



HANDBOOK FOR ARRANGING
THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIAD
IN INFORMATICS

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PREFACE

The purpose of this IOI handbook is to help in organizing and planning the IOI event. The handbook consists of subjects which are essential to ensure that arrangements will be smoothly and successfully organized. For example, the IOI handbook helps with the choosing of the venue and the hotels, transportation arrangements, dining, award and closing ceremonies, cultural program etc. All these topics are related to the whole IOI week and it is clear that this kind of event consists of a lot of different arrangements.

“Every event is different even if the events have followed the same format for years. They will be different because the participants, the surroundings, the choice of location, different organizers and timing will make the event unique.” (Shone, 2001, p. 17.) The IOI event is organized every year in a different country and by different people. Therefore, it is difficult to make a handbook which is comprehensive and suitable for each host country. In spite of this, the handbook tries to give some guidance and tips for planning the IOI event. Reading this handbook may help the organizer to avoid some mistakes or pay more attention to certain issues.

This handbook does not deal with requirements of the competition itself, because the writer is not familiar with those issues. The writer has been a member of IOI 2001 organizing team and she has studied service management in Laurea Polytechnic in Finland. This handbook is her scholarly thesis as well. The handbook is based on her knowledge and experience of the IOI 2001, event organizing literature and interviews of other IOI 2001 organizers.

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1 THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIAD IN INFORMATICS

Professor Sendov from Bulgaria proposed the idea of initiating International Olympiads in Informatics for school students to the 24th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris in October 1987. In May 1989, UNESCO initiated and sponsored the first International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI).

The IOI is one of five international science Olympiads. The primary goal of the IOI is to stimulate interest in informatics and information technology. Another important goal is to bring together exceptionally talented pupils from various countries and to have them share scientific and cultural experiences.

The IOI is organized annually in and by one of the participating countries. Each participating country typically sends a delegation of four students and two accompanying adults. The students compete individually and try to maximize their score by solving a set of informatics problems during two competition days. The problems have been algorithmic programming problems to be solved with a personal computer. Cultural and recreational events are organized on the remaining days. (IOI history, 2002.)

1.1 Responsibilities of the Host Country

The organization of the International Olympiad in Informatics is each year's host country. A host country consists of the responsible ministry(ies), institution(s), and/or corporation(s) in that country which will plan and organize the IOI event. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

The present host is obliged to prepare guidelines for the organization and provide plans suited for the IOI. Here is the list according to the IOI regulations of what kind of information the host country should distribute.

- Present Host:
Organizing institute(s), Host Team, secretariat of the present IOI with names and complete addresses.
- Program:

Date of IOI, date and time of the Opening Ceremony, Competitions, General Assembly, Awards and Closing Ceremony, agenda of social & cultural program.

- Locations:
Complete addresses of all IOI location(s), buildings, rooms, and maps.
- Facilities:
Computers for leaders and contestants, Internet, photocopier, organizational and technical support, support to and from International Secretariat.
- Board, lodging and leisure:
Bedrooms, meals, mealtimes, and facilities for refreshment, sport, medical care and insurance.
- Registration:
Invitation to participate, newsletters, registration forms/procedures for participants, observers and guests, deadlines for registration, fees for observers and guests, list of names, addresses and bedrooms of participants, observers and guests.
- Country information:
Visas, travelling between seaport or airport and IOI location(s), traveling between IOI location(s), public transport, currency, stamps, public telephone, climate, complete address of tourist association, voltage
- Competition:
Establishing a Scientific Committee, global description and preparation of Competition Tasks and associated judging model, equipment & software, conducting the Competition, technical support, competition procedures
- Awards:
Judging Procedures, medals.
- Proceedings:
Production and distribution
- Financing (not necessarily public):
Fees, sponsors, accounting
- The Competition Procedures contain information about:
Asking questions about the tasks in the beginning of the competition day, reporting failures, testing data files, printing, decision using private diskettes (with or without software or data files), decision about using private printed or written materials, visiting the refreshment rooms, handing in solutions, and so on, during the Competition.
(Verhoeff, 1995.)

1.2 Participants of the IOI

Every year the number of the IOI participants has been growing. In the following there are short introductions of the main groups of participants and their tasks. The purpose of these introductions is to describe to the reader the IOI's official responsibilities and their extent. In this report there is no need to handle these duties separately, therefore the concept of *participant* in this report includes all the persons who have an official status in the competition.

1.2.1 Delegation

A national delegation of a country is to be headed by a team leader. The delegation comprises generally a team of one to four contestants, a deputy leader and a team leader. The delegation could also be observing. Then it may include only a deputy leader but no contestants. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

All members of a national delegation are from one country. A contestant is a student who was enrolled at a school for secondary education during the period September to December in the year before IOI. Contestants are not older than twenty years on the 1st of July of the year of IOI. The delegation could also include guests who have to pay a reasonable fee which is fixed by the present host. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

1.2.2 The General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is a temporary, short-term committee during the IOI. It is composed of the delegation leaders and the deputy leaders of all participating countries, the members of committees, the president of the GA, the secretary-general of the IOI, the chair of IOI, a representative of the international secretary and a representative of IFIP. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

The GA is the owner of the IOI, it acts in the general spirit of the regulations and it has the voting procedure of "one vote per participating country". The tasks of the GA are to take decisions on issues not provided for in the regulations, make recommendations to the International Committee (IC), and decide on proposals made by the IC. The GA also supervises and decides on the host nominations and selection, and supervises and participates in the selection of competition tasks, and decides on the awarding of medals at each IOI. The GA's task is also elect a representative of a participating country to serve on the IC to replace one of the three elected members retiring by rotation. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

1.2.3 The International Committee

The International Committee (IC) for the IOI was founded by the assembly of all delegates participating in the first IOI in the 1989 in Pravetz, Bulgaria. IC is comprised of past host representatives, current host representative, the chair of the IC and future hosts' representatives. In addition, three other persons are elected for two years by the general assembly. (International Committee for the IOI, 2002.)

The main tasks of the IC are to supervise the continuity of the IOI by finding future host countries, examining the organization of future IOIs, solving problems encountered during the organization of an IOI, evaluating past IOIs and adjusting the format and content of the IOI to ensure that the IOI goals will be met in the future. (International Committee for the IOI, 2002.)

1.2.4 The IOI Scientific Committee

The IOI Scientific Committee (ISC) was established at the GA Meeting in 1999, at IOI'99 in Antalya-Belek, Turkey. The ISC consists of past, current and future IOI host countries and members elected by General Assembly. Totally, the ISC includes seven members. The task of the ISC is to guarantee the smooth operation of the IOI by meeting before the each IOI to screen the problem set and test the grading system. (Verhoeff, 1995.)

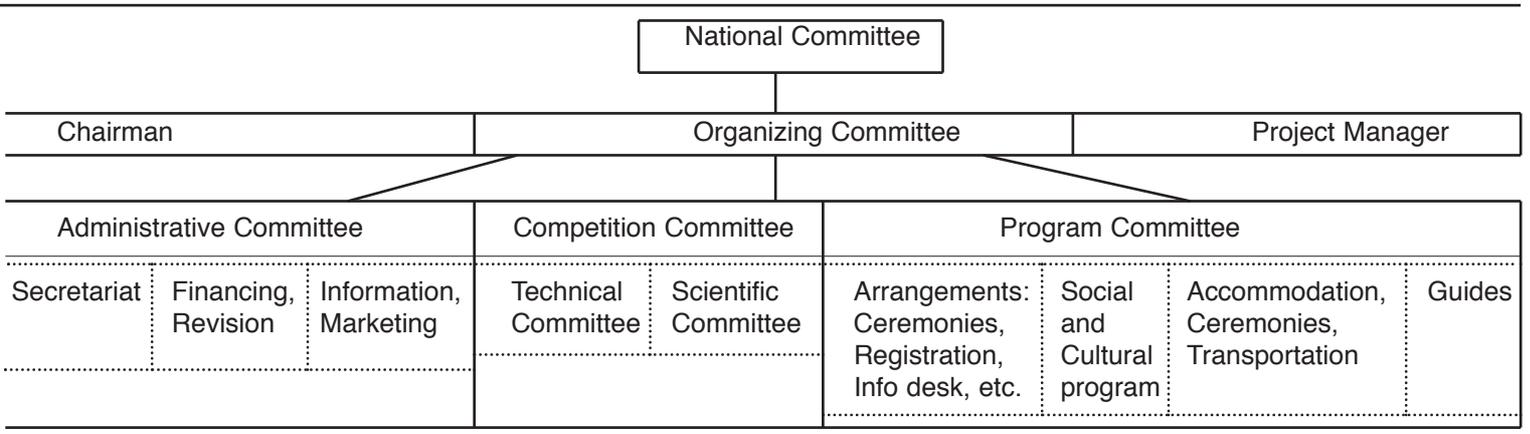
2 ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING

The IOI event needs to be carefully planned and organized. It also needs a large group of personnel to handle different duties. The project organization usually has a *project manager*, *coordinators*, who are responsible for different sectors and a *secretary*. No matter what kind the IOI project organization is, its objective is the same: plan, organize and carry out the project. Usually people who work in the core organization have been guests or other participants in the past IOIs, and can, therefore, use their knowledge and experience in organizing their own IOI.

The IOI organization can be divided into different teams which will have their own responsibilities. The teams can have managers, leaders or coordinators who will report progress and needs for example, to the board of directors. The IOI teams could be as following:

- Chair of IOI
- Chair of the host scientific committee
- Project manager:
Contact person who guides the work of committees, takes care that everything is done according to the plans.
- National committee:
Members representing institutions which have contributed in arranging the IOI. Its task is to guide and supervise the organizing committee.
- Organizing committee:
Members are chairmen of the different committees. Their task is to lead arrangements in practice and possibly appoint committees to handle parts of arrangements.
- Administrative Committee:
 - Secretariat:
Tasks: Invitations, visas, arrangements of arrival and departure, accommodation, catering, transportation, bookings of the venue and social program, sponsor contracts, registrations, competition office, products and prizes, etc.
 - Financing and revision
 - Information and marketing
- Competition Committee:
 - Scientific committee
 - Technical committee
- Program Committee

The organization could be like in the following diagram.



In many countries it is possible to use professionals' help in organizing the event. For example, *venue finding* services are companies which find the suitable venue to match the requirements of the organizer's event. Their services are usually free to organizers, as most of the venue finding services make their profit through the commission earned by booking the venues. *Professional event organizers* PEOs, are specialist management companies who ensure the smooth running and success of events. They work closely together with their client. PEOs can help with event plans like choosing the venue, hotel bookings, transportation arrangements, payments etc. and they also assist with the making of backup plans. (Davidson, 1994, p. 34–35.) PEOs are usually hired for events like sales conferences, product launches and international congresses but why not events like the IOI.

2.1 Contacting the Delegation

The secretariat sends information about the timetables to the delegation leader quite regularly a few months prior to the event. The leader should always be fully aware when he or she has to send information to the secretariat on different issues. This information includes many details needed from the delegation leaders. This might be the names of the contestants, flight schedules, accommodation details, diets or any special needs. It is important to have good communication system between the delegation and the IOI secretariat. The email and www have proven to be suitable in this case.

Some delegations need visas to travel to the host country. It is good service to inform about this matter in advance so that the delegation has time to apply for the visas. In some countries an official invitation letter supplied by the secretariat is needed for visa application.

It is a good idea to discuss with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the contents of the invitation letter in order for it to be in a correct form.

2.2 Beginning to Plan an Event

Two of the most important elements of running a successful event are: being organized and paying attention to the details. It is essential that things will be on track and moving forward as scheduled. A *critical path* is an idealistic tool to remember all important dates and make things in time.

To create the critical path of the event, the organizer should first think what has to be done and when. The list has to be made backwards starting from the date of the event. To avoid mistakes and disasters there have to be deadlines that need to be strictly followed. The critical path should also contain all the deadlines and cut-off times of contracts and the responsible persons of each issue. Important dates are cancellation dates and dates when it is allowed to change booked figures without penalties. When the event develops, the critical path should be updated. (Allen, 2000, p. 17–18.)

Another important tool in the beginning is a function sheet where everything is clearly detailed. The function sheets provide vital information to suppliers about how the event should be arranged. Function sheets are a valuable asset to hotels and venues, who will study them carefully so that everything will be ready when the event begins. The function sheets provide accurate info about contracts, costs, details of arrangements, etc. All suppliers and major partners are given a copy of the function sheet so they can study it and make necessary changes. (Allen, 2000, p. 21–22.)

It is also a good practice to use some project management software. They are available in the market from many software companies.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

- The IOI organization can be divided into different teams which will have their own responsibilities.
- It is possible to use professionals when organizing and planning the IOI.
- Planning needs a critical path which is a schedule of arrangements.
- Function sheets are information guides that tell the suppliers how the event has to be handled. Every supplier and key player receives a copy.

3 FINDING A VENUE

Sometimes the organizer has the idealistic place for the IOI event when there is no need to think of different options. Though usually the organizer has to make the decision after many requests for quotations, visits, meetings and site inspections. This chapter consists of things which should be taken into consideration when choosing the location and venue for the IOI. Even if the organizer already has the idealistic place for the IOI, it might be useful to check these things anyway.

3.1 Location of the IOI

Location for the IOI event should be determined at a very early stage. Location needs to have a venue for the IOI, services such as shops, accommodation and leisure options and some tourist attractions as well (Verhelä, p. 2000, 20). Metropolises are usually cities, which can provide a large number of choices for the venue, accommodation etc., but sometimes it might be easier to find an available venue and arrange the whole IOI event in another city than in big metropolises and cities. Metropolises and capitals are usually the main places for the great congresses, and therefore, venues are booked there many years in advance. This is a subject that, of course, depends on the country and the time of the year.

IOI is an international event where most of the delegates arrive by airplane. Therefore, it is important to select a venue within a reasonable travelling time from an international airport. It would not be a very successful start for the event if some of the participants had to sit in a bus or a train for hours after a long flight (Rogers, 1998, p. 138). Also it would be easier to organize the IOI event if the venue, hotels and the cafeteria were close to each other. Then it is possible to save in costs of transportation, and it is also easier for the delegates to move from place to place.

The competition organization has also a great role in choosing the location for the IOI. The people doing the practical preparations should have easy daily access to the competition venue, because planning and building the competition environment needs active presence.

3.2 Venue

When starting to plan an event, one of the first things is to make a list of requirements. This will provide an overall picture of needs. Sometimes the venue may first look like the perfect place but when the organizer checks requirements of the list it may turn out to be inadequate. (Allen, 2000, p. 131.) The list of requirements can be sent to the different venues and to see if they can accommodate all the requirements. Whenever possible it is a good idea to ask the venue official to supply a floor plan or diagram of the site. That will help planning and making a site inspection.

There are very wide choices of venue types. Venue types for the IOI can be for example, purpose-built conference or convention centers, exhibition halls, civic halls, hotels, universities and colleges. The most important thing in choosing the venue is that it fulfils the competition's technical requirements.

The IOI venue should also include other rooms than the competition hall. There have to be rooms for the meetings, translations, registration, secretary, press, personnel etc. It is also convenient to have spacious lobbies or rooms available for the delegations to spend time together. There is also the possibility to have the competition in a different place and other activities in another place but the distance between places cannot be too far. The meeting room for the Scientific Committee should be close to the GA meeting room because of the close interaction of the GA and the Scientific Committee during the task selection meeting.

Venue management should recognize all possible needs and have an insight into what is about to come. It is better to have a little extra space than to work with insufficient accommodations once the contract has been signed. (Allen, 2000, p. 45.)

The IOI is an event for over 500 delegates, and that number of people needs quite a lot of space. The entrance hall is a place where the registration is arranged, participants meet each other, and ask questions from the officials at the info desk. That hall should be large enough that people can move easily and find the places they are looking for. It could be seen as the heart of the whole IOI event. The significance of the entrance hall cannot be underestimated.

3.3 Site Inspection

A site inspection is essential before booking a venue. Failing to visit the site in advance will cause a lot of extra work when it is time to take care of various arrangements. Making the inspection with a checklist of the necessary things will prevent future setbacks. Every event brings its own demands, and therefore, it is not possible to create a perfect checklist. The following is just an example of a basic list that could be used in planning more specific lists. (Rogers, 1998, p. 141; Goldblatt, 1997, p. 50–53.)

LOCATION	FIXTURES
Independent access Freight access Proximity to main entrance, toilets, meal areas etc. Distance of venue to the nearest airport Distance to nearest trauma facility Distance to nearest fire/rescue facility Distance to shopping Distance to recreational activities	Decor, pillars, obstructions Room shapes and partitions Fire exits Natural light Location of doors Registration area Effective directory or other signs for easy recognition Stage area Power and telephone points, electrical power capacity Temperature controls Blackout curtains Size and number of rest rooms.
NON FIXTURES	GENERAL
Chairs Tables Capacity of storage Ability to distribute event materials at check in	Cleanliness, overall comfort Ambience, pre-function space Full-time security team Positive relationship with law enforcement agencies

Supply of electricity is vital for a successful IOI event and the event organizer should be aware of what needs to be plugged in and where. There might even be need for auxiliary generators, UPS devices and electricians. The organizer has to note that there will be a significant increase of power demand in the electrical network when all the equipment is used at the same time. The event organizer should be aware in advance of the expenses. The venue can provide an estimate of the expenses based on similar events. (Allen 2000, p. 129.)

3.4 Booking the Venue

The venue should be booked as soon as possible after the host country has been selected. It is always better to book early than too late. Usually venues are booked 1-4 years before the event. The

organizer should also think about the date of the IOI. It is important to find out whether there are other events which may interfere with the IOI arrangements, or whether the date is suitable for the whole IOI organization. If there are other events at the same time, there might be possibilities to cooperate with the organizers of the other events. For example, if the theme of the other events has some connection to the IOI there might be the opportunity to arrange common seminars or conferences where the IOI committee members, guests or leaders can participate.

The price of the venue is one of the main costs of the IOI budget. A written contract should be extremely specific and clear. Cancellation and invoicing terms, included items, etc. should be paid attention to before signing the contract. Contracts of large events like the IOI are always case-by-case. Before signing any contract it is essential to find out what additional charges could apply. For example, whether there are any charges for tables, chairs and for clean-up, what overtime charges might apply, whether there are specific firms the organizer must work with, what are the charges for electrical power etc. (Allen, 2000, p. 48.)

Significant information is to know if the venue has a dedicated conference coordinator who can assist with the planning and arrangements. The conference coordinator will be of enormous help in planning. It would be idealistic if this person could be involved in the whole IOI project from the beginning to the end (Rogers, 1998, p. 142). It is useful to be in contact with the venue and its coordinator regularly. The venue should be informed continuously of all needed items and special requirements.

The organizer should specifically know what is taking place at the venue before the set-up. For example, whether there are any possibilities that the previous event might be delayed and what effects this would have on the set-ups (Allen, 2000, p. 133). It takes about a week to prepare the venue for the IOI event. Time is needed for the installation of computers, testing, building of the info-desk, rehearsals of the opening and closing ceremonies, organizing of the IOI material, decoration etc. These preliminary tasks demand many working hours and personnel.

3.5 Security

An official permission is usually needed when arranging an event. The number of attendees or technical complexity has an effect on how many permissions are required. The official permission can

come from local, state, province or federal authorities. The reasons why an event must comply with local legislation is to protect the organizer's legal interests, to guarantee safety of the event stakeholders, to ensure safety in financial investments and to go along with ethical issues. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 270.)

When all the required contracts, permits and licenses are prepared, it will ensure that the event will not suffer unnecessary interruptions (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 270). When the event is free from hazards and it is protected from future harm, it has a safe event environment. Mistakes in legal, ethical or risk management judgment may cause loss of property, life and money but, in addition, the event loses its good name as well. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 272.)

The organizer should not only check that own responsibilities has been taken care of but, in addition, the permissions which are the venue's responsibility must be checked. Insurance conditions should also be considered.

If the venue is public, doors might be held open all day and some curious visitors may also drop in. There is much expensive equipment which should be protected from outsiders. Therefore, it is worth thinking who will be allowed to enter, should certain doors be always locked, should the delegates always wear ID badges, how the personnel are informed about the security etc.

It is also useful to contact a local police department and ask how to prevent any criminal acts and how the police can help in the security issues. The police can, for example, increase police patrols on the IOI area. The organizer should also arrange the first-aid at the venue.

The organizer must remember that the contestants are not adults. That causes special concerns about what should be taken care of. For example, whether the city or the IOI area is safe enough to walk in the evenings, and how the participants are informed about the security issues. In addition, the organizer could emphasize that the participants must have travel insurance.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

- The location of the IOI should be determined at a very early stage.
- The location needs to have a venue, services, accommodation and leisure options and an international airport.

- Venue types for the IOI could be conference or convention centers, exhibition halls, civic halls, hotels, universities and colleges.
- The venue should consist of other spaces besides the competition hall.
- The entrance hall has an important impact in the IOI.
- Before booking a venue, make a site inspection.
- Check electrical supply of a venue.
- The venue should be booked 1-4 years before the event.
- A written contract should be specific and clear.
- If possible, use a conference coordinator's help in arrangements.
- The organizer should check whether there are any restrictions or regulations that should concern the event.

4 ACCOMMODATION

The IOI organizer is responsible for arranging accommodation for all participants. Usually the participants are accommodated in hotels. Hotel reservations need to be made at an early stage in the same way as the venue booking.

Hotels need to be located close to a venue. In small cities it might be necessary to book more than two hotels because of the small room capacity of available hotels. Usually the contestants are not accommodated in the same hotels as the team leaders and other participants. Participants are accommodated in double rooms but for extra charge others than contestants may have a single room. Therefore, there is a greater demand for double rooms than single rooms.

Group reservations are expensive and they reserve a significant capacity from the hotels. Therefore, it is important always to make a written contract. At the contract stage it is impossible to exactly estimate how many rooms are actually needed. Usually it is possible to lower the guaranteed number of booked rooms without charges if the numbers are reduced by a certain date. If the numbers are reduced after the certain date, it could become a very expensive mistake, because the hotel can then charge based on the original number of rooms contracted. (Allen, 2000, p. 18.) These deadline dates for cancellations and changes should be negotiated to be as close as possible to the final IOI registration date.

The organizer could also consider other accommodation alternatives like campus areas and hostels. Family accommodation for the contestants might be quite special and a cultural experience as well. Of course, it requires many volunteer families in the host country.

4.1 Rooming List and Check in Times

At the time the rooms are booked, the hotel advises when they require the rooming list, deposit, and final payments. The rooming list contains full names, the type of rooms, check-in and checkout dates, and special requests. Hotels usually want the rooming list 30 days in advance but after that it is possible to make some changes to the list if needed. The hotels need to be aware of possible late bookings after it receives the rooming list. The changes should be sent to the hotel, but it is not advisable to send a completely new roo-

ming list, unless all the changes and additional bookings are not clearly marked. (Webster, 1993, p. 136.)

It is important that the hotels are provided with an arrival schedule beforehand so that rooms can be assigned in order of flight arrival. Some participants could arrive very early in the morning, and therefore, the rooms might not be available yet. An international check-in time is 2 P.M. but the event organizer must do everything to make sure that the rooms are available as quickly as possible. If that is not possible there should be proper rooms for luggage so that while waiting for their rooms, participants can, for example take a walk in the area. (Allen, 2000, p. 114.) It is good service for the participants if the organizer gives contact information of hotels and tourist bureaus. This information is needed if participants want to book extra nights before or after the IOI event. The organizer can also agree with hotels about the price of extra nights for IOI participants.

4.2 Roommates

The basic rules planting roommates is that same nationality and same sexes are in the same room. If there is an odd number of males or females in the delegation, they can be accommodated with some other countries' participants. Remember to ask the sex of the participant in the registration form, and wishes about the possible roommate. Sometimes it is possible to have an extra bed in contestants' double room but that depends on the hotel. If it is necessary to put different nationalities in the same room, it is polite to find out if there are some disagreements, big differences etc. between these cultures and nationalities.

4.3 Special Wishes

Competition tasks are given to the leaders one day prior to the competition day. Therefore, the contestants should not leave from their hotels on the previous night. There should be a few guides as "guards" in the hallways to prevent that. Also phones should be switched off in order to prevent any external calls. Hotel staff needs to get information about all special arrangements before the event. It will be useful to deliver the program of the IOI week to the hotels so that they can plan their working hours and duties.

It is useful to have a bulletin board in the lobby where the participants can see current IOI news, announcements, changes etc. Usually hotels have the bulletin board available, otherwise the organizer

can bring its own board to the lobby. The IOI organizer can arrange meetings of committees in the hotel if the IOI venue does not provide such premises. The bulletin board should also contain instructions how to find these meeting rooms.

The IOI is an event where the majority of participants are teenagers. Therefore, the minibars in the rooms should be locked or empty, and pay TV channels should not be available. Hotels need to be clearly informed about these special requirements to make all necessary changes in the rooms.

The participants could also have their own special needs like smoking rooms or allergy rooms. They mark these needs usually on the registration form or they might contact the IOI secretary by email. These participants' wishes may sometimes be very extraordinary and the organizer should consider whether these wishes belong to its obligations as a host. The organizer should also be prepared for changes and mistakes. Sometimes the registration form can be incorrectly filled or the hotel can make mistakes in selecting roommates. Therefore, it is important that the organizer checks everything before the event and has a few extra rooms as a backup plan.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

- The hotels need to be located close to the venue.
- There is greater demand of double rooms than single rooms.
- Deadlines for cancellations and changes should be as close as possible to the final IOI pre-registration date.
- Rooming lists are required 30 days in advance.
- The arrival schedule of the IOI participants should be delivered to the hotels.
- Ask hotels to provide a proper luggage room if the participants arrive before their rooms are available.
- Make sure that the participants have taken care of their accommodation if they stay extra nights in the IOI host country.

5 DINING

The host of the IOI provides meals for the participants during the IOI week. Usually breakfasts are served at the hotels but lunches and dinners are provided at some other locations. Good alternatives for dining are cafeterias at the venue, schools, universities, restaurants and caterers. It is also possible to dine at the hotels if they are located quite close to the venue. Choosing a place for dining is also a matter of financial resources. In any case, the main issue is to provide diverse and healthy meals for the participants.

5.1 The Event Caterer Types

The organizer may consider different caterer companies to provide meals for the participants. *Event caterers* are usually one of three business types and each is defined by location.

The first caterer type is an *institutional caterer*, which is also known as an "in-house" or on-premise caterer. The institutional caterer has or has not permanent kitchens and offices at the event venue. The second caterer type is the *traditional off-premise caterer*. It prepares meals at a temporary location and it is responsible to provide the necessary equipment and services if the location or venue do not have them. The third caterer type is the *concessionaire* which may use a mobile kitchen or concession trailer to deliver its products. It may work in a fixed venue, a permanent or temporary concession area as well. These three catering types could have variations in their business operations. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 154–155.)

Whether the organizer will choose a *restaurant company* or caterer, which will plan, prepare and serve meals, it should have experience in providing dining to large groups. Tables, chairs and other standard equipment will be necessary to serve a quality meal. The organizer must ensure that the caterer or the restaurant meets appropriate style and needs of the event. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 156.)

For the caterer or to a restaurant it is important to have the approximate number of the expected participants at least two weeks before the event and final numbers two days in advance, so that they can make accurate food, drink and equipment orders (Shone, 2001, p. 155).

5.2 Buffets at Events

Buffets are popular and practical to arrange dining at events, but timing may cause problems in the schedule. Many people will politely queue at a buffet but still more than one direction or side of a buffet table should be available. It will take a person the average of 20 seconds to her or his plate. Multiplying that by the number of the participants, give a surprising result. That is why more than one buffet queue is needed for a large event. (Shone, 2001, p. 152.) Everyone should have time to enjoy his or her meals without rush. Major dining problems, for example long queues, might cause delays on the whole IOI program. Good planning is again needed.

The restaurant may be open to regular customers as well. This entails that the organizer should control dining, for example, with coupons. The personnel of the restaurant could also be informed that the IOI participants have ID badges. Of course, this means that the IOI participants should know that they have to wear badges to get their meals.

5.3 Menu Planning

After the dining places are decided, the next task is to start to plan a menu. It is essential that the restaurant company or the caterer is informed that the IOI event is an international event and the menu should be quite neutral. Special diets should be informed as well.

It is considered exotic that the host country serves own traditional food but there should be some international alternatives as well. To familiarize the participants with local cuisine, the organizer could arrange a welcome buffet dinner that includes samples of local food. The preparation of each course could be explained by personnel or with a pamphlet. (Allen, 2000, p. 169.)

Many cultures have their own special diets and rules for appropriate food. The host country should honour other cultures by serving food that everyone can eat. Alternatives guarantee that the participants can choose what they most prefer. Therefore, the menu should be checked but usually professional restaurant companies are capable of making delicious international menus.

The most common special *diets* are *vegetable diet*, *lactose intolerance diet*, *celiac disease diet*, *no pork-meat-diet* and *kosher diet*. In addition,

there are some allergies, for example fish allergy. People should be fully aware of what they are eating, and therefore, special diets must be marked clearly in English. People are more and more concerned with good health, and they are willing to choose nutritious foods. They are very interested in what ingredients are used in meals. Therefore, the restaurants or the caterers could make available the list of ingredients in a menu or signs which are posted near the food items. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 170–171.)

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

- Dining could be arranged in cafeterias, schools, universities and restaurants or the organizer can hire a caterer.
- Make sure that the caterer or other dining company can provide healthy and delicious food for over 500 people without any major delays.
- The menu of the IOI week should consist of different alternatives which guarantee that the participants can choose what they most prefer.
- It would be polite if there were lists of ingredients available and clear instructions for those who have some special diets.

6 TRANSPORTATION

There are two main transportation needs in the IOI event. One need is transportation from and to the main borders of the host country and the other is transportation of excursions. Transportation by bus is usually the most practical way to arrange it.

To make the transportation successful, the participants have to inform their travel plans in time. Therefore, every participating delegation should be instructed to give their specific travel plans to the IOI organizer. E-mail has proven to be the best way to communicate between the IOI organization and the delegations.

6.1 Transportation on the Arrival and the Departure Days

The transportation on the arrival day deserves careful planning. Most of the participants arrive by plane but some participants from the nearest countries might have another ways to travel. Planes arrive during the whole day or some delegations might even arrive a day before or after the official arrival day. The timetable of the transportation is therefore quite hard to plan because it is difficult to arrange direct transfer from the plane onto the bus for everyone. Unfortunately some participants have to wait a little longer before the bus is loaded and ready to leave. The timetables should not be too specific because of possible delays on flights, or problems of getting luggage. Therefore, it is important that the bus wait for a while or there is another transportation alternative if something unexpected happens. There could also be extra seats in every bus just in case.

The participants should get all the necessary information about the transportation before the IOI event. The organizer must inform when and where their buses leave, how long the trip is, whether someone will welcome them at the airport. The best and nicest way is to have IOI personnel, for example guides, at the airport to welcome and guide the IOI participants. The guides should wear the IOI T-shirts and have IOI signs so that they are easily recognized in the crowd. The guides help the participants to find the busses. They also make sure that no one is missing before leaving towards the IOI venue. The organizer can consider making public announcements about the transportation at the airport. It is also useful to inform the

personnel of the airport about the IOI event and the transportation if participant has not found the IOI guide or the bus.

In transit the guides can tell participants about how to register, how to check-in to hotels, where they can change money, about the cultural issues in the host country etc.

With such large number of the participants, it is almost certain that some of the luggage probably disappear or arrive later. To handle this problem, the IOI organizer could plan how it can help the participants to find their luggage. For example, the organizer could consult the local airport and have in advance its service number.

On the departure day the transportation is usually easier than at the arrival day because the airport is more familiar to the participants. The participants do not necessarily need guides but it is still important that the IOI personnel make sure that everyone is in the right bus towards the right airport or some other destination. A timetable of departure transportation should be available at least a couple of days before leaving and every participant should get the information about it.

When transferring the participants from and to the airport it might be more enjoyable if the bus takes a route which has a beautiful view, even if it takes a little longer time to get to the hotels or to the airport (Allen, 2000, p. 100).

6.2 Transportation of Excursions

The IOI contains also leisure days when excursions are arranged to interesting places and tourist attractions. The transportation to these excursions needs good planning, similar to that of the arrival and departure days.

Bus parking should be checked, for example, whether there are any obstacles such as ceiling heights, or whether it is even possible to drop the participants directly to the destination (Allen, 2000, p. 77). Rush-hour traffic and other events which will occur at the same time should be taken into consideration as well (Allen, 2000, p. 82).

When planning the timetable, it is advisable that buses are at pick-up points at least fifteen minutes in advance. The organizer should think what the maximum time is to wait for participants who may

be late. It is not very wise wait too long for some people while others are ready to go. Delays always have an effect on the other program as well. Guide's duties at the excursion is to count the participants and to make sure that everyone comes back to the IOI area from the excursion.

6.3 Booking the Transportation

The buses should be booked at least two or three months before the event. The organizer should know how many buses the IOI event requires and when the busses are needed. Hired busses typically range 18 to 52 seats. On a long journey, the bus could be equipped with TV and VCR. The transfer time can then be partly used to see a movie or to listen to somebody telling about the landscapes etc. (Allen, 2000, p. 76.)

The costs of renting a bus vary a lot. It is useful to know about the charging practises of the renting firms. For example, a customer might be billed for the buses from the moment they leave their garages, not from the moment when they arrive at pick-up point, until they return to the garages. It should also be very clear whether the buses need to stay at the destination for certain hours or are there only one-way transfers. Additional hours could be booked just in case. (Allen, 2000, p. 77.)

The renting company should have information about the destinations of transportation, routes, timetables and stops. The organizer may ask for English-speaking drivers if that is necessary. A few days before the IOI event it is worthwhile to check from the renting company that everything is in order and taken care of.

On some occasions, for example the transportation to or from the airport, it might be a better solution to book a minibus if only few participants arrive or depart at a certain time. It is also worth thinking of booking an own vehicle for the IOI week for unexpected or a few persons' transportation needs. There should always be back-up plans for the transportation.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6

- The timetables should be planned flexibly if any delays in flights occur. Other transportation alternatives should also be available.
- The organizer has to inform the participants before the IOI event how the transportation is arranged.

- The best way to get everyone into the right bus is to have IOI personnel at the airport to welcome and guide the IOI participants.
- While travelling by bus to the IOI hotels, guides can share information about the registration practices, hotels, the culture of the host country etc.
- The timetables of the departure transportation should be available at least one day before leaving.
- The costs of vehicle renting vary a lot. Make sure what the costs include.
- It might be a good idea to have an own vehicle, for example a minibus, for the IOI week if some unexpected transportation needs occur.

7 THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROGRAM

The social and cultural program is an integral part of the IOI event. The organizer has an opportunity to show its creativity and make the IOI event memorable. The social and cultural program allows delegates to mix informally and network but also to experience something of the host country. The local convention bureau, conference offices, travel agencies etc. are invaluable assistance in planning the social and cultural program (Roger, 1998, p. 155).

7.1 Destinations of Excursions

The IOI program includes two leisure days with excursions. Destinations for excursions can be, for example tourist attractions, historical and cultural places, nature, international companies etc. The excursions provide unforgettable experiences for the participants. Nature usually offers many possibilities and every country has its own specialties. Culture has a great role in the social and cultural program. People usually want to experience the culture in one way or another. Historical and cultural places are common attractions when the purpose is to show the host's own culture and history. Visits to different places do not always reach satisfaction. It might be more enjoyable if there are also possibilities to take part in some activities.

Examples of destinations of the excursions.

Tourist attractions: buildings, monuments, amusement parks, zoos, markets, stadiums	Historical and cultural places: museums, churches, buildings, castles, farms, handicraft workshops, villages
Nature: seaside resorts, sea coast, lakes, forests, mountains, parks, zoos, fishing, riding, hikes, walks	Companies: computer companies, factories, science societies

The organizer can also ask about the participants' wishes for excursions. Some leaders and even contestants participate in the IOI many times and they may have good ideas for the excursions. The organizer can ask about these wishes in the previous IOI event.

In addition two leisure days, there is the possibility to make smaller excursions and arrange social program in the evenings. Usually the contestants have different interests than other participants. Therefore, it could be advisable to plan some of the social program separately for the contestants and for other participants.

Making a cocktail party is a good way to break the ice and get the participants to know each other. It helps the participants to relax and get into the event mood. (Webster, 1993, p. 46.) Leaders, guests and members of committees usually have a get-together banquet, dinners and some own excursions. The contestants might prefer discos, movies, amusement parks, plays and sport possibilities. The social and cultural program is successful if it is memorable, people have fun and they get to know each other better.

7.2 Planning the Social and Cultural Program

Planning of the social and cultural program is usually limited by time. Every country has marvellous tourist attractions but visiting them all or at least the greatest ones is not always possible. Destinations of the excursions should not be very far away from the venue because sitting in a bus for several hours is not comfortable, and it might be too demanding for the participants. Most of the participants, especially from the other side of the world feel that coming to the host country and participating to the competition in itself is already quite exotic. Therefore, visiting local attractions may be better solution than travelling by bus the whole day. In addition, the local attractions may be so near that it is possible and maybe more interesting to walk a few kilometres than travel by bus.

Every delegation has a personal guide and it is also possible to plan excursions with smaller groups. For example, if the destination of excursion is to visit a museum or a sightseeing place, it could be better to go there in groups of few delegations.

Time is also important between excursions and other program. For example, the participants may want to freshen up, rest or change clothes in their hotel before going to a dinner or a meeting etc. The participants may also want to spend their spare time on they own, for example buying souvenirs and spending time with other participants. Therefore, it is not necessary to arrange too many excursions during the IOI week. When planning the timetable the organizer

should take into consideration the cultural differences of time. In other countries people are very punctual but in others people think timetables are not so specific.

Notification of the social and cultural program should be comprehensive. Everybody should know when and where the excursion or a special occasion starts. The organizer has to remember to announce if the program requires some special clothes or if it is not recommended for persons who have health problems etc.

The weather can have an impact on every event almost anywhere. Especially when it is not supposed to rain, it will. It is better to be well prepared for weather changes than to be forced to cancel excursions. If any delays or problems occur, there should be program to lighten the atmosphere. Second plans for just in case should be planned.

The organizer needs to arrange dining during the excursion. Probably the easiest way is to make a reservation to a restaurant but it is possible to give everybody a lunch box or a lunch coupon as well. Quite exotic would be if the participants had an opportunity to prepare their own food, for example in the nature excursion.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7

- Destinations for the excursions can be, for example tourist attractions, historical and cultural places, nature, international companies etc.
- Nature usually offers many different possibilities for excursions and it is a good counterbalance to the competition.
- The culture has a great role in the social and cultural program.
- The contestants and other participants may have some separate program.
- The destinations should not be very far away from the venue. Local attractions could be as good as any others.
- The IOI week should not include too much social program. The participants want to spend some time on their own.
- The participants must get information of the social program and excursions in advance.
- Dining should be arranged when excursions take several hours.

8 OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES

Every host country can design the opening and closing ceremonies as they wish and it would be gratifying if there were some characteristic ways to arrange them. The ceremonies contain official parts but also entertainment. Planning of the opening and closing ceremonies should begin a few months in advance. Planning takes time and the organizer needs to be in contact with several parties.

8.1 The Requirements of the Place of the Ceremonies

The first issue is where to have the opening and closing ceremony. If the ceremonies are not held at the IOI venue, there are many other options, for example theatres, culture houses, restaurants, city halls etc. The location should still be quite close to the hotels and the IOI venue. The organizer should remember that the participants usually wear suits and evening dresses preventing the place being too far from the hotels without transportation.

Wherever the ceremonies are, the event organizer should check that the place fulfils following demands. First, there should not be any obstacles that prevent the participants to see the stage (Allen, 2000, p. 133). Secondly, the stage has to be large enough to give medals easily to winners, and to ensure that the performers have enough space for their show. The stage should be tested to confirm how many people it can accommodate. Also the height and the position of the stage has to be suitable for the audience. And third issue is that there has to be suitable backstage area where the performers can change their clothes, wait for their turn and concentrate on their performances (Allen, 2000, p. 136). In addition, the place must provide screens and projections if the ceremonies include audio-visual presentations (Allen, 2000, p. 138).

The event organizer should find out how much set-up time each supplier needs. For example, time is needed for lighting, audio-visual and decor set-ups. These set-up times should also be in the contract. (Allen, 2000, p. 116.) Rehearsal time has to be requested because performers, speakers, award ceremony and video presentations require a review. Everything that happens on stage needs to be planned and finely choreographed. Access on and off the stage has

to be planned as well. Usually it could be wise to have two accesses on the stage to avoid queues. (Allen, 2000, p. 139.)

8.2 Performers and Program Planning

Every community has people whose main interests include performing. The term amateur refers to a person who has not yet begun to charge for his/her services. With little work it is possible to find lots of entertainment at low cost. In the case of amateur performers, the organizer might have to supply them with necessary elements so that wanted level of style can be achieved. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 214.)

Professional performers can be hired by contacting the performer, his/her manager, through agents or by holding an audition. The organizer can save in costs by block booking the performers with other event organizers. The block booking means that other organizations in the event city or area are also able to use the services of the performer. In this case the performer has many shows in the same area and in a short period of time. This can save the event organizers costs as much as 50 percent. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 214-215.)

The event organizer is ultimately responsible for the performance whether the performer is an amateur or a professional. The organizer must use time and resources to ensure successful performance. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 215.) The organizer should also see that plans follow the rules and regulations, such as safety and fire regulations. (Allen, 2000, p. 115.)

The performers, musicians and speakers should follow a detailed schedule during the ceremony. The schedule includes all that is occurring on the stage, the minute-by-minute action, what is happening on the screen, the lighting and the audio. (Allen, 2000, p. 207.)

The organizer has to inform performers precisely when and where they must be on the ceremony day. The IOI organization contains one or two persons whose duty is to coordinate the program of the ceremonies and make the contracts with the performers. Back-up plans should also be done because it is possible that the performer becomes ill or is delayed.

8.3 The Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony day is after the arrival day. The ceremony's idea is to open the IOI competition officially. At the beginning of the opening ceremony there are speeches by sponsors, representatives of the Ministry of Education or some other national department and members of the IOI organization and committees or ex-contestants. After the speeches or between them there can be cultural music, dance and other entertainment performances. Live entertainment enhances any event as a wonderful icebreaker. The ceremony can be lead by one or two announcers. Guests and performers can also come to the stage without any special welcoming.

The timetable of the opening ceremony should be planned. It would be polite if the speakers were aware of the time which is reserved for their speech. The speakers who are not so familiar to the IOI should be informed about the nature of the IOI so that they can prepare their speech which is connected to the theme. The duration of the opening ceremony could be from one to two hours. To avoid too heavy program the entertainment and official speeches should be in good balance.

8.4 The Closing Ceremony

At the closing ceremony the speeches could be given by the same parties as at the opening ceremony. Usually there are speeches of thanks, summary of the IOI and finally the host country hands over its responsibilities to the next host. The IFIP greeting belongs to the closing ceremony as well. Entertainment performances have also been very common and wanted.

The highlight of the closing ceremony is the award ceremony. At the IOI the bronze medal is given to one quarter, silver medal for one sixth, and gold medal for one twelfth of all contestants (Verhoeff, 1995). This demands a lot of planning of the award ceremony. At one time there could be over thirty contestants on the stage. To make it successful the organizer should rehearse with the announcers and with persons who will assist in handing out the medals and other prizes. The award ceremony is important to the contestants, and therefore, the announcers should present clear and simple instructions of how to get the medal. Also the names of the winners could be seen on the screen so that there would be no misunderstandings about pronouncing the names. It is important that the

announcers know the names of winners in advance in order to practise the pronunciation of the names and countries correctly.

After the award ceremony everybody is quite thrilled and speeches requiring concentration. A good way to end the closing ceremony is to show pictures of the IOI week or a video. The IOI is a very special event because people get new friends, they learn about different cultures and have good experiences and memories. Every contestant should feel at the closing ceremony that he or she has achieved something special with or without the prize medal.

After the closing ceremony there is usually dinner and the participants can spend time together. The organizer can arrange program for the dinner but background music can also be enough. The next day is the departure day when the first transportation to the airport may be very early, therefore, the dinner should not be planned to end very late.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 8

- The opening and closing ceremonies can be arranged also in some other place than where the competition is.
- The organizer should check that there are not any obstacles that will block views, the stage is large enough and that there is a backstage for the performers. Set-up and rehearsal time should also be arranged.
- The performers could be amateurs or professionals but the event organizer is ultimately responsible for the final performance.
- A detailed schedule of the ceremonies need to be prepared including all events on the stage.
- The ceremonies include speeches, cultural music, dance and other entertainment performances.
- The closing ceremony should be a warm occasion so that participants can feel that they have achieved something special.

9 THE GUIDES

Guides have an important role in the IOI event. In the past IOI events there has been a tradition that every delegation has its own guide during the IOI week. The contestants usually need more guidance than leaders, guests and other participants. The guides' duty is to introduce the environment to the delegation, for example the venue, the hotel, the cafeteria, the city etc. They make sure that everybody is in the right place at the right time. They attend the excursions and spend leisure time with the participants, and in practice they take care of the contestants. The guides also forward messages and informations to the delegation, if there appear any changes in the program.

9.1 Who are the Guides?

In the past IOI events there have been delegates from over 70 countries. Therefore, it is necessary to have the same number of guides, and also few extra guides. The guides are the ones in the IOI organization who spend the most time with the IOI participants. Therefore, they have to be motivated to make sure that they give their best contribution. The guides can be volunteers or hired. The organizer has to consider different options to find them.

Many events need volunteers. Students from schools, colleges, universities and other institutions are required to complete a minimum number of community service hours to graduate. Schools may also have student organizations which may be willing to participate in the events. Students are usually motivated by a cause, such as money, credit for their studies, gathering experience etc. The organizer has to know the needs of the students and their organization before contacting them. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 133.)

All volunteers need to be comprehensively trained. The organizer could consider publishing a handbook that summarizes the policies and procedures of the event. The training itself can be arranged in different ways but the goal is that the volunteers must learn and use the skills the organizer requires. The organizer can test the skills of the guides through a written exam, observation or a combination of both. During the event, volunteers need team leaders who oversee their work and provide help if any problems appear. Volunteers

need also motivation during the whole event. Rewarding them before, during and after the event can develop a loyal and strong volunteer team. (Goldblatt, 1997, p. 133-134.)

The guides should know what their duties and responsibilities are. They have to get instructions on how to handle different situations, for example if someone is lost, ill or has lost her or his property. It is also important that the guides know their rights and when they can refuse to do something. The guides should always be reached one way or another and they should have someone to turn to if they do not know what to do. The guides are usually students, and the organizer must remember it when considering their responsibilities.

9.2 Requirements of the Guides

Every guide is an individual and a special person. Nevertheless, all guides must have certain common characteristics. The guide is a very multifaceted person. The competent guide knows all the necessary information. She/he is a good performer and has interaction skills. The most important feature is to get along with different kinds of people. (Kalland, 1995, p. 56.) The IOI is an international event, and therefore, guides should know about different cultures and cultural habits. It is also important that the guides know their own culture and how other people feel about it.

The most important skills in an international event are the communication skills. When a guide thinks of her/himself in another person's position, she/he can imagine what kind of communication is needed and how important the guide is (Widén, 1995, p. 62). Also the significance of language skills should not be forgotten. Without them there are no possibilities to communicate. All contestants cannot speak English although it is an official language of the event. Therefore, the organizer could try to hire guides who speak other languages as well. For example, Russian and Spanish are very useful languages at the IOI.

Short and useful tips for guides could be for instance: smile, happiness is contagious, dress appropriately, be patient, be prepared that things can go wrong, be friendly, be polite, be calm and positive and learn the names of the members in your group (Webster, 1993, p. 172).

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 9

- The guides can be volunteers or hired.
- Many students are required to complete some service mission and they may be willing to work in the IOI event.
- All guides must be trained.
- The most important feature of the guide is to come along with different kind of people.
- The most important skills in an international event are the communication skills.

10 THE REGISTRATION

The participants need to register when they arrive to the IOI host country. Usually the registration is at the venue on the arrival day or on the second day. The IOI personnel check that all participants who have pre-registered before the IOI event have arrived. The age of contestants are checked to make sure that IOI regulations have been followed. Every IOI delegation has to pay a registration fee before the IOI or at the IOI. At the registration the personnel should collect the payments if necessary. It is also been a routine that participants' flight tickets are confirmed by the IOI personnel. Therefore, the personnel must collect the tickets at the registration.

The participants will get ID badges which are marked by the person's name, nationality and status. The participants might be politely required to wear their badges, though normally most participants are happy to wear them. The participants also get material at the registration desk such as the IOI program, guidebooks, pack bags, T-shirts etc.

Quick and fluent registration can be achieved by packing program, site maps, badges etc. into bags in advance. This will make the registration process quicker, and it saves a lot of space on the desk. (Shone, 2001, p. 223.)

10.1 Planning the Registration

Usually the best place for the registration is in the lobby of the venue. Proper signs with the event's name or logo and appropriate decor make the lobby comfortable and recognizable for the participants. (Goldbaltt, 1997, p. 73). To avoid big backlogs it is worthwhile to give instructions about the registration, for example during the transportation from the airport. The registration is easier if participants do not come all at the same time. Usually the transportation from the airport comes at intervals of couple of hours. It is worth trying to get the groups in the same transportation to register before the next groups arrive.

The registration has to be well elaborated. A registration form should be clear and easy to fill in. For example, if some information

has not been given at the registration there should be specific areas where to put that information. The form could be pre-filled in as much as possible. For example, every delegation could have their own pre-filled form which consists of names of the delegation, dates of birth of contestants, fee payments etc. The pre-filled forms save time and the registration will be smoother. All filled forms should be retained during the whole IOI week.

10.2 Confirmation of the Flight Tickets

The IOI organizer confirms return flight tickets. The tickets can be easily collected at the registration. Proper safety box is needed for the valuable tickets.

The flight tickets are confirmed at various airline companies. The confirmations can be easily made by telephone, and it helps work if the telephone numbers of the airline companies are known before the IOI event. The tickets should be first sorted by airline companies to make this phone process quicker. It takes time to confirm all the flight tickets of the participants, and therefore, at least three people should be working with this.

When the tickets are confirmed, the organizer takes care that participants get their tickets back, for example at the info desk. It is possible to deliver the tickets to their hotel as well, but most important is that everyone gets his or her tickets back. A good way to prevent misunderstandings is to require a signature from the participant when the flight ticket is handed over.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 10

- At the registration the contestants' age has to be checked, registration fee has to be paid if it was not paid in advance and the departure flight tickets will be collected for the confirmation process.
- The best place for the registration is at the lobby of the venue. Make sure that there are proper signs of the IOI event.
- To avoid big backlogs try to get the participants to come in little groups and give instructions of the registration before the event.
- A carefully designed registration form makes sure that every detail is checked and unclear things can be easily solved later.
- The confirmation of departure flight tickets can be easily made by telephone. Keep the flight tickets in a proper safety box.

11 THE IOI INFO DESK

The info desk is very essential at the IOI. The info desk is a place where the participants can always find the IOI personnel.

The info desk should be at the venue in such place where everyone can easily find it. Duties of the info desk are very varying. The personnel of the info should know almost everything about everything, and what they do not know they have to find that information. If the whole IOI event has been planned well and the participants get necessary information in time there will not be much difficult cases at the info desk.

Opening hours of the info desk might be from early in the morning till evening, for example from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. The info desk contains office equipment like files, pencils, paper, computer, printer, telephone etc. The info desk provides supplies of brochures of local information, the IOI material, maps, shopping tips, list of restaurants and other useful material.

At least two persons should always be available at the info desk at a time. They should know quite much about the IOI, the IOI program, the IOI organizers and also language skills are important. Before the event the organizer should plan how the personnel works at the info desk. Everybody should have common rules how to handle different situations and problems. For example, how to finish unfinished work if someone's shift is over and how to inform the next person who begins her/his shift at the info desk. The biggest problem may usually be just the lack of information between the info personnel, and sometimes it may cause chaotic situations.

Good service is one part which forms the image of the IOI. Customer service has a great role, and the organizer should not underestimate it in the event arrangements. The info personnel should be polite and very helpful. Every problem should be solved as soon as possible, and the participants should really feel that they are taken care of during the IOI week. There may be very busy hours at the info desk but the personnel should tolerate that stress. The personnel must remember that the participants are customers, and the info personnel represents the whole IOI host country.

11.1 Communication among the IOI Personnel

To make sure that the info desk really has the right answers for every tricky question it requires enormous efforts from every IOI person who is involved in organizing the event. If there are any changes in the program, the info personnel needs to get this information immediately. The info desk can also have responsibility to inform all the changes to the participants and to the personnel if that is possible. Once again if the info desk's personnel cannot get the information, they cannot deliver that forward. If it is not planned how to handle new information between the IOI personnel, the information might get lost at some point.

To get and give information needs a good communication system. Every event can have different communication depending on the nature of the event. According to David Watt (1998) there are many ways to communicate and each organization needs to consider the best alternative for it.

The communication may have many objectives like to send and receive messages, ensure understanding, achieve correct action and to exchange information. There are also several methods of communication:

- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication (body gestures etc.)
- Written communication
- Visual communication (videos etc.)
- Electronic communication (computers, mobile phones etc.)

Whatever method is chosen, it should be efficient and flexible to respond to changes. Good communication requires that everyone involved knows basic facts about the event and its organization. The basics are as follows:

- The overall structure of the organization
- Who is in charge
- Who has responsibility for what
- What communication methods are to be used
- How communication is accomplished
- Who has to do what, when and how.

Effective communication systems must be established before the event between all relevant groups. Communication methods should be simple and clear and suitable for the event. (Watt, 1998, p. 39-41.) In event organizations, communication does not only travel up and down in the hierarchy, but also from side to side. This guarantees

fast spread of information as the information does not have to get up to managers first and then back down again. (Shone, 2001, p. 229.)

The organizer must install the practical means of communication (email, mobile phones etc.) and make them available to all who need to use them at the event. (Watt, 1998, p. 39–41.)

11.2 The IOI Frequently Asked Questions

Usually the participants need help of the info desk if they cannot find a certain place or a person, or if they have lost her/his ID badge or other property, or they need some papers which someone has left for them etc. In addition, the IOI info desk's personnel should be aware of details of the competition rules, environment and habits. Especially the team leaders and the committee members may ask questions which can be quite difficult to answer if the personnel has not studied all relevant information. For example, during the IOI week there are many meetings, and it is essential to know who are participating in what and when.

In the last few IOI days the participants are preparing for the return journey. The transportation timetable should be available at least two days before the departure day, if it has not been published already before the IOI event. The participants may want to get information about other transportation possibilities, and therefore, the info personnel should be prepared to give information about public transportations and taxi companies. Sometimes it is necessary to help in arranging new flight tickets or hotel bookings for extra nights.

Also in the last few days the participants may want to buy the IOI products which have been left over. They are willing to pay for T-shirts and backpacks but posters, stickers, pens and badges are usually given for free. Prices for the T-shirts and backpacks could be in US dollars, but other currency could be accepted as much as possible. The info desk needs to have a cash register or another register system.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 11

- Make sure that the info desk is equipped with files, pencils, paper, computer, printer, telephone, the IOI material, maps, shopping tips etc.

- The IOI info personnel should have common rules as how to handle different situations and problems.
- The communication between the personnel could be verbal, non-verbal, written or electronic.
- Usually the info desk helps the participants, it handles office duties, gives information of location and at the end of the IOI week there is a possibility for the delegations to buy IOI material.

12 THE IOI PRODUCTS

The past IOI event organizers have produced various products for the IOI participants. Every host country can use their imagination about the products, but usually certain products have not changed in the past IOI events.

The organizer has to design their IOI logo which is very visible in every IOI product. It used to be common to design for simple logos with single colours, but now multicoloured and often multi-image logos are used as well. A good logo reflects the event, passes on what it is about, is attractive and eye-catching, portrays the image of the event and gives relevant message. (Watt, 1998, p. 68.)

12.1 The IOI Material

The IOI material consists at least of the IOI brochure and the IOI program of events. In addition, the organizer can make, for example posters and postcards.

The IOI brochure is a booklet; size A4 which contains some facts about the host country and the host city, messages from the president or the minister of the host country and from the main sponsor. It also includes a short presentation about the history of the IOI and an introduction of the present IOI. The IOI's program and participating countries can be listed as well. The sponsors and organizers are also introduced. The brochure can be filled with photos, graphics and creativity.

The IOI program of events is a sort of guide for the participants. It is a booklet with very useful information for the whole IOI week, and its index may and can vary from year to year depending on the host country. Usually it consists still of the basic items like a message of the present chairman of the IOI, contact information of the organizers and important sectors like first-aid, police, hotels, transportation etc. The program of events could also include a specific program and schedule for each day, menus, maps of the location, a short introduction of guides and newsletter reporters and tourist information. The booklet could be size A5 to ensure that it is easy to put, for example into a pocket or a backpacks.

The newsletter belongs also to the IOI materials. The newsletters are published every day during the event. It consists of the news of the participants, the host country, culture, the excursions, the organizers and everything current that takes place during the IOI week. The organizer can hire students of the public relations to make the newsletters.

12.2 T-shirts

The participants will get two T-shirts when arriving to the host country. Wearing T-shirts helps the participants to identify each other during the IOI event at the city and in excursions. The organizer should ask for the size of the participants at the official pre-registration form. Clarifying the sizes could be needed because some countries may have different size standards than in the host country. The IOI personnel should also wear T-shirts during the IOI week, and their shirts could be in different colors than the participants'. The organizer should have extra T-shirts if participant needs to change the size or wants to buy extra T-shirts.

12.3 Backpacks, Badges, Pens, Pins

Every participant will also get an IOI backpack. The packs should be comfortable to wear, long lasting and big enough. The backpacks can be filled with all the material and the IOI products earlier given to the participants. This makes registration day easier to organize and the products do not require too much space at the registration desk.

The name, nationality and the status of the participant are marked on the ID badges. It can be worn around the neck to make it visible.

Other IOI products can be pens, pins, envelopes, post cards, writing paper, key holder etc. The organizer can provide many products which may be useful and wanted.

12.4 Prizes

The IOI winners will get the medals and other valuable prizes at the closing ceremony. The organizer has to plan a picture or a figure of the medal and order the medals from professionals. The bronze medal is given to one quarter, silver medal for one sixth, and

gold medal for one twelfth of all contestants. In addition the winners will get valuable prizes from the sponsors or other supporters. These prizes are usually some electronic equipment.

It is also goodwill to give a commemorative medal to all the participants or another prize for their great effort. A commemorative medal should be different from the bronze, silver and gold medals. Every participant also gets a certificate of participating in the IOI.

13 MEDIA

The IOI event creates interest among the press in different ways in different countries. It is important to have publicity for the IOI because it is a very special event. Publicity also helps to get financial support in the future from sponsors and governments. Therefore, the IOI organization must make plans for the publicity.

The organizer must prepare the plan of the publicity about a year before the IOI. The plan should be revised about six months before the event. The plan consists of a timetable of when different notifications should be ready and which channels are to be used. The IOI organization could have a media manager whose responsibilities are contacts with the media, writing and planning the press releases, the press conference, etc. (H. Ylilehto, interviewed 2002, September 13.)

An efficient way to inform the media is to make a *press release*. The press release tells about the backgrounds of the IOI and what kind of Olympiad is held in that specific year. The first press release could be sent a couple of weeks in advance, next could be sent in the beginning of IOI and third in the end with the results of the competition. (H. Ylilehto, interviewed 2002, September 13.) The press release should start with news in the first two lines. The press release is brief, no more than two sheets of A4, clear, interesting and succinct. (Watt, 1998, p. 70.)

The IOI organization can arrange a *press conference* on the days of opening and closing ceremonies. Invitations for the press conference should be sent at least two weeks in advance. Local and national newspapers, international press agencies, correspondents, TV- and radio companies could be representatives of the media. The representatives of the IOI organization should be present in the press conference, for example the chairman, the project manager, the scientific manager and the representative of the national government. Various material of the IOI should also be available. The organizer could provide for reporters a pressroom with the IOI material during the whole IOI week. The representatives of the IOI organization should be available in the pressroom at all times. (H. Ylilehto, interviewed 2002, September 13.)

When inviting the media to the event, the organizer has to know how and when the media attends the event. For example, the reporters could need an area to park their film crew's truck, or places for their cables, etc. Sometimes the event organizer may even provide some food or beverage to the reporters. Media people are very busy and the organizer should respect their time. Media has many events to choose from, so it is important that the event organizer has built working relationships. (Allen, 2000, p. 158-159.)

Sometimes interests of the media may prove to be too low. One reason for that could be that an ordinary citizen has difficulties to understand the IOI. It is hard to explain what the contestants are competing, and how to tell about the event to the public in an interesting way. There are some tips how to do it, and they have been used successfully quite often. If the IOI is held in a small city, the local press is more interested because the big event arouses attention. The contestants are also easily identified with their IOI T-shirts in the small city. Reporters may try to explain the IOI by giving an example of one of the IOI competition tasks. That might help people to understand the skills and demands from the contestants. To make the IOI interesting, the media could also interview foreign contestants and try to get different characterizations. Usually there are only a few girls participating in the IOI and they catch the reporters' attention. If the host country's own contestants are successful in the competition, the national press may be very enthusiastic to have interviews. (H. Ylilehto, interviewed 2002, September 13.)

The team leaders should also train the contestants to handle the press and publicity. Sometimes the publicity may cause pressure to the contestants. The team leaders should take care, that before the competition there is time for students to concentrate.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 13

- The plan of publicity must be made one year in advance.
- The press releases are published before and during the IOI.
- The press conference can be held on the opening and closing days.
- The pressroom for reporters is useful.
- The media and public might be interested in characterizations, an example of a competition task and the success of the host country's contestants.

14 IMPROVEMENT IDEAS FOR THE IOI

The IOI event develops every year according to the proposals of the International Committee and the Scientific Committee.

Many people may have good ideas to improve the IOI event and those ideas are very valuable for the IOI. In this chapter I will make some proposals to improve the way to organize the IOI event in the future. Every IOI organizer may consider whether to use these ideas.

14.1 The Feedback Form

It is very essential that the IOI organization knows what the participants feel about the whole IOI event. Therefore, it is practical to make a feedback form which is given to the participants before the end of the IOI event. The feedback form could consist of questions about the general arrangements. The form should be easy to fill in, for example it may consist of different answer alternatives which the participant can choose by marking. In the following list there are some examples of the topics of the questions

- Welcoming at the airport
- The transportation from the airport
- The quality of the accommodation
- The dining arrangements at the IOI
- The competition area
- The venue of the IOI
- Relationships with the guides
- Opinions about the cultural and social program
- Opinions about the IOI personnel
- Opinions about the ceremonies
- Opinions about the whole IOI week.

The organizer has to make sure that the form consists of well defined questions in order get the answers wanted and receive useful information to develop the IOI event. The form must be clear and have enough space for the additional comments and opinions of the participants. The form could be filled in anonymously if someone prefers so.

The feedback form should be given to all participants. To guarantee the return of as many filled forms as possible, the organizer might

want to arrange a drawing of lots among the participants returning the feedback form. The prize can be some souvenir from the host country, some electrical equipment etc. Return boxes should be placed to more than one place, for example at the info desk, at the hotel and at the general and other meeting rooms.

When the IOI event is over the answers should be summarized. The feedback result should be presented to other IOI countries. The results can be available, for example, at the official Internet site of the IOI. The future host countries can learn from of those results. For example, they can take into consideration the participants' opinions, avoid mistakes, which may have occurred in other IOI events, or they can learn about good planning systems and valuable tips.

14.2 Feedback Meeting

Another feedback method is a feedback meeting. The feedback meeting should be arranged in the end of the IOI event. It could be, for example one part of the General assembly. The meeting should be open and everyone can present her/his personal opinions of the IOI. The chairman can lead the discussion by presenting certain topics, for example the competition environment, the meeting arrangements, the cultural program etc. If the IOI organization has made any new arrangements they can also ask for the opinions of these solutions. In the feedback meeting the organizer has a chance to give answers to presented questions and tell about the solutions to possible complaints as well. The idea of the feedback meeting is to get feedback and constructive criticism. It is rewarding to get positive feedback but it is also good to think about what the reasons of possible problems were. It is clear that the future host countries are very interested in listening and participating in these discussions.

In the feedback meeting the organizer can provide to the next host a list of contact people of different nations. The list is an enormous help for the next organizer when it is time to send invitations to the next participating countries. It is also polite to give contact information of the host country's IOI organization to the next host. There should always be the possibility to ask for help from the previous IOI organization.

14.3 Seminar of the Representatives of Governments

Governments are usually among the most important financial sources of the IOI. Without the support of the governments the

IOI event would not be as big as it is nowadays. It has always been a little difficult to get financial resources to the IOI, and therefore, the IOI organization should have good relations to governments.

The IOI organization could invite representatives from the Ministry of the Education of different nations to the IOI event as guests. Representatives could also be from different institutions depending on the nations' government system. The idea is that representatives have a status as a guest and pay the respective fee, and therefore, they can participate in the IOI event as guests. During the IOI event there will be seminars for the representatives of governments. These seminars can be arranged by the International IOI organization.

The purpose of these seminars is to give detailed information about the IOI, its benefits, its importance and governments' importance to the competition. The governments should know that the IOI is depending on their support. There are also many countries which like to be involved in this IOI activity but they do not have financial resources to do that. Therefore, it is important to give information to the governments to ensure that new countries will have easier access to take part in the IOI and act as a host by support of governments.

The governments of the IOI countries will benefit from these seminars because the IOI supports the education systems in the countries encouraging the students in these countries to look at the careers in the area of information and communication technologies. The students will also benefit because they get valuable international professional experience at an early age.

The IOI will benefit because the negotiations about the financial support from the government will go much more smoothly, and the representatives of the government will know in advance what kinds of support is needed and how much. The respective ministries have also wide networks of relevant parties and companies in the area of computing, and they can help the IOI organizers to find valuable partners and sponsors to prepare the IOI.

15 SUMMARY OF PLANNING THE IOI EVENT

AT LEAST 2 YEARS BEFORE THE IOI

- Project plan; organization, budget, schedule of the project
- Venue booking
- The IOI program
- Preliminary bookings to the hotels, to the restaurants or catering firms, to the social and cultural places.

ONE YEAR BEFORE THE IOI

- Sponsor and co-operation contracts
- Contracts with employees
- Planning of the social and cultural program
- The IOI logo, planning of the IOI material
- Contracts with advertising agency, press and translator (not necessary)
- Pre-marketing in the past IOI
- www-domain
- Planning of the security and insurance issues
- First-aid and medical care
- Contracts of equipment requirements
- The transportation planning
- Planning of the opening and closing ceremonies.

IN THE IOI YEAR

- Official invitation, visa applications, assisting in travel plans of participants
- Handling of the pre-registration
- Checking of the bookings
- Material orders
- Training of the guides
- Schedule of the transportation
- Public relations.

PREVIOUS WEEK BEFORE THE IOI EVENT

- Last training of the guides
- Checking of arriving flights
- Installation of computers, servers and networks in the competition hall
- Stands for the airport, the hotels and the venue
- The registration desk and the material for the info desk
- Rehearsals of the opening and closing ceremonies
- Double checking.

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