

Event Management – So You Want to Have a Heraldic Symposium ***by Baroness Briana Etain MacKorkhill***

What is a Heraldic Symposium?

While this type of specialty event is many times called a Heraldic Symposium, it is by tradition usually a Heraldic AND Scribal Symposium. There are several reasons these two activities are associated together including the fact that it is the heralds who read the scroll texts of the awards that the Royalty present. Additionally, many times it is a research herald who crafts the text that the scribes will utilize in the wonderful, beautiful scrolls they will create. In some kingdoms, the officer who is in charge of overseeing scroll production falls under the office of the kingdom herald. And, in some kingdoms, the Principal Herald of the kingdom must verify any coat-of-arms placed on a scroll and/or sign the scroll along with the Crown. Thus the two activities are linked.

A Heraldic & Scribal Symposium is an event where classes are taught on a variety of topics that center on heraldry and the scribal arts. Additionally, there will be round-table discussions, keynote presentations and displays dealing with this focus. There will also be informal gatherings of participants to discuss matters and possibly merchants with wares suited to the symposium's theme.

Running a Heraldic & Scribal Symposium

Your group is discussing holding a Heraldic & Scribal Symposium and you had to leave the room for a moment. When you get back, you discover that you are now the autocrat of the event. What do you do?

First, don't panic. Being autocrat is not really all that hard if you remember a couple of things:

Organization is your friend...

Organization is the key to a less stressful event. There is never an event that goes off without some little thing going wrong. The trick is to make sure that the situation is handled quietly and quickly.

AND you don't have to do everything yourself!

Others in the group can do some aspects and actually are eager to help – they just don't know what to do to help. Delegate. Have lots of deputies. This applies to a kingdom-level symposium, but even more so if it is a Known World symposium. Some areas to consider having a deputy for include: troll coordinator (organizes check-in table needs), class wrangler (schedules classes), transport wrangler (organizes rides if you have guest instructors flying in), A&S display coordinator (organizes display of scrolls & heraldic items), food liaison (assists attendees with finding local eating places), proceedings editor (handles creation & distribution of proceedings of a Known World symposium) and site steward (to handle spills, site problems, etc). For each activity the symposium will have, try to have someone local to oversee that particular aspect. This does two things: first it allows people to fill those positions and thereby gain experience if they have not autocrated before and second it splits up the work so no one is overwhelmed and overworked. Additionally, some deputy positions may want to recruit a staff of people to assist them, so the work is spread out over the course of the symposium.

Authorization

First and foremost, check with the Kingdom Principal Herald about hosting the event. Whether this is for a kingdom-level symposium or a Known World symposium, approval should first be obtained

from the Principal Herald as they are the person who is responsible for heraldic activities in the kingdom. Additionally, the Principal Herald may have certain requirements that need to be met to have the symposium. To host a Known World Heraldic and Scribal Symposium (KWHSS), some kingdoms require additional approval by the Kingdom Seneschal and/or the Crown. The Principal Herald may prefer to be the one to contact these individuals, or may leave it up to the autocrat; check with the Principal Herald to determine how they wish to handle this aspect. Also realize that for a Known World symposium, you have to “get all your ducks in a row” then create a bid that is presented to the SCA College of Arms. The Laurel Sovereign of Arms and staff will review all bids and select one for the next KWHSS.

Date

Check the Kingdom calendar for an open date well in advance. This should be at least 6 months in advance for a kingdom-level symposium and a year in advance for a Known World symposium. Once a possible date is determined, check with the Principal Herald to verify that the date is good with them. Nothing would be more embarrassing than having a heraldic symposium on a date when your kingdom’s heraldic representative cannot be present. Once a date is confirmed, have your seneschal contact the Kingdom Reeve to see about reserving the date for your event.

Budget

Check with your exchequer about approximate cost. Consider how many people may attend, then use that number multiplied by an average site fee cost and that will give you what you can go up to in renting a site. Example: say you figure that about 100 people attend and your site fee is \$8. That means that your site cost should not go over \$800. Less is much better. Try to also bear in mind that non-members are always charged an extra \$5 so you don’t want it to become too expensive.

Site selection

When considering potential sites, be sure that your site has all the accommodations that you need to adequately meet your needs. Some basic needs are:

A large common room for people to meet and gather in between taking classes, so they can talk and interact with one another. Hallways are really not adequate for this.

Determine if you want to have an inn or even a feast after the day’s activities. If you are going to need to have kitchen facilities, it is best to take that into account before settling on a site.

Adequate number of bathrooms and changing areas if possible. It is surprising how often this basic need is overlooked.

If you are going to offer classes, you’ll need classrooms. Open air areas are not good for use as places to have classes. Sound does not travel well in such spaces, making teaching and discussion difficult; people just going by are a distraction and utilizing any sort of audio-visual equipment is extremely difficult. So be sure to have enough rooms to handle the number of classes you want to present. When checking out sites, if you are presented with extremely large spaces, see if the site has a means of dividing the area up into make-shift classrooms such as with folding/sliding walls or moveable temporary wall sections.

Having merchants is a wonderful plus to a symposium. If you are going to have folks merchanting, make sure there is adequate space for them to set up with room left over for gentles to be looking at the wares and other people still be able to get by them. Nothing is worse than having merchants squeezed into narrow hallways which participants use to get between classes and things becoming bottle-necked as some people are looking at wares and others are trying to quickly get to their class.

Find out if the mundane authorities have any special requirements on the site usage. When to pick up and deliver the key and site rental money, time to be finished, any alarms that need to be set, how to set the temperature controls for heating or air conditioning, any limitations on certain floors such as no boots, food or drinks, etc. Be extra sure to check about whether alcoholic beverages are allowed on site, many a site has been lost because of this last one.

Be sure and set aside a nice room for a privy chamber for the Royals, if They are going to be in attendance. It is actually best if you can have one for Their Majesties and one for Their Highnesses if possible. Remember that They are often going to be very busy and will need a local liaison to coordinate court (if it's a kingdom-level symposium) and other activities. It is also suggested that you contact Their chamberlains prior to the event for food allergies and other special needs that They might require. Providing lunch for them is customary and a real touch of class. They work very hard to keep our dream alive and this is a small way to express your appreciation that They chose to attend your event. Along these lines, it is also a good idea to provide close, reserved parking spots for the Royals and have some people ready to help carry the heavy thrones and other regalia that They bring with Them.

You have a site now, what's next?

Once you have settled on a site, there is still more to be done. This is the time to work out a rough schedule of the day's planned activities. As new activities are determined, be sure you have a deputy to oversee it. As time goes on, check in regularly with your deputies and get progress reports on setup and any materials needed for the activities. If someone needs help, be sure they know that all they need to do is let you know. Keep notes as to the progress from each so that you know that each aspect is covered. Some areas are easier to set up than others, so be sure and ask for volunteers to help each deputy. This really pays off when the day rolls around and you have everything under control.

Approval

Now that you've got a date, arranged a site, determined a budget and a preliminary schedule, present the information to the Principal Herald for final approval. For a Known World symposium bid, make sure you've met all the requirements the SCA College of Arms has. Information on this can be located on the Society Herald's webpage at: <http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/kwhsart.html>

Filling Out the Classes

Once you have approval (or had your bid accepted in the case of a Known World symposium) it's time to get instructors to teach classes, discussion leaders to head up round-table talks and possibly a keynote speaker. Consider asking for time in court at events to announce you are looking for instructors. Also make use of any e-lists your kingdom may have for heralds, scribes and general announcements to ask for teachers. Utilize the SCA-wide herald's list SCAHRLDS to announce the need for teachers also. This is good for kingdom-level symposiums as well as Known World symposiums because gentles from neighboring kingdoms may wish to come teach. Also talk to heralds and scribes at events you attend and see if they would consider teaching a class or two.

As classes come in, work on developing tracks or areas of focus in particular classrooms. For example, having a series of vocal classes all in Room A, a series of name research classes in Room B, classes geared to new heralds in Room C, classes geared to new scribes in Room D, and so forth. Try not to schedule classes on similar topics against each other.

Do not schedule anything against the Principal Herald's opening event address (if applicable) or against a keynote speaker's presentation or against a heraldic roadshow.

About 4-5 months prior to your event

Remember that to be an official Kingdom event, the event flyer must run in the kingdom newsletter prior to the event. If this is not met, the Crown may not be able to hold court and hand out awards, a real disservice to all your hard working members. Additionally, the more times your event is advertised in the kingdom newsletter, the more attendants you're likely to get, thus making your event more successful. So the flyer must make the newsletter deadline for submission, which is 1-2 months prior to the first month that you want it to run in. There may be a cost to run your flyer so be sure to check for the most current fees and submission deadline.

Some points to remember about your flyer:

- Use a clear font for text on your flyer so when it is reproduced, people can still read it.
- Include clear directions to the site from all points in the kingdom.
- Try to include a brief idea about the theme and a tentative schedule of activities.
- Make the date, site address and site fee prominent on the flyer.

About 1 month prior to your event

Check in with all your deputies and see if they have any questions or last minute problems.

Night Before

Setting up the site the night before is ideal. Before moving tables and chairs into the configuration that you want to utilize, carefully map out where everything was when you arrived. I cannot stress this enough. Sites really appreciate the thoughtfulness of leaving the site the way you found it. This also allows you the opportunity to go through everyone's responsibilities and checking off that each is covered. Remember, those attending your event are not acquainted with the site as you are. Make lots of signs. Make them legible and large, at least 8x11 for each room. This helps you too, because then people don't have to ask a local for directions all the time and you can attend to your day's duties.

Day of the Event

On the day of the event, there are some key responsibilities that many forget to think about. Make sure that doors that are supposed to be locked stay that way and those that should be unlocked get unlocked first thing. I always try to be on site at least 1 hour before the doors are scheduled to open for an event because there is always some last minute thing that needs attending and it allows you a chance to get organized and ready to take on the day. One other responsibility needs to be shared with all the members of your group: police the bathrooms during the day. Be sure that supplies are ready to be replenished as needed.

Once the doors open, the event takes on a life of its own. That doesn't mean that you can just sit back and do nothing. No way. It means that all your preplanning will fall in place and you can tend to the "now" things - the small things that can pop up no matter what.

Well prior to court (if there is a court), ask the chamberlain for either Their Majesties or Their Highnesses if you might be added to the court agenda to address the populace. Thank the Royalty for attending the event, thank all the populace for attending the event and thank your deputies and helpers for all their help. This public acknowledgement is not only courteous, but it helps get your group members recognition.

After the Event

The event is over. Time to go home? Not just yet. Cleanup crews need to restore the site to the way it was before you took it over. Use the maps that were made for each room to reset the chairs and tables. Be sure to vacuum or sweep each room. Take any trash out to the dumpsters and replace the

liners with fresh ones. Check the site over for any lost & found. Be sure to clean up the bathrooms and turn off lights when you are finished with a room/area. If the kitchen was used, clean it thoroughly. Try to leave the site cleaner than when you got it. It is the SCA way.

Lastly, be extra sure to thank all your deputies and helpers again for all their hard work. A well-run event is not just the effort of the autocrat but all the people who have contributed to make an enjoyable event for all who attended.

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