2012 NCPH Annual Conference

Frequently Asked Questions for Graduate Students

What should I wear/pack?

In general, the dress code for conference events is business casual. Although you will see people dressed casually, presenters and attendees should dress well to make a good impression. Those about to enter the job market may consider formal attire at events and sessions, as you may have the opportunity to contact a potential employer and give them your business card or resume. Suits are rare, but many people wear a jacket as well as a tie.

As the conference will be in Milwaukee in mid-April, expect brisk weather. The average highs in April are in the 50's with the lows around the mid 30's. Make sure to wear comfortable shoes if you sign up for one of the field trips, as some events will require a fair amount of walking. By no means do you need to wear a formal suit!

The opening plenary is more formal than the regular conference sessions; although it is not an absolute necessity, you may want to bring a couple formal ensembles for evening events.

Am I able to share a room?

If you are interested in sharing a room, there are a couple options for finding other registered graduate students.

One option is to become of a fan of NCPH on Facebook and post your query there. To join the

Facebook group, search for NCPH in the Facebook status bar or go to:
http://www.facebook.com/nationalcouncilonpublichistory

Another option is to send an inquiry to the H-Public listserv. To subscribe to H-Public, visit
http://www.h-net.org/~public/

NCPH does not post a list of registered attendees before the conference starts, so in order to find a roommate for the conference, you will have to utilize one of the two routes described above.

Can I attend "OAH" events?

YES! As this is a joint conference, events are open to member of both organizations. A primary focus for this joint meeting is to celebrate the increasing interconnections and breaking down of hard lines between academic and public history.

What happens during a Session?

There are basically four types of sessions: Panels, Working Groups, Field Trips, and Workshops.

Panels feature 3-4 speakers and a moderator. All topics and presenters are listed in the conference program. Panels generally have room for 30-40 seated attendees. You do not have to sign up ahead of time to attend a panel and you can leave for another session depending on your interest level. If you choose to leave a session, please be courteous as you exit and wait until speakers change.

Some panels feature scholars presenting a paper or a case study, while others are composed of practitioners in the field reflecting on a project or problem-solution they have encountered.

Ostensibly, all panels leave time at the end for a question-and-answer session, although this depends on the moderator's skill at checking presenters on time. Students are welcome to ask questions! If a speaker is an expert in a subject related to your field of study or research, take this opportunity (after the discussion) to meet them and establish a formal connection. Conferences provide an excellent opportunity to network with other public history professionals and discuss different topics of interest to you.

Working groups are sessions that feature a group of approximately 10 - 15 discussants who come together to explore, in-depth, a subject of shared concern. Working groups have a problem they are actively trying to solve. Each participant prepares a case statement to share with the group. These case statements are circulated and discussed among participants in advance; therefore, the conversation has already begun prior to the group's meeting at the conference and everyone is prepared to participate actively in the topic of discussion.

Generally, conference sessions last for 90 minutes, except for field trips.

Tours are organized by the local programming committee and take participants off site to points of interest. Field trips are a few hours to whole-day commitments, and most require advance registration and sometimes additional fees. Field trips often take a limited number of participants and spaces can fill up quickly, so consider this when you are registering for the conference. To view the list of field trips, see page 24 of the 2012 conference program http://annualmeeting.oah.org/library/2012program.pdf

Workshops, which usually cost extra, feature outside presenters giving a "how-to" talk on a specific topic. Workshops are generally longer than a typical conference session, but they vary in length depending on the topic (often 2 - 3 hours or more). Please check the conference program for workshop details, see page 29 of the 2012 conference program, http://annualmeeting.oah.org/library/2012program.pdf

In addition to these sessions there are keynote speakers, dinners, and other special events in the mornings and evenings.

Do I have to attend each Session?

No, you do not need to attend each session. There are no sign-in sheets or any formal tracking of attendance. Sessions are separated by short coffee breaks, but you may need a longer break! Panel and working group sessions do not entail any extra fees, so choose which ones are most interesting and useful to you. You may also find that schedules for sessions you are interested in are at the same time. Try to find colleagues, fellow students, or those you meet at the conference who can share their notes, or ask them to grab the contact information of the speakers so you can talk with them about their presentation.

Also, if you are volunteering in exchange for free registration, then you will miss some sessions.

Do I have to pay for each session?

Normal sessions, such as panels and working groups, are included with your conference registration. Some other events require an extra fee. This includes field trips, workshops, the new member breakfast, the fundraiser, and closing dinner. (You can sit in on the closing dinner to hear the speaker without having to pay.) Some events, such as the Speed Networking (see below), are free but require you to sign up in advance of the conference.

Should I bring business cards or my resume?

One of the most important aspects of attending the conference is the opportunity to network with academics, professionals in the field, and other graduate students. Having business cards is recommended. If your graduate program does not provide you with business cards, you may want to order some online in advance of the conference. Several graduate students have been pleased with the prices, speed, and selection of www.123print.com. Plan to have at least 25 for the conference. Make sure that your business cards are professional; this is not only your first impression to others, but your card may also be passed along to a potential interviewer. If you will graduate shortly after the conference, make sure to use an email address that will work after graduation.

If you are a new professional looking for a job, or a graduate student on the hunt for an internship, you may also want to have a few copies of your resume on hand.

The conference is an opportunity to network for potential interviews in the future, not a job interview. Keep in mind that the professionals you want to meet will have many people they want to meet as well. Be tactful in handing out your business cards and resume. Do not force it! After sessions, or talks, most presenters linger, providing an excellent opportunity to meet them. Another useful approach is to introduce yourself to the person you would like to meet and get *their card*. Then, if you want to pursue a conversation, you can contact them a few days later.

What is Speed Networking?

Speed networking is a fun, easy, and low-pressure way to meet with fellow public historians and exchange ideas and experiences. The event is set up a bit like speed dating, but with different ends. Each participant will have a chance to talk and network with established public history practitioners. These seasoned professionals remain seated at the same table during the duration of the event while a pair of participants rotates in fifteen-minute intervals from one table to the next. The event provides graduate students with the opportunity to connect with public history professionals and to learn about the variety of careers available to public historians. Speed networking is a great way to share your research, bounce ideas off peers, and maybe even pull together a panel for a future conference. Prepare some questions in advance, bring your business cards, and expect to talk and listen!

To participate you will have to sign up (no charge) in advance using the print or online conference registration form. Once the registration fills up there is a waiting list for speed networking.

How can I best prepare to present a poster?

Poster sessions are a great way to present your research without the stress of giving a formal panel presentation in front of a large group of people. Poster sessions allow for informal discussion of your work; there is an emphasis on casual conversation (coffee and tea included), and visitors can choose to spend as much or as little time as they like looking at the various posters in the exhibit hall. As such, it is particularly useful format for generating feedback on works in progress and for projects that have visual, tangible, or digital media components.

(1)   One option is to create a poster template in PowerPoint. A quick Google search for "poster session template" will bring up many examples that you can work off of. You can choose to have the poster printed professionally (which is by no means required), or go the do- it-yourself route. When you arrive at the conference, all you have to do is attach the poster you've created to the board. Bring glue or tape for these purposes.

(2)   Avoid making your poster too text-heavy. While this is certainly tempting, you will quickly find that people would much rather gather the main idea of your project from the poster and then ask you to speak directly to the finer details.

(3)   If you need an electrical hookup, or have specific audiovisual needs, be sure to request these for your presentation in advance of your arrival.

(4)   Take a few moments to check out other graduate student posters – this is a great way to meet other students (and your future colleagues) and to see what kinds of research and projects they are working on.

(5)   Dress professionally. Even though the poster session is a less formal way of presenting your work, it is still important to make a good impression. Be sure to bring business cards, and if entering the job market soon, your resume. Potential employers and other professionals walk the presentation and it is a great way to network for employment or future research assistance.

(6)   Relax, and have fun! Above all, poster sessions are conversational. People will be genuinely interested in what you are working on, and will want to ask you questions about your work. This is a great opportunity to test particular questions that you have been grappling with and see how people respond to your research.

How can I present next year ?

The deadline for submitting a proposal for the 2013 conference is July 15, 2012. The paper does not have to be completed before you submit your session proposal, but it will assist you in creating the session and participants if it is. Finding session participants can be done either through networking or by putting a call out through a listserv. If you are interested in presenting a paper next year, make the most of the conference by making contacts with potential presenters through the various social events and by contacting this year's speakers and moderators. For more information, go the NCPH 2013 Call for Proposals page (http://ncph.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013-Program-Committee-CFP.pdf).