

Guidelines for a successful Symposium Cumanum or Symposium Vesuvianum

(A tralaticious document, with additions by Tim Moore in 2016, light changes by Jim O'Hara in 2018, and some further editing by Barbara Weiden Boyd in 2020, 2021, and 2022) [[comments in brackets for the Symposium Vesuvianum]]

As soon as you assume the directorship of the symposium

Write to Mina Sgariglia (minasgariglia@gmail.com), the Vergilian Society's legal representative in Italy and the person who will supervise all the onsite work, and introduce yourself to her as the director of the upcoming symposium. If you have not introduced yourself yet to the president, please do so—he or she will answer questions that come up in planning the symposium.

As you plan the Symposium, the best course is the following:

1. Make decisions as you can, copying Mina and the President, asking them to let you know if anything is amiss in your plan.
2. When there is something you must know from Mina, email her and then call a day or two later.
3. Plan everything as far ahead as you can, as getting answers you need may take weeks.

Please approach your university for some support of the symposium. Most directors have asked for, and gotten, somewhere in the area of \$1,500 [[[\$1000]]] to help with expenses. If you are unsuccessful, the fees for the symposium can be raised to offset at least part of this, but there is a limit to how much of a registration fee we can realistically charge.

Registration fees must account for the following: 1) Society membership for those who are not members in good standing, 2) lunches, snacks, tea and coffee breaks planned at the Villa, 3) transportation costs and site admission fees, if applicable. Lodging charges will be calculated separately.

Approach at least two or three well known people and get from them a commitment to attend. This does wonders in making the symposium attractive to potential participants. If you choose to have a keynote speaker, you can offer free room and board at the villa, but there won't be funds for anything else unless you get a lot of money from your university.

May / June of the year before [[12 months before]]

Work with the secretary on initial publicity. This will probably take the form of a call for papers (200-300 words) that can be put on the Vergilian Society website and eblasted to all the Vergilian Society members. Include the names of your prominent attendees and a deadline (December 1 is recommended [[roughly late fall for Symposium Vesuvianum]]). Try also to get the same call eblasted to the WCC mailing list, the Kentucky Classics list, the (UK) Classicists List, the Dipartimento di filologia classica at the University of Naples – Federico II, and the SCS (they will put it on the website). You can also put the CFP on the Vergilian Society facebook page, and on your own facebook page (or that of a friend with more facebook friends) or use other social media.

10-9 months before

[[This is not relevant for the Symposium Vesuvianum unless you want to do this]] Start working with the Dipartimento di filologia classica at the University of Naples – Federico II on their contribution for the symposium. They have hosted us in Naples for a day, and individual faculty members have drawn on their research accounts to offer us lunch and coffee as well. For the foreseeable future, Giancarlo Abbamonte (giancarlo.abbamonte@gmail.com) is our informal contact, but eventually what he arranges will probably have to be cleared formally with the department head. Write to Giancarlo very early on, copying Mina and the President, and let him take it from there. You can proceed with the entire symposium at the Villa if the folks in Naples cannot host.

Another round of sending out the CFP would be good now.

Begin working with Mina to renew the ‘patrocinio morale’ (a formal declaration of support) from the entities that have worked with us on the symposium. Mina will deal with the local political authorities. Currently we also get support from the American Academy in Rome, the Academia Vergiliana in Mantua, the Dipartimento di filologia classica at the University of Naples – Federico II, and the British Vergilian Society, along with the parliament of the European Union. It is important that we have these declarations of support, which are printed on all our publicity, but in Italy one must have a formal letter each year before the name of the group can be listed. Mina will handle all of this. Just do your best to keep up with what she is doing. If you have potential connections in Italy who might provide additional versions of this patrocinio morale, put them in touch with Mina.

While planning the symposium

Consider having one special talk near the ‘sibyl’s cave’, a nice archaeological site 8 minutes away by foot. This gets people out of the building on one of the long days. Alessandro Barchiesi did this at the 2013 symposium and it was seen as one of the highlights, both by him and the audience. You need special permission from the soprintendente if you want to do this. Do not count on Mina to get this permission for you unless you prod her.

Work with Mina to plan one excursion during the symposium. A bus tour to Lake Avernus and Pozzuoli is one possibility; another is to add a visit to the National Museum in Naples or to the Capua Amphitheater.

Plan on having a full day in Naples, unless the situation with the department there changes. Don’t forget to calculate the lost time in transportation as you schedule papers there. If the department is contributing a session, it is best to have it when they are hosting.

When selecting proposals

[[This is not relevant for the Symposium Vesuvianum]] All proposals from the Dipartimento di filologia classica at the University of Naples – Federico II have to be put aside and (ideally) accepted—they are our co-sponsors for the symposium, and we can’t expect them to invite us to

Naples for the day if we reject their proposals. If problems emerge here, contact the President for diplomatic advice.

Avoid the temptation to overcrowd the schedule. This is particularly hard if you have lots of good proposals, but the reality is that there is only so much time and people get irritated at the conference if they are always rushed. About 25-27 papers is probably a good number to accept, on the understanding that additional papers from important people might need to be added to the program at the last minute. Be sure especially to leave lots of free time on the morning of the first day, since Mina will generally be able to bring several local dignitaries (e.g. the mayor of Monte di Procida; a representative of the Soprintendenza archeologia e belle arti; etc.) to welcome us. This an essential component of conference protocol in Italy, and especially important for the Villa. Finally, as you schedule make sure talks finish well before meals so that they are not interrupted by the gong.

When proposals are accepted

Send out the “practical details” as soon as you have all the information you need (three or four months ahead at the latest). You can model this on the one from the year before, but check every detail. You may need to work with Mina, or with the treasurer, to set costs and make arrangements for payment. Have the participants contact Mina directly for room and board—you don’t want them asking you a series of questions to which you don’t have the answers. Note, though, that they will contact you when Mina has not responded to their emails.

Explain that rooms at the villa are shared, with bathrooms down the hall.

Make it clear to the participants that there are no single rooms at the villa. Single rooms are available at some nearby hotels, but some involve a dangerous (because of the narrow roads without sidewalks) 45-minute walk, or a short taxi ride. (Shared taxis can be arranged to transport people to and from the villa during the days of the symposium.)

Work with Mina to devise a paragraph, which can be part of the “Practical Details,” on how participants can get to the villa from the main train station and the airport in Naples. (People should watch their bags carefully while in Naples.) Cuma is a bit isolated, and people should be confident that they know how to get there.

Impose a clear time limit for papers and make it clear that speakers are expected not to exceed it. This is especially important, given the tendency for papers at Italian congresses to be longer than we want. 20 minutes is probably good. If you have made this clear from the beginning, you can retain control of the schedule.

Encourage people to arrive early enough on the day before the symposium starts that they have time to walk up to the Cuma archaeological site, which closes at 7 pm in the summer months. Otherwise you will hear irritated comments about being close to things but not having time to see them. Even if you say this, some will arrive late and will be disappointed that they do not see the ruins. Since the ruins close in the evening, some recommend that on one of the two “full days” of papers at the Villa, you finish early so that all interested can visit the archaeological site.

14 days in advance

Send Mina the final program. We would recommend a mass email to all the participants, asking them to confirm that they are indeed coming. Give them, say, four days to respond and then send the program to Mina so that she has time to get it printed. You may find this frustrating as you try to make sure the program gets done, as emails will not get responses. Leave as much time as you can to get this done. Also be prepared for last-minute changes to the program. The major challenge is making sure that all the images from those providing a “patrocinio morale” are available. If you do the program yourself, ask previous organizers as well as Mina for the images you need.

There are three ways this program has been done:

1. A Word file with all the information has been sent to Mina, who added the necessary images for each institution that provided a *patrocinio morale*.
2. One of the organizers created the program and brought copies to Italy.
3. The organizer created the program with the necessary images and sent that to Mina for printing.

At some point you can ask for the program to be put on the VS website, and you can also put it on social media. Whether you do this in advance or only later is up to you.

3 weeks in advance

Abstracts for all talks should be sent to Mina, for the preparation of an abstract booklet. This could be done by email, or by a dropbox shared with Mina. In 2015 an organizer prepared the abstract booklet himself and brought it to Cuma. In 2016 the organizer prepared the book and sent Word and pdf files to Mina for printing. Leave as much time as you can for this, as emails will not get responses.

Tell everyone they need to bring their own handouts (40 copies should be more than enough). There is no copying facility available at the Villa or nearby.

At the symposium

Work with Mina the morning of the first day on the opening ceremony. As noted above, there will be a number of dignitaries present [[less likely at the Symposium Vesuvianum]], but she won't know until the last minute who is actually coming.

The Villa now has good wifi, a video projector, and a good screen, thanks to generous donors.

Introduce yourself formally in the opening session as the director(s), and encourage people who have practical issues concerning the program to talk to you. Refer people with lodging issues directly to Mina.

Meet quickly after the first session, for five minutes, with all the session chairs. Ask them to have a paper with ‘5 minutes remaining’ written on it, and to show this paper to speakers as they near the end of their assigned time. The chairs should also indicate to speakers when their time

is up. It will be up to you whether you feel comfortable asking chairs actually to cut speakers off; this is an extreme measure, especially in Italy, but the schedule will get out of control quickly unless some consistent pressure is applied, and at least one director recommends “cutting off people ruthlessly.”

If you don't speak fairly fluent Italian, be sure that you have by your side a participant who does when you leave the villa for tours, and especially for the day in Naples.

After the symposium

Submit a copy of the symposium program to the editor of *Vergilius*. This should go in by, say, September 1. This date is also good for the Symposium Vesuvianum if the program is established by then. You can ask the editor of *Vergilius* if he or she wants more than that. Read over this set of guidelines, correcting anything that needs updating and adding anything you want your successors to know.

Think about plans for publishing the papers. The editor of *Vergilius* might be interested in two or three of the best ones, and you could work with him or her to steer good things in that direction. We do not have any expectation that all the papers, or a selection, will be published in a conference volume, but if you want to try to do this, you are welcome to do so—several volumes have come out of these symposia. We do not have funds to support any publications except for *Vergilius*.