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So Glad You (Didn't) Ask: A Column of Unsolicited Opinions #61
How To Operate a SF Convention Press Office In Ten EASY Lessons
By Chris M. Barkley

Fantasy & Science Fiction Media Relations - Press Room Guide By Chris M. Barkley (with invaluable contributions by Anne Pinzow, Tom Whitman, Bart Kemper, Charles Mohapel and many others)

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Press Office Manual: Executive Summary Outline by Tom Whitman

Press Office needs: physical:

- Office: two rooms in an easy-to-locate space
- Supplies: paper (pads), writing implements, furniture, Wi-Fi, cork/white boards
- Staff: intelligent, good communicators in print and in person

Press Office needs, Organizational:

- Flexible staff and executives
- Effective communication with all Divisions and Departments
- Effective communication with external press organizations
- A designated individual with decision-making authority at all times through the con

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this manual, we assume that you are thinking about or have accepted the position of being a press liaison for your fannish convention.

This is not an easy nor a lightweight position. While you may be one of the less visible members of the concom, you are definitely in a position which can (or will) determine how

successful (or not) how the convention will be perceived for posterity.

Isn't THAT a scary thought?

Well, it certainly should be.

Long gone are the days when the press room staff of a convention only had to worry about the local or regional television, radio and newspaper outlets. In addition to those traditional media outlets, you now have to worry about podcasters, bloggers, freelance writers and practically anyone with a social media account and a smartphone.

For all intents and purposes, the objective of you and your office staff is to:

- A) Register and welcome professional journalists and fan affiliated writers to the convention.
- B) Present information regarding the convention to journalists in a timely manner.
- C) Facilitate requests for information and provide opportunities for interviews to journalists.
- D) Give your convention chair, committee and Division Head regular reports on how the convention is being portrayed by the media and perceived by the public.

The head of the Press/Media Relations office and its staff must be patient, cool under pressure and, most importantly, be truthful and objective to everyone who comes into contact with the Press Office, whether it be The National Review, USA Today, CNN, Fox News or MSNBC. You cannot control what is said, written or shown about your convention. But you can be as honest and transparent in representing fandom in the best way possible.

This manual will show you many ways that can be done. This manual should not be viewed as THE definitive way to handle media relations for your convention but more as a template or starting off point for you to follow. The circumstances you face may not match any of the scenarios mentioned here, and you need to be flexible.

PRE-CONVENTION PLANNING, STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

A) Your Responsibilities

The head of Press/Media Relations for your convention is one of the most vital, but mostly invisible, parts of running a convention.

Your mission is to make a good impression, diminish stereotyping of fans in the media

and generate interest in fandom: specifically, for your convention.

What you do in this position will affect the attendance of the event or the public's perception of what a fannish convention is. To wit, if you don't clearly or adequately explain what fandom is about (whether it be sf, anime, art, fiction, filk etc...) so the media can translate to the public at large, they'll get it wrong. You won't attract the people who would enjoy your convention.

You will be responsible not only for your own decisions and actions, but those of your staff as well. If something goes wrong (and in all endeavors of this size, shape and number of personalities and egos involved, something will go wrong), be prepared to accept the consequences.

Do not forbid your staff from talking openly with the press. Caution them that they should make it clear to any reporter that any opinions they express are their own, not the convention's; and that if they have something of a sensitive nature to express, it should be done "off the record" or as "background" as an anonymous source. If they don't, they can be held responsible by you or any number of higher authorities in the convention food chain.

I can recall an instance where I was faced a challenging incident in which I was not directly involved but I was ultimately at fault:

In 2003, the Toronto Worldcon (Torcon III) faced a crisis; it turned out that the person they had appointed to run their Press Relations office had done absolutely nothing regarding press contacts or registration in advance of the convention. When I read about this in an email a week before Worldcon opening, I volunteered to step in and do the job. I had headed up the Press Office previously at LoneStarCon II in 1997 and had a pretty good idea of how to set up an office in a hurry.

On the day of the Hugo Awards Ceremonies, I received a phone call from Rebecca Eckler, a "lifestyle" writer from the National Post. She wanted a press pass plus one to attend the Hugo Awards. When I asked for the name of the other person she replied "Gollum" (which should have set off an alarm bell right then and there).

I told her that I would be in the press office with the badges and gave her instructions on how to find me. I had decided to skip going to the Hugo Awards and stay in the office to distribute the results of the Hugo Awards (with the stipulation that they were to be embargoed until the end of the ceremony) via individual email to newspapers and other media outlets. I released the staff to attend without any instructions other than seeing that any journalists were properly seated in a designated area.

In hindsight, those were not the best decisions. Here's why:

Rebecca Eckler never showed up at the press office as she had promised. She and her companion turned up at the Hugo Awards pre-ceremony reception unannounced and were refused entry. Ms. Eckler, who was well along in her pregnancy at the time, decided to make a fuss at the entrance of reception, citing that she was a journalist and entitled to be admitted. None of my staff were there to ameliorate the situation or to alert me to Ms. Eckler's presence.

When it came time for the nominees and their guests to be escorted into the hall at the beginning of the Hugo Ceremony, Ms. Eckler and her companion joined the line and were seated with the nominees! According to reports I heard afterwards (and her account that was eventually published in *The National Post* the next day), she eventually became bored and the two of them left before the end of the ceremonies.

The bottom line is that I, or someone on my staff, should have been present at the reception and at the Hugo Awards ceremony to mitigate what happened. While there was a high likelihood that a negative story about Torcon III could have been prevented, some prompt action could have stopped her disruptive behavior.

As a reminder of what happened, I kept Ms. Eckler's press pass, pictured below:

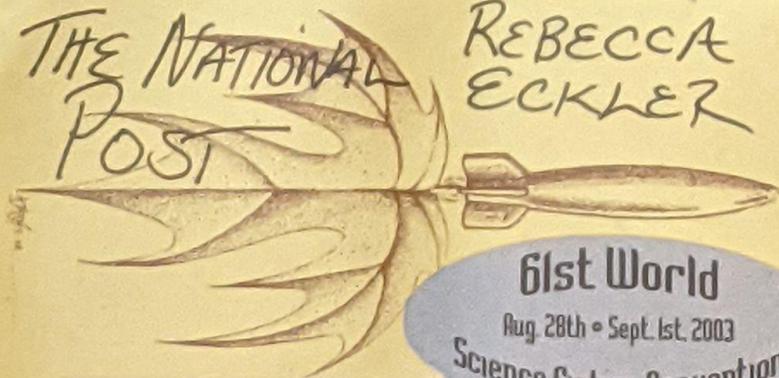
TORCON

TORONTO, CANADA
2003



THE NATIONAL
POST

REBECCA
ECKLER



61st World

Aug. 28th - Sept. 1st, 2003

Science Fiction Convention

PRESS
PASS

There are several things that you, as the head of the press relations for your convention, should remember:

- You are responsible for what happens on your watch, whether it's your fault or not.
- Someone with authority must be present at ALL of the important public events and functions of the convention.

B) Gathering Your Team and Establishing the Parameters of Their Duties

Another important thing to remember is that you cannot do this job alone. If you are lucky, as I have been over the many years, to have a number of trusted associates working closely with you at your convention, your chances of succeeding are quite good.

Your Press Office Staff need not be large: four or five people besides yourself and your deputy should suffice.

You, for better or worse, are going to be anchored in the Press Office for most of the convention. From my personal experience, this is inevitable because of the sheer range and magnitude of your duties. Being in the office makes you accessible to the journalists you are serving and to the convention committee and staff as well.

Your deputy, whomever that might be, should be a trusted individual who is empowered to act decisively in your absence. Needless to say, the deputy and you should be on the same page when it comes to an agreed upon set of procedures and policies.

On a basic level, your staff members are primarily there to help you with some office duties and serve as your eyes and ears outside of the confines of the office.

Your staff members need to be very familiar with fandom, social media and have some passing knowledge of how contemporary news media operate. Also, they must be friendly (or be able to reasonably fake it), discreet, be able to follow orders and at the same time, dispassionate under pressure and know when to be able to improvise solutions on their own and think fast on their feet.

One of the best examples of having the right person at exactly the right time came at Torcon III, which was my second time heading the Press Office.

Anne Pinzow was a walk-on to the Press Office. She was (and still is, to the best of my knowledge) a writer and editor for a newspaper and volunteered to help out at the convention as a change of pace. Needless to say, her skills and experience were put to the

test almost immediately...

On the morning of the second day of Torcon III, our morning staff meeting was rocked by a headline in the Arts Section of the Toronto Star. Hugo Award Winning Fan Writer and Fan Editor Cheryl Morgan (who also served on the Press room staff) chronicled what happened next and published the account in her fanzine, Emerald City (September 2003, www.emcit.com/emcit097.shtm#Wheels)

“The first major embarrassment that we suffered was on Thursday morning when an article appeared in The Star, a local newspaper, announcing that Neil Gaiman had won a Hugo for “Coraline”. This sounded terribly like a leak, but although we often give out the results under embargo just before the ceremony, there was no way that the paper could have gotten word of the results that early. So we phoned them.

Here I must give credit to my colleague, Anne Pinzow, who handled the call, firstly for her patience in working through The Star’s automated call handling system, and secondly for the magnificent way in which she laid the law down. A Hugo, she explained, can make or break an author’s career. Winning it can be worth millions of dollars. And by suggesting that the results were known beforehand The Star was casting doubt on the validity and integrity of the voting process, and therefore on the awards themselves. It was a wonderful performance.

As it turned out, however, the editor in question was already duly contrite. Murray Whyte, the journalist who had interviewed Neil and written the piece in question had already phoned up and complained bitterly about his article being butchered. It turned out that what had happened was that an enthusiastic sub-editor had not understood the difference between being nominated and winning, and had “sexed-up” the article to make it sound better. There were red faces all round at The Star. They printed an apology on page 2 on Friday, and on Sunday they devoted half of page 2 to a report of the Hugos.”

So, an utter disaster averted, but just barely. And thankfully, Neil Gaiman, being a prince among writers, was a good sport about the imbroglio and did not hold up the scurrilous headline above his head as Harry Truman had infamously done back in 1948 (“DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN”) after winning the Hugo for Coraline.

As I said before, don’t forbid your staff to talk to journalists. First, because they are there to converse and engage with the journalists; second, you don’t want to give the impression that the Press Office is there to hide anything from them or the public (other than the results of the Hugo Awards until after the Hugo Ceremony). What you should caution the staff about is that ultimately, they are responsible for what they say to reporters. Unless they specifically say they are providing background information or want to say something confidentially or off the record, what they say may end up in a publicly seen, read or heard story, whether they meant it to or not. Depending on how bad the result is, you may need to send this volunteer off to work somewhere else at the convention.

The last piece of advice I want to impart on this subject is this: If you or a member of your staff sees something inappropriate or sees a situation that needs some immediate intervention, stop what you are doing and render assistance. Worldcons are solely run by groups of unpaid volunteers from all walks of life. For the most part, we consider ourselves an unofficial but very real “family”. And helping family members with a problem at Worldcons is mandatory and not open for debate as far as I’m concerned. Know what you can do to intervene, and call for help if you need it.

No one, not even the head of the Press Office should be under the impression that they can speak officially for the convention or the committee and Chair(s) running it.

Ultimately, only the Chair(s) or officially sanctioned people with the convention are allowed to make any official statement if something happens. The phrase “no comment” should be your constant companion unless you are instructed otherwise.

Always keep in mind that your presence and position as a leader is dispensable; you can be replaced. Your staff is as well, and should always keep that in mind too.

C) Your Budget

This is usually negotiated between your Division Head and Logistics when they hash out the allocated funds for the convention’s operations. Needless to say, you should have a say in these negotiations.

Your primary expenses will be an office, an excellent Wi-Fi connection, comfortable furnishings, a water stand and potentially other refreshments. You will need office supplies, and copies of local daily newspapers for the length of the con. If the convention has a tight budget, you may want to donate these yourself: if you do, keep receipts, because sometimes the con has an unexpected surplus and can reimburse you. .

As I have noted elsewhere, you can save the convention money by providing some of the more basic office supplies (pens, paper, laptops, etc) from home or from your staff.

Conservatively speaking, I would budget the Press Room operations at \$1200-1500 (as of 2021). This may vary by the size and structure of the convention. I would advise verifying the budget as soon as possible and remember that it may change as circumstances change. The actual number depends a lot on how the convention allocates and tallies expenses: some budget all space allocation under one department, and others allocate each office to its department. You will need to understand your convention’s approach, which means talking with the Treasurer.

D) The Convention Chair and Area Heads

If a convention is, metaphorically speaking, a hierarchy. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the chairperson(s) are at the top. You can try to argue, compromise or reason with them but they have the final word, whether you like it or not.

And exactly where would you, as the Head of Press Relations/Press Office, be in this hierarchy? Well, right above you would be your Division Head, who is in charge of the functions in your particular area. Using the Discon III (the 2021 World Science Fiction Convention) chain of command as an example, Press Relations could fall under the Publications Division (where it has traditionally been) or one of the newer divisions, Outreach.

The Publications section includes the convention's Newsletter, the Souvenir Book, Advertising and the Sign Shop. The Outreach Division includes (as of this writing) Social Media, Community Outreach, Advertisements, the convention Website and Merchandise.

And while there is a lot of space between your department and the Chair of your convention, your office is one of the vital keys to a successful effort.

It would be in your best interests, and the convention's on the whole, if you introduced yourself to all of the other Department Heads, especially those who you will have direct contact with over the course of the event.

For instance:

Art Show: Get a copy of the policies regarding casual and media photography.

Guest Liaison: Coordinate requests for interviews with the Guests of Honor.

Timeline Manager: Know when events at the convention start, continue or end.

Website: Publish Press Relations Policies and Registration process. Social Media: Keep track of trending topics, gossip, misinformation, firestorms, etc...

Daily Newsletter: Coordinate the dispensing of daily news to the convention members.

Legal Advisor: Be prepared for legal problems.

Information Desk: Let them know your location and policies, and how to handle Press

Registration: Get badges for journalists and the processes for distributing them,

At-Con Operations: Get them an overview; develop procedures to handle any Press issues that may arise.

Treasury: Develop procedures for handling last-minute budget surpluses or shortfalls.

Events:

The Hugo Awards Ceremony: Seating for Journalists at the Ceremony.

The Hugo Awards Administrators: Dispersing Hugo Awards Results and statistics.

Masquerade: Seating for journalists and professional media photographers.

Broadcast and Content: Check the availability of streaming broadcasts to the public.

You will need to negotiate what access you and your staff will have to the backstage areas of the convention. Access for Hugos and Masquerade backstages are important because that's where issues that you may have to deal with are likely to arise; and it's where the people who can tell you what to say will be. You don't need unaccompanied access to the money-counting room. Try for more access rather than less. Establish what access you will have well before the convention starts.

E) The Spaces You Will Occupy

One of the first (of many) decisions regarding your physical presence at the convention is where your base of operations will be located. Besides your Division Head, you will be specifically talking to the Facilities and Logistics Divisions about this.

The placement of your office is important for several reasons; you want to make it easy for journalists to find you and get registered as quickly as possible. I can tell you from personal experience that on several occasions, the placement of the Press Office in far off locations has led reporters to just hang out at the entrances of the convention hall or hotels, hoping to interview random fans (even BETTER if they are in cosplay mode!) and convey a superficial or biased view of what's going on.

Ideally, the Press Office should be located as closely as possible to the Information Desk and/or the Registration Area. If this is not possible, have a table or booth in that vicinity so journalists can pick up their introductory material and press passes (or credentials: the difference between the two we will discuss in the next section).

In the best of circumstances, you should have at least one other room near or adjacent to the Press Office for the exclusive use of reporters and their subjects in need of a quiet space to conduct their interviews. Maintaining a schedule of the open time slots in the

interview room is an important tool. **IT IS VITAL THAT THESE SPACES BE AVAILABLE FOR JOURNALISTS!**

If additional space is required for a second interview, you can either try to find an additional vacant room nearby (by checking with the appropriate Division for its use) or offer up your office space for a limited time.

The booth/table in the main area must have your personnel there on duty for as long as Information and Registration are open. If you cannot spare anyone on your staff to do this, arrange to recruit (and train) volunteers from the Gopher Hole who can perform that function in your absence.

Also, as head of the Press Office, you should schedule yourself for several shifts out on the "front line", to assure some level of quality control in that area, and to make sure that you are getting all the information you need.

The Office should be furnished with several long tables, chairs and a few pieces of casual furniture for comfort. Make sure there is a set up for water that will be refreshed as needed. (Having coffee, tea and other refreshments would be nice, but they're usually very expensive. Inquire with Logistics to see if it has been budgeted for your office, and develop a plan to get these if the convention unexpectedly has extra money.)

The Office area WILL need to be a Wi-Fi hotspot: for communications between you and the convention and for reporters who might need to file a story from your location.

F) Registration of Media via the Internet and Mail

Instead of explaining each step of this rather long (and tedious) process, I have taken the opportunity to nick all of the relevant information about registering journalists and other writers for your convention from the Worldcon 76 website. It is an excellent example of what should be on your Press Information webpage. It is attached as an Appendix.

I will point out a few points of interest that will need your close attention:

-Produce a Media Packet for the Press Office. This should be distributed to writers doing an in depth report on the convention who are not wholly familiar with sf fandom, fans in general or its authors/artists/editors, but it should be made available through an online link or as physical copy upon request. Ten to fifteen copies on paper should be more than adequate for most conventions but have a contingency to obtain more, if needed.

- Talk to your convention's webmaster about setting up a Press Registration page, the registration email address and where those emails should go, ideally directly to you, with copies going to Registration and your Division head, who can keep track of your progress

as well.

- Offer, on a limited basis, the convention souvenir book to writers who may need it for background information. You will have to make arrangements to procure copies from Registration. Start with having 20 copies, and make sure you can get more, if needed. Return any unneeded copies to Membership at the of the convention

-You may be asked to produce Press Releases for the convention but do not do so unless you actually have the time (and inclination) to write them. (If you do them before the convention, the expectation will be that you will do so AT the convention. Believe me, you will be too busy to do that. Politely decline and let someone in the Social Media Division or the Newsletter do that.)

-ALWAYS stay in the loop about what is going on regarding the convention through external sources, your contacts with the convention committee, Division Heads, Social Media staff and friends working on the convention. When you are forewarned about possible problems you are forearmed. If your convention has daily Division Head meetings, make sure you or your deputy attends.

-Press Passes are for full time, professional journalists, Press Credentials (usually a Press Ribbon and access to press seating at Events) are for fan writers and photographers. They MUST be full time members of the convention before getting credentials. There is no in between regarding this policy unless the Chair(s) request it.

-ALL reporters and photographers are subject to your convention's Code of Conduct:
THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS!

Make sure everyone has a copy when they pick up their badge or ribbon.

-Arrangements with the Membership Division for the printing of the badges for pre-registered Press should be made far in advance of the convention. (And your office is responsible for providing that information to Registration.) Additionally, there should be an ample supply of badges (at least 10) just marked "**PRESS**" (for professional members of the media ONLY) who arrive at the convention without pre-registration and are only going to be onsite for a short amount of time for quick remotes or spot reporting. Make sure you tell the reporters that the badges MUST be returned to the office before they leave the convention. These badges also must be either marked or numbered and a log kept of who has possession of each badge at any particular time.

-Without exception, every single time I have worked in a Press Office, someone confuses our office with the convention's Newsletter Office. Be sure to order an array of LARGE signs from the Sign Shop indicating that this is your office, its hours of operation and the location of the Newsletter Office.

ON SITE ACTIVITIES

Pre-Convention Checklist/Office Move In and Set Up

-Plan to arrive at least a day or two before the convention starts. Do a walkthrough of your areas and meet with the Department Heads and Staff you will be interacting with on a regular basis.

-Make sure the office has basic office supplies. This will include pens, pencils, a pencil sharpener, a stapler, legal pads, a cork board (to pin newspaper articles), pins, a white board (for messages to the media and other announcements), white-board markers, a copier, and at least two wifi ready laptops. If the convention is not supplying these, you can -- keep those receipts so you can be reimbursed if the con has the funds to do so..

- Arrange for your move in for the day before the convention. Make sure you have all the furnishings (tables, chairs and lights) that have been allocated for your area. Know who to contact if they haven't arrived.

-Get the pre-registered reporters' Press Badges from Registration.

- Set up legal pad seating lists for the Hugo Awards Ceremony and the Masquerade.

-Get plenty of rest on the night before the convention.

Opening Day and Staff Meetings and Deploying The Staff

Be the first one in the Press Office. Greet your staff as they arrive. Have refreshments if possible.

Have a short meeting and go over the office procedures, hours of operations, assignments and protocols. Make sure everyone knows that the morning meetings are essential, to go over what has happened and what is going to be happening that day.

Make sure EVERYONE'S cell phone number is on file in case they need to be contacted in

a hurry.

Finally, when there is nothing else of importance to discuss, send everyone on the staff out to become familiar with where the convention's sites are; the Convention Offices, Art Show, Dealer's Room, Exhibit Halls and Meeting rooms. They'll need to know where they're going if you need to dispatch them in a hurry.

Daily Monitoring of the Media and Online Activities

Among the allocations you should have in your Press Office budget is for local daily newspapers, so you can keep track of the coverage the convention is getting. Also, you can pin those articles on the office cork board: these can be part of an archival collection to be presented to the convention committee at a later date.

You should assign someone (either a deputy or staff member) to monitor Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik-Tok and other social media platforms for any mentions, rumors, images or incidents happening at the convention. Talk to the Social Media head about the best way to do this.

It has been my observation that more often than not (and especially in the last decade or so) if something, ANYTHING, happens at a convention, it will surface on a social media platform first, and then spread like wildfire. It has happened more than a few times in my last few outings at the Press Office and I was grateful to know about a developing situation and having some idea of what was happening before taking any action or informing anyone higher up in the chain of command that there was a problem (or not). The best course of action in many circumstances is to do nothing. Knowing this is part of your job.

Green Room, SFWA and ASFA Liaison and Communications

You should make every effort to contact whomever is in charge of the convention Green Room and the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists and Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's convention suites, preferably before the convention opens. SFWA and ASFA usually have a hotel suite, a table or both at Worldcons and large regional conventions. The Green Room is the pre-panel meeting space for the convention's programming guests.

Journalists will be seeking these luminaries out for interviews and it will be more than likely that they will be asking the Press Office to arrange interviews and in most cases they cannot be accommodated easily. The best policy to pursue here is to state that the Guests of Honor, artists, writers and other luminaries will probably either have strict

schedules or will be very busy during the convention and have that posted very clearly in the press section of the website, in press releases and through social media.

The best solution is to set up Call Boards (which was first suggested by aforementioned Ms. Pinzow) in all three locations where reporters can post open or specific requests and others can announce if they are available or not.

The best advice you can give inquiring journalists is to contact the people they want to interview as far in advance of the convention as possible or make arrangements to meet their person of interest during the convention.

So, contacting the Green Room Staff (through the Programming Division), ASFA and SWFA is in the Press Office's best interests; you can arrange for coordinators to put up message boards for people who would like to be interviewed or post messages from journalists requesting one.

Ideally, someone should be sent several times a day to check each suite to refresh the call boards and information exchanges.

Also, be sure to order up a sufficient number of QUIET or INTERVIEW IN PROGRESS signs from the Sign Shop, along with easels to display them.

The Hugo Awards Ceremony and Masquerade Competition

The very first thing that the Press Office should have on the registration table is a sign up list for seating at the Hugo Awards Ceremony and the Masquerade Competition. You should be in regular contact with both to provide estimates on how many seats you will be needing in the Press and Photographers sections and where they will be seated.

Remember that while it is understood that nominees, their plus ones and convention goers have a priority when it comes to seating, the press needs adequate seating in order to make sure they can cover the events efficiently and adequately. Check with press photographers about their needs.

Your presence, or your deputy's, will be required at these main events in order to make sure that any problems that occur can be resolved quickly. Besides yourself, there should be at least two people at the Masquerade and all hands should be on deck at the Hugo Awards Ceremony.

One other Important Note: Usually, the Hugo Awards Ceremony Staff handles both the Hugo Awards results, nomination and voting statistics and the press release that comes with them. Make sure this is clear before the convention starts! Your office may be asked to take custody of copies of these items before the Ceremony, to be embargoed and

distributed to the press afterwards.

Needless to say, it is vital that you, as the head of the Press Office, take full responsibility to keep the results safely under wraps. They should be held strictly on a need-to-know basis: and you personally don't need to know. As someone who has been privy to those results (on several RARE occasions) I cannot tell you how nerve racking it is to walk around with that knowledge rattling around your noggin. If you are offered the opportunity to know in advance, my advice to you is to turn it down. DON'T DO IT! Enough Said...

Closing The Office

After MANY days of frenzied activity, it is finally time to close up your office. On the last day of the convention, I usually hold one more meeting to go over how things went and thank the staff profusely. The office should open at its regular hour to accommodate any last minute requests from journalists; the office should usually close an hour or so before Closing Ceremonies.

Your Checklist should include:

-Contacting Logistics to pick up any materials or equipment that was purchased by the convention that they want back, like furniture and computers.

-Returning all of the temporary and unused press badges to the Membership staff, along with a log of who had a badge.

-Cleaning the office area to the best of your ability to help the convention hall staff.

-Having the office closed at least an hour before the beginning of Closing Ceremonies.

AFTER ACTION REPORTS

Reports to the Department Head and Convention Chair

As a courtesy to your Division head and the Chair of the convention, you should prepare a brief summary of how many journalists attended, how you thought the office and your staff performed, anecdotes, problem areas and deficiencies that happened during the convention, and suggestions that can be passed along to future conventions. One to two pages is usually quite sufficient.

Final Thoughts

I have no doubt whatsoever that when you reach the end of your tenure as head of the Press Office, you will breathe a well earned sigh of relief. You have survived (successfully, I hope) one of the more difficult positions in convention running.

Your assignment is not to make news but to facilitate those who report it, from the fan writers with inside knowledge of fandom to professional journalists who may have no idea of what they're dealing with.

If you decide to take up this challenge on a regular basis, appreciate what you learned and strive to improve with each attempt.

And lastly, remember that this guide is only a starting point for your journey, not the end result.

GOOD LUCK!

APPENDIX -- Worldcon 76 Press Page

WORLDCON 76 PRESS CONTACT PAGE TEMPLATE

Welcome to the Worldcon 76 Press page. Worldcon 76 will provide support for members of the press and writers for online media who are covering the convention before, during, and after the event. You can find information on this page for obtaining press passes, approved logos and preferred fonts and colors, and usage guidelines, as well as basic event data.

Please note: This page is being updated constantly and may not have all of the above information until a later date.

Contact Us

For questions or general information on press relations that cannot be found on this page, please send email to press@worldcon.org. Or leave a voicemail

message for us at +1-888-8888. For additional needs, please refer to the [Contact Us](#) page on this site.

Press Releases

You can find press releases from Worldcon [here](#).

Media Packet

A media packet, including biographies and images of our Guests of Honor, information about the Hugos and Worldcon, and approved logos and guidelines can be found [here](#).

Press Registration Information

Thank you for your interest in Worldcon, to be held August 16-20, 20XX in San Jose, California at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center. The Worldcon actively supports members of the press and writers for online media who are covering the convention before, during, and after the event. We aim to provide information about this convention specifically, and about Worldcon, science fiction conventions, and the science fiction and fantasy genre in general.

As a representative of a media outlet, including professional and genre-related online sites, we at Worldcon 76 want to provide you with the opportunity to experience the most prestigious gathering in the Science Fiction & Fantasy community. We have listed the qualifications for credentials below, as well as common questions and answers for your convenience. If you have further questions, please feel free to email us at press@worldcon.org.

This document applies to everyone granted media access, whether audio-visual, traditional press, or non-commercial press (as defined below). The terms *Media Pass* and *Press Pass* should be considered interchangeable for these purposes.

Worldcon 76 reserves the right to remove anyone approved under this license if it deems that the company or its representative (s) in any way has violated

stated Worldcon 76 policies, common courtesy, violation of state and federal laws, and/or misrepresented itself or the nature of its business. Worldcon 76 has a [Code of Conduct](#) which is applicable to everyone attending this convention.

Press Pass Registration and Guidelines

Working members of the press must register prior to the convention. [Please register as early as possible](#). We recommend that you register by July XX, 2018 to ensure that we have sufficient time to verify your credentials and arrange for your visit to the convention and any interviews with the guests or staff.

We will have a Press Relations office on-site at the Convention Center. Please check in at the Media Registration Area on site to obtain credentials. Credentials will not be mailed.

Worldcon 76 Press Relations will coordinate media access to the Art Show, Dealers Room, Hugo Ceremony or any other event(s) requested. Please note that individual events may have additional guidelines. Media / Press Passes are a privilege and are subject to being withdrawn if these guidelines are violated. We expect to have more detailed guidelines for the events prepared in July and will email a copy of these guidelines to approved Press Pass holders. Registration information will be kept confidential.

Worldcon 76 Press Relations will coordinate and arrange accommodations for setup, convention memberships, and access. All requests for interviews and space allocation for reporting, are handled by Press Relations and not individual guests or participants. Please include these requests in your registration, or contact press@worldcon.org. Please note that we may not be able to accommodate all requests, so the earlier you make them, the better the chance will be that we can arrange it. A Worldcon 76 Press Pass is a complimentary license to be present and report on Worldcon 76 activities and does not grant any other privileges of membership.

The Press pass is not a standing group credential, but is individually issued, and all members of media teams are required to apply. Please make sure that you list all names and positions you wish the Press Pass to include in your application process to avoid confusion.

Please also note that while San Jose McEnery Convention Center offers free WiFi, WiFi access, electrical connections for equipment or special preparation gear will not necessarily be accessible during this event. Please list these requests when you complete the Press Pass Application. We will do our best to accommodate your requests, but cannot guarantee availability.

We request that media representatives who are granted Press Passes submit a link to or copies of their published works referencing Worldcon 76 to press@worldcon.org within 2 weeks of publication.

Non-Editorial Press Registration

Non-editorial employees of media organizations, including but not limited to, marketing, public relations, advertising, sales, publishers, etc., do not ordinarily qualify for Press Passes.

Please note that publishing companies do not qualify as media outlets. All

Non-Editorial Press must register through the standard membership page.

Freelance Reporter Registration

Freelance reporters must complete the [online application](#). Please note that all Freelance Press Registration should be received no later than July 15, 2018. While every effort will be made to accommodate those replying after this date, verification of credentials is not guaranteed.

Eligibility is subject to approval by the Press Relations staff, who will notify you if your request for a Press pass is confirmed or denied, or if additional information is needed to confirm your status.

Professional Online Media

Worldcon 76 defines Professional Online Media as journalists who represent commercial news websites. Sites must be established and updated regularly with original and current news. To qualify as online media, online reporters must provide in their [online application](#) a link to your online publication with

your name and title appearing in an editorial capacity, and a link to a bylined, industry-related article from your publication written by you and published within the last six months (the copy must clearly show the name of the publication and byline). Please note that online media must meet all criteria below:

The website must have a paid reporting staff of two or more. The website must post original, dated, industry-related news at least twice per month. Website content must extend beyond newsletters, links, forums, or blogs.

Non-Commercial Press Including Bloggers and Podcasters

Worldcon 76 supports the growing class of independent reporters and columnists who reach their audience via blogs, podcasts, video, or other nonprofessional online media, and is committed to allowing independent media access to the event on a limited slot availability.

We have a short list of guidelines below that will be used in evaluating the slots available for independent media. Please fill out our [online application](#) no later than July 15, 2018. We cannot guarantee independent media credentials for applications received after that date.

Worldcon 76 prefers to work with online media outlets that have an established track record covering aspects of Science, Science Fiction, Fantasy, and related works. We would prefer to work with websites that have been in continuous operation for at least six months.

Worldcon 76 reserves the right to request traffic data from a third party (e.g., Sitemeter, Technorati, Feedburner, iTunes, etc.) in the evaluation process when necessary. While the decision to grant access is not based solely on traffic/subscriber data, we do ask that applicants provide some degree of transparency into their operations for us to make a fair and timely decision on any media registration.

Obtaining press credentials is an opportunity to meet and interact with key industry and professionals as well as a solid Science Fiction/Fantasy fan base. While continued access to Worldcon 76 is not directly contingent on producing coverage during the convention, due to space limitations,

Worldcon 76 Staff will take it into consideration when granting Press Passes.

All online media must sign an acknowledgement that they agree to abide by the [Worldcon Code of Conduct](#).

Production Company/Videography Crew Registration

Worldcon 76 requires that all film crews requesting permission to film at the convention register in advance as either a production company or a videography crew. If you are registering as a production company or videography crew, please complete our [registration for media credentials](#). We will then contact you regarding your request. Worldcon 76 Press Relations maintains sole discretion in determining whether a network or station is a recognized media representative. A videography crew is defined as a videographer contracted by a conference exhibitor to film solely in that exhibitor's booth for that company's private/non-broadcast use only.

Due to limitations of space and access to our Media Rooms, all crew members engaged by an attendee, exhibitor, or guest at Worldcon 76 to film or record, need to be registered as media outlets. Unregistered crews not only run the risk of interfering with our members' convention experience, but often have equipment that needs to be handled accordingly with our on-site manager and in compliance with our contract limitations. Videography crews must submit a letter from the exhibitor stating that the company will be working under contract to film at their booth for private/non-broadcast use only. Worldcon 76 reserves sole discretion to determine if a videography crew meets the requirements and be granted permission to film at the convention.

Production companies and videography crews must preregister. Onsite registration will not be available. The pre registration deadline is July 15, 2018.

Worldcon 76 reserves the right to remove representatives of any production company or videography crew from the show if it deems that the company or

its representative(s) in any way violated [stated conference policies](#) and/or misrepresented itself or the nature of its business. There are no refunds for those who are removed or barred due to behavior or unqualified incidents, unprofessionalism, or any other reason that constitutes removal from Worldcon 76.

General Rules for Recording and Photography

1. **Coordination:** All photographers please coordinate with Press Relations.
2. Do not occupy or block any spaces designated for Accessibility purposes.
3. Do not occupy reserved seats or sections not marked for Press.
4. During the opening ceremony, the Masquerade, and the Hugo Ceremony, no flash photography is permitted, and photographers are not permitted to bring in additional lights.
5. Publishing pictures of a person in a public space, e.g. a group shot, may require their consent, unless the person clearly is not the main subject of the image and the picture does not cause them any damage, suffering or harm. Please do not take pictures or video of individuals without their explicit permission.
6. It is never acceptable to disrupt a program item or other event. The moderator/organizer of any event has the right to ask anyone to leave the room if they believe they are being disruptive. Please ensure any photography is non-disruptive, and respect the moderator/presenter, and/or panelists' wishes regarding taking of photos and/or video.
7. Please do not film signings. Many people are present and identifiable at these events, not just the author, and for many people meeting their favorite authors in person is a very personal moment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who may receive complimentary Press Passes?

A: Complimentary Press Passes will be issued only to reporters, editors, freelance writers, photographers, and videographers working for recognized professional publications of national news services, local television or radio stations, or nationally-recognized independent media outlets. They must also cover an area that is relevant to Worldcon 76 such as community news, science, science fiction, fantasy, artists or authors, conference, or topics relevant to our event. Each media request is different and will be fully assessed before being issued.

Q: How do I register for a Press Pass?

A: Complete our [Press Pass application](#). The application period will close July 15, 2018. Incomplete applications will not be considered, and you must agree to abide by the [Worldcon Code of Conduct](#).

Q: How will I know if my request was approved?

A: You will be notified by email from press@worldcon.org if your request is approved.

Q: How do I pick up my Press Passes?

A: You pick them up at the Press Relations Office at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center starting on August 15, 2018 after 2pm. No registration material will be mailed by the Convention to any of its members.

Q: When I register for Press Credentials, will Worldcon 76 distribute my information?

A: Worldcon 76 will not distribute your contact information and respects the privacy requests of all who register. If requested, we will pass along your contact information to the 2019 Worldcon to be held in Dublin, Ireland.

Q: Will there be a working Press room on site, hours and access during the event?

A: To be determined. Contact press@worldcon.org with specific questions.

Q: Will I be able to store equipment on site?

A: All equipment brought to Worldcon 76 by attendees is the sole responsibility of the owner. While we will do our best to accommodate, Worldcon 76 cannot be held responsible for lost, abandoned, or discarded equipment and materials.

Q: What is included in a Press Pass?

A: Press Passes provide general access to convention events. Individual events and areas of the convention may have limitations on general access, audio and/or video recording, or photography. If you want to cover a specific item or interview one of our guests, please indicate your preferences on the application and we will attempt to honor these requests if possible. Worldcon 76 reserves the right and discretion to close receptions, workshops, panels, presentations or keynote speaker access to media at any time.

Q: What if one of our team members is unable to attend. Are Press Passes transferable?

A: If one of your team is unable to attend, contact press@worldcon.org and we will do best to approve the substitute. At the convention, we will make every effort to accommodate you.

Q: Will media representatives be allowed to photograph or film the Art Show?

A: In general, photography and video is not allowed in the convention Art

Show. If access is to be granted, permission from individual artists will be required.

Q: How do I arrange an interview or ask about covering a specific event?

A: Please indicate specific requests on the application form. Please do not contact the guests directly.

Q: Will wired or WiFi internet be available for the Press?

A: San Jose McEnery Convention Center offers free high-speed Wifi, but Worldcon 76 does not run its own access lines in the Convention Center or the Hotels which will have their own rules and guidelines. Access may be purchased on site through the Convention Center and/or the hotels.

Q: Does my Press Pass include parking? A: No; the convention center has ample public parking, and there are several parking lots nearby. General information can be found at <https://www.sanjose.org/trip-ideas/parking>.

Q: What if my questions is not answered here?

A: Contact press@worldcon.org for any other questions.