

# Making the Most of Your ALA Conference Experience



## Come Prepared

- Bring business cards – either from your agency or printed out on your home computer to help with networking with other families and providers.
- Bring your nametag that was mailed to you. You will need to show it to receive your conference packet. This will help to reduce long lines at registration.
- Create an emergency plan with your family so that they know how to reach you at the conference/hotel. During daytime hours, you could direct them to ask for the Sharing a Vision registration desk for assistance in reaching you.

## At the Conference:

- Arrive in plenty of time on Day 1 of the conference to get through the registration process and to orient yourself to the building. You can usually expect a line at registration the first day. Plan on arriving more than 30 minutes prior to the start of the conference.
- Upon arrival, orient yourself. Familiarize yourself with all of the conference locations (Break out rooms, general sessions, luncheons, exhibits, hotel restaurant, gift shop). Some of the Conference Sessions can happen in hotels that are miles away from the Conference Center.
- Map out your day and know how close sessions are to one another.
- Keep a list of alternate sessions that are nearby. Sometimes, sessions are not as advertised. When that happens, don't hesitate to leave and find another session. Some sessions are also so popular that you can't get in (not even to stand!)
- There may be times when you don't have time to find food and there are no good food options nearby. Make sure you have things on hand that can get you to the next break.
- There's a map in the conference guide. Study it. It's amazing how confusing big conference centers can be! Know where you are and where you're going. Look at the floor plans in your program.
- Turn your cell phone off or set it to vibrate throughout the conference. If you must answer your phone during a session, please quietly exit the room to take the call. Others will appreciate you for it.
- Bring a sweater or layer your clothing so that you will be comfortable whether the room is hot or cold. Conference planners will have no control over room temperatures.
- Bring survival supplies:
  - aspirin, Advil, gum, cough drops, bottle of water, energy bars



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## Plan to Network

- Make Time to Meet People – Take time for genuine, in-depth conversations with peers and jot down notes on business cards. Don't try to meet everyone, instead focus on meeting fewer, more relevant contacts -including competitors.
- Wear your nametag high so people can see it. Look at other people's name tags for use in networking and meeting new people. Assume that anyone wearing a conference committee tag is extra approachable!
- You're going to be standing in some lines (at registration, to get coffee, etc.). Take this as an advantage and network with others in line with you.
- Plan for time in the Exhibit Hall - Consider using one of the break out times to visit the exhibits. Exhibits are fun and often have fun freebies you can take. The ALA Conference has vendors that serve every type of library need: from t-shirts to carpeting and architects to software. Review the list of Exhibitors and make a short list of people you want to visit and their booth numbers.
- Whether or not you're looking for a job right now, consider visiting the Career Center. You can have someone give your resume a quick review; you can schedule interviews with organizations that are hiring and you can schedule meetings with a Career Counselor. They also develop sessions for job seekers that can really help you think about your career path.
- Throughout the conference, keep a list of how you plan to put what you've learned into action when you get home. Refer to the list when you get back home and take action!

## After the Show

- Book Time to Digest – Schedule necessary time after the show (even though you are really, really busy) to review the notes and materials you collected and evaluate solutions while ideas are still fresh and top of mind.
- Follow-up with Contacts – Take the time to drop your new contacts a card or email. Doing so helps your next show be even more productive plus builds your personal reference library of industry experts.
- Create an Action Plan - Review your findings and formulate a plan to further investigate and evaluate solutions. Share your knowledge and resultant action plan with co-workers who didn't attend the show.
- Write a DCLA Newsletter Article based on what you learned – The DCLA Newsletter would love to have content for the Web site based on what you learned at the conference. Sharing your experience will crystallize what you learned and you'll be sharing it with others!

See: [http://sharingavision.org/conf/2007/pdfs/tips\\_first\\_time.pdf](http://sharingavision.org/conf/2007/pdfs/tips_first_time.pdf)  
<http://www.getelastic.com/conference-attendee-tips-mazimize-roi-list/>

