price for a ribbon cartridge at $285.00, to be replaced about every two years.

As far as I can recall, the only checks we've had to write connected with the postage meter have been for the rental of the postage meter itself and the "postage-by-phone" stuff (the latter being to put money into the postage meter account). I think we've had this postage meter just about long enough for the 10000 guesstimate above to come into play. I don't think the previous postage meter had this problem, but, again, I could be wrong.

Dean Gahlon
dean@visi.com

From: David Dyer-Bennet <ddb@gw.ddb.com>
Date: 6 Sep 1997 18:37:52 -0000
To: board@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Postage meter costs

Dean Gahlon <dean@visi.com> writes on 6 September 1997 at
01:28:48 -0500

>>Did you know that it's costing us 2.85 cents per piece to use the
>>postage meter? Probably more than that; that's just the cost of the
>>ribbon cartridge used in the current meter.
>
>Just how much do ribbon cartridges cost? And how long do they
>last?

From Pitney Bowes, they cost $39.95 for a pack of two. They spec
them for about 700 imprints each, which is in the ballpark of what
I've been getting. I got caught short this last time because I expected
such a large cartridge to last longer.

There may be cheaper sources, but the office-supply stores don't
seem to have anything for this model.

—
David Dyer-Bennet   ddb@gw.ddb.com, ddb@ddb.com

From: "Susan B. Levy Haskell" <sblh@mapnp.org>
Date: Mon, 8 Sep 1997 15:23:45 -0500
To: crumbo@hotmail.com, kdrache@sun.hennepin.lib.mn.us,
raymond@macalester.edu, OCELCAJ@gw.startribune.com,
schafer@minn.net, GDavidTen@aol.com
CC: board@mnstf.org, Minicon-L@mnstf.org, hrc@ddb.com
Subject: The promised clarification

A Clarification and Revision of the High-Resolution Minicon Proposal

September 8, 1997

Three weeks ago we published the High-Resolution Minicon proposal
to refocus Minicon, starting with Minicon 34. The proposal was
presented to the Minn-Stf Board, the Minicon 34 Executive Selection
Committee, and the fannish and Minicon communities. We have
received a variety of responses, nearly all of which confirm our
observation that we must scale back Minicon; but many of which
have caused us to reexamine some of our strategies for doing so. We
thank everyone who has taken the time to respond for their
thoughtful—and thought-provoking—comments. This document is
intended to explain some of the issues we've reconsidered, clarify our
positions where they need clarification, and address concerns that
we've heard expressed.

The most pressing issue that our responders cite is the need for very
clear communication. Most of those who have responded recognize
that we aren't intending to exclude *anyone* whose interests include
science fiction and fandom; but we must find more ways to
communicate that we're excluding *activities*, not people who may
participate in them. All Minicon committees decide what they will and
will not include; we are proposing to make that very explicit from the
outset, rather than by default.

Our initial communication, our proposal itself, outlined our
intentions, as well as the need for them. It has successfully generated
discussion locally and elsewhere about how to refocus the
convention without excluding the very people we seek to keep. One
of the issues we must keep foremost in our minds is that the fen we
want to continue seeing at Minicon—or see return—are often those
most sensitive to messages of rejection, whereas the people who
aren't interested in the community are likely to be less so. We have
learned that each of us is more effective at communicating our goals
and plans to some people than to others; we recognize that we must
speak with a variety of different voices. (Appendix A includes some
preliminary ideas and text for our communications plan.)

Generally, our communications with the current committee have been
in personal conversations. Many of them are interested in working
with us on Minicon 34. Some have reservations about parts of our

proposal—and some are very enthusiastic (like the four of our
authors who are on the current committee ;>)—but we have received
confirmation that we needn't concern ourselves with wholesale revolt.
We have also received support and offers of aid from many past
committee members who no longer work on Minicon; they are eager
to work again on a Minicon they're putting on for their friends (the
ones they know and those they've yet to meet).

Our proposed committee structure has been of concern to the Exec
Selection Committee. The ESC has said that it is too likely that a
single executive will be distracted by a faltering department; they are
concerned about the Chair "white-knighting" one department while
the rest of the convention receives too little attention. In fact, at least
one of the ESC is inclined to return to the original Executive
Committee model, wherein a variety of department heads serve.
While we don't concur (our proposal states that an Executive
Committee is an inappropriate use of our human resources), we are
aware of their issues, and propose an alternative that we believe will
satisfy their concerns and ours. We propose to use a variation on the
common Worldcon model: the authors of this proposal would
comprise a convention Executive Council, at whose pleasure our
Coordinator will serve. Other members of the Council would take on
specific departmental responsibilities. In the event that the
Coordinator requires replacement (or simply remonstration) for
inattention to the convention as a whole, the Executive Council can
act; but they would not be required to spend precious time in routine
oversight of departments other than their own.

We have heard concern that we are excluding media fen from
Minicon. While most of those who have read our proposal recognize
the distinction between excluding people and curtailing the activities
that cater to them, we want to clarify our position. We neither want
nor intend to exclude people who want to be a part of Minicon. We
have shown, however, that Minicon *must* become less complex; and
in simplifying it, we will be excluding activities that may be the sole
reason some people attend Minicon. That's the reality, and we are
unwilling to deny it. Without being explicit about it, the "alternative
cultures festivals" have excluded people who came to Minicon for
community; we feel that that's not being forthright with the
community, and will not continue that pattern. We will continue to
work to communicate to everyone whether they're likely to enjoy our
Minicon, but we will not deny that some will not.

We have heard it alleged that we're going to "kill" Minicon. We're
certainly proposing radical surgery. But Minicon is on its way to
explosion now, and the gradual solutions we've been trying for years
have been ineffective. We *must* make radical changes to fix Minicon.
We *must* find ways to reduce its complexity and its size before
another catastrophic failure destroys Minn-Stf along with Minicon.
And those who say that our goals are achievable by less radical
means have shown no evidence that this is so.

Appendix A—Preliminary Communications Plans

This is an *extremely*rough*start* at communications planning. This
document is made up of fragments of ideas—and some whole ones—
for communications about Minicon 34, should our proposal be
selected.

If we are awarded the opportunity to run Minicon 34, we will start
work immediately, in conjunction with the Minicon 33 committee, to
plan our communications. We recognize that our communications will
affect their convention; and many of our best opportunities to
communicate with the Minicon community will come *at* their
convention. It is urgent that our communications plans for Minicon 34
do not obstruct Minicon 33's communications; and it is imperative
that we start publicizing our proposed changes as soon as we know
we'll be making them.

Communications at Minicon 33:

Announce at the masquerade that there won't be one next year. Be
available to take the heat & explain the reasoning to angry costumers.

—

Have a couple-sentence "pledge" that anyone getting a drink from the bar must read. Something like: "Next year's Minicon will be very different. I may not like it. I'd better read their publications." This serves two purposes: it makes sure that *most* of the attendees know that something's gonna happen; & anybody who *can't* read it needs to be cut off! ;>

—Signage or fortune cookies or somesuch:

If a room full of people—some of 'em sober!—sitting around & talking about whether Greg Bear's _Blood_Music_ had a happy ending or not appeals to you, then you're probably going to enjoy our Minicon.

If you will spend *hours* pondering what else the technology in a transporter would get used for, you're probably one of us.

If you've done a walking tour of Minneapolis sight-seeing the locations in Emma Bull's _War_for_the_Oaks_—or better still, *thought* about doing it, but haven't gotten around to it yet—then you're probably one of us.

If you're used to being the odd one, then you're probably one of us.

If you think you're the one we're rejecting, then you're probably one of us.

If your inclination is to bring a bunch of your friends to Minicon so you'll have someone to hang with, then you probably won't have much fun at our Minicon.

If your inclination after your first Minicon was to drag a bunch of your friends along, but they all thought it sounded weird, then you're probably one of us.

If you *really* *hate* Heinlein, then you're probably one of us.

If you *really* *love* Heinlein, then you're probably one of us.

If the name "Wilson Tucker" means something to you, you're probably one of us.

If the name "Bob Tucker" means something to you, you're quite likely one of us.

If the name "Larry Tucker" means something to you, you're almost certainly one of us.

If the name "Tanya Tucker" means something to you, you may or may not be one of us—it's not a defining characteristic.

If the name "Stanley Tucker" means something to you… er… um… would you introduce us? We don't know him….

If your bookshelves collapse and kill more than 3 people, you may be a space alien.

If you get more papercuts at home than at work, you may be a space alien.

If you believe you have very close friends whom you've never met, you may be a space alien.

If you own more than enough bricks and boards to build the Tucker hotel, but use them to keep part of your book collection on, you may be a space alien.

If you think nothing of driving 8 hours for a weekend with a few hundred friends, you may be a space alien.

If you use your phone more for data than for voice, you may be a space alien.

If you can recognize more than 5 fonts, but you're not a professional designer, you may be a space alien.

If you never had to develop "study habits" until your junior year in college, you may be a space alien.

—Prs & stuff:

Geri responding to Sharon Kahn on Minicon-L:

It is my intention that Minicon 34 pubs—should the Board approve our proposal—will knock the collective socks off of our membership. And I have enough grounding and experience to believe they will. We fully agree with you that outstanding publications are critical to our mission.

While I've already started drafting copy for PR1, we've also talked about the importance of presenting information in lots of different "voices." Some people respond well to my tone, others respond well to Steven's, others to Fred's, others to Laurel Krahn's, and yet others to people we haven't even heard from yet. Sharon, I've put your "space alien" message into my Minicon 34 pubs resource file with the intention of asking you if we can use part or all of it—or if you'll expand on it—for one of the PRs. We're talking about building community; let's have our pubs help people "hear" the voices of that community first-hand.

—

PR1 Draft:

There's a reason we're known as Crazy Minneapolis Fandom

We hope to demonstrate that craziness in a whole new way at Minicon 34. For years, we've done our best to run the great, big Minicon. While concern has been expressed over the size and tone of the convention, anything we thought to do to fix it seemed only certain to make the convention worse. Instead, the convention got worse all on its own.

"What's that" you say? "Minicon is magical; I love its hugeness, its openness"

"Worse" is a relative term. There's been magic to be found at every Minicon. And even more magic to be made. But the Minicon committee has faltered under the load. Every year there have been crises, and the magnitude of those crises has been increasing. Burnout among committee members has increased dramatically. New members have been thrown into department head positions without experience or support, then crashed and burned themselves under the burden.

Minicon 32 was a particularly bad year. In addition to actually losing money (a first in known history), one of the co-chairs resigned the week before the convention, a publications department head never was found, and the bright, energetic team who tried to rescue Minicon programming after the disaster it had been at Minicon 31 left many participants feeling that programming had been even worse at Minicon 32.

Many long-time fans, including some Minneapolis fans, have simply stopped coming to Minicon. Others come in "defensive mode," which does little to enhance the wonder and magic of it all. There's been an unacceptable cranking up of incivility at the convention itself. At Minicon 31, one member using a cane was taunted by other members of the convention and told to "go home, cripple." Other volunteers and convention members have been physically threatened and intimidated by fellow members of Minicon.

None of this is acceptable at any science-fiction convention. Ever. If Minicon 32 had been a one-year aberration, we could have simply done our best to address with the specific problems, much as the Minicon 33 committee did. But these problems and others go back a decade and more. Drunken incivility was the main reason the Minicon 26 committee chose not to serve alcohol in the consuite in 1991. The Minicon 29 chair gafiated immediately after that convention, leaving records in shambles. With every year that's passed, there have been more departments at the edge of crisis, with one or more going over the edge, which has led to last-minute rescue missions at large personal cost to committee members. The Minicon 31 exec went into the convention not knowing if we'd make or lose money. They eventually turned $3,000 over to Minn-stf; the financial target was $_____.

In 1991, a Long-Range Convention Task Force was formed to look at the future of Minicon. That group developed several proposals, which past, present, and future Minicon committee members voted on. (Voting required a commitment to work on three or more Minicons between 1968 and 1997.) The decision was for "The Big Minicon"—to embrace our size and proceed with style and flair. We've done our best in the years since, but have regularly fallen short in the style and flair categories. Minicon used to be widely known as one of the very best science fiction conventions; now it's better known as one of the largest.

The bottom line is that the Big Minicon is beyond the capabilities of Minn-stf and Minneapolis fandom to run. We've tried recruiting in new talent, but we've fallen short in that area, too. Over half of the people who have volunteered before the convention over the past decade have not returned to the committee in subsequent years. The fun to work ratio of Minicon committee positions has decreased dramatically.

In the process, Minn-stf has suffered, fandom has suffered, and the bright, new people have suffered. Minicon the huge alternative-culture festival has not been a supportive, inviting place for neos to discover the wonders of fandom.

"So what are you going to do about it?"

Minicon 34 will be both dramatically different and, we hope, somewhat the same. We're going to focus the convention on written science fiction and science fiction fandom, especially as reflected in the mirror of Minneapolis fannish sensibilities—open, warm hospitality; zaniness; finesse. We're hope to scale back to a manageable size, to a convention that is sustainable and fun to work on and belong to rather than one that appears destined for disaster.

"What do you mean, "scale back"? Is there a membership cap?

While we hope Minicon 34 will attract about 2,000 members rather than the 3,600 who have come to recent Minicons, we are not implementing a membership cap at this time. We hope you will self-select to come or not based on your specific sf and fannish interests, and your interest in and support of the bright and shining new Minicon we'll work together to build.

We're not becoming a small, intimate convention. Two thousand members is still larger than most regional conventions. But we do hope to again be a convention you can describe as being "2,000 of my closest, most intimate friends, many of whom I haven't met yet."

Two thousand isn't a magic number. We're using it for budgeting and planning purposes until we have actual registration figures. And we'll keep you updated in future progress reports what those numbers are and if our expectations change.

This really is a grand experiment. Other conventions, notably Boskone, scaled back after meltdown occurred. Others have had membership levels fall over a number of years, usually to the consternation of the committee.

"So, what you getting rid of?"

In specific, Minicon 34 will have a tightly-focused program schedule with no more than __ tracks of programming. We will not have a masquerade, or other large main-stage events beyond opening and closing ceremonies and, perhaps, Guest of Honor programming.

Minicon 34 will not offer media programming. We urge media fans to go to MediaWestCon, DragonCon, Worldcon, or the multitude of other media-oriented conventions. Or even to start a fan-run media convention in Minneapolis.

We also welcome media fans who are interested in written sf and fandom at Minicon 34. Having eclectic, wide-ranging interests is a hallmark of fannishness. You won't be turned away if you're a known member of a media group. (Heck, we don't plan on turning anyone away.) Please do come to Minicon to continue exploring the non-media aspects of the genre.

"But masquerades are fannish. And media fans are just as much a part of fandom as the old pharts. You say you're so welcoming, but you're excluding me!"

Masquerades are fannish. And media fans are fans. Yet these are activities and interests that tend to overrun the rest of a convention, both in terms of sheer numbers of people and in terms of resources spent to support them.

In trying to be all things to all people, Minicon failed to do a really good job by any of its constituencies. Media fans have long wanted media guests of honor, which Minicon has not provided. Media fans and costumers alike have not felt particularly welcomed by Minicon, especially by the Minicon committee. And the funds raised by the convention have been returned only to its sponsoring organization, Minn-stf. Yet Minn-stf itself is hardly a hotbed of fannish involvement in either media fandom or costuming.

Minicon 34 is not going to try to be all things to all people, or even all things to all fen. We are going to celebrate written science fiction and fandom. We have a thriving community of readers and writers, and fannish connections that spread far and wide. We'll be building on those in the years ahead. We hope the convention will be of keen interest to fans old and new. We welcome all who are interested in sharing their own love of sf and in learning about the fannish way of life (aka the goddamn hobby known as fandom).

We hope the Minneapolis media fan groups will consider sponsoring one or more fan-run media conventions in the Twin Cities.

(I'll follow with quite a bit more about Minicon as one of the places where fandom celebrates community—conventions are where we see long-time friends and make new ones—hitting on the participation thing, not in the institutionalized "get your volunteer card and earn your T-shirt" manner but in the "each of us in responsible for making our own good time, and the best of that is when we do it in such a way that it enhances everybody else's good time, too." I've also got stuff to say about the hucksters room, art show, registration, and the like.)

—

At Minicon 34:

Another obvious thing just penetrated—for our Minicon 34, there's more scope for important stuff going on in the at-con newsletter than usual. More things will be different, and if we succeed in attracting people back or to Minicon for the first time, there may also be more people who don't know the recent past. Thus, more need to communicate things, more likelihood of things changing at-con, more benefit to spewing words at people.

-susan
—

Susan B. Levy Haskell   *Information Technology Services Director*
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fax (612) 647-1369   *St. Paul, MN 55114-1629*

[NOTE: *The following was forwarded to the Minn-Stf Board mailing list by Lydia Nickerson <lydy@ddb.com> without comment. —falh*]

From: Charles Piehl <underhill@spacestar.net>
Date: Sat, 13 Sep 1997 01:04:41 -0500
To: exec@minicon33.mnstf.org
Subject: Gang of Ten Proposal—A Rebuttal

Submitted per conversation with Victor.

The Gang of Ten claims broad support. How many of these supporters are both ready and able to help run a convention? With this kind of support, what happened to ReinConation? To claim that ReinCon is only taking a year off ignores two realities. 1) the membership has slipped badly, and 2) the people most adamant about the need for such a con are not generally willing to work on it.

The Gang of Ten claims that the lack of opposition on Minicon-L are a sign of support. Actually, it is a symptom of how many people just don't take the list seriously, Nobody I know does.

The Gang of Ten claims that Minicon needs to be all but gutted to be fixed. There is so little that they propose to keep from the existing con, I submit that the best response would be for MinnStF to work seriously at promoting a revitalized ReinConation, true to the ideas Martin originally had. Frankly, I think we should do that in any event. The con the GoT seems to want would keep little from Minicon beyond the prestigious name, mailing list and the convenience of existing bank accounts (which have been better, I know.) Why bother?

The Gang of Ten claim that Minicon is broken. I disagree. We have problems, and big ones. But they are solvable. Refocusing the convention, clearly and consistently, and holding to that new focus, is the only approach I think will work in the long term. Our deepest problem may in fact be the heresy that the convention is (or should be) owned by any one subset of the community (long term residents or "new kids").

The Gang of Ten claim that their proposal will solve the problems they see at Minicon. Frankly, the steps underway by the current Exec will do much the same thing. Let's see it the current approach will work before we go in blasting.

The Gang of Ten present themselves as a powerful force in the community. The past work many of them have offered was valuable, and worthy of note. A few have remained active. Some, frankly of their supporters at least, have done little more than complain for years. Power, properly, is a function of work effort and work product. What I want to hear is where the people Working on Making Minicon Happen want the convention to go. Has anyone spoken to the current ConComm?

The Gang of Ten claims that Minicon belongs to a history. Fossils belong to history; living organisms are too busy. Minicon has a long and extremely varied history which belongs to it. It is further claimed that the history to which Minicon belongs was somehow "purer" than it is today. As a "newcomer" with only 13 years in fandom, I find that hard to believe.

The Gang of Ten claim that the Fannish Community is behind them. Frankly, bull. A loud, notable, and historic element within the community is, and strongly. This is not to be ignored. But to claim that this community (or any other) is monolithic is shortsighted, at best.

The Gang of Ten claims that their vision represents what fandom is all about. Why, then, is this vision not demonstrated in any examples of which I am aware? KeyCon seems roughly along these lines, but that's it. Other than sercon events, on which I admit little knowledge, no con of which I have heard even begins to resemble the vision they describe. The Gang of Ten have a vision, and have articulated it well. They should try to make that vision work. There is no need to gut an existing convention to do so.

The Gang of Ten have, and I believe they would agree, an attitude. Unfortunately, it is an attitude which has turned off the bulk of our newer workers. And without THEM, no convention has any future, now matter what its past was.

In closing, let's calm down, and continue to evolve the exec into the future, not leap at every revolutionary plan that comes along. Patience and broad community building are going to be the reason that Minicon is still the most successful and stable SF Con in known space for another great 30 years.

Submitted without warranty,
    Charles Piehl

I was unable to connect to the site where the proposal is suppose to be found…..the URL /change-minicon. was not available.

I spoke very little at the Sunday meeting when everyone had a chance to discuss what they felt about the proposal. I was caught off guard a little because the issue did not include what I thought a big part of the proposal might include, and also because I am not an eloquent speaker. Writing is my forte.

As I mentioned, I was not even aware of what MiniCon was, had never heard of it, until just before I went to MiniCon31. It was not science fiction as much as BDSM that drew me to the Con, but as an enjoyer of science fiction in many forms, I knew that I would have fun with the science fiction stuff during the day, and then turn into someone different for the party I came to attend at night, which was held in a large suite that had been turned into a BDSM playroom.

Unfortunately, one of the members of the BDSM community went out into the hall after an earlier BDSM panel discussion wearing nothing to cover her large upper body, and there was offense taken at this sight, understandably so. Because of this, MiniCon32 did not have one of the larger suites to turn into a playroom, and the activities were not open to anyone else but just those already in this community, and we went to a regular private room. It was crowded and conversation was forbidden due to the small play area. Only one scene could take place at a time.

This dampened my evening fun, as well as the fact that a person from another state who came to work MiniCon and join me in a playsuite was not available until the early hours of Sunday. He worked too much, and there was no playsuite anyway.

I really thought that some of the discussion would involve banning some of these kinds of night parties because they didn't directly relate to science fiction, although if you watch an episode of Next Generation entitled "Age of Ascension," this notion would be proven otherwise.

I want to be able to attend MiniCon not only for what it has to offer lovers of science fiction in many forms, but also because I can get together with people from this other community who come from faraway places to enjoy science fiction and BDSM, but I do believe that the BDSM activities should take place at appropriate times. There is a usefulness to allowing a panel discussion of these things for those interested in learning more. However, I think that risque BDSM outfits should be saved for the evening hour parties, not during the science fiction day hours.

I like dressing up as an alien during the day to check out the science fiction stuff, and in my naughty clothes at night for the other stuff. I don't want to lose that option.

About the issue of MiniCon trying to focus more on the original kind of Con which involved mostly literature-minded people…….alot of technology has happened in 30 years. It is not realistic to expect people to break up science fiction interests as if they belonged at different and specific Cons. If this were to be the case, you'd have a Con for the book and magazine readers, a Con for the TV and movie watchers, and a Con for the computer game and internet users.

There was talk of focusing on a common thread. It seems to me that science fiction/fantasy IS THE COMMON THREAD. Times have changed, technology has advanced to bring science fiction to us in many forms. I enjoy them all. Because I enjoy them all, there is nowhere in the Con that I feel out of place. If a science fiction fan wants to limit themselves to only one form of science fiction because that's how they started their interest, they are going to be left way

behind and they are going to feel overwhelmed by the amount of variety that technology has brought to the subject of science fiction/fantasy.

What there is no room for at the Con is discrimination. It is almost like racism when you look at it objectively. And because I am so new to the scene, I am probably more objective about this than alot of the people who've been there years and years and years. I've had no long-term commitment to MiniCon, physically or emotionally, so I don't have that same sense of bewilderment or loss that some of the more upset people are experiencing. I'm sorry if that sounds unsympathetic, but it is this fact that helps me to be more objective.

I love MiniCon. More and more people love science fiction/fantasy in increasing numbers because there are so many more ways for people to get involved in it, because the population increases and ages, and because more people learn about the existence of MiniCon every year.

Maybe someone who watched, but did not read, science fiction came to a Con and discovered something there in literature form that they really liked alot and this helped them to learn to appreciate reading more.

I know that I like reading the books and then watching the movies, which usually don't hold a candle to the book, but I do like the special effects, and the speed with which I can experience a story. The only sci-fi book I ever read that I found hard to wade through was "Contact" which I recently finished, and I saw the movie first. The movie was so much better. Carl Sagan was so incredibly long-winded and boring that it took me over 2 months to read that damn book. But now I can go onto something that will probably be interesting. Like I said at the meeting, I do not have broadcast or cable TV, but we own and rent movies, and go to all the sci-fi movies when they come out.

You can't limit the number of people coming to MiniCon by pitting one group of science fiction fans against another. Science fiction is science fiction, and many people enjoy more than one form of it. You can't limit the number at all. The only thing that can keep any host hotel from being overwhelmed is to use a hotel big enough to be able to host a Con of this size.

The real issue is size and staff. That is the issue here. The problem is in lack of space and lack of qualified staff to help make this Con work.

I know that I am very fresh meat, and I don't know all of the Sci-Fi and Con jargon or most of the people, and it seems crazy when I think about myself taking notes at these meetings for something I know very little about and which is so incredibly huge that people from all over the country come to it every year. But I am willing to do what I can in the capacity of taking notes, and helping in Programming and maybe even something else at the Con, although I prefer to think of my work being done before then so I can enjoy my time at the Con.

I realize this is alot to say, but I am not a speaker, I am a writer, and this is where I shine. MiniCon is a big and wonderful thing that draws people for many reasons. I have never felt unsafe at MiniCon, but then I've only been to 2.

Maybe this was too long for you to even read. Maybe you don't approve of people with interests in BDSM. Maybe I'm just to new on the scene to be taken seriously. But I hope these things can be looked past and my words considered, for I know that I speak for many people with what I've said here.

Thank you very much, and I sure hope I do okay with the notes and stuff. It's pretty intimidating and I've got 13 pages to decipher from Sunday afternoon.

—Pamela Lang

I don't quite know how to introduce this, so I'll just say it and then back-sell:

The Minn-Stf Board should =give= Minicon to the U.S.S. Nokomis.

Why?

- I believe Minicon is Broken. Real broken. Awesomely broken.

- I believe it is most likely that it's beyond Minn-Stf's ability to fix. To clarify: I had hopes for the High Resolution Proposal, and still think that's the =only= way that =Minn-Stf= could fix Minicon. But after attending the concom meeting on Sunday, I suspect that there's too many years of suspicion and ill-will surrounding Minicon for it to work.

- We (Minn-Stf) abdicated responsibility for Minicon, its goals, and its appeal for so many years that we are no longer in a position to "take it back"; too many people who have little or no interest in (or even active hostility toward) Minn-Stf have invested too much sweat and blood and energy in Minicon over too many years for it to be possible or honorable for Minn-Stf to simply "take it back."

- If Minn-Stf no longer owns it, "letting go" will be easier and less painful for those of us who need to do so. Geri Sullivan won't feel obligated to burn herself out on last-minute rescue missions. I won't feel obligated to tear myself up by going and seeing what it's become. (Insert your own example here.) Etc.

- The discussion of "what to do about Minicon" has been tearing us up and tearing us apart—on a low-grade level for many years, and pretty intensely right now. Giving up Minicon might just save me, my immediate friends, my community, and maybe even Minn-Stf.

- Minicon is supposed to be Minn-Stf's fund-raiser. Minn-Stf could choose to have a bake sale instead. At least we wouldn't =lose= money, and the politics would be less messy.

- U.S.S. Nokomis President averred at the concom meeting yesterday that he =likes= the "Gathering of the Tribes."

- He also said they're the "second largest sf club in the state." Okay, so maybe they've got the personpower.

- U.S.S. Nokomis, by all reports, understands "hospitality" pretty much the way Minn-Stf does.

- I'm told that U.S.S. Nokomis has been busting their balls for Minicon for a lot of years without a whole lot to show for it. If they can fix it, let 'em reap more of the rewards.

I know that "letting go" is almost as hard to do as "change," but it might just be the right thing and the right time.

Implementation details:

1) Minicon has been Minn-Stf's "fund raiser," and fell short of expected/directed revenues two years ago and =lost= money last year. Therefore, some equitable division of any profits from Minicon 33 needs to be made: how much is Minicon allowed to keep as seed money and how much is turned over to Minn-Stf must be decided in advance. Also, some equitable means of passing on the property owned by Minn-Stf on behalf of Minicon must be decided upon.

a) Minn-Stf would need to "tighten its belt." This may be easier than it sounds at first blush—it's my impression that a lot of "club" expenses are really Minicon expenses.

2) U.S.S. Nokomis may, if it wishes, use the name "Minicon" for one year while they make the transition to a new name for the

convention, and may use the phrase "the convention formerly known as Minicon" in the second year (they do not, however, have to adopt an unpronounceable symbol in lieu of a name). After the second year, they will return the name "Minicon" to Minn-Stf.

3) During the two-year transition period Minn-Stf guarantees and warrants that it will not run any convention in the months of March, April, or May, unless the U.S.S. Nokomis moves the convention to another month or decides to stop putting it on. This will be in effect regardless of what the U.S.S. Nokomis decides to do about the name. This will:

a) Give the U.S.S. Nokomis a fair start on whatever its "vision" of the convention is, without having to worry about "competition" drawing off either attendees or workers.

b) Give Minn-Stf a chance to recover, regroup, and rethink its attitudes about running conventions and about appropriate ways to raise funds.

4) No other "strings"—Minn-Stf hands over the keys to Con to U.S.S. Nokomis and wishes them "good luck."

My Ranking of the Various Proposals at This Moment:

1) Give it to the U.S.S. Nokomis.
2) The HRC proposal.
3) Simply stop running Minicon—shut it down.
4) Give it to the fen in Albuquerque.
5) Any other clever ideas anybody comes up with.
6) Remain with the status quo.

Comments?

(My apologies if you receive this message multiple times—I'm sending it to the various mailing lists/groups I know of who I think might be interested.)

Fred A. Levy Haskell | "I do believe you are what you perceive
falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu | what comes is better than what came before"
                        | —The Velvet Underground

From: Fred A Levy Haskell <falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 1997 10:16:25 -0500
To: Exec Selection Committee:;, Minn-Stf Board of Directors <board@mnstf.org>, The High Resolutionary Council <hrc@ddb.com>, Minicon-L@mnstf.org (Minicon Mailing List)
Subject: Bounce License for Fred's *CrAzY* Idea for Minicon

At 2:58 AM -0500 9/16/97, Fred A Levy Haskell wrote:

>I don't quite know how to introduce this, so I'll just say it… <etc.>

Oh, I forgot to mention. I sent my original message to the Minn-Stf Board of Directors, the Exec Selection Committee, The High Resolutionary Council, and the Minicon Mailing List. Those lists are also receiving this message. I have not (yet) sent out any "individual" copies.

If you know somebody you think would be interested in reading or discussing or thinking about this idea, you have my explicit permission to bounce or forward my original message to them, as long as you send it unaltered and in its entirely.

Thanks!

From: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 1997 10:54:39 -0500 (CDT)
To: Fred A Levy Haskell <falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Cc: board@mnstf.org, hrc@ddb.com, Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Fred's *CrAzY* Idea for Minicon

This idea is no crazier than the idea I put forth to split the con. Given, however, the lead balloon reaction THAT idea received, and, well….

More to the point: the fact of the matter is that there are a lot of people who are on the Minicon committee who disagree with the Hi-Res Original Proposal—mostly about the media/printed split.

Since_that's_been_given_up….

I think we're faced with the difficult BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE task of putting together something that (a) helps focus Minicon, (b) the con committee can get behind, and (c) be of benefit to MinnStF. And I think we're very close to a real solution.

Victor Raymond

From: Fred A Levy Haskell <falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 1997 11:44:54 -0500
To: Minn-Stf Board of Directors <board@mnstf.org>, The High Resolutionary Council <hrc@ddb.com>, Exec Selection Committee:;, Minicon-L@mnstf.org (Minicon Mailing List)
Subject: Re: Fred's *CrAzY* Idea for Minicon

At 10:54 AM -0500 9/16/97, Victor J. Raymond wrote:

>This idea is no crazier than the idea I put forth to split the con. Given,
>however, the lead balloon reaction THAT idea received, and, well….

Yeah, well, I don't think the split was a good idea. I think this is. Let's wait and see if anybody salutes.

>More to the point: the fact of the matter is that there are a lot of
>people who are on the Minicon committee who disagree with the
>Hi-Res Original Proposal—mostly about the media/printed split.

That's true.

>Since_that's_been_given_up….

Not in the least. It's simply in second place at the moment. Not at all the same as having "given it up."

>I think we're faced with the difficult BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE task of
>putting together something that (a) helps focus Minicon, (b) the con
>committee can get behind, and (c) be of benefit to MinnStF.

I think it is impossible.

>And I think we're very close to a real solution.

And I think you're wrong. Well, no, it depends on what you think the "solution" is. I think we =are= close to a real solution, but that solution is for Minn-Stf to disengage from Minicon.

But I guess that's something intelligent people of good will can disagree on at the moment.

Fred A. Levy Haskell | "'My house is me and I am it. My house is
falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu | where I like to be and it looks like all
                        | my dreams,' Mr Plumbean said."
                        | —Daniel Manus Pinkwater

From: Joel Rosenberg <joelr@winternet.com>
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 1997 12:31:08 -0500
To: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>, Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Cc: board@mnstf.org, hrc@ddb.com, Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Fred's *CrAzY* Idea for Minicon

From Victor J. Raymond on 10:54 AM 9/16/97 -0500:

The Quoted Message Begins*

>I think we're faced with the difficult BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE task of
>putting together something that (a) helps focus Minicon, (b) the con
>committee can get behind, and (c) be of benefit to MinnStF. And I
>think we're very close to a real solution.

The Quoted Message Hath Ended

Okay, I'll bite: could you describe the real solution?
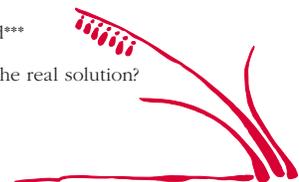
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 1997 13:57:51
To: "Victor J. Raymond" <RAYMOND@macalester.edu>, Fred A Levy Haskell <falh@maroon.tc.umn.edu>
Cc: board@mnstf.org, hrc@ddb.com, Minicon-L@mnstf.org
Subject: Re: Fred's *CrAzY* Idea for Minicon

At 10:54 AM 9/16/97 -0500, Victor J. Raymond wrote:

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>putting together something that (a) helps focus Minicon, (b) the con
>committee can get behind, and (c) be of benefit to MinnStF. And I
>think we're very close to a real solution.

Victor, my friend, can I have some of what ever it is that you are smoking? Please?

My take on the concom meeting is that it is simply not going to matter what we say, nor even what we do, people are going to accuse of using a print/media filter to exclude them. The ancient grudge between the two factions is far more serious than I had realized. I don't think there _is_ a way to reduce size without causing people to assume that this is what we are doing.

Um, I'm speaking for myself, only.

If you are seeing a real solution, please tell me about it. I have seen depression, and it looked a lot like this.

_____

Lydia Nickerson   *lydy@ddb.com*
Dulciculi Aliquorum

From: "Cheri Thompson" <thom0296@gold.tc.umn.edu>
Date: Wed, 17 Sep 97 17:35:36 -0500
To: exec@minicon33.mnstf.org, board@mnstf.org, PamAyla@aol.com, RAYMOND@macalester.edu
Subject: Response to High-Resolutionary Council

This is an open letter to all interested readers. Any attempt to distribute this letter is encouraged and applauded, as long as it is reproduced and/or distributed in its entirety, with no additions, omissions, or changes of any kind. Any distribution in edited form will be construed as an act of war.

Please direct questions, comments, etc to:
Cheri Thompson (Home: 612-722-7975)
3501 14th Ave S #5, Mpls, MN 55407
Email: thom0296@gold.tc.umn.edu

I feel that perhaps my reaction to and critique of the "Statement of Focus" put forth by the High Resolutionary Council may have been incompletely understood by some people at the September 14 ConCom meeting. Perhaps this is because I am somewhat uncomfortable speaking in front of large groups of people, and was less than clear about what I intended to say. Perhaps this is because my comments were made after having scarcely ten minutes to both read the two page document and formulate my reaction. Perhaps it is because many people in the room have not only strong feelings about this subject but also a great deal of vested interest in the outcome of this discussion. I suspect that the answer is some combination of these hypotheses.

Regardless of the reasons for, and the reality of, potential misunderstandings, I feel a great need to be sure that my comments are fully made and fully explained before decisions are made based upon this document or it's parent document, "The High-Resolution Minicon".

What I wish to say may require yet another preface; I would like to clarify that what I am critiquing is a document, and the assumptions that are implicitly accepted in that document. I am not, nor do I wish to be mistaken as, attacking anything or critiquing any one person or group of individuals. Given that much time has been spent in back-biting, finger pointing, and jeering, I want this point to be extremely clear.

Because I love Minicon, and because I care about how (and whether) Minicons of the future include myself and those people I enjoy being with, I wish to extract and open for discussion some of the assumptions made in the "Statement of Focus". It is my hope that when teased into the light of day, these assumptions can be examined for their validity and their relevance to a discussion of 'focusing Minicon'.

The first paragraph of this document is finely worded to evoke emotions of loss and failure, and thus gain approval—and adoption as policy—through this emotional betrayal. According to the HRC:

We have tried to be all things to all people, and *we have failed*. The *hurt* is particularly keen because we have stopped being the fine fannish convention we began as; *we have squandered our reputation*. We have *not kept lit that beacon* to the greater community of fandom. *We have lost* members who once attended… (*emphasis* mine).

But have we? Minicon has never really *tried* to be all things to all people. Our convention has made room for those who have asked for it, usually. But we certainly haven't welcomed a great many groups and individuals with open arms. We don't go out of our way to make people feel welcome in our 'biggiecon', regardless of their interests, if they don't appear to fit in.

When was the last time you, dear reader, got asked a question that made you reconsider your own very personal, private biases about people? The ones you don't like to admit to in any company, private or otherwise? Biases about things like appearance? Age? Ethnicity or race? Sexuality? How long has it been since you really pulled your sacred beliefs about Minicon out and examined them? We have certainly incorporated a few individuals from any group imaginable, but does that really entitle us to claim to have "tried to be all things to all people"? Minicon has more sacred cows than I can detail here, and I'm sure that you, dear Reader, are already aware of them.

In reading through the written history of this discussion (such as the "High-Resolution Minicon" and various rewrites, and the reports from the Long Range Task Force, as available from the Minicon web pages), I've discovered a great deal of discussion about the 'fall conventions'.

It seems to me that ReinCon is, in many ways if not all, what Minicon was. It also seems that—for many people in many ways—this discussion isn't really about the *problems of* Minicon, it's about *their problems with* Minicon. This is an important distinction, and we'll get into this a bit more in a minute.

First, I'd like to look critically at the High-Resolutionary Council's "Statement of Focus" for a moment (I did promise this at the beginning). The High Resolutionary Council states unequivocally that "We must find some way to focus, to scale back, and even to exclude some activities enjoyed by some people who have had a stake in Minicons of the recent past".

Why? The sole reason ever voiced for this in the "Statement of Focus" is that Minicon has stretched Minn-StF's resources "beyond the breaking point". For the first time, Minicon 32 lost money. The solution that is proposed is to prune ruthlessly anything that doesn't directly relate to "science fiction literature". How will this help? What is it really supposed to help? And why should "literature" be defined as the new focus?

IN 32 CONVENTIONS OVER 30 YEARS, IT JUST NOW HAD A BUST YEAR???

I fail to see how this signals Armageddon, wolves in the flock, or an immediate necessity to drastically change our convention. There are a variety of things that can be done to improve the financial outlook for Minicon, and hence for Minn-StF, without throwing all 'those people' out of our convention. Some examples/ideas:

• Ensure that registration is being run in such a way that checks are immediately cashed, and that provides accurate information about registered and warm bodies on a continuing basis both before and during the convention. This is also set forth in the "High-Resolution Minicon", and is certainly a valuable idea.

• Utilize the concept of "Project Brainsuck" to better tailor the acquisitions/ordering process to reflect actual use the prior year. This means that departments will need to keep written records, which should be done anyway if financial accountability is a goal.

• Enforce registration policies. The registration database is, last I saw about a year ago, set up such that there is no tracking of money entered into the computer compared to money deposited in the bank. While comp registrations that we know about are fairly few, we currently have no way of tracking this. I brought this up several months ago, and upon request emailed my comments and a simple suggestion for plugging the holes to the M33 exec. As far as I know, nothing has changed and this has not been pursued.

• Cut budgets. This is a solution that has already been implemented for M33. Why not sit back and chill a little bit, and see how much effect this has on the financial picture for M33?

• Raise prices. Nobody likes an increase in membership costs, but a modest increase in prices could raise a great deal of money.

• Increase fees. Perhaps the appropriate place to raise additional money isn't through the membership. Perhaps fees for Dealers and others could be raised. Perhaps there could be a commission taken from artwork sold at the convention. You will certainly note, dear Reader, that some of these ideas are in the "High-Resolution Minicon", those that are repeated here certainly appear (to myself, at least) to hold some merit.

Another reason bandied about for hack and slash policies is that we don't have sufficient personnel to run a convention this large. If human resources is truly where we are short, why do we want to cut down our pool of potential volunteers? Instead of driving people away, making clear that they aren't welcome, why not give them the option to help us keep Minicon running fantastically? Some of the following ideas are culled from my readings of Minicon historical documents and some are brought in from quieter discussions with a variety of people. The overarching statement that needs to be made, however, is simply this: ConCom, Old Pharts, and everyone else involved needs to start listening to the people who say that they (we) feel ignored because of our status as 'newcomers' when we have 5, 10, or 15 years of Minicon involvement.

• Recruit more aggressively. This has a corollary: MAKE NEW VOLUNTEERS WELCOME! Encourage them to become more involved. Encourage those who are interested in more responsibility. Instead of holding tight to your own small piece of Minicon and guarding it jealously lest anyone steal a piece of your own recognition and acclaim, begin garnering that satisfaction by helping to groom and prepare the next generation of ConComm. If each department trains in just one new person this year, we can have several ready to fill vacancies next year.

• This segues neatly into suggestion number two. If the problem is "burnout", TAKE A BREAK. Minicon has survived years without many important and renowned Minnesota fans. Your personal investment in Minicon is much larger than Minicon's need for you. If you are burnt out, tired, sick of it, whatever, step down for a year! This shouldn't even have to be said, but many of the people I hear raising the issue of burnout don't seem to understand that they can choose to not be involved for a year. Or they can choose to be involved somewhere else for a year. There are lots of options!

If none of what I've said so far appeals to you, let's look at the concept of "community" for a moment. I hear complaints from all sides that Minicon no longer has a sense of "community", and that's why we have so many problems and non-contributing partiers. Is this really the problem?

I submit that Minicon has a fairly strong sense of community, but that we haven't hed social norms and mores for the people who haven't known us l enough to read our minds. Why not clarify our

assumptions and our expectations? We can do this in a variety of ways. For example, put a blurb in the PRs and program book about the work ethic of SF&F fandom. Post signs at registration (humorous ones, hopefully) that highlight our expectation that members will contribute, rather than begging for volunteers.

The complaint of a community lost is only valid if the community was first found. When the general assumption that everyone can be asked to help out is nearly invisible how can we expect newcomers to "get it"? The most obvious activities at Minicon in the recent past have revolved around ConSuite and cabana parties. Where is our socialization process? Even the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" has a method for instructing 'virgins' about their expected behaviors and contributions. Why can't we?

Now to get back to the promised discussion of *problems of* Minicon versus *problems with* Minicon. I think this is best handled in context of the proposed limitation of Minicon to science fiction literature.

At the September ConCom, I questioned the wisdom of compartmentalizing fandom. I attempted to point out that our world, and our recreational uses of technology, are still growing and changing. I would like to understand why it is that SF/F which is printed on wood pulp is "good" and "appropriate to Minicon", while SF/F which is captured on celluloid, video, or electronic means is somehow "bad" or "inappropriate" to Minicon.

The best answer I heard was from Fred Levy-Haskell, who told me he doesn't care what people are reading, as long as they know how to read. That's a fair assessment, and I can agree that people who are well-read are often more fun to be around. But how does this justify limiting Minicon to SF/F "literature", to the exclusion of all other media? In spite of the High-Resolution Council's claim that they do not wish to exclude media fans or any other group, this will be the inevitable result of a conscious decision to allow only literature based programming.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from two diverse phrases when they are strung together: The past is prologue; kick the system.

The surest way to guarantee the slow and painful death of Minicon (or anything else) is to put a wall around it. Forcing Minicon to exist in a plastic bubble through which only that material that has been deemed sterile enough is allowed in, where no one is allowed to kick the system, ensures that Minicon can no longer grow.

Now, dear Reader, stop howling. It's unseemly. I am not using "grow" in a biological sense of getting larger or maturing; I am using it in a spiritual sense of continuing to change in response to our actions or inactions and in reflection of the membership as a whole.

I cannot help but reflect that this need to "focus" Minicon is an expression of anxiety, of fear, of discomfort. People who are, perhaps, reminiscent of the Minicons of years gone by would like to recapture what they perceive that had then. There is nothing wrong with that desire, but we cannot regain our youth, recapture the sixties, nor stop the progression of time. Perhaps this helps explain why we read speculative fiction?

At any rate, the old Minicons are gone. They have happened and finished. For those who feel that they simply cannot be happy as a part of the a Minicon which is large and rowdy, I submit that the smaller fall conventions discussed five years ago still exist. They are ReinCon, WisCon, and a variety of others within a half days drive. Smaller conventions are found all around us, and we indeed already have one of our own. Why should we throw away our fabulous, unique, large convention to reproduce what already exists?

The past is prologue, and it is time for us to address where we would like Minicon to go. This discussion cannot be predicated upon reclaiming something already gone, but must be focused on our collective future as convention organizers, members, and fans.

*** Flattery is all right so long as you don't inhale.—Adlai Stevenson ***

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                  Minneapolis, MN 55414
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Email: thom0296@gold.tc.umn.edu

I just finished reading the entire proposal. I have no idea why, but I feel like crying now. Maybe it was just alot of stuff to try to put inside my head and heart all at once, especially all the apparent feelings of loss, heartache and despair that permeated much of this proposal.

I am not opposed to most of what the proposal has outlined. I think that focusing on a common thread is a good idea. As I said to one of the people on Mnstf who wrote to me, I see the common thread as science fiction. But from what I'm getting out of the proposal is that the common thread should be science fiction limited to literature forms only.

At MiniCon31, my first, the most memorable panel I went to was the mock Klingon trial. It was entertaining, the costumes were very good, the acting was great. This panel is media-related, but it is wholly a science fiction subject.

I think it is dangerous to do more limiting of MiniCon than eliminating nonsci-fi related panels. At least, to do this all at once in one year's time is far too drastic.

You will already be cutting back when you eliminate the nonsci-fi panels/subjects such as the harp panel, the origami panel, the bdsm panel, the "how to draw a barbarian" panel (the only panel I ever walked out on), the juggling activities, etc. etc. These kinds of cuts are understandable….they are not at all directly related to science fiction.

Of course, while you cannot police what people do in their own rooms on their own time, allowing science fiction in its many forms will fall within the category that this con is titled for (science fiction) and will offer the variety of science fiction subjects that many of its fans have come to appreciate.

It never occurred to me that MiniCon really meant science fiction BOOK convention. And as I said in response to a letter I received, if you do that kind of splitting up of the subject of science fiction, you will be seeing a science fiction MEDIA convention, a science fiction PC/INTERNET convention, etc., to which they responded that these kinds of conventions already exist. ???????

No matter how you try to slice and dice it, science fiction is the subject.

MiniCon32 would have been my first year as a volunteer, but no one ever got back to me regarding my repeated offer to work the VooDoo message board, so MC33 is my first year, and my 3rd year of attending MiniCon. I want to continue to volunteer because I believe I would be an asset to the management of MiniCon.

My husband and I have been running two business for about 20 years. I'm financially independent. I have the time and the freedom to help. My clerical experience, beginning with secretarial vocational training after four years of clerical in high school, as well as Recording Secretary (taking meeting minutes) and Correspondence Secretary for a state nonprofit organization for the last eight years, makes me qualified to help in the areas which I feel I'm best suited for. I would not be so bold as to volunteer for a committee or in any other capacity for which I am not qualified. I know myself and my capabilities, and I won't overstep them.

However, I would feel less apt to support MiniCon in the future if it is going to break up the subject of science fiction into tidy little packages and set them in separate corners of the room. My enjoyment of MiniCon as the essence of a gathering place for fans of science fiction will be diminished greatly. And do I really want to attend or volunteer for three or four science fiction conventions every year so that I can enjoy all the facets of science fiction? I don't think so. It shouldn't be necessary, and I sincerely hope that your decision doesn't "make it so."

Sincerely,
Pamela Lang