

Tips on Attending the 2014 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas

By Kristi Haman, June 2014

Travel

- Free shuttle from airport if you are staying at an ALA hotel. If not, you can take the SuperShuttle to your hotel if it is located on the strip.
- Parking is free at casinos so use your car to get from one place to the next if you can.
- Take advantage of free conference shuttles be mindful of the times. Don't leave yourself stranded somewhere. Some events end late and you will need to take a taxi home.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get from one place to the next. You will need at least 25 minutes to walk from your hotel room to the convention center. Maps make venues appear closer than they actually are. Splurge on a taxi, your feet will thank you.

Hotel

- Be sure to register for your hotels rewards program. You can earn free nights and other benefits such as free Wi-Fi and room service.

Basics

- Hydrate, always carry water.
- Wear very comfortable flat shoes. Save the heels for evening socials.
- Bring foot lotion, Vaseline and a few Band-Aids – your feet will get very sore from walking long distances.
- Bring snacks.
- Layer clothes. Hot outside, freezing inside.
- Pick up your registration packet the day before the conference starts so you can spend some time going over maps and programs.
- Use the conference app on your phone or iPad. Don't carry around your laptop. Too heavy!

Programs & Events

- Use the Annual Conference Scheduler to design your own conference experience

- *Cognotes* is a free daily newspaper detailing what happened the day before and what is coming up next. It also lists last minute changes to the schedule.
- Conference Orientation on June 27th.
- If you are a student, attend the Student Reception June 29th.
- There are ALA Ambassadors everywhere so you can ask questions.
- It is totally fine to arrive late and leave early – just stick to the back of the room so you can come and go easily.
- The keynote speakers are always inspirational. Just go.
- Highly recommend *The Laugh's On Us* – comedy show with Paula Poundstone & other comedians, wine & cheese platters (no free shuttle bus, you may need to take a taxi home).
- Visit the local libraries. I always pick up great ideas when I wander around other libraries.
- Session: Earn What You're Worth: Salary Negotiation for Library Workers (June 29th)
- Session: Library Family Feud – quiz show that pits authors against librarians. There is an author signing afterwards. Gretchen Caserotti – Meridian Library District, will participate as part of the Sparkplug Librarians. June 28th
- Attend ALA meetings, express interest if you want to join a committee
- I have never been to ALA awards dinner but I hear they are wonderful.
- Artist Alley Silent Auction. If you love art, bring some extra money and purchase original art by graphic artists.
- If you are looking for a job, check out the ALA Placement Center. They offer the New Members Round Table Resume Review so bring your resume. Also visit JobLIST on the ALA website.
- Attend the **Live! Stages** and listen to authors read from their books, especially Book Buzz Theater
- **Meet the Authors & Actors** events Stan Lee, Jane Fonda, Alexander McCall Smith, Paula Poundstone (the comedian), Jeff Bridges etc. Useful when you are working on the reference desk. Share when a book will be published, if it will be made into a movie, etc. Gain insight into how authors think, what their next projects are, and details about their book.

Network & Make Friends

- Bring business cards. You will be constantly meeting new people. Moo cards or Vistaprint – 250 cards for \$13.24. Network. Approach people...some will invite you to receptions or dinners.

- Join the ALA Conference Facebook page (and Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram. Subscribe to ALA listservs and ALA Connect.
- Wear your name badge at the conference but remember to take it off when you leave.
- Night life – Division Happy Hours, Publisher & Vendor receptions
- New Members Round Table Awards Reception June 29th, networking and refreshments

Exhibits “A Carnival for Librarians!”

- Nearly every vendor booth has a raffle drawing to win books, iPads and other goodies. Bring stickers with your name, address, phone number & email. Paste the stickers onto raffle drawing sign up forms. This saves a lot of time so you don't have to fill out each one by hand.
- Vendors have games and demonstrations you can play or watch and then win free items. Join in!
- It's fun to attend the Ribbon Cutting & Exhibits Opening Reception. They have free food but long lines and the food disappears quickly.
- Give yourself plenty of time to visit the Exhibits. Try to win prizes. (I won an iPad from Oxford University Press.)
- Only take home swag and free books that you think you or your library can use. Otherwise, you will become over loaded.
- Meet the vendors that your library uses. These are valuable contacts. Plus, vendors often have receptions that you can attend.
- Target who you want to see. I go straight to the publishers and then to PBS, Smithsonian, ALA Store, Ingram, and I pick up back issues of Library Journal.
- Check out the latest and greatest bookmobiles in the Exhibits Hall.
- On the last day of the conference, publishers give away all of their books on display or sell them at an extreme discount.
- What to do with your free books? If you fly Southwest, use your second suitcase and fill it with books. Mail them home using flat rate boxes provided by the Post Office in the Exhibit Hall. Caution: On the last day of the conference the Post Office usually closes early and there are long lines. Also, cash will get you into the fast moving line. Credit card lines are longer.

Free snacks or meals or books

- Literary Tastes Breakfast (breakfast and free books) – Harper Collins
- AAP's Book-A-Licious Breakfast
- The big jobbers and publishers (OCLC, EBSCO, 3M, Gale Cengage Learning, Mango Languages, Penguin, etc.) always have free meals and receptions.
- Meet and greet PLA President

Places to Visit in Vegas

- Ka at MGM Grand – if you see one show in Vegas...this should be it.
<http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/KA/default.aspx>
- Aria & Cosmopolitan – just walk around and admire the beauty of these modern hotels. The two hotels are connected by the Shops at Crystals (a fancy mall Louis Vuitton, Hermes, and Jimmy Choo!)
- Margaritaville (restaurant on the strip) – largest Nachos
- Marrakech Moroccan Restaurant (belly dancing & excellent food, come hungry)
- Stratosphere – great views and fun rides
- Fremont Street – light show and concerts
- The Neon Museum and Boneyard (request a guided tour) is across from the Las Vegas branch library.