

2013 NCPH Annual Conference

Frequently Asked Questions for Graduate Students

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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. Ultimately, it is most important to consider the events that you want to attend ahead of time, and plan accordingly; for example, the opening plenary is expected to be more formal than the regular conference sessions, and dressier outfits may be more appropriate for evening events.

As the conference will be in Ottawa in mid-April, expect brisk weather. The average highs in April are in the mid 50's Fahrenheit with the lows around the high 30's Fahrenheit (between about 3 and 15 degrees Celsius). 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. As the event draws closer, checking weather reports may also be advisable, to ensure that you have weather-appropriate gear during the conference.

Am I able to share a room?

Sharing a room with one or more people can be an effective way to keep down costs at the conference. The room rate for attendees this year is \$159CDN/night, though there are a limited number of student rooms available at \$129CDN/night—act quickly to get those before they fill up! In general, there are many attendees who are eager to share a room, so don't give up if you can't find someone you know to room with. NCPH has several ways for you to connect with others:

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 utilizing one of the two routes described above is the best way to find a roommate for the conference.

What happens during a Session?

There are basically four types of sessions: Panels, Working Groups, Workshops, and Field Trips. Panels feature 3-4 speakers and a moderator. All topics and presenters are listed in the conference program. Generally, conference sessions last for 90 minutes, but be sure to check your Program if you're unsure.

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. All panels should leave time at the end for a question-and-answer session. 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 are designed to facilitate substantive, focused, and extended seminar-like conversations on a particular topic. They 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. Participants are selected well before the date of the conference, so that they have plenty of time to research the topic at hand; each participant prepares a case statement from their research 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.

Working groups are open to other conference-goers (unless otherwise noted) who would like to sit in on the discussions, but we ask that they respect the co-chair's need to potentially limit participation from the audience.

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:

<http://ncph.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013-Annual-Meeting-Program-Web.pdf>

Field trips are tours or other off-site ventures that are organized by the local programming committee to take participants to points of interest in the Ottawa community. Field trips are a few hours to whole-day commitments, and most require advance registration and 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. The list of field trips is in the conference program:

<http://ncph.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013-Annual-Meeting-Program-Web.pdf>

In addition to these sessions there are other special events, such as featured speakers, meal opportunities, speed networking, poster sessions, and other activities in the mornings and evenings.

Do I have to attend each Session?

No, you do not need to attend each session. In every time-slot, there are actually several sessions occurring concurrently, so it's impossible to go to every one. You should consult your Program ahead of time to make a schedule of the sessions that most appeal to you, so that you can get the most out of the experience. Don't feel compelled to go to a session in every time-slot, either—there are no sign-in sheets or any formal tracking of attendance. It's entirely possible that you can get just as much benefit from using a break to interact and network with other public historians as you would from attending a session during that time. Not only are these connections valuable in the long-term, but also for the conference, as you can share notes or speakers' contact information with one another, potentially filling you in on interesting sessions that you missed.

Be sure to note that if you are volunteering in exchange for free registration, then you will be required to 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. These include field trips, workshops, and the new member breakfast. Some of these special events, such as 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 a particularly useful format for generating feedback on works in progress and for projects that have visual, tangible, or digital media components. Here are a few tips that we recommend, based on what worked in the past:

- (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. Check your Program in Ottawa for more information on the NCPH 2014 Call for Proposals.

Passport Information

For any non-Canadian participants attending the conference, you will need to remember to plan ahead to make sure that your passport is current and ready to go by April. For U.S. residents, more information about how to acquire or update your passport can be found at the following website:

http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html