Guidelines for Prospective Local Organizers of Digital Humanities Conferences

Approved by the ADHO Steering Committee on June 18, 2011

These guidelines contain practical information about the organization and running of DH conferences. They may be used by prospective local hosts to get some idea of what is required, and they should be consulted by the host for each conference. As the conference evolves, these guidelines will also change, so check the revision date on this document to make sure it has been updated within the last two years, and if it has not, ask the chair of the ADHO Conference Coordinating Committee to confirm that this document provides current advice.

The location of each annual conference is agreed by the constituent organizations at the DH conference no later than two years before it is held. A checklist of what to include in a bid for a future conference is in Appendix I.

1. **Size and Funding of the Conference**

The conference usually attracts 150-300 participants. Factors which influence the number of participants include location, cost and also possibly the number of interested local attendees. A minimum number could be approximately 100 presenters (of papers and posters), plus about 20 officials of the constituent organizations. Below this level of enrollment, it is hard to imagine this conference breaking even, and conference expenses are the responsibility of the local organizer (by the same token, any profit on the conference goes to the local organizer as well). ADHO does contribute a fixed amount to the conference ($5,000) to ensure that the local organizer (LO) validates individual ADHO membership status before registering people for the conference at the member rate. The Chair of the ADHO Conference Coordinating Committtee can provide more information on how this validation can be accomplished. Sometimes the LO will provide exhibitor space for publishers, software developers or others, and charge for that; sometimes the LO will solicit sponsorship from the host university or from businesses with an interest in the DH community. These arrangements are entirely up to the LO.

The academic programme is the responsibility of the Program Committee (PC), of which the local organizer (LO) is a non-voting member. The PC Chair should invite nominations for keynotes from both the PC and the LO. The LO can veto any nomination based on cost: barring a veto, the final choice rests with the PC. If no agreement is possible, the matter should be referred to the CCC Chair. Keynotes should be chosen with cultural, disciplinary, geographic, and other forms of diversity in mind. Once keynote speakers have been chosen, using the guidelines above, actual iInvitations should be issued by the LO, since the LO will be responsible for travel arrangements, etc.

2. **Dates, Timetable, and Elements of the Conference**

The LO proposes appropriate dates which are agreed by ADHO when the bid is presented. In recent years the conference has been held in June or July. Note that early June tends not to be a good time for some European institutions which hold examinations at that time.

The conference usually has three full days of papers, preceded by various committee meetings.

A provisional timetable would look like this:

- Day −2: ADHO Steering Committee meeting / Workshops or tutorials
- Day −1: Committee meetings of constituent organizations / Workshops or
  tutorials
- Day 0: First day of conference proper
- Morning: ADHO Steering Committee re-convenes
- Afternoon: Arrival and registration for participants
- Late afternoon: Opening plenary
- Early evening: Reception
- Day 1: Conference sessions
- Day 2: Conference sessions
- Day 3: Conference sessions to include closing session
- Day 4 etc.: Workshops / tutorials may also be held after the conference (particularly if they are being run by members of the executive committees of ADHO or its constituent organizations).

Social Program:

The social program of a DH conference includes a banquet, for which participants pay separately, and to which they may pay to bring guests not registered for the conference. The banquet may be held in the midst of the conference schedule, or at the end. Any scheduling choice has consequences. For example the LO might schedule the banquet for the evening of Day 3, followed by half-day of papers on Day 4 to allow for departure on that day. This is convenient for people who do not have to travel far, but it won't do much good for those who have come a long way to attend, and in this scenario there is often a small audience on the last morning. It is also not easy for any speakers who are scheduled in the first session on the morning after the banquet.

A social program beyond the banquet and receptions is usually part of the conference, with excursions to points of local interest. Again, participants pay for this separately, and they may pay to include unregistered guests. The social program in general provides important opportunities for informal networking among conference participants. Some conference organizers have put excursions at the beginning or end of the conference, and others have elected to have something in the middle of the meetings (for example, on the afternoon of day 2 or 3). Those who simply come for the academic program will prefer not to have that program interrupted, but attendance at excursions is likely to be better if they are not at the beginning or end of the conference. Also, it is increasingly common in recent years to have workshops in the day or two before the conference opens, and these could conflict with early excursions (as do the meetings of the various organizations). All details and decisions with respect to the social program are at the discretion of the LO, who should describe proposed activities at the time of the bid.

Academic Program:

A typical day of papers consists of at least four parallel sessions, each of 1.5 hours. Each session consists of three submitted papers, or a panel submission. The programme also includes reserved session slots for AHDO and each of the constituent organizations, making a total of four reserved sessions at present.

The starting time each day depends to some extent on local practice, but anything earlier than 9 a.m. is likely to be unpopular (and embarrassing for speakers facing an empty room). Coffee breaks in the morning and afternoon are expected, and usually last 30 minutes. Serving large numbers of people could become difficult if the coffee break time is less than this. The amount of time allowed for lunch depends on the facilities for lunch. If lunch is available close by, 60-75 minutes might be adequate. If participants have to go some way to find their own lunch, 90 minutes is reasonable. It is unusual for the LO to include lunches in the cost of registration, but there could be circumstances where this is necessary. Participants tend to go to dinner (on their own) around 7.00-7.30 pm and so there would be time after the end of the scheduled sessions for any extra meetings etc.

Annual members' meetings of ALLC, ACH, and SDH-SEMI are normally held at lunchtimes, and not on the same day.

Local organizers can expect requests for facilities for workshops and tutorials. The LO or other participants may organize workshops or tutorials before or after the conference, but these workshops need to be approved by the Program Committee, because they are part of the academic program, even if they fall outside the official start or end dates of the conference. The Local Organizer needs to approve the financial arrangements for workshops and tutorials, because the cost of those events are part of the overall conference budget. A sample call for proposals for workshops and tutorials, including a more detailed list of responsibilities, is available on request from the CCC.

3. Facilities for the academic programme

The following facilities are needed to support the academic programme

a) One lecture theatre capable of holding all participants. In reality, not all participants will attend a plenary lecture, but most will be there for the opening session and for special events such as the Busa Lecture (see below section 11).

b) Lecture/seminar rooms for parallel sessions. There are normally three or four parallel sessions, but the LO should confirm this with the PC. One of these rooms may be the same as the large lecture theatre, but a small audience in a large room is not ideal. The LO, together with the PC, needs to estimate numbers for each of the parallel session, but a room holding less than 50 is likely to be too small. The parallel session rooms should be sufficiently close to enable participants to move to another room between papers in a session. Note that there are likely to be problems with fire regulations if rooms are very crowded.

c) Space for breaks (coffee etc). This could be the foyer of the lecture room area or another room close by. It should be big enough to hold all the participants.

d) Space for posters. This could the same as the coffee area. There should be sufficient poster boards to provide each presenter with a minimum of a 1.5 x 1 metre space. Easels or facilities for hanging posters on the wall should be provided, along with thumbtacks, clips, etc. The number of posters is likely to be 50 or more. Ideally, the posters should remain on view for the duration of the conference. Poster presenters are advised to check with the local organizer if they want to use a laptop as part of their presentations, to make sure that power, wireless, tables, etc. will be available. The LO is not obliged to provide these. Poster presenters are advised that projection, large displays, etc. are not to be expected.

e) Each of the lecture rooms must, at a minimum, have facilities for data and overhead projection, plus amplification and adequate table space for speakers. Most presenters like to use their own computers, but a computer should be provided with Internet and Office tools. It is usual to have one local technical support person in each lecture room, to help with any equipment issues. The LO should also ensure that there is water for the speakers, with clean glasses and generally that the speakers' area is tidy for each session.

   For a session of submitted papers at DH, normally only the current speaker is on the platform or similar area at the front of the room. Other speakers in the session sit at the front of the audience. The chair also sits at the front of the audience after introducing the speaker (in direct view of the speaker, in case time-keeping prompts are necesary) Panels may wish to organize themselves differently. It is important to arrange the seating to ensure that a row of speakers sitting facing the audience at the front does not block the view of the screen.

f) One or more tables in the coffee area for any leaflets that participants might wish to distribute.

g) A notice board for general use during the conference in the coffee area.

h) A notice board or similar outside each lecture room where the day's presentations are listed. It is important to highlight any last minute changes on this list.

i) A meeting room for the ADHO Steering Committee on Day −2, and the morning of Day 0. Meeting rooms for each of the ACH, ALLC, and SDH-SEMI Committees on Day −1. Projection facilities and network access should be provided for these meetings, and the LO should check with the presidents of these organizations in advance of the meeting dates, in case there are any additional requirements.

4. **Facilities for the Social Programme**

a) Opening reception
   The LO is expected to organize a reception on the first evening of the conference. This may be at the conference location itself or a short walk away if there is somewhere suitable nearby. Wine and soft drinks, plus some snacks are usually provided. This is not intended to replace dinner, the idea being that participants go off to dinner in groups from the reception. Depending on the location, occasionally there has been a short welcoming speech at the reception by a local dignitary such as the mayor of the town or a university official. If possible, it is better to have people to serve the drinks, by walking round the room, rather than just a table with one or two people to serve them. The cost of this reception needs to be included in the conference fee, rather than being broken out as a separately costed item, but it is wise to ask people to register for it nonetheless, so you have an approximate headcount, for

planning purposes.

b) Banquet
This is normally costed separately and it is advisable to try to keep the cost within reason rather than having a lavish event. Vegetarians and those with other special dietary needs should be identified beforehand, preferably on the registration form. The student bursaries and/or poster prizes are presented at the banquet so there needs to be a podium and microphone. The LO may invite some guests (e.g. their Dean) to the banquet, and their costs should be included in calculating the conference fee. Sometimes there is a 'top table' of conference and constituent organization officials. If so, a seating plan is a good idea. There will inevitably be some empty places at the banquet. The number of empty places can be minimized if longer tables rather than smaller round tables are used.

If the budget is tight, it is reasonable to provide enough wine for everyone to have 1-2 glasses. It is advisable to warn people beforehand if arrangements are made for participants to purchase wine after that. A short drinks reception can be provided before dinner, either as a cash bar or gratis.

The LO may organize some music or similar entertainment during or after the banquet. It is important to remember that the audience is international with different customs and perspectives and that not all members of the audience may appreciate the entertainment, so it may be advisable to provide an area to which those more interested in conversation than entertainment can adjourn. Announcing the availability of after-dinner drinks in this location has proven effective, in the past, in encouraging those not interested in the entertainment to relocate.

c) Excursions
The LO may organize one or more excursions for conference participants. Participants register and pay separately for these, and costs should be kept within reason. Local color is the rule, in excursions, and they may range anywhere from a couple of hours to a full day. If the excursion overlaps mealtimes, meals should be provided as part of the cost of the excursion. Successful excursions in the past have taken participants to museums and historical sites, but in other cases participants have gone tubing on rivers, ridden in horse-drawn wagons over the Hungarian plains, and observed ax-throwing contests. Liability should be taken into consideration by local organizers.

5. Options for accommodation

Some participants will want to stay in budget student accommodation, while others will prefer hotels. For student accommodation there should be sufficient information to indicate the level of facilities and service provided. Most hotels and student facilities now have web sites. It is usual to negotiate a block of rooms at a reduced rate, for hotels. Parking information is also helpful. Costs should be provided as soon as possible before registration opens, though these may only be approximate at the time of a bid. There should also be information about the approximate distance from the accommodation to the lectures and what kind of transport is available, if it is more than a short walk.

6. Travel

Travel options for participants should be available at the time of the bid, giving some indication of frequency of flights, travel from the nearest airport and surface travel (e.g. trains, road).

7. Abstracts book

The LO is responsible for the production of an e-book of abstracts, which is to be included among the materials provided to all registrants. An printed and perfect-bound version of the book of abstracts should also be made available, and the cost of this may be factored in to the registration fee or broken out as a separate and optional expense. The LO will want to consult with the PC for the final version of abstracts and figures, and the LO has discretion in deciding whether to include authors who have incomplete materials. It is highly desirable to have the abstracts marked up in TEI, so that they can easily be added to the archive of past years' abstracts. Information about the TEI schema used for abstracts, and about options for publishing to the web and to print, will be provided by the chair of the Conference Coordinating Committee. Local organizers may wish to consider providing an incentive for submitting abstracts marked up in the conference schema. Some spare copies of the abstract book are usually made available for sale, for example, if participants want an extra copy for their library. The book will have a note of welcome by the LO, an introduction by the PC Chair, a list of PC members, a contents page and an index of authors. It is normal to put the papers in alphabetical order of author, rather than by order in the programme. Authors' institutional affiliation should be given with their names, in the heading of the abstracts. It is also helpful to include a schedule for the conference in this book as well, even if it may be revised later.

8. Conference Web site

The web site is the main source of information about the conference. The more information that is available on the site, the fewer e-mail enquiries there will be to the LO about facilities, equipment etc. The web site should contain enough information for participants to find their way to their accommodation and then from the accommodation to the registration place where they pick up their conference bags etc. Some maps are very helpful. Sites for past conferences provide some useful models. The LO should ensure that the conference web site stays online as long as possible and should consult with the CCC Chair on plans to archive the site.

The LO is responsible for organizing the web site and keeping it up to date. A preliminary site should be online one year before the conference. The LO may provide a logo for the conference, or not. The site should also include logos for ADHO and its constituent organizations. At a minimum this preliminary site should have dates, information about the location, including a brief description of possible accommodation and social events, and travel as well as a provisional outline programme. In order to help participants plan their travel arrangement, the provisional programme should, as soon as is possible, include the starting time on the first day of the conference and the finishing time on the last day.

The web site is also an opportunity for LOs to showcase their own institution and facilities.

The call for papers is distributed by the PC approximately 9 months before the conference and should be added to the web site at that time. Further information is added to the web site during the run-up to the conference.

Registration for the conference is done using Conftool, which is hosted on www.digitalhumanities.org/conftool/ – configuration of Conftool for the upcoming DH conference is handled by the chair of the Conference Coordinating Committee, in consultation with the LO and the Chair of the PC, and this should be initiated around September or October, since Conftool is also used for reviewing papers.

Once it has been finalized by the PC, the academic programme is placed on the web site by the LO, preferably with links to abstracts.

9. Budget

The local organizer and host institution are entirely responsible for the budget, except for some costs associated with the Busa Award (see section 11).

When preparing the budget it is helpful to divide the costs into:

1) Fixed costs: those that will be incurred no matter how many participants there are
2) Costs per participant: those that are linked to the number of participants

Typical fixed costs include hire of lecture rooms, equipment and technical support, preparation of the abstracts book, staff for reception, etc, admin support if this is not designated part of somebody's job at the host institution, registration facilities (if not already available), additional staff for registration, any costs associated with posters, miscellaneous stationery etc, any other costs associated with lectures, e.g. water, signage, keynote speakers' travel, subsistence and registration, registration for winner of Busa award (in 2010, 2013, 2016, etc.), use of computing facilities.

Typical individual costs include (for a 3-day conference), 6 tea and coffee breaks (don't underestimate the cost of these), 3 lunches (if lunch is included), printing of programme etc, printing of abstracts book, conference bags, reception, name badges, conference services (if these are used, locally). Depending on how the printing is organized, there is often one fixed cost fee for preparing the copy and then a cost per participant for printing. Note that these costs are typical. There may be others depending on the host institution and local requirements.

A draft budget can be prepared by multiplying the sum of the individual costs by the estimated number of participants and then adding this figure to the sum of the fixed costs. It is advisable then to include a contingency amount for unexpected expenditure. Provisional registration fees can then be calculated.

There are several levels of registration fee. Members of the constituent organizations pay a reduced fee. The difference between this fee and the normal fee should be no less than the individual annual fee for subscribing to LLC. It is advisable to set a fee for early registration and then to increase the fee for registrations after a particular date, perhaps 8-10 weeks before the conference. This will help to get a better estimate of the likely number of participants. Reduced fees are also offered to students, at differential rates for members and non-members. There are likely to be some on-site registrations. A higher fee can be charged for these.

Bidders must include a provisional budget with their submission, but it is likely to be too early to get definitive prices two years before the event. The LO will need to rework the budget as preparations for the conference proceed.

Most participants prefer to pay by credit card. This solves problems in obtaining foreign currency, but the LO needs to allow for credit card charges to the payee in the budget (usually 1.5% of the transaction). It is better to prepare the budget entirely in the currency of the host institution and to avoid any costs that might be incurred in another currency – the one exception here is that keynote speakers may not wish to be reimbursed in a currency that is not widely used outside the host country. Participants who do not pay by credit card should be expected to bear the cost of any currency exchange.

In some European countries Value Added Tax (VAT) may be an issue. It is as well to be clear on this at the beginning to avoid a large tax levy once registration fees have been set. The local institution should be able to offer advice.

Some institutions require conferences on their premises to be organized by an institutional conference office. In this case the conference office will handle credit-card transactions for registration, the printing of nametags, arranging meeting space, excursions, etc., but will also normally charge for their service. If such an office exists, it is advisable to make contact with them as early as possible, and well before submitting any bid. The LO needs to be clear exactly what functions this office provides and how these fit with DH conference procedures.

10. Financial support

The conference is self-supporting in that the constituent organizations do not provide any financial subvention, beyond the $5,000 (USD) incentive for enforcing the validation of LLC subscriptions for those who register as members. The host institution and local organizer are responsible for balancing the budget.

The LO may seek financial support from the host institution, grant agencies, computer manufacturers, publishers, foundations etc. It is often easier to do this if support is tied to a particular part of the conference. For example a vendor or publisher might support a reception or a grant agency could be approach for expenses for keynote speakers or a vendor might fund the conference bags. It is worth remembering that commercial organizers support academic activities if they see some benefit to themselves. Support is normally given in return for distributing publicity material at the conference.

The timing of requests for financial support can be important. Some organizations have an annual budget for such things and it is therefore important to approach them at the best time in their annual cycle. However, two years ahead could be a long time, especially for a small business which may no longer exist at the time of the conference. It is advisable not to include any such financial support in the overall budget until the funds have been provided or there is a firm commitment in writing to provide them.

11. Busa award

This is a life-time achievement prize, awarded every three years (2010, 2013, etc). In a Busa Award year, the prizewinner will give one of the plenary lectures, normally as the last session in one afternoon. S/he will be introduced by the chair of the Busa Award Committee. The LO may provide a reception after the lecture. The LO must also ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to take the awardee to dinner after the lecture/reception with officials from the constituent organizations. ADHO covers the travel, and subsistence costs for the awardee to attend the conference. His/her partner is normally invited as well. The LO is expected to provide a free registration.

12. Dubious registrants

LOs need to be aware that recent conferences have experienced a spate of somewhat dubious registrants. These people have used the online registration system to provide an invalid credit card number and then begun to e-mail the organizer for a letter of invitation etc so that they can apply for a visa to attend. The LO has discretion as to how much time will be spent on these individuals, but past experience suggests that they do not usually end up paying or attending.

13. Coffee, tea etc

Coffee and tea should be provided at each mid-morning and mid-afternoon break, plus fruit, cheese, cookies etc. Decaffeinated coffee or tea may be requested by some delegates. It is always a good idea to have plenty of water available at breaks.

The meetings of the constituent organizations on Days −1 and −2 will also need coffee breaks at appropriate times. The LO could also give some thought to lunch for these meetings, perhaps to check with them first and then to order in some sandwiches. This can be very informal, and the constituent organizations should agree to pay the cost of lunch if it is provided.

14. Lunch

At most DH conferences, lunch is not provided, but depending on the location of the lectures, lunch may need to be provided as part of the registration fee. This is advisable if the location is more than walking distance from a variety of restaurants or does not have many restaurants. Local catering can be a university cafeteria where participants are given lunch tickets in advance. It could also be a sandwich or other buffet where there also needs to be plenty of space for people to sit down and a few tables for their computers.

Annual members' meetings of some constituent organizations are held at lunchtime, and typically not on the same day: the LO should ascertain which organizations wish to meet, and whether they want lunch provided: if so, the constituent organizations will pay the cost of lunch.

15. Computing facilities

It has become the practice for participants to be given an id or other similar information so that they can use a wireless network at the conference location. The LO is expected to organize this, also to make a few computers available for general use.

16. Registration and conference desk

The LO will provide a conference desk for registration, questions etc. This may be staffed throughout the conference, or only at certain hours once the conference has got going. It will then be most needed before and after sessions and during breaks.

The conference web site will provide information about the location and times of registration and opening of the conference desk.

Most participants will pick up nametags and conference materials during the main registration session on the first day. It is advisable to keep the desk open as long as possible on this day for late arrivals. Several staff will probably be needed then. The desk could have two or more stations organized by initial letter of the participants' last name.

The following items are likely to be needed for the desk:

- Computer with Internet
- Printer
- Phone
- Spare stationery
- A means of storing payment for any on-site registrations. Some participants may want to pay in cash.
- Some means of handling payments by credit card
- Spare pins etc for posters

On registration participants are provided with a conference bag which is likely to include the following items:

- Programme
- List of participants with e-mail addresses. This might be updated and redistributed on the last day.
- Abstracts book
- Local visitor information. This can normally be obtained from the local tourist office.
- Map of the campus
- Information about local transport, if needed to get from one conference location to another
- Note pad
- Pen or pencil
- List of restaurants
- Other useful information such as location of nearest post office, ATM/bank, convenience store, medical facilities, mobile phone information, fax information, where to get material printed or copied
- Phone numbers for taxis etc for departure
- Any publicity material which has been sent to the LO beforehand, including that from financial sponsors

On registration, participants are normally given an individual envelope which contains a receipt, if they need a printed one, ticket for the banquet if they have booked for it, confirmation of any other options they have chosen, e.g. excursions and a name badge. A personalized welcome letter from the LO is a nice addition.

Large printing is helpful for name badges. First name followed by last name is usually sufficient if the list of participants gives the affiliation. Members of the local organizing team may have different coloured badges. Sometimes coloured stickers on badges are used, for example, to identify speakers or banquet attendees. Many participants prefer a badge that is hung round their neck rather than pinned on.

17. Timeline Leading up to the Conference

a) Activities for external view of conference

DH Conference 1 year before	Web site up; pitch the upcoming conference at the closing session; advertise general e-mail address for conference; distribute leaflets; liaise with PC over timetable for paper submission; attend PC meeting
6.5 months before	Set up registration system
3 months before	Put preliminary programme on web site; registration opens, including housing options
2 months before	Deadline for early registration
After conference	With PC chair, edit papers for LLC; ensure web site stays up as long as possible

b) Local activities

11 months before	Confirm banquet and reception
8 months before	Finalize budget for registration, accommodation etc; make arrangements for keynote speakers
5 months before	Confirm arrangements for tea, coffee, lunch
3 months before	Start work on abstracts book; order conference bags; contact speakers who have not registered; make arrangements for participants to use wireless
1 month before	Start preparing material for bags; briefing for technical support people and testing equipment in lecture rooms; check requirements for ADHO and other committee meetings
1 week before	Abstracts book ready Prepare conference bags Prepare name badges Prepare signage to registration desk and lecture rooms Prepare material for registration desk
During conference	Put programme for each day on board outside lecture room; Check water and other facilities in lecture rooms
After conference	Send thank you notes to keynote speakers

Appendix I

Checklist for bidders

The host for a conference is agreed at the conference two years before. The bidder must attend committee meetings of the ADHO steering committee (day -2) and, if the bid is successful, be prepared to attend the meetings of each of ADHO's constituent organizations (day -1) at that conference to make a short presentation and answer questions. The bid will be circulated to committee members in advance of the meeting.

A few pages will suffice to outline:

1. Host institution and its interest in Digital Humanities
2. Degree of local institutional engagement and support for the local organizer
3. Facilities for the academic programme (to include location of lecture rooms, poster sites, tea and coffee facilities and technical support staff)
4. Options for accommodation and their proximity to the lecture rooms
5. Travel information
6. Possible arrangements for social events, to include the conference dinner
7. A provisional budget giving a possible registration fee for members and non-members.

The local organizer will be required to sign a memorandum of understanding with ADHO confirming commitment to the conference and ability to carry out the activities needed to host it, and acknowledging financial responsibility for the event.