

Programs: The MOST Critical Aspect of Your Society

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What is the primary product of your society?

- Information

How do you provide *information* to the current and future members of your society?

- Meetings
- Classes
- Workshops/Seminars
- Journals and Quarterlies
- Publications / Books
- Abstracted Records

Of those products, which is the most important for increasing local membership?

- The Society Meeting

Meeting Features

- Meeting Day and Time
- Location
- Facilities & Space
- Meeting experience
- Program

Review Meeting Day & Time

- Is the meeting day appropriate for your community?
- Is the meeting time convenient?

Scrutinize Meeting Location

- Is the location convenient?
- Is the location easy to find?
- Is there adequate parking with room for growth?
- If you meet at night, is the parking lot well lit?
- Do members feel safe when they leave after a meeting?

Inventory Facilities & Space

- Is your facility cramped?
- Average attendance will be less than 80% of the available seating
- Are all seats equally comfortable?
- Are your acoustics adequate?
- Are restrooms clean?
- Is the facility reasonably well maintained?

Examine the Meeting Experience

- Do visitors and guests feel welcome?
- Guest Registration, Name tags, greeters, refreshments
- Is society business conducted quickly and efficiently?
- Present reports in written form
- Limit announcements from members

Critique the Program

- Programs should focus on some aspect of genealogy
- Aim for educational and entertaining
- Schedule all speakers well in advance
 - Difficult to promote last-minute programs

Consider a Speaker Series

- Bundle programs in a Speakers Series
- Include mix of local and professional, historical and genealogical speakers
- Members and prospects more likely to join or renew.
- Raise money for a Speakers Fund to pay for Speakers Series
- Think Beyond Your Society

Think Beyond Your Society

Programming Ideas

- What are other societies doing?
 - Check their websites and Facebook pages
 - Look at programs posted on <https://conferencekeeper.org>

Foster Collaboration

- Collaborate with the lineage, heritage, and historical groups in your community
- Promote their events to your members
- Attend their events
- Plan joint events
- Share resources
- Include other organizations' events in newsletter
- Invite speakers from historic and lineage groups
- Include reciprocal links on website
- Sponsor student organizations
- Share an exhibit at a community event

Example: Genealogy Fair

- Invite local genealogical and historical organizations to host an exhibit (free to exhibitor)
- Offer door prizes
- Contact genealogy companies for donations

- Attendees have to register name, address, and e-mail address to win
- Serve refreshments

SAGHS Genealogy Fair

- 52 exhibits
- Lineage groups, three local forts, heritage societies, authors, student organizations, museums, libraries, cemetery associations, and more
- 12 exhibits provided by SAGHS - website demonstrations, DNA, "Getting started," "About SAGHS," Family History displays, sales
- Held on a Tuesday night
- Free facility at library
- Free advertising from newspaper (in-kind contribution)
- About 200 in attendance
- 80 new prospects; 40 current prospects, 50 SAGHS members; 10 new members
- Cost to SAGHS: \$200

Example: Family History Displays

- Members create 32" x 40" foam board displays
- Photos, documents, newspaper articles, and other memorabilia mounted on mat paper
- Display in a public place
- Have promotional handouts available
- Use to publicize the launch of a new society year or large society event

What is SAGHS planning for 2022-23?

- **Format**
 - Mix of virtual and in-person
 - Virtual - on traditional meeting night
 - In-person - quarterly seminar style sessions
 - Monthly brown-bag events
 - Avoiding hybrid (virtual and in-person) for now
 - No volunteers available with sufficient tech skills
 - Too easy for attendees to decide at the last minute they'd rather attend virtually

Speaker Series

- During COVID, programs were on a month by month basis
- For 2023, will set the year's programs as one, two, or three speaker series.
 - Full year (9 sessions)
 - Half year (Fall and Winter/Spring)
 - Three sessions (three months each)

Celebrating 50th Anniversary!

- Planning one or two seminars with extremely low prices for members as member appreciation.
- Special emphases throughout the year.
- Fun events for members, local and out of area.

Looking Forward to US Semiquincentennial

- Workshops with heritage societies - DAR/SAR, Daughters of War of 1812, DRT, and more
- Encouraging interest in US ancestry
- Adding inclusive historical presentations