

**YAPC::NA 2009
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
Feedback & Suggestions**



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**a joint production by
Pittsburgh Perl Mongers
& YAPC Conference Surveys**

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An Introduction

This document includes fragments from comments that were submitted by attendees of the 2009 YAPC::NA Perl Conference during a survey taken after the conference had completed. Each survey provided the attendee with the ability to provide suggestions for future events and feedback on the 2009 event.

Following each set of fragments we have responded so you can hopefully understand the reasons behind decisions that were made. These are our own personal thoughts, and merely stated to hopefully explain why some things happened the way they did.

One thing to bear in mind while reading this report, is that everyone's time and effort in putting on the conference was given freely. We did it because we enjoy programming Perl and wanted to have the chance to give something back to the community. All the organisers have full time jobs and were fortunate enough to have partners and family who were willing to put up with losing us for several nights over the last year, in order to bring the conference to Pittsburgh. So a big thanks to them for letting us do it :)

Not everything goes according to plan, and the trials of hosting a conference for several hundred people are not without frustration on the part of the organisers. Hopefully what follows provides a glimpse of the effort involved in organising a conference. To those who submitted their feedback, many thanks for doing so, as it really is very much appreciated. YAPC::NA has now been running for 10 years, and this feedback will hopefully help to improve the event for the future. Long may it continue.

The 2009 organisers of YAPC::NA

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Rating The Conference

After asking attendees to rate the conference, the survey then asked the attendee whether there were any strong views.

- (1) If a speaker is not present or not prepared for a talk, they should not attempt to give it. I missed out on some good sessions because I committed to a parallel session that turned out to be a major disappointment. Despite the "move between rooms" policy, it is awkward to leave during a session and difficult to get a seat in another running session.

(2) More space for sessions would be nice!
- 1) There ought to be a whiteboard or bulletin board as part of the main conference space clearly marked as a space where people can post notes and self-organize spur-of-the-moment BOF sessions. This is something that they do at PyCon, to great success, and also at at least some past YAPCs. (I believe this was the case at Chicago.) I know I did not regularly check the wiki BOF page after the day before the conference, and frankly the BOF information is kind of buried there; it's a place that is very easy to ignore, especially for conference first timers who don't use irc. (Or for anyone with network/laptop troubles.) I'm also aware of a lot of confusion about, for instance, where the Bad Movie BOF was held, and when; all you've got on the wiki page (still) is "Tuesday or Wednesday evening: (For the time and place, just find one of us)". If there was a central place for checking this out, it would help. I'm especially concerned about the shy newbies who are at their first YAPC and don't know who to ask; I'd like to make it easier for them to join in the fun.

2) I'd pay an extra \$10 to my conference fee for nonstop coffee, from the 8 am opening bell to 5 pm. Having to crawl out of bed after the previous night's doding while crunk only to find that we've got to wait at least an hour for wake-juice is just AWFUL. It seems that having opening-hour coffee only happens at some YAPCs; if it's just a money thing, as I said I'd be willing to pay more. I find it hard to believe that University caterers just won't supply it at the opening hour, but if that's the case, then I'd pitch in for the conference organizers to keep an urn or coffee pot of their own going (or pick up a few gallons of coffee from a chain; that's not a joke, I know that, for instance, Einstein Bagels and possibly Panera sell coffee that way) until the caterers finally show up to do their job. Outside of the coffee, the food was perfectly fine, and the conference dinner was magnificent. The arrival dinner was a little short on food for the late comers.

3) The schedule printout in the conference packet was a mess; at least, my copy was out of order and missing a day. On behalf of everyone who also might have had some issues with their laptop, PLEASE DON'T DO THAT. I didn't print out a copy of the schedule in advance of arriving, because I was expecting one to be given to me. Also, the wiki's schedule has no "print all schedule pages as one document without the web page sidebars" option, which would be a really, really fantastic feature to add to whatever software the conference web pages are running on. (Seriously, what is running the conference web pages? Where is the

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source? I'd be interesting in trying to write a patch for this, if I could see the source. If the conference web code is on github, please post a link to the yapc mailing list. This assumes that the wiki/schedule code is a consistent code base reused by all the YAPCs, which I thought was the case.) Also, there MUST be a map to the arrival dinner, or to the arrival dinner pick-up/meet-up point, in the conference packet. I was completely lost trying to get there, and almost didn't get any food.

4) While the badges/nametags looked better than in the past, there should still have been room for the nickname/handle. I would like to propose that a standard OO.org template be designed, that can be used by all future conferences, and which has all the relevant information in place, with font sizes of appropriate visibility. Certain features (like a background watermark image, side image, font colors or types) should be customizable, but the main information should be a set format and a done deal. We should not be reinventing the wheel on this year after year, especially when the reinventions so frequently contain varying degrees of fail.

5) Finally, and I'm sure this is either an unworkable pipe-dream for multiple reasons, or simply WAY too much work, but I'd love it if this could be done to reduce the number of schedule conflicts: Have conference goers vote on which talks (that have already been selected by the conference committee) they'd like to attend, ranked by their importance. Then, feed this data into a system that would then create a schedule where the least number of people suffer conflicts in the talks of their primary preference.

- 1: I have answered this survey about "YAPC", as I think you want.
- 2: But I primarily attended for PVMW - I left Tuesday AM .
- 3: On the subject of PVMW, nice job. In particular, I want to single out Mr. Blackwell for spectacular service in getting things organized and supporting those of us that went. He was clever, helpful, committed, and generous, over and over again.
- Although I think it is fine that YAPC doesn't provide lunch (for free), it would be good if they organized a lunch that the participants could pay for, as YAPC::NA 2008.
- Basset hounds got long ears.
- being a speaker made a lot of things weird; for example, it kept telling me to buy a ticket
- Better advertising of BOF locations... Some sort of "live" information display might be nice to direct people along the way to highlight locations. Definately liked having all three tracks on all poster boards.
- BOFS: In past years the WIKI was setup as: monday BOF's, TuesdayBOFS, etc. This required BOFS to set a time before their day was over. Not a lot of BOFS happened because there wasn't a deadline. The morning and afternnon breaks could be longer, allowing a little bit of time in the hallway track without missing talks. If I were to have any conversation between 8-5 (excluding lunch) it meant that I was going to miss a talk with no exceptions.
- CMU facility (especially WiFi) rocks, and accommodation is not really bad. It would be nice if sessions were taped, since you have lots of quality talks in the same slot.

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- CMU Wireless set a precedent for WiFi Offerings at any and all conferences. Spectacular. I had expectations of Continental Breakfast in the morning. BOF Advertisements were not efficient, perhaps in addition to signage in the main area, announcements after last talk before lunch in all rooms?
- Conference hotel was VERY sub-standard, however, shuttle bus was good feature.
- For god's sake stop making talks start at 8am. Start at 8:30! Consider more in-depth talks if you can get speakers and less fluffy 20 minute sprints through topics. Also forbid ANYONE to do a talk on How to stop being a N00b unless they're actually going to do something other than tell DailyWTF stories. Call those talks "How I cleaned up after the pup" or something. Funny but detrimental when marketed to overly cautious people as help. This needs to be a categorical ban which is why I put it here. I'll say a lot more on that particular review.
- Getting my parking pass was a hassle. I was originally told it would be available at the registration desk, but then ended up having to schlep across campus to get it. I ended up missing a perl talk because of that.
- Great job!
- Hotel was too far away. Nothing you guys could do about it, but it kinda sucked. I regretted staying in the dorms in Chicago because the beds were crap and I slept horribly, and then regretted not staying in the dorms this year because it took a long time to get there and back each day.
- I appreciated the vegan options at the dinner. My only food-related request for the future would be to provide soy milk when serving coffee and tea.
- I found links in e-mail messages to content on the website that I could not find through the navigation. I also found it strange that some time-sensitive navigation remained even after the deadline had passed (submit a talk). I did not feel like the e-mail messages to the list adequately kept me in the loop. I do not recall receiving a message letting me know the call for talks was open, nor that my talk had been submitted, nor accepted.
- I think perhaps a bio of teachers would help me make a better decision on which classes to choose in case I don't know anything about the topics. Better descriptions of the classes would also be helpful. I ended up sitting in for some truly disappointing classes, such as Leonard Miller's "how to stop being a noob" session, and David Moreno's "Perl in the time of social networks" session. I recognize that the instructors volunteer to do this, but feeling like I'm leaving without taking much back is not going to be a good report, and offer less motivation to my managers to send me again next year. To name some positive courses: Bruce Gray, Patrick Michaud,, Matt Truth, Michael Schwern, Nicholas Perez, Scott Walter, and Steven Lembark were all classes were all good speakers and instructors and coming back to see more of their teachings would be great.
- I wasted two days trying to get onto the local wired network, ended up missing the entire Parrot session.
- I would rank Food Service higher if the campus stores weren't closed on Sunday when we

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arrived. But the food district wasn't far away. Would have been better if I'd learned about that before Monday.

- It is very discouraging to need to work so hard to hear the speakers, who do not adjust the volume on the microphones properly (perhaps the YAPC organizers should do this, before every speech, modifying the gain to account for the speaker's volume, the particular microphone, the place the microphone has been attached to the speaker's shirt... so often the speakers just mumbled, rather than trying to speak clearly.
- Larry Wall has given weak keynotes at the last 2 or 3 YAPC::NAs. I would rather hear something more compelling than just "Larry because it's Larry". At this conference, the launch of Melody during YAPC was huge tech news about Perl, making headlines on CNET, TechCrunch, InformationWeek, etc. Something like that would have been more energizing for the community, I think. Some other time can be used to meet and introduce Larry. (ref: http://news.google.com/news/story?hl=en&q=%22movable+type%22+fork+melody&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ncl=d5dkigMz_KckibM&ei=PuFISufXAZKKMd7VxLAC&sa=X&oi=news_result&ct=more-results&resnum=1) Lightning Talks are a great bang-for-the-buck in terms of the value received compared to time spent. I would like more of them. At PyCon, they open and close each day with lightning talks. I like that idea. There are so many new Perl modules released each day, that one whole track of lightning talks could be devoted just to introducing new modules and distributions. Also, I'm not a fan of Uri's auctions. I'd rather quietly socialize with a small group than listen to Uri on the mic for an hour. I feel like perhaps we ought to form an "Anti-Auction Dinner" for those who would rather avoid the related noise. Of course, the Auction dinner is paid for, which is a draw. Generally, I wouldn't mind of the Auction Dinner were simpler productions, focused more on socializing than grand-scale events and venues. As a regular \$1k+ sponsor, I'm not thrilled to know my money appears to be going towards \$50+/person events. Also, I don't really care about the T-shirts for the most part. I would like an explicit option to not get one. The Pittsburgh T-shirt was my favorite in the past few years. The design was simple and tasteful, and the back was uncluttered without all the usual sponsor logos. I think this makes the shirt much more likely be worn, and sponsors should appreciate that an advertisement on the back of a shirt does no good if the shirt isn't worn due to the ugliness of the logo jumble.
- Last year, the dorms were connected to a large common area. This really encouraged after hours get togethers and collaboration. While this was not possible here, it would have been better for people to have not been spread out among 3 dorms.
- Less Chromatic, less self-promotion, more technical talks
- Loved the staff this year!!! Very helpful and available. Info on time and place of BOFs should be decided quickly (not just that there is one) and placed on both Wiki and big easel near high traffic area so all will notice. The conference dinner and auction was a lot of fun!
- Many people raised their hand when asked if it was their first YAPC, yet no one addressed how the conference usually works (i.e. the BOFs).
- Need to have a good starting point. Ideally I'd have pulled up in front of Mudge, got my

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parking pass, then parked, then proceeded to registration. But instead, I parked at a meter, wandered around asking people where the Unicenter was then wandered back to mudge by foot, then went to collect my car, then back to registration. That's an hour in the toilet. Same with the football stadium. I got there by car and could not figure out which entrance to use with enough certainty to pay park the car. (Why pay 10 or 20 bucks to park a car and then have to walk 2km to try to find something?) I just went and did something else in Pittsburgh which is fine but it would have been nice to socialize a bit given that it's 20h of driving for me to come to Pittsburgh. It was hard to find stuff on the Web site. Your right navigation bar is good but something like Wiki should be broken down into something more functional like the different areas of content.

- No strong views, but you may want to add a item about the auction in the table above.
- Overall it was good. A lot of the talks had a feel of experts talking to their friends/people familiar with the work to some extent. I'm not at that level and so mostly what i got out was some interesting things to look into more...more of awareness raising. The one big exception was the Git is Easy talk. That inspired and took me from being afraid to use it to being able to jump in and start using for my personal stuff.
- Really, really great overall. Re: the BOFs, it was kind of hard to know which ones were scheduled. If the boards for them were a.) MUCH bigger, like really gargantuan, and b.) smack dab in the center of everything, that would have helped a lot.
- Social event at Heinz field was boring.
- Talks in past YAPC's seemed more varied in topic: this year seemed to be described almost entirely as "Moose!" and "Modern Perl (or a rose by any other name)!" The perl community is ripping itself apart at the seams. There seems to be a strong perl5 vs perl6 feud going on, and in the end the friction doesn't convince any standers-by to bother caring one way or another.
- The BOFs seemed to MIA. I know they were supposed to be in the rooms by the cafe, but I never saw any scheduling information or people in the rooms.
- The conference dinner was a bust. I thought the venue was silly and had zero fun. I recognize that I might just be a party-poopier, but after fighting our way there in our own vehicle (because we didn't want to wait till ten to leave) and then being in a huge sports stadium feeling trapped by Uri's voice left me pretty miserable. And the drink tickets for less than half the price of a beer? I would have been happy to have eaten in the conference center for much cheaper and then have gotten breakfast each day.
- The front page of the website only had "latest news" usually, instead I would prefer it have the frontpage used for the info one wants to look up when visiting it: Registration/Location/Schedule/Acomm and stats (number of BOFs etc).. Cant really explain but just having the latest newsletter there was less helpful. Too much stuff was "somewhere on the wiki" about 3-4 clicks from the frontpage.
- The social space across from the talk venue was too small and loud. I would have liked to go there but couldn't because I felt forced out by not enough space and not enough "inside

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voices."

- There were *no* directions/maps available that I could find. I had to go to CMU's website and the Pittsburgh Port Authority to plan every aspect of my trip. The Quality Inn was a sh** hole. Their "hotel restaurant" (as advertised on qualityinn.com) was a Panera. Their fitness room was "out of order". They had a fire alarm at 3am, with no apology let alone compensation. Housekeeping left me without soap twice.
- There were a few non-talks - I believe the one I was most astonished by was the "Intro to Moose" talk on Monday afternoon. It was mostly profanity and hastily thrown together non-slides. Some pre-screening of these things would help prevent us from wasting time, missing better talks.
- There were way too many last-minute schedule changes due to cancellations. You can't control when someone cancels; you can control your contingency plan for cancellations. The quality of the presentations varied too widely; some were absolutely excellent, but others were terribly sub-par and a waste of time ('How not to be a noob' and one of the Moose presentations in the downstairs room are 2 examples that come to mind -- they were both embarrassingly bad.) Regarding the above 2 items, should presenters be vetted, at least a little? Should the content of presentations be reviewed ahead of time to assure at least a minimum of competence in the subject? When the talks were bad they were very bad, and this seems entirely preventable. Let new people present by all means, but make sure they're prepared and try to prevent them from completely embarrassing themselves, which is exactly what happened here. Not fair to the presenters or the attendees. Also, there was plenty of space to accommodate the number of attendees, yet several talks were so crowded there was no room to sit. Better organization/planning could have avoided this... there was no reason to have to stand in a tiny room when a larger one with few people was nearby. This was a pretty serious shortcoming, imo. I actually gave up one afternoon and went back to the hotel because everyone wanted to attend the same talks and there was simply not enough room.
- We drove in for about 6 hours and planned to be there for early registration which was supposed to go to 6 pm. When we arrived around 5:30 or so, early registration was already torn down. This wouldn't have been a problem if the forms for the wireless access had been available at the arrival dinner, but they weren't. Our only option to get online was to track down someone who already had access and to guess at the access codes. That worked, but it was sub-optimal, to be sure. It was a great conference on the whole and I would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in going. The only other thing, which sounds a bit petty, is that the chairs in the upstairs rooms were extremely uncomfortable to the point that it distracted from the talks. I realize that can't necessarily be fixed, but so many hours on them 3 days in a row was a bit painful. ;)
- Would've wished for better information on the venue and directions to the pre-conference courses.
- YAPC this year was very well run!

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For Future Organisers

In the final section of the survey, we asked attendees "Do you have any suggestions for improvement (please give examples where possible)?"

- * A restaurant guide would be helpful.
 - * If a wiki is going to be the primary source of information, the main conference page needs more links to relevant parts of the wiki, and the wiki needs a front page with an index-or-table-of-contents.
 - * Make it more obvious how to sign up for the mailing list.
- * many times the schedule felt a bit too tight (not enough time for talks to run over; to run for coffee; to chat in hall; between talks; go for lunch and get back without rushing) a slightly looser schedule would be nice
 - * dinner was too formal this year. The informal dinner of YAPC::NA 2008 (Chicago) was really nice, and I preferred that much more. (Admittedly, not all venues will have such a great space available.)
- - start at 9:00 each day -- 8:00 is too early
- - provide conference info at dorm check-ins -- no conference info or wifi credentials were provided at early check-ins, which leaves attendees without mobile Internet access in the dark
- - double-sided name tags -- they face forward about 50% of the time
- - T-shirts with a logo on the front and nothing on the back -- not important, but I'm just picky about what I wear
- Accept more talks from new speakers, and less talks per speaker in general. Schedule people travelling from other time zones appropriately, so the aren't both hung over and jet-lagged during their 8am time slot.
- BOF Announcements at the end of last talk before lunch/end of day? Coffee/Continental Breakfast served if talks @ 8am. Have WiFi atleast half as good as CMU.
- BOF sessions need more attention.
- Breakfast! Cut other stuff (eg very expensive venue for conference dinner) before cutting breakfast. It's frustrating to have to worry about getting a meal before talks. I just want to get up, go to the venue, and sit through the first talk with a bagel in my hand. Maybe it seems superfluous, but I think it adds a lot of value to the conference.
- Clearing house for info: both on-line (phone friendly) and irl.
- Do as much work early on to prevent keeping us waiting for info later. write your CFS now, with email addresses and everything. Have a custom google map of the area, and do a little pre work on the wiki to make it easier for us to self organize info. Specifically to have Bofs sign up for a specific day (maybe time too?) when they add the bof, instead of just a list. Also, huge importance for me is to end the talks on time, so that the next speaker can get

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setup. this is HUGE for me. This means that in each room there is a specific person who is to cut off the speaker at the given time. I had to appoint an attendee to help me out for my talks, since there were no room monitors. If offering a corporate rate (and you should), give something in addition, even if overpriced by our standards. Perhaps on the wiki, add a spot for self organized social events.

- Don't start at 8 AM. Provide coffee/tea/water & snacks before the first sessions. 10 minute coffee/tea breaks are too short. More signs to the venue/indoors.
- Don't wait to the last minute! Start early, plan your work, and work your plan! Also, ask Larry Wall to submit his completed talk one month beforehand, so he won't "wing it" for next year's talk! His talks are usually GREAT, but he couldn't "pull and all-nighter" this year he said, so we need to give him more lead time.
- Double-sided name badges and get the call for sponsors-support out earlier
- During the weekend classes, coffee and tea was mostly absent, even during refreshments and lunch. That was a difficulty. I was exhausted from getting in really late the night before due to a delay during layover, and running on about four hours of sleep, and no caffeine really exacerbated the problem. I found tea later in the micro-kitchen, but not good tea, or very easy to prepare (no hot water handy).
- Get the information out there sooner. Start to talk to sponsors now.
- I think the 20 minute talks should scrapped. Its not enough time. Let the talks be 50 minutes with 10 minutes in between. And I like the idea of having a block of lightning talks each day.
- I think you can't have too much information electronically or on signs in high traffic areas. BOFs (especially time and place) need to be advertised on Wiki and on big sign near all the other courses. Signs should be placed everywhere and maps should be given to all participants that include lodging, course locations, and local food choices (both paper and electronic forms). If possible, all schwag should be given out at registration in some sort of bag. I carried T-shirts and other schwag around every day of YAPC|10 because schwag was randomly distributed (kind of annoying).
- I would like the tutorial track back, I met several people who were looking for actual code/tutorials rather than descriptive presentations. My other problem is theres so much to do/visit, so many talks, and not much time to sit down and digest/hack on ideas gained.. This is a hard one to fix tho, as everyone is different.
- I would suggest some kind of user-requested scheduling mechanism. Maybe put the list of courses up for review, and try to design tracks based on "I'd like to see" feedback.
- If something was decided on IRC and I missed it, then it would be difficult to find out when/where a social event would be taking place. I don't have a solution but it would be nice if I could find out where groups were going to each lunch/dinner if I missed something (maybe a social get-together twitter announcement). I also spent a lot of time on Google Maps trying to find a place to eat or a pharmacy. A more comprehensive list of these things

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would help.

- If there is going to be group bidding at the Dinner, that should be announced well before hand so people can organized. Lighting talks should come earlier so people can connect afterwards.
- In previous years, starting in late January the local YAPC organizers would begin to send mail to yapc@mail.pm.org, which has always served as the NA conference's main mailing list. This mail would announce major dates (e.g., deadline for proposals, deadline for early registration) and drive traffic to that year's conference web site. From mid-April onward, traffic on that list would be high. This always built excitement for the conference. This year, however, the conference organizers failed to make early and extensive use of the mailing list. I brought up the lack of traffic on the list, only to be denounced (albeit not by one of the conference organizers) as "spamming the list." As June drew near, I repeatedly had to prod the conference organizers to make use of the mailing list to drive traffic to the web site and to build excitement for the conference. One of the conference organizers said in response, "But I've been tweeting." I noted that past attendees would not necessarily have expected to get most of our news about YAPC from Twitter. The net result of this, IMO, was that there wasn't as much excitement going into this year's YAPC as into previous years'. Frankly, I was very surprised that they got 275 attendees; based on the level of traffic on the mailing list, I would have expected far, far fewer than that. But I'll be that with better, earlier use of the mailing list, the buildup would have been more intense and might have resulted in more (5-10) attendees. So future organizers: Build excitement by using the mailing list early and often. Also: If you are going to have a post-lightning talk "closing keynote" on Day 3, publicize that fact.
- It is very discouraging to need to work so hard to hear the speakers, who do not adjust the volume on the microphones properly (perhaps the YAPC organizers should do this, before every speech, modifying the gain to account for the speaker's volume, the particular microphone, the place the microphone has been attached to the speaker's shirt... so often the speakers just mumbled, rather than trying to speak clearly. The guy who did a lightning talk on the app he created with Comet, AnyEvent, Coro, Continuity and Squatting should be invited to make a 50 minute speech. Wild stuff.
- It should be possible to attend without asking people randomly at the venue about how to find what I need. Other than that everything is great.
- It would have been nice if there was coffee available the entire day.
- Less Chromatic, less self-promotion, more technical talks
- Less stuff should be planned that early.
- Let folks know where to get food if they arrive during the weekend and on-campus venues are closed. Let them know in email before the conference starts. Explicitly state which bus/masstransit route to take to return from the arrival dinner to campus/dorms. Recommend 3-5 cab companies with their phone numbers for non-airport trips to/from campus. Broadly announce a link to an application for splitting large checks. If this exists, a member of the

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party could key in who had what to break it out with tip and tax. something in the spirit of the auction tool. While we had cash at the large group dinners, we did not order symmetrically for an even split.

- make advanced classes longer and beginner classes shorter.
- Make sure it is possible for people to get breakfast before talks begin. In Pittsburgh the campus food places opened no more than half an hour before the talks began, if that.
- More communication with speakers would be helpful including providing speaking tips, details on what is expected, and checkbacks to verify attendance.
- No early talks
- Open the submission process early to give people a sense that something is happening; choose submissions early enough for people to make plans and write the *&^% talks; accept a few un-scheduled "alternate" talks in advance to help deal with cancellations.
- Plan better. Screen presentations for quality!
- Please do some work to make sure that there are a minimum number of conflicts between what talks people will want to attend. Scheduling wasn't awful, but it wasn't that great. A bunch of nerds should be able to do better at such an obvious technical problem.
- Please don't schedule the conference with the day immediately before or after being father's day (a likely travel day).
- Provide more pointers to important areas of the website during the opening talks, such as information about food and other local points of interest. Coffee available throughout the days. Slightly longer morning/afternoon breaks. Ensure there are real moderators for all of the talks to keep on schedule. Have a news page on the website and possibly also a whiteboard with updates to scheduled talks or other important changes so people can easily see when they will want to adjust their plans.
- several simple marketing techniques can be used to encourage the growth and connectedness of the community developed at yapc. since roughly half of participants are first time attendees each year, there exist excellent opportunities for community growth. some examples include: provide better methods of keeping in contact with the conference speakers and attendees. for example, one day after the conference, send an email to all speakers, reminding them to post their slides and provide a link to be included on the conference website. do the same three days after the conference. one week after the conference, send a message to all attendees thanking them for attending and providing a link to all submitted session slides. encourage attendees to share their blog posts and pictures, tagging them appropriately, and providing a central location where links to these posts can be found.
- should have tracks such as web stuff and so on. From this year's schedule, sometimes too much web related talks on the same time and some time just NONE.
- Some information on local dining options would have been nice. Ended up tagging along

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with people who seemed to know where they were going/

- thank you, you rock
- The dinner should probably be in a smaller venue than this year's with stuff that keeps people in one place (sort of) so they socialize longer. Chicago's space with bowling and ping pong was a bit crowded, but I think it made for a better overall party. See earlier notes about exercising some real control over what kind of content goes into a How to stop being a n00b talk. This year's talk was offensive to n00bs as a bunch of us ranted over it at lunch. It would have been a fine talk if it had been labeled "My Daily WTF" or some such. But it was hugely unhelpful and it's too important a topic to keep fucking up.
- The schedule was irregular between 20 minute and 50 minute talks... seemed to get people jumping up and down a lot. Perhaps this could be ammended some how to prevent / reduce this from happening.
- This may seem strange, but I'm not really a fan of name tag wearing. For the organizers perhaps yes, but I find that while it is a convenience to discovering who people are, it is a bit rude to be gazing at a name on people's chest for an introduction to them. It seems much more polite and positive to be introduced to people through others or directly. The point being there is a verbal exchange and a hand-shake. What I would do is have a badge to wear if identification is really needed (which I'm not sure it is). Those that want to wear a name tag can do so. Basically provide a choice.
- This was definitely covered ad nauseam throughout the conference, but it would've been nice to have clearer indication of where exactly the conference was. I'm an Oakland local and am pretty familiar with the CMU campus, but I don't know what the buildings are, so when I was trying to find the conference on Monday, I wasn't sure what building to be in. (CMU's website for the building was similarly unhelpful.) More coffee (doesn't need to be free, heck, some mornings I would've gladly paid \$5) availability would be nice.
- When printing the schedules maybe put a start and end time for the current talk. Seems like a lot of speakers thought that they had to end at the time that was listed for the next talk. Not five minutes before that.

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For The Pittsburgh Organisers

For the final question of the survey, we asked "Do you have any feedback you would like to give specifically to this year's organisers?"

- Casey's enthusiasm was terrific; his opening presentation with Robert was perfect: upbeat, funny. The TPF presentation was much better than expected, but it's still (like YAPC 2008) not a good idea to start a technical conference -- especially one that includes noobies -- with TPF. Start it with something cool in the way of new apps or techniques. Why Larry Wall can't take the time to properly prepare a speech for the one annual conference in North America mystifies me. People have come from all over the country and even the world in part to hear him; Larry's a great guy and of course fundamentally a geek, so he gets a lot of slack for that, but honestly. It dishonors the attendees for him to fail to prepare. I have heard him make some great speeches, such as YAPC 2005's discussion of what it takes to make up a community. People (not just in the Perl community) need to hear a State of the Onion speech from him. The bozo who spoke about Moose at the end of the first day should be reprimanded. Talk about dishonoring your attendees. That guy was not cute; one or two slides of real Moose would have been plenty, but he ran it into the ground with many such slides, wasting out time. If he didn't have any slides and didn't know much about the application -- which he said was his excuse -- then somebody else should have made the presentation. It's especially regrettable because some attendees were at YAPC for the first time, and because Moose (and hence "Introduction to Moose") is such a big deal for Perl at this point. He really fucked up (as mst might say). It made me mad. Mygawd, what a TERRIFIC conference dinner and auction. I loved the tour of the stadium. Bravo! The lightning talks were excellent. It would be helpful to list the speakers on the wiki so people can get in touch with them afterwards. I'd like to follow up with some of them. I wish the TPF speaker had spent some time describing the projects that have been funded and their results, not just the stats on how many applied, how many were funded, etc. Monday's speakers were the weakest of the three days; this is unfortunate because it's so important to get things started right. We needed a map showing where Mudge Hall was, and how to get from it to the dorms. Also, somebody should have stayed at Mudge Hall until 6 p.m. as advertised. Casey's apology was a little weak, though of course sincere.
- Could've been helpful to have a little more guidance on which busses would have taken us between the arrival dinner and campus. Or refer to the location on the first floor where all the transit maps were. I didn't happen across them until the last day, and I don't (yet) have an iPhone. Heck, maybe a dedicated volunteer who would be available to help plan the routes to take. Baggage check on Wednesday was awesome! Wireless was awesome after getting a key! (The dorm checkin person could have mentioned that this would be a separate process; the very nice conference hotline person pointed this out when I called the number in the booklet in the dorms.) Posting the YAPC|10 cell phone number by email ahead of the conference was awesome!
- Excellent and worthwhile conference. Thanks!

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- For the Love of God. Never again, under any circumstance known to man, schedule ANY talk to start at 8am. YAPC is not work. YAPC should not feel like work. Starting at 8am gives the entire conference a work-like feel to it instead of a fun, laid-back, learning venue.
- Good job
- Good job!!!!
- Good job.
- Great job - everything seemed to go smoothly. Choosing the Heinz field for a technical conference was less than optimal, as a lot of us couldn't care less about sports and stadiums.
- great job guys. If I'd add anything it'd be to find a way to organize your work flow and delegate mercilessly. Don't be afraid to conscript.
- Great job thanks for all the hard work! We might have liked it if our company name had been spelled correctly in the catalog and website and such (I assume "VirtualAdmin" was supposed to be us...our company is "Virtualmin"), but no big deal.
- great job!
- Great job! Good venue, snacks, location with coffee shop etc, good accommodation.
- Great job! I've been to two PPW's and I was amazed at how well you scaled up to a YAPC.
- Great job! Thanks! ZERO wifi problems!!
- Great logo!
- Great venue, great city and good job. The talks were good overall, but there were a couple of timeslots where nothing appealed to me. Also it seems that given there were several empty slots it might have made more sense to just have 3 tracks going at once, but I don't fault anyone with wanting to have more variety or selection.
- I enjoyed the panel discussion at the end of the conference.
- I kind of feel like the restaurant for the Arrival dinner took us for a ride. 20-something bucks a head for that pretty cheap and low-quality food was excessive. Seems like something more in the neighborhood of \$10 a head would have been about right.
- I really felt that the town hall on the last day was too hypercritical to the organizers. The team did a fantastic job planning and executing the conference. Even overlooked accommodations such as the conference dinner transportation dropping me off in front of my hotel was a very important part of the overall experience.
- I thought it was fairly well done in terms of organizational perspectives, minus the 8 am starting point.
- I was taken aback that during the panel Q&A session at the end of the conference, the mic was not handed to people so they could ask their own question. I was a little disappointed by the speaker dinner. I think it was nice having it on campus, so I could easily leave whenever

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I needed to, but the venue was very small. It seemed like the speaker dinner was just thrown together with little or no prior planning. On the other hand, the banquet on Tuesday was really nice. The tables in each room were really nice, and the wifi was very reliable.

- In previous years, starting in late January the local YAPC organizers would begin to send mail to yapc@mail.pm.org, which has always served as the NA conference's main mailing list. This mail would announce major dates (e.g., deadline for proposals, deadline for early registration) and drive traffic to that year's conference web site. From mid-April onward, traffic on that list would be high. This always built excitement for the conference. This year, however, the conference organizers failed to make early and extensive use of the mailing list. I brought up the lack of traffic on the list, only to be denounced (albeit not by one of the conference organizers) as "spamming the list." As June drew near, I repeatedly had to prod the conference organizers to make use of the mailing list to drive traffic to the web site and to build excitement for the conference. One of the conference organizers said in response, "But I've been tweeting." I noted that past attendees would not necessarily have expected to get most of our news about YAPC from Twitter. The net result of this, IMO, was that there wasn't as much excitement going into this year's YAPC as into previous years'. Frankly, I was very surprised that they got 275 attendees; based on the level of traffic on the mailing list, I would have expected far, far fewer than that. But I'll be that with better, earlier use of the mailing list, the buildup would have been more intense and might have resulted in more (5-10) attendees. Note: This did not detract from the conference itself. Day 3: I had no sense that there would be a "final keynote" talk after the lightning talks, unlike in previous years. Assuming that there would be none, and having suffered a medical problem, I left the conference at the conclusion of the lightning talks. Only later was I told that Chip Salzenburg gave some kind of closing talk. I would have stayed around for that.
- Make maps! I felt like I was always surrounded by good places to go for lunch but was afraid to try and find one in the time allotted. Also, the early registration snafu was irritating; I went back in checked and couldn't find any mention of it ending at 5 instead of 6. I know that's small, but we left early and rushed to make it with time to spare and ended up catching y'all as you were packing up. I guess just try and be consistent with what's up on the site.
- Maps to where the campus cafeterias are.
- More communication up front. I felt that the website was slow to have any details. Basically I would have moved most of the planning schedule up by 4-6 weeks. the CFS is up earlier, the schedule is out earlier, making it easier to justify to \$BOSS. Also anyone who is on the mailing list talking on your behalf, needs to address the \$BOSS of their attendees. My boss is on the yapc mailing list, and Uri, swearing about F***ing flash on a website, does not help me sell the conference. Also, huge importance for me is to end the talks on time, so that the next speaker can get setup. this is HUGE for me.
- Nice job
- Nice work. See my comments above Re: Robert Blackwell.
- Overall, very impressed.. Pittsburgh was beautiful, organizers were easily accessible and answered any and all questions. Thanks for a great job, I hope you bid again in the future.

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Again, WiFi at CMU was exceptional.

- school bus is uncomfortable need breakfast catered
- Thanks for the work! Despite my gripes in the comments, I had a blast and all the organizers I met were extremely helpful.
- signage, information, and overall organization were wonderful! Great job!
- Starting at 8 AM was a bad decision. Specially if the afternoon schedule has lots of holes. Loved the conference dinner. Best YAPC dinner ever.
- Thank you! I had a wonderful time and learned a ton.
- Thank you!!!!
- thank you, you rock
- Thanks for putting in a lot of work.
- Thanks very much for all of your efforts. It was a class act and very much appreciated. We all got far more than what we paid for.
- Thanks. Great wifi.
- The conference was run very smoothly, I have no complaints. I realize you have no control over who submits talks, but I'd generally prefer a wider variety of talks and speakers. The keynote and closing times seemed long: it seems another half day of talks could've been fit in.
- the dinner at heinz field was spectacular. the food was excellent, the venue was well laid out for socializing, the auction was well run and of appropriate length, and the tour was a spectacular surprise.
- The wiki *really* should have had a useful search function. Having the bar at the bottom was lame, but not being able to search the content was just bad. OTOH, Pittsburgh is a nice place and for all the mystery of navigating the campus, it was a very good location. Also, I had to go to Mudge three times before they gave me what I needed to connect to the wireless network. I did get here on Friday before most people, but it was still fairly frustrating.
- The wiki was a good idea but stopped being used when the event started.
- There were a lot of cases where to talks I wanted to see were at the same spot. Unfortunately, that's probably a function of a large number of great talks. Despite some comments from others, I had no problems with the Wifi.
- They did an excellent job of setting up the event. Everything seemed like it went very well.
- This was a good YAPC. The only problems were the lack of sponsorship and the lack of information on the website.
- This year was smoooooooooth.

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- This year's organizers did a great job, especially filling in gaps where presenters were not able to give their talk.
- Very good organisation
- Well done!
- YAPC == Awesome Great job, everyone!!!
- You all did a great job!!! I know some things went wrong, but you were highly available and helpful in solving those issues. I think you can't have too much information electronically or on signs in high traffic areas.
- You did a great job the conference ran pretty smoothly.
- You folks did a GREAT job overall and things ran well! Special shout out to Casey and Robert!
- You guys did a great job putting this YAPC together. Very well organized.
- You guys did a great job. Thanks!
- You guys did a pretty good job: especially Robert helped me out personally to setup WiFi even though I arrive later.
- You guys did an amazing job.
- zomg wireless SO GOOD

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[1] <http://yapc-surveys.org>

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