

American Society of Limnology and Oceanography Meetings Planning Guide

This document provides general information about scientific meetings sponsored by the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, and outlines the duties and responsibilities of individuals who agree to organize ASLO meetings, either as Co-Chairs or as members of the Organizing Committee.

Role of the Meetings Committee and the ASLO Board: The ASLO Meetings Committee (current members are listed in Appendix A) is responsible for suggesting future meeting locations, potential meeting Co-Chairs, and members of meeting organizing committees. In addition, the committee makes recommendations to the ASLO Board on a variety of issues related to meeting planning, execution and timing. Implementation of these recommendations requires Board approval. One member of the Meetings Committee serves on the Organizing Committee for each meeting to provide easy communication between the Meetings Committee and meeting organizers. The Meetings Committee fields questions and issues raised by individual organizing committees; when necessary, these questions are forwarded (by the Meetings Committee) to the Society president or Board for discussion. The intended flow of information or questions, then, is from meeting organizers to the Meetings Committee, and then on to the Board or the president.

Role of the Organizing Committee and meeting Co-Chairs: Co-Chairs responsible for organizing a particular ASLO meeting are nominated by the Meetings Committee and chosen by the ASLO president with approval from the ASLO Board. The tradition has been to choose one chair with a freshwater background and one whose expertise is in marine science. These individuals usually represent distinctly different areas of study within the ASLO community. At times, Co-Chairs have been chosen in part for their familiarity with the local area, region or city where the meeting will be held. On occasion, more than two co-chairs are nominated for specific reasons (for example, to increase visibility of a meeting to a particular group of aquatic scientists).

The basic responsibilities of the meeting Co-Chairs are: 1) to plan a scientific program that represents the diversity of the ASLO community. Towards these ends, the Co-Chairs need 2) to choose members of an Organizing Committee (see below), 3) together, to plan a scientific program that is exciting, 'cutting edge,' attractive and interesting to all members and 4) to maintain frequent touch with Business Office. These various responsibilities will require a few meetings, either in person or via telephone conference, before the actual meeting.

Members of the Organizing Committee should broadly reflect ASLO's membership in terms of scientific discipline, saltiness of study site, geographical location, gender, and ethnicity. While these individuals can be friends and colleagues, they should not be chosen because their research interests are similar to those of the Co-Chairs. ASLO meetings are primarily characterized by the disciplines represented, and these disciplines – together with meeting location and format – are the keys to success. The Organizing Committee for each meeting is charged with careful consideration of the disciplines that should be represented at their meeting; the Organizing Committee itself should represent these disciplines as well as

possible. The Meetings Committee can provide names of appropriate members of the organizing committee if co-chairs want assistance.

Role of the Conference Manager or Company: The ASLO Business Office, under the very capable leadership of Helen Schneider-Lemay, currently serves as Conference Manager and takes care of all meeting matters relating to location, contracts with convention centers and hotels, the planning of entertainment or field trips, contracts with audio-visual and computer contractors, and all of the meeting finances. Helen will keep you well informed of these decisions for your particular meeting, and you will not need to worry about budgets, rooms, or logistics. Based on information provided by the Organizing Committee, and with its approval, the Business Office also takes care of meeting advertisement (a poster that is mailed out with the ASLO Bulletin, journal or is advertised at preceding meetings), the call for special session proposals, the call for papers, and meeting registration. They maintain a portion of the ASLO website that accommodates all of these activities. The Business Office sends out notifications to all speakers about scheduling their presentations or posters, prepares a draft of the Meeting Program and Abstract Book, incorporates all comments on these documents made by the Organizing Committee, and sends out a list of suggested procedures to all session chairs. Their machine is very well oiled; meeting Co-Chairs and members of the Organizing Committee have surprisingly few logistical responsibilities or concerns.

Importantly, Helen and her office will help you to develop a timeline for your responsibilities so that all aspects of the meeting are organized well in advance and that necessary tasks are completed on time.

How are meetings decided?

Type: ASLO sponsors two basic kinds of scientific conferences, those planned solely by the Society, and those planned in conjunction with another society (joint meetings). The current tradition includes a joint meeting – the Ocean Sciences meeting – that is held every other year (February of even years); partners have been the American Geophysical Union and The Oceanographic Society. During these years, a summer ASLO meeting is held, usually in June. The Aquatic Sciences meeting, which is sponsored solely by ASLO, is held in alternate winters (February of odd years). Proposals for other joint meetings are presented occasionally to the ASLO Board for approval or to the Meetings Committee for communication to the Board, but no fixed schedule exists.

When joint meetings are held, our Conference Manager meets with the manager for the partner society to plan meeting location and associated logistics. It is extremely important that both Organizing Committees also meet very early in the planning process in order to determine the policies that will be adopted. This is particularly critical when meetings policies differ between the two societies.

Location: Sometimes, locations for ASLO meetings are proposed by individuals or groups who are particularly interested in hosting (planning) a meeting. The Summer 2005 meeting in Santiago de Compostela was an example; Carlos Duarte and Emilio Fernandez made a proposal to the ASLO Board to hold a meeting in this city. More commonly, the Meetings

Committee or Board members suggest sites based on their attractiveness (Santa Fe) or their facilities (Salt Lake City). The Business Office then follows up on suggestions to determine whether the conference facilities that exist are adequate for ASLO. Some members question why meetings are no longer held at universities. Rarely do universities have adequate facilities, and they usually charge more than convention or conference centers.

International Meetings: The ASLO Board has agreed that a meeting will be held outside of North America every 5 years. So far, locations for international meetings have been proposed by groups of interested individuals. The mechanics for international meetings are basically the same as those for meetings held in North America (outlined below). It is, however, extremely important that international meetings be organized by a local committee (local means the same country), although not all members of the organizing committee should come from the host country.

Basic Information

General Structure of ASLO meeting

Over the past few years, a general meeting ‘structure’ has evolved that is not written in stone, but is outlined here as a prelude to more specific recommendations or guidelines in the planning process. This structure has been repeated, with some modification, but is open for debate and change. Some modifications will not be successful; the Business Office has a very good sense of these.

Sunday: Opening Plenary lecture
 Opening Mixer
Monday: Opening Ceremony – welcome, ASLO awards
 Scientific Plenary lecture
 Contributed and Special Sessions
 Poster set up
 ASLO Business Meeting; Student Meeting (out of your control)
Tuesday: (Plenary)
 Contributed and Special Sessions
 Posters in evening
Wednesday – Thursday: same as Tuesday
Friday: Half-day session of presentations

Meeting ‘Themes’: This topic has received very active debate by the ASLO Board and by the Meetings Committee over the past few years. Most recent ASLO meetings have had themes; these usually are very broad (e.g., interdisciplinary linkages in aquatic sciences and beyond; the Earth’s eyes: aquatic sciences through space and time). The breadth of these themes has led several to claim that they are vague and ineffective, that they do not relate well to the sessions offered or the topics covered, that they are not used to direct or organize the meeting, and that themes play little or no role in determining whether an individual will attend a meeting or not. The opposite end of the spectrum is meeting themes that are intentionally narrow; these are too often exclusionary and disenfranchise some portion of the

ASLO membership. There is the temptation for Co-Chairs could put their individual ‘mark’ on a meeting through definition of a specific meeting theme, but this practice has distinct disadvantages. Targeted themes for recent ASLO meetings have served primarily to identify plenary speakers.

The debate over meeting themes led the ASLO Meetings Committee to recommend that identifying a theme or themes for every ASLO meeting is not necessary. Meetings may lend themselves to effective themes because, for example, the meeting is jointly organized with another, more targeted society, the meeting celebrates the anniversary of some major concept or innovation, the meeting’s location suggests a unifying theme, or a unique representation of disciplines is planned. Themes for these meetings should be discussed with the Meetings Committee.

There is great room for flexibility here. Co-Chairs should not feel pressure to develop a theme, and – if they choose to do so – should think very carefully about the purpose of that theme within the context of a general ASLO meeting. **Most importantly, themes should not be used to focus a meeting in any way that would disenfranchise ASLO members. Proposed Contributed and Special Sessions must appeal to the broad range of disciplines represented by the Society and must be inclusive of all members and their research interests.**

Plenary Speakers: Recent meetings have included anywhere from one to four plenary speakers; both the number chosen and the identity of the speakers is the purview of the Organizing Committee. A recent suggestion for the ASLO president to give the opening plenary talk on Sunday, before the official start of the meeting, was instituted in Savannah, 2004. The Meetings Committee is excited about establishing this as a tradition – we vote on ASLO presidents based on their scientific reputation, but provide them little opportunity to discuss their science. Logistics associated with plenary speakers are as follows: 1) no honorarium is provided, and the Society rarely has funds to cover speakers’ travel, 2) if the plenary speaker is one who normally would not attend an ASLO meeting, there **may** be funds available for travel costs, 3) registration fees are waived, and 4) plenary speakers do not have to be ASLO members. There are some distinct advantages to inviting individuals who are not members of the Society.

Guidelines for choosing plenary speakers are general. The individual should be an engaging speaker. It helps if a member of the Organizing Committee knows this first hand, rather than relying on scientific reputation. Plenary speakers do not need to be ASLO members, or from North America. They may be chosen to represent a particular meeting theme, for the timeliness or creativity of their research, or because they are particularly known for education, policy issues, or other broader Societal interests.

Contracts and Budgets: As indicated above, convention center and related contracts together with meeting budgets are prepared by the Business Office in close communication with the ASLO Treasurer. For the most part, meeting organizers have little to do with this aspect of meeting planning.

ASLO Activities: At every meeting, Societal events are scheduled over which the Organizing Committee has little control. These include the presentation of ASLO awards, student travel awards, the student meeting, the ASLO business meeting, and poster awards. ASLO awards (Lindeman, Hutchinson, Lifetime Achievement, etc.) are always presented at the opening ceremonies, on the first day of the conference. All of the logistics for these awards are currently handled by the Business Office, including who does the presentations and ordering the required plaques or citations. Student Travel Awards currently are handled by the student representatives to the ASLO Board. Similarly, a student meeting has recently been scheduled to follow the traditional ASLO business meeting, and this is organized by the student representatives. The ASLO business meeting is traditionally held on Monday evening (or the first day of the conference) and is scheduled by Helen's office. Finally, the Society awards prizes for the best student posters, and judging of these posters should be accomplished early in the meeting so that winners can be recognized. Coordinating the judging of student posters early in the conference is a responsibility of the Organizing Committee.

Sessions: ASLO meetings are a mixture of different types of sessions, including plenary sessions, contributed sessions, special sessions, and poster sessions. Special sessions often include either or both tutorials and invited speakers. How are these balanced to schedule an effective meeting?

1. Plenary Sessions: This subject has been covered above. The Organizing Committee decides the optimal number of plenary speakers, and their identity.

2. Contributed versus Special Sessions: The Organizing Committee has great flexibility with the design of the scientific program for a meeting; this flexibility includes the number of special versus contributed sessions. It is important to keep in mind a balance between these two, however. Too many specialized sessions may reduce opportunities for cross-disciplinary insights, even though some special sessions are designed to be cross-disciplinary (they are not always successful). The Organizing Committee is encouraged to be creative in planning innovative or new contributed sessions together with timely special sessions. More language from Jon Sharp

The Conference Manager/Business Office co-ordinates the electronic call for special sessions (see Timeline below) once the organizing committee has decided whether there will be themes or specific targets for these sessions. Helen's office also co-ordinates and distributes the general Call for Papers, once special and contributed sessions have been chosen.

3. Invited Speakers and Tutorials: The Meetings Committee has defined a Tutorial as an introductory talk on a research topic; the presentation should include approximately 25% of the presenter's recent (within the past 2 years) research. The presentation should review research by others in some particular field. Tutorials are usually 30 minutes long (2 normal presentation slots). We define an Invited Talk as a regular, 15-minute research talk that is invited by a session chair, and that discusses recent and perhaps unpublished research by the presenter (who is likely to be a leading scientist in a particular field). As a guideline, the Meetings Committee recommends no more than one, 30-minute tutorial for each special

session, and no more than 20% of the presentations in a special session be Invited. It is not necessary that a special session include either a tutorial or invited speakers.

The question has repeatedly arisen of whether an individual invited to give a talk may submit an additional abstract for a more focused research presentation. Following the definition of a Tutorial and an Invited Talk explained above, this question would apply only to Tutorial speakers. The recommendation to the Organizing Committee is that Tutorial Speakers be allowed to submit a second, more focused, abstract without paying an additional registration fee. On occasion, both Tutorial and Invited Speakers have been allowed to submit second abstracts when their invited presentation were in sessions devoted to education or to other topics of broad Societal relevance.

4. Poster Sessions: Poster presentations are an important part of ASLO meetings, but few guidelines exist for their planning or implementation. As a result, organizing committees can exercise creativity in deciding how best to showcase posters. Here, we offer a few suggestions. First, it is important to adhere to the allowed poster size, which is fixed at 4 x 4 feet. The Business Office provides these instructions once abstracts have been accepted and the scientific program has been set, but the organizing committee needs to enforce these limits. The size of posters has been increasing as more people prepare them using Power Point; this is analogous to oral speakers using 15 minutes or more for their presentations (see below).

In planning poster sessions, organizing committees should consider the following questions:

- 1) how long should posters be exhibited? For the entire meeting, or just for one day? While exhibiting the same posters for several days seems advantageous, some members have commented that they would be more likely to attend poster sessions if the posters changed daily.
- 2) Should the poster sessions be scheduled for late in the day, and associated with a social hour? This is the tradition, but some members have commented that they are too tired by the end of the day to pay close attention to posters, and the sessions can become more of a social event than an opportunity to examine posters and talk with presenters.
- 3) Are there creative ways to schedule poster sessions that give posters equal weight with oral presentations? For example, could one or more of the concurrent sessions run all day be a poster session?

Number of abstracts per registrant: The Society's general policy is to require a full registration fee for each submitted abstract. This means that an individual can be first author on only one presentation (unless that individual wants to register more than once, a situation that has never arisen). An individual can be second author on several presentations; each of the first authors must register. Reasons for this policy are, first, that one registration-one abstract allows for the participation of more scientists and assures a broader range of science at a meeting, and second, that allowing one individual to be first author on several presentations can seriously disrupt a carefully planned scientific schedule if this individual fails to show up.

Length of presentations: A large number of presentations at ASLO meetings now run for 15 minutes, allowing no time for questions (or for switching rooms between talks). This trend of leaving no time for questions after each presentation detracts from the overall purpose of our meetings. The Meetings Committee recommends that a firm limit of 12 minutes per presentation be instituted, with an additional 3 minutes for questions or discussion. To effect this limit, session chairs should be instructed, before the meeting, to:

- Adhere to the program schedule, beginning the overall session and each presentation at the time listed on the schedule
- Interrupt speakers to ask them to speak more audibly, slowly, clearly, etc.
- Use timers that show a green light for the first 11 minutes of a presentation, a yellow light for 1 minute, and a red light for 3 minutes to allow for questions.
- Strictly enforce the time limit, and do not hesitate to cut off a speaker who continues to talk after the red light appears.
- Defer lengthy discussion until the end of the session.

More detailed guidelines for session chairs are provided at the end of this document.

Student Poster Awards: Judging of student posters should occur early in the meeting, before the first official poster session begins, so that the identity of winners is known throughout the meeting. Winners of the poster awards will be posted (the entire poster) on the Society's web page; no monetary prize is currently awarded.

Exhibitors: Organizations that support the mission of ASLO are common exhibitors at our meetings. These organizations are contacted by the Business Office, and all logistics for exhibitors are handled by Helen's crew; meeting Co-Chairs and organizing committees rarely have any responsibilities for this portion of the meeting. It is interesting to know who will be exhibiting, however.

Workshops and Evening Activities: Often when members respond to the call for special sessions, a few will propose workshops that are commonly held on Sunday before the official meeting begins. Most often, these have focused on demonstrating particular techniques, and they are considered by the Organizing Committee on an *ad hoc* basis. The same holds true for evening sessions – meetings of particular ASLO committees, meetings of scientists working on a particular project, etc. These can easily be worked into an informal schedule and, if planned far enough in advance, can appear in the Program Schedule.

Field Trips: The Organizing Committee for any particular meeting may decide to plan field trips that highlight scientific or natural history aspects of the host city (or surrounding area). When ASLO met in Santa Fe, NM, for example, field trips were planned to local petroglyph sites, to Indian ruins near Taos, and to Bandolier National Monument. The Business Office usually takes care of logistics for these trips. A word of warning: these field trips are usually poorly subscribed, and many need to be cancelled, so it may not be wise to put too much energy into these activities.

Tours of the host city or nearby sites can also be arranged; these usually occur during the meeting itself and are great activities for accompanying family members. If the Organizing

Committee is interested in making these sorts of day trips available, it is wise to set up a meeting with local tour or convention bureau. The ASLO Business Office has lots of experience with these tours, and with working with local convention bureaus.

Social Activities: Some social activities are included within the meeting registration fee – the opening mixer, and social hours associated with evening poster sessions. Not for quite a long time has ASLO attempted a meeting-wide social event like a banquet or barbecue. Rather, additional social events have been planned for a limited number of meeting participants, at a local museum, aquarium or other spot of particular interest. The price for these events has been in addition to registration fees. At some meetings, dances have been held – with highly variable success. The Organizing Committee has the responsibility to plan social activities for their meeting, and Helen’s office has abundant experience with which kinds of these work well.

Timeline: The ASLO Business Office has generated a very accurate timeline for planning a meeting. This timeline is appended, and will be made available to all members of the Organizing Committee. In general, planning for a meeting begins about 2 years before the actual event, involves a series of sequential tasks, and requires that the Organizing Committee meet together 2 or 3 times before the meeting occurs.

One serious responsibility of the Organizing Committee is to adhere strictly to this timeline, and to honor deadlines. These have been set (based on mistakes and experience) to keep the planning on track and to ensure that the meeting is well organized. It is always tempting for members of the Organizing Committee to be lenient with these deadlines – our friends or graduate advisors want to submit their abstracts a week or more late (sometimes for very good reasons) or someone wants to present a poster long after the abstract deadline. These exceptions may seem harmless on an individual basis, but they create havoc in the Business Office for finances, meeting schedules, and all of the precise work that goes on behind the scenes to produce a successful ASLO meeting. So even if you think that there is room in the scientific schedule, or plenty of poster space, do not make **any** exceptions to the existing deadlines.

Overall responsibility and chain of command: As outlined above, the Organizing Committee for a meeting has responsibility for planning a rigorous scientific schedule (including plenary speakers, contributed vs. special sessions, poster sessions and local activities) and therefore for the intellectual content of the meeting. When needed, the Meetings Committee will work closely with this committee to answer questions, suggest volunteers or appropriate participants, and recommend policies. Questions that cannot be answered by the Business Office should be directed to the chair of the Meetings Committee. When major questions of policy arise, the Meetings Committee will take the responsibility of contacting the ASLO Board for a recommendation or decision.

Other Policy Issues

Registration fees: Registration fees and meeting budgets are developed by the ASLO Business Office in close cooperation with the Society’s Treasurer. Fees are structured to

cover meeting expenses (ASLO does not plan to make money from meetings, although we sometimes do). As a result, meetings that are held in expensive locations (e.g., Copenhagen, Hawaii, Savannah) have higher registration fees for all participants than meetings in other locations. In addition, the cost of holding meetings has risen over the past 7 years and meetings are much more expensive now than they used to be. Registration fees in all membership categories have risen, but the steepest rise has been for non-members. ASLO continues to allow individuals to register for a single day, but these individuals are not allowed to submit abstracts.

Appendix I

Members of the Meetings Committee

Howard Riessen, Chair (to 12/06)
Saran Twombly, Chair (to 12/07)
Carla Cáceres (2004-2006)
Russell Moll (AGU Liaison; to 12/07)
Mary Scranton (2004-2006)
Jonathan Sharp (2004-2006)
Margaret Squires (2004-2006)
Nancy Butler - (to 12/08)
Romi Burks - (to 12/07)
Hein de Baar - (to 12/08)
Meinhard Simon (to 12/07)
Markus Weinbauer. (to 12/08)
M. Robin Anderson (ex-officio, non-voting)
Lynda Shapiro (ex-officio, non-voting)
Helen Schneider-Lemay (ex-officio, non-voting)