

ISKO Biennial conference: Guidelines and Hosting Invitation

ISKO's Biennial conference is a great opportunity, both for the membership to meet and refocus its energies, and for a Host institution to enhance its reputation and outreach in the field of Knowledge Organization (KO). This document provides guidelines for main features of the conference, and invites organizations with an interest in the field to submit hosting proposals for future years.

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Part 1: Conference Guidelines

Conference aims

ISKO's goal is to hold a prestigious biennial conference on a sustainable basis, achieving its purposes without lavish expense, while being accessible to and affordable by a good proportion of the worldwide membership.

Purposes of the ISKO International Biennial Conference include:

- to offer a showcase of inspiring R&D work in the field of Knowledge Organization (KO);
- to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience in KO research and practice, through peer-reviewed conference papers, invited talks, panels, posters, demonstrations, exhibits and seminars;
- to provide an opportunity for people involved in KO to meet face-to-face and discuss their activities as well as seeking new ways of pursuing ISKO's mission and raising our profile.

Dates and Location

The ISKO Conference (hereafter 'the Conference') takes place once every two years, usually on three consecutive days in a period when most universities around the world are on vacation – thus enabling academic researchers to attend. Popular holiday periods such as August, December and January, however, should be avoided. Clashes with major events in related fields should be avoided. Collocation with another related event can be considered.

Given the worldwide spread of our membership, we try to hold the event in a different region of the world from one conference to the next, giving each continent at least one chance every decade. The country and city should be easy to reach - preferably served by good, frequent air services from all major capital cities.

Attendance

Ideally the conference should attract the majority of members, as well as a good admixture of non-members who have an interest in our field. Especially for colleagues working in the region, this may be a very rare opportunity to hear directly from the leaders in our field. In practice in recent years, attendance has been in the range 100 to 200 participants. After the event, some participants may request a certificate of attendance, which should be provided by the Host institution.

Host Institution and Organizational Planning

Arranging an international conference is a time-consuming labour of love. The backing of a Host institution is indispensable, typically a university with a commitment to teaching and research in our field. Ideally the Host already has a suitable venue, a body of staff and students to do most of the work, and a strong incentive to enhance its own reputation by staging a successful event.

Planning should begin at least two years ahead of the event, with a schedule for key stages such as venue booking, calls for participation, paper submission dates, publicity and acceptance of participant bookings. Working in consultation with the ISKO Executive Board the Host should establish an organizing committee with a strong chairman, to set up and implement a strict timetable and take responsibility for all the functions and facilities described here (and probably more). The Executive Board will appoint at least one member of the committee, who will act as

liaison between the Host and the Board, and should be kept aware of all aspects of progress. Office-bearers of the local ISKO Chapter should be consulted and invited to help.

Conference Format

The conference consists largely of conventional presentations in slots from 15 minutes (for the least compelling offerings) to a maximum of 45 minutes for a high profile keynote address. A slot of 30 minutes generally gives comfortable space for a competent speaker to develop his or her points clearly and allow at least five minutes for questions from the floor. The presentations are grouped in themed sessions that last not more than 2 hours before a break for lunch or refreshment. Each session should have a chairman to moderate discussion and control timekeeping.

At least one keynote address should be given by an inspirational invited speaker of high calibre, whose name can be used to attract participants. It is customary to waive the registration fee and pay essential travel/accommodation expenses of invited speakers.

Depending on the number of presentations to be fitted in, some of the sessions may need to take place in parallel. A maximum of three parallel tracks is acceptable, and timekeeping needs to be carefully coordinated. To encourage audience engagement, some sessions should involve panel discussion, or a more interactive format such as a “fish-bowl”.

A poster display is always appreciated, and should be located in or close to the refreshments area. Poster presentation is a good option for students and newly qualified researchers to develop their careers. A poster slot may also be offered to some would-be authors whose paper proposals were judged too weak for inclusion in the programme.

Aside from orthodox papers, panel sessions and posters, there is always scope for innovations. An exhibition, workshops or tutorials could all be options. If too many to fit into the main programme, the tutorials or workshops could be optional extras for the days before or after the conference proper. The host organization is encouraged to develop imaginative new features.

Submission and Selection of presentation proposals

The opportunity to present a paper or a poster at the conference should be offered to all ISKO members and preferably others too, subject to critical review/approval. The aim is to attract high quality contributions, and to encourage ever more participation in our field. It is customary to issue a Call for Presentations (CfP), via ISKO-L and other mailing lists, as well as any other inexpensive publicity channel. At least three months should be allowed for receipt of proposals, following the initial CfP.

Proposals need to convey evidence of the likely quality and relevance of the eventual paper and presentation. Usually an extended abstract is requested, and the abstracts are reviewed by a panel drawn mostly from ISKO members (and optionally other well qualified colleagues). The Host institution needs to set up the panel and organize the reviewing in good time for the accepted submissions to be written up by their authors. Before acceptance in the Programme and Proceedings, it is important to check that the author seriously plans to attend the conference.

Provision for General Assembly

The occasion of the biennial conference offers an unmissable opportunity to hold a General Assembly of ISKO members (with an agenda arranged by the Executive Board). This is generally scheduled for early evening on the second day, or at some other point that does not clash with the conference programme. A convenient meeting room and at least two hours must be allocated to the Assembly. Accommodation may also be needed for meetings of ISKO committees, such as the Executive Board and the Scientific Advisory Council.

Website, email and electronic transactions

The Host institution needs to provide a Conference website and electronic system for receipt of bookings and payments as well as submission of proposals, papers, etc. Optionally the submission system may also provide facilities for the peer reviewing process. The website should convey as much information as possible, as early as possible, about the conference programme, registration fees, venue, accommodation, local travel/transport advice, addresses for correspondence and all other necessary arrangements. All conference participants, especially the speakers, are valued colleagues who potentially have queries and concerns. A substantial volume of correspondence may need to be handled promptly and courteously.

Venue and facilities

While luxury is unnecessary, the venue should be well equipped, convenient and comfortable, with one plenary room (theatre style) for an audience of up to 250 people, and additional lecture theatres for any parallel sessions planned. Spaces for lunch and refreshment breaks should be ample for social interaction, and as close as possible to the lecture theatres. A space for poster sessions should ideally be adjacent to or integral with the refreshment space, and not so crowded as to interfere with the display.

A reception area should be located where newcomers can easily find it, with at least one attendant throughout the proceedings. A supervised cloakroom or locked space for baggage is useful.

Technical and Audiovisual Services

The lecture theatres and meeting spaces should preferably allow adequate, free wireless Internet access for all conference participants. The lecture theatres need to be equipped with audiovisual equipment and support, including a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint or OpenOffice Impress, a projector and screen and sound amplification if necessary. The computer should have a wired Internet connection. At least two roving microphones should be available during any sessions involving audience participation.

Ideally it should be possible to receive sound and video from a remote presenter (e.g. using Skype), channelled into the room sound system, and for room microphones to be channelled through the computer to the remote presenter. Useful also is the capacity to record the audio of presentations. Live streaming is even better, if finances permit.

Technical support should be available in the event of equipment problems at any stage during the proceedings, and especially in the hour before each day's proceedings start, to assist with uploading of files, etc.

Proceedings Publication

The proceedings are published both in hard copy and electronically, as the “Advances in Knowledge Organization” series. The Host institution is responsible for negotiating the price and other details with Ergon Verlag, who since 1998 have undertaken publication and delivery in bulk. Authors must commit to providing full text, following a consistent template and a tight page limit, by a deadline several months before the event (the precise date has to be worked out with Ergon in the light of the conference location), leaving enough time for the volume to be printed and delivered to the conference (where each participant gets a copy). The organizing committee edits (to the extent time permits) compiles and paginates, providing Title page, Table of Contents, indexes and list of authors with contact details. Ergon provides electronic access to the whole series, to ISKO members.

Handouts

On registration, each participant should receive a badge, a copy of the printed proceedings and a programme with times and locations of all presentations and other conference activities. Other helpful handouts include a list of participants, a plan or layout of the venue, guidance on local transport to the venue, advice on internet access at the venue, and any literature or gifts provided by sponsors. The bundle of handouts may conveniently be assembled in a conference bag, preferably provided by a sponsor.

The participant list should aim to provide name, affiliation and email address for each participant, to help with networking. But a few participants may not wish to release such details. It is good to let them request exclusion from the list, at the time when they make their conference bookings.

Language

The language of all parts of the event is normally English. Simultaneous translation into the local language may be considered (sponsored by the Host or by external sponsors). Some sessions in another language may be considered (to encourage conference attendance) so long as a parallel session in English is available.

Costs and Financing

The costs of the conference are borne entirely by the Host institution, which likewise receives all the income from conference fees and any other sources, such as sponsorship. The conference is not a commercial event but may sometimes generate a modest surplus, although an aim of breaking even is preferred. A certain amount of financial risk is inevitable, however, hence the need to avoid unnecessary costs and set the fees at a level that our members can afford. To encourage more bookings, the programme needs to be attractive and advertised well in advance.

ISKO does not underwrite or provide direct financial support for the Conference, except by special agreement. But with care it is very feasible to break even or better. Hosts are encouraged to budget carefully, and provide for contingencies.

A conference budget should plan for the following:

- Venue-related costs, such as hire of meeting space, wireless internet, microphones and presentation facilities;
- Staff-related costs, such as payment for services and support, both prior to and during the event;

- Any website-related costs;
- Catering, to include:
 - Coffee/tea and refreshments breaks;
 - Water for speakers and panellists;
 - Lunches for participants on all full days of the event;
 - Welcome reception;
 - Conference dinner
- Cost of publishing, printing and bulk shipping the conference proceedings;
- Other printing costs, to cover the conference programme/schedule, participant list, any signage needed, and attendee badges;
- Conference bags;
- Travel/accommodation expenses for Invited speakers;
- Registration fee waivers for invited speakers and members of the organizing team.
- Revenue from conference fees and any sponsorship by the Host or third parties, and any other ethical source of income consistent with ISKO's non-profit status and mission.

The budget, including proposed level of registration fees, should be submitted to the ISKO Executive Board for comment and approval, at least one year before the event. An updated budget showing any significant changes, together with a progress report on all aspects of planning, should be shared at monthly intervals with the Board member appointed to assist.

Registration Fees and other charges

Registration fees should be set for full participation, with an option for single-day registration if possible. The level of fees should be reasonable considering the audience but should also be sufficient to cover costs. Discounts should apply to ISKO members, "early-bird" and student registration. (For example, the full registration fee at the 2016 conference is 250/300 Euros for members/non-members, or 150/200 respectively with early-bird discount.) Additional registration fees may be levied for any pre-conference tutorials, special sessions or workshops. It may be convenient to charge separately for Conference dinner tickets, with an option for participants to buy tickets for any companions. Participants should be warned of any charges applying to optional social events.

Sponsorship

The suppliers of products and services relevant to KO may well be willing to support the event via gifts and/or a financial contribution, in return for discreet promotion of their offerings. (For example, the vendors of software for indexing or text mining, book publishers or consultant service providers may be glad to supply logo-branded items such as notepads, pens, conference bags. An exhibition stand and opportunity to demonstrate the product could merit financial support; a smaller payment could cover insertion of a promotional brochure in the conference bag.) All such support should be ethically sound, discreet and relevant to KO, and a direct sales pitch from any sponsor should be discouraged.

Payment Facilities

The Host is responsible for providing online and on-site payment facilities for Paypal and/or secure credit card payments, to be available at least 5 months before the start date of the event.

Possibilities for payment by bank transfer, cheque in local currency and on-site cash payments may be considered.

Accommodation

The Host should provide suggestions for local accommodation in a range of prices, ideally negotiating special rates and/or a block booking for conference participants.

Catering and Social Events

On all days during the event, coffee/tea/snack breaks in morning and afternoon and lunch for registered participants must be provided. On one evening a conference dinner should be arranged. (A separate fee may be charged for the dinner. While fixed seating is very acceptable, a buffet style encourages more mixing.) Meal arrangements should take into account any special dietary requirements for reasons of health, or the varied cultural backgrounds of our international audience (vegetarian, gluten-free, halal etc.).

At the discretion of the Host institution and organizing team, additional social events may be arranged, or advice may be provided on local touristic opportunities.

Promotion and Publicity

Publicity coordinated by the Host institution is essential to attract good speakers and achieve a good turnout. The CfP should be issued directly to ISKO members as well as via ISKO-L and as many other mailing lists in related fields as possible. Likewise an invitation to make a conference booking, as soon as the booking system is in place. Several reminders at intervals may be needed in both cases. The organizing team should enlist the help of the ISKO membership to spread the word as widely as possible.

Part 2: Invitation to submit a hosting proposal

Institutions with an interest in Knowledge Organization may at any time submit a proposal for hosting a future conference to the ISKO Executive Board. Proposals should take into account all aspects in the Guidelines above, and in particular should outline:

- Provisional conference title and theme
- The preferred year and month
- The location of the venue, with description of local transport facilities and links
- Facilities and services at the venue
- Availability of organizing team members
- Availability of accommodation for participants
- Any variance envisaged from the guidelines above, and/or proposed innovations
- Name and contact details of the person(s) responsible for correspondence, and for the successful conduct of the event.

The Board will be happy to discuss any doubts or queries, and will endeavour to reach a prompt decision, at least two years before the proposed event date.