

Financial Transparency Report

NarraScope 2022

NarraScope 2022 ran July 29-31. This year we used the Gather virtual presence platform. Gather supports voice, video, and text chat between attendees in a virtual space, as well as video streaming of conference program material.

Gather charges a fee for large events. Our reservation (400 users in a space for two days, with a discount for our non-profit status) cost \$1680. To support this, we charged a fee of \$10 per attendee. We want NarraScope to be as accessible as possible, so we offered an optional reduced price of \$3, on the honor system. We also offered *higher* price tiers at \$25 and \$50 for people who wanted donate extra. Speakers and volunteers received complimentary memberships.

The educational workshops on Friday were run through Zoom, not Gather. However, for simplicity, we offered the workshop signups as (free) add-ons to the regular conference registration.

Attendance

A total of 400 people registered for the event, including speakers and volunteers. (Our Gather reservation estimate, by luck, turned out to be exactly right.)

Our program listed 51 speakers, plus a handful of IFTF board members and volunteers who spoke at the “Meet IFTF” event.

According to Gather's metrics, Aaron Reed's plenary keynote drew a viewership of 150 people. The rest of the conference was run in two parallel tracks; we did not try to measure attendance for these talks.

The Inform bootcamp, which ran for two weeks preceding the conference, had an attendance of 41 people. The Friday workshops had a total attendance of 302. (This number counts seats, not people; an attendee could sign up for multiple workshops.)

Financials

<i>Income</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Fees</i>	<i>Net After Fees</i>
36 complimentary registrations*	\$0.00		\$0.00
89 limited budget registrations	\$428.98	\$161.98	\$267.00
185 regular registrations	\$2264.40	\$414.40	\$1850.00
60 supporter registrations	\$1689.60	\$189.60	\$1500.00
30 superstar registrations	\$1640.10	\$140.10	\$1500.00
Total registrations	\$6023.08	\$906.08	\$5117.00
Sponsorships	\$3000.00	\$72.88	\$2927.12
Total income	\$9023.08	\$978.96	\$8044.12

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Fees</i>	<i>Total With Fees</i>
Code of Conduct consulting	\$296.93		\$296.93
Incident coordination	\$1500.00		\$1500.00
Gather room reservation	\$1680.00		\$1680.00
Web hosting	\$84.00		\$84.00
Email hosting	\$42.50		\$42.50
Zoom Pro account	\$191.16		\$191.16
Total expenses before honoraria	\$3794.59		\$3794.59
Net before honoraria			\$4249.53
Honoraria	\$3450.00	\$39.00	\$3489.00
Net for IFTF support			\$760.53

* Not all of our speakers requested a complimentary registration through EventBrite.

Our institutional sponsors this year were Articy Software, The Molasses Flood, RichCast, and FailBetter Games. They contributed a total of \$3000 before PayPal and wire transfer fees.

The rest of our revenue came from attendee registrations via EventBrite. We took in a total of \$5117 from 364 paying attendees. Note that EventBrite fees were billed to the attendee. That is, a \$10 regular membership was billed as \$12.24 with a \$2.24 fee included.

Unlike the 2020 event, we did not solicit donations separately from conference registration. (The web site offered a donation link, but we did not emphasize it and nobody used it.)

Our primary expenses were the Gather reservation and incident coordination. Given the online moderation issues at NarraScope 2020, we thought it prudent to have a paid coordinator on staff for all of Saturday and Sunday. (The Friday Zoom workshops, being smaller, did not require this level of moderation.) We worked with Dietrich Squinkifer, a long-time IFTF advisor, for this service. Dietrich also worked with us before the event to update our Code of Conduct.

As it turned out, no moderation issues occurred during NarraScope 2022. However, we consider the money well spent to ensure everyone's safety and comfort.

Our other expenses included service fees for web hosting, email, and Zoom video, for a total of \$317.66.

We paid our keynote speaker \$750 this year. Of our 50 other speakers, 27 accepted a \$100 honorarium.

Our intent this year was to retain 20% of net revenue, before honoraria, for IFTF general expenses. The other 80% would go to speakers. (This is in line with IFComp's Colossal Fund, which gives out 80% of funds as IFComp prizes.) In fact we wound up giving out 82.1% of net revenue as honoraria. The mismatch was due to mis-estimating the number of speakers who would decline the money.

A small revision: our 2020 financial report showed a surplus of \$741. We indicated that we would "apply [this] to the budget of NarraScope 2021." It turned out there was no NarraScope 2021, and we forgot to roll that \$741 forward to the 2022 budget. Thus, in retrospect, NarraScope 2020 contributed 12% of its pre-honoraria revenue to IFTF general expenses. We expect to follow the 20% guideline for future events.

Responses to Gather

Gather was an experiment this year. We are still collecting feedback from attendees. However, we already see a wide range of reactions to the Gather platform.

The cost of Gather, as compared to free use of Twitch and Discord, is of course an issue. We were not able to offer at-the-door registration or walk-in attendance of talks.

While it is difficult to make a direct comparison, we observed more active "hallway" social activity in Gather than we did in the Discord chats of 2020. Large groups congregated in the Gather space during every program break and into the evening.

Many people commented positively on Gather's social affordances. However, others found the large groups difficult to enter. Some commented that it was difficult to form smaller conversation groups; there did not seem to be a social cue for "we're talking amongst ourselves here".

Gather describes its mobile support as "in development". In practice, most people who tried to attend events via mobile failed. This was a serious accessibility issue for those who did not have desktop machines available. Gather's support for browsers other than Chrome is also unreliable.

It is difficult to tell how many people decided not to attend at all due to our use of Gather. Gather is not automatically accessible to visually-impaired users. We had one blind attendee (a presenter); we were able to offer them support by assigning a dedicated volunteer. This was effective, but would require more volunteer effort if more visually-impaired users attended.

In general, we (and our presenters) encountered more technical issues in 2022 than we did in 2020.

Gather's documentation recommends a limit of 500 people per space, and 100 people simultaneously watching a video presentation. These limits did not bite us; 150 people watching the keynote did not seem to cause a problem. However, future NarraScopes might grow faster than Gather's capacity to host them.

The Future

We intend to run NarraScope 2023. Our preference is to host a hybrid event – a physical conference with all talks streamed and some kind of virtual social space. Of course, we cannot yet say whether it will be practical and safe to host an on-site event in 2023. We will have to keep our options open and be prepared to change our plans to fully-virtual at any point in the planning process.

If we do run an on-site event, we will revisit the ideas raised after the 2019 MIT NarraScope. These include conference-wide live streaming, live closed captioning, better signage, a dedicated quiet room, and travel and accommodation grants for budget-limited attendees.

As noted above, the use of Gather in 2022 was a mixed benefit. We have not yet decided whether to use Gather for future events.

In 2020, we ran a pure donation-centered fundraiser, as the event was free to (virtually) attend. Our fundraising this year was linked to registration fees. We raised about 50% more money this year, but the direct comparison does not seem to be meaningful. We may try to combine the approaches next year.

As always, please keep in mind that NarraScope is run by IFTF, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which is supported by your donations. Leave a note mentioning

NarraScope with your contribution, and it will be accounted under “Individual donations” for next year’s conference.

Thank you for supporting NarraScope and the community of narrative games!