

Arcanacon 2004 Writers Pack

(part the first)

So you're writing for Arcanacon?

Arcanacon is only a little over 6 weeks away, and there is still a lot to do.

It's both easier and harder to write for a Con than you might think. With preparation, most of tasks shouldn't require any last minute panic - all you need is a bit of organisation and to know what needs to be done.

On the other hand, people can easily make things difficult for them themselves and for the Arcanacon organisers. Most of the pitfalls are caused by underestimating the amount of time you need to commit to organising an event for the Convention.

Most of the following mostly applies to tabletop roleplaying events - obviously we're not expecting people to playtest the Trivia or run Munchausen for 10 sessions - but the spirit of the requirements can be applied to the other events at the convention too.

What Arcanacon expects from You...

So, what exactly have you committed yourself to if you decide to write? Looking at an ideal universe, you've committed to:

- Being prepared to offer your event in at least 7 sessions (that's only half the convention), and preferably to 10 different teams
- Following our blurb guidelines
- Writing a game that matches the blurb that was advertised;
- Playtesting the game more than 3 days before the con, and definitely not in session A
- Actually writing the game down so someone else could run it if you were run over
- Being able to run more than one team in a session, by finding at least one other person who is prepared and available to help you run the game for at least half of the sessions that you've said it will run
- Showing up to the Con when you have said you will, with your game

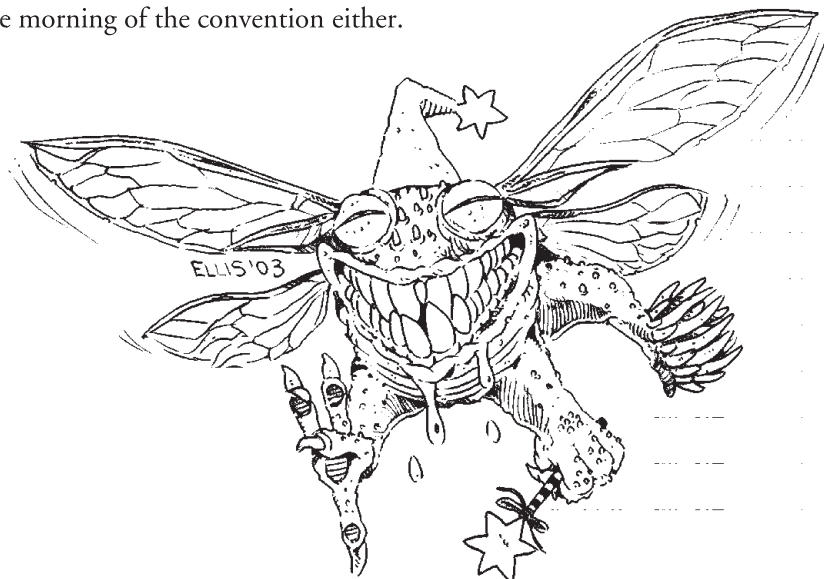
You'll note that most of these commitments are for the lead-in time to the Con, except for running the game itself. It's also our experience that it doesn't work to try and do them all in the morning of the convention either.

What You can expect from Arcanacon...

If you go to all the effort and strain the creativity muscles to do an event for the con, then we will try and help you all that we can to make it as much fun for you to present as it is for people to play.

We will:

- Do our best to present your game the way you want it in the booklet
- Cover printing costs for your event (within reason :)
- Offer free registration to the convention for you and your fulltime GMs
- Be as communicative as we can: let you know if there are problems, discuss your requirements for rooms or props for your event, and so on
- Try to prize the way you want them (including not having them if desired)
- Provide coffee and or tea
- Make running your game as easy as we can make it, including trying to make getting rooms, finding players and such as simple as possible
- Help provide extra gms, advice on blurbs, playtesters and other assistance if you want it.



Tips and Tricks

- Never underestimate the value of playtesting. You should plan on playtesting your game at least twice before the convention. The first time to see if the game concept works, the second time to see if it runs more or less to time and that you have designed all the player handouts you need (e.g. character sheets, journal extracts, puzzles or riddles, etc...).
- Three hours isn't really three hours, in actual playing time, a three hour session is closer to two hours. You think I'm kidding? Think about it, before play starts you have to; wait for your team to show up, find extra players to make up for the people who inexplicably couldn't make it, handle registration enquiries, find your room, someone needs to do a canteen break, someone else needs a toilet break, someone has to return a phone call that come in during last session, you have to set up the module and props for the session, character allocation, reading character sheets, arguing about rules, reading the background material, explaining crucial pieces of genre information for the person who has never heard of the system before (even though it was listed genre/system 5), someone has to borrow a pencil or dice from someone else, you have to do session admin and fill in the room voucher. And that's **before** you start playing. Then after the session you have to; debrief the players (especially in freeforms), collect props and nametags, pack up all your stuff, make sure nothing is left behind by the departing team, clean up the room for the next game, score the session (if it's that sort of game), make your way back to registration for the next session.
- Some teams meander and some teams will gallop through your module. Have some 'spare' encounters for teams that stampede through the story, but know which encounters are unnecessary for teams that spend half an hour characterising who would open the door to the office where they will get their assignment. Most teams like to play for the maximum amount of time but also get to finish the story.
- Try to think about all the ways the players can run off track, it's better to ad-lib to get the players back on plot than to use brute force to get them there - I've been in a team where the GM wrote "*plot*" on the floor and tried to bodily shove us there to get us back on plot, why didn't he move the story in front of us instead? If you know the world your game is set in, ad-libbing becomes much easier.
- It is a good idea to get your backup GMs to playtest the game for you, it will give them a better idea of how the game is supposed to run, and allow them the chance to ask detailed questions about any part of the module they don't understand.
- Plan on printing your module at least two days before the convention - that way if something goes wrong you have time to fix it. The more urgent the print job, the higher the probability that there will be a problem. Make sure you have spare copies of any character sheets and the module. Leave some at home on the first day, we have had people lose their game packs before and have to run their module from memory.
- If your game has lots of pre-reading, try to hand it out to your players at registration - but practice a 'condensed' version for a verbal briefing to get your session off to a quick start.
- If you have difficulties fixing the personalities of NPCs in your mind - have a pull out 'cast of characters' and assign a TV or movie character to each one as an 'instant' personality starter.
- If you are having problems with your game, ask for help. Start with your GMs, they may be able to help you solve a game problem, you could also try emailing the Arc committee. If you would like to ask the gaming community as a whole, you could try posting a message to *aus.games.roleplay*, or if you are on LiveJournal check out http://www.livejournal.com/community/aus_gamers/.

* IMPORTANT DEADLINE STUFF *

Trophies & Certificates

Trophies

The deadline for trophy information is **Sunday, January 4th**. If you have not provided me with information for your trophies by that date, we will decide what will be written on them.

The format of the plaque is:

Arcanacon XXII
[Name_of_Game]
[Name_of_Prize]

There is a 25 character limit per line.

Tabletop games:

- Will get one trophy per team size (i.e. a 5 player game will get 5 trophies, a 4 player game will get 4 trophies)
- The default [Name_of_Prize] will be “Best Team” unless you tell us otherwise.

Freeforms:

- Will get 2 trophies per scheduled session to a maximum of 4
- The default engraving will be 1 x “Player’s Choice” and 1 x “GM’s Choice” per session.

Miniatures organisers should notify me of their prize requirements.

Special Events will receive the following trophies:

- Theatre Games, 4 trophies and the perpetual trophy.
- Munchausen (practice session) 1 trophy
- Munchausen (final) 2 trophies and the perpetual trophy.
- Trivia, 6 trophies

When sending me the trophy information, please check your spelling **before** sending it to me, as I will assume that what ever you ask for is **exactly** what you want on the trophy.

Certificates

The default allocations of certificates per tournament will be four (4) certificates. Please let us know if you specifically want more than that, as will be printing the certificates before the convention and will have only limited numbers at the convention.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding trophies or certificates, please email me (sara@vurt.net) before the January 4th deadline so we can sort any problems out early.