

HHC 2004 Conference Report

Richard J. Nelson

Introduction

HHC 2003 had a predictable annual drop (5 to 7 people) in attendance and I have been concerned since HHC 2000 in Los Angeles that the work required to put a conference together was worth the effort for an ever decreasing number of people.

During the peak years (early 80's) of activity I used 95 attendees as a break even number for cost estimating. In recent years 45 has been the number. By HHC 2002 (HPCC 2002 in London) it was also clear that HP Calculator interest was also dropping (following a similar slope) in the UK. Activity in other European countries had dropped to a few dedicated individuals in a hand full of countries. When I wrote the Conference report of 2002 I clearly indicated that the future of these Conferences seemed very limited. I expended a great deal of effort to provide as much detail as possible in that report for others to be able to "pitch in." Looking back it was a wasted effort because it is human nature to want to do things their way - as it should be, it is their work - but that effort goes to the motivation as to why group leaders do what they do.

When it was suggested in London that we hold HHC 2003 in Joseph Horn's "backyard" (in Orange County California where I have lived for decades) and within 100 miles of my present "backyard" I was enthusiastic to do it. Several suggestions were made as to where and how HHC 2004 could happen - see the HHC 2003 Conference Report. A copy should be in the HHC 2004 binder. When Ted suggested that he would take on the financial responsibility, print the proceedings, select the hotel, and arrange for the Saturday night dinner I agreed to do the technical program.

It takes just about ALL of my available time for a minimum of three months (1/4th of a year) prior to the conference to plan and organize it. I know that this seems like a lot - and that does not include the additional time prior to that final push - but it takes much more time than what is obvious. This time is even reduced a little because I have so many files on my computer from past conferences to help in formatting, organizing, etc. We spend time at the end of each Conference discussing ideas of how we might have the next Conference, and how the Conference might be done differently. The core participants work very hard and they have refined the ways things are done to increase efficiency - we all work smarter.

Wlodek and I had the opportunity to discuss these issues at length as we both arrived in San Jose two days early. From my perspective the US HPUC seems to lead the UK HPUC by 12 to 24 months in these trends. This has nothing to do with the differences in how the two communities operate. It is quite simple, interest is very rapidly declining and the life of the advanced high-end scientific (graphing in market terms) calculator is in the end game. Locally, the group that started an HPUC, still meets regularly but we only have 1/3rd membership participation for each meeting and we have had two meetings in the last year where only two or three people attended. We still "connect" via email and the Internet, but the reservation of an evening (the third Friday of each month in our case) once a month is increasingly difficult because of business, family, or distance issues. The average drive to attend a meeting in the greater Los Angeles area for most members exceeds one hour because of distance and traffic.

In addition to the "normal" conference preparation time each committee member puts in there is another issue. I mentioned this during the discussion at the end of HHC 2004. It is impossible to know in advance how many people will attend. Planning a Conference for 30, 40, or 50 people is quite different and the costs and location considerations will vary. One consideration I have always made was to be able to allow for the last minute attendees. Perhaps we should say, "If you are interested tell us by this date", and then plan based on the really serious people who want to attend. I don't like this approach because what happens if a really neat project comes to our attention and our "rules" exclude this possibility.

I mentioned a steady decline over the last few years and we have used this to predict our resources. We did two unusual things this year to adjust to this unpredictability. All you have to use to predict the future is the past and experienced judgment. The curve was pretty predictable up to HHC 2003, attendance for HHC 2004 had a major dip and was 11 below the hoped for 45 and 4 below those "registered" on the web site. We certainly are optimists.

Conference Overall

Theme: **Looking to the future of HP Handhelds**

Objective: To have fun, learn new things, get the news, meet new people, and **inspire HP**.

We published the Conference content (talk synopses) in detail before the Conference. The mechanism for publishing was the HHC 2004 Conference Web Page, the CHIP email List, the HHC Conference email list, and the HPCC Conference email List. Completing a synopsis for each speaker has never been done for any previous conference. Even the schedule was posted several days before the Conference. I want to thank the many speakers for their efforts in this regard.

I believe that everyone enjoyed the Conference immensely and I am very pleased with the results. I received several emails specifically saying that they had an especially good time. We started earlier than previous Conferences, 8:15 AM on Saturday by the schedule, 8:30 AM by the clock, and I was astounded at the interest, questions, enthusiasm, and participation going strong at 10:30 PM Saturday night. Where we may not have had quantity of attendees we certainly had quality and variety of 18 presentations by 16 different speakers not counting the three speakers from HP. Most importantly we had hotel proximity for our activities and lots of fellowship. I like to set (personal) goals for Conferences, aside from documenting them. One goal for 2002 was to be the most documented. Everyone met this with a lot of hard work - see the list of ten documents in the 2002 Report. For 2003 it was to be the most photographed Conference. That was a failure. This year, however, we had many digital and film cameras snapping photos before, during, and after the Conference and 2004 could be the most photographed Conference. I am aware of at least 1,000 photos from only three photographers. There were several others. I would like to receive all of these images. So far I have added Eric Smiths and Jakes to my own. Other photographers I remember are Roger Hill, Joseph Horn, Wlodek, and Bill Butler. I am sure there are others.

HHC 2004 participants took home the following - in addition to increased knowledge and friendships.

1. **Conference binder** containing the presentations. A special thanks to Ted Kerber.
2. An **HHC 2004 CD** containing all of the new HP Learning Modules, Manuals, Fonts, & Programs. This CD also contains TI Manuals, Programs, and newsletters (Historical). A special thanks to Gene Wright and Jake Schwartz.
3. An up-to-date **HP Calculator Archieve CD** from hpcalc.org. A special thanks to Eric Rechlin.

4. The **Museum of HP Calculators DVD** (or 7 CD's). This DVD contains Calculator Manuals; Option, ROM, and Peripheral Manuals; Quick Reference Guides; Calculator Software Manuals; HP Computer Curriculum; Service Manuals and Internal Documents; Synthetix and Grapevine Books; HP Digests, Key Notes, and Journal Articles; HP BASIC Exchange; EduCALC Catalogs; Advertisements, Brochures and Catalogs; and Local copy of the Website and Extra Images. A special thanks to Dave Hicks.
5. **At least one Door Prize**. A special thanks to the members of the HPUC. See web site for official list.
6. An **HP33S Calculator** as a special gift from Hewlett-Packard

The Conference in Detail

The Conference Committee is comprised of:

- Ted Kerber: Registration; Hotel; Dinner; Proceedings. tedkerber@hotmail.com
- Richard Nelson: Speakers' Schedule (Technical program). rjnelson@aemf.org
- Joseph Horn: Website. JoeHorn@HolyJoe.Net
- Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz: European coordinator. wlodekjmj@yahoo.co.uk
- Jake Schwartz: Videographer, historian. jakes@magpage.com

The HP participants

- Cyrille de Brebisson, HP R&D Manager cyrille@hp.com
- Roke Ghodsi, Customer Satisfaction & Quality Manager roke.ghodsi@hp.com
- Art Garcia, Business Development Manager North and Latin America art.garcia@hp.com

The Attendees. (Name and State)

1 Dennis Belillo	13 Joe Horn, CA	25 Jake Schwartz, NJ
2 Jamie Bobof	14 Paul Hubbert, IL	26 Richard Schwartz, CA
3 Bill Butler, Canada	15 Phyllis Kerber, CA	27 Namir Shammas
4 Martin Cohen	16 Ted Kerber, CA	28 David Shier, CA
5 Monte Dalrymple	17 Thomas P Kline	29 Eric Smith, CA
6 Cyrille de Brebisson (HP), ID	18 Luan Le	30 Jeremy Smith, CA
7 Art Garcia (HP), CA	19 Vern Lindsay, ID	31 Bill Spense
8 Roke Ghodsi (HP), CA	20 Peter Marschall	32 Tim Wessman
9 Larry Gill, CA	21 Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz, London	33 Gene Wright, TN
10 Dave Hicks	22 Karl Moerder	34 Bertram Zinner
11 Roger Hill, IL & CA	23 Richard Nelson, CA	35
12 Jim Horn, CA	24 Eric Rechlin	36