
SO YOU WANT TO HOST AN ILDA CONFERENCE...

Some tips and tricks to staging a fun and successful event

By Michael Roberts

Version 1.0, May 2006

So you want to host an ILDA conference... To invite the members from many countries to your corner of the globe... to have some fun with a group of people who stay up until 3 AM looking at laser shows?

Then you have to be part gracious host, part gofer, part logistics manager, part catering supervisor and be prepared to get your hands dirty while exhibiting infinite patience and a ready smile. At the same time, you should not hesitate to call upon professionals where appropriate to provide essential services. Above all, you must accomplish this while spending as little as possible... and keeping the cost to members as low as possible!



Please note that this guide is written for people at all levels of technical sophistication. As a laser professional, some of the things covered here may seem blindingly obvious to you, but may not have occurred to others. Not all possible contingencies are covered herein, so you need to use a little imagination and experience when reading this guide.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SO YOU WANT TO HOST AN ILDA CONFERENCE.....	1
PREPARATION	5
WHEN	6
TRAVEL.....	6
VISA.....	7
TAXES AND MONEY	8
WHERE	9
HOTEL.....	9
<i>Trade Show ILDA meeting</i>	9
<i>ILDA only meeting</i>	9
<i>Accommodations for members</i>	10
CONFERENCE AND ILDA OFFICE.....	11
ILDA OFFICE AND BOARD FACILITIES	11
<i>Internet</i>	12
<i>Meeting/seminar rooms</i>	12
LASEOFF AND AWARDS BANQUET LOCATION	14
<i>Laseoff</i>	14
<i>Awards Banquet</i>	14
VENUE.....	15
POWER AND UTILITIES	15
STAGING AND LASERS	17
SOUND.....	17
LIGHTING	19
VIDEO.....	22
SMOKE MACHINES	23
LASERS.....	23
GEAR.....	26
CREW COMMUNICATIONS.....	26
PEOPLE POWER	27
REHEARSAL.....	28
CATERING	30

MEAL SERVICE TYPES	30
PLATED SERVICE	30
<i>Plated Service Menu selection</i>	31
BUFFET SERVICE	31
<i>Buffet Menu selection</i>	31
MENU SELECTION TIPS	32
<i>Vegetarian</i>	32
<i>Local delicacies</i>	32
<i>Local serving customs</i>	32
<i>Fish dishes</i>	32
INFRASTRUCTURE	34
TELEPHONE	34
BUSINESS CENTER	34
TV CHANNELS	35
CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT	35
AMENITIES.....	35
TOURISM OPTIONS	35
INTERNET	36
INTERNET CAFE OPTION	37
SCHEDULING	39
MEALS.....	39
NETWORKING	39
EVENT START AND END TIMES	39
<i>Day 0</i>	40
<i>Day 1</i>	40
<i>Day 2</i>	41
<i>Day 3</i>	42
<i>Day 4</i>	42
<i>Day 5 Optional</i>	43
MEAL PLAN.....	43
SUPPORT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES.....	44
AIRPORT SHUTTLE AND TRANSPORTATION	44
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	44
FIRE.....	44
MEDICAL.....	44
LEGAL	45
CUSTOMS BROKER.....	45
SPOUSE PROGRAM.....	45
BUDGET	47
SUMMARY.....	48

BOARD FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CD.....	48
MEMBER PRESENTATION	48
A FINAL NOTE.....	50

PREPARATION

Before you even consider inviting ILDA, you should first do a “feasibility study” so you can answer the questions you are bound to be asked. You also need to develop a presentation to the membership - this will mostly be you speaking; but could include a computer slide-show or other content - you want to keep it under five minutes. A good strategy is to also prepare a one page flyer as a handout so members can get a bit more detail on your invitation.



Have patience! First you are going to need it to run a conference... and secondly, historically, ILDA does not accept the first invitation from an international member... and occasionally the second invitation is also rejected! You need to do some campaigning with members and garner support for your invitation.

TIP: Your feasibility study should be “tarted up” into a 3 to 6 page illustrated report to the ILDA Board. This will show that you have done your homework and give the board more material to base a recommendation/decision on. The report should also include a proposed/ballpark budget for the conference - you may want to do that as a spreadsheet so it can be updated a few days before it is presented.

The important things to quantify for your feasibility study are: When, Where, How, Technical parameters, Meals, Scheduling, Support services, Operations, Tourism options, Budget and type of ILDA meeting.

WHEN

You want to invite people to your country when it will be a pleasant experience. The height of summer or the depths of winter are not very popular times to travel. Traditionally, the ILDA annual conference was held in November, but ILDA has shown flexibility in scheduling. There is never a good time for everybody... so try work with the Board *in advance* of your presentation to the membership so that you know the chosen date will be the best compromise.



As you will know, being a laserist yourself, we are not a very rich bunch. So the best strategy is to invite ILDA to hold its meeting in the early spring or late fall when the weather is generally pleasant and temperatures moderate... and when “high season” rates are not in effect. It is important to the Board and to the members, to get the most “bang for the buck”.

TIP: Bringing a conference to town gives you a bit of leverage with a hotel and other suppliers - exploit it!! [within reason]. Many hotels will bend the rules or extend off-season rates a week or two if they are promised 30 to 50 rooms booked, function rooms and catering. For planning purposes, you can work with a range of 100 people to 150 for the ILDA meeting.

TRAVEL

Start by doing some research on the costs for members to travel. A good travel agent is a must in this regard. One that can provide services via Email and is fully briefed on the needs the people will have so they can respond appropriately, is a rare gem.



Anecdotal experience shows that dealing with a larger travel agency, who specialise in corporate/convention travel, is not desirable. These people run a “factory” and ILDA is a small group compared to some conventions, so members will get lost in the shuffle. If you can find a smaller travel agency, preferably one that is a “mom & pop” operation or at least locally owned where the owner works in the agency, they will give much better service since the ILDA meeting represents a major client to them.

Before you get to the travel agent, surf to some of the major travel “discount” web sites. What you want to know, is the cost of getting from the airport serving your city to major centers such as Frankfurt, London, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo and Beijing. You may want to adjust this list depending on your location so as to be sure to cover major cities on every continent and on the east and west coasts of the USA/Canada.

You should have some ideas about what the travel costs are [in US\$] before you go and speak to the travel agent. Your travel agent will do the research to see what they can find in the way of discounted flights on the regularly scheduled airlines.

You need to be able to give the Board and membership an idea of travel costs for members to get to the meeting. This is also useful information to include in a small table with a selection of typical departure points as part of your feasibility study - update the prices [in US\$] a few days before you leave to give the invitation. Consider including some typical fare ranges in your computer presentation and/or your flyer.

TIP: One other area to research is “charter” or “tourist” flights. I have, on a few occasions, bought air-only tickets on a charter at ridiculously low prices a week before the flight and found myself on a 1/2 empty plane! Most charters or tourism flights offer a 6 or 7 day package - usually with hotels, meals and all the bells and whistles - just get the “air only” price as they are happy to get “bums in seats” and these are often a good deal.

Many of the charter operators fly in on Mondays or Tuesdays as that cuts their operating costs so be sure this can fit in with members’ plans and the meeting schedule. Try to find ones that depart from a major, central city in each region, so that members could fly to there and then get the charter/tourist flight if it is a significant savings.

VISA

Will members need a visa? All the members? Or just some members from certain countries/regions? Are visas just a formality or are they a paperwork nightmare? Do they cost money and if so, how much? Will members who need a visa require a “Letter of invitation”? If so, what are the rules for those? Can you issue letters of invitation yourself or do they have to come from some official source? Can they be issued electronically?



You should have all this information in advance, and in detail, in your feasibility study. You also need to be able to summarise it in one or two sentences for your presentation, for example:

“ILDA members visiting <your country> from <list countries your government likes> do/do not require visas. On arrival, you have to/don’t have to, get a stamped tourist card for \$?.?? US\$, which you must return in order to leave the country [or pay a fee of \$?.?? US\$ for a replacement card].

ILDA members attending the meeting from <list unpopular countries here>, are required to obtain a visa at least 7/14/30/60 days in advance of entering <your country>. Visas typically cost \$?.?? US\$ and take X

days/weeks/months/years for your local <your country name> embassy/consulate/mission to issue.

You can get more information at <insert URLs of relevant web pages here>.”

TAXES AND MONEY

Does your country charge any kind of “landing fee” or other permit/fee to enter the country? Does your airport charge a departure tax or any other kind of fee when leaving the country? Are there any special taxes/permit fees that apply to foreigners visiting your country? Is your country a haven of tax-free shopping? Is there a tax/bond on equipment temporarily imported for a trade show display? Are there any restrictions/regulations regarding foreign money exchange? Or the amount of money you can carry with you as a visitor? Are credit cards commonly accepted and which types are most used? Are travelers cheques accepted and which types?

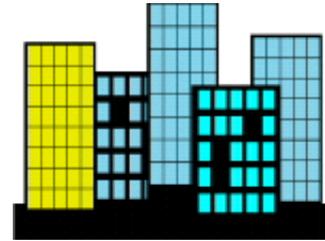


This is important information to help avoid surprises for the membership and particularly those bringing equipment to exhibit. The tax information should be summarised in your feasibility study for the board. If there are any taxes - or tax benefits - which apply to foreign tourists, this should also be summarised in your presentation to the membership.

WHERE

Now that you have figured out how people can get to your location and what it will cost to get them there... you need to select the meeting location!

The location is constrained to a hotel or conference center as the meeting requires: accommodation for members, a conference office, meeting/seminar rooms, large hall/theatre that meets technical requirements, catering facilities with good food and suitable infrastructure.



Ideally, the cost of an average room for 2 people should not exceed \$100 US\$/night + taxes... lower is better as long as the hotel is not a “dive” - anything in the 3 star category needs intense and detailed scrutiny.

HOTEL

The hotel needs can vary depending on the type of ILDA meeting:

Trade Show ILDA meeting

If this is an ILDA meeting which is held in conjunction with, or just before/after, a major trade show [EG: SIB, PLAZA, PALM, LDI, IAPA], then the hotel should be located within walking distance [That’s North American walking distance of 1 Km/.62 mile], a block away, right next door, or better yet, on top of the convention hall. This makes it convenient for members to come and go as they please and obviates the cost of bussing. These hotels are likely to be 4 and 5 star and charge accordingly so these kinds of ILDA meetings tend to be more costly.

ILDA only meeting

If it is an ILDA meeting held on its own [not connected with a trade show], then the choice of hotels becomes broader. You can look for a hotel out in the suburbs with low rates, as long as it is within a 10-15 taxi ride from the “downtown” area with bars/clubs/stores/ restaurants. The hotel must offer on-demand or scheduled shuttle service to the nearest major airport or have suitable arrangements in place so members can come and go according to their schedules. The hotel should also be well served by public transit and/or be within a block or 3 of a train/trolley/subway/metro/Bus [preferably with all night service].

You might also want to consider a resort hotel outside the city if that offers a significant upgrade such as scenic/historic location, beachside [in swimming season], extensive recreational facilities, or luxury amenities in the \$100 US\$ to \$120 US\$/night range. If a resort hotel is chosen, then it should be within a 30-40 minute drive of a major

town/city “downtown”, must offer on-demand or at least hourly shuttle service to the nearest large town/city, and other public transportation options should be available.

You should make a short-list of likely candidates, then do a bit of research on them. Start with their web sites as this is what the members will be judging by. Once you have your short list, you can head out and inspect them for yourself.

Any hotel will have to meet certain technical requirements. The most complex production is the ILDA awards banquet which requires a good space, power and utilities, and a cooperative and helpful staff. This is one area where your friends and colleagues in the show production business can tell you what the joys and drawbacks of the hotels on your short list are. This may give you the chance to scrap an otherwise promising candidate because the loading dock is 700 meters from the banquet hall and two floors below!

Accommodations for members

You want to impress the members with your country, and nothing does that better than a good night’s sleep! The hotel must be clean and comfortable in the budget/average rooms. There should also be larger accommodations such as suites, 2 room arrangements or adjoining rooms available as some members need an office area.

Don’t take the hotel’s word for it... inspect some of the typical rooms for yourself. Any hotel that is serious about getting the ILDA meeting will be very cooperative with inspection tours.

TIP: Once you are down to your final hotel, consider checking in for a night without letting the banquet/conference staff know your plans. That way, you will get to see just how the hotel deals with guests and what a random room is like in terms of comfort and amenities.

Members want to have a good time and don’t want to be bothered with details. Work with the hotel to get the most favourable rate with the most frills for the members included - free use of health club included, beach towels/chairs included, breakfast included, internet included, etc., etc.

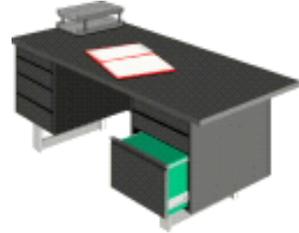
If the hotel has a more favourable side due to good scenic/ocean/city views, negotiate with the hotel to either apply the “bad view” room rates to that area, or to agree to put all members in rooms on that side/wing so they can enjoy the view.

TIP: Bed sizes tend to be larger in North America than in Europe and Asia. To insure that the majority of people are happy, make sure that the rooms offers at least two “twin” beds [99 X 190.5 cm - 39” X 75”] or two “double” beds [137 X 203 cm - 54” X 80”] even when intended for occupation by two people. Some members may want a “king” size bed [76” X 80”] Also check that the

hotel has a supply of additional beds and can provide other sleeping arrangements if guests request them.

CONFERENCE AND ILDA OFFICE

You and ILDA will both need an office to run the conference. The Conference office is the hub of organizational activities for the production crew, while the ILDA office is a central place for members to gather and a space for the executive director to take care of business.



The ILDA and conference offices should be in close proximity to each other, centrally located, and easy for members to find. If the ILDA meeting is being held in conjunction with a trade show, then the ILDA “office” may be the booth on the trade show floor while the conference office is located in the hotel.

Try to get a room/office/meeting room [or rooms] that are as close to the banquet facilities as possible, but also close to the main lobby. The Conference office should be easy to find. It should be clearly marked, and the hotel should permit the posting of directional signs.

The Conference office is your logistical and organizational hub. It also acts as storage for valuable items and a staging area for your activities. It should be secure and lockable. You will need a few tables, a computer work station with internet access and a fax/phone. Set the tables up across one end of the room near the door with 4 to 6 chairs on the door side for members who need to sit and talk with staff and for staff meetings. Locate materials and valuables behind the tables and chairs towards the back of the room.

Ideally, the office should have someone in it at all times... even if that person is just holding a phone/radio and knows who to summon to the office. If that is not possible, then post office hours and cell/mobile numbers for key people on the conference office door. Make sure that you, and at least three of your conference crew, have keys to the office and communications devices such as mobile/cell phones. The key people should have radios with lots of spare/charged batteries.

Office hours are best held from 30 minutes before breakfast until 30 minutes after the day’s proceedings have started, and again in the evening from the end of the days proceedings until 30 minutes after the evening events have started. This means that some people are going to miss out on parts of the events so make sure the office people you have recruited for this know about it.

ILDA OFFICE AND BOARD FACILITIES

The ILDA office should be easy to locate and should be the closest to the lobby. It has similar needs; a table with 2 chairs



for computer/printer, internet connection, phone, and a meeting table with chairs. The ILDA office also needs to be lockable when it is not in operation.

The Board and executive director may also require a separate meeting room/office. A suite or bedroom with adjoining sitting room will be the best and most cost effective option for this to suit privacy needs as those types of rooms are typically located away from the central facilities. The Executive director can then stay in the bedroom while board meetings and other official business are carried out in the adjoining sitting room/office.

Internet

If the hotel does not provide in-room internet, then you will need to set up internet facilities for the members and board - these can go in the ILDA office. The minimum would be a 128K connection to a router which provides at least 4 ports and WiFi access - a 256K or faster connection is preferred.



There are more comments on providing Internet service for members in the Infrastructure section further on in this guide.

Meeting/seminar rooms

The ILDA meeting will require a large enough room so that all the members can congregate for the ATW and membership meeting. ILDA may also need a smaller room if multiple simultaneous seminars are planned.



For the main meeting room, plan for seating for 100 people in theatre style seating with a stage and podium up front. Seminar style seating [rows of narrow tables with chairs] is also appropriate. Due to the increasing use of laptop based presentations, a video projector and sound system is almost essential for this room. The video projector must be equipped with all needed cables so that the presenter can simply plug in a laptop.

The sound system in this room need not be designed for rock concerts. Far too many meetings/conventions feature over-amplified speeches! Check the in-house sound system under realistic conditions [ask the hotel if you can walk into the back of the room for 5 minutes during another event and see what it sounds like in a room full of people]. If the in-house system is inadequate, then you must obtain a proper PA system and include that in your budget.

Since this is the ILDA meeting, you can also expect to have to make provision for lasers. Fortunately, that is not as arduous a task as it once was. With the advent of solid state, full colour, laser systems, one usually just has to provide power. If you are getting the equipment on loan, then be sure to check with the owner/sponsor on power requirements and voltages. You may need some step up/down transformers. You should also make provision for back-up equipment in case one of the main systems fails.

The ILDA meeting may also require a secondary meeting room for simultaneous events. For a smaller seminar room, plan on 50-60 people with Seminar style seating. This room should not need a PA system, however, if it has one, it should be checked for functionality. You should also check the proximity of heavy duty power in case someone needs to run a larger laser in this room.

TIP: A flip-pad on an easel and felt pens should be provided in both rooms. A white-board and erasable pens is also desirable but not usually found in larger hotel meeting rooms. Pens/pencils and bottled water on the audience tables is also a nice touch.

LASEOFF AND AWARDS BANQUET LOCATION

ILDA has two main events which require a large hall with proper production facilities. The Laseoff - which can be considered a dress-rehearsal for the Awards Banquet, and the Awards Banquet.

Laseoff

The Laseoff is intended to be a more informal presentation of past and present shows, experimental works and works in progress in a relaxed atmosphere.



You should ask the help of the awards committee to stage this event. At some meetings, shows which had won as yet unannounced awards, were included in the Laseoff. The awards committee can assist with screening selection to eliminate any material which will be shown at the Awards Banquet with is usually held as the last major event.

- If the ILDA meeting is being held in conjunction with an established trade show [SIB, LDI, IAPA, etc.], then it may be desirable to stage the Laseoff in a location at, or within 1 block of, the trade show hall. This may require that you have a duplicate set of equipment, or the resources and time to move the production equipment to the Awards Banquet location which is typically a hotel.
- If this is an ILDA only type meeting not tied to a trade show, then the Laseoff and Awards Banquet will typically be held in the same venue at the conference hotel or nearby.

Awards Banquet

The Awards Banquet is intended to be the gala event of the ILDA meeting. Typically there will be many extra guests [spouses, staff, etc.] attending the banquet so you need to make provisions for the increased numbers accordingly.

TIP: Try to avoid holding the Laseoff and Awards banquet at a location that is more than walking distance [1 km/.62 mile] from the hotel as that will entail shuttle busses. Shuttle busses put a lot of pressure on members to come and go as a group; this destroys members' flexibility and freedom to come and go according to their own schedule.

VENUE

To stage the Awards Banquet, you will need a venue which can accommodate 150 to 180 people in comfort. The venue should be a “soft seat” type venue - that means carpeted floors, plush furnishings, drapes, etc., to give both a warm and inviting look, and for good acoustics. It **must** be capable of full black-out [excepting legally mandated emergency signage] at any time of the day. Full black-out does not mean shades or blinds drawn over windows with light leaking round them... it means complete darkness!

TIP: Most hotels prefer to set up the tables in “rounds of 10” - a round table with 10 places. These tend to be cramped. Often ILDA events are held in a large hall so the hall may look too big/empty.

For 120 people, rounds of 10 come to 12 tables, while rounds of 8 comes to 15 tables. By requesting “rounds of 8” as your layout (provided you have the space), you get a few more tables which makes the event look bigger, everyone is comfortably seated with plenty of elbow room, and if a table decides to invite an extra person to join them, they are easily accommodated.

It is desirable to have a stage as the focus of the event. Many banquet facilities have permanent stages halfway down the long axis of the room. This is designed to decrease the distance between the performers and the back rows of the audience but is not ideal for laser shows. The stage should be at one end of the long axis of the room. If the hotel is otherwise acceptable but has the stage in the “wrong” place, fear not as most hotels have risers and can put a basic stage at one end of the long axis of the room, or you can rent risers from a staging company. Minimum height for risers is 30 cm [12”], ideal height is 46 cm [18”], and the maximum height should not exceed 92 cm [36”] except in the case of a built-in stage.

TIP: When considering venues, find out if the space can be partitioned using a movable wall. If this is the case, then your layout should have the stage, screen, sound system and support equipment at one end of the room such that it can be closed off with the partition. The other portion of the room can then be re-set with seminar or theatre seating and used as a meeting room during the day to keep costs down.

POWER AND UTILITIES

In years gone by, any location without 3-phase power was out of the question. If you are staging your event with all solid-state colour laser systems, you may need little more than some extension cords. Even in these circumstances, it is wise to use a connection to production power from the venue and your own power distribution as that way, you will know exactly what the loads are and where the power cables and fuses/breakers are located.



If you are planning to use ion lasers for the ILDA events, you must be sure that suitable power is available, the power is within a reasonable distance of where the equipment will be, and that you have sufficient distribution panels and cables to reach where you need to go. You will probably also need cooling water. You should be sure of the location of a reliable source of water and drainage within a convenient distance.

You should also do a static water pressure test on the water supply with help from a few friends flushing nearby toilets 2 and 3 at a time to insure the dreaded “john effect” does not cut out a laser. The best time to do this test is around 12:30 or 13:00 when the hotel restaurants and kitchens are busy so as to get a realistic idea of the conditions you are likely to experience. If the water connection is in a “banquet kitchen” which is only used to cater for events, try and get someone on staff to run the dishwasher and open a few taps to simulate kitchen activity.

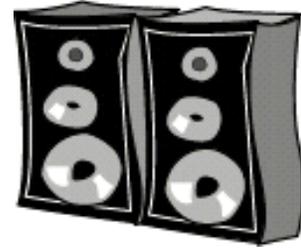
Naturally, you also have to check/inspect power cable and water hose routes to insure that they can not be pinched in doorways, walked on, accidentally shut off, the drainage obstructed or pose a threat to anyone’s safety. During the event, it is also a good idea to be seen by the venue staff making this inspection at set-up, before the event starts, after the meal service and about 1/4 of the way through the show.

TIP: Try to arrange with the venue that you have access to the space starting at midnight on the first rental day. You can then move all of the equipment into the space just after midnight so that the people working on the set-up can have everything to hand when they start.

You should include sufficient budget so that you can rent the venue, or the portion of the venue where the stage and production gear will be located, for a full day before first use. This will allow you to set-up and test everything in advance with less stress on the production crew and time to fix problems discovered during the set-up.

STAGING AND LASERS

If the hotel has built in sound, lighting and video systems in the space, then you should see them fully demonstrated and be assured they are in working order. You will need to perform this check again a week before the actual meeting. If any of the systems are inadequate, you will need to provide replacements.



It is usually best to provide your own equipment as proper production is critical to making the events a success. When you provide your own production equipment, you are fully in control of everything and know where all the controls, cables and connections are. This is an area where hiring a qualified professionals is a wise investment.

It is very important to site the control tables as far towards the back of the room as possible, and on the same level. If the hotel sound system is adequate, and you are planning to use it but the control room is at the back and on the second floor, use a mixer and EQ on the main floor to feed the system in the booth. Booth monitors can be deceptive and even with open windows on the booth, the sound can be very different between the booth position and the audience on the floor.

SOUND

Good sound is imperative to enjoying the show. So how much power do you need? The typical rule-of-thumb for budget productions is 1 watt/person/channel-rounded up to the nearest 100. Thus for the ILDA meeting where you are planning on around 160 people, 200W per channel would be a bare minimum. To get better sound and some “punch” from the bass, 500W/side to 1 kW/side in a typical 200-250 “soft seat” venue is plenty. Over 5 kW/side for an ILDA meeting is probably a waste of budget.

The **minimum requirements** for sound at the ILDA events are as follows:

1. Unidirectional/cardioid [“vocal”] type, wired, podium microphone on a gooseneck stand with shock absorbent mounts - speakers *will* bang the podium so shock mounts on the mike and the stand are imperative.
2. At least one high quality radio microphone system with enough spare batteries that you can change them before each event. Two radio mikes would give greater flexibility.
3. At least one wired “vocal” type mike at the control position
4. Suitable mixer to handle 6 channels of mike inputs, 1 stereo CD playback [2 channels], 1 stereo DVD playback [2 channels], 2 stereo computer playback for

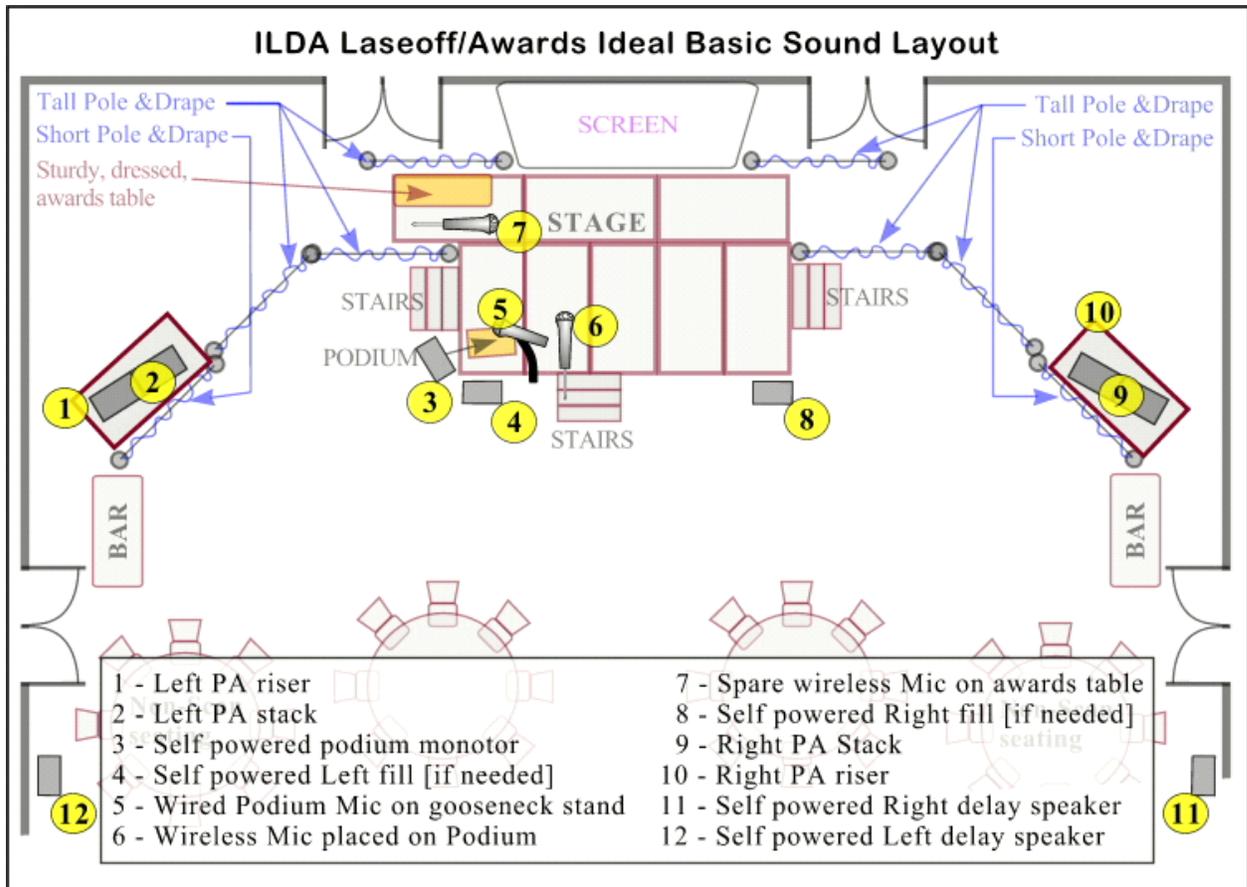
laser graphics systems [4 channels] , 1 stereo ADAT playback [2 channels], at least 2 and preferably 4 spare channels for other playback devices [an 18 to 24 channel board should cover your needs].

5. At least 2 and preferably 6 DI boxes to isolate troublesome input devices
6. Professional grade graphic Equaliser and any other audio signal processing [compressor, feedback limiter, etc.] you feel you may need
7. Output mixes for: Main PA; house PA if you are using that as fill; a “press box” feed of the main PA signal, with at least stereo XLR balanced line outputs and stereo RCA output connectors [preferably 2 sets of each] at line level ready to be moved into position when needed; and a monitor sub-mix of the main PA.
8. The production crew needs to be able to hear the speaker at the podium to get their cues. The control position monitors need not be elaborate, a couple of decent 3 way computer sound systems, or a 50W/channel home stereo and bookshelf speakers works just fine - there is no need to spend lots of budget on crew monitors
9. Cross over(s), all cables, and a minimum of a 2 way but preferably a 3 way PA system with properly secured and dressed speaker stacks. The stacks should be located to be as unobtrusive as possible. If the placement is too wide for good stereo imaging, a pair of full-range, self-powered monitors can be placed one third of the way in from each main stack and used as fill.
10. One full range, self-powered , 50-100W, Monitor speaker on the floor, or off to the side of the podium - you do not need a lot of power as you are mainly filling mid-high so the speaker at the podium can hear themselves. A separate sub-mix and EQ to drop out the bass and any frequencies causing ringing in the podium monitor is highly desirable.
11. Tablecloths and dress kit for master control. The Awards banquet is intended to be a gala event so every effort should be made to make it look as good as possible.

The above listing is the minimum requirements which will let you meet the needs of the ILDA meeting. Naturally, you should consider professional advice on the PA system, and should consider adding as much production quality - such as a subwoofer, side-fill/delay speakers, etc., etc. as is warranted by the size of the room and the budget.

TIP: If you are supplying your own equipment in a location where the hotel sound system is adequate, you may want to consider adding whatever extra equipment is needed so as to feed the show audio to the in-house system. If the house system is mono, you will need a sub-mix and DI box to feed it; if it is stereo, you may only need two DI boxes. The main sound should appear to come from the stage so the in-house sound system should be at a very low level as “fill”.

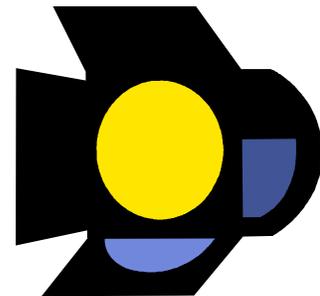
Below is a diagram of an ideal, basic sound system layout for the ILDA meetings. This should be taken as a *guideline* only as room geography and local conditions may require modifications to suit available equipment/budget.



LIGHTING

Good lighting makes it possible for people to see properly - fortunately, the ILDA meetings do not have complex lighting requirements. Your choice of lighting layout may be limited by the geography of the room.

In an ideal world, you will be able to use a couple of short trusses, either on towers or dead hung from suitable, venue approved, rigging points. If trusses are not possible then you will have to use floor standing towers (provided these do not obstruct the beam projections).



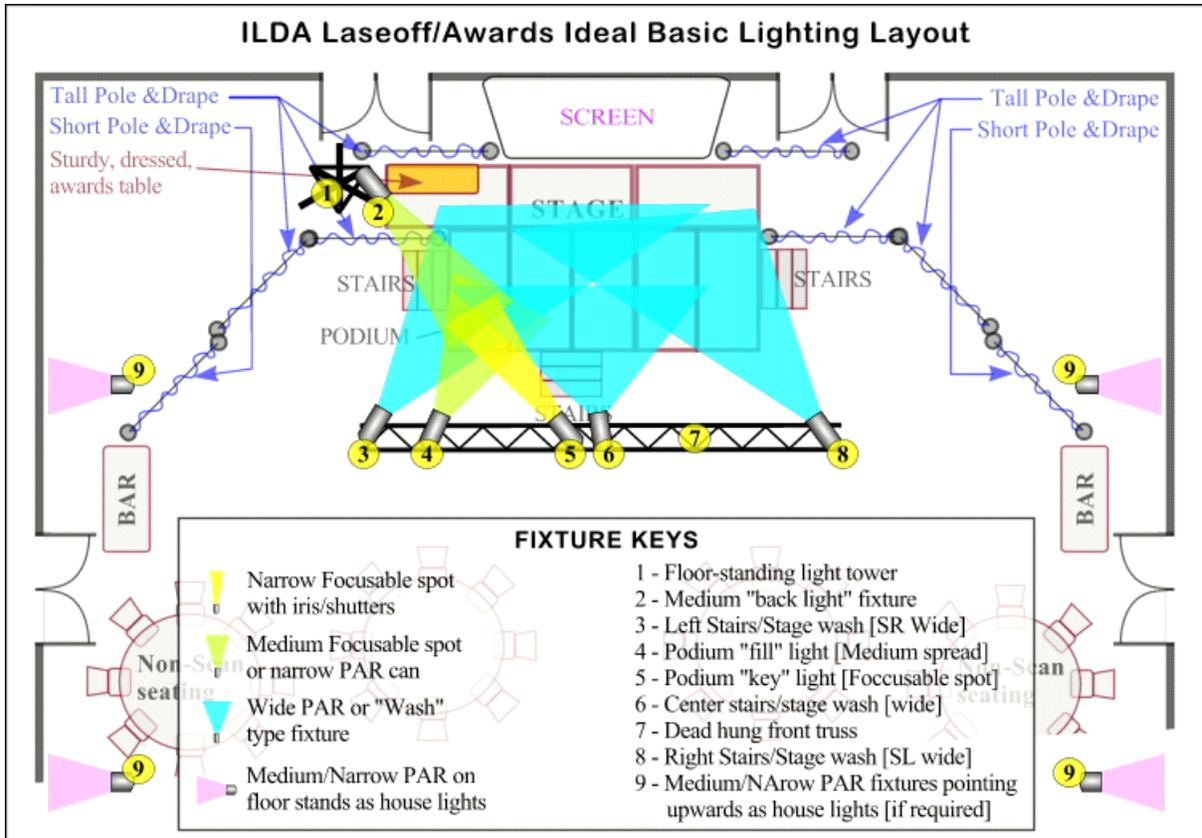
The **minimum requirements** for lighting at the ILDA events are as follows:

1. Dimmable house lights with a control unit in, or right next to, master control. If you can not have full control over the house lights, you will need some form of house lights under your control for use during the events. A simple and cheap approach is 4 narrow 500W PAR spots on a dimmed circuit, floor mounted at one thirds along the long axis, 2 on either side of the room. When they are dimmed up, and given a white ceiling or light coloured walls in the venue, they will provide adequate light for people to navigate the room safely.
2. A “key” light on the podium - typically a 1 kW Leko or other focusable type spotlight with framing shutters and/or iris. This light should hang ahead and off to one side of the centerline of the podium, aimed downwards at the podium such that both tall and short people will be properly illuminated in the facial area. It is important to have a new bulb in this fixture and a spare on hand in case of failure.
3. A “fill” light about equidistant from the centerline of the podium on the opposite side. This should be a light with a broader beam such as a medium flood, 500W PAR fixture or a 1 kW fresnel spot. The purpose of the fill light is to lighten the shadow on the opposite side of the speaker’s face from the more focused key light. You should also have a spare bulb for this on hand.
4. A “back” light which goes behind and slightly offset from the centerline of the podium in the same direction as the fill light at the front. Suitable fixtures would be a medium flood, 500W PAR fixture or a 500W fresnel spot. The lights should be aimed downwards such that it is just over the top of the tallest speaker’s head and with as little spill off the stage as possible - not into the audience’s eyes.. The purpose of the back light is to make the speaker at the podium stand out from the background and also to help illuminate the shadowed top of the podium caused by the front key and fill lights.
5. A least two “fill” lights, one on either side of the stage, preferably with a third on the same dimmer upstage center, to produce a wash. Suitable fixtures would be 500W Medium PAR lights or a 500W focusable fixture. The lights should be aimed from the front downwards to mid stage left and right, in such a way that they illuminate the steps on either side of the stage, and the surface of the stage, without splashing onto the screen. If you have the budget and rigging needed to put a third light front and center, it should be similarly aimed to light the stairway and stage without splashing onto the screen. The purpose of these lights is to allow the award recipients coming on to the stage to see the stairs and stage, and for the audience to see their arrival.
6. A couple of gooseneck table lamps on heavy bases with 10W white incandescent bulbs in them - also bring 20W white bulbs and some 10W blue bulbs. You will need at least one of these to light the awards table [a 10W blue should do fine]. You will doubtless find some other place where another one is needed.

7. An adjustable, 20W to 50W, white light for the podium or one of the gooseneck type “little lights”. It should be compact and must be dimmable. The light must be secured to the podium in such a way that it occupies the minimum of real-estate and can not collide with the microphone. The purpose of this light is for the speaker to read their notes.
8. A DMX based control board with at least 12 channels. The board should be programmable to set-up scenes on a single fader. This is helpful to, for example, bring the podium front key and fill lights to full, the back light to 70% and the podium reading light to 90% using a single slider. Other useful combinations are stage fill lights to 90% and house lights to 30% for when recipients are walking to and from the stage.
9. All the required control, power, extension and feeder cables required to interconnect the system and connect the dimmer rack to the main AC power. You should also have a selection of very light pink gels on hand as plain white lights tend to look glaring and a light pink colour helps to make people look better.
10. A 12 channel dimmer rack with sufficient capacity to handle your loads. You may need to go to an 18 channel dimmer and patch some channels together when programming the system.

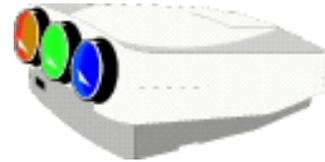
The above listing is the minimum requirements to stage the meeting. If you have the budget and access to suitable equipment, you may consider adding an extra fill fixture for the stage to bring the total to 4, or you could consider the judicious use of 2 to 4 movable head fixture to, for example, project slowly changing gobo patterns on the screen and/or walls/ceiling as “filler” before the laser shows begin.

Below is a diagram of an ideal, basic lighting system layout for the ILDA meetings showing the fixtures and coverage. This should be taken as a *guideline* only as room geography and local conditions may require modifications to suit available equipment/budget.



VIDEO

Some of the ILDA Awards presentations are on video so good quality video projection (and back-up) is an important element. You need to have the image as large as possible, preferably filling the screen, and also bright with good brightness and contrast.



A professional quality video projector with a choice of computer and various video inputs is desirable. Since most of the material to be shown will be provided on DVD, format is not much of an issue but you should be sure to check with the awards committee to make sure that there is no material in a format that your local equipment can not handle. If that is the case, you need to get the material a couple of weeks in advance so that you can have it converted to the local format.

You should also have a proper selection of cable and adapters on hand in order to connect the video playback equipment. If more than one video playback device will be used, rent a video switcher so that you do not have to re-patch cables in the dark while the show is in progress.

SMOKE MACHINES

Standard smoke machines can be noisy when they are producing smoke and this can be a distraction, particularly if it is in a quieter part of the show. If you place the smoke machine under the stage (so the noise is masked), in line with the front steps, and blow the smoke in that direction with a fan; the smoke should emerge from below the stage and out into the venue.

As a further refinement, place skirting at the side of the stage and part way around the front to keep the smoke from exiting in the wrong place. You can add some “baffles”, the same height as the stage, made of black foam-core or thin plywood about 50-100 cm [20-39”] in front of the opening under the stage on either side of the steps. The baffles will cause the smoke to drift upwards into the laser beams.

LASERS

ILDA members have come to see laser shows so you need the proper equipment to present them. Since non-ILDA members and other industry professionals may also be present, the equipment must meet ILDA standards and must be in good working order. You should also have a back-up plan for swapping out a laser or projection system which has problems or has failed.



The **minimum requirements** for lasers at the ILDA events are as follows:

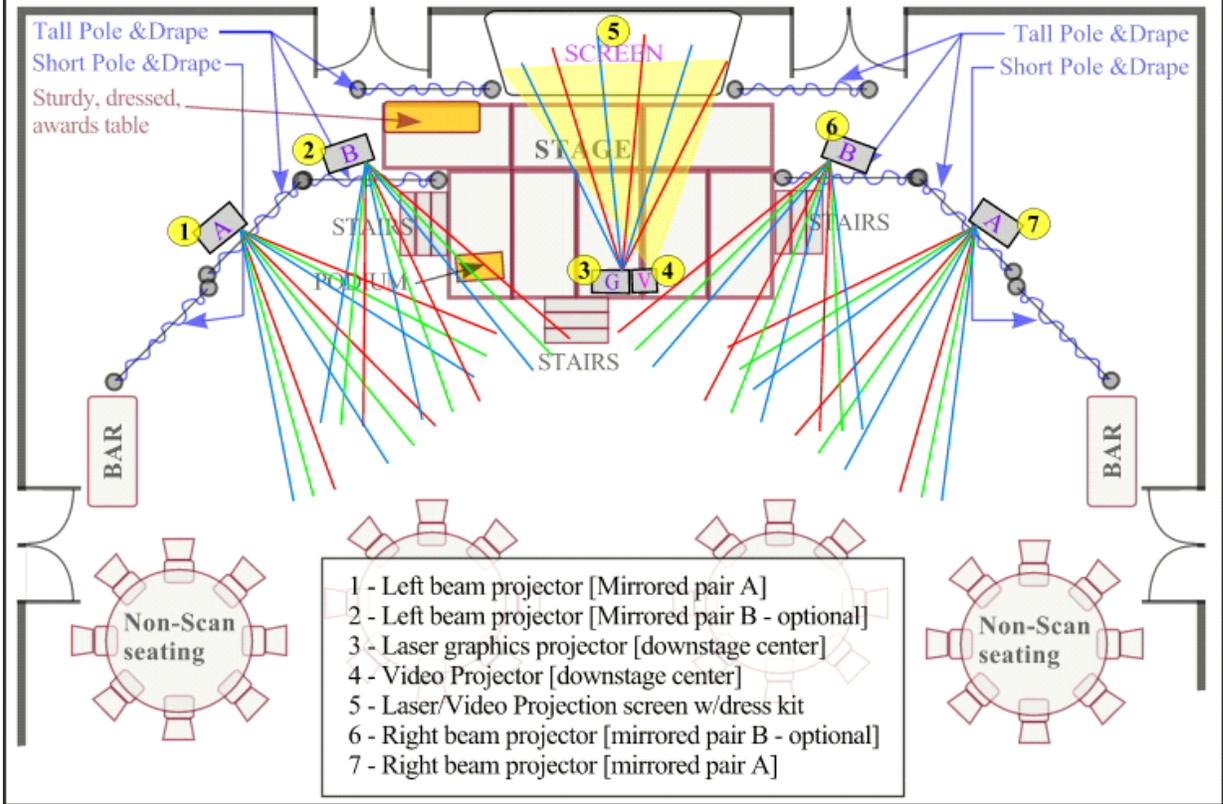
1. A 30K, full colour, graphics system to project onto the screen on/behind the stage - preferably this should be a solid-state system so it will be compact and require the minimum of utilities. You should need 1 watt [or less] of laser power for this system. To make life simpler for everyone, this should be equipped with a UGC or ILDA signal EQ at the control position so that signal levels can be adjusted. The UGC also offers the benefit of hardware geometric correction so that people do not have to re-set geometric correction parameters if they have a computer system crash.
2. Two, 30K, full colour, beam effects systems located to either side of the stage and arranged as a mirrored-pair [one projector moves the beam in the opposite direction from the other] - preferably this should be a solid-state system so it will be compact and require the minimum of utilities. These systems should require between 500 mW and 1W of laser power. These projectors could also be fibre-fed remotes from a central laser systems. The input of these should be equipped with a UGC or ILDA signal EQ at the control position so that signal levels can be adjusted - and each projector should be equipped with adjustments for size and position so that the scan fields can be overlapped symmetrically.

3. All necessary DB25 cables to bring the laser signal feeds to master control. You should also have a supply of shorter [3 meter/10'] DB25 cables for patching equipment at master control.
4. If the production will use two or more laser systems for playback of shows, invest in a couple of all-lines-switched DB25 printer switch boxes. This will allow fast changes between presentations and obviate trying to patch cables in the dark.
5. For the beam shows you will need haze. An MDG "Atmospheres" or DF50 type hazer works best. The hazer should be of the type that can run continuously without any supervision. It should be located in the backstage area with a fan to blow the output up towards the ceiling. It should be a quiet running type or be located behind drapes and far away from the audience that any noise it makes is unnoticeable. It should be started at least 20-30 minutes before the beam shows so as to give time for the haze to build up.
6. To give the beam texture, a heavier smoke is required from a second machine which can be controlled from master control. An MDG MAX3000, Roscoe or Lightwave type machine work the best in this application. The machine should be provided with a suitable fan to disperse the smoke into the beam path.

These are the minimum requirements for the laser systems at an ILDA meeting. If you have the equipment and budget, you could consider adding a second graphics projector and/or a second pair of beam projectors. If budget is limited, then the best improvement is a second smoke machine with fan to go under the stage so you can deliver a bigger burst of smoke during a beam presentation.

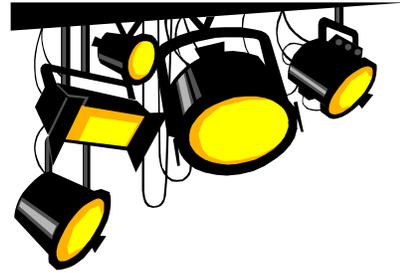
Below is a diagram of an ideal, basic Laser system layout for the ILDA meetings showing projectors and coverage. NOTE: the second set of beam projectors (marked B) are optional if appropriate equipment (and Backups) are available. This should be taken as a *guideline* only as room geography and local conditions may require modifications to suit available equipment/budget.

ILDA Laseoff/Awards Ideal Laser Layout



GEAR

Where to get all this equipment? As a laserist, you probably have some of the basics needed and possibly can provide all of the equipment needed. However, asking some of the laser/projector manufacturing ILDA members to loan you a system for the event is a good idea. It reduces the strain on your resources and also allows the member to showcase/advertise their technology - which may be cutting-edge equipment you do not have in your own rig.



If you are asking for laser equipment to be donated, you should give a summary list of what equipment you will need in your feasibility study provided to the board. You should also be in contact with the ILDA Awards committee so that request for loaner equipment go through them to make it official.

All other sound, lighting, video and production equipment that you do not own will have to be rented or provided by suppliers.

CREW COMMUNICATIONS

It is important that the production crew have proper communications so that problems are identified and solved rapidly. During the show, it is also important to have communications amongst the operators for cueing the show segments.



If you are planning to use radios for communications during the set-up work, be sure they have earpieces as that limits annoyance from radio chatter in the hallways and also helps keep information amongst those who need to know it.

For the actual show production, wired or wireless, hands-free, headsets for the sound, lighting, video and laser operators is vital. You should also include an extra headset station at master control and at least one backstage at the awards table [at least 5 and preferably 6 or 7 sets].

TIP: Make a miniature version of the complete ILDA meeting schedule. This should show the time, event name and location (room) for each event (including meals). On the reverse side, print your crew contact list phone numbers and also the local emergency numbers for fire, ambulance, etc. With a little planning this should fit on half of an A4 or Letter sheet.

At the ILDA 10th anniversary conference, we printed and laminated enough of these so that each member of the crew (including outside

professionals) could wear one on their lanyard along with their ILDA badge. With these, your crew is now equipped to deal with emergencies, contact crew/team members or assist members with information on event times/locations.

PEOPLE POWER

All of this production work is going to take some people power to accomplish. At least one professional and experienced sound technician and one experienced lighting technician will be required. Each of those people will need an assistant for the set-up and testing.

You should also consider having at least one person who is just looking after the video equipment as that can be time consuming to set-up, test and de-bug.

As a laserist, you should be concentrating on the laser systems and making sure they are perfect. You will also need an experienced assistant for this work as some of your time will be spent supervising others and making production decisions.

Typically your minimum crew needs are 2 sound people, 2 lighting people, 2 laser people and a video person - 7 people. You may want to consider adding a “runner” who has some production experience and can lend a hand as needed or fetch and carry items for the crew.

Where will you get all these people? Do not count on ILDA members to be available for much help in this area as they are coming to the meeting for other purposes. You may be able to get a couple of people who will agree to help in advance with some limited hours that are convenient to their meeting schedule. You will probably be able to get a few volunteers to put in a couple of hours before the events for last minute stuff.

The top sound, lighting and video people should be professionals, either paid or volunteering. Their assistants should also be experienced people, either paid or volunteering. You may be able to get a few local professionals to volunteer in return for meals and access to the events - clear this with the ILDA board in advance, but you are largely on your own drawing on people you have worked with at past professional events and/or who have worked on your shows.

TIP: “Dinner” music to be played before the production starts should be instrumental (no vocals), should not have a lot of bass and should be played at a very low level in order not to impede peoples’ dinner conversations.

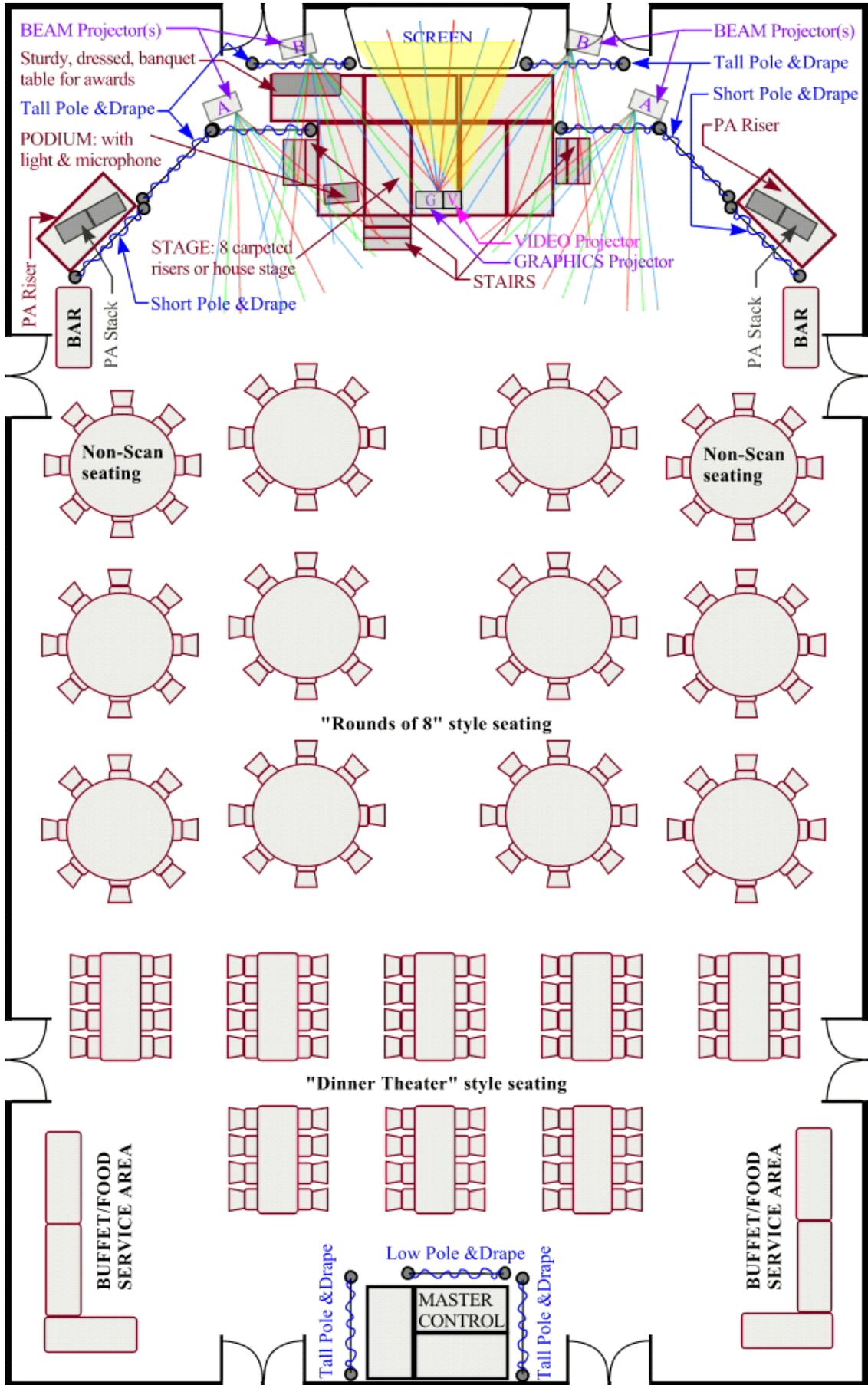
REHEARSAL

Each year, ILDA tries to schedule a rehearsal for the Awards Banquet and this often does not happen due to poor organization, technical problems or time pressures. Try to schedule in at least a 2-3 hour time block for a rehearsal. Having the awards presenters on the stage and rehearsing delivering their lines and handing out awards is very helpful to not only to solve technical issues, but to make them feel comfortable with the set-up and the equipment.

For the actual show production, you will need the sound, lighting and video professionals to be in master control as operators - well before the start of the event. ILDA will most likely have at least one volunteer [possibly 2] to run the laser graphics systems. You should be acting as production manager to make sure that all equipment is working and any problems that arise are solved immediately, thus you should not have a fixed role in the production, but be available as a supervisor and “floater” to do whatever is required to keep the shows running smoothly. If you have done the pre-production properly, then you will have little to do during the shows.

On the next page is a diagram of what the typical ILDA Laseoff and Awards banquet layout would look like in an ideal world. Note that two different styles of seating, rounds and dinner theatre are shown for illustrative purposes. Typically, the room is set up in one style or the other. This diagram is for illustrative purposes and is **not** intended to cover every contingency. Also note that the tables have been placed so that the central aisle is wider than the other aisles to allow easy access to the stage for award winners and presenters.

(remainder of this page deliberately left blank)



CATERING

A conference marches on its stomach and you get more complaints about food than any other issue at a conference - well unless you are in a hotel with dysfunctional Internet.

You should be sure to check independent reviews of the hotel/venue where the two main events will take place to insure the food is good. Once you have a short list of a few venues, you should try and arrange to drop in when other events are in progress and sample the food behind the scenes [sometimes called a “Tasting” by banquet people].

You should also take a walk through the kitchen during your inspection tour to insure that it is clean and well organized.



MEAL SERVICE TYPES

There are two main kinds of meal service offered by hotels and conference venues; “buffet” service and “plated service”. There are also some minor variations as discussed below.

PLATED SERVICE

The meals are arranged [plated] in the service area and then brought by serving staff to your table. A different version is sometimes available where the serving staff bring plates to the table first, then trays of food are brought to the table and each person is served individually.

PROS:

- Plated meals can have a good presentation adding perceived value.
- Most people consider plated service to be more “classy” as you are served at your table.

CONS:

- Plated service always takes longer because of the need to wait until the last served table has finished a course before clearing and serving the next course.
- If there are any delays, plated meals sitting in warming ovens can become stale.
- Special diet meals [diabetic/vegetarian/kosher] are more difficult to provide.
- Limited socializing as members mostly remain seated at their tables.

Plated Service Menu selection

Hotels and banquet facilities generally have a range of set meals that they offer in the plated service format. The price of these per head varies depending on the number of courses and the complexity of the main dish. Obviously a lobster or steak dinner will cost more than your standard roast beef banquet or chicken dinner. There is generally not much one can do to improve on the meal by adding extras.

BUFFET SERVICE

This is exactly what it says - the meal is served in large dishes or on platters on tables and the members help themselves. This allows you to offer a wide variety of foods for the members, including local delicacies. In a variation, you can have buffet service but with a server/chef at a “hot table” at one end of the buffet to carve a roast or serve the hot foods. The price per-head again depends on the amount and type of food served

PROS:

- Buffet service allows members to select their own meal in accordance with their tastes, appetite, and any special dietary needs such as vegetarian.
- Buffet service has the advantage of being quite fast, especially if the venue can divide the buffet into two sets of tables for larger groups [over 120].
- More socializing opportunities as people are moving around the room to and from the buffet.
- Buffet service is generally lower cost on a per-head basis as less serving staff is required.

CONS:

- Buffet service is not considered “classy” as you have to get your own food.

Buffet Menu selection

You usually have a bit more latitude with menu selection in the buffet format than with plated service .. This is because of economies of scale, and being able to serve the food in bulk containers so that spoilage is less of an issue.

Facilities typically offer from 2 to 6 different levels of buffet based on the number of dishes included. Most facilities will allow you to add in extra dishes or combine a buffet with other offerings such as a sweet table, cheese trays, etc.

About 20 to 25% of the food provided on a buffet does not get eaten. A money saving way to make a good impression is to select one of the smaller buffets, then add a cheese tray and some extra salads and perhaps an additional hot vegetable dish [avoid adding meat/fish

dishes as these are usually the most costly] to offer a better selection and the appearance of a more lavish spread.

MENU SELECTION TIPS

These tips apply to both plated and buffet service:

Vegetarian

Make sure that you offer Vegetarian options for those members who want them. For plated service, this might mean polling members in advance on the Laserist list. With buffet service, be sure to include at least one hot vegetarian dish. If it is not obvious that the dish is vegetarian [vegetarian lasagne or chilli for example] then make sure it is marked as vegetarian with a tent card on the table in front of it.



Local delicacies

Your country or region may be famous for certain local dishes and you want to show these off to your guests. However, not everyone will want to try some of the more exotic items and may be revolted at the thought of eating roast guinea pig [I found it delicious] or fried worms [too crunchy for me]. Thus it is not a good idea to include this kind of food in a plated service meal where there are no other options for members.

At a buffet service meal, given a little creativity and budget, you can provide some of the local culinary delights. You could arrange to have a separate section or buffet table where these items are provided, suitably covered in local fabrics and decorated in local style, possibly with a server in ethnic costume to tell people about the local foods.

Local serving customs

Some countries have unique or unusual culinary customs which members may enjoy. In many tropical and semi-tropical areas, outdoor meals in the form of a BBQ, Luau, roast pig/sheep on a spit, etc., are very popular. Given the right layout of the venue, it may be possible to stage one of these at an area adjacent to the venue - either as the opening night welcome party, or before the Laseoff. If you are going to have one of those, consider bringing in suitable ethnic entertainment and props so as to give members the best impression of your country and its unique heritage/culture.

Other local culinary customs such as flaming dishes or food served in unusual containers, may lend themselves to being integrated into a plated service banquet.

Fish dishes

Fish/seafood dishes, while popular, are not universally liked and can be dangerous to those with allergies thus they should **never** be served as the main dish in a plated service format,

and seafood should **not** be served as one of the main hot dishes in a buffet unless at least two other hot meat dish choices are available.

A popular and showy way of integrating fish into the buffet is to have the hotel/conference center prepare a whole cold, fish on a decorated platter and offer that as one of the buffet items, or add (a clearly marked with a tent card in front of it/them unless they are obviously fish) seafood salad or shrimp plate.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The hotel or conference center you choose has to have a suitable infrastructure in order to handle the ILDA meeting. When considering the infrastructure, you want to look at more than just the banquet and meeting rooms, power and water; you also need to look at other areas, particularly communications, which will directly affect members.

TELEPHONE

Does the hotel have a proper telephone system? Is Direct International Dialling (IDD) available to guests? Do guests get to leave messages with an operator? If so, are the messages delivered to the room or the front desk? If the hotel has a voicemail system on the phones, does it work properly?



Does your country use GSM, CDMA or both for the mobile/cellular phone network? It is easy for tourists to connect their mobiles to the local system through a “pay as you go” SIM card or some other option? Are short term mobile/cellular rentals available and where?

BUSINESS CENTER

Does the hotel have a business center where members can send and receive faxes, make copies, etc? If not, what is the location of the nearest place offering these services - it should be within walking distance [1 Km maximum]. For those members, and official business, who may need to duplicate a large number of copies, have the location of the closest print/copy shop available along with directions on how to get there from the hotel. You should also check to see if the copy store offers pick/up delivery services.



TIP: The Executive director and ILDA board will need to prepare and print paperwork for the meetings. While they can easily bring laptops, a good printer is a bulky and heavy item.

While it is possible to use the hotel business center, it is best if a printer is available to ILDA 24 hours a day, in locations such as the Laseoff/Awards Banquet hall where it is most convenient. Therefore, you should be prepared to supply a good quality, fast laser or inkjet printer. You should also have related supplies such as cables, printer driver software, replacement toner or ink, and at least two reams of white A4 or letter-sized paper.

You may also wish to have a similar printer in the production office for your own use as well as for ILDA members who need to print a few pages.

TV CHANNELS

Does the hotel offer any TV channels in English (if you are in a non-English speaking country)? English news channels are particularly favoured as it allows members to keep up with the news of the world. If these channels are available, then this should be noted in your feasibility study and members leaflet.

CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT

Is the Check in/out desk large and capable of serving more than one arriving/departing guest at a time? Is it adequately staffed during business hours? Are the elevators conveniently located to the reception area? Does the hotel have rolling luggage carts/racks which guests can use?

AMENITIES

What amenities such as a swimming pool, sauna, health club/fitness center, laundry, room-service, etc., etc., does the hotel offer. You will want to make an inspection of these facilities as well to insure they are suitable. You should make a short summary for your presentation listing these amenities.

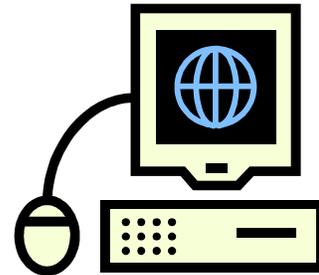
TOURISM OPTIONS

Are there any nearby famous/scenic/tourist attractions? Having invited the members to come all the way to your country, you should make it as easy as possible for them to see more than just the airport and the hotel!

Does the hotel offer a service to book local tours for the members? Can your local travel agent provide day and overnight trips? If there is some local “must see” attraction that you can consider offering as a day trip to members provided it is scheduled in such a way that it will not conflict with the meeting events.

INTERNET

In the 21st century, the Internet has become a vital and cost effective way for professionals to keep in touch. ILDA members tend to be computer literate and heavy users of the Internet thus Internet service is vital to the success of the ILDA meetings.



Does the hotel offer in-room high-speed Internet - either included in the room cost or at additional cost? Be wary of hotel claims to have Internet service throughout the hotel - I stayed at famous hotel in Shanghai, China which claimed to have in-room internet but it turned out that all the guests in the hotel were sharing a 64K wireless connection which was slower than dial-up during peak hours.

Are all the rooms equipped for Internet service or only certain rooms/floors? How is the Internet connection delivered - CAT5 connector or Wi-Fi? Have you personally tested the connection in a couple of sample rooms with a laptop to see if it works? Have you performed a bandwidth speed test to see if you are getting reasonable speeds?

If in-room Internet is not available (or not acceptable), does the hotel offer other options such as an on-site Internet café or a business center with Internet connections? If so, how many? Can that reasonably accommodate the needs of ILDA members and other hotel guests - especially considering that the greatest demand from members will be during meal breaks and time off? Is the hotel willing to allow you to connect a wireless router to their system (especially if you are willing to pay a small fee) so that you can provide Internet to the members via Wi-Fi with SSID security?

Wireless routers and repeaters are very inexpensive [See for example the Linksys WRT54GS router and the Linksys WRE54G repeater]. Even if the distance between the Net connection and the ILDA office or members Net access area is too far for reliable service, a repeater strategically located in a hallway or service corridor can boost the signal without running cables.



You should summarize the results of your findings both in the board Feasibility study and the members leaflet. The summary can be very brief E.G.:

“The <hotel name> offer guests in-room Internet connection via CAT5/Wi-Fi which runs at speeds of around ???K. The hotel does/does not provide CAT5 patch cables. The In-room Internet is included/not included in the room/costs \$?? US\$/day. Service is available in all rooms/a limited number of rooms so state your Internet preference when reserving your room”.

Naturally, that must be adjusted to reflect your venue.

In the event that the hotel is an otherwise fine establishment, but in-room internet service is lacking or has only limited availability, or the Net access offered is on only 2 or 3 work stations, then you will have to set up Internet access for the members in either the ILDA or the conference office. You can make wired access available during office hours, but Wi-Fi can be available 24/7 provided it has basic SSID security and the membership is informed of the SSID code. This “Internet Café” for ILDA can also function as a social gathering point for the membership.

To provide Internet access, you will need a high-speed connection. If the hotel already has a high speed connection, find out if you can arrange to get a feed from their main router delivered to the room in which you will set up the Internet access area. If this is not possible for technical or logistical reasons, then you will have to get an outside connection. The room may be equipped with a phone line or provision to connect outside lines, or a Cable TV connection. The cable option is usually the fastest and simplest to implement as DSL require the right line conditions. You will have to speak to the local ISP and make arrangements with them for a minimum of a 256K line.

Due to provisioning and set-up/tear-down charges, you may land up paying 2 months of regular fees just to get a week’s service. Be sure to include the cost of the Internet Service provider if you are going to get an outside connection in your budget. You should not include the cost of the router/WAP and cables as these are very small and you may be bale to borrow the equipment, or use/sell it after the meeting.

You will need some long tables with tablecloths, cables long enough to get 2 wired connections to each table, a power bar/strip with 4 or more outlets, surge protection and proper grounding located on the top of each table and a sign providing the SSID for the WAP.

Further refinements would be two foam-core dividers on each table to separate the table into three areas and provide users with some privacy [and to provide an ideal place to display sponsor logos]. Set the tables up along the walls and set the chairs between the wall and the table so that users screens are not exposed to full view.

You may also want to consider providing at least one fully functioning computer connected to the Internet.

INTERNET CAFE OPTION

In that event that the hotel is clueless about internet, and it is technically difficult or prohibitively expensive to provide services to the members through an outside connection, then you need to know the location of the local Internet Café which must be within walking distance of the hotel [1 Km/.62 mile or less].

You should visit the establishment in advance, and again a few days before the meeting starts and explain to the management that you will be sending ILDA members to their facilities. In the event that English is not the main official language, you must explain to

the management that most members have their own laptops and need to plug them in rather than using the provided computers. This is especially important in non-English countries which use non-standard keyboards. Be sure that all staff at the facility are advised to allow ILDA members to plug-in, preferably with a memo in the Net Café office or reception desk.

SCHEDULING

ILDA meetings usually seem hectic to the members due to a crowded schedule. Here are some tips that can make the conference more pleasant for members. These tips apply mostly to an ILDA only meeting - if the meeting is held in conjunction with a trade show, then the schedule is usually adjusted to suit the Trade Show schedule.



MEALS

You should schedule at least 1 hour for breakfast, 90 minutes for lunch, 120 minutes for a plated service dinner and 90 minutes for a buffet dinner. The duration is from when the doors open, or the meal is served, until the last portion of the event, or the next meeting/seminar starts. This will give members sufficient time for leisurely meal and some networking before the next segment of the conference. A 90 minute lunch is also sufficient time for a member to have a fast meal and make a trip to bank machine or perform some other errand without missing much.

NETWORKING

One of the most important functions of any Conferences is networking - members having the opportunity to chat with other members and to exchange ideas, news and technical tips. It is very important to arrange the schedule in such a way that there is sufficient time for this important activity. This can be accomplished by making meals and breaks long enough, that there is plenty of time for members to network.

EVENT START AND END TIMES

On the first day, it may be feasible to have an earlier start and breakfast, but it is not reasonable to expect people who have stayed up until 01:00 or 02:00 the night before, to get up at 08:00 in order to have breakfast and be in an 09:00 meeting,

Events should not start before 10:00, especially if there has been a late night event the day before such as the Laseoff/Awards - breakfast time must be arranged accordingly. On days when there has been an event the night before, the first event of the following days should start at 10:00 and breakfast should be from 09:00 until 10:00 to give the members time for the sleep they need.

Event end time should be taken into consideration based on the start time of the next day's events. IF the meetings start at 09:00 the next day, any event should finish by midnight so as to allow members time to sleep - even if they do not and hang around in the bar/lobby till all hours, you made a schedule which offered them enough time.

Remember that no member is forced/required to attend a particular event so you may see members doing other activities rather than official Conference events. It's their choice and as long as they have paid for the events they wish to attend, they are free to do as they please in attending or not attending the events.

Here is an example schedule which gives the layout for a more relaxed ILDA event. The events listed are typical of an ILDA conference but not all may be scheduled. This is an example only and will need to be adjusted in consultation with the Board to suit ILDA.

Day 0	
Daytime	Set up ILDA meeting and finish all last minute arrangements with the hotel. If there is a User Group meeting held in conjunction with ILDA, this may be the best day to schedule this meeting. The user groups are independent of ILDA but you should be ready to assist them with any arrangements they may need to make for their event.
Check-in time onwards	Be ready for the early crowd to arrive and have your "Members Info Sheets" printed and ready for hand out at the reception well in advance. All of the facilities for members should now be operational and ready for use (Offices, Internet, Board meeting room, etc.) except the theatre.
Optional tourism	This may be the best time to offer an afternoon trip to a local tourist attraction as it does not conflict with official ILDA events.
16:00	ILDA should make registration available, either in the lobby, or announce it with signage giving the location so that members can get their badges and programs
18:00	Optional reception and/or welcome event for members. This can take the form of a "cash bar" event with some limited snacks/finger-foods available.
19:00	If your country offers some distinctive food, outdoor meals or other local serving customs, this may be the time to provide these for the members. Since this is the Opening of the conference, many members will have been traveling that day, and there will be events in the morning, this event should end around 22:30 or 23:00.

Day 1	
08:00 - 08:50	Breakfast (and if possible, ILDA registration near/in the breakfast area).

09:00 - 10.30	ATW part 1
10:30 - 11:00	Refreshment break
11:00 - 12:30	ATW part 2
12:30 - 14:00	ATW Lunch Break
14:00 - 16:00 or 16:30	ATW part 3
16:00 or 16:30 onwards	Free time (Networking) and dinner on your own
NOTE	If the ATW will run longer than 16:00 to 16:30, then an afternoon refreshment break may need to be added and the balance of the schedule adjusted.

Day 2	
08:00 - 08:50	Breakfast (and if possible, ILDA registration near/in the breakfast area).
09:00 - 10.30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 1
10:30 - 11:00	Refreshment break
11:00 - 12:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 2
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 17:00	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 3
17:00 - 18:30	Free time (Networking)
18:30 to 19:00	Cocktails (cash bar) in the lobby of, or in the ILDA Theatre venue
18:50	Doors to the ILDA theatre open and members may enter
19:00 0 20:15	Laseoff Dinner (Usually Buffet service)

20:15	Announce start of event at 20:30 and have hotel clear the meal service
20:30 - 01:00	Laseoff show

Day 3	
09:00 - 09:50	Breakfast
10:00 - 12:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 1
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 15:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 2
15:30 - 16:00	Afternoon refreshment break
16:00 - 17:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 3
17:30 to 18:30	Free time (Networking)
18:30 to 19:00	Cocktails (cash bar) in the lobby of the ILDA Theatre location
18:50	Doors to the ILDA theatre open and members may enter
19:00 0 20:30	Laseoff Dinner (Usually Plated service)
20:30	Announce start of event at 20:45 and have hotel clear the meal service
20:45 - 01:00	ILDA Awards Show

Day 4	
09:00 - 09:50	Breakfast
10:00 - 12:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 1
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch Break

14:00 - 15:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 2
15:30 - 16:00	Afternoon refreshment break
16:00 - 17:30	Meetings/Seminars/Trade show part 3
17:30	End of official ILDA events (dinner on your own)

Day 5 Optional	
Not too early!	This may be the best time to offer a trip to a local tourist attraction as it does not conflict with official ILDA event.

MEAL PLAN

The meal plan (provided for budgeting purposes) for the above schedule consists of:

- 4 - Breakfasts
- 2 - Morning Refreshment breaks
- 4 - Lunches
- 2 - (possibly 3) Afternoon refreshments breaks
- 2 - Dinners (Laseoff and Awards)

Once again, this is an ideal and theoretical schedule. You will need to work with the ILDA board to implement it in the manner best suited to ILDA. If the meeting schedule is implemented such that the morning event start times are adjusted to take into account the night before activities, the Breaks for networking and the longer meal times are observed, then the members will enjoy a more relaxed ILDA meeting.

SUPPORT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Other than the obvious Production services (Sound, Lighting and Video) you will need to support the ILDA meeting, there are other important support,/emergency services and contingency plans required for the conference:



AIRPORT SHUTTLE AND TRANSPORTATION

Members need to know how to get from the airport or train station to the ILDA meeting venue other than the obvious Taxi option. If there are regular busses/trains/metro service, let the members know in advance.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Members need to know what public transportation is available to get them from the ILDA meeting venue to the “downtown” area of your city.

FIRE

You must have the phone number of the local fire brigade as accidents can happen. Since we will be using smoke machines, the hotel staff needs to understand that and check with you first if they see smoke in the hallways **before** calling the fire department.

You should also have a Fire extinguisher stage left and stage right next to the stairs, and a third extinguisher available in the master control area as those are the most likely places a fire would start, and places where your production staff knows to find extinguishers.

MEDICAL

You should know the rules for the acceptance of visitors as patients in an emergency treatment facility or hospital. Some countries only allow “foreigners” to go to certain hospitals. If there are rules of this nature in your country, it is probably wise to visit the facility where foreign patients would be sent and speak to the administrator there to make them aware of ILDA and the possibility that member may seek medical services there. You should also discuss the facility's payment options and how they deal with foreign patients who are covered by out-of-country medical insurance.

If you are in a non English speaking country, it is imperative that you locate a doctor, clinic or hospital where they have English speaking medical staff. You should have a 24 hour number for the English speaking staff available in your emergency numbers list.

LEGAL

The laws of every country are different and while ILDA members are generally a law-abiding bunch, there can be situations where they can get in trouble with the law or break some local law/custom inadvertently. If there are certain local laws/customs that could be an issue for members [no smoking in public, women must wear veils in public, not permitted to import alcohol or certain books/movies, etc.], members need to be made aware of this

You need to know the rules in this regards and if an ILDA member were to be arrested, what police station or prison would they be taken to. You should also locate a reliable, English speaking lawyer who would be willing to handle any situations of this nature. This may require paying the lawyer a small retainer fee so as to be on call in case of any problems.

CUSTOMS BROKER

Some members will be bringing valuable items [cameras, laptops] or goods to display at the trade show or for use at the ILDA event. If these are small items brought into the country in the member's baggage, are there any customs rules/declarations which must be observed to get these in and out of your country? You should know the rules in this regard and be able to give members a short explanation of what they need to do (if anything).

In the case of members who are bringing a booth and hardware to display at the Trade Show, this is typically shipped in advance in a container or boxes. Typically, these kinds of goods are covered by a "temporary import bond" for which there is a nominal fee or a deposit which is returned after the goods leave our country. You will need to locate a reputable and reliable customs broker who can take care of the paperwork for these members. You should have a discussion with them some month in advance of the meetings, and again a few weeks before the meeting so that they are ready to handle inquiries from members.

SPOUSE PROGRAM

Many larger conferences run a "Spouse Program" to provide activities for spouses and family members of the attendees. ILDA has not run a spouse program so far, however, it is always wise to look into the possibilities. Spouse programs typically include some tourisms to local sights of interest, shopping and cultural activities. If you are going to run a spouse program, then you should have a person (preferably the spouse of someone in your group) running the events so that they are available to spend time with the spouses.

Note: This is the 21st century so don't assume all spouses will be female thus the program should be adjusted to have interesting things for both male and female spouses.

All of the information about support and emergency services should be summarized in your Feasibility study to the ILDA Board. A summary of this information, along with emergency contact numbers/info, should be printed on the back of the schedule that your staff has [mentioned earlier] as well as being available on printed sheets posted in the ILDA and production offices.

The basics of the emergency information should be summarised and made available to members some weeks before they arrive for the meeting. A small summary and important local emergency number can also be provided to members in their registration kits.

BUDGET

Now that you have read through the vast list of requirements and details for hosting an ILDA meeting, we get to the most important part of the planning - the budget!

The more reasonable the cost to the members, the more members are likely to attend. This is especially true when you add in the cost of the plane ticket to get to your country so you have to look at the overall cost to members as part of our budget planning.



When speaking to the hotel, you should be aware that the price of food and refreshments can vary due to many factors. Most hotels/conference centers can give you the prices for the catering today, and can then give you a range through which they may increase. Once ILDA has approved the meeting and you have signed a contract with the hotel, the prices for the facilities and services will be “locked in”.

Collect all of the cost of the production equipment, venue, meals, refreshments and services you need as set out herein. You should consider putting this information into a spreadsheet so it can be adjusted as things move along. You can update this spreadsheet a few days before you leave to make your presentation so that you can provide the most recent figures to the members in your presentation, and a copy of the budget spreadsheet on CD for the ILDA Board.

As a final test, calculate what the overall cost of the proposal you are making will be, then divide that by 80 to get an approximate cost for each member. Now add to that the sample airfares you researched earlier from representative cities on the major continents, and you will have some idea as to what the cost to a member from that region will be. Take a good look at those number and consider if you personally would spend that much to attend the ILDA conference.

If the budget figures seem to be too high to you, then go back through your budget and look at what cuts/changes can be made to bring the costs in line with recent ILDA conferences. You have full latitude at this planning stage to design a meeting that has all the elements which showcase your country/region but bear in mind that the Board has the final say and may make further changes/cuts to the budget.

The areas in which you should **never** cut are, extra day of rental for the stage area of the theatre so you have the time to set up the equipment, the quality of the sound, lighting and video equipment to be used, and the quality of the meals for the members.

SUMMARY

Now that you have all of the facts and figures, have located or arranged all of the details and are certain that you can provide ILDA with a high quality conference, its time to organize yourself for the presentation. There are two main elements that you will need for the presentation:

BOARD FEASIBILITY STUDY AND CD

Compile all of the information about your plans and proposal and organize it using your favourite word processor or desktop publishing program into a booklet. Don't just present pages and pages of text, add in illustrations [as you see in this document] that are relevant to the subject matter you are covering on that page. Colour printing is cheap so you should print 5 or 6 copies of your Feasibility Study so that you can hand them out when meeting the board. It is probably also a good idea to turn it into a .PDF file which can be submitted on the accompanying CD.

It is also a good idea to have digital photos of the exterior and interior of the hotel and the facilities where the main events will be held. Don't rely on the hotel to provide these as they will give the standard "propaganda shots" which have been re-touched to look wonderful. Your own photos, while maybe not as professional, will give a better impression of the reality of the facilities. You should include a few key photographs in your printed/PDF feasibility study, but also consider providing additional photos (with captions so people know what they are looking at) on the CD you will present along with your Feasibility Study.

Nobody like surprises so the best approach is to advise the ILDA Board (through the executive director) that you plan to bid for the ILDA meeting, at least a few weeks prior to the ILDA meeting. Try to arrange to meet with the Board before the membership meeting where you plan to make your presentation. This way the Board will have had a chance to review and discuss the proposal - and to let you know if there is a "deal killer" in your feasibility study, or lurking in the wings. When meeting with the Board, be ready to answer any question they may ask. If you do not know the answer, advise the board you will get back to them shortly and then contact whomever has the information you need and be sure to submit it to the Board before the presentation of your invitation to the members.

MEMBER PRESENTATION

If you have prepared at least a year in advance, you can make a presentation to ILDA members at the Annual Conference. This presentation can be as simple or as fancy as you like. Bear in mind that you must be able to make this presentation in 5-6 minutes so as to allow some time for



members' questions - so don't get into too many details like your presentation to the Board - paint with broad strokes. You don't want to waste a lot of time setting up an elaborate presentation so a basic computer slide show or short video will suffice.

You should have compiled a one page flyer to hand out to the membership. This should be colourful with lots of appropriate pictures and enough text to get the message across while providing enough information to cover all of the basics - especially estimated travel and hotel costs [ILDA registration fees to cover the cost of producing the event are set by the ILDA Board].

Print 100 copies of the flyer to bring with you and to distribute at the membership presentation where you will bid for the Conference. You should also make the flyer into a PDF file and provide a copy on the Board CD so that it can be placed on the ILDA web site or sent out to members who are not at the meeting.

To add flair to your presentation, contact your local Tourist board and find out if they can supply you with 100 of their finest glossy brochures - they are there to attract tourists and conferences so they can be quite helpful. You can then hand these out when you hand out the presentation to the members. Also ask the Tourist board if they have any pins/badges, miniature flags or other give-away items with your flag or city name on them to use as handouts.

For even more impact, you could put together your flyer with the Hotel's brochure, the tourist brochure and one or two other relevant items that give an idea of the charms of your corner of the globe; place those together in a simple folder or presentation cover and have 100 kits with you to hand out at the meeting.

Don't be afraid to "campaign" after the invitations have been issued and before the membership votes. Campaigning should be subtle so for example having some extra posters from the tourist bureau so you can make a simple display on a flip-chart stand in the Lobby or outside the meeting/seminar room(s) is better than having a brass band march through the meeting. Remember the pins/badges/give-away items you got from the tourist bureau? You can use those in your campaign by chatting with members in the hallways and at meals to promote your invitation. Those members who seem to be supporting your invitation can be given the badges/buttons to wear to show their support.

As mentioned at the beginning of this guide, have patience! First you are going to need it to run a conference... and secondly, historically, ILDA does not always accept the first invitation from a member... and occasionally the second invitation is also turned down! If you keep coming back every year to promote your invitation and overcome objections, the members will see that you are serious and eventually you will have an ILDA meeting in your location!

A FINAL NOTE

Hosting an ILDA Conference can be exhausting but exhilarating as well. You are showcasing you personally, your company and your country. If everything goes well, you'll have made a lasting impact on ILDA and the laser display industry.

Good luck!