

Program Chair Handbook

The following is a preliminary handbook for Conference Program Committee Chairs. It outlines general procedures for accepting and processing proposals, including sample letters and forms for managing these processes. Please feel free to make changes or suggestions to this handbook.

Guidelines for Processing Proposals

- 1. Acknowledgement:** Each proposal is automatically acknowledged by the online submission system and incomplete proposals cannot be submitted.
- 2. Numbering:** All submissions are automatically numbered in the format 2014-084 (for the 2014 conference). Secondary materials, such as recordings for lecture performances, are not automatically numbered and should be numbered by the Chair as 2014-084a, etc.
- 3. Recording:** Email confirmation of each submission is automatically sent to the Chair. The Chair should create a spreadsheet of all received proposals, including title, proposer (and email address), number, award status, and A/V requests.
- 4. Recusal.** If necessary, you can recuse yourself from rating a particular proposal by selecting that option in the rating scale menu. The system will display a red "R" for your score and it will calculate the proposal's average score using just the other members' scores.
- 5. Reviewing:** Proposals are reviewed by the committee members using the online viewing and grading system. Before the submission deadline, the Chair should provide the SAM Webmaster with the names and email addresses of the committee members so they can be given access to the reviewing system.
- 6. Late submissions:** The online submission does not allow late submissions to be submitted without prior authorization from the Chair. The Chair should coordinate with the SAM Webmaster to have any authorized late submissions uploaded into the system.

Recommendation: At the PC meeting, create an “alternate” list. Doing so will save time in the event of a large number of proposals and will allow the chair after the meeting to use waitlisted proposals that fit with others already taken. The final decisions are of course made before anyone is notified about a proposal.

SAM Program Committee Selection Guidelines

1. Around the date of the submission deadline, you will receive login information for the online reviewing system.
2. After you login, you will see a listing of every proposal submitted for which you have authorization to view (i.e., Seminar chairs will only see proposals submitted for their seminar while regular committee members will see every proposal). This list is color-coded by proposal type, and it can be sorted and filtered in a variety of ways. Click on the title of a proposal to begin reviewing it.
3. Rate each proposal on a scale of 1-5. Five means “outstanding, can’t wait to hear it,” one is “absolute rejection.” Along with your rating score, you can include a note about the proposal for future reference. These notes are private to you and are not seen by the Chair. Your scores are viewable only by you and the Chair. You cannot see the running average of a proposal’s score; only the Chair can see that. Sessions with unusual formats and complete sessions should be judged as a package as much as possible. In rating all proposals, consider the following points:
 - **Quality:** Is there a point being made? Is it supported? Is it clear? Is the style engaging, or at least lucid?
 - **Variety:** Does it contribute to program that is interesting, well-rounded, and representative of the diversity of scholarship among Society members? Does it contribute to an interdisciplinary understanding of music and to the Society’s interest in new kinds of presentation formats?
 - **Interest to attendees, timelessness or special appeal of subject, including those topics that were stressed in the call for papers.**

As you work your way through all the proposals keep in mind we’ll need to create sessions. I’d like to remain flexible. Please start thinking of possible groupings of individual papers, even possible chairs or respondents. Use the notes field of each proposal as a way to keep track of potential session groupings.

I’d like a copy of your rankings by [date]. I will compile them in advance of our meeting.

[Sample rejection letter:]

Dear [name]:

I regret to inform you that the Society for American Music Program Committee has not been able to accept your proposal for the [date] Conference in [location]. We had many more proposals than there were slots available, and had to reject many deserving papers.

Thank you for your interest in SAM. I hope you will consider this or a similar proposal in the future, and best wishes with your work.

Sincerely yours,

[name]
Chair, Program Committee

[Sample acceptance letter for performances]:

Dear [name]:

I am pleased to inform you that your performance proposal for the Society for American Music [date] annual meeting in [location] has been accepted.

Your presentation has been scheduled as follows:

Session Title:

Session Date and Time:

Paper/Performance Title:

AV requested:

Please review your 100-word abstract and the information above and on the next page carefully. You may make changes to you title and abstract at this time if you wish. Please e-mail me the following information before [date]. If e-mail is unavailable, please send it by mail to the address below.

1. Your name and affiliation EXACTLY as you wish it to appear on the program.
2. Your paper title, exactly as you wish it to appear
3. A copy o the final version of your abstract.
4. Any changes in AV requests.

Performance presentations are limited to thirty minutes. Please time your presentation carefully as session chairs will be given instructions to enforce time limits.

All presenters must register for the conference. I would like to invite those presenters who are not currently members of SAM to consider joining at this time.

Conference publicity, along with the registration form, final program listing and convention logistics, will be mailed in January. If you questions, please contact me or the local arrangements chair [info on that person]. Thank you for your contribution to what I know will be a terrific conference.

Most sincerely,

[Sample acceptance letter]:

Dear [name]:

It is a great pleasure to inform you that the Society for American Music has selected your proposal for presentation at the [date] annual conference in [location]. Of the [number] proposals received...[some percentage] were accepted. We are happy to number yours among them.

Your presentation has been scheduled as follows:

Session Title:

Session Date and Time:

Paper/Performance Title:

AV requested:

Please review your 100-word abstract and the information above and on the next page carefully. You may make changes to you title and abstract at this time if you wish. Please e-mail me the following information before [date]. I e-mail is unavailable, please send it by mail to the address below.

5. Your name and affiliation EXACTLY as you wish it to appear on the program.
6. Your paper title, exactly as you wish it to appear
7. A copy o the final version of your abstract.
8. Any changes in AV requests. Please note that due to the considerable expense of renting AV equipment we cannot provide access to Powerpoint. We can provide CD/cassette players, slide projectors, overhead, VCR, and piano.

Paper presentations are limited to twenty minutes. Time your presentation carefully as session chairs will be given instructions to enforce time limits.

All presenters must register for the conference. I would like to invite those presenters who are not currently members of SAM to consider joining at this time.

[If you are a student, you may apply to the Student Travel Endowment fund for assistance. Information and applications are available on the website, or from [name] [address]. Students may also apply for the Mark Tucker Award, presented annually for the best student presentation. Applications are also available on the website, or you may contact [name] [address].]

Conference publicity, along with the registration form, final program listing and convention logistics, will be mailed in January. If you have questions, please contact me or the local arrangements chair [info on that person]. Thank you for your contribution to what I know will be a terrific conference.

Most sincerely,

[Sample letter asking someone to serve as session chair]:

Dear [name]:

The annual meeting of the Society for American Music will be held in [location] on [dates]. The Program Committee has assembled a varied series of papers, panels, and performances that reflect the diversity of American musical expression.

In recognition of your expertise and scholarly achievement, it is my pleasure to invite you to serve as a Chair for one of the sessions at the conference. The role of the chair is an important one. Your personality should facilitate collegial interchange and your knowledge should nurture intellectual focus. In the hopes that you will accept this important responsibility, the Program Committee has tentatively scheduled you to preside over the following session:

Session: [Session title]

Papers: paper titles

Date/Time:

I hope that you will consent to assist the Society in this special way. [To that end, please return the attached form, indicating how you would like to have your name listed in the program and the institutional affiliation or city you would like to accompany it.] Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Sample letter for Session Chairs who have accepted]:

Dear [name]:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as session chair for the upcoming meeting of the Society for American Music. I have you scheduled for the following session and time:

Session Title:

Time:

The additional pages provide contact information for the presenters on your session, the 100-word abstract(s) from the conference program and more specific details about your chair duties. (The abstracts are in their uncorrected and “text-only” version.) In general, your task is to introduce presenters, to make sure that the session begins and ends on time and to insure that all presenters on paper sessions adhere to their 20-minute time slots.

Again, I am grateful to you for your willingness to serve in this capacity. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions about your duties.

Enjoy the conference! With all good wishes,

[should we put something about having to register for the conference?]

[mailed in February, just prior to conference]

other items:

Enclosed are the abstracts of the presenters on your session. You should request brief biographical information from each, along with the full paper as you see fit.

Your job as chair includes arriving a few minutes early to meet the presenters and make sure all of their equipment needs have been met. Someone from the Local Arrangements Committee should also be present to help with any last-minute arrangements.

**Would you also collect a copy of each handout and give them to me [PC] at any time during the conference. The handouts will be placed in the Society archives.

I hope you will use your own time to provide a conceptual or contextual way to link the session papers as well as introduce each presenter and his or her offering. In the interest of time, you will probably want to focus the speaker’s background as much as possible onto the topic at hand.

INTEREST GROUPS

There are new guidelines for the Interest Groups. Check with the Interest Group Council chairperson to see what they are.

Make sure they have funding.

Make sure all participants are registered.

The Student Forum (not an interest group) should be allocated time on the program.

[Sample Committee thank you letter]

From all the comments I received, both at the conference and by e-mail, I think the [location] conference was a complete success.

I am particularly pleased that so many people commented on the high caliber of the papers and performances. Many also appreciated the diversity of the whole program; in fact, I think we touched on just about every type of American music and music in America.

I want to thank you sincerely for your participation on the Program Committee. Certainly this conference would not have been what it was without your active voice. I appreciate the expertise that you brought to the Committee and your openness to try new things.

I look forward to working with you again.

[Sample guest speaker invitation]:

Dear [name]:

The Society for American Music will hold its annual conference in [location] on [dates]. As part of the conference this year, the Society will invite several guest speakers to participate in a special plenary session held on [day, date, time].

It is my pleasure to invite you to join us as one of the featured guests in this plenary session. Other speakers will include [names].

I would greatly appreciate it if you would please submit a title for ½ hour presentation on the topic of your choice and a 150-word abstract for publication in the conference program. Please also include information such as your name and institutional affiliation as you would have it appear in print.

As discussed earlier, the Society is willing to present you with an honorarium that should cover a portion of your conference travel and lodging expenses. Please send me some estimate of your costs so that I may budget accordingly.

Thank you very much for your participation in our conference. I am looking forward to meeting you in [location] this spring.

[Sample confirmation letter for guest speaker]:

Dear [name]:

Thank you for agreeing to deliver your presentation of thirty minutes, entitled [title] at the Society for American Music conference on [day, date, time]. Thank you also for submitting an abstract of this presentation to [name], Program Chair for inclusion in the conference program. This letter will serve as a formal confirmation of the details worked out between you and the Program Chair.

Upon receipt of proof of expenses, the Society will reimburse you for The Society has made hotel reservations at [location], for the following [dates]. Please plan to attend the banquet on [date] as the Society's guest and indicate your preferred choice of entrée below. Note also that your registration fee for the conference is covered by the Society. Please give the receipts for expenses to [name] Local Arrangements Chair for reimbursement.

Should the conference be cancelled because of natural disasters, strikes, or other calamities or should you be unable to attend by virtue of bad weather or ill health, this arrangement will be null and void. In the latter case, please call [name] Local Arrangements Chair at [phone numbers].

We would appreciate it if you would sign both copies of this letter and return one to the Program Chair [name, address].

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Name: (sign) _____

Name: (printed) _____

Address:

Social Security Number:

Telephone number:

E-Mail:

Fax:

Banquet entrée: