

The Conference on Christianity and Literature

Guidelines for Regional Meetings

Regional Meetings and the Goals of the CCL

Since its formal organization in 1956, the Conference on Christianity and Literature has had the following set of goals:

- the exploration of the relationships between Christianity and literature;
- the fostering of excellence in scholarship and teaching among committed professionals;
- the encouragement of fellowship among its members.

In addition to special sessions held in conjunction with the annual Modern Language Association convention, the CCL promotes smaller regional meetings of its members in order to fulfill these goals, according to Article VI, Section 8 of the By-Laws:

Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, members in a geographic region may organize with officers for the purpose of holding one or more regional conferences and otherwise furthering the purposes of the Society. The following policies apply to regional conferences of the Society:

(a) The Director who serves as the elected representative of a region shall serve on the Steering Committee of that region. If a region does not elect a regional chair (or president), the Director who serves as the elected representative of a region shall serve as the regional chair and lead the steering committee of that region. The regional chair has the responsibility of securing invitations for regional meetings at least 18 months in advance.

(b) All who attend regional conferences of the Society must be members of the national Society. Exceptions to this policy may be granted to undergraduate students and to keynote speakers.

(c) The host institution for a regional conference of at least two days' duration may apply for a grant-in-aid from the national Society to apply toward the honorarium for a keynote speaker. Any such grant-in-aid is contingent on the regional conferences' requiring all attendees to be members of the national Society, except as noted in (b) above.

Currently Organized Regions

East: New Jersey, New York, Eastern Ontario, Quebec, New England states, the Maritime provinces, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Southeast: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Western Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

Southwest: Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana.

West: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

Regions and the National CCL

The clearing-house for information regarding regional meetings is the office of the national Vice President. Approval to organize a regional meeting can be obtained by writing the Vice President who will clear the matter with the appropriate members of the executive committee.

Regional Organization

The Director who serves as the elected representative of a region shall serve on the Steering Committee of that region. If a region does not elect a regional chair (or president), the Director who serves as the elected representative of a region shall serve as the regional chair and lead the steering committee of that region. The regional chair has the responsibility of securing invitations for regional meetings at least 18 months in advance.

It is the responsibility of the regional chair to ensure continuity and planning within a particular geographical area, to conduct the business session at the regional meeting, and to locate possible host institutions for future regional meetings.

The steering committee serves on an annual basis and typically includes the regional chair, the program chairperson for the current year, the local arrangements chairperson at the host institution for the current year, the past regional chairperson, the past program chairperson, and, if possible, a representative from the host institution for two years hence.

Hosting a Regional Meeting

The most important component for a successful regional meeting is enthusiasm at the host institution or institutions. Two colleges in the same locale may easily cooperate, and it is well to think two years in advance when offering to host a meeting. Past experience suggests that a financial pledge of \$600 to \$1000, as well as administrative and online support will be needed from the local institution. Registration fees will cover many local expenses; for some meetings, they could cover all expenses.

Dates for the regional meeting should follow the traditional pattern of the area in question and should not conflict with any other major professional meetings. It is advisable to clear the date of the meeting well in advance with the Vice President. Regional meetings or special sessions sponsored by a region can be linked with a regional meeting of the MLA or other association. Regional meetings may also be linked with a local conference held at a host institution. In addition to attracting academic presenters and participants, the organizers should think about the role of literature in civic life and consider planning elements of the conference that will appeal to the general public. Lectures that are open to the public are encouraged.

Local Arrangements

Local arrangements should include information regarding motels and hotels for all registrants. (It is sometimes necessary to reserve blocks of rooms where housing is limited.) On occasion,

special transportation from airports or stations is also necessary. Rooms at the host school must be reserved and arrangements carried out for coffee breaks and for any catered meals. Well-informed greeters should be at the registration desk, and there should be plenty of maps and signs available for out-of-town guests. Hosting a regional meeting is an opportunity to show Christian hospitality.

Establish a deadline for registration, but be aware that most people register for a conference in the last few days before the deadline. To accommodate “walk-ins,” set a slightly higher fee for registration at the conference.

Program Planning

Samples of past programs can be obtained from the national Vice President. The keys to an interesting program and a robust registration are variety and high-profile plenary speakers. Traditional papers can be interspersed with panels (e.g., “Christian Writers and Their Audience”), workshops (e.g., “Teaching the Bible as Literature”), films, poetry readings, and student sections. An evening session provides the opportunity for a major guest lecturer, a play, poetry readings, or other activities. Regional meetings may be linked to the presence of a known lecturer already on campus. Be sure to provide breaks during the day during which registrants can talk with one another and ask further questions of participants. People also need time to relax.

Two- or three-day conferences provide ample time for keynote addresses, paper and workshop sessions, and social times. One of the greatest advantages of a two- or three-day conference is the opportunity for interaction among conference participants. With a four-day conference, some registrants come late or leave early; with a one-day gathering, a longer conversation has little opportunity to emerge. But a regional gathering that offers a mix of plenary sessions, social occasions, poetry readings, keynote addresses, scholarly papers and times for discussion fosters a collegial opportunity to listen, consider and interact.

Conference organizers may consider selecting the best papers to send to the editors of *Christianity and Literature* for possible publication.

Conference Travel Grants and Graduate Student Participation

In order to encourage graduate students to participate in regional meetings, CCL offers up to \$500 for each regional meeting to meet travel expenses and conference registration fees for graduate students presenting papers. This money may be distributed to as many students as the region sees fit. Applicants must be CCL members in good standing and are expected to stay for the full conference at which they present a paper. Students may not receive an award more than twice. Preference is given to dissertation-level students whose research will be most enhanced by conference participation. If graduate students’ needs have been met, the conference director may then make conference travel grant funds available to independent scholars, adjuncts, and faculty lacking travel funding. The conference director and the CCL regional board director should ensure that grant is adequately publicized before the conference.

Applicants should send the following material to the conference director:

1. A letter, not to exceed 400 words, stating the session in which the student is enrolled and explaining how this session relates to the student's dissertation in progress. (In the case of a later-career scholar, the letter should mention the circumstances surrounding the lack of institutional support and state how the session relates to publication potential.)
2. An informational (not evaluative) letter from the student's Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair providing date of approval of the student's dissertation topic; expected date of completion; date when all other degree requirements were completed; statement of departmental policy on travel support for graduate students; and amount of funding applicant will receive (if any) toward attendance of the meeting for which the student seeks assistance. (In the case of a later-career scholar with institutional affiliation, a letter from a department chair confirming the lack of institutional support will suffice.)

The director of the conference, in consultation with the CCL regional board director, will award one or more grants. Awards should be announced no later than one month prior to the meeting for which the applicant seeks assistance. Recipients of the grant should submit their receipts to the conference director or the board member (whomever is so designated) who will forward them to the Treasurer of CCL for reimbursement. **NO MONIES WILL BE DISBURSED WITHOUT RECEIPTS.** The name of the recipient, title of paper presented, his/her institution, and the amount awarded should be reported to the Vice President of CCL on the [Conference Report Form](#).

Undergraduate Student Participation and Awards

Directors of regional meetings are encouraged to include an invitation for undergraduates to submit papers, preferably in dedicated undergraduate panels when possible. Creative work as well as critical essays may be solicited. Undergraduate students who present papers are not required to become CCL members. Conference directors may either require that undergraduates submit full papers in place of an abstract or require full papers at some later point (for example, two weeks before the conference date) for undergraduates whose abstracts are accepted.

Any paper presented at a regional conference may be submitted to the CCL undergraduate writing contest for that calendar year. Conference directors should publicize the opportunity to present papers and to submit work to the national contest to undergraduates in their region. Directors should submit the best undergraduate work (up to 3 critical and 3 creative papers) from the conference as part of the [Conference Report Form](#) to the CCL Vice President, within two weeks of the conference's conclusion. The VP will then forward the submissions to a committee for evaluation. **Only papers presented at regional conferences are eligible for the contest.** Contest winners will be selected by January 2 for work submitted the previous calendar year. Winners of best creative paper and best critical paper will be announced at the annual CCL luncheon, will each receive a \$100 cash prize, and will have their work published on the CCL website.

Publicity

Calls for papers may be announced through emails and pdfs sent to CCL members and literature departments of colleges and universities in the region. The call for papers should also be sent to Mark Eaton (meaton@apu.edu) for posting on the CCL website and may be announced in

Christianity and Literature, although the latter must be sent at least a year, preferably 18 months, before the deadline to allow for publication delay. Include the date and location of the conference, preferred topics, length of papers or abstracts, paper deadline, and the name and address of the program chairperson. Posting on the ChristLit Discussion Group (<https://www.christianityandliterature.com/ChristLit-Discussion-Group>) is also advised. In addition, it is useful to list the conferences with *PMLA* and the University of Pennsylvania website (<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/submit/>) and, of course, with other societies, publications, and memberships—local, regional, and national—who might be interested in the conference theme or featured speaker(s).

Calls for papers should be circulated by the program chairperson at least eight months prior to scheduled meeting; registration materials and final program announcements should be made available no later than ten weeks before the meeting.

An email attachment of all announcements should be sent to the national Vice President. Upon request, the Vice President will send the conference organizer an email list of CCL members that can be used for publicity purposes.

Each region should maintain its own supplemental mailing list of persons who have attended regional gatherings in past years. It is also vitally important to develop lists of prospective participants who are not already CCL members. To start or augment such a roster, make a list of church-related colleges and universities in your region. A visit to each college's web site can secure the names, institutional addresses, and email addresses of English and Modern Languages professors. It is also useful to circulate announcements to the language and literature departments at all colleges and universities, both public and private, in one's region. These departments are listed in the September issue of *PMLA*. Additional mailing lists can be obtained through contacting other organizations such as the American Academy of Religion.

Local publicity through newspapers, circulars, posters, and classroom announcements is also extremely important in extending the appeal of the CCL and in providing a service to the local community.

Sample copies of *Christianity and Literature* may be obtained from the editorial office of the journal and should be displayed at the conference.

To protect the privacy of members, please use blind copy or another program that prevents recipients from seeing all the email addresses when you send publicity announcements.

Grants in Aid for Speakers

To encourage the development of healthy vibrant regional gatherings, the CCL Board of Directors provides a grant of \$600 to any host institution that

- holds a CCL regional conference of at least two days' duration;
- features a keynote speaker of national reputation;
- ensures that all registrants are CCL members or become new CCL members;
- provides a prompt, complete conference report as specified below.

The grant from the national CCL is intended to defray the honoraria that host institutions pay to keynote speakers of national reputation. In recent years, CCL regionals have included such distinguished keynote speakers as Robert Alter, Denis Donoghue, Stanley Fish, Dana Gioia, Li-Young Lee, Kathleen Norris, Marilynne Robinson, and Robert Scholes. By offering speakers of this caliber, a regional CCL gathering will attract a larger number of participants, who in turn will contribute to a lively and engaging conversation that we all want to foster.

To apply for the Grant in Aid, please submit the [application form](#).

Policy for Regional Conference Fees

The host institution will establish and charge a basic registration fee for use in defraying the costs of the program.

All registrants who present a paper at regional meetings must be members of the CCL. Regions are encouraged to offer a widely disseminated call for papers and to accept papers solely on the basis of their merit. However, once a paper has been accepted, the author must join CCL if he or she is not already a member, in keeping with common professional practice.

About four weeks before the conference, the conference organizer should request a current membership list from the Vice President of CCL and use this list to verify that all participants at the regional are members of CCL. **The organizer is responsible to ensure that each presenter is a member.** Memberships are \$48.00 per year, include print and online subscription to *Christianity and Literature*, and are available through Johns Hopkins University Press (<https://ccl.press.jhu.edu/membership/join>).

Conference directors should have a computer available at registration so that participants who have not yet become members may subscribe through SAGE at the conference desk. The membership fee is in addition to any conference registration fees.

The only exceptions normally made to this fee schedule are for keynote speakers and for undergraduate students (who will not receive a subscription to *Christianity & Literature*). Any questions or requests for exceptions to the fee policy outlined above should be addressed to the Vice President who, in consultation with the President, will act on such requests. Exceptions can be granted only in unusual circumstances.

Note: Only fees for national CCL memberships belong to the national organization. Other moneys collected (registration above these memberships, banquets, etc.) are the property of the region and should be used as seed money for the next conference.

Reporting

Within two weeks of the regional conference, a [report](#) on finances, memberships, attendance, and a general assessment of the meeting should be sent by the regional chairperson to the national Vice President. The results of the business meeting should also be included in this report.