

19th European Conference on Object-Oriented Programming

Glasgow, July 25–29, 2005

Final Report

1 Introduction

This document is the final report¹ of ECOOP 2005 in Glasgow. We have followed the structure of recent ECOOP final reports in the basic order and content of this document, with additional sections to provide additional feedback and input in light of the unusual features of ECOOP 2005. The main differences that are highlighted and discussed relate to administrative difficulties encountered during the running of ECOOP 2005, the unusual outcome of a financial loss, and the ongoing efforts to finalise ECOOP 2005, for example with respect to the workshop reader.

ECOOP 2005 was held at the Scottish Exhibitions and Convention Centre and the adjoining Moat House Hotel, on the banks of the Clyde in Glasgow, with the traditional ECOOP structure: two days of workshops and tutorials, July 25 & 26, were followed by three days of conference, July 27–29. The hosts for the event were the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, and the formal welcome on Wednesday was given by the Principal of the University of Glasgow, in an opening event that included the awarding of the first AITO Dahl-Nygaard prizes to Bertrand Meyer and Gail Murphy.

ECOOP 2005 included 18 workshops and 10 tutorials over the initial two days, a combined doctoral symposium and PhD workshop, the AITO Dahl-Nygaard prize-giving and invited talks by the two prize winners, brief reports by the PC chair and organizing chair, and 24 main papers organized as eight technical sessions. In addition, there was a small poster display, with external posters and additional offerings from some workshops, a programme of demonstrations, exhibitions from three publishers, and a keynote speech at the banquet.

There were 339 participants in ECOOP 2005, compared with recent attendee numbers of: 436 (2004), 369 (2003), 483 (2002), 450 (2001), 600 (2000), 480 (1999) and 700 (1998). As usual, the attendees came from a wide range of organizations and from all over the world (32 countries in 5 continents). A more detailed breakdown of attendee numbers is given in §2.3 and a discussion of factors which may have contributed to the lower than usual numbers is in §4.1.

ECOOP 2005 would not have been possible without the support of a great many people and organizations, including the Programme and Organizing Committees (listed on the last page of this document) the hosting Universities, our sponsors (AITO, Sun Microsystems and Microsoft Research) and a wide range of staff at the venues (SECC, Moat House, Glasgow Science Centre, Glasgow City Chambers and The Arches). We thank all of them for their assistance with ECOOP 2005. Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank the student volunteers, whose assistance was, as always, essential to the smooth running of the conference.

Peter Dickman
Organizing Chair
ECOOP 2005

¹Though an annex to the report will be produced once the saga of the workshop reader is resolved, for completeness.

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2 Financial Statements

2.1 Fee Structures

The fee structure for ECOOP 2005 is presented in Table 1. The basic structure of fees follows usual practice at ECOOP, with a range of levels based on status and the time at which registration occurred. The key fee levels (£360 for early regular registrations, 50% rates for students and banquet tickets sold separately at £40) were agreed as part of the original bid to host ECOOP 2005 and honoured thereafter. Due to the strong pound, this pricing structure was felt to be at the upper limit of what might be acceptable, being noticeably higher than the registration costs for ECOOP 2002 & 2003 and comparable with the price of ECOOP 2004. The pricing, and the separation of banquet tickets from the standard registration is discussed further in §3.5.1. A reduced fee level, with banquet ticket included, was offered to members of the Programme Committee, by way of thanks for their assistance with ECOOP, and accompanying guests were welcomed at a below-cost price, to help them feel part of the event.

		Conference	Workshops Only	Banquet
Regular	Early	360	180	40
	Late	440	220	
	On-Site	440	220	
Student	Early	180	90	35
	Late	220	110	
	On-Site	220	110	
Tutorials Only Fee			50	
Accompanying Person (inc. Banquet)				75

Table 1: ECOOP 2005 Fee Structure

2.2 Invitation Letters

Following the advice of previous conference organizers, we were particularly wary of registrations that appeared unusual, to try and avoid problems of fraud and illicit visa acquisition.

From the outset, we followed previous advice and enforced a policy of refusing to issue letters to attendees until they had paid their registration fee in full. We were then willing to issue letters noting that the attendee was planning to attend the conference, in support of visa applications. As in previous years, there were visa problems for a couple of potential attendees but we did not have any problems with applications from West Africa this year.

2.3 Participation

There were 339 participants, and 10 accompanying partners. To provide some sense of the breadth of appeal of ECOOP, we present data acquired during the registration process. Table 2 shows the number of registered participants in each fee category.

A particular problem arose over tutorial registrations. Very few tutorial sessions were sold (a total of 38 units), leading to the cancellation of some tutorials and low numbers in most sessions. Last minute attempts to sell tutorial slots at a discounted rate within the host institutions added a small number to

		Conference	Workshops only	Tutorials only	Tutorial Units				Banquet
					1	2	3	4	
Regular	early	81	46	0	6	1	0	0	47
	late	20	15	1	0	0	0	0	5
	on site	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
Students	early	52	30	0	4	2	2	0	26
	late	10	9	5	2	7	0	0	3
	on site	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Accompanying		10							10
PC members		1							1
Free admission but self-funded banquet		57							11
									2
Total		237	106	6	12	10	2	0	107
Tutorial units sold		38							

Table 2: ECOOP 2005 Attendee Numbers

the total tutorial attendees, but made little real difference. The tutorial numbers are discussed further in §4.1.7.

Of the 339 active participants, only 39 were identifiably from industry with 295 identifiable as being associated with academic institutions. It is difficult to compare with the proportion of industrialists in previous years, as this is not always recorded: we received 11.5%-13%, depending on the unknowns, from industry compared with 18% in 2002 (Malaga).

There were 109 fee-paying students amongst the 282 fee-paying participants, i.e. 38.6% of the fee-paying participants were students; this increases to approximately 43% of the total active participants when the student volunteers, organizers and guests are included in the calculation. ECOOP 2004 hosted 119 students from 436 registrations, giving 27%, compared with 38% in 2003 (Darmstadt) and 33%–35% in 2002 (Malaga) (33% of fee-payers, 35% of all participants).

The countries in which the 349 participants and partners are based was also captured, in case it proved to be of value for future organizers. In all, 20 European and 12 other countries were represented. This is illustrated in table 3 which is ordered by numbers of participants within geographical regions. The 32 country total is roughly comparable with previous ECOOPs: 36 in 2004, 25 in 2003 and 34 in 2002.

2.4 Global Financial Statement

The overall financial statement is presented in table 4 on page 9. This table is reproduced, as table 5 on page 10, with all figures converted to Euros at current rates, for ease of comparison. Some care is needed in interpreting these figures, as explained below, in comparison with other recent ECOOP conferences.

2.5 Responding to Changing Circumstances

In most years, the ECOOP organizers find that their budget is robust and that they have a surplus to invest in additional services and improved entertainments at the conference. Unfortunately, ECOOP 2005 had the opposite problem. It became clear more than six months before the event that we were having problems attracting sponsorship. After initial successes with Sun Microsystems and Microsoft

UK	64	USA	55
Germany	39	Canada	12
Belgium	22		
France	19	Brazil	5
Spain	18	Mexico	2
Switzerland	17	Argentina	1
Ireland	15	Chile	1
Denmark	11		
Finland	7		
Italy	7	Japan	8
Netherlands	7	Taiwan	1
Norway	6		
Austria	4	Australia	3
Portugal	4	New Zealand	2
Hungary	3		
Sweden	3		
Luxembourg	2	Israel	6
Latvia	1	South Africa	2
Poland	1		
Slovenia	1		

Table 3: ECOOP 2005 Attendees, by country of residence

Research, no further main sponsors were found. In parallel with continuing attempts to find sponsors, we therefore engaged in a process of cost minimisation, to ensure that we did not incur a significant loss and in the hope of avoiding loss at all. This led to the abandonment of a number of planned minor elements and the substitution of alternatives wherever possible.

The main costs for ECOOP 2005 were venue hire and meals, and these could not be significantly reduced. However, by simplifying the arrangements — e.g. using bags with the Universities’ logos rather than purchasing long-lasting backpacks or similar — we were able to reduce costs compared with our original budgets. Similarly, rather than providing travel passes for the whole Strathclyde region, we simply provided the minimum essential tickets for the local trains, reducing the costs but incurring a time penalty as the tickets had to be individually generated at the local station, a process which took several hours. More importantly, wherever possible the administrative costs were absorbed into expenditure within the Universities, rather than directly associating them with ECOOP.

Unfortunately, the major shortfall in tutorial income, and a shift to workshop-only attendance with reduced numbers staying for the main conference, only became obvious as we approached the early registration deadline, and these further falls in the income proved catastrophic to the overall finances. Wherever possible, expenditure that was incurred immediately prior to the conference was eliminated or transferred to other budgets but a substantial loss was unavoidable at this stage. A decision was taken to ensure that the conference would be unaffected so far as was possible, with high priority given to maintaining ECOOP’s reputation, especially since the main costs were rigidly fixed and the loss could not be substantially reduced by changing the arrangements for the event.

Category	Key		Income	Expenses	Balance
Publicity and printing	10	Call for papers			
	11	Call for participation			
	12	Advertising			
	13	Mailing			
	14	Final program		£340.00	
	15	Signposts, badges, tickets		£68.00	
	Sum		£0.00	£408.00	-£408.00
Conference	20	PC meeting support		£1,304.55	
	21	Invited speakers		£2,299.85	
	22	Conference fees	£49,940.00		
	23	Donations	£7,096.48		
	24	Insurance		£1,212.75	
	25	Proceedings		£5,125.76	
	26	Room rent		£50,880.63	
	27	Panels			
	28	Banquet room		£2,260.76	
	29	Banquet	£3,175.00	£3,793.30	
	Sum		£60,211.48	£66,877.60	-£6,666.12
Tutorials and workshops	30	Speaker reimbursement		£1,011.57	
	31	Material			
	32	Tutorial fees	£4,200.00		
	33	Tutorial/workshop lunches		£4,200.00	
	34	Tutorial notes		£110.00	
	35	Fees workshop-only	£16,130.00		
	Sum		£20,330.00	£5,321.57	£15,008.43
Catering	40	Receptions, coffee breaks, lunches		£24,612.71	
	41	Wages			
	Sum		£0.00	£24,612.71	-£24,612.71
Exhibition	50	Booth rental			
	52	Exhibition fees	£75.00		
	Sum		£75.00	£0.00	£75.00
Merchandise	60	Shirts, bags			
	61	Proceedings	£108.95		
	Sum		£108.95	£0.00	£108.95
Organization	70	Students honorarium		£297.50	
	71	Office material, stationary		£131.56	
	72	Machines		£578.42	
	73	Rental fees			
	74	AITO meeting		£2,396.90	
	75	Transportation		£802.00	
	76	Food			
	77	Telephone			
	78	Banking, credit cards		£990.79	
	79	Interest			
	80	Administration			
	81	External services			
	82	Registration			
	83	CyberChair		£5,158.14	
	84	AITO loan (@ € 1.473 ≡ £1)	£16,976.78		
85	East European support				
	Sum		£16,976.78	£10,355.31	£6,621.47
Taxes	90	Taxes: IVA			
	91	Taxes: IRPEF			
	92	Taxes: various			
	Sum		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Total			£97,702.21	£107,575.19	-£9,872.98
Total		(£1 ≡ € 1.464 on 16/6/06)	€ 143,036.04	€ 157,490.08	-€ 14,454.04

Table 4: ECOOP 2005 Financial Statement (in pounds sterling)

Category	Key		Income	Expenses	Balance
Publicity and printing	10	Call for papers			
	11	Call for participation			
	12	Advertising			
	13	Mailing			
	14	Final program		€ 497.76	
	15	Signposts, badges, tickets		€ 99.55	
	Sum		€ 0.00	€ 597.31	-€ 597.31
Conference	20	PC meeting support		€ 1,909.86	
	21	Invited speakers		€ 3,366.98	
	22	Conference fees	€ 73,112.16		
	23	Donations	€ 10,389.25		
	24	Insurance		€ 1,775.47	
	25	Proceedings		€ 7,504.11	
	26	Room rent		€ 74,489.24	
	27	Panels			
	28	Banquet room		€ 3,309.75	
	29	Banquet	€ 4,648.20	€ 5,553.39	
	Sum	€ 88,149.61	€ 97,908.80	-€ 9,759.19	
Tutorials and workshops	30	Speaker reimbursement		€ 1,480.94	
	31	Material			
	32	Tutorial fees	€ 6,148.80		
	33	Tutorial/workshop lunches		€ 6,148.80	
	34	Tutorial notes		€ 161.04	
	35	Fees workshop-only	€ 23,614.32		
	Sum	€ 29,763.12	€ 7,790.78	€ 21,972.34	
Catering	40	Receptions, coffee breaks, lunches		€ 36,033.01	
	41	Wages			
	Sum		€ 0.00	€ 36,033.01	-€ 36,033.01
Exhibition	50	Booth rental			
	52	Exhibition fees	€ 109.80		
	Sum		€ 109.80	€ 0.00	€ 109.80
Merchandise	60	Shirts, bags			
	61	Proceedings	€ 159.50		
	Sum		€ 159.50	€ 0.00	€ 159.50
Organization	70	Students honorarium		€ 435.54	
	71	Office material, stationary		€ 192.60	
	72	Machines		€ 846.81	
	73	Rental fees			
	74	AITO meeting		€ 3,509.06	
	75	Transportation		€ 1174.13	
	76	Food			
	77	Telephone			
	78	Banking, credit cards		€ 1,450.52	
	79	Interest			
	80	Administration			
	81	External services			
	82	Registration			
	83	CyberChair (€ 7.5k)		€ 7,551.52	
	84	AITO loan (€ 25k)	€ 24,854.01		
85	East European support				
	Sum	€ 24,854.01	€ 15,160.18	€ 9,693.83	
Taxes	90	Taxes: IVA			
	91	Taxes: IRPEF			
	92	Taxes: various			
	Sum		€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
Total		(£1 ≡ € 1.464 on 16/6/06)	€ 143,036.04	€ 157,490.08	-€ 14,454.04

Table 5: ECOOP 2005 Financial Statement (converted to Euros)

2.6 Financial Commentary

Almost all figures in this commentary are given in Euros, for comparability, and figures are taken from the Final Reports of the last three ECOOPs to provide context.

2.6.1 Publicity and Printing

Our publicity and printing costs, as reported in the accounts, were considerably reduced. We moved to all-electronic advertising for the event, which is discussed further in §4.1.1. Reduction of the publicity budget was flagged as a possibility in our original bid, if we encountered early problems with sponsorship, and this policy was taken to the extreme when we realised the difficulties we were encountering. Furthermore, once the lower than expected tutorial registrations became clear we minimised our expenditure on the final programme and tickets, badges etc, by using in-house photocopiers rather than professional printing services. Overall, we feel that the production of the badges, final programme etc worked well and was cost-effective compared with previous ECOOPs², but that additional expenditure on advertising might have been advisable.

2.6.2 Tutorials and Workshops

The tutorials and workshops section of the accounts demonstrates that we received a workshops-only fee income roughly in line with previous ECOOPs, at approximately € 23.5k, but very little tutorial income. We had budgeted for tutorial income in-line with Malaga or Oslo (around € 15k) rather than Darmstadt (€ 26.5k) but received only just over € 6k. The only saving grace was that our associated food costs and speaker reimbursement was considerably reduced by the low numbers. Again, as with the programme printing, we minimised our tutorial-related costs by printing material in-house and quietly absorbing as much as possible of the associated costs.

2.6.3 Sponsorship

The sponsorship figure shows a nominal sponsorship of just over € 10k, of which approximately € 8k was actually external donations. This consists of donations of £3.4k from Sun Microsystems, £2k from Microsoft Research Cambridge, and a nominal allocation of approximately £1.7k from the Department of Computing Science at the University of Glasgow. The Glasgow funds are explained further below. This compares badly with recent ECOOPs, which raised considerably more from external sponsors: € 40k in Oslo, € 23.5k in Darmstadt and € 23k in Malaga.

2.6.4 Conference Attendee Fees

Our fee income from conference attendees, at slightly over € 73k, does not compare well with previous ECOOPs: € 175k in Oslo, € 79k in Darmstadt and € 80k in Malaga. We had budgetted, in the worst case, for attendance figures comparable with Darmstadt and had set our rates closer to those for Oslo; so falling short of the Darmstadt/Malaga income level was a major problem: we raised € 7k less than them, with a worst-case plan calling for an income higher than theirs.

²We should note, however, that many of the internal costs of production have been dispersed within other departmental expenditure in an irrecoverable fashion, so the figures shown here are only partial costs.

2.6.5 Cancelled Elements

As part of the last-minute risk and cost minimisation, many planned elements of ECOOP 2005 were cancelled. These included the provision of T-shirts for volunteers, bags³ and “goodies”⁴ for the delegates and a structured social programme for accompanying partners. A reception for the Tuesday evening was also cancelled once it became clear that we would not be able to find a sponsor. Furthermore, we selected the cheapest and simplest of our plans for the reception and the banquet, to minimise costs, releasing and/or not proceeding with bookings for a visit to Stirling Castle and a cruise on an ocean-going paddle steamer. No costs were incurred for any of these items, as the plans were changed in advance of any non-refundable expenditure.

2.6.6 Merchandise and Exhibition

The absence of T-shirts did mean that there was essentially no opportunity to benefit from the sale of merchandise. Since this heading has always involved a net loss for previous ECOOPs, we feel this was the correct decision, even though it meant that there was no ECOOP 2005 T-shirt and delegates were given their materials in plastic bags carrying Universities’ logos.

Our attempt to raise money through the exhibition was essentially unsuccessful. Springer provided additional copies of the proceedings at no-cost, in exchange for their stall, but only token payments were received from the other two publishers present. Nonetheless, we feel that it was better to provide the exhibition at no cost, than to reduce its scope further. The net effect on the budget is the same as for Malaga and Darmstadt, i.e. essentially nil, since we did not incur additional costs in providing the exhibition space.

2.6.7 Programme Committee support

The total cost of supporting the work of the Programme Committee was approximately €9.5k, of which €7.5k was for Cyberchair. These costs were not within our control, but seemed entirely reasonable compared with previous events, given that the PC meeting was held in Switzerland and the PC members travelled there at their own expense. Oslo incurred €9.7k and Malaga €7.5k We also absorbed some of the expenses of the PC chair, to allow him to attend ECOOP; these appear under the “Invited Speakers” heading, along with some of the costs of the main banquet speaker.

2.6.8 Other Organizational Costs

Our other organization costs are somewhat lower than for recent ECOOPs, at approximately €7.5k, compared with €24k for Oslo, €38k for Darmstadt and €20k for Malaga. A major reason for this is that most of the internal administrative costs have been silently absorbed by the departments. The most substantial item was for the AITO dinner at approx €3.5k, however this item is balanced by a hidden subsidy in the form of part of the “departmental” sponsorship and a small part of the fees paid by AITO members for attending ECOOP. The AITO dinners previously cost: €2.7k in Oslo, €0.9k in Darmstadt and €0.7k in Malaga.

³It should be noted that, given the London bombings which occurred shortly before ECOOP’05, the absence of identical backpacks was seen as a bonus by the venue security staff.

⁴Plans were well in hand for a variety of small gifts, representative of Scottish produce and local crafts, to be distributed along with small umbrellas (which seemed like a good idea given Glasgow’s fickle weather, but turned out to be unnecessary anyway).

The remaining organizational costs are:

- Student honorarium budget: a small explicit accommodation subsidy for some volunteers, in addition to the invisible partial accommodation subsidy achieved through price negotiation within the University of Glasgow, see §3.6.1 for more details.
- Stationary costs: these are explicit costs for specific materials purchased directly for ECOOP; all other stationary costs have been handled internally within the department and do not appear as a cost to the conference.
- Machines: we provided our own computer and AV equipment, borrowed from the Universities at no cost, rather than pay the venue rates or hire equipment from external suppliers. In order to avoid the exorbitant wireless connection fees, and to support attendees who did not bring laptops, we created our own on-site computer room. Nonetheless, we did have to pay fees for a telephone line, purchase a cheap switch, and pay for the internet connection for our computer room, hence an unavoidable equipment charge was incurred. A charge for equipment was also incurred at the Moat House, to support a pre-ECOOP project meeting held there on the Sunday. It should be noted that the IT costs were not included in our original budget, as we had not foreseen the excessive costs of the venue provision at the time of the bid.
- Transportation: this is again substantially reduced compared with the original budget; rather than providing delegates with general travel passes, specific local tickets were provided. This considerably reduced the costs but required a considerable investment of time, which has been absorbed internally, since the tickets had to be manually produced at a local station, requiring attendance for an extended period of time by an organizer. Our travel costs of € 1.1k compare favourably with € 7.5k for Oslo, € 2.5k for Darmstadt and over € 8k for Malaga.
- Credit card charges: although almost all of the administrative costs of handling the conference finances have been absorbed by the University of Glasgow, some explicit charges have been passed on, related to credit card handling fees; these are considerably lower than our original budget and lower than previous ECOOPs. We incurred approx € 1.5k in charges, compared with € 3.5k for Oslo, € 5k for Darmstadt and € 2.4k for Malaga.
- Insurance: at € 1.75k this was an unavoidable expense incurred due to the use of a conference venue. We were required to have a policy to cover the first £1 million of public liability, as part of our contract with the venue.

2.6.9 Proceedings and Banquet

Other specific charges incurred for the conference include:

- Proceedings: which at € 7.5k is in line with previous ECOOPs: € 7k for Oslo, € 7.7k for Darmstadt and over € 9k for Malaga.
- Banquet: the entertainment at the banquet (a display of falconry) was extremely well received and cost surprisingly little (approx € 360) — a reduced fee was charged by the falconer, as he wanted to prove that it was possible to give such a display in order to gain future business, and half of the cost was absorbed by the venue for similar reasons related to their own publicity and their arts-based subsidy. The main cost of the banquet was therefore a venue hire fee and the cost of the meal. Our total banquet cost of nearly € 9k is considerably lower than all recent ECOOPs: € 28k

at Oslo, € 15k at Darmstadt and € 12k at Malaga. However our notional loss on the banquet, at over € 4k, is greater than previously, € 1.6k at Darmstadt and € 2.2k at Malaga (Oslo is not comparable), due to the low uptake of banquet tickets and slightly subsidising student tickets.

2.6.10 Venue Hire

The main venue cost just over € 62k, exactly in line with the budgeted amount (the price was negotiated in detail prior to the final bid), but the cost of the adjoining facilities at the Moat House hotel, for the workshops and tutorials, was somewhat higher than budgeted, at just over € 10k. We deliberately over-provisioned the rooms to ensure we had space for impromptu BoFs and other meetings, and to provide break-out space for workshops in case it was required. In the event this space was almost entirely unused, and the cost could have been avoided; however this was felt to be an expense worth incurring, to ensure the workshops and tutorials went well.

The venue hire fee for the Monday reception at the Glasgow Science Centre (€ 1.7k) was covered using departmental funds (appearing in the venue totals and as an element within the explicit sponsorship), because a project within the department part-sponsored the reception. The Civic reception incurred no costs to the conference. The banquet venue fee was discussed above.

2.6.11 Catering Costs

The catering costs were primarily for the provision of lunches and breaks, and for the Monday reception. The Monday reception cost approximately € 7.5k for catering, while breaks and lunches throughout the week cost a total of approximately € 34.5k. We have nominally recorded just over € 6k of this as tutorial lunches, but in practice this actually represents the costs of lunches on Monday & Tuesday at the Moat House⁵, the remainder being the Monday to Friday lunches within the SECC. This total of € 34.5k compares with € 67k in Oslo, € 27k in Darmstadt and € 28k in Malaga. The primary reason for the relatively high cost was the requirement to use a specific external caterer within the main venue — most lunches were produced in mobile site kitchens concealed behind the catering area.

2.7 Overall Financial Outcome

The net effect of the various incurred costs, and the lower than expected income from sponsorship, attendees, and tutorials, was a notional loss of approximately € 39k. AITO agreed to allow the full € 25k loan to be used to support this loss, and the remaining € 14k is being borne by the Department of Computing Science at the University of Glasgow. In addition, AITO provided support for the doctoral symposium and absorbed the costs of the Dahl-Nygaard prize-winners and the banquet guest of honour, Peter Wegner.

The ECOOP 2005 deficit compares badly with recent surpluses: € 14k at Oslo, € 47k at Darmstadt and € 24k at Malaga. The proximate cause of the loss was, of course, the relatively low income, at € 143k compared with € 243k in Oslo, € 192k in Darmstadt and € 174k in Malaga, and the substantial costs due to the use of an external commercial venue.

The € 39k loss should be seen in the light of the € 15k comparative shortfall in donations, the € 10k comparative shortfall in tutorial income, the € 7k comparative shortfall in attendee fees, and the reduction of approximately 100 in attendee numbers, relative to Darmstadt and Malaga. Faced with plans that

⁵Hence this is the cost of all the tutorial lunches and the lunches for six of the workshops.

called for similar or higher levels of income under all of these headings and the added burden of major venue costs, we are relieved that the loss was not greater.

3 Organization

As much information as possible was made available in the conference guide, in the hope that this would assist the attendees, workshop organizers, tutorial presenters, session chairs, main speakers, demonstrators and poster presenters. It is not clear whether everyone read the guidance notes, but we experienced very few problems.

3.1 General Organization

For the most part, the organization of ECOOP 2005 followed the standard ECOOP model. The main technical programme was controlled by the Programme Committee, chaired by Andrew Black, who was responsible (with Cyberchair support) for the production of the proceedings. Workshops and tutorials were coordinated by a local organizer together with an external person (and a small advisory committee in one case). The local organizers were led by a Local Organizing chair, Peter Dickman of the University of Glasgow, who was also a Co-General Chair alongside Paddy Nixon from the University of Strathclyde. The organizing committee was made up of academics in the two Universities, along with one person from a third University and one from an industrial lab in the USA. The full list of local organizers and other committee members is available at the end of this document.

Specific responsibilities were given to individuals with respect to the various aspects of the event, in a fairly standard style. The one unusual feature was that the bulk of the organizing committee were divided between the two hosting departments. A further complication arose when two people changed institution (and country) during the run-up to the conference.

3.2 Registration Processes

Specific comments appear below, in §4.4 about the internal issues raised by processing registrations internally within the University of Glasgow. Additional relevant comments are made in §4.8 and §4.1.6 about our website and problems that arise in the user perception of our registration processes. Compared with other ECOOPs, our registration processes were not smooth and straightforward. A variety of difficulties were encountered, and not all were handled promptly and well. Overall, the processing of registrations was slower than we would have liked, but the on-site support for registering attendees went very smoothly and the few small problems that arose were handled reasonably well. The small number of on-site registrations were handled straightforwardly, with the main delay being due to the way we were producing receipts, which took place off-site.

Registration opened on the Sunday afternoon, in the lobby of the Moat House, to allow early arrivals to register and reduce our Monday morning load. The River Festival on the Clyde, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, provided free entertainment for the early arrivals. Registration moved into the SECC Lomond Suite for Monday morning, and we slowly reduced the number of registration desks until we retained only a basic operation for on-site registrations at our information desk, which was manned almost continually throughout the week.

Information was available at the desk on local activities, including comprehensive guides to the restaurants in Glasgow as a supplement to the short guides produced by the tourist office. Information about

travel arrangements was also available, to supplement the basic information in the conference guide.

3.3 Venues

The main venues appeared to work very well for the event, although we provided additional signage in an attempt to manage the maze-like nature of the Lomond Suite. Visually and acoustically, the rooms seemed to work well, and there was a sense of sufficient space but a reasonably coherent and engaged community in a compact setting.

3.3.1 SECC

Given the final numbers of attendees, the SECC Lomond Suite was somewhat larger than necessary for ECOOP 2005. We believe we could easily have coped with attendee numbers on the scale of 1998 or 2000, but that our spaces were not overwhelming for the 340 or so participants who actually attended.

After considerable negotiation, the SECC agreed to provide a free left-luggage facility for ECOOP 2005, on security grounds, which was well received by attendees. Absence of such a facility previously has meant that bags and suitcases are often left unattended in corners of rooms, and this was felt to be inadvisable.

Another advantage of the additional space we had available at the SECC was that we were well-placed to provide space for BoF meetings (of which there were very few), to host additional demos (there was one) and to provide a private space for prayer, when asked to do so by Muslim attendees. We strongly recommend to future ECOOPs that one or two spare rooms are retained if at all possible, to handle last minute requests.

We were able to provide a dedicated room for speakers to prepare in, although this was not used very heavily at all. It contained a data projector, coffee, water and fruit and was close to the organizers' office in case of difficulties. Although hardly used, we would recommend that such a facility is offered if at all possible, if only for the peace of mind it provides.

3.3.2 Moat House Hotel

The Moat House had the advantage of slightly more reliable food than we could provide within the SECC, for the two days we used their facilities (though they may not have coped with the numbers we had hoped for overall), and a useful mix of rooms sizes and locations. In theory we could have fitted the whole of ECOOP into the Moat House, avoiding the SECC venue charges, but in practice their room costs would have been at least as high, for rather less suitable spaces.

3.4 Technical Programme

As usual, Monday and Tuesday consisted of the workshops and tutorials with the main conference running from Wednesday to Friday. We have not reproduced the conference guide tables here (the guide is available to any AITO members who wish to see it and will be circulated with the final report) but we summarise its content in prose below.

3.4.1 Workshops

There were ten full-day workshops on the Monday, and eight on the Tuesday. Six were placed in the Moat House rooms and the remaining twelve in the SECC. One further workshop was cancelled in mid-June. So far as possible we followed the guidance of the ECOOP 2002 final report, and we believe that the workshop programme was a major success at ECOOP 2005. The only significant difficulty was caused by the relatively late availability of the registration system and difficulties with the main ECOOP'05 website, which caused some tension for the workshop organizers. The current status of the workshop reader is discussed separately, in §4.9.

We were ready for last minute changes in the numbers of workshop participants, and had rooms available for relocating any workshops that became too large for their allocated spaces. In the end, this was not necessary — although most workshops gained participants on the day, they all fitted in the spaces provided.

Each workshop was assigned a student volunteer, to handle any difficulties that might arise, and we had staffed offices in both the Moat House and SECC to provide a central contact point at which assistance could be sought. Little use was made of these resources, but they provided peace of mind for all concerned.

Workshops were encouraged to stagger their lunchbreaks, without formally allocating them slots for lunch, and this worked reasonably well in practice.

In addition to the range of technical workshops, a combined PhD student workshop and doctoral symposium was organized under the auspices of AITO, on the first day of ECOOP 2005. The committee for that event included a local student, to provide a link with the local organizing committee for ECOOP.

3.4.2 Tutorials

The small number of tutorial registrations caused considerable problems. In the end, six tutorials were cancelled either due to speaker unavailability or low numbers (primarily the former). The remaining tutorial programme consisted of: one full-day and five half-day tutorials on Monday; one full-day and three half-day tutorials on Tuesday. All tutorials were hosted in the Moat House. Whereas ECOOP 2004 had 17 tutorials, ECOOP 2005 had only 10 after the cancellations, and only 38 tutorial units were sold in all. This was a great disappointment to both the local organizers and the tutorial speakers, whose efforts are much appreciated. It would appear that ECOOP 2006 has scheduled a similar number of tutorials, and we hope that in future it will be possible to expand the provision to the more traditional levels of the late 1990's and early 2000's.

Similarly to the arrangements for workshops, each tutorial was allocated a student volunteer and additional support was available from the volunteer base in the Moat House. Materials and AV equipment were delivered to tutorial rooms prior to the start time, and there were no major difficulties with the tutorial arrangements.

3.4.3 Dahl-Nygaard Prizes

The Dahl-Nygaard prize fitted extremely well into the arrangements for ECOOP 2005. The prize winners provided well-received invited talks for the main conference, and the ceremony formed a coherent element within the opening ceremonials. The local organizers attempted to invite recent winners of the Turing and von Neumann prizes to the AITO Dahl-Nygaard ceremony; we received a handful of

messages indicating that, unfortunately, attendance was not possible, and a couple of very pleasant and supportive responses. Most of our emails, as expected, did not receive replies.

3.4.4 Main Conference

The main conference began with a short opening ceremony, including an address from the Principal of the University of Glasgow, which was immediately followed by the AITO Dahl-Nygaard prize ceremony. Thereafter, the programme continued in traditional style with sessions of technical papers and the two invited speakers. Both the PC chair and the local organizing chair spoke briefly, but there was no panel session at ECOOP 2005. Technical support staff were on hand at all times as were student volunteers, and there appeared to be no significant problems in the main auditorium.

The prohibitive pricing of wireless access, and the availability of a separate computer room for those wishing internet access, meant that ECOOP did not suffer unduly from the audience being engrossed in laptops during the sessions. However, as always, attendance at most sessions was low in comparison with the total number of attendees at the conference.

Throughout the main event, the local organizing chair, or a deputy, was available in the organizers office, ready to handle any problems that arose. The information desk was also available to handle any problems or questions for attendees. Overall these mechanisms seemed to have worked well, with a fairly rapid response to the few requests that were made.

3.4.5 Exhibits

The ECOOP 2005 exhibition consisted solely of booksellers displays, which were presented in the main refreshments area. This worked reasonably well, and the local organizers assisted with the setup tear-down to the extent we were able.

The main complication was that the conference venue was unable to accept deliveries of materials destined for the conference exhibitors. So we had to arrange for their books and stands to be delivered to the CS department in Glasgow and then transport the material to the venue along with our own materials, AV and computer equipment.

3.4.6 Posters and Demonstrations

There was surprisingly little interest in the call for posters, and the effect was therefore a little disappointing. Workshop organizers were encouraged to produce impromptu posters after their events, to supplement the “official” displays, and two refreshment breaks were flagged as formal poster sessions. The poster sessions at some previous ECOOPs have been rather richer, and in hindsight we wonder whether student volunteers should be encouraged to submit a poster as part of their application for volunteer status. However, there appear to be rather more posters scheduled for ECOOP 2006, so we hope that the dip at ECOOP 2005 was a one-off anomaly.

Four demonstrations were included in the conference programme, and a fifth impromptu demonstration was incorporated into the programme during the week. Student volunteers were provided to support the demos, along with AV facilities in the room used. Overall the demonstrations seemed to be effective and useful and they certainly added to the overall impact of ECOOP 2005. Our only concern was the relatively small number of demonstrations that were offered — far fewer than at some previous ECOOPs. Fortunately, it appears that ECOOP 2006 has returned to a healthier number of demos. We believe that

our lack of demos may be related to lack of industrial participation and sponsorship in general and insufficient effort being put into soliciting demos.

3.4.7 Birds of a Feather sessions

Rooms were available for impromptu Birds of a Feather session, however there was very little use made of these rooms. The main activity being for a repetition of an invited talk from one of the workshops, to allow additional attendees to participate. It is believed that the layout and quiet of the venue, with many quiet spaces in which impromptu meetings could be held reduced the need for BoF spaces.

A small education-related BoF took place during lunchtime on the final day, and it is hoped that, since related activity is now starting to be organized on a national scale within the UK, in due course a more formal structured event may be arranged as a follow-up at a future ECOOP.

3.5 Social Programme

The social programme consisted of a mix of formal and informal events. On the Sunday, the Clyde River Festival took place immediately outside the main venues, and provided a small amount of entertainment for those who arrived early for registration. The first formal social event was a reception, part-sponsored by a project in the Computing Science department at the University of Glasgow, which was held at the Glasgow Science Centre; this allowed delegates access to many of the educational toys and displays in the centre. Tuesday evening was left free for attendees to explore Glasgow, with basic guidance information and travel tickets provided. Wednesday evening involved a formal civic reception at the City Chambers, hosted by the City Council. The conference banquet, on Thursday evening included an indoor display of falconry, a short speech by the Guest of Honour, Peter Wegner, who was intended to be the banquet speaker at ECOOP some years ago, and the main banquet speech given by Gilad Bracha. Both banquet speeches were excellent and very well received. Only the Monday reception and the Thursday banquet incurred costs for ECOOP. Sadly our budget did not permit us to provide a second reception on the Tuesday evening, or to supplement the Civic Reception with a subsequent meal.

3.5.1 Integrated Banquet Tickets

With hindsight, we should have included the banquet tickets as standard in the registration fee for all participants. Although this may have had a slight deterrent effect for a few people, we believe that far more of the attendees would have come to the banquet which was undoubtedly a highlight of the conference.

3.6 Accommodation

The City Convention Bureau provided an on-line room booking mechanism, focused on the on-site hotels but with some lower & higher cost provision elsewhere in the city. This was not used as heavily as expected, in part because of the increasing ease of direct on-line booking and partly because of the lower than expected numbers of attendees.

3.6.1 Student Volunteer Accommodation

Special efforts were made to ensure cheaper accommodation was available for the student volunteers. A series of arrangements were considered, involving provision from the Universities in the city. In the end, we were able to provide volunteers with low cost rooms very close to the venue, however complications in the negotiations over price meant that these rooms only became available rather close to the time of the conference (and the price then continued to drop a little further, much to our surprise and pleasure).

3.7 Transport

Having the attendees essentially on-site, and with a good public transport system, limited our transportation costs and the associated complexities. Tickets were provided for the local trains between the station at the main venue and the city centre, although this was within walking distance.

3.8 Internet Access

As noted elsewhere in this report, the on-site wireless network was priced at an excessively high rate. We therefore, as had always been planned, provided our own computer room, using a leased internet connection. The facilities consisted of switches, with a large number of cables to allow attendees to connect their own laptops, plus a smaller number of machines we provided and a printer rented from the venue.

Although we would have liked to provide our own wireless facility in and near the computer room, we were forbidden from doing so by the venue (with extreme penalties had we ignored their instruction). We were concerned as to our ability to provide a sufficiently rich infrastructure, however once established everything appeared to function well enough and to satisfy the core demand for internet access.

The only real problem was that the internet facility was not working until late on Monday, since we only had access to the space to begin installation for a short while on Sunday. Given that we were not in an academic site we were pleased with the functionality we were able to provide⁶.

Our experiences were, on the whole, more positive than those recorded in some recent Final Reports. Although we also experienced a small number of helpless users, enough other people, and the student volunteers, were around to resolve most problems and our “plug-in a cable” approach, plus dedicated PCs with a standard login, solved most problems.

3.9 Student Volunteers

Student volunteers were, as always, an essential part of making ECOOP a success, and we used a mix of local students and overseas volunteers. Potential student volunteers were invited to identify themselves and arrangements were put in place (as noted above) to try and provide them with reduced cost accommodation — it already being clear that ECOOP’05 would not be able to afford significant financial rewards for the volunteers. As a further reward, we invited student volunteers who had not got

⁶We did have a backup plan, involving the installation of our own line-of-sight network link back to the University of Glasgow. Fortunately we did not need to resort to this as we had no confidence that we would be able to get everything working in the available time, and there would have been significant problems within the SECC with the cabling we would have needed. This rather baroque solution was our technique of last resort, when it became clear that we would not be able to negotiate a reasonable price for wireless access for all delegates.

banquet tickets to attend at the start of the banquet, on the understanding that they would get the chance to occupy any empty seats that arose due to non-appearance of other attendees. Although this caused some administrative difficulties, it did provide an additional reward of sorts. The few students who attended but were left without banquet seats were given a meal in the venue café, as partial compensation for being unlucky in the last minute banquet seat lottery.

The activities of the student volunteers were overseen by the SV chair, one of our local students, who did an admirable job, especially given that he had never previously attended a conference.

Student volunteers assisted in the immediate run-up to the event, by stuffing envelopes, preparing registration materials, transporting materials to the venue, and helping with the set-up at the event. The students then assisted by manning registration desks, and acted as contact points for workshop organizers and tutorial presenters. Student volunteers managed the lunch queues, including the rather unusual ticket swapping arrangements, and assisted in the main auditorium and with demonstrations. Student volunteers also assisted the local organizers on the information desk and in the computer room.

3.10 Website

The website for ECOOP 2005 was hosted at the University of Strathclyde and was designed and managed by their in-house graphic designer, in collaboration with and under the direction of a member of the local organizing committee. With hindsight, the communication paths involved in this approach were perhaps too convoluted and this contributed to some delays in updating the site. Problems also arose at one stage because of configuration problems, but these were rapidly resolved once identified.

3.11 Questionnaire

As noted elsewhere in this report, for several reasons we did not provide a formal feedback mechanism during the conference. With hindsight this was unfortunate, and we should have rectified this omission during the event itself. However, much of the data collected previously was available to us through the registration information, and we endeavoured to informally sample the attendees impressions of the event during the refreshment breaks and at the social functions.

4 Observations and Lessons Learned

Running a major conference is always a learning experience. The final reports of previous ECOOPs were a very valuable asset, but as always, some well-known lessons were re-learned the hard way, and new and unusual problems came to light too. In this section, we will endeavour to present the main lessons that can be learned from ECOOP 2005, some of which came at a high price. In doing so, it should be noted that ultimate responsibility for the organization of the conference rests with the organizing chair, and that these (sometimes painful) observations are offered in the hope that future organizing committees will be spared these difficulties. Some of the problems described here may seem blindingly obvious, yet caught up in the whirlwind of events that lie behind a major event it is surprising how often obvious things are overlooked or misunderstood. It must be emphasised that the members of the organizing committee invested considerable effort in ECOOP 2005, and that informal feedback from attendees was that ECOOP 2005 was a very effective and enjoyable event, continuing a long tradition of great conferences. The success of ECOOP 2005 was down to the many participants, especially those who contributed to the technical programme, and to the positive environment that we were able to offer for the conference as a result of the efforts of the PC and organizing committee, with support from AITO and the hosting Universities. None of the problems described below should be taken to detract from the event, and most of these difficulties were not visible to participants.

4.1 Attendance Levels

We believe that a number of factors contributed to the low numbers of attendees and the shift towards workshop-only participation.

4.1.1 Weak Publicity

To assist in ensuring a balanced budget and, subsequently, when the financial problems started to become apparent, a decision was taken to emphasise on-line advertising, relying on the web site and email to advertise the conference, rather than spending on direct marketing. This followed the approach of ECOOP 2004, though to a rather more extreme degree. With hindsight this may have been an error. Our website did not provide as solid a base for attracting participants as we had hoped, and our e-mail shots were insufficiently well organized and less effective than needed. Although the strategy was probably valid for contacting the “usual” ECOOP community, and was efficiently reinforced by the workshop organizers publicising their own workshops, the low number of industry participants may be indicative of a failure to properly advertise the event via non-electronic mechanisms.

A minor but contributing problem may also have been the absence of ECOOP 2005 from the ACM Calendar of Events, even though we did have the usual ACM “In Collaboration” status. This was never resolved and we were remiss in not noticing the omission, and rectifying it, much earlier.

4.1.2 Workshops vs Main Conference

A comparison between the attendance levels at ECOOP 2005 and ECOOP 2004 shows the dramatic relative shift from main conference to workshop only attendance. This is illustrated in table 6. While workshop-only attendance was roughly similar (albeit with slightly more students) the fall in main conference numbers was dramatic and affected both students and regular attendees alike. This may have been caused by cost, timing or both, as discussed below.

Regular Attendees	2004	2005	Students	2004	2005	Total Change
Workshops Only	73	65	Workshops Only	34	41	-1
Conference	175	106	Conference	85	63	-91

Table 6: Attendance Shifts from 2004 to 2005

4.1.3 Home Nation Effects

At first sight, the home nation effect appears to have been at work as usual. There were 64 UK participants in 2005, compared with 67 Norwegians in 2004 and 114 Spaniards in 2002. However, given the size of the UK population the local attendance was disappointing. Various suggestions have been made as to why this may have happened, in most cases these seem to combine the lack of available travel funds in UK universities and a lack of publicity, especially outside academic circles.

4.1.4 Costs

Throughout the period running up to the conference the pound was very strong. Combined with the relatively high price forced upon us by the use of a commercial venue, and the generally high cost of food and accommodation in the UK, the effect was to make ECOOP 2005 seem relatively expensive. Informal feedback from US-based participants made it very clear that price was a significant concern for this part of the ECOOP community⁷. Similar issues were raised, though less forcefully, by Euro-zone attendees.

4.1.5 Timing

ECOOP 2005 was held somewhat later than in previous years, and it has been suggested that this may have contributed to the fall in attendee numbers. This view is reinforced by the halving of the number of attendees from France (down from 40 to 19), while the numbers from Germany remained roughly stable (down from 42 to 39). Running ECOOP immediately prior to the main August holidays in France may have been the cause, though it is impossible to verify this. USA attendee numbers fell by 20%, but we have no firm reason for this other than cost and the lack of ACM-based publicity; we do not believe the bombings in London in early July will have made a major difference, as the pattern of early vs late registrations is not unusual.

4.1.6 Registration Problems

We are aware that a small number of potential participants may have been deterred by a combination of factors relating to registration: the relatively late release of registration information⁸; difficulties with the website; difficulties with the faxing of registrations; and problems with the rekeying of crucial data such as email addresses after faxes were received. However, we suspect this is a minor issue compared with the questions of timing and cost, affecting relatively few people.

⁷At another major international event held in the UK in the autumn of 2005, the same issue was raised, compounded by their policy of charging industrial participants a higher registration fee, much to the annoyance of staff from US-based industrial research labs.

⁸One contributing factor was a delay in setting the final rates for registration —in the end the original bid rates were honoured, since these had already been flagged as very high, rather than risking a deterrent effect from even higher rates.

4.1.7 Tutorial Numbers

The collapse in tutorial numbers was a major contribution to our financial difficulties. We believe that relatively weak advertising of the event (and the delays in getting information into our website) combined with a high perception of the costs to act as a deterrent. Our pricing structure may not have been helpful, and our failure to solicit sufficient UK industrial interest in the training opportunity offered by the ECOOP tutorials undermined our vision of the tutorial programme.

4.2 Sponsorship

As noted above, we did not achieve the usual level of success in attracting sponsorship. Although in part this may be due to changes in economic circumstance, our inexperience may also have been a contributing factor. Since our budget was predicated on similar levels of sponsorship to previous years, this caused us major concerns throughout the preparations for the conference.

Industrial sponsorship proved very difficult to acquire, with one frequent ECOOP sponsor claiming a gap in the budget for 2005 only. Other potential sponsors, with a strong record of giving to other events, apparently chose not to donate to ECOOP 2005 when invited to do so.

We were offered support (at a reduced but non-zero cost) for activities that we did not wish to outsource, by a UK professional body. Attempts to convert this offer into financial sponsorship ran into political difficulties within the organization, with different sections within it offering to assist in a variety of non-financial ways, and directing us to other parts of the organization to seek financial support. A related, and equally awkward, problem arose with two pseudo-governmental organizations that share substantial amounts of government funding: each was clearly of the opinion that the other could, and should, provide support, but felt just as strongly that supporting an event like ECOOP did not fall within their remit.

With hindsight, insufficient effort collectively was put into fund-raising at an early stage, and some of our subsequent efforts were mis-focussed. We strongly recommend that future ECOOP organizer do everything within their power to get confirmed levels of financial support from non-industrial sponsors in place prior to making their bid.

4.3 Working with a Conference Venue

There are both benefits and drawbacks in working with a conference venue. The primary complications relate to timescales and costs. Commercial venues tend to be considerably more expensive than academic settings, and to provide a level of service that may not be needed given a willing pool of student volunteers. More importantly, a commercial booking is likely to be rather more rigid, in terms of the space contracted for and its price, than a booking within a University, where cancellation of bookings for some rooms may be possible in the run-up to an event. In the case of ECOOP 2005 this meant, for example, that we had more rooms available for workshops and tutorials than were actually required, and that more space was available for demos and BoFs than could realistically ever have been needed.

A second complication is that we were required to use a specific external caterer for both the Monday reception and for the breaks and lunches within the SECC. The caterers then worked from mobile site kitchens to produce lunches etc, and this affects both the price and nature of the catering offered. The alternative, of allowing attendees to use nearby venues to acquire lunch, was not feasible given the location and layout of the site.

The advantage was that the professional event organizers at the main venue and the subsidiary locations were all extremely helpful and supportive. Furthermore, the staff at the Glasgow Conventions Bureau did a great deal to assist us in making the original bid, in organizing accommodation and materials for the attendees, and in arranging for our civic reception. A great deal of additional effort would have been required on our part if it hadn't been for their assistance.

4.3.1 Catering Arrangements

The main complication in the catering arrangements concerned Monday and Tuesday, when lunch was available in two different locations. A slightly Heath-Robinson mechanism involving three colours of lunch tickets appeared to work satisfactorily, even though some attendees were undoubtedly bemused by the need to convert their tickets either prior to, or on arrival at, lunch in order to allow us to control the numbers eating lunch in each location.

There was considerable agonising over the decision to serve haggis for one of the lunches (we were concerned that some attendees, especially from the USA, may be unwilling to eat haggis). It turned out to be one of the most popular meals, with the caterers running out of the haggis after people started returning for second helpings. It appears that there is a continuing desire for local "delicacies" to form part of ECOOP.

4.3.2 Why use an external venue?

In most years, ECOOP is held within a University setting. For ECOOP 2005 we felt that the best available venue was not within the Universities, primarily because of the combination of workshop/tutorial rooms needed for Monday and Tuesday and the auditorium required for Wednesday to Friday. After careful consideration of the implications of a split-site event, as had been tried in Cannes previously, and preference expressed at some previous ECOOPs for the hotels to be reasonably close to the venue, we felt it best to try to find a single site capable of accommodating the whole week, with nearby hotels for the attendees.

The Lomond Suite at the SECC provided the only raked, 500-seater auditorium with excellent AV support and rear entrances to the auditorium in the whole of the West of Scotland. The Universities in Glasgow (the two hosts, Glasgow and Strathclyde, and also the third University, Glasgow Caledonian) have a wide range of auditoria, but none met our specification: the good quality auditoria of the right size lacked rear entrances, for example. Since we could also have sufficient smaller rooms in the immediate vicinity (as against in different buildings, which is what would have happened in the host Universities) and since there were three on-site hotels and a nearby hall of residence, the SECC seemed perfectly suited to the event.

We did consider holding the banquet within one of the Universities, however the chosen venue (The Arches) provided an interesting and unusual location which avoided the need for large numbers of coaches. We also considered holding a reception in one of the Universities, but in the light of the low sponsorship we felt that the Science Centre offered the best balance of interest, convenience and cost.

4.4 Financial Issues and Registration

An early decision was made to handle the finances of the conference through an internal account in the University of Glasgow financial system. This was fairly straightforward to organize, involving some

form-filling using the estimates from our original bid to host ECOOP, and offered a number of advantages. The two main advantages were that it was possible for us to carry considerable deficits at key times, without financial penalties or interest, and that we could use the University of Glasgow facilities for credit card processing at a low cost.

The University of Glasgow offers two modes for hosting conferences. For a non-trivial per-attendee fee, a unit within the University would process registrations and handle bookings, however this normally assumes that the event is being housed within the University, and hence was seen as not suitable for ECOOP (which was not held on the University site). The alternative is for the organizers to handle the registrations themselves, and this allows access to the University financial facilities for a low fixed fee. ECOOP 2005 was run using the second mechanism. Unfortunately, this had major unforeseen consequences that caused difficulties in our registration process.

It became clear, as we approached the time when we wished to add the registration pages to the conference website, that there was a significant problem concerning the collection of credit card numbers. This was considered to be sensitive information that offered a risk if it was not handled carefully. We were instructed by technical support staff in both hosting institutions that they could not permit us to collect credit card details online, as we would be exposing personal financial data to unacceptable levels of risk. The problem was that the systems we were using were not guaranteed to be immune to hacking. After repeated attempts to find ways around this problem, we resorted to a more primitive technology, asking for registration forms to be faxed. After initial problems with a poor quality fax machine on a dedicated line, we reverted to using a fax machine within a staffed office, which addressed most of our difficulties. Nonetheless, the requirement that all information then be rekeyed into a computer from the faxes did add considerably to the administrative burden (and to delays as perceived by attendees) at a critical time in the run-up to the conference. This problem had been previously identified, e.g. for ECOOP 2002, and our last minute solution was probably the worst of all possible approaches; capturing most data online and acquiring the credit card info by fax would have been more sensible, if we had realised in time to prepare for such an approach.

The final complication which resulted from our approach to handling registrations was that it proved difficult to acquire detailed information from the University accounts concerning the status of the credit card payments. Chasing up of credit card payments and refunds was unexpectedly time-consuming.

An annoying consequence of this is that we believe a small amount of registration income has not been collected. Since it is proving too difficult to confirm our view, and to address this by determining exactly who may not have paid after all, we have decided that we have no choice but to write off any such outstanding sums. The sums involved represent, at the absolute maximum, less than 10% of our deficit, and pursuing them risks incurring much greater administrative costs than would be recouped. To put this in context, the amounts involved are likely to be roughly comparable with the amounts we have saved in reduced bank charges and credit card fees, by processing the registrations internally, rather than using an external agency to handle them.

4.5 Contractual Problems

As might be expected in the face of a substantial financial loss in an activity with multiple responsible organizations, some tensions became evident once it became clear that there would be a loss. We would like to thank AITO for their generous assistance in bearing more than their contracted share of the loss. Compounding this problem for ECOOP 2005, there was an internal misunderstanding about the sharing of financial risk. One of the two sponsoring Universities was unaware that it would be expected to share any financial loss.

Although we hope future ECOOP organizers will not face a loss, we would recommend that in future all parties to the hosting of ECOOP provide separate signatures on an agreement that explicitly specifies the burden of risk borne by each partner in the event of a loss. Furthermore, it is essential that the signatories have appropriate authorisation to enter into a financial agreement on behalf of their institution, e.g. a Head of Department or more senior person may need to provide the necessary formal commitment. This recommendation makes sense even if only one university is involved.

4.6 Banquet Issues

A number of minor problems arose relating to the banquet. Surprisingly, none of them related to the presence of an eagle, a hawk and an owl at the dinner!

We had not expected the presence of small children at the dinner, and this caused minor problems for the venue (their alcohol and entertainment licence includes strict rules about the presence of children in the bar areas) and some concerns for the entertainment (since the baby might have reached out to a wild bird if one of them had landed near it).

We had difficulties over the banquet tickets, partly because of administrative confusion, partly because of last-minute ticket trading by a student volunteer which led to a group of people arriving one hour into the meal, to deliver one person who wanted to use someone else's ticket. This happened long after we had allowed other student volunteers to take the last few seats to ensure no food was wasted and to maximise the rewards for their efforts.

It was discovered immediately prior to sitting down for dinner that the banquet speaker was expecting the use of a data projector and screen. This could have been provided, at some difficulty (by fetching one from the main venue), but he declined the offer on the grounds that it would interfere with dinner for one of the organizers. It became clear during his talk, however, that his speech would have benefited from the visual aids and it is a shame that this was not made clearer to us. If the significance of the request had been clearer, we would have found some solution, either using banquet venue equipment or our own. I advise all future organizers to have a laptop, data projector and screen available, just in case they are needed, even if you are not expecting to have this requirement thrust upon you.

On the positive side, selecting a banquet venue which is used for a substantial number of concerts and musical events, ensured that we had appropriate support with the audio facilities and the banquet speaker was definitely audible. Also, the falconry display, which had been kept secret from attendees (and, accidentally, some of the organizers also!) was deemed a great success and provided much conversation for the banquet meal itself.

4.7 Team Structure and Organization

The bulk of the team for ECOOP 2005 were volunteer academic staff from the two host departments. This did introduce some complications in arranging meetings of the team, and further complications arose when two key local members of the committee moved to another country. With registrations being handled via a fax machine in one of the departments, while the website was managed through a single individual (who was not one of the committee members) at the other department, there was ample opportunity for difficulties and confusion. Since the local organizing chair had no formal position within one department, and the co-general chair left that department prior to ECOOP 2005, it was far too easy for matters to be left unresolved for too long, and there was a tendency not to chase up matters as rapidly as was needed. In this respect, there is an important (obvious) lesson to be learned in multi-hosted events: a key person, with some seniority, in each host organization must be actively committed to the

day-to-day organizing of the event, and participate closely for the full duration from pre-bid until final report. With hindsight, our arrangements for managing the event were too loose and insufficient time was committed to key activities early in the organizing of the event.

As author of this report, the local organizing chair freely admits that he has learnt a lot about delegation and his own approach to people management from this experience, and that there was (and is) much room for improvement in his approach to delegating elements of the complex task of organizing a conference.

4.8 Website Issues

An important lesson we learned far too late in the process of hosting ECOOP 2005, was that it is a very good idea if almost all of the organizing committee have simple straightforward access to the source of the conference website. This makes it easier to do updates in a timely fashion, and for responsibility for key sections of the site to be given to specific individuals. Our approach, of a hosted site with a single controlling author was, in hindsight, overly restrictive. The advantage of the sole author approach is, of course, that the site is protected from inconsistency and that a uniform look-and-feel can be maintained — inconsistency can arise if multiple authors are at work in parallel. Clarifying the outline design of the site as early as possible, and ensuring that it is kept as simple as possible, are also advisable and would also help in avoiding problems with multiple authors.

4.9 Workshop Reader

The workshop reader for ECOOP 2005 is an ongoing saga. There was some discussion in the six months leading up to the conference concerning the reader, and its feasibility, given our concerns about the conference finances. As a matter of principle it was felt, however, that a reader should be produced, even if there was a limited market and minimal funding available to support it (the concern being that Springer may not be interested in the reader and considerable effort would be required to produce a high-quality volume).

Given that it is now almost one year after the conference, there appear to be three ways forwards, and all will actively be pursued, even though they are mutually exclusive. The options are:

1. Complete the production of the 2005 workshop reader in Springer style, offering it to Springer as a free-standing LNCS volume
2. Use the 2005 workshop reader material as half of a joint volume with ECOOP 2006, to provide a more substantial volume within the LNCS series
3. Present the 2005 workshop reader as an electronic resource, hosted by `ecoop.org` or at Glasgow and/or Strathclyde.

The first two options appear to be preferable, and the decision as to which will be pursued will depend on the preference of the ECOOP 2006 committee.

5 In Summary: Why the Budget Didn't Balance and How It All Ended

As the attendance numbers make clear, ECOOP 2005 had approximately 90 fewer participants in the main conference than ECOOP 2004. This shortfall in attendees led to a dramatic drop in registration income, compared with previous ECOOPs and our planning. This was compounded by the sharp drop in tutorial unit sales, with less than 25% of the expected uptake, and a sharp drop in sponsorship, to less than 20% of our initial goals. Any one of these problems on its own could have been managed, however the effect of all three was overwhelming.

This shortfall in income was exacerbated by the use of a commercial venue. Although food costs could be scaled back, to a certain extent, since final numbers were well understood before the catering deadlines, the charges for venues were fixed long in advance and reducing room sizes was not feasible. The problem was thus made worse by the high fixed cost for venue hire, which could not be reduced proportionately when it became clear that attendee numbers were much lower than expected. The net effect was that an infeasibly large proportion of the registration fee was required to cover venue costs, and this forced the conference into an overall deficit despite our best efforts.

A side-effect of these financial strains was that attention was diverted to trying to address these problems, rather than being focused on the preparations for the conference and tidying up loose ends afterwards. One consequence of this is that we did not have a feedback questionnaire at the event. We had planned to run a post-event questionnaire electronically, using attendee email addresses, to support ECOOP 2006, however no major issues were identified for which input from past participants might be helpful and, due to an ongoing focus on financial issues, we never did collect structured feedback from the ECOOP 2005 attendees.

Nonetheless, informal feedback at the event, and subsequently, suggested that the participants enjoyed ECOOP 2005, with the maze-like nature of the venue and the falconry at the banquet being the two abiding memories of a pleasant week in Glasgow.

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