

## It's Not Just Packing a Cardigan: How to Attend a Conference and Get the Most Out of Your Experience

Tips and Tricks from the Indiana State Library

### Before the Conference

- Write a justification. Be sure to think about this from the perspective of your organization. What will **your library** get out of the conference?
- Make a plan for your educational sessions. What will you attend? Download the Conference app if available.
- If there are multiple people from your institution attending, consider coordinating sessions with your colleagues. If two people from the same department are attending a conference, you might get more bang from your buck if you do not attend the same sessions.
- What **back up sessions** might you be interested in? Sometimes sessions fill up or might not be what you thought.
- What conference sponsored social events will you go to?
- Plan your clothes. Bring layers and wear comfortable shoes.
- Conference survival supplies might include: Water bottle, band-aids, phone charger, pens, business cards, snacks, aspirin, cough drops.
- Is it in a new city? Get to know the town, especially their transit options, ahead of time.

### Be a Savvy Attender

- Get out of your comfort zone and meet people
- Leave sessions that don't interest you or are not what you thought they'd be.
- Don't lose your personal belongings
- Learn. Take organized notes.
- Collect and give business cards. When you get a business card, make a note immediately on it to remind yourself later what you talked to this person about. Or, take a selfie with a new person that you've met.
- Do the vendor hall. They subsidize the cost of the conference, so thank them for being there.
- Note to yourself, what is something you could do to participate more fully next time...can you serve on a committee? Blog about your experience? Do a poster session?
- Take breaks when you need it.
- Eat lunch with people. Even people you don't know.
- Consider going to at least one event that you have no idea what it is.
- Consider going to open committee meetings. You can learn a lot by seeing what these committees are up to.
- Ask for help if you need it. Conference planners want you to have a great conference.

### After the Conference

- Unpack that bag.
- Follow up with vendors.
- Send notes to people you met.
- Give away or put away the freebies you collected.
- Write a report for your board, boss, or supervisor.
- Make goals about what sorts of changes you'd like to make in your library as a result of attending the conference.
- Share with others who attended and those who did not attend.