



COLLOQUY DOWNEAST
PO Box 394, Blue Hill, Maine 04614
www.colloquydowneast.org

Information for Facilitators

Mission Statement

The mission of Colloquy Downeast is to create an independent learning community (supported and nourished by residents of the Blue Hill Peninsula, Deer Isle and beyond) engaged in enriching discussions through exchange of thoughts and ideas. This mission is supported by informed volunteer facilitators who offer analytical, interactive and conversational learning experiences to participants willing to share ideas and challenge their own assumptions.

I. Background

The programs of Colloquy Downeast are overseen by a Steering Committee (“the Committee”) which approves their general subject matter and content. The Committee also recruits facilitators, handles advertising and finances and assists in scheduling programs. Colloquy Downeast is a 501(c) (3) organization. The Committee typically approves 10 to 14 programs (called “colloquies”) per year; these are offered during the fall, winter and spring seasons (and, perhaps in the future, the summer). The colloquies cover a variety of subjects including science, medicine, art, literature, history, music, philosophy, religion, law, politics and current events. Occasionally, a colloquy will be designed as a “how to do” something (e.g. play bridge, gourmet cooking, digital photography). Other colloquies call for site visits to places of geologic, ecological or historic interest. Colloquy leaders (called “Facilitators”) are individuals with knowledge of the subject who enjoy the preparation and discussion which are inherent in a successful colloquy.

Each participant is charged a fee of \$50 per colloquy to cover the expenses of Colloquy Downeast, including the costs of advertising, mailing, maintaining the website, meeting locations and a payment to the Facilitator, which payment may be waived at the participant's request.

Successful colloquies call for critical thinking by participants. They challenge past assumptions, offer new insights to the subject matter and, in addition, expand understanding of the subject or field of knowledge under review. Further, they provide enjoyable learning experiences that call for active engagement by participants.

II. Role of the Facilitator

In keeping with Colloquy Downeast's mission, Facilitators should foster dialogue and conversation among program participants. They should avoid lectures wherever possible but, rather, use the program material as a basis for conversation and exploration. To encourage discussion, colloquies are limited to 15 persons. However, if they wish, Facilitators may admit one or two more if space allows. There is no minimum number, but a Facilitator may cancel a colloquy if he or she thinks the number of enrolled participants is too few. When a cancellation occurs, participants are given the choice of a refund, enrollment in another colloquy or a donation to Colloquy Downeast.

A typical colloquy consists of four two-hour sessions, once a week over a four week period. When submitting the concept for a colloquy, the Facilitator should identify his/her preferences as to colloquy meeting dates. When finalizing the program schedule, the Committee will coordinate with the Facilitator to select the best dates, while considering other colloquies offered and available locations. Commonly chosen places are the Blue Hill Public Library (Howard and Bass Rooms), Parker Ridge (private dining room), and the Library at the Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School. The final program for a colloquy, including dates and times, must be approved by the Committee. Most locations have equipment for display of DVDs and PowerPoint presentations but check ahead to be sure.

The home page of the Colloquy Downeast website (www.colloquydowneast.org) contains general information about the organization. In addition each colloquy has its own web page. After a colloquy is approved by the Committee, Facilitators are requested to provide the Committee with a description and other information about their colloquy to be posted on the web page. This should include the following:

- 1) A relatively short, one-paragraph description of the colloquy topic (this is typically prepared in draft form when the colloquy is first proposed);
- 2) A short identification of the Facilitator, usually one or two sentences;
- 3) A syllabus for the colloquy, indicating how the subject and discussion will be divided among the four sessions (helpful to participants in preparing and organizing themselves for the colloquy meetings); and
- 4) A reading list and/or indication of other material that the Facilitator wants participants to review prior to the colloquy (it is helpful to distinguish “required” or “strongly recommended” materials that will be essential to a thoughtful discussion from “optional” or “other” readings that may interest the participant).

Please visit the web pages for recent colloquies for examples of the form and level of detail required.

Many colloquies are organized around one or two “core” texts, with a series of other, optional texts and other resources (magazine or newspaper articles, internet links, etc.). Links to web pages are encouraged to be posted on the “reading list” sub-page—allowing participants to either review online or print, as they wish.

Before a colloquy starting date, the Committee will give the Facilitator a list of enrolled participants with, at a minimum, their e-mail addresses or other contact information. Packets of supplemental materials, if any, should be given to participants at the opening session or before the session in which they will be discussed. The Facilitators should insure that participants without access to the Internet are provided with the necessary information.

Some Facilitators communicate with participants between sessions by email. This is not required, but it can lead to further discussion and generate additional insights into the subject matter. If one or more participants do not have access to email, however, Facilitators should be sensitive to their needs.

Some Facilitators hand out tent cards for participants' names at the opening session. This is optional. However, not all the participants will know each other, and display of their names helps to encourage dialogue. Although not a common practice, some Facilitators provide snacks (juice, cookies, etc.) during a 10 minute or so mid-session break.

If a new Facilitator has never attended a colloquy, the Committee recommends that he or she visit one in progress. The Committee can make arrangements for the visit.

III. Assistance to Facilitators

Being a facilitator is essentially a volunteer undertaking. However, the Committee will pay each Facilitator (up to two/colloquy) \$100.00 for use as he or she sees fit, but typically to be used for the purchase of texts, duplicating or supplies.

All Committee members, each of whom is listed on the website are available for advice and help with colloquy questions. In addition to the functions described earlier, the Committee maintains enrollment lists for each colloquy.

The Committee is grateful for the time and energy given by Facilitators, and it hopes they find their experiences rewarding. The Committee members are always available for advice and counsel.