

Welcome to BiCon 2005!

This booklet contains various things we can already tell you at the beginning of August, a few weeks before BiCon.

If you get your copy before BiCon, do have a look through it. As well as giving you some idea what to expect, it may help you to decide what to bring.

The main thing *not* here is the complete timetable and details of sessions: we plan to finalise and print that information just before BiCon, in the programme booklet which you'll get when you arrive. (In the meantime, see the outline timetable on p18; and you can get some idea of how the contents are shaping up from <www.bicon2005.org.uk/sessions/>.)

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But first, a few true stories of "My first BiCon"...

"Friends persuaded me to attend my first BiCon, telling me that the parties were good and some of the discussions might be interesting too. I was extremely nervous and wondering why on earth I'd want to spend this time with people I only had bisexuality in common with.

Meeting people I knew in the registration line helped. I was welcomed in to dinner in one of the flats. I had many conversations that made me want to repeatedly say "Yes, I think that too!" I had more thoughts and connections than would reasonably fit in just a few days.

By the end I was tired and happy, feeling like this was home and already knowing I'd miss my new friends whom I felt I'd known for years, not days."

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"I was overwhelmed by the unconventional appearance and dress of many of the attendees and thought I would never fit in, that I couldn't be as pretty or as outrageous... and that I needed to raid vintage clothing and/or fetish shops to stand a chance.

Gradually over the weekend I began to feel that actually it wasn't necessary, that most people were dressed the way they were, not to fit in, but because that was how they liked to dress and they were free to do so here.

I was exhilarated by the gradual dawning that here, in this space, it was OK to just be me. And that people might even be interested in me, the real me. And that maybe the real me could try to express herself in new ways and have some fun even. I've kept coming back.

Some people who first met me at one of my later BiCons might be surprised to hear what I've just said!"

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"I was bowled over by the event. Everyone was so friendly and despite being involved a bit in the Bi community in London I had the most steepest and most enjoyable learning curve I've ever had. It was the beginning of me being me and accepting me and not being frightened of being bi.

BiCon was the turning point from me creeping anxiously in to Gay pubs to feeling able to shout 'oi you! I'm bi and I'm proud'"

Help during BiCon

Key contact numbers

Dial **999** in emergency.

BiCon 24 hour phone helpline: **07910 438976**. This mobile is kept at BiCon Reception in the daytime and with one of the team members at night.

University security: The number for this will be confirmed when you get to BiCon. At night, they are based at the University's Reception desk.

Police (other than 999)

Central switchboard: 08457 444888.

The main police station in town is on Castle Street.

We have met with officers from the West Mercia police Diversity Liaison team, who have a supportive attitude to BiCon and are keen to deal with all incidents of hate crime. Although Worcester is safe by the standards of many towns, if you experience any verbal or physical abuse then you can be assured of positive action from investigators.

Health / Medical services (other than 999)

First Aid

Volunteers on duty at BiCon Reception. 07910 438976

Hospitals

24hr A&E dept: Worcestershire Royal Hospital, 01905 763333.
Charles Hastings Way, Worcester.

Surgeries & Health Centres

St John's House Surgery, 01905 421688. 28 Bromyard Road, St John's.

Spring Gardens Health Centre, 01905 681690. Providence Street.

Dental Surgeons

Moor Street Clinic Dental Emergency Info Line, 01905 760090.

Bull Ring Dental Practice, 01905 424033. 1 The Bull Ring, St John's.

Oasis Dental Care, 01905 748248. 25A St John's.

p.t.o.

Pharmacists / Dispensing Chemists

St John's Pharmacy, 01905 422139. 23 St John's.

D L Ogle Ltd, 01905 428028. 18-20 St John's.

(St John's is both the name of a suburb and the name of a road in the suburb.)

Counselling

Some BiCon-goers are trained counsellors and have volunteered to be available during the weekend. If a listening ear would help, please ask at BiCon Reception or call the BiCon mobile phone on 07910 438976.

And everything else: The BiCon team

If there's anything you need over the weekend, please talk to us. Besides knowing where to find First Aiders and counsellors, we have lots of other practical information, and we can liaise with the University about any problems that belong to them.

Remember that the team may have their moments of being as frazzled and short of sleep as anyone (if not more), so please don't be mean or moany, but please do give us a chance to help if we can.

Identifying us

Wearing a sash means "on duty". Anyone with a sash on is a good person to ask if you need help or resources.

People with the word "Organiser" on their badges are the "core team", who have been working on BiCon during the year. If we don't know what's going on, we usually know who *will* know.

Other people wearing sashes are assisting for a limited time on a particular bit of BiCon. Some have been to lots of BiCons, some may be first-timers themselves.

Organisers' postbox

We will check the postbox at least once per day (shortly before the announcements plenary session), and sometimes more often.

It will be either in BiCon Reception or somewhere nearby.

It can be used for anything you want to communicate to the organisers (and perhaps also to the whole of BiCon). For instance...

- a suggestion about how things could work better
- a problem you want us to be aware of
- something you want to tell us anonymously

- something you'd like brought to everyone's attention at a plenary, but don't want to say yourself
- thank you to someone (on the team or not)
- how much you're enjoying yourself!

Leave your name if you want us to know who sent the message (e.g. if you want us to get back to you) or not if not.

If you *particularly do want* or *don't want* your message to be mentioned or read out at the plenary, please say so; otherwise we'll use our own judgement on that.

BiCon Code of Conduct

Context

By its nature, this section can sound like a long list of "Do this, do that, don't do this, please do that". We hope you will read it in the spirit it's meant: having these guidelines spelt out from the start is intended to prevent a sticky moment or misunderstanding which might spoil someone's BiCon.

Your responsibility

Everyone has a part to play in making BiCon a safe space.

If you notice an incident of harassment, or anything else that doesn't belong at BiCon, please report it to BiCon Reception or the nearest organiser as soon as possible.

(If you don't feel comfortable bringing an issue to us directly, you can still put a note in the organisers' postbox. See p4.)

The BiCon organisers' responsibility

The organisers have "final say".

We will try to deal fairly and respectfully with any issue which you bring to us.

Breaches of this code of conduct will in most cases be met with a warning from a member of the organising team. We reserve the right to ask anyone to leave BiCon, and if asked to leave you will not receive any refund.

Respecting difference

People are welcome to attend BiCon regardless of how they define their sexuality.

Transgender people are accepted at BiCon as the gender they choose to present.

Remember that some people are new to BiCon. Be helpful if you can.

Racism and other bigoted behaviour will not be tolerated at BiCon. Respect the choices people have made regarding their beliefs, gender or sexuality, and how they choose to express them.

Access is not just a matter of wheelchairs. Different aspects of the environment affect different people. (E.g. some people may be

lipreading, some need smoke-free space, some find busy crowds difficult.) You can't always know without being told, but try to be aware of what the people around you might need to make BiCon accessible to them.

Boundaries / harassment

No means no

No-one at BiCon should be put under any pressure to join in with things they don't want to. Obviously that includes any sexual behaviour, but it also includes hugs, touching, playing a game, being in a photo, disclosing information or even having a chat.

It's fine to ask someone once if they would like to do something. Pestering someone counts as harassment; if someone asks you to leave them alone, do so.

In public, "No", "Stop", and "Don't do that" will be taken at face value by the BiCon organisers, regardless of any safewords* within BDSM games/scenes.

(* For explanations of "BDSM" and "safeword", see the Community Info Zones, as described on p14; but you can safely skip over the above paragraph for now if they're not ideas you're already familiar with.)

Personal space

Don't invade people's personal space without being invited to. A useful phrase is "Would you like a hug?"

Public behaviour

Please keep any public behaviour legal.

Remember that consent includes any audience.

Confidentiality

... within BiCon

Not everyone at BiCon wants to be 'out' about their sexuality to the whole world.

If you take a **photo**, it is your responsibility to make sure everyone in it is happy to be photographed and knows what you intend to do with the photo. "Everyone" includes people in the background / in the distance / facing away from you.

Similarly, ask permission before identifying anyone in a public **write-up** of BiCon. For the avoidance of doubt, 'public' includes personal web sites and web logs such as LiveJournal.

... within discussion sessions

No photography, recording or filming in programme sessions, unless it's specifically stated in the programme.

Feel free to discuss the content of sessions with people who weren't there. But don't 'name names', and don't describe someone in a way that identifies them.

Press policy

Members of the press should identify themselves to BiCon Reception and at any sessions they attend. If not everyone is happy with their presence in a session, the session organiser may ask them to leave.

Who's who

People attending BiCon should wear their pass/badge to all events; if you don't, your right to attend may be challenged.

Different coloured badges will indicate under-16s and under-18s. If you're over 18 but look younger, or over 16 but look younger, please bring proof of your date of birth.

People wearing sashes are involved with the organisation of BiCon in some way. More on this under "Help during BiCon", p3.

Health & safety

Smoking

UCW has a no smoking policy throughout college buildings. BiCon is extending this to cover the Students' Union as well. In the outdoor quads, please look out for notices showing where smoking is welcome.

Wellbeing

Party responsibly; don't use the amazing BiCon environment as an excuse. Take care of yourself.

Animals

We can't allow animals on-site, except for registered assistance animals.

Sessions programme

Age limits

"Children welcome" will indicate sessions welcoming accompanied under-13s.

Teens aged 13-16 are welcome at sessions in general. Parents are responsible for knowing where their child is, and giving or withholding their permission as they consider appropriate.

Sessions with other age limits, such as over-16s or over-18s, will be indicated in the programme and/or on the door of the session room.

Babes in arms are welcome at all sessions unless otherwise stated.

(There is a crèche; see page 23.)

"Only" spaces

A few sessions may have other restrictions on the people that may attend: for example, "women only" or "bisexual men only". This will be indicated in their description in the programme. If you're not included, don't gatecrash.

(If it's not clear who is or isn't included, please confer with the session organiser in good time before the session. People at BiCon Reception can help you find them.)

Content

Some sessions will deal frankly with topics that some people find offensive or difficult.

It's fine to leave quietly if a session isn't what you expected, or you realise you're not in the mood for it.

If you feel that the content breaches this Code of Conduct, please tell the BiCon organisers.

Mobile phones

Unless you are on call as a volunteer counsellor or first aider, please turn off your phone before joining a programme session.

Confidentiality

As stated above under "confidentiality": Feel free to discuss the content of sessions with people who weren't there, but don't 'name names', or describe someone in a way that identifies them.

It's also good manners not to assume that just because someone talked about a particular issue in a session, they'll want to carry on talking about it somewhere else later.

When a session is "closed"

Some sessions may become "closed" either when a certain number of people have arrived or after a certain amount of time. This will be indicated by a notice on the door. If a session is already closed, don't try to join it.

Additional tips for good manners in sessions

Turn up on time, or slightly early.

Don't interrupt or talk over other people.

In discussions, be aware of how much you're speaking, compared to other people. Help the session organiser to make sure that the quieter people get a turn to speak if they want to.

Find your BiCon feet

With so much to take in and so many people you don't know, it can take a while to "find your BiCon feet". Even people who come back year after year have their moments of feeling a bit wibbly or "alone in a crowd".

Here we aim to give you a little of the BiCon flavour, and tell you some useful things to help you settle in at your own pace.

If you've been to BiCon before, you'll know some of this already. But a few things we're doing are new this year.

Meeting new people

Who's in the same boat?

Most years, about a third of people at BiCon are first-timers. So although everyone around you may *look* as though they know lots of people already, that's probably an illusion. There's probably someone nearby who'd be delighted to discover a fellow newcomer or friendly person to chat with. The tricky bit (especially if you're shy) is finding them. But even if you can't spot them yet, don't forget they're around.

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"I was shy because at the time I identified as a Lesbian with a capital L and expected to stick out like a sore thumb, but was proven entirely wrong. Lots of people knew each other so spent their time with their mates, but loads more were really friendly and chatty.

I found some nice quiet people to sit in the corner being shy with, and found that during the day loudly advertising that you were making a fry-up was a sure-fire way to make friends fast.

I'd say the one thing you need to enjoy BiCon is a ready smile. One of them and you can't go far wrong."

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Flat-sharing

Unless people have specially asked to be with a friend (whom they've named), we usually aim to put newcomers together in the flats with other newcomers, and/or other people from the same geographical area.

Workshop sessions

Traditional advice is to go to daytime sessions as a good way of meeting people. You won't necessarily make friends instantly in the sessions, but the discussion topic can lead into some interesting conversations then or later.

This year, we strongly recommend that newcomers go to at least one of the sessions entitled "Fitting and misfitting in the bi community". These are open to everyone - bi or not, new or not. The format is designed to provoke some interesting thoughts and help people settle in, without putting anyone "on the spot". We're repeating it throughout BiCon, so that whenever you arrive, there will be one of those opportunities coming up soon.

(If you'd like a preview, see <www.uncharted-worlds.org/bi/fitmisfit.htm> for an account of its debut at BiCon 2002.)

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"Even though I'd been to BiCon before, it was this workshop that really made me feel at home. It put a lot of things in perspective.

We had the opportunity to realise what a diverse bunch we really were, and look at awkward feelings without putting anyone on the spot. I felt like I heaved a big sigh of relief, like "Oh, that's all right then!"

BiCon's been a much more comfortable place since then, and I've found that's something that's carried over into other situations elsewhere."

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Thursday night intro/meetup/welcome sessions

BiCon officially starts on Friday morning, but lots of people will be arriving on Thursday night.

On Thursday night, on the hour at 18.00, 19.00, 20.00 and 21.00, there will be short intro/welcome sessions. In these,

a) any announcements will be made, and practical questions answered

b) people will have an opportunity to hook up with others wanting to do the same thing. E.g. some may want company for a food shopping trip; some may already have unpacked and settled in, and just want to sit around and socialise for a while.

Volunteering

Feel like contributing? BiCon runs on volunteer energy, and that could include you - just ask at the reception desk.

Noshers' Network

What if you want company for lunch? At meal breaks, turn up to the Noshers' Network "meeting point" at the times shown in the timetable. The idea is very simple: people who want the same kind of food get together. That might mean going to a supermarket or takeaway and then back to the kitchen in someone's flat, or if the weather's good perhaps having a picnic, or simply walking round the corner into the coffee shop. The group doesn't necessarily all go to the same place - it depends what people want.

Aside from finding people to chat with, this can be a good way of getting to know the local food places.

Meet & Mingle zones

In the chill-out space (near the bar), and possibly in some other places, look out for "Meet & Mingle" signs. The idea is that in those areas, you can go and join a table where you don't know the other people (yet). Obviously you *could* do that anywhere, but this way you know in advance that you're not interrupting a private conversation.

Meet & Mingle rules:

1. Anyone is welcome to sit down and join in the conversation.
2. Once you're in the Meet & Mingle zone, look out for passers-by or people who've recently come into the room, and invite them: "Want to join us?"

Some Meet & Mingle zones may have another theme too, such as "Stitch & Bitch" (for both keen knitters, and people who just want to have a go), or board games. Ask at BiCon Reception if you want pens & paper to create your own Meet & Mingle sign with a particular theme.

Notice boards and plenary sessions

There will be some notice board space available in the area upstairs from BiCon Reception. Feel free to put up a notice advertising for other people, e.g. from your geographical area or sharing a particular interest.

You might also like to make a brief announcement at an evening plenary session, or ask for your announcement to be read out by the team.

On the net

This year's BiCon web site is at www.bicon2005.org.uk, and there's one at www.bicon.org.uk which links to info about past years and next year.

You might consider introducing yourself on the BiCon community LiveJournal, <www.livejournal.com/community/bicon/>. There usually seem to be at least one or two newcomers who say hello there before BiCon, and more afterwards. If you don't have a LiveJournal (a.k.a. LJ) yourself, you can still join in the conversation there by commenting on someone else's post. A lot of regular and recent BiCon-goers read this group, including some of this year's organising team, so it's a good place to get questions answered.

Community Info Zones

Coming to BiCon can be quite a learning curve in terms of different words and different communities. For instance, BiCon-goers include people who identify as transgender, transsexual, Deaf, disabled and/or Goth. You might also hear words and abbreviations like polyamory, BDSM, genderqueer and so on. Look out for Community Info Zones - written displays which try to answer the basic questions about these various areas. You won't be the first person who's wondered what those words mean.

Who are these people in the strange clothes?

One of the wonderful things about BiCon is that it's a very unjudgemental place when it comes to dressing up. Leather, latex, purple velvet; corsets, drag, sparkly things; BiCon's seen it all (especially in the evenings). Sometimes it's easy to get the impression that these dressed-up people are of a different cooler species, or indeed strange alien weirdos. However, we're mostly much the same as anyone in ordinary life, as you'll find out if you get chatting to us.

In true BiCon diversity, you'll also see plenty of people in their favourite ordinary comfy clothes, especially in the daytime but even on the dance floor.

Not necessarily bi

Some non-bi people come to BiCon as the partner, friend or relative of a bi person. Some people visit as part of questioning their sexuality. Some people might be labelled bisexual by mainstream culture but actually prefer a different label (such as queer or pansexual). Some non-bi people feel at home here thanks to the accepting attitude to other non-mainstream things. There may also be a few people with a professional interest in bisexuality, e.g. a researcher (though anyone at BiCon as a journalist must identify themselves).

In short, don't assume that everyone you meet at BiCon is bi.

Sex and no sex

Compared to the ordinary world, BiCon is an unusually sex-positive environment. A fair amount of conversation about sex goes on, and some people do "pull" while at BiCon.

But if that's not your cup of tea, don't be fooled into thinking that you're the odd one out. Plenty of people here are happy with the number of partners they have already (whether that be none, one or more), and/or don't enjoy casual sex, and/or just aren't in the mood.

What's your pronoun?

Although the majority at BiCon is people of fairly ordinary gender, it also attracts a lot of gender diversity. Some people identify (and live full time) as a gender you wouldn't necessarily have predicted from their appearance; others are just playing with a different role for an evening.

To be respectful, use the pronouns (he, she, her etc) which people prefer themselves. But how do you know which those are?

Sometimes you can guess from the person's name or appearance, but sometimes the only way to know for sure is to ask. So don't feel you ought to know by some secret sign, and don't worry if you get it wrong sometimes, as long as you were doing your best to be polite.

By the same token, if *you* want to be known by a different pronoun than someone's guessed for you, let them know.

See also the "Community Info Zones" (as described on p14).

What if I'm not bi enough?

Perhaps because there are so many different ways to be bi, it seems to be a common thread among bi people to worry sometimes that they don't quite qualify as a "real" bi person. This is part of what we explore in the workshop "Fitting and misfitting in the bi community". For now, let's just say that we're not going to be asking for some mythical "certificate of bisexual authenticity". Besides, BiCon is open to people who don't even consider themselves bi.

So don't worry - however tiny the element of bisexuality in your life, if you can respect the diversity of others then you're welcome at BiCon.

Take it easy

Because BiCon is such an exceptional experience, it can feel like you don't want to miss a moment. It might sound obvious to say this, but do remember to eat and sleep a reasonable amount.

Most people don't go to things in every session, but take time out in the day to chat, snooze, ring home, have a bath or go food shopping. It's not possible to do everything - if you like it here that much, you'll just have to come back next year :-)

Counselling

Being at BiCon may stir up big feelings of one kind or another. Some BiCon-goers are trained counsellors who have volunteered to be available over the weekend. If you need a confidential listening ear, ask at reception or ring the BiCon mobile phone, on 07910 438976.

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"I had some unfinished business going on from a recent tricky relationship situation. I saw in the programme that there were counsellors available and I thought it would help if I could 'let off some steam', so I asked at reception.

By chance, the volunteer counsellor on call at the time was someone I knew from home. She said I could swop to someone else if I'd rather, but in fact I decided I didn't mind that she already knew me a bit. (She didn't know the other person I mostly wanted to talk about.)

It was lunch break so the two of us went and sat in one of the empty session rooms. I talked to her for maybe half an hour and it really did help."

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After BiCon

A lot of people have a sense of "post-BiCon comedown" a day or two later. It's also common to be fired up with activist inspiration and feel you can't wait to hook up again with some bit of the bi community. Or both :-)

It can be useful to think in advance about how you might feel when you get home, and build in a few plans to take care of yourself.

Some people book a day or two off work after BiCon finishes, to unwind and catch up on sleep (though if you're already at BiCon when you read this, it may be too late to arrange for this year).

If where you live is somewhere you're not out as bi, it can be good to stay a night with a friend where you can talk freely and let off steam.

You might want to fix up your next bi social event before you leave BiCon, to have something to look forward to. If there's nothing going on near where you live, you could still plan to stay in touch with people by phone or to join one of the internet groups.

On Monday morning (and possibly also Sunday - t.b.c.), there will be a session with the theme of "Re-entry", for thinking ahead about returning to ordinary life: what you might want to do next, and how best to take care of yourself.

Happy BiCon!

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"BiCon is like the place where all the people who don't or didn't fit in come together. There's the nerdy kind, the cool type, the just doing their own thing ones, and the rest.

Because of this, everyone is really welcoming, because they know what it's like to be the 'only one who...' And after a while, you get to be whoever you are, and still fit in."

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Timetable outline

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
	Reception open 9.00	Reception open 9.00	Reception open 9.00	Reception open 9.00
	Opening ceremony 9.30			
	Session 75 minutes 10.00 - 11.15	Session	Session	Session
	Break 15 minutes	Break	Break	Break
	Session 11.30 - 12.45	Session	Session	Closing ceremony till 12.30 or earlier
	Lunch break 90 mins 12.45 - 14.15 Noshers' Network meet at 13.00	Lunch NN 13.00	Lunch NN 13.00	
	Session 14.15 - 15.30	Session	Photo, then D.M. Plenary	
	Break 15 minutes	Break	Break	
Reception open 16.00	Session 15.45 - 17.00	Session	Session	
	Break 15 minutes	Break	Break	
	17.15 - 17.45ish Announcements Plenary	Ann. Plenary	Ann. Plenary	
Intro/ meetup/ welcome sessions 18.00, 19.00, 20.00, 21.00	Teatime break 2 hours & 15 mins 17.45 - 20.00 Noshers' Network meet at 18.00	Teatime break NN 18.00	Teatime break NN 18.00	
	Evening session 20.00 - 21.15 and ents till late	Evening sesh & ents	Evening sesh & ents	

Notes on timetable outline

D.M. Plenary = Decision-making plenary. See page 28.

NN = Noshers' Network. See page 13.

If you arrive late at night, after BiCon Reception is closed, please call the BiCon phone line on 07910 438976.

BiCon officially finishes at the end of the closing ceremony, but some people will stay and socialise afterwards. See "Vacating rooms, or staying on", p22.

Evening entertainments

All the evening entertainments are included in your day or weekend ticket.

At the time of this booklet going to press, some of this year's plans are yet to be finalised, but here are a few key elements:

Friday night will include a disco. If you'd like to contribute to the music, bring your favourite dance track on CD. Ideally you would copy it onto a separate CD, for ease of playing and so that we can't accidentally lose your original. (There will probably be some kind of voting system to decide what gets played.)

Saturday night will have the Time Travellers' Ball, with music from the 1920s to the 1990s. Fancy dress is optional: possible themes include any time in the past or future, or your favourite Dr Who character or monster.

Sunday night will have karaoke, and assorted other entertainment. Would you like a five or ten minute slot to do something? If so, let us know, on ents@bicon2005.org.uk or via BM BiCon, London WC1N 3XX, or (if you're already at BiCon) via BiCon Reception.

If we can, we'll put up a full list of available karaoke songs onto the BiCon website beforehand.

The bar will be open from 18.00, Thursday to Sunday. See "Students' Union building", page 21.

More details of entertainments will follow in the programme booklet which you get when you arrive at BiCon.

Resources on site and in the local area

BiCon 2005 is taking place on the campus of University College Worcester, about a mile from Worcester City Centre.

We've collected some info here about the campus and local area. We've done our best to be accurate, but things can change, so please check opening times before relying on them. Additions and any corrections will be put up on the BiCon notice boards.

You can also get **further information** from

- the Tourist information centre: The Guildhall, High Street, 01905 726311.
- this big collection of online listings for Worcester: www.thisisworcester.co.uk/worcestershire/worcester/info/

Maps

On the inside front cover of this booklet is a sketch map showing the local area and local shops, referred to here as "local map".

On the inside back cover of this booklet is a "3d picture" map (provided by the University and annotated by us), referred to here as "campus map". If you're reading this before BiCon, you should also have got a separate copy of the original, in the post with this booklet. If you want one and haven't got one, ask at BiCon Reception or University Reception, or get extra copies on line at <www.bicon2005.org.uk/campus.png>.

BiCon's buildings and spaces

The central admin building and the wheelchair-accessible flats are about 200m apart. The Students' Union and the other flats are within the same general area.

All the BiCon spaces are accessible via level floors and lifts, with two exceptions: (a) some of the flats; (b) an area upstairs from the SU bar, with additional seating and pool tables, which won't be used for anything special.

We are sharing the campus with another conference - the Barbershop Singers! They will mainly be in the dedicated conference centre (not very near us), and in Worcester Halls.

The **central administration building** contains

- BiCon Reception [campus map 10]
- University Reception, round the corner from ours
- Stalls and notices area, upstairs from BiCon Reception (served by adjacent lift). Community Info Zone displays will be here.
- Safer sex supplies, probably in the stalls & notices area. (Help yourself, and take some back to your flat - someone might thank you for it in the middle of the night :-))
- Next door to BiCon Reception, the coffee shop, "Café Connections". Pre-booked packed lunches can be collected from here. (See "Food" section on p24 for opening times.)
- The plenary hall
- The session rooms
- The staff common room, which we may use from Saturday onwards. (Staff will be on site on Friday.) We're likely to use this partly as a session room in the daytime, and as social space in the evening.
- The dining hall, where breakfast will be served to those who have booked it in advance.

The **Students' Union building** [campus map 23] will be open Thursday to Sunday from 18.00.

As far as BiCon's concerned, it contains only

- The bar
- The adjacent dance hall, which will be the main venue for evening entertainments
- The chill-out space, with a few sofas and more tables and chairs, which will be a quiet but also licenced area.

Due to licensing restrictions, the bar will operate a strict "No under 18s" policy, and this will apply to the chill-out space as well. The staff common room, and the stalls and notices area upstairs from BiCon Reception, will be in use in the evening as alcohol-free social space.

Bar opening times

Thursday to Sunday: opening at 18.00.

Thursday & Sunday: closing at 22.30.

Friday & Saturday: Late licence applied for but not yet confirmed; if confirmed, closing at 1.00.

(We realise that to some people, the lack of an afternoon bar is a downer, but we hope the central café will be a reasonable alternative. The cost of security for opening the entire SU building was the main reason we didn't go for the afternoon bar.)

Parking

If you booked accommodation, please note that we are arranging BiCon parking permits to save weekenders having to feed the "Pay & Display" every day. They will be available from BiCon Reception.

Accommodation details

The overnight accommodation is in self-contained student flats. BiCon's main building is Wyvern Hall [campus map 33]; a few people are in Worcester Halls [campus map 36], where the wheelchair-accessible rooms are.

Each flat has 4 or 6 bedrooms, shower, w.c., bath and kitchen. Bed linen, towels and a bedside lamp are provided.

The kitchen includes fridge/freezer, electric cooker, and what they're calling "basic cutlery and crockery". So far, we have been unable to extract a definitive list from the University of what that means, but we reckon you can be fairly sure of knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and mugs. We have also been promised a "pool" of pans.

If there is any shortage, we should be able to sort it out when we get there; apparently they do own plenty of stuff, they just can't tell us yet what it is. However, those travelling by car may want to bring a few bits of kitchen stuff to be on the safe side, such as can openers, corkscrews and even a pan or two if you've got room.

Vacating rooms, or staying on

BiCon officially finishes at the end of the Closing Ceremony, lunchtime on Monday 29 August. The closing ceremony starts at 11.30 and will run no later than 12.30. (It could well finish quite a bit earlier, depending on what rounding-off there is to do, but this is what you can count on for the purposes of planning travel.)

If you're leaving that day, you should vacate your room by 18.00. Leave the key either in the door or inside the room, and sign out at BiCon Reception.

The University hires out rooms on an individual basis and you may book your room for an extra night after BiCon (or more if they have space), paying the University directly. The cost will be £16.45 per additional night. You can do this at BiCon, up to about 17.00* on

Monday 29 August, by going to University Reception. You may also reserve rooms in advance by emailing Debbie Naylor, our key person at the venue, on <d.naylor@worc.ac.uk>.

* This is not a hard deadline, but simply due to the fact that at some time shortly after 18.00, the keys of people leaving that day will be collected from the flats. The people doing that job will need to know which keys they're supposed to be collecting.

Note that the 18.00 time to vacate rooms is specific to the end of BiCon (we negotiated it). On subsequent days, rooms should be vacated by 10am.

Crèche

There is a crèche which will run on daytimes Friday till Sunday, plus Monday morning (exact times t.b.c.). There may still be a few places available; please email team@bicon2005.org.uk or call the BiCon mobile on 07910 438976.

Cashpoints

Cash machines are located in the Students' Union and Dining Hall lobby. A charge of £1.75 per transaction is made.

Telephones

Bedrooms have neither telephones nor phone sockets. The payphones appear to be quite expensive. There is a payphone next to "Café Connections" and one in the Students' Union main entrance.

Internet access

We have access to the University's network at no charge. Get your password from BiCon Reception. A WiFi network covers the main buildings but not the accommodation. The Computer Centre [campus map 21] is open 24 hours.

Sports

BiCon has free use of the University's gym [in the Indoor Sports Centre, campus map 19]. You must first complete their medical form, available from BiCon Reception.

Gym opening times during BiCon: Thur/Fri 7.00-21.00; Sat/Sun 9.00-16.00; Monday closed.

Worcester Swimming Pool & Fitness Centre, 01905 20241, is on Sansome Walk, in the City Centre not far from Foregate railway station. There's no swimming pool on site.

Pool times during BiCon: Fri 9.00-13.15 general; Sat 7.15-9.00 adults, 9.15-13.15 general (and pm kids); Sun 7.15-9.00 adults, 9.15-17.00 general; Mon 9.00-17.00 general.

Laundrette

The on-site laundrette is next to the computing centre and will be open throughout BiCon. The machines take £1 and 20p coins. £1.40 for a wash. Get a scoop of soap powder at BiCon Reception.

Food & other provisions

Usually at BiCon there's a mix of self-catering in the flats, and people getting take-away or going off-site to eat. Some years, including this year, there's also food to buy on site.

We will have a display in or near BiCon Reception of all the local takeaway and restaurant menus we've managed to collect. If you visit somewhere we haven't been, feel free to add to the collection.

... On site food

The on-site coffee shop "Café Connections" is next door to BiCon Reception. It will sell hot and cold drinks and (a limited supply of) light snacks.

Coffee shop opening times:

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday: 10.00 - 18.00

Monday: 12.00 - 13.00.

For those who have booked it in advance, breakfast will be served in the dining room. Details on this are to be confirmed.

There will also be a coffee machine in the staff common room.

... Off site shops

See the local area map on the inside front cover. Numbers in square brackets indicate references to that map.

Note that the campus has two main entrances/exits. The Malvern Gate is on the south side of the campus, near University Reception. You probably came in this way if you got a bus from town. The Severn Gate is on the east side of the campus, near the long term car park.

The map shows three nearby areas you might go to for shopping.

- [1] Nearest to the campus is the Co-op local store. Starting from the Malvern Gate, it's about a quarter of a mile east, on the junction of Henwick & Oldbury roads.

Co-op local store opening hours: 7.00 - 23.00, 7 days including bank holidays.

- [2] North of the campus are the Martley Road shops. Here is Tesco Express, an off licence and a dry cleaner.

Tesco Express opening hours: 6.00 - 22.30, 7 days including bank holidays.

If walking to Martley Road, you probably want to leave by the Severn Gate, on the east side of the campus. From there it's about half a mile.

Or you can get the number 31 bus going north from the top of Laugherne Road, near the Malvern Gate. Bus stop is shown as lower case [b]; see buses info on page 26. The stop you want to get off at is actually called "Martley Road shops".

- [3 to 9] South of the campus is the suburb of St John's, with various shops and takeaways including a chip shop, pizza place, Chinese, Cantonese and Indian food, Post Office, NatWest bank, pharmacies and a Co-op superstore.

This is perhaps three-quarters of a mile walk from the Malvern Gate.

By bus, get the 31 from bus stop [B]. This will take you down to St Johns via Laugherne Road & Comer Road. See buses info on page 26.

By car, go down Henwick Road & park in the Co-op car park. The car park is accessed via a narrow turning on the right, after the level crossing and just past the pub. You can then walk down to the end of Henwick Road (or through the co-op store).

Additional info for some of the St Johns' shops:

Co-op superstore opening hours: Mon-Sat 8.00-22.00; Sun 10.00-16.00; Bank holiday 8.00-21.00 t.b.c.

Perfect Pizza takeaway, 0870 438 8822. Opening hours: 16.30-midnight, 7 days.

Hing Tai Chinese take away, 01905 426997/429963.

Anaz Indian takeaway & delivery, 01905 425888.

Golden River Cantonese takeaway, 01905 428313.

The Bush Inn and Mulbury's restaurant are under the same management. The restaurant blurb claims: "special diets/non smoking/wheelchair access". 01905 428986.

Buses

The 31 bus runs between the University and the town.

For bus stops near the campus, see the local map on the inside front cover of this booklet.

Going to the town, catch the bus from the stop shown as capital [B], next to the campus's "Malvern Gate".

Coming *from* the town, there's no physical "bus stop" here, but the bus will stop on request. Ask for University College and they'll drop you opposite the Malvern Gate (fairly near [B]).

If you want to get the 31 going north to Martley Road shops, cross over Oldbury Road and go a little way down Laugherne Road to the bus stop shown as lower-case [b].

A single into town is £1.30, and the buses do give change.

There exists a ticket for £2.50 which includes a whole day's bus travel, although we haven't yet managed to check for any time restrictions on that (e.g. it may not be valid early weekday mornings).

Taxis

The following local taxi firms have been recommended by UCW:

Associated Taxis, 01905 763939.

Blue Star, 01905 610022.

Brookside, 01905 429833.

City Taxis, 01905 726726.

BiCon Background

History and basics

The first UK bi gathering was in 1984, although it didn't yet have the name BiCon. This is the 23rd. In recent years, they've all been on a university campus in late summer and lasted three or four days.

There is no permanent BiCon organisation, although there is now a permanent web site (www.bicon.org.uk) and mailing address (BM BiCon, London WC1N 3XX). Each year, it's run by a new team of volunteers, sometimes a mix of past BiCon organisers and people new to the challenge. The formal hand-over from one team to the next is often at the BiCon closing plenary.

Some years, the team is based in the same city as the BiCon venue; this year we've chosen a venue for its good facilities even though the team lives elsewhere. These days, much of the planning takes place over the internet anyway.

The essentials of a BiCon are defined by the BiCon Guidelines, formalised in 1998. If a team wants to run BiCon differently from those, they're supposed to say so up front when they say "We want to run BiCon in such-and-such a year". Usually that's in a plenary session at BiCon. The Guidelines can be seen on the web at [<www.bicon.org.uk/guidelines.html>](http://www.bicon.org.uk/guidelines.html).

If it happened that two groups both wanted to run the same year's BiCon, there would be a vote to decide, although in recent years that's never been necessary. Some years it's seemed like no-one was gonna do it; other years, there's been a kind of organically-evolved consensus where word goes around that "so-and-so is thinking of such-and-such a year".

Usually most people in the organising team identify as bi, but straight & gay people can be and have been BiCon organisers too.

Several recent BiCons (though not all) have ended up with surplus money. Thus the next groups of BiCon organisers have been able to start off with seed money, e.g. to pay the deposit to the venue. What's in the bank also protects BiCon organisers from having to dip into their own pockets in the event of a financial loss.

The suggestion comes round regularly that BiCon (as a whole) should be formed into some kind of limited company, but as yet there has been no consensus for that. Individual BiCons can take that route, though, if the team members want to.

Plenaries and the Decision-Making Plenary

The word "plenary" is from a Latin word meaning "full". The idea of a plenary session is that everyone goes to them (or could if they wanted), so they're scheduled on their own in the timetable. Plenary sessions during BiCon are an opportunity to make announcements and to enjoy the sense of being together as a group.

Each BiCon has one "**decision-making plenary**". This is the place where formal proposals can be discussed and voted on, and it's usually longer than the other plenary sessions. Everyone there gets a vote, so in a sense, the whole lot of us take a role as representatives of "The UK Bi Community".

Here, people can offer to run future BiCons, and propose changes to the BiCon Guidelines. This year we have laid out a specific structure for bringing forward proposals, which is outlined below.

The decision-making plenary is also the place for any other formal business which wants some kind of endorsement from "The Bi Community".

Making proposals at the decision-making plenary

The decision-making plenary tends to run more smoothly if the proposals being presented have "had the corners knocked off" beforehand. This year, this is the structure we've set up to help that to happen.

At Friday's evening plenary, we'll invite anyone with an idea for a proposal to stand up and **outline** it. We won't debate it then; this is just a "heads-up" so that people with an interest in that issue know it's worth their while to go to the workshop the next day. The proposals will go on display afterwards for the benefit of people arriving later.

On Saturday afternoon, interested parties get together in a "**knock-the-corners-off**" session. This may mean that the original form of the proposals changes, or even that a completely different and better idea is invented.

After that session, we put up a **list of the proposals in their evolved form**, along with the proposers and perhaps any main opposers who want to be named. This allows for people to approach them as individuals if there's a point they want cleared up, even if they missed the discussion.

People may also want to put up written arguments for & against, for people to read while browsing the notice boards. (Something along those lines was done at 2003 and 2004.)

At Saturday's evening plenary, we **read out the list**. (This would also mean we *could* have another knock-it-into-shape on Sunday morning, if necessary. We're not sure yet whether in fact we'll need this.)

With any luck this process will mean that things appear at the **decision-making plenary on Sunday afternoon** in a form that is clear to vote on, where the substantive issue has been identified and the undergrowth of "yes buts" and "what ifs" cleared away. It also gives people time to think about the stuff and/or discuss it and/or get clarification before they turn up to debate it & vote.

Running sessions

Most or all of the sessions at BiCon are run by ordinary BiCon-goers, who have a skill to share or a hot topic they want to talk about. Some have lots of experience of running groups; others are running their first session this year.

Usually, most of the sessions are offered before BiCon starts, so that the organisers can work out a timetable and print a programme with details.

However, it's also common for a few more to be added as BiCon goes on. Perhaps you wanted to get a sense of the BiCon vibe, or see what was already in the timetable, before making your offer. Or perhaps the idea for the subject was a spin-off from a discussion during the weekend.

Up until just before BiCon, the place to offer workshops is via the web site at <www.bicon2005.org.uk/sessions/>. Or write to BM BiCon, London WC1N 3XX.

If you decide during BiCon that you'd like to offer an additional session, ask at BiCon Reception.

If you have an idea for a subject, but not much experience of leading discussions, you might like to collaborate with someone else. You can also read up on some ideas for running BiCon sessions at <www.uncharted-worlds.org/bi/workshop.htm>.

=

"I was expecting the BiCon workshops to be more political/academic, similar to other conferences I'd been to, so I was a bit disappointed. However, I soon realised that BiCon was an open space, where you can easily get involved and run workshops that interest you."

=

Things you might like to bring

Comfy clothes.

Clothes to dress up in, if you like to dress up. This could include

- fancy dress (see page 19)
- any other clothes you like, perhaps especially ones you wouldn't usually get the chance to wear (see page 14).

Favourite board game or card game, if you enjoy them.

Knitting/sewing, if you enjoy them - there will be a "Stitch & Bitch" space.

Walking boots if you fancy a walk in the Malvern hills.

Swimming things if you fancy a swim.

Your favourite dance track on CD, for possible use at the disco (see page 19).

Proof of your date of birth, if you're over 18 but look younger, or over 16 but look younger.

Can opener, corkscrew; any other handy kitchen items if you plan to do some self-catering, although basics are to be provided (see page 22).

Booklet credits

Insides of this booklet edited & mostly written by Jennifer Moore. Feedback and corrections to jennifer@uncharted-worlds.org please.

Research into local area resources by Martin Winfield, who also did the maps and the cover.

Thanks to Marcus Morgan, the BiCon 2003 team and other past BiCon organisers for the basis of the Code of Conduct.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their "true story quotes".

The full BiCon 2005 team listing and credits will follow in the programme booklet.

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