

Tips, Advice, and Frequently Asked Questions for First-Time Attendees at the 2015 NCPH Annual Meeting

Before the Conference

When should I arrive? The conference kicks off with a full slate of workshops and an opening reception on Wednesday, April 15, so we suggest arriving on Tuesday or early Wednesday to participate in those early activities. Attendees who fly will arrive via Nashville International Airport (BNA). For those who intend to drive, three major interstates (I-40, I-64, and I-24) converge near downtown Nashville. Travel information is located on page 6 of the conference *Program*, which is now accessible online [here]. If you're looking to share a ride locally or from the airport, post offers and requests on our [ride-share board](#).

Tip: If you plan to drive, the mobile app [Waze](#) (available for Apple and Android devices) can help you navigate and will also show real-time traffic information to help you find the best gas prices and avoid construction zones, delays, and accidents.

Where should I stay? This year, NCPH has reserved a discounted room block at the [Sheraton Nashville Downtown](#) at a rate of \$150 a night. Parking in their garage runs \$35 a day. You must book your room by Sunday, March 15, 2015 to take advantage of NCPH's group rate. See page 5 of the [Program](#) on the NCPH website for information and rates.

Tip: Sharing a room with one or more people can be an effective way to keep down costs at the conference. Many attendees are eager to share a room, so don't give up if you can't find someone you know to room with. Post requests and offers to the [room share discussion board](#) in our Public History Commons.

What does my conference registration include? A full conference registration includes access to all working groups and sessions, the exhibit hall, public plenary, and other events. Registrants also receive a conference packet and badge. Special opportunities such as workshops, tours, and meal events require additional fees. Visit the [NCPH Annual Meeting webpage](#) for more information on registration rates. Registration for the conference will open in November.

Tip: If you already registered but want to add a tour, workshop, or meal event to your registration, it's easy! You can [log in to your registration](#), select, "My Events" from the left menu, and then "Add Sessions." Some tours, workshops, and event tickets may be available for sale onsite, but pre-purchasing your tickets is the only way to guarantee your space.

Can I bring my spouse or a guest to an evening event? Yes. Guest registrations and tickets to select events can be purchased for non-public historians who would not otherwise attend the conference. See the website for details.

Why is my name not on the conference participant list? During the registration process, every attendee was asked whether or not they wanted to omit their name, affiliation, location, and email address from

the final participant list. If you selected this box, you were not included. This does *not* mean you are not registered to attend the conference! Be sure to check your email inbox for your receipt of purchase for the conference, which should have been sent once your registration was completed. If you cannot locate your email confirmation, please email ncph@iupui.edu or call (317) 274-2716.

Where can I acquire funding for the Conference? NCPH recognizes excellence in the field of public history through several awards that promote professionalism and best practices in the field, including a handful of travel grants for graduate students presenting at the conference. To learn more about potential cash prizes and travel grants, consult the [NCPH awards page](#). Students should contact their advisor, department chair, student government, or other campus associations to find out if they provide travel grants for attending conferences. Professionals should consult their employers for available funding opportunities. Be sure to register during the [early bird registration period](#), which lasts until March 4, 2015, to save on registration costs.

What should I wear/pack? In general, the dress code for conference events is business casual. Some evening events, like the Opening Reception, can be a bit more formal. Be sure to dress in layers; conference centers often range from drafty to stuffy, so be ready to change dress accordingly. There is no need to bring a full suit.

Nashville's climate is moderate and, in April, variable. Prepare for warm days and cool nights. April's average high temperature is 70°F (21°C), while the lows average 47°F (8°C). Average rainfall for the month is about four inches, and snow this time of year is unlikely. Humidity is at a yearly low in April at 39%, so we should be quite comfortable.

Tip: Walking Tours and Field Trips will take place rain or shine, so if you sign up for one, bring comfortable shoes, a coat, and an umbrella.

During the Conference

Where do I register on the first day? Registration is open from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM on Wednesday, April 15 (and 7:30-5 every day through Saturday the 18th) in the 2nd floor Ballroom foyer of the conference hotel, Sheraton Nashville Downtown. Make sure to give yourself enough time on your first day to register and pick up your conference program and badge. Be prepared for a line at registration, especially if you plan to arrive on Wednesday or Thursday. Registration hours and workshop/session start times can be found on pages 2-3 of the conference [Program](#).

Be sure to check meeting times closely. The final conference [Program](#) you'll receive after check-in lists times and locations for all conference sessions, workshops, tours, and other events. Times and locations occasionally shift after the *Program* is printed, so make sure to check your Errata sheet for updates.

Tip: You can use the Schedule-at-a-Glance on pages 2-3 of the [Program](#) to help choose which sessions and events you would like to attend. And keep an eye out for our mobile app!

What should I bring? We recommend you bring business cards and a few copies of your resume for unobtrusive networking. In addition, bring healthy snacks and a refillable water bottle to keep you going through the day—there will be scheduled breaks, but sometimes in the excitement it's easy to forget to hydrate and eat! Feel free to use laptops and smartphones during session activities, but be sure to put your devices on silent. If you anticipate needing them during the day, make sure to charge all electronics the night before.

What is going on? There are four basic types of activities: Sessions, Working Groups, Workshops, and Field Trips. 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.

- **Sessions** feature 3-6 speakers and generally have room for 40-50 seated attendees. You do not have to sign up ahead of time to attend a session and can leave for another session depending on your interest level. If you choose to leave a session, please be courteous as you exit. Some sessions 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 sessions should include time for questions and discussion. Everyone is 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 that interest you.
- **Working groups** are sessions designed to facilitate substantive, focused, and extended conversations on a particular topic. They feature a group of approximately 10-15 discussants who come together to explore and address potential problems and/or solutions to a subject of shared concern. Participants are selected well before the date of the conference. 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** feature outside presenters giving a "how-to" talk on a specific topic. Be sure to note that these sessions usually require additional fees. 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 see pages 16-17 of the conference [Program](#) for workshop details.
- **Field trips and tours** are off-site ventures organized by the Local Arrangements Committee to take participants to points of interest in the Nashville community. Field trips range between a few hours to whole-day commitments and 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 and tours is on pages 12-13 of the conference [Program](#).

Do I have to attend each session? No, you do not need to attend each session. In every time-slot there are several sessions occurring concurrently, so you couldn't even if you wanted to. You should consult your [Program](#) ahead of time to make a schedule of the sessions that are most appealing to you. The temptation to pack your schedule to get the most out of the conference is very real, but you may 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 each time-slot.

Do I have to pay for each session? Normal sessions, such as panels and working groups, are included with your conference registration. Other events require an extra fee. These include field trips, workshops, and meal events. Some of these special events, such as Speed Networking, require you to sign up in advance of the conference but are free.

Are there any events tailored to first-time attendees or graduate students? Yes! NCPH offers several special events designed to help novice conference attendees network with professionals and graduate students in the field. For more information on these events, see pages 14-15 of the [Program](#).

- On Wednesday, April 15, a **First Time Attendee and Mentor/Mentee Pre-reception** will take place at 5:30 PM and is included with the \$7 fee to attend the Opening Reception later that evening.
- Also on Wednesday the 15th, the **Resume Building Workshop**, a new addition in Nashville, affords the opportunity for attendees to have their resumes reviewed by a working professional in the field. This session will be arranged in advance of the conference. If you are interested in participating, register online when you register for the conference.
- Later on the evening of the 15th at 8:00 PM, you can meet and mingle with fellow attendees at the **New Professional and Graduate Student Social**.
- On Thursday, April 16, NCPH will host a **New Member Breakfast** at 7:30 AM (\$35 ticket required). This breakfast provides an opportunity to meet new and experienced members of the organization and learn more about NCPH, the conference, and the field of public history.
- Also on Thursday the 16th, the 10:00 AM **Speed Networking session** provides graduate students with the opportunity to connect with public history professionals and to learn about the variety of careers available to public historians.
- Later in the evening on the 16th, the 5:00 PM **Poster Session** is a venue where attendees, many of them graduate students and new professionals, can present their work more informally. The deadline to submit a poster for 2015 has passed, but this is a great opportunity to see what your peers are working on and get ideas for involvement in future conferences!

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. As the name suggests, it's a lot like speed dating. 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 participants rotate in fifteen-minute intervals from one table to the next. To participate you will have to sign up in advance (with no charge) using the print or online conference registration form. Once registration fills up, applicants for speed networking will be placed on a waiting list. Check out [this video](#) on NCPH's Vimeo channel for more information.

Should I hand out business cards? 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 highly recommended.

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. 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.

Tip: [123Print](#) and [VistaPrint](#) are two quick, easy, and affordable printing options for business cards. If you are a student or your work situation is in flux, be sure to put an email address on your business card that you can still access after you leave school or your current job.

How should I spend my evenings? Most days, sessions and workshops end between 5:00 and 6:00 PM, with special dinner events immediately following until 7:00 PM. Stretching later into the evening on Thursday, April 16, our "Dine Arouds" facilitate small group discussions on pre-determined topics over dinner at local restaurants. You can sign up for a Dine Around at the registration desk on the first day of the conference.

You will have free time in the evenings, and we recommend that you take advantage of this time to explore Nashville. Nashville is known for its great food and for its thriving music scene. NCPH's Local Arrangements Committee has put together a list of recommended restaurants and things to do on pages 8-11 of the conference [Program](#). You can also investigate the Sheraton Downtown's [list of nearby attractions](#), the New York Times' piece [36 Hours in Nashville](#), and the fabulous blog [365 in Nashville](#).

Tip: This is a great chance to get to know your fellow attendees in an informal environment, so have fun! But remember that these people are your peers and some may be your future employers or coworkers—so maybe not *too* much fun.

Tweet to #NCPH2015! If you're enjoying a particular session or event, let other people know about it. Attendees who don't have a Twitter account can still follow conference discussions online in real time. It's also a good way to find fellow attendees who share your interests.

After the Conference

Follow up with your new contacts. Send an email to those you've networked with. You can present a question or discussion, or simply send a thank-you note for taking time to speak with you.

Complete the post-conference survey. NCPH emails a post-conference survey to all registrants. This survey is important, because it helps us figure out how to make future conferences even better! Please take a few minutes to share your experiences, let us know what you liked, and offer suggestions for future improvements to our annual conference.

How can I present next year? The deadline for submitting a proposal for the 2016 annual conference in Baltimore is July 15, 2015. You can find session participants through networking or by submitting an early topic proposal by June 1. If you are interested in presenting 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. Check page 18 of your [Program](#) in Nashville for more information on the NCPH 2016 Call for Proposals.

Presenting a poster at the Poster Session is a great way for a relative newcomer to present their research or project at NCPH. The deadline for submitting a poster session proposal for Baltimore is October 1, 2015.

Where can I learn more about attending conferences? There are many online links that provide additional information on attending conferences. Here are a few worth investigating:

- [ProfHacker](#) has a comprehensive collection of articles on preparing for, attending, and live-tweeting conferences.
- [Christopher Bartneck, "Academic Conference Travel Guide"](#)
- [Tessa Lau, "How to Attend an Academic Conference"](#)
- [Megan MacKenzie, "Survival Guide for Grad Students: The Essential Clothing, Food, Shelter, and Networking Dos and Don'ts"](#)
- [Twitter, "Live-Tweeting Best Practices"](#)
- [Ernesto Priego, "Live-Tweeting at Academic Conferences: 10 Rules of Thumb"](#)
- [American Historical Association, "The Dos and Don'ts of Live-Tweeting at an Academic Conference: A Working Draft"](#)