

SEM Annual Meeting
Policy on Group Sponsorship of Organized Sessions
September 7, 2016

The program of the SEM Annual Meeting is constructed by the Program Committee, which is appointed each year by the SEM Board to represent the diversity in background and interests of the Society membership. The Program Committee employs a blind review process to evaluate all abstracts submitted for individual presentations and organized sessions (panels, roundtables, and other collective presentations). Blind peer review creates a level playing field for all abstract submitters and ensures that the Annual Meeting regularly includes a selection of the highest quality scholarship in ethnomusicology.

For many years, SEM has encouraged its constituent groups (Sections, Special Interest Groups, and Ancillary Organizations) to sponsor organized sessions. In sponsoring a session, a group vets the session abstract (and component abstracts) before submission. If the proposal is accepted by the Program Committee, the session is then listed in the program as sponsored by the group. Due to the blind review process, the Program Committee is unaware of sponsorships until abstract evaluation is completed.

Statistics on abstract evaluation demonstrate that each year the acceptance rate for organized sessions is substantially higher than that for individual presentations. Moreover, there is a higher rate of acceptance of sponsored organized sessions than of unsponsored ones. In 2016, for example, 65% of organized sessions submitted were accepted, while only 34% of individual presentations submitted were accepted. 70% (48 of 69) of the organized sessions accepted were sponsored.

These acceptance statistics suggest that the collective discussion and assessment of abstracts before submission increases their quality. Quality is also enhanced by the efforts of Sections, SIGs, and Ancillary Organizations to identify, critique, and submit the best work of their members. Recognition of these efforts is highlighted in the program by the listing of groups as sponsors.

The SEM Board is aware that some scholarly societies allocate guaranteed program sessions for their constituent groups. The Board has decided against this arrangement for the SEM Annual Meeting in order to promote the strongest possible program through a fully open and blind peer review process. In addition, SEM's large number of constituent groups (35) and limited number of program slots for organized sessions (approximately 70) would severely diminish the authority of the Program Committee if every group were allotted one program slot.

The SEM Board encourages the Society's constituent groups to continue to sponsor and submit the best work of their members so that the Annual Meeting program will reflect the current scope of innovative research in ethnomusicology.