**NWAV 44 Venue Report**

**Prepared by Michol Hoffman**

**Feel free to contact me!** [**mhoffman@yorku.ca**](mailto:mhoffman@yorku.ca) **1- 416-823-2325**

**Introduction:**

This report reflects our experience planning NWAV44 and offers some advice for future NWAV organizers for best practices. I hope you find it helpful, but please disregard any comments or topics irrelevant to your NWAV.

NWAV 44 had an interesting (we hope) but aggressive schedule. Although we were pleased with the positive reaction to our program, in retrospect, I (Mickey) think it would have been best to accept fewer papers and give attendees a bit more time between sessions and after sessions.

**Refreshments:**

Universal truths: everybody likes food; more is better; quality is important. With this in mind, we found that it was better to charge a little more for registration in order to have what we thought would be more, better food.

* **Timing**
  + It has been general practice to offer breakfast food, drinks in the morning, and drinks and a snack between afternoon sessions, and one or more evening receptions with food and drink
  + We offered
    - daily fare as above
    - tabled hors d’oeuvres and a drink ticket at the opening night reception
    - passed hors d’oeuvres and a sandwich table during the poster session along with a cash bar
    - stationed savoury food and dessert, tea and coffee and a drink ticket at the Saturday party
    - a savoury cheese/vegetable buffet before the closing plenary on Sunday
* **Type**
  + It is important to recognize dietary restrictions of attendees and equally important to recognize that you cannot please all of the people all of the time.
  + Keeping cost in mind, I think we could have used more diverse breakfast food. WE had pastries, fruit, granola bars and boiled eggs, but it was a bit carb heavy and gluten-free unfriendly
  + The evening events offered better, more diverse selections, and though we strived to please, we did get complaints that there was not enough vegetarian food
    - Keep in mind when planning that non-vegetarians eat the vegetarian selections as well
* **Quantity**
  + Overestimate slightly more than you think you need to.
    - I was pleased with the volume/availability of most of our offerings, but there was no waste and attendees probably would have liked a bit more quantity
    - There was not enough food at our final Sunday snack buffet, which I sincerely regret
* **Location**
  + Try to ensure ample room for buffet access and socializing
  + Some of our locations were tight

**Facility notes**

NWAVs have been held both in conference centres/hotels and in classrooms/facilities on University campuses without conference centres. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Whatever the choice, there are a number of issues to take into account when considering a venue.

Most of our sessions took place in a student centre on the University of Toronto campus in downtown Toronto. When planning take into consideration the amount of time needed to move between rooms, and building, if applicable.

* **Accessibility**
  + the buildings we used were technically accessible to those in need of ramps and elevators, however we encountered some difficulties after hours when entrances and exits were locked.
  + Keep in mind after hours accessibility and custodial issues and emergency numbers for after hours support
* **Number/type/use of rooms**
  + We planned four parallel (breakout) sessions for individual papers. It is important to ensure the right size rooms with ample seating. We planned on 100/breakout session. All were equipped with sound and projection (see A/V section below). There were times when I thought seating was at capacity, but there were empty chairs available in the middle and toward the front of the room. Encourage chairs to ask people to move up so that late(r)comers can sit at the back.
  + Check rooms for sound quality and noise from adjacent rooms.
    - There was a noisy wedding ceremony situation across from one of our breakout rooms. Needless to say, we couldn’t tell them not to play music in their ceremony…
  + We had complaints about the facilities and seating for workshops. It would be beneficial to consider the nature of the workshop and ensure that attendees have access to plugs/receptacles for laptop charging and tables on which to work.
  + Depending on the facility, lounge/informal interaction space may be beneficial
  + The publishers’ displays were located adjacent to our main plenary area, which was useful for interaction.
  + Our registration/information area was also in a central location, on the way to the plenary area.
* **Storage**
  + On site storage for the publishers’ displays and registration table cash and supplies was useful
  + We also had a semi-supervised coat check for some events.
  + A somewhat larger area to store attendees’ luggage would have been beneficial.
* **Technical requirements and support**
  + Of course, it is essential to have LCD projectors and sound in every room.
  + Our venue could not provide onsite laptops, and we had presenters bring their own. This worked out, but it might have been better to have laptops on hand. Make sure to have extra connectors available in case presenters forget theirs.
  + Be sure to have staff test the projectors and audio. We had a number of technical issues that could have been avoided with better testing. This interacts with timing to allow staff and presenters the opportunity to test the equipment.
  + Some of the projectors in our venue were old so the presentations appear faded.
  + Also test and ensure that microphones are up to snuff. Despite my best attempts, we had continual problems with ours at in our plenary sessions
  + We paid for one dedicated technical support person for the duration of the conference. I would recommend hiring two to ensure minimal disruption.
* **Staff and Committee support**
  + We benefited from the guidance of an events coordinator from our venue. She provided advice regarding menu, set up and other logistics related to our venue.
  + It is essential to have on hand venue liaison or dedicated staff. Many small things come up over the course of the conference and it is extremely helpful to know who is in charge of which aspects of support.
  + Depending on the structure of the committee, organizing committee members may take on trouble shooting for the duration of the conference or in shifts. I found that it was useful to have a venue radio so I could contact relevant staff immediately. This worked relatively well on my end. Unfortunately, I heard about a number of problems post hoc. We had instructed university host attendees to be mindful of such issues and to text me immediately so I could help resolve the problem. I wish that this had happened more. I strongly recommend posting a local (faculty member/student) in each session who can seek help on the spot for AV and other technical challenges (see technical requirements above).