



Communiqué

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES PALAIS DE CONGRÈS
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER KONGRESSZENTREN

■ President's Message:

Quality Standards are both a Challenge and an Opportunity

The results of our most recent member survey on the topic of quality standards clearly shows two things: first, that AIPC members overwhelmingly see a variety of benefits to be had from adopting a specific set of performance measures and, secondly, that there is no truly universal standard in use. Members who responded to the survey cited a wide variety of both broadly based and regionally specific measures, as well as a number of standards developed by the centres themselves. However, there was no single set of standards that a majority felt to be appropriate to their particular needs.

The first question this raises is: is there really a need for a "universal" standard, and is it even practical to suggest there could be such a thing? Everyone operates under somewhat different circumstances, with a wide variety of local conditions and differing types of facilities, which makes it tough to come up with a "one size fits all" set of performance measures. Yet there are some good reasons to suggest that an overall standard could be useful;

First, our clients find it a lot easier to understand a single set of standards than many different ones. Nobody wants to have to actually investigate what ten different sets of standards mean, yet that's what we're asking them to do when there's no common denominator.

Second, there is the matter of credibility. As good as they may be, individual standards or "best practices" cannot have the same degree of impact on our clients as those that are perceived to be developed and maintained by a third party.

And third, it's not easy for a centre to develop and maintain a set of operating standards that cover all aspects of the complex environment in which we work. We all have enough to do without having to add something as complicated and demanding as the development of facility standards to our job list!

All of which suggests that members don't choose to develop independent standards (or do without any at all) because they want to, as much as in response to the fact that no good, common performance standard exists. And that poses a real challenge, and opportunity, to an organization such as AIPC.

AIPC has had various forms of quality standards for many years. We maintain a set of entry qualifications, which are enforced by site inspections and used to

ensure centres meet membership criteria. We have incorporated "best practices" into educational programs, and carried out seminars and published guides in an effort to identify appropriate standards for key areas such as security and environmental protection. At the same time, we've maintained the Apex Award as a vehicle for both encouraging and recognizing high standards of performance from the perspective of that most important audience, our clients.

But in a time where the market is looking for best value, and the confidence that they're getting a reliable standard of product, we probably need to go further. The ability to point to a recognized standard helps congress and convention centres demonstrate their commitment to quality, and that can be a great benefit in marketing to an ever-more demanding set of customers.

With this in mind, your Board created a Quality Standards Task Force with the assignment of evaluating the current situation regarding performance standards and recommending an appropriate way for AIPC to proceed in this area. Their first job - that of surveying members on their existing practices - has if anything even further reinforced the need and opportunity for a standard. The next job is the tough one: to see how such a standard could be created in a way that would make it both useful and beneficial to everyone.

Many of you will be hearing in this regard from Warren Buckley, who is chairing the Quality Standards Task Force and I'd urge you to give him all the support you can. If it was an easy task, it would have been done long ago - but given its obvious importance, its going to be a priority from here on!



Barbara Maple, AIPC President

Get Ready For Edinburgh (They're Getting Ready for You!)

Edinburgh International Conference Centre is the site of this year's AIPC Annual Conference, and a great opportunity to combine participation in the industry's most important annual event with a spectacular destination during its most exciting time of year.

We'll be publishing the entire conference program in the next issue of Communiqué. In the meantime, log on to the EICC web site to get full registration details and all the background information on this great event and destination.

And while we're all getting ready for Edinburgh, Edinburgh is doing its own preparation. We go now to Hans Rissmann, Chief Executive of the EICC, for some background:

Communiqué: How do you feel about having all your colleagues / competitors coming to your facility this summer?

HR: It is always very challenging and exciting having industry colleagues visit the Centre. I think our industry is unique in not seeing these occasions



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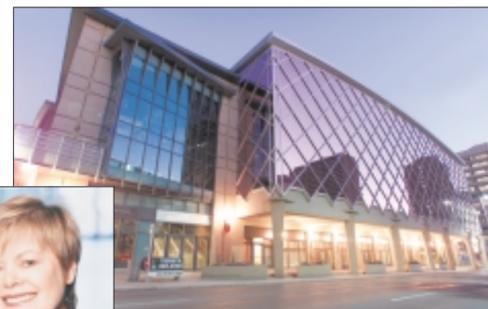
AIPC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS:

Telus Convention Centre Calgary

Founded in 1875, Calgary is the center of Canada's oil and livestock industries and boasts one of the country's fastest growing populations. Known internationally for its annual "Calgary Stampede", it also offers a

diverse range of attractions from theatre, galleries and museums to nearby mountain and equestrian retreats including Banff National Park in the Rocky Mountains.

Framed by historical buildings in downtown Calgary, Canada, the Telus Convention Centre Calgary hosts meetings, conventions, trade exhibitions and special events in over 130,000 square feet of



Telus Convention Centre Calgary; inset: Marcia Lyons, General Manager



highly flexible function space. The Centre consists of two linked buildings which include over 65,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 20,000 square foot ballroom and 26 breakout rooms with 4 pre-function areas. Special features include an elegant Terrace View room with a spacious outdoor patio; free-span exhibit space and direct exhibit floor access for large trucks and semi-trailers.

The centre is directly connected to three four-star hotels with over 1150 rooms, with a further 1850 rooms within a few minutes walk in the downtown core. Access is easy, with the Calgary international Airport only 20 minutes from downtown and over 1300 flights a week from more than 68 cities around the world.

Marcia Lyons, General Manager of the Telus Convention Centre Calgary says she believes that AIPC membership will give them valuable insights into how their operation fits into the global facility picture. "This will be of great benefit to us as we increasingly look to broader markets and need to know how best to address the expectations of clients from other parts of the world", she says.

Congress Centre - Norway Trade Fairs

As the host to Norway's most successful exhibitions for almost 90 years, Norway Trade Fairs has played a major role in developing and presenting Norwegian industry, both at home and abroad. Its activities have been shaped by the many structural changes in trade patterns over the years, with more specialized events developing out of national exhibitions which combined trade fairs with more general events.

After 40 years and some 1050 exhibitions at its original location in Sjølyst, the facility moved in 2002 to new premises at Lillestrøm, just outside of Oslo. With an attached 278 room hotel component, the Centre has received both architectural awards and international attention for its design.

Now billed as Norway's premier meeting place, this ultra-modern exhibition and congress centre covers 52,000 square meters, including 32,000 square meters of exhibition halls, 10,000 square meters of meeting space and a 7200 square meter column free banquet area. It can accommodate up to 6,000 delegates for a plenary and 5700 for a banquet function, and its primary markets are Norway, other Nordic countries and the international market for exhibitions, corporate events and international congresses.

Along with special features such as ground level access to exhibit halls, the facility offers an attractive lakeshore location, and a high-

speed train connection which connects the Centre to either the airport or city centre in only 11 minutes.



Norway Congress Centre - Norway Trade Fairs; inset: Per Wessel, Congress and Exhibition Director



To keep in touch with AIPC, visit www.aipc.org

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Introducing - AC Forum

You may or may not have heard of AC Forum - but if you're involved in staging major conferences, particularly in the medical field, you should know who they are and what they have to say. As representatives of a large and growing sector of our collective conference business, they have some very strong ideas on how we can better serve clients like them - and how to communicate our information more effectively!

The Associations Conference Forum (AC Forum) was created back in 1999 when the European Congress of Radiology (ECR), the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the Federation of European Cancer Societies decided to meet on a regular basis to exchange ideas, experiences and common targets. Soon other not-for-profit medical associations shared the interest in creating a network and joined the group at its first meeting in Vienna in June 1999 where 13 organizations were represented. Major consensus was immediately reached on the usefulness of joining forces and the group decided to become a real and structured entity.

Today, AC Forum serves as a platform for communication and networking among association executives in conference management and related activities, primarily between, but not restricted to, those involved in medical conferences. They enable the exchange of information between members in order to improve standards in the organization of conferences and related activities and increase the level of professionalism, in house knowledge and expertise available within associations and to association executives in conference management. At the same time, they represent the joint interests of members in their dialogue with suppliers, clients, peer groups, regulatory and other bodies in this field.

- Membership is open to groups that:
- Are not-for-profit organizations with a permanent office in Europe and a salaried staff that organize a conference of 2000 or more participants on a regular basis;
- Are responsible for managing the majority of key activities, such

as scientific program, abstract handling, participants registration, financial control, sponsorship, hotel accommodation, exhibition and social events associated with the organization of association congresses, or

- That plan to move towards an in-house congress organization in the near future.

When it comes to congress centres, the members of AC Forum have some pointed questions - and some suggestions as to how centres could better present themselves to potential clients such as themselves. Among the items mentioned:

- Accounting for often significant cost variability, even among countries where labour costs are comparable
- Quoting additional costs, such as those for changing rooms, at the outset.
- The ability to depart from "tied" suppliers, especially with regard to catering
- Contracts prepared in "plain English" i.e., not overburdened with legal jargon
- A longer working day as part of the contract, since while most centres operate 08:00-18:00, many events operate outside these hours which add considerably to the venue cost
- English speaking staff to meet the needs of participants.

In terms of what kinds of information they'd like to see on a congress centre web site, AC-Forum has some suggestions for additions to FAQ pages, including:

- Resources available for conference organizers
- High-resolution room plans and photos of the Centre
- Realistic specifications of facilities and capacities in a standard format, ideally searchable according to a number of defined criteria
- Reference lists, including contact details, of recent and future clients, and
- Lists of preferred or exclusive suppliers.

More details about AC Forum are available on their web site - www.acforum.net - or by contacting Kathy McGree - AC Forum President at info@eacts.co.uk.

for international congress business, along with other areas in which working together can produce better results for everyone - including the client! The session will feature four panelists and take place May 13, 2004 at 8:45 AM.

- IMEX is once again convening an "Association Day" which will take place May 11, 2004, the day prior to IMEX, and is intended to maximize attendance by international associations. That evening, the association executives attending Association Day will attend an evening social function hosted by IMEX from 18.30 to 21.30 hrs. at the Hilton Hotel, Frankfurt. All AIPC members who are exhibiting at IMEX are invited to attend this event and network with the estimated 200 International Association decision-makers who are expected to participate. Attendance is free for all such exhibiting AIPC members, providing that they have RSVP'd via the AIPC Secretariat Office by March 15.

Come and show your support for AIPC by participating in some of our scheduled activities!

Join Us at IMEX!

Going to be at IMEX this year? Plan now to participate in some of the AIPC activities that will be happening around the show schedule. Among your options:

- AIPC will be hosting a booth in the trade show to welcome members and tell delegates about what we represent as an association. The AIPC booth will also be the site of the Edinburgh cocktail reception where you'll be able to sample some Scottish hospitality and get all the details on this year's annual conference. The booth will be open throughout IMEX, and the reception takes place at noon on May 13.
- AIPC is again cosponsoring an educational seminar with industry colleagues from IAPCO (the International Association of Congress Organisers). This year's topic, A Cooperative Approach to Successful Congress Bids, will explore the ways that centres and PCO's can work together better to prepare and pitch bids



AIPC Annual Conference

Cont'd from page 1...

Communiqué: What special features does the EICC have that will be of particular interest to your colleagues, and how do you intend to showcase these?

HR: There are a number of things. First, of course, there is the opportunity for many colleagues to see the revolving auditoria that they have probably heard about. It is an awesome sight seeing two entire rooms revolve and double the auditorium capacity in just four and a half minutes. Secondly, there is the wireless network. As well as running the current European standard, we are currently running two additional trial networks which represent the cutting edge in communications Hiperlan2 and 802.11a. However, the element of the Centre I think that will be of most interest will be the people, our team. I am sure many colleagues will agree that, in general, the infrastructure and technical differences between our centres continues to narrow each year. However, it is in customer service that potentially the biggest differences could continue exist. Our team had a wonderfully successful year last year, including picking up two awards at the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) awards in Helsinki in November. Experiencing the EICC with their help is something I would be most interested in.



Hans Rissmann, CEO of the EICC

Communiqué: What particular destination aspects of Edinburgh do you intend to feature?

HR: The conference takes place during the Edinburgh Festival period. The Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe represent the most significant arts event in the world and cover every conceivable branch of the arts from street theatre to film and opera. It is a very exciting, and unique, time of year and one of the City's principal - and truly world class - selling points.

Communiqué: What benefits do you see to your membership in AIPC and your hosting their conference?

HR: The theme of the conference is "Expanding Horizons". The event will not only discuss best practice in facility management but also in the aspects of service - the USP of purpose built congress centres. We believe you never stop learning and having the AIPC Conference in Edinburgh will give a greater number of the team the opportunity to learn from their colleagues. Such benefits surrounding a sharing of ideas and of being able to continue to plan a bright future for this great industry of ours cannot be underestimated.

Dates Set for Quebec 2005

All right, we still have Edinburgh to look forward to - but it's never too early to start planning your schedule for the 2005 Annual Conference in Quebec City Canada! This unique destination will be a longer trip for many of our European members, so get these dates into your agenda right now: **Wednesday, July 20-Saturday July 23 2005.**

Accepting Bids for 2006

With all the excitement of Edinburgh in 2004 and Quebec City in 2005 to look forward to, it's not as easy to be thinking about the location of the 2006 AIPC annual conference. But come Edinburgh, we'll once again be voting on the 2006 conference host - so we need to hear now from any members interested in bidding for that honour!

Full bid details and further information are available from the AIPC Secretariat Office. The deadline for expressions of interest is May 1, 2004 in order to allow for the preparations necessary to bring proposals to the membership for vote.

Member Updates

Nantes Adopts Qualicongrès Accreditation



With quality standards on so many minds these days, the recent adoption of the **Qualicongrès** accreditation by the Cité des Congrès de Nantes makes for an interesting case study. Here's what Jacques Tallut, Managing Director and Jean-Baptiste Desbois, Deputy Managing Director have to say about the accreditation and its implications for their facility;

Communiqué: Why did you decide to apply for Qualicongrès accreditation?

JT: It was part of the Conference Centre's quality programme in which the next stage, hopefully in 2004, will be ISO 9001 version 2000 certification. In our opinion, quality (which is an integral part of Management's corporate policy) is a strategy in its own right, like development in the international market. It allows us to give formal expression to existing expertise while, at the same time, helping us to improve our internal structure.

For our clients, it is a guarantee of trustworthiness, confirmation that we listen to their requirements and take their expectations on board. In that respect, certification is a means of ensuring client loyalty and it is a valuable way of differentiating us from others in the same market - of the 48 members of the France Congrès Association, only 8 have achieved accreditation to date.

Communiqué: In your view, how does Qualicongrès accreditation meet the specific requirements of a conference centre?

J-B.D: This accreditation was initiated by France Congrès, an association with a membership drawn from all the main conference towns in France. It was based on a preliminary survey among more than 100 professionals. By identifying their expectations and selection criteria, the association was able to draft the 20 quality commitments on which the accreditation is based. Since then, our contacts with clients have shown us the relevance of these criteria.

Communiqué: How did your staff react to the service commitments implied in the Qualicongrès accreditation?

JT: That was our first reason for satisfaction. It was the teams themselves who supported and advanced the project, through working parties! In fact, the approach led to a reorganisation of the Sales Department in order to meet demands for fast turnaround times. In doing so, the "upstream" part of Sales (client prospecting followed by a commercial proposal) was separated from work "in the field" and customer follow-up (single contact on site, briefings and debriefings).

Communiqué: How do you feel your clients and partners have reacted to this approach?

J-B.D: The fast turnarounds, with the promise of (and compliance with!) very short response times, were the first source of satisfaction for our clients. They also appreciate the quality of our customer file follow-up and the customer feedback opportunities, especially through

individualised processing of customer satisfaction questionnaires. As far as our partners and service providers were concerned (caterers, stand installation companies etc.), accreditation clarified our offer and gave our approach greater professionalism while, at the same time, optimising their own quality initiatives.

Communiqué: Did you have any particular difficulties or successes when you were setting up the Qualicongrès system within the Centre?

JT: Although some people saw it as a source of additional administrative constraints, accreditation proved eventually to be a means of standardising the processing of customer files thanks to the systematic use of our sales management software program. The project was also an opportunity to accelerate work in progress such as the preferred supplier system.



Jacques Tallut, Managing Director and Jean-Baptiste Desbois, Deputy Managing Director of the Cité des Congrès de Nantes

processing of customer files thanks to the systematic use of our sales management software program. The project was also an opportunity to accelerate work in progress such as the preferred supplier system.

J-B.D: Moreover, we realised that the organisation of smaller events and our work with and for loyal customers might sometimes lead to excessive constraints for such clients because of the demands of accreditation. This led us to offer specific arrangements for these two types of contract. Eventually, this initiative was highlighted by AFAQ as one of our strong points!

Communiqué: How do you take advantage of your new accreditation among your clients and partners?

J-B.D: We announced the accreditation on the front page of our newsletter and the France Congrès newsletter. We also forwarded a press release to priority targets e.g. economic and specialist reviews, professional associations, agencies, partners etc. Gradually, it also became an integral part of our promotion and PR work. Finally, it will be displayed within the Conference Centre itself and highlighted on our new website which is currently in the last stages of completion.

Communiqué: What in your view are the key issues today as far as quality standards are concerned?

JT: There are two dimensions to the on-going implementation of this approach. Firstly, we have to optimise our use of Qualicongrès accreditation to ensure customer loyalty and conquer new markets. Secondly, thanks to our work on the ISO project, we have to bring all the skills in our company closer together within a Quality project.

J-B.D: As Chairman of the France Congrès Economic Committee, I would like to conclude by emphasising that the entire profession has been enhanced by the Qualicongrès accreditation. It confirms a determination on the part of conference centres and gives clients additional guarantees of professionalism within our sector of activity.

Seattle, San Diego CEO's Receive Prestigious Award



Last year AIPC member John Christison, President of the Washington State Convention & Trade Centre received the Charles McElvavy Award, described by the International

Association of Assembly Managers as "the industry's premier award recognizing individuals for excellence in the public assembly facility management", at the IAAM annual conference in New Orleans. In acknowledging his receiving the award, AIPC stated that "this is indeed a tribute to your leadership and your contribution to the Association, as well as to the industry".

Now, another AIPC member Carol Wallace, who is President and Chief Executive Officer of the San Diego Convention Center Corporation and President of the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) in 1999-2000, has been announced as the winner of this year's McElvavy award, which she will officially receive this summer at the IAAM Annual Conference & Trade Show in Reno, Nevada.

Wallace's announcement came on January 22nd at an event in her



Carol Wallace, President and CEO of the San Diego Convention Centre Corporation

facility to celebrate its 15th anniversary. With some 400 distinguished guests and dignitaries in attendance, IAAM Executive Director Dexter King and Frank Poe, who succeeded Wallace as IAAM president spoke before Wallace's colleagues and commended her on her industry service as well as announcing the McElvavy award. "On behalf of IAAM President Mike Kelly and the board of directors, Frank and I were honored to be in San Diego for this special occasion and to recognize Carol's influence and contribution to the industry, as well as to announce her award status," said King.



John Christison, President of the Washington State Convention & Trade Centre

The San Diego Convention Center continues to play a prominent role in the development of the city as an international destination site for conventions and trade shows, despite the fact that California is currently being hard hit by funding issues. As a result, a number of speeches were given during the anniversary event praising the venue for the numerous awards it has received and recognizing Wallace for her leadership and service to the city and the facility.

Valencia Conference Centre Plays Role in Securing America's Cup 2007



Nine months of hard negotiations finally paid off as Valencia was selected as the city that will host the America's Cup in 2007. As the announcement was broadcast live from Geneva, those filling the main auditorium of the Valencia Conference Centre yelled with joy at the prospect of hosting a unique regatta that will become one of the most important international events ever to be held in Valencia.

This 130 year-old trophy owes its name to the schooner that won the 100 Guineas Cup in England in 1857 for the first time. After 31 matches held in other continents, the Cup is now returning to Europe.

The Alinghi syndicate from Geneva successfully challenged for the 32nd America's Cup in 2003 and, since under the Protocol governing the Cup the races have to be at sea, America's Cup Management Ltd was appointed by the Société Nautique de Genève to select the venue for the next Cup. Of the 65 candidate cities, Valencia was considered the most appropriate.

For Valencia, the America's Cup means hosting up to 20 teams that could take part in the races, each consisting of 80 to 100 people, with an average budget of 50 million Euros. The impacts for the host city are estimated at a billion Euros, and 10,000 one-year jobs.

The Valencia Conference Centre played a key role in the negotiations by hosting the most relevant meetings between the

Swiss and the Spanish parties and helping ensure their success. In addition, it hosted the press conference that took place the day



America's Cup 2007 Announced at Valencia Conference Centre

after the announcement to officially introduce the venue for the America's Cup 2007 to some 150 accredited journalists from more than 10 countries.

Members Send Strong Message in Quality Standards Survey

AIPC's most recent member survey, which attracted a strong rate of response, gave a clear picture of the importance members place on quality standards while at the same time demonstrating that there is currently no generally applied standard adopted by a majority of members. The purpose of the survey was to determine the extent to which AIPC member facilities operate with either formal certification or their own quality standards for operations and management. In addition, it was intended to identify the level of interest in such standards and the value that members associated with them.

The key results of the survey were:

- Members were more likely to have their own quality standards than to have adopted a formal certification. To the question "Do you have a formal certification" the "no" response outweighed the "yes" group by 41% to 59%. In response to the question "What is the certification?", a variety of certifications were cited, including ISO 9000/9001 and Investors in People.
- 57% of respondents indicated that they maintained their own quality standards, and of these, 27% indicated that they had both formal certification and maintained their own standards as well. Some 30% of respondents indicated that they had neither formal nor facility standards.
- Respondents were also asked to identify the source of their facility standards. In response to the question: "Did you create these yourselves or were they adapted from other standards?", 62% answered that they had developed the standards themselves, 48% indicated that they had adapted from others and one indicated a combination of the two.
- In response to the question "If adapted, what was the source?", the largest proportion was again ISO (30% of "adapted" group) with a wide variety of other sources cited, from local / municipal to corporate standards having been adapted)
- The vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated that they were prepared to share their standards with other members. Some that did not wish to do this cited the specificity of the standards to their own particular circumstances as being the reason (i.e., no use to others).
- Those without a model currently in place were evenly divided in their intention to seek one out for their use (Yes: 53%; No: 47%). The "yes" group was again evenly split as to those who intended to pursue a formal certification and those who intended to develop their own model.
- The overwhelming majority of all respondents (92%) felt that some form of certification was of value to their operations. There were a wide variety of reasons given for this, largely centering around marketing, benchmarking and enhancing client confidence but also including such areas as improving operations, maintaining profitability, improving efficiency and providing a basis for evaluation.

The overall conclusion of the survey was that the vast majority of respondents (and, by implication, AIPC members) believe that the adoption of some form of quality standards is a valuable management and marketing strategy. While members are divided on the relative benefits of formal vs. facility developed standards, almost all either maintain such standards or intend to adopt them.

The variety of standards cited indicate clearly that there is no single widely accepted standard. This, along with the strong indication of a willingness to share standards now in place, suggests that there may be a good opportunity for the development of practical standards that would have comparability amongst different centres.

Whoops!

We don't always get it right. In the November issue of Communiqué we referred to **Jean-Marie Pire** as the CEO of the Brussels Exhibition and Convention Centre (Brussels Expo). In actual fact, he is the CEO of EXCS. Our apologies for this error.