

YOUR FIRST ANNUAL MEETING: HOW TO ARRIVE—AND THRIVE

Your first SAA conference experience doesn't have to be daunting. With the right planning—and a good pair of walking shoes!—you can conquer it like a pro. We asked three members for tips on navigating the CoSA/SAA Joint Annual Meeting this August in New Orleans.



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How many SAA meetings have you attended?	One	Eleven	Two
How can first-timers successfully network at the meeting?	“Attend an event or session that’s outside your comfort zone. The natural inclination is to hang tight to what one knows or is familiar with, but the moments to have a genuine conversation with someone often arise in different settings. These can come in the form of a social gathering or a roundtable meeting.”	“Networking by starting up random conversations at social events works well for some, but not for me. I find the structure of sessions and roundtables to work better. For example, I started in the Architectural Records Roundtable and discovered friendly people who were dealing with the same issues that I was. Easy, helpful networking followed and still goes on.”	“If you’re a Twitter user, tweeting is a great way to jump into conversations and meet other archivists. Also think about signing up for a Navigator to show you the ropes, and if you’re lucky, he or she may personally introduce you to other professionals who may be a good fit for your own interests.”
What events should first-timers attend?	“Attend one of the tours arranged by the Host Committee, because it can be a chance to strike up a conversation with a peer, future co-worker, or colleague in a more relaxed setting. I met Annie Ross (of Archivists Toolkit fame) while learning about San Diego’s Chicano Park, and it set me up to have a great conference. She then introduced me to other archivists, who introduced me to more archivists, and so on. I don’t think I would have had that experience had I not signed up for a tour.”	“The Awards Ceremony. I didn’t start going to the Awards Ceremony until about 2006. I was amazed at the broad range of work that constitutes archival excellence, and now I love hearing about the successes of my colleagues.”	“Attending roundtable meetings is a great way to get to know other professionals who match your interests. It is also a prime opportunity for you to become more familiar and involved with SAA and could even start you on a leadership path.”
What one tip do you have to help first-timers plan their schedules for the meeting?	“Refrain from cramming your schedule full. The opportunity will present itself to do something every second, but because there’s so much to do, it’s easy to get worn out. Feel free to leave thirty minutes here and there unscheduled just to catch your breath.”	“Familiarize yourself with the schedule before you arrive, but don’t get too caught up in your plans. Every year I plan my week with the SAA schedule, circling the sessions I will attend. Then the Annual Meeting happens and I run into someone who says, ‘Session 42 has a great speaker.’ Or maybe I just don’t feel like thinking about metadata on Wednesday and attend a session about oral histories instead. Some of those random choices have led me to the best sessions.”	“Use a calendar app like Google Calendar to plan your SAA schedule. Just beware of time zone changes (a lesson I learned the hard way!)”
Name three items every Annual Meeting attendee should pack in her/his suitcase.	“1) A good book because, let’s face it, reading while traveling is amazing; 2) comfortable shoes, because you will be on your feet a great deal; and 3) an updated résumé, especially if you expect to be job hunting in the next year or so.”	“1) Good walking shoes because you’re not going to spend much time in your hotel room; 2) business cards (or the hip equivalent that lets you share your contact info); and 3) an open mind, because you never know who you might meet or what ideas will strike a chord.”	“1) A reusable water bottle to fill up at water stations; 2) a pair of comfy shoes that won’t kill your feet if you have to walk a mile to get to that restaurant you found on Yelp; and 3) a swimsuit for hotel pool parties with your new archivist friends!”