

The Joys and Perils of Early Adoption OR Proper Care and Feeding of Node Ops

Jennifer Teig von Hoffman

Boston University

Access Grid Human Factors Workshop

February 1, 2001



Overview

- **My AG role at BU**
- **How we use the AG at BU**
- **Pre-meeting prep**
 - **Host and remote sites**
- **Meeting operations**
 - **Host and remote sites**
- **Causes of my headaches**
- **How my headaches affect others**
- **How my headaches may affect AG community**

My AG Role at BU

- **One of three BU node operators**
 - **Generally only one of us drives at a time**
- **Managed large-venue events, both as remote and host site**
- **Organizer/planner of most AG-enabled events at BU**
 - **Day-to-day gatekeeper to AG**
 - **Management of staffing, logistics issues**
- **Demos, demos, demos**

How We Use the AG at BU

- **Various events**
 - Large-venue
 - Workshops/tutorials
 - Meetings of varying levels of formality
 - Demos, demos, demos
- **Various kinds of participants**
 - Our own department staff
 - BU community
 - Outside the BU community
 - Familiarity with the technology varies widely

Pre-meeting Prep (Host Site)

- **Schedule virtual room**
- **Schedule and run test cruises, if needed**
- **Manage PowerPoint slides (and sometimes other media), if needed**
 - **Pester participants for slides**
 - **Review/modify slides for AG-unfriendly features**
 - **Make slides available for download by remote sites**
- **Make arrangements for backchannel and network/telco bridge conference calls, if needed**
- **Ensure local logistics taken care of, if needed**

Pre-meeting Prep (Remote Site)

- **Show up for test cruise(s), if requested**
- **Download PowerPoint and/or other files, if needed**
- **Ensure local logistics taken care of, if needed**

Meeting Operations (Host Site)

- **Run audio and video pre-meeting tests**
- **Coordinate set-up of telco/network bridge (and sometimes telco conference call for backchannel communications), if needed**
- **Manage PowerPoint (and sometimes VNC) transitions (kill/start master/client), if needed**
- **Essentially run the show – if my event runs into trouble, I'm in the hot seat, so I make the calls**
 - **This role may be shared with a Producer, depending on the size/complexity of event**

Meeting Operations (Host or Remote Site)

- **Start-up and monitor all AG software**
 - If there are multiple PowerPoint and/or other display media, this can be rather time-consuming
- **Manage audio and video inputs and outputs**
 - Microphone management
 - Camera angles
 - Local audio input and output adjustments as needed
 - Appearance of display wall

Meeting Operations (Host or Remote Site)

- **Communicate with other sites on backchannel**
 - “Camera angle okay? Audio okay?”
 - “Hey, could you zoom in on the person speaking?”
- **Occasionally, work around network problems**
 - Provide telco/network bridging services
 - Switch to multicast/unicast or telco/network bridge
- **Provide “face-to-face” presence for local participants**

Things That Make My Head Hurt

It's not just Lisa – big AG events usually require extra-strength Tylenol.



Things That Make My Head Hurt

- **Too many PowerPoint files to download, too many PowerPoint transitions to manage**
 - **Advance availability often impractical**
- **Ditto re VNC, but we don't use it as much**
- **Too much time spent in test cruises**
 - **Can we find a better way to ensure that all sites are prepared for an event?**
- **Communications failures**
 - **Node op/Node op**
 - **Meeting planner/Node op**

Things That Make My Head Hurt (Cont.)

- **Beyond the Call of Duty?**
 - Hand-holding for nervous presenters
 - Fixing AG-unfriendly PowerPoint features sometimes turns into assisting in development of presentations
 - I've been mistakenly assumed responsible for preparations (or lack thereof) at sites other than my own
 - ◆ What does it mean to “make arrangements for the meeting to be on the AG”?

How My Headaches Affect My Participants

- **The quality of their experience depends heavily on how well I manage my various tasks. For example:**
 - **Do PowerPoint slides go up late, or not advance properly?**
 - **If network fails, do I slide over to the bridge seamlessly?**

How My Headaches May Affect Other Sites

- **I may send bad audio and/or video**
- **My site's participants may pop in and out of the meeting**
- **If I'm in charge of some display media (ie, controlling site in a VNC session), it may go poorly**

How My Headaches May Affect the AG Community

- **My participants' opinion of the AG is largely (if not entirely) based on what they see at my site**
 - **Many (if not most) never see another AG node**
 - **Local problems can appear to be AG problems**
- **In really severe cases, other node ops may spend their time bailing me out – meaning something, somewhere else is not getting done**