

The Value of Attending An HHC Conference

Why Do People Attend HHCs?

I have met with, corresponded with, and talked with many thousands of HP handheld users during the last 23 years that HHC's have been held. I have been actively involved in the Hewlett-Packard User Community, HPUC, since the beginning of Scientific Calculators in January 1972 when the HP-35 startled the world. As a result of this experience I believe that HP Handheld users attend an HHC Conference for the following reasons.

1. Meeting others. You especially enjoy using and programming your machine and you are interested in meeting others with similar interests. What does this mean exactly? You want to share ideas about programming with someone who also uses your machine in their class, either as a student or a teacher? Yes, this may be true, but this is only the obvious and more justifiable reason to tell your friends who don't share your passion. The basis for the HPUC is much more than a common interest in a piece of hardware. The hardware is very personal and the machine serves to stimulate and educate as well as solve problems or process/provide information. This is a mental (some even say spiritual) thing. I have taken surveys regarding the formal members of the group (PPC & CHHU) and some very interesting common interests are clear. The people you will meet at an HHC are primarily technical people. By this, I mean that they naturally want to quantify and measure their world. You will find that common interests are flying and aircraft, electronics, aerospace, quality music, photography, mathematics, amateur radio, and design just to mention the more common remembered interests.

Another aspect of meeting others is meeting the people at HP who make the decisions regarding the products that sparked your interest in the first place. You learn from those who are directly involved in the creating, designing, building, and occasionally the marketing of HP's machines. Of course, the time spent at the conference provides a bidirectional-information-flow opportunity. The HP people who attend HHC's know that the attendees are their most informed and dedicated customers - and they listen.

2. Learning new ideas. We have had some very unusual and cutting edge presentations at our conferences. **[Joseph, link to past conference reports?]** They are usually technical in nature, but no one thinks that they are *the* expert, because there is usually someone who has actually done what you might be thinking about. The interest and desire to learn is also coupled with an interest in sharing. This open sharing and learning has kept me active in the HPUC for three decades. We do not attend the conference to prove anything to anyone. After all, technology changes so fast that unless you discovered it today you may no longer be the "expert."

3. Discovering resources. The Internet is a wonderful place to find information. Much of the information that will touch you personally with regards to your HP interests will not be on the Internet. If it does end up there it may be because the interest shown at an HHC stimulated the person to spend the effort to get it on the Internet. Users will make something, or buy something that is meant for a different use but is a great accessory for an HP, etc. You will see it at the conference and it will solve a problem. Often people will bring materials with them such as out of print books, or obscure articles, photographs, etc. and you will then have a new resource.

4. Getting privileged information. Getting a group of experienced users together will stimulate conversations that usually involve their personal experiences. You will hear stories of various projects from the people who did the work. As products age the sensitivity of such "inside" information decreases. While it is still not public or common knowledge, you will be exposed to privileged information.

Another aspect of information gathering is the personal opinion of the people who write the books, design the accessories, and provide the really great programs. They will save you endless hours wading through Internet searches and trying to decide which solution is the best one for you.

5. Having fun. This is the most important reason to attend an HHC! I saved it until last. The contests, the Q&A, the forums, the demonstrations, and the documented work of fellow users are also reasons to attend - and have fun.

What Are The Costs?

I could not list the costs without justifying or mentioning the benefits. Only by having the two things together, as a quotient, can you measure the value of attending.

Conference Cost. The cost to attend will depend on a large number of personal factors. The actual cost of attending the conference, if you lived across the street from the hotel and you went home to eat and sleep, would only be the conference donation.

The cost of attending the conference has not yet been determined and that will greatly depend on how many attend. Do you see the catch 22 of conducting a conference? Please register [**Joseph, link?**] even if your probability of attending is only 25%. Now you know why there have not been more conferences of this type. The cost will be announced as early as the committee is able to estimate the numbers. **The conference cost will be less than \$50 - collected at the door.** The conference donation is to cover the room rental costs (\$500/day if attendees book 15 rooms, less if more), proceedings printing costs, etc. The goal is to break even, so that is why we don't know at this time. Many of you know the history of CHHU and PPC so you can understand why there is no treasury to buffer the finances - which are open and public - for this Conference. For budgeting purposes use \$50 to participate. Formal speakers do not pay. This policy is a "fixed overhead" that greatly impacts the income/budget.

Hotel Cost. In the early days, the local chapter would offer their homes and have conference attendees stay with them. I have been the guest in Philadelphia and Chicago in years past. Still, you may share a hotel room and divide the hotel cost. The budget number is \$49 per night per person. This includes the 10% tax. If you would like to share a room let me know by way of an email and I will keep a list and make a suggestion when we know the people who want to do this. I have done this many times over the years. I will stay at the hotel Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights since I live 100 miles north of Newport Beach. I could stay with a local, but time is too precious to waste driving.

Travel Cost. This is attendee dependent. Those of you coming from outside the US will have a long flight and additional meals because of the schedule. Those of you coming from within the US can most likely fly directly into John Wayne Airport (SNA) and walk or call the hotel for a ride. If this is the case, only the airfare cost has to be entered into the budget under travel. You do not need to rent a car.

Those traveling into Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) will have to get to John Wayne (SNA) using one of the many shuttles available. See travel information [**Joseph, link to Schwatz's info?**] elsewhere on our web page.

Food Costs. I would not plan your flight schedule so tightly as to be at the conference only one day, or to leave early on Sunday if you can help it. Minimal conference time is 8 AM Saturday to 6 PM Sunday. Some of the best and most informative times are the informal Friday evening gathering and the Monday morning breakfast.

Again, your food costs are dependent on your visit time and your desire to dine or just eat. We do not plan any formal food as part of the conference per se. See other parts of the web page **[Joseph, link?]** for places to get food that are a very short walk from the Hotel. We have done formal dinners, provided break snacks and drinks, and box lunches on Saturday and Sunday, but these kinds of things require predictable numbers and these are impossible to predict. Considering the economic times we decided it is best to keep it simple this year.

Saturday Night Dinner will be a formal dinner at a restaurant very close to the hotel - again so you won't have to rent a car. The cost will be up to you as you order from the menu. We have a simple place identified, but over the years attendees have liked a "nicer" place. As we get closer to the Conference weekend we will poll the attendees, select the location, and make the announcement. We already have photos. Use \$12.00 average for a budget value.

Goodies Costs. Most attendees do not allow for this item. While we are not a business, many attendees know that they have friends that they will be seeing, and as friends, they buy a few extra "special" items to share. I bought a 2 MB RAM card for my HP48GX at an HHC. I bought an HP-41CX last year. These opportunities are fleeting and unpredictable so be prepared. If you are interested in a new HP-41CX email Wlodek, he may have a suggestion.

Richard J. Nelson - June 19, 2003.