

Hosting an A&S Event

Introduction

To the uninformed eye, Amtgard appears to be a bunch of weirdoes hitting each other with foam sticks. If everyone was just a “stick jock”, this game would be very boring. True, there is a role-playing aspect that helps liven things up, but what brings the true color to the game is the arts and sciences.

Those who participate in the arts and sciences enliven the game by recreating a period atmosphere with a contemporary flair. Bards entertain everyone with period pieces they’ve researched intermingled with folks reflecting the Amtgard culture around them. Garbers recreate beautiful outfits from modern fabrics. The scientists and engineers of the game are constantly upping the standards in weapon-making, regardless of the size or nature of the weapon, shield, or armor.

Being an artisan in Amtgard is an important and fun role in the game, and arts and sciences events are a great way to bring the local talent together to showcase and share their gifts. This guide hopes to serve as a guide for arranging these gatherings.

Step One: Selecting the Type of Event

When you hear “an A&S event”, more often than not, your mind immediately focuses on the competition aspect; the qualifications, the tournaments. We constantly seek to label someone as “the best”, often ignoring the talents of those who don’t measure up on that particular day. While these tournaments have their place, they are not the only means of showcasing talents. There are also workshops and exhibitions. Each of these has their merits and their flaws.

Here is a quick run-down of the three:

1. Tournament- broad covering event that results in placements in each category, plus an overall winner. Many places use the rankings at these tournaments to determine whether or not a person advances in a particular A&S order.
2. Exhibition- rarely used broad covering event. It is a good opportunity to get newer or shyer artisans to display their work because there is no pressure to get a good score or ranking.
3. Workshop- The workshop is an opportunity for advanced artisans to pass their knowledge and skills on to those wishing to learn. A collection of workshops held together is called a collegium. Again, this event relies on the selection of reliable people to lead the workshops.

It is possible to have two of these going on simultaneously, although I would recommend only trying to do two of them at any given event.

Step Two: Finding a Location

Once you have selected what type of event you are going to host, you will need a place to hold it. Some things to keep in mind while trying to arrange space include:

- ~~///~~ Your target participants (Is this a park or kingdom level event?)
- ~~///~~ How many participants are you expecting? (remember that it won't just be the participants and judges/teachers. Many of us travel with at least one other person.)
- ~~///~~ What possible amenities will your participants need? (possible outlets for cooking or bardic entries, storage for cooking entries)
- ~~///~~ If it's an outdoor location, is there any way to protect the entries if the weather turns bad?
- ~~///~~ Space for display tables. (Making sure you have a way to hang garb for display is a particularly thoughtful, and overlooked, gesture.)

Step Three: Announcing the Event

Once you have located a place for your event, you then have to announce it. ("If you host it, they will come" just really doesn't work well in this game for some reason.) In your flyer, make sure to point out the amenities you have so thoughtfully included for your participants.

Above all, make sure the flyer includes: date, time, location (including a map, address, or really good directions), and the categories/classes for your event.

Step Four- Actually Planning the Event

Depending on which type of event you've decided to host, you now have to get everything in order. I have included information on the three basic types of A&S events, along with sample forms that will hopefully be useful to you in your planning.

Tournaments

Tournaments are the easiest to run because everyone has a general idea how things should run. Unfortunately, they are also the hardest to run because of the paperwork involved and the need for reliable people.

With a tournament, you should start by setting the categories. For Qualifications, the CK corpora requires that you have a minimum of seven categories, to be selected from the following list: *Art* (may be divided into 2-D or 3-D), *Writing* (may be divided into Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry), *Bardic*, *Construction* (may be divided into Passive and Active), *Weapon Construction*, *Armor Construction*, *Shield Construction*, *Garb* (may be divided into Court, Fighting, and Monster), *Accessory* (may be divided into Jewelry, Court, or Fighting), *Cooking* (may be divided into entrée, dessert, or beverage), *Rose*, and *Smith*.

However, if you're doing a tournament at other times, you may choose to have a specific focus for your tournament. Good options for themed tournaments include: Literature (focusing on the Writing Category), Cooking, Garbing, Smith (focusing on Weapon/Armor/Shield Construction), or having the tournament focus on entries that feature a specific material component.

Another fun option for an A&S tournament is one where participants do not bring entries they have already made, but instead are given a box of materials at the tournament and are given a specific time limit in which to make something using only the materials in the box. The items made are then judged. Please note that this type of event allows both individuals and teams to enter. However, the team only gets a single box.

You will need to decide on a scoring rubric. The scale used is 0 to 5, with 0 being illegal entries and 5 being the absolute best. 5 is not a commonly awarded score as it represents a superior achievement in the arts and sciences. 3 is accepted as the average score point. You should decide if score points will be broken down into whole points (0, 1, 2,...), quarters (.25, .5, .75), or tenths (.1, .2, .3, ...).

You will need to select judges. Try to do this a couple of weeks before the tournament, as people are hard to locate the closer you get to an event (or may have a set of entries they plan on entering) and they don't remember they agreed to do it if you ask them too early. There are many theories out there on how many judges you have and what their qualifications should be.

How many judges should you have? An odd number. Three or five is an acceptable number. With five, you have the option of dropping the lowest and highest scores, which be nice as you never know when someone is having an off day.

Who should judge? There are those who argue that only Serpent Knights, Master Dragons, Master Owls, and Master Garbers should judge competitions. It's a lovely theory, but it has its problems. First, these individuals have often become set in their ways, and as a result can misunderstand a new innovation being tried out by a new artisan. Secondly, this group tends to be a bit harsh in their judging.

My theory is that you should have a mix of masters, intermediate artisans, and new artisans. The masters bring their expertise to the table. The intermediate artisans start to get a feel for how their own pieces are viewed by participating as a judge occasionally. The new artisans can learn many things by participating as a judge, although they can initially be as harsh as the masters.

This group should not be solely garbers or weapon/armorsmiths or cooks. Again, diversity is a good thing when selecting your judges.

The last thing to consider as you select these judges is that you want to select people who are not intimately familiar with a participant or their work. This includes significant others,

parents, children, roommates, household members, company members. This may prove tricky, but you really need to remove as many possible biases as you can.

Before the competition, you will need to organize your paperwork. You will want a sign-in sheet where each participant will sign in themselves, each of their entries, the category for each entry, and the award levels the participant stands at in Dragon/Owl/Garber (this is useful when reporting the results of the tournament). Something Akara did that I really liked, even though it was murder at Kingdom-level competitions, was that she set up judge booklets. These booklets included a space where the judge put their score and a space for feedback which was given to the participant at the end of the competition. This was a nice touch as each A&S event should be a growing experience for the participant. Even if you don't do it this way, you will need a way for judges to record their score on each item, along with a master sheet to make averaging easier.

You will also need to determine your labeling scheme for entries. There are two schools of thought on this one, and both are completely acceptable. Both use a prefix and an identifying number. The first uses an abbreviation for the category followed by a number showing when it was signed in. For example, if I sign in a needlepoint piece for 2-D art, and I'm the fourth person to sign in an entry for 2-D, the entry's label is 2-D 4. The second method assigns each entrant a number, and then numbers the entry based on when the participant signed it in. Example: I am the ninth person to enter a competition, and that needlepoint piece is the third thing on my list of entries. The needlepoint's label is 9-3.

After the judges have finished assigning scores, average the scores for each entry to determine the entry's score. In each category, rank the top three entries. According to the CK corpora, the formula for determining ranking is: overall average for all items entered times 5, plus one point for each 1st place (where there were at least three entries in the category), plus one point for each item that had an average score of three or better.

After everything is over, you will need to make a report with the following information: a list of entrants with their entries and each entry's score, the top three ranked entries in each category, the three overall winners, and an explanation of the scoring methodology you used to get these results. Include the judges is a nice gesture. If you are running this tournament for someone else, the report will need to go to that person. Otherwise, make sure you put the results where they can be publicly accessed. This can be through email, a verbal announcement, or a newsletter. If there were any award recommendations, get them to the monarchy. If there is any feedback, give it to the person.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions are rarely used, but I think it's a good way to encourage newer artisans to show their work. An exhibition is sort of like a tournament, except participants don't receive scores. Like a tournament, these entries should be signed in and labeled to keep the anonymity. A sheet should be included next to the entry to allow feedback from those who choose to view the competition.

An exhibition is a good time, also, for artisans to look at each other's work and offer peer feedback. I had a lovely theory at one point that this is a non-threatening way to have master artisans look at newer artisans' work and offer constructive criticism in a helpful way.

Again, this can be a general gathering of entries or a themed exhibition.

Remind people before they start viewing the exhibition that comments should be given in the form of constructive criticism, and that all recommendations should be given to you, not written on the feedback forms.

Points to Remember:

- Feedback sheets should be given to the participant as quickly as possible
- Any award recommendations should be passed on to the Monarchy.

Planner- A&S Tournament/Exhibition

Date:

Time:

Location:

Host: *include either a phone number or email address*

Judges: *include either phone numbers or email addresses*

Type of Event: *Tournament or Exhibition*

Reason: *Qualifications, Midreign/Coronation, Theme (state theme), etc.*

Categories: *add or remove categories as needed*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Scoring Method (Tournament only): *whole point, tenths, quarters*

For overall: Describe method if not the one in the Corpora

Materials needed for the day: Sign in sheets (*decide if entries by entrants or by category*)

Feedback Forms

(Tournament Only): Judging forms (*include something for them to write on and pens*)

Master tally sheet

Result reporting form

Calculator (for tallying results)

Tournament Results

Event:
Date:
Crat/Host:
Judges:

Scoring Method: *copy from planner*

Overall Results

1st- *name and points*
2nd-*name and points*
3rd- *name and points*

Category #1

1st-*name, entry, score*
2nd-*name, entry, score*
3rd-*name, entry, score*

Category #2

1st- *name, entry, score*
2nd-*name, entry, score*
3rd-*name, entry, score*

Category #3

1st-*name, entry, score*
2nd-*name, entry, score*
3rd-*name, entry, score*

Category #4

1st-*name, entry, score*
2nd-*name, entry, score*
3rd-*name, entry, score*

Award Recommendations

Include the participant's name, the order level you're recommending for, and why

Workshops

Workshops are a nice way to allow intermediate and master artisans to share their skills with others. It can be a good way to get someone who is interested in A&S started off. It is also a good way to pick up a new skill.

Workshops share a problem with tournaments. They rely on people. You can decide whether to host a simple workshop with one teacher or a collegium where many teachers gather and present workshops.

You will need to talk with the teacher(s) and find out what they need to teach their class. It is probably a good idea to do this before you decide where to hold the workshop, as some skills have special needs. You will be expected to provide the space, tables and chairs. Any other materials will be provided by the teacher or the students (include this information on the flyer so students are prepared).

If you have a number of newbies on your field, it is a good idea to run garb and weapon-making workshops every once in a while so that these people can learn how to make their own equipment. It helps alleviate being overwhelmed by the game initially.

If you are particularly gifted with space and artisans willing to share their knowledge, you may be able to get a series of workshops going. Each week, a different artisan can lead a workshop; and then for a couple of weeks right before an A&S tournament everyone can bring their entries and work on them.

If you want, you may ask the person presenting the workshop to prepare a pattern/direction sheet for the participants to take with them. Be sure to keep a copy for yourself. If you don't have one already, you should be creating your own A&S resource with patterns, directions, pamphlets, booklets, books and anything else that might relate to A&S. This is not only useful for you, but if anyone expresses an interest in learning a craft, you can whip out your resource and point them in the right direction.

Workshop/Collegium Planner

Date:

Time:

Location:

Host:

Topic: *for a Collegium, repeat these two sections until you have listed all teachers/classes*

Teacher:

Materials needed for the day: Tables and Chairs as directed by the Teacher
(Collegium) schedule of classes

The A&S Categories Explained

- ✂ Art (may be divided into 2-D and 3-D Art)
 - 2-D Art is defined as “flat” or a piece that is only meant to be viewed from one side. NOTE: Needlepoint and Photography may be separate categories if there are enough entries.
 - 3-D Art is defined as a piece that is meant to be viewed from multiple directions.
- ✂ Writing (may be divided into Nonfiction, Fiction, Poetry, Persona History, Battlegame)
 - Nonfiction is self-explanatory.
 - Fiction is self-explanatory.
 - Poetry is self-explanatory.
 - Persona History is defined as an account of someone’s persona background. If you have someone attempting this category, please remind them to not include their name.
 - Battlegame is defined as rules for a game that can be played on the field. This is often offered for those running for Champion, although other devious minds enjoy this category as well.
- ✂ Bardic (may be further divided into Song, Dance, Recitation, Acting, Instrumental)
 - Song is self-explanatory.
 - Dance is self-explanatory.
 - Recitation is defined as a storytelling or reciting a poem out loud.
 - Acting is defined as a dramatic reading or presentation from a play or similar source.
 - Instrumental is defined as a piece performed on an instrument with no vocal accompaniment.
- ✂ Construction (may be further divided into Passive and Active)
 - Passive Construction is defined by CK as that which may not be used on the battlefield. It is described elsewhere as a construction with no moving parts.
 - Active construction is defined by the CK as that which may be used on the battlefield. It is described elsewhere as a construction with moving parts.
- ✂ Weapon Construction
 - Must be deemed field legal by the Champion
- ✂ Shield Construction
 - Must be deemed field-legal by the Champion
- ✂ Armor Construction
 - Must be deemed field-legal by the Champion
- ✂ Garb (may be further divided into Court, Fighting and Monster)
 - Court is defined as garb you would not want to fight in.
 - Fighting is defined as garb you would fight in.
 - Monster is defined as garb appropriate to one of the monster classes.
- ✂ Accessory (may be further divided into Jewelry, Court Accessory, Fighting Accessory)
 - Jewelry is self-explanatory.
 - Court Accessory is defined as an accessory that you would not use on the battlefield.
 - Fighting Accessory is defined as an accessory you would use on the battlefield.
- ✂ Cooking (may be further divided into Entrée, Dessert, and Beverage)
 - Entrée is self-explanatory.
 - Dessert is self-explanatory.
 - Beverage is self-explanatory.
- ✂ Rose
 - Defined as anything given to the Kingdom/Province or Companies/Households
- ✂ Smith
 - Defined as those works that are instructional in nature.

Resources

I have a section of my bookmarks dedicated to A&S, organized by craft. I've included some of my favorites here. Add to the list as you find sites you like.

General

SCA Arts and Sciences Page- http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/arts_and_sciences.html

This links to information on various crafts and articles on period crafts.

Chain Mail

DC Wireworks- <http://www.dewireworks.com/>

Sara's Chainmail Connection- <http://www.chainmailconnection.com/construction.html>

Cooking

AllRecipes- <http://www.allrecipes.com>

Reluctant Gourmet- <http://www.reluctantgourmet.com>

This is a really good resource for the beginning cook.

Garbing

Simplicity Online- <http://www.simplicity.com>

McCall Online- <http://www.mccall.com>

Jewelry

Macramé Instruction Sheets- <http://www.elainecraft.com/instructions/instructions.html>

Westrim Crafts- <http://www.westrimcrafts.com/>

The beady patterns on this site would be a good kid craft.

Music

Cantaria- <http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/>

Folk Song Index- <http://www.acronet.net/~robokopp/folkindx.htm>

Amtgard Crafting Guilds

Armors Guild- <http://www.pegasusvalley.com/armor>

Cooking Guild- <http://www.geocities.com/ktgilland/Enter.htm>