



Vice President's Column MAC Meetings and Symposia Update

By Joshua Ranger, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Due to the overlapping dates of *MAC Newsletter* publication and the Annual Meeting, I like to imagine that you are, as you read this, on a flight, bus, or train heading for Detroit to attend the fantastic meeting we have planned for you. If you are attempting to read this while driving, please put it down and pull over immediately so that you can safely read it on the shoulder of the interstate or state highway you are traveling.

The Annual Meeting is very much on my mind because, as I am writing this column, we are finalizing many of the last few details. One very critical decision that we just made concerned the cost of registration. If you have been a long-time attendee of MAC's Annual Meeting, you probably noticed that the price of the meeting increased this year. Detroit's early registration was \$135 for members, \$165 for nonmembers, and \$65 for students. By comparison, the rates for last year's meeting in Chicago were \$100, \$130, and \$55 respectively. This is a significant increase, but not an insignificant decision that we took lightly. I want to use this space to explain a bit of the rationale behind the decision.

MAC produces an important journal for our profession and an informative newsletter for active members. We also use our collective influence to support our membership and mission. Our main *raison d'être*, though, is organizing in-person meetings where students, archivists, and allied professionals can come together to learn, network, and share ideas. Simply put: with no meetings, there is no MAC.

Conversely, our Speaker Bureau events, Fall Symposia, and Annual Meetings rely on MAC's financial health because with no MAC, there are no meetings. With that in mind, our business model has historically required that the Annual Meeting, which is the largest of these events, make a small profit to help sustain MAC's other activities. Many of you may know this already, but it is worth repeating from time to time.

To make a profit, the Local Arrangements, Program, and Education Committees must balance the attendee experience with a return for the organization holding in tension our commitment to keeping the meetings affordable to everyone. This is a difficult balancing act considering that

- Hotel and service costs continue to increase. Hosting a MAC meeting at a conference hotel STARTS at

\$45K–\$50K. This cost is largely split between the food and drink that we purchase (often as a trade-off for free meeting space) and the in-house A/V support. The alternatives to hotel-provided A/V are beyond our decentralized organization's ability to handle efficiently.

- We are proud and eager to show off our host communities, which includes hosting receptions at interesting places and tours that are frequently beyond an easy walk from the hotel. The costs for the MAC reception and the transportation (subsidized to keep tours affordable) may approach another \$15K–\$18K.
- MAC is a large region, requiring many of our attendees to fly to our Annual Meetings. This means that we cannot look to smaller, potentially more affordable communities that lack major airports to serve individual cost savings.

Of course, we also look to donors and the vendor community to help support our Annual Meetings. We typically raise over \$10,000 to help defray costs, and, although we are not taking our figurative foot off the gas pedal in these areas, the fund-raising we can do is limited. Meanwhile, we have control over the registration fees, which Council and the planning committees have kept comparatively very low over the years to make our content-rich meetings more attractive to attendees. This year, however, we are acknowledging that, to achieve balance, we must ensure that meetings do more than just cover their costs; they must, year in and year out, help support the organization and its mission.

Upcoming Meetings

After Detroit, we will be quickly shifting our attention to the Fall Symposium in Fargo, North Dakota. Small shop archival work is a common experience in our profession, and I am so proud that MAC is acknowledging the unique needs of those who work in these roles with a retreat designed just for them. Look for a sneak peek elsewhere in these pages and a fuller view in the July issue.

And, next spring we head to Des Moines, Iowa, and by spring, I mean it: we'll be meeting in May! We will convene in the Hawkeye State May 6–9, 2020, and my sources say that, by then, the snow and ice will be gone and the corn will be big-toe high.