

Conference proceedings guidelines

— compiled for the Publications Board —

1. Conference organisers should bear in mind that not every conference necessarily needs to be followed by a volume of published proceedings. It is customary for the proceedings of the LAA biennial conferences to be published, but organisers of local or special interest conferences, workshops and seminars should only consider issuing published proceedings if the topic is of unusual interest or the papers are particularly noteworthy.
2. If it is decided to publish the proceedings there are several items which need consideration prior to the conference or seminar being held. A decision needs to be made on whether the papers will be included in a journal or as a separate publication. In both instances there are financial implications eg. the extra cost of including them in the journal against the cost of separate publishing. It must then be decided whether the conference fees will be structured to cover the cost of the publication and whether the participants will receive a free copy. It is also important to assign editors prior to the conference/seminar so that duties related to this can be carried out during the meeting.
3. Conference organisers should also bear in mind that, where proceedings are to be published, not every paper necessarily deserves publication. It should be made clear to speakers that the published proceedings may be selective rather than comprehensive, and that the editor reserves the right to exclude papers which are not considered suitable. The same refereeing criteria as applied to articles submitted to a scholarly journal should be used in deciding whether a paper merits publication.
4. Where some papers are omitted from the published proceedings the volume should include an editorial statement to this effect. Consideration should be given to listing the authors and titles of the papers omitted so that readers may fully appreciate the scope of the conference.
5. The published papers should be the papers actually delivered at the conference. Speakers should be required to submit the text of their addresses. It is seldom satisfactory to publish from a transcript of a tape recording, and if for any reason there is no alternative to a transcript of a recording, this must be made clear in the published version. In general, it is preferable to omit a paper of which no written version has been supplied. While a speaker may be given the opportunity before publication to update statistics or correct obvious errors, it is not desirable to permit him or her to rewrite the paper completely for publication.
6. Because of the nature of a conference presentation, written papers received from speakers may be couched in terms not entirely appropriate for publication, e.g., the salutation 'Good morning ladies and gentlemen' or phrases such as 'another topic I want to talk about is . . .'. Appropriate editorial changes should be made for publication. Speakers should be encouraged to amend suitably the speaking versions of their papers, but in any event the editor must reserve the right to make editorial changes of this nature, although editors should not abbreviate, or make amendments of substance, without consultation with and the approval of the author.
7. It is sometimes thought desirable to publish the discussion which takes place after a paper has been presented. Before doing so, editors should consider carefully whether the discussion really adds anything new and important. If discussion is to be included, editors should consider whether it is to be in the form of a verbatim transcript of questions, answers and comments as they were heard by those attending; or selections from such a transcript; or a summary written by the editor or someone else of the main points that were made. The first often catches in its net much material that is irrelevant or of little interest; the second can give rise to complaints of censorship; the third requires careful preparation, particularly if points of dispute arose, but may often be the preferred option.
8. The proceedings of a conference can only include what was actually said in the meetings. Occasionally a person who was not present may have a view on the speaker's paper or on points discussed and may seek to have a statement included in the proceedings. A person whose work is criticised by a speaker or in discussion may seek a right of reply in the proceedings. This should not be permitted since it distorts the record of what actually happened at the conference. It may be as unfair to the original speaker as to the complainant. It should be suggested that a letter or article in a relevant journal is the appropriate way to express views which were not expressed at the conference.
9. The physical format of the proceedings of an LAA conference should be such that it brings credit to the Association and to the unit which sponsored the conference. In other words, it should look professional rather than amateur. The Publications Officer of the Association will be glad to give advice on the physical aspects of bringing the proceedings into print in a professional manner.

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