DPS Meeting Guide for Local Organizers
Version 2, May 2011

1. Hosting the annual DPS meeting – laying the groundwork

Are you interested in hosting a DPS meeting? The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) is important to the success of the DPS annual meeting and is a rewarding way to support your discipline and highlight your local institutions.

As the DPS has grown, the complexity of this undertaking has expanded, and AAS staff now handles the core logistical organization. This allows the LOC to focus on the extra details that differentiate one meeting from the next – the special local events, the program planning, speakers, activities for significant others, etc. Communication, coordination and cooperation between the LOC, the DPS committee and the AAS staff are essential for a successful meeting, the goal of this guide.

1.a. Local assessment

Start by contacting the current DPS chair to let them know of your interest. They will be able to tell you which years are open and in need of a location.   Note that meetings are planned several years in advance. The preferred dates are the last two weeks of October (but avoiding Halloween) and the first two weeks of November. This is to maximize the separation between the dates of the European Planetary Science Conference (EPSC) and the DPS meeting.

Then begin scouting out potential locations for the conference. Note that the AAS must approve all contracts, and has substantial advantage in negotiating the best rates, so don't begin negotiating with the venues, just assess what local venues will work for the DPS meeting. A spreadsheet with logistical requirements is provided at http://dps.aas.org/meetings/, and summarized here. Typically conference venues will have enough information on their website to judge their adequacy. A meeting between the venue personnel and the LOC is unnecessary and discouraged.

DPS facilities' requirements, based on the generic AAS RFP and the actual accommodations we had in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, are synthesized below. Also noteworthy: a "stand-alone" convention center is generally more expensive than a hotel with conference facilities because often the hotel will negotiate rates based on the number of rooms we can fill, while a convention center will just set a price.

1. General Session: 900 people, typically a ballroom. The El Conquistador resort in Fajardo had a 20,486 sq. ft. ballroom that was subdividable into 3 approximately equal areas. These 3 were used for parallel sessions.
2. Poster and exhibit hall: need >15,000 sq. ft. El Conquistador had 19,917 sq. ft. which could be overkill but was very nice for the large groups of students that came through. This space includes break and reception set up. Use of 15,000 – 20,000 sq ft. may require posters to be changed out daily.
3. 4-6 rooms for workshops, breakfasts, etc. of approximately 1500 sqft. El Conquistador had 3 rooms, ~1500 sq. ft. each.
4. Press: 2 conference room 800 sq. ft minimum for both office and conference room
5. Space for registration plus an office for AAS staff - 800 sq. ft minimum
6. Space for the cyber café – 800 sq. ft minimum
7. Speaker Ready room – 800 sq. ft minimum
8. Boardroom for DPS committee meetings (included in the 4-6 rooms)
9. Lactation Room – 1 room, office-sized, with a locking door, a chair, and a power outlet (minimum. A mini-fridge and small table are nice to have.

1.b. Kickoff

If your area does appear to have a suitable venue(s) you will be invited to a DPS committee meeting to propose your site, at which point, AAS staff will help to look at venue option details and availability. Potential conference dates are discussed between the LOC, DPS committee, and AAS staff. The AAS does all negotiation with the venue – the LOC does not.

You will be invited to join a DPS committee telecon. The types of questions the committee may ask include:

1. Do the organizers live in the **city** where the meeting is proposed, or have close ties to it? If they are not local, how do they plan to do their job?

2. Is there a **host institution** that can provide support (money or personnel such as student volunteers)?

3. Roughly what **time of year** were you considering (summer, early fall, late fall) and are there any known constraints on the time? (Normally the DPS is held in the fall, separated as much as possible from EPSC).

4. Are there **special planetary science events** (mission results, etc.) coming up that year, which you anticipate featuring at this meeting?

5. Is there reliable, frequent, inexpensive **transportation** to the meeting city?

6. Is the location especially attractive to DPS members for **scientific or tourism** reasons? Is there an interesting and adequate Banquet venue?

7. Does the location have adequate **local facilities** for meals? Banking? Post office? Copying and fax and other office-related activities?

Assuming that the proposal goes well for everyone, the LOC chair will commence planning the meeting in concert with the AAS staff and the DPS committee. This includes recruiting LOC members, the Science Program Committee (SPC) chair, thinking about local events, spacecraft happenings to highlight, etc. DPS committee meetings take place in May and the day before the annual DPS meeting. The committee will request a detailed status report at each.

Typically, the LOC chair will present the new site to the membership during the DPS conference two years prior to the meeting you'll be hosting and essentially invite the membership to attend. The invitation is extended again with more detail at the DPS member meeting during the conference one year prior to the meeting.

2. Organizational Meeting between AAS and LOC

No later than 1 year from the conference, the DPS leadership will organize a face-to-face meeting between the LOC Chair and the AAS staff. Other LOC members are welcome to attend.

After introductions, discussion will center on who will do each task, and a timeline for each step will be established. A schedule for team telecons is established for the next year. The DPS-AAS MOU (made available to LOC), outlining much of the division of labor, will form the framework for this discussion.

2.a. Division of Tasks

The AAS will create a budget spreadsheet and will keep the budget spreadsheet up-to-date (this may diverge into two tabs – the original budget and updated estimates as they come in). There will be only one spreadsheet and it will be "owned" by the AAS.

The AAS handles all negotiations with hotels and the conference venue as well as any additional contractors or suppliers. Activities or events at the meeting must conform to all contractual and legal obligations.

The LOC decides on the location for the events held on the evening prior to the first day of the meeting (typically Sunday evening): registration, general reception, and any student receptions. Registration will take place in one location at the conference venue but the reception does not need to be held at the same venue, although a location within walking distance is recommended and food and beverage commitments to the venue should be taken into consideration.   The LOC scopes out and suggests reception locations; the AAS does all subsequent negotiation with those locales and incorporates detailed costs for these events in the budget spreadsheet. Events may need to be modified based on budgetary considerations, legal issues or for other reasons.

The LOC decides whether or not access to the exhibit hall to hang posters on Sunday is desirable (again, modulo any contractual or legal obligations). If so, the LOC + AAS decide on the time. Then the AAS works with the exhibitors to make sure they will be on-site at that time to keep an eye on their equipment.

The LOC scopes out and suggests possible banquet locations (including catering companies if appropriate) and the night for the banquet. The AAS handles all subsequent negotiation for the location and the food and beverages. This is an iterative process with the AAS as meal costs are determined and ticket prices established. The AAS personnel communicate with the LOC during telecons to relate progress on banquet details and planning; the LOC helps to make decisions, as needed, regarding banquet menus, music etc. The banquet must pay for itself (it is not subsidized by the registration fee).

AAS arranges for all food and beverage (F&B) items at the meeting, including the reception, coffee breaks, poster sessions, workshops that request snacks or drinks, student breakfasts, session chair breakfasts, bag lunch availability, etc. This is a very expensive part of any meeting and care must be taken to set the F&B budget carefully and to stick to it. The AAS will communicate to all vendors the importance of "buying local" with F&B providers. The AAS and LOC work together to decide on menus (as appropriate) for breaks and poster sessions, and to decide on options for poster session and opening reception drink tickets.

The AAS is responsible for contracting for Internet provision and audiovisual equipment as part of the meeting. Any special requirements must be provided by the LOC prior to the final details being provided to the appropriate vendors, which usually happens a few months prior to the meeting (see timeline below). Currently, these are non-trivial expenses and care should be taken to plan for adequate Internet and audiovisual resources, but not too much.

The AAS handles all communication with exhibitors.

The LOC is responsible for the content of the conference web page, but the AAS needs to be able to communicate updates to the LOC webmaster as needed (although this is not a formal requirement, the AAS can provide full website support, including content management). The AAS handles the registration web site. The AAS publishes the websites for workshop requests and hotel registration, which are then linked to the DPS meeting page.

The LOC lines up ~50 volunteers to help with meeting room support, registration, and any other support tasks. The AAS handles onsite coordination and scheduling of these volunteers.

The LOC lines up local donors; the DPS committee contacts big sponsors. Both the LOC and the DPS committee make sure that sponsors are properly acknowledged at the conference. Care should be taken to not rely on donations in the preparation of the budget until the funds are actually in hand.

AAS contracts for transportation arrangements between venue and hotels if applicable. This cost must be covered appropriately within the meeting budget.

The AAS produces the block schedule for the meeting rooms, but coordinates the workshop schedule with the Science Program Committee and LOC.

The AAS produces a simple map of conference rooms and the poster layout. The AAS contracts for the provision of poster boards and is responsible for the setup of the poster hall.

The LOC handles public outreach. Typically local schools are invited to tour the poster hall. The conference budget will subsidize some of the outreach costs – the extent of support will be negotiated with the DPS committee because it is a budget item. The DPS press officer is responsible for advertising the meeting and public activities to the press.

The LOC arranges for a time and venue for the Sagan medal winner to give a public lecture. There should be no cost involved, however if there is then the DPS committee will be involved as this becomes a budget item, and the AAS staff will handle any contractual negotiations required. The LOC plus the DPS Press Officer promote the lecture with local media.

The LOC organizes all additional activities, such as local tours, for conference attendees and their guests. These should all pay for themselves. The LOC produces additional helpful information such as maps and a local restaurant guide.

The DPS committee decides on the registration fee and amount of the "green" donation at the May meeting.

2.b. Timeline of pre-conference activities

The execution of every item on the following list is discussed during AAS-LOC telecons. The DPS chair is also an attendee on the telecons. Some items may be remanded to the DPS executive committee if necessary for a decision to be made, particularly in the case of large unanticipated budget items, although normally the LOC is empowered to make decisions. This timeline is a general guide to the timing of various tasks, detailed deadlines will be worked out between the AAS, DPS committee and LOC, and adjusted as needed.

October, or meeting –12 months
- LOC-AAS face-to-face organizational kickoff meeting. A good opportunity is on the last day of the conference.
- Meeting logo design available (use to promote at the meeting)

November; meeting –11 months
- SOC chair and members named.
- DPS committee members begin contacting meeting sponsors.

December; meeting -10 months
- Begin identifying banquet options
- The LOC and Program Committee chairs should be interacting regularly with the DPS press officer and EPO officer regarding their plans and needs for the meeting. At this time, the press officer will need information on local media contacts (TV, newspaper, radio) to help publicize the meeting to them. The EPO officer will discuss plans for teacher workshops, participation of school groups, etc. and will similarly need local contact information.

January; meeting -9 months
- Meeting website designed. Be sure it includes the date and site of the meeting; the LOC and SPC Chairs with contact information; and especially *abstract, housing, and pre-registration* **deadlines**.
- Generate a list of childcare providers in the area. Include in the web site design with the appropriate disclaimer. Also include a link to a parent's forum for sharing childcare and to the professional development web site for further information.
- DPS Committee sends email to all members soliciting nominations for DPS prizes
- DPS committee sends email to all members soliciting donations for Hartmann travel grants

February; meeting -8 months
- SOC sets abstract deadline.
- Launch meeting website.

March; meeting -7 months
- Audiovisual quote due to AAS.
- Internet quote due to AAS.

- LOC provides EPO space requirements to AAS.
- LOC + SOC draft very rough schedule of plenary sessions and parallel sessions.
- AAS does initial floor plans and room assignments.

April; meeting -6 months
- LOC proposes banquet, reception, student reception location options to AAS for AAS follow-up
- Website with workshop form goes live
- Initial meeting budget presented by AAS to LOC and DPS leadership
- Banquet contract signed
- Meeting sponsors and amounts finalized by DPS committee

May; meeting -5 months
- DPS committee meeting – budget reviewed, registration fee set
- Prize winners notified by DPS chair, SPC contacts to finalize schedules for prize winners' talks
- Hotel reservations open, website link goes live
- AAS mails exhibit prospectus to potential exhibitors and prior-year exhibitors
- Meeting logo to AAS for OASIS / BAAS

June; meeting -4 months
- Exploder email to members with meeting information, call for abstracts, etc.
- Workshop proposal deadline.
- Workshops scheduled; organizers emailed.
- Volunteer form and info sent from AAS to LOC volunteer coordinator
- Registration link goes live.
- Exhibitor registration advance deadline.
- Hartmann travel grant prize winners notified (DPS vice-chair responsibility)
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- Abstracts due (or in July: Negotiated with AAS)

July; meeting -3 months
- Volunteer form goes live
- Early registration begins
- Splinter meeting form goes live
- July exploder email with abstract info, hotels, registration info
- Follow-up exploder email with deadline reminders, workshop
- Early registration deadline, regular registration begins
- Deadline for exhibitor registration – late fee starts

August; meeting -2 months
- All vendor and venue contracts signed
- Signage needs defined by LOC (coordinated with DPS committee to acknowledge sponsors)
- Exploder email with meeting news and reminders
- Audiovisual deposit due

- Final exhibit deadline
- Exploder email with registration reminder
- AAS does shipping inventory, orders supplies
- Final transportation schedule (for buses from hotels to venue, if applicable)
- List of volunteers provided from LOC to AAS

September; meeting -1 month
- LOC finalizes signage needs and delivers list to AAS
- Exploder email with registration deadline reminder, conference updates
- LOC provides AAS with EPO schedule of events and logistical requirements
- Regular registration deadline, late fees commence
- Audiovisual order deadline (incorporating workshop needs)
- Catering orders deadline
- Splinter meeting deadline
- Final block schedule online
- Hotel cutoff
- Internet order due
- Exploder email with conference updates
- Volunteers scheduled by AAS, LOC emails volunteers their schedule
- Session door signs produced by AAS
- Posters laid out by AAS, map sent to LOC (AAS did this last year)
- Exhibit hall map from AAS to LOC for program update
- List of recipients of comp'd registration due to AAS
- Program updates due

2.c. LOC-AAS telecon schedule

Dates and times for the AAS-LOC telecons are selected at the organizational meeting one year prior to the conference (see 2b). Although the dates can be changed later, it is helpful to plan around weeks when the AAS staff are immersed in executing AAS meetings, the LOC chair is unavailable, and other conflicts. The following is a rough guideline to telecon frequency - the number is not mandatory, and telecons should be cancelled if not needed.

- November to March – one telecon per month
- April to June – two telecons per month
- July to September – one telecon per week (schedule these but cancel if not needed)

3. The Local Organizing Committee

The chair of the LOC is encouraged to put together a committee and then delegate! Possible assignments are:
- Website
- Logo

- Student-focused activities
- Child-care
- Green czar (see section 5)
- Registration packet content (if applicable)
- Local restaurant guide
- Local activities and tours
- Education and Public Outreach
- Volunteer coordinator
- Banquet plans
- Description of local sightseeing options (for people to do on their own)
- Local fund-raising

If possible include the LOC chair for the subsequent DPS meeting on your committee so that they can see what they will need to do.

4. The Science Planning Committee (SPC)

The SPC chair participates in all LOC and LOC-AAS meetings. The SPC is primarily active for the abstract sorting and scheduling at a date scheduled sometime in July. If possible include the SPC chair for the subsequent DPS meeting on your committee so that they can see what they will need to do. Include the DPS Press Officer.

The LOC and the Program Committee decide on any **special sessions and invited speakers** in addition to the standard prize lectures, and **invited-only sessions** to discuss news of general and timely interest (usually new spacecraft results).

4.a. SPC Timeline of activities

- Minus 6 Months: SPC Chair submits list of Session Topics to the AAS to be incorporated into the abstract submission website.

- Minus 4 Months: Program Committee finalized. Names and e-mail addresses are sent to the AAS so that they can be given access to the secure site for downloading abstracts

  SPC Committee, based on SPC Chairs recommendations, picks Invited Speakers. SPC Chair contacts Invited Speakers for availability. In consultation with SPC members, SPC Chair picks and contact alternate speakers if necessary.

- **Minus 3 Months:** Run an **abstract deadline reminder** in the DPS and AAS electronic newsletters. It doesn't hurt to have e-mail reminders one week and 2 days before the due date, as well.

- Program Committee collects **titles from invited speakers**, sends them on to the AAS. Normally *abstracts* from invited speakers are due the same time as all the

other abstracts, but it is a good idea to remind them now to submit an abstract for their invited talk.

- **Minus 2-4 Months (As negotiated with AAS):** Abstract deadline; AAS collects and processes **abstracts.**

- Minus 2 Months: AAS and DPS secretary confirm the **membership status** of first authors (or, if first author is not a member, that they are sponsored by a DPS member and that the "one-time-only" rule is being followed)

- AAS confirms that no person is **first author of more than one paper** (invited talks and education posters excepted)

- Abstracts and reports made available on a **secure web site** to the Program Committee and the Press Officer

- Self-selected "**Newsworthy**" abstracts are flagged for the Press Officer

One Week After Abstract Deadline: Program Committee meets. Before the committee meets, the Chair will look over the number of abstracts that have been submitted, including the number of oral versus poster requests, and make the overall decision of how many oral slots are available in total, and how these slots will be distributed by topic (e. g. "we'll have 18 oral papers on Mars Surfaces, one grab-bag session of nine unclassifiable papers...") so that the rest of the committee knows what constraints they are operating under. To accomplish this, prior to the SPC Committee Meeting, the Chair should develop a block schedule of sessions which minimizes the simultaneous scheduling of overlapping topics (i.e, Saturn an Jupiter scheduled simultaneously, or Jovian satellites and Enceladus). An example of a good combination of simultaneous sessions is (1) a planetary atmospheres session, (2) a small-bodies session (asteroids, comets), and (3) a Mars surface session. The block schedule should incorporate the schedule for the Plenary Session, comprised of the Invited Speakers and the DPS Prize winners. Time for the plenary DPS annual Members Meeting also needs to be scheduled, if held during the day.

At the Program Committee meeting, the committee members are to:

      A. Flag any abstracts that are clearly **inappropriate** for the session in question, either because they were misassigned (the author hit the wrong button) or because the work is not of a quality appropriate for the meeting. *These latter abstracts are extremely rare. Any abstract that is likely to be rejected must be put aside to be discussed by the entire program committee and, if necessary, referred to the DPS Committee before such a drastic step is taken.*

      B. Decide which papers are to be given **orally**, and which are presented as **posters**.

- o In recent years, the authors of the abstracts have been given the choice on the abstract submission form of choosing their preference for oral or poster presentation.
- o Try to accommodate all preferences. This will depend on the time slots and abstracts available.
- o If you find that authors who have requested an oral presentation must be moved to a poster, send a personal message to the author explaining the reasons (and be prepared to stand firm when you receive flak for this decision).
- o Authors who request posters, should be given posters unless the Program Committee strongly feels that the results are better presented orally. If possible, consult with the author first.

Order the papers within the oral session so that similar papers are grouped together and the topics flow in an interesting and logical manner.

D. **Order** the papers within the poster session so that topics are grouped logically.

E. Identify two people who can serve as **session chairs**, plus a third alternate candidate to be given to the PC Chair in the event that one of the two chosen candidates cannot serve.
- The pool of potential chairs is made up with those who indicated they would be willing to serve as a chair when they submitted their abstract.
- Session chairs should be persons of sufficient stature in the community that they can chair with some authority, and of sufficient knowledge of the field to be able to recognize good questions and good questioners, and, if necessary, ask intelligent questions themselves of the speaker.
- If possible, the chairs should be chosen from those *not* giving papers in that session; instead, look to those presenting in related sessions or those presenting posters. (This is a nice gesture especially if that person's paper was "pushed to poster" by time constraints.)
- If it is unavoidable that both chairs are also presenters, at least try to have one chair give a paper in the first half of the session, the other chair give a paper in the second half of the session so they can chair each other's paper.

- Program Committee Chair sends **session schedules and assignments** to AAS

- **Minus 1 Month:** AAS collects late abstracts, SPC Chair organizes **late session**. Normally late abstracts are automatically assigned to poster sessions; this greatly simplifies the entire process and keeps the process fair to all members.

5. Planning a Green Conference

As planetary scientists we are uniquely conversant in the scientific basis underlying climate change concerns. The LOC is requested to look at all available methods for reducing the meeting's carbon footprint. [The Ithaca LOC in 2008 is especially commended for their many innovative measures!] The AAS has a green policy, which should be referenced for possible ideas and current AAS operational procedures and policies at the main Society meetings.

Possibilities for the LOC to consider:

- Detail alternative travel options to the meeting besides air travel
- Describe public transportation options to travel between airport and meeting
- Encourage carpooling
- Encourage vendors to "buy local" for food breaks
- Advertising the awareness for "Eco-Friendly" and "C-Footprint" on as many places as possible – asking the participants to look for ways to minimize waste
- On-site paper, plastic, and glass recycling
- Utilizing recyclable (paper) cups, plates, etc. for coffee, cookies, etc. use wooden stirrers; avoid plastic disposables as much as possible.
- Minimize the printouts and handouts of the conference abstracts/programs etc. - put terminals and printers if participants want to print specific parts.
- If possible, obtain polyethylene (HDPE or LDPE) nametag pouches and ask these to be returned – they can be recycled.

Webcasting of all sessions of the entire meeting was tried in Ithaca, but not pursued after that meeting. There were two reasons: 1) concerns about release of proprietary ideas and data; and 2) the cost. In the future the cost of webcasting will likely decrease, but the concern about release of proprietary material will still need to be addressed.

The LOC will also make sure that a button for a voluntary donation to offset our carbon footprint is included on the registration webpage. The donation amount will be decided at the May DPS committee meeting when the registration is set.

6. Meeting Events

The following events need to be incorporated in the schedule; this should be jointly coordinated by the AAS, LOC and SPC:
- Opening reception (Sunday)
- Student reception (Sunday)
- Opening and welcome by civic leaders at first plenary
- Women's lunch
- Prize lectures – Kuiper, Urey, Masursky

- Presentation of medals to Sagan and Eberhardt winners
- Public Sagan-medal-winner lecture
- NASA night
- DPS members business meeting
- Banquet
- Session Chair breakfasts every morning.

7. Meeting Week

The AAS staff is the point-of-contact for all service vendors. AAS staff will run the registration desk and be available all week to answer questions and to resolve issues.

7a. LOC chair responsibilities

• Try to be present at as many activities as possible, to be available in case questions arise or things go awry.

• Assign at least one LOC member to be present at each planned activity, to be the point person. (Don't feel that you need to be the point person at everything! This is particularly difficult with simultaneous activities, if there are any.)

• Be sure to exchange cell phone numbers with the LOC members as well as the DPS Chair and SPC Chair, for last-minute communications throughout the week.

• Be sure to thank your LOC members!

• Be in close contact with the AAS Staff, DPS chair and the SPC chair throughout the week, to make sure that you're all aware of how things are going and decisions that have been made.

• Throughout the day, hang around (as appropriate) the registration area and general meeting areas to be available for questions and to coordinate things as needed with the AAS staff. Don't feel that you can't go to any talks though!

7b. SPC chair responsibilities

- On "set-up day", typically day before first sessions:
    o Meet with AAS staff person responsible for oversight of the session rooms.
    o Learn how the clock, microphones, laser, projection equipment work

- Morning of Each Day: Conduct Session Chair Breakfast
    o Discuss how sessions are run (time for each talk, Q+A process, etc)
    o Introduce Audio Visual Technican, who will demonstrate operations of the clock and computer procedures for accessing and displaying talks

- Before Start of each Session: Ensure all talks have been submitted . If not, try to locate speaker, and coordinate back-up plan with Session Chair

7c. DPS chair responsibilities

- Welcome students to student reception, explain purpose, thank organizers
- Meeting opening - Greet civic leaders when they arrive, introduce civic leaders at beginning of Welcome Plenary, introduce and thank LOC and SPC chairs and committees, thank sponsors
- Give Sagan Medal and Eberhardt award to recipients (introduce winners, read citations) at plenary session
- Give Urey, Kuiper and Masursky prizes to recipients and introduce them to give their prize lectures (act as master of ceremonies at plenary session)
- Attend student breakfasts
- Welcome everyone to NASA night
- Run the DPS members meeting (be sure to bring gavel to hand off to incoming chair)
- Welcome everyone to Sagan public lecture and introduce speaker

8. Wrap Up

Post-meeting the DPS committee will want to hear your feedback on lessons-learned and suggestions for future improvements.

Please know that the success of the DPS meeting every year is based on the volunteer efforts of the members of the division. By taking on the role of LOC or SPC member or chair you are providing an invaluable and sincerely appreciated contribution to your discipline.