PCirc Conference Planning Help

Gather a knowledgeable and hard working committee – 5 or 6 people, at least one techie; Ex Officio - OhioLINK ICS liaison, Anita Cook.

Begin initial planning meetings 10-12 months prior to the conference. A long time frame would be better. Propose several dates. Summer time generally works well as business is slower for most people. Double check that dates do not conflict with other significant meetings/conferences, for example, ALA.

Work with OhioLINK staff to locate a suitable site.

Determine who will be primarily responsible for which parts of the planning. The group should work as a committee-of-the-whole, though, to ensure continuity of the conference should one person decide to step out of the planning.

Choose a theme or design early for the conference. It helps to have a recognizable visual presence. A logo would help.

A major consideration is to have a conference rate that allows the most people to come to the conference while covering all the food costs. OhioLINK pays for the hotel/conference site.

**Things to consider when finding a location:**

* Cost of the facility. Include conference rooms rental, food, A/V costs (extra? included in rental?) and speed at which rooms can be set up during the day.
* How many breakout rooms? (This will impact on the number of sessions.)
* Travel time for attendees. Making it all in one day is always good, hence a central location is desirable.
* Availability of sufficient free parking.

**Space considerations for various functions:**

* Is there a room big enough for a plenary session? Will everyone see the podium and hear the speakers? If there are slides/videos are they viewable? Multiple screens so everyone can read them?
* Check various room sizes and number of rooms. Some sessions are more popular than others.
* Check the ease of moving between rooms. Remember that 200 people will be moving quickly, but will stop to talk. Need pathways. Look for potential bottlenecks.
* Are there sufficient numbers of restrooms easily accessible? Check the number of stalls, not just the existence of them. Are they big enough to handle many individuals during session-transition times and break times?
* Several individuals form the group must conduct a site visit prior to signing contracts. Actually, walk the spaces, checkout the rooms, look at the physical condition of the site before signing anything. Heat, air-conditioning, room comfort should be part of the conversations with the hotel/conference site.
* Look at the transit spaces. Where will the registration table go? You’ll need several tables for vendors or their staff and/or giveaways.

**Food/Catering:**

* For those staying overnight, are there reasonably-close places to eat?
* Is there a room minimum to bring down the cost of catering? (Most likely, this will not come into play, but it may so this question is included for consideration)
* Conference food should include:
  + Coffee, tea, juice, and some food like Danish or bagels. Not a full breakfast, but sufficient.
  + Lunch menu selected by the group. Include meat and vegetarian. Might also consider a gluten-free choice as some requests were made for that choice.)
  + If a speaker is considered for the lunch time, ensure the lunch space at the conference site is capable of a setup to hear and see the speaker.
* Afternoon break should include drinks and food. Sweet and salty choices would be welcome. Brownies go fast, as do cookies.
* Gluten free breakfast and snack options would be appreciated
* Water should be available all day.

**Room temperatures**

* These are important. Establish with the conference center what temperatures do they set for the duration of the conference. How fast can they change room temps? What protocols do they have for keeping or changing temperatures during the run of the conference? For example, do they shut off the air conditioning before the conference ends?

**Sound**

Get information about how the sound system is run.

* Does the conference center run their own?
* Bring in an outside company?
  + If so, do they use their own equipment or the conference centers?
  + Hotel systems may not have the best systems.
  + Make sure the sound people are available for sound checks well prior to the conference the beginning. Sound checks are vital. Sound people should stay in the room or be immediately available throughout the conference. They should be available immediately to address sound problems.

**Registration**

* The conference does not need to make money. At this juncture, registration covers associated food costs. Any honorarium for speakers should be negotiated with OhioLINK about the costs involved. Should they be covered by OhioLINK or by registration costs? OhioLINK pays for the facility. Fiscal processes will be set by Ohio State University’s (OSU) policies and procedures, the fiscal agent of OhioLINK.
* Registration protocols also may be set by the OSU business office.
  + At a minimum it is useful to have an online registration form and submission.
  + Confirmation for every registration is necessary. It is also useful to have the food choice in the confirmation. Individuals will ask for off-menu items. Check with the Conference center staff about off-menu items. One may require vegetarian, vegan, or gluten free food choices.
* Onsite registrations is a must, but a registration deadline of a week before the conference would allow food and facilities the best chance of success.
* The BGSU budget office staff suggested for the next time that a backup acknowledgment is sent Many institutions handle the registration for users and the users didn’t know that they weren’t registered so a message on the registration webpage and in other documentation such as “If you do not receive an email confirmation, you are not registered”.
  + The conference center will need to have final head counts and meal counts a day or two ahead. Ask the conference center staff about the timing of final head counts.
  + Credit card payments should be available to conferees and also to their institutions.
  + Have a method to complete onsite registrations at the conference.
* Have plenty of help passing out materials at the registration tables.

**Conference website and social media**

* Someone from the planning committee should be handling the conference website to ease the communication of information. Begin the website early, after the date and place is set. The web address then can be included in all advertisements and communications as a place to send registrants for more information.
* Conference Website (who can set up a website?) Someone from the planning committee should be the web person. A libguide has been used and seemed to be sufficient to the need. It was hosted by BGSU for no cost to OhioLINK or the Conference, except for the local website labor needed.
* Whatever social media is current at the point of the next conference, it should be initiated and advertised by the conference group. Advertise it on the website a month prior to the conference. The web manager could monitor it.
* Send a save the date email to PCIRC and ICS, and the OhioLINK lists six months prior to the conference. With periodic updates, especially as the program fills out and other significant information is available.
* Participating vendors should be given public approbation and a place on the website as acknowledgment.

**Program**

* Gather topics for presentations. Either call for proposals or call for topics from the “PCircers” about the things they want and then find presenters.
* Plan sessions and a plenary speaker.
* The planning group assigns the presentation rooms for sessions.
  + A preliminary survey can determine approximations of interests.
  + A printed program along with a conference floor plan should be available to conferees on the day.
* Note well: Presenters would like to present once so they can attend other sessions.

**Vendors**

* Determine whether any vendor wishes to have exhibit space.
* As all conferees will attest, goodies are a mighty thing. Try to gather as many as possible to have for taking on the day.

Attempt to get bags to distribute as one of the donations

**Evaluation**

* Designate a member to lead the evaluation of the conference. Develop the questions, method, and format. Analyze and summarize the results for ICS.

**Other Suggestions**

* Negotiate, if possible, a reduced hotel room rate for those staying overnight.
* Create signs for the conference that get individuals to places to which they need to get in house, for restrooms session rooms, lunch, etc. These can be determined when the planning group visits the conference sight.
* The idea cards weren’t as successful as they might have been. It could be tried again, though, perhaps with clear expectations put out there beforehand – doing a sell job in the morning announcement.
* Expand more into the SearchOhio public library and ILL world. Programming could be broader.
* Open discussions may be welcomed. Discussion ideas shared included policies, staffing levels, or job sharing.
* Old libguide URL: [**http://libguides.bgsu.edu/PcircConference2013**](http://libguides.bgsu.edu/PcircConference2013)
* Have people available to answer questions and for way-finding.

**Conference Day**

* The committee should all arrive about two hours early on the day of the conference. Assign particular tasks to group members. For instance, check room temperatures and chair set up, put up directional signs, set up the registration table and set up goodie table, etc.
* Help at the registration desk, plus one runner would be useful.
* Knowing which conference center staff to call for which kinds of issues would be very useful.
* Head of the committee should be free to take care of incidental and last minute issues. Others on the committee should be taking care of the “day of the event” duties if possible.