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## Make the Case to Attend MLA 2022 Annual Conference

How can you obtain support to attend the MLA 2022 Annual Conference? The key is to understand the professional benefits of attending from your employer's perspective. It's about shifting the question from "Can I afford to attend?" to "Can I afford to miss it?" Check out these tips from MLA members like you!

### **Emphasize the benefits of attending.**

Talk about how your organization can benefit from the new ideas, information, connections, and innovations you'll acquire as a result of attending.

- "MLA Annual Conference is the premiere education event for Michigan library professionals."
- The sessions are presented by experts and colleagues who provide current information on challenges and solutions that are impacting Michigan libraries today. Multiple programs running concurrently allow you the flexibility to tailor an education experience that meets the specific needs of your institution.
- "Our entire team will benefit."
- Is your expertise different from your colleagues? Are there overlapping sessions and events that you can tag-team? MLA education and networking opportunities benefit professionals at all levels, and can provide an excellent opportunity to advance your library's performance across the board.
- "I need to learn the ropes."
- If you're new to the library field, this event is the best way for you to make connections that can help you be more effective in your position.

**Mention the added value of an in-person event.**

Your boss not only wants to know what it costs to attend the conference, but also what it's worth. Be sure to emphasize the early-bird registration discount.

- "I can make connections and gain insights from people who understand the exact issues we face."
- MLA is back in person for 2022! Take this opportunity to meet your counter parts from across the state – or meet others in your area that you can stay in touch with throughout the year. With the many networking opportunities offered, you're bound to meet someone interesting that can advise you on an issue, compare notes on a topic or just make a friendly connection!
- "We can solidify our relationship with the companies who are already doing business with us."
- By getting to know your suppliers better, you can build collaborative partnerships that result in enhanced service, more responsive solutions—and bigger savings.

Is money the make-or-break issue? If so, see if you can quantify the value of certain aspects of attending.

- Can you attach a dollar estimate to the savings you negotiate with vendors?
- How about the cost-cutting or program building techniques you learn in the education sessions?
- Can you gather information that can be shared with other staff when you return?

### **Demonstrate how you intend to spend your time**

Put your plan on paper to show your supervisor that your trip to the MLA Annual Conference will be productive.

- Use the Schedule-at-a-Glance to build an agenda that includes keynotes, breakout programs, networking functions and time to visit with vendors. Add it to your work calendar.
- Study the conference programs and choose the ones that apply to your position as well as your library's specific objectives.
- If you purchase products and services for your library, check out the exhibitor list for suppliers that offer what you need. Include the vendors you'd like to visit in the written plan that you show your supervisor. Even if you aren't responsible for purchasing, time is well spent gaining an understanding of new technology and products to keep up on new trends.

### **Follow up after the conference.**

Assure your supervisor that you will give a full report on your conference activities upon your return. Your report should include:

- The sessions you attended, along with your evaluation of each.
- The vendors you visited.
- The products and services you learned about.
- The savings you realized by taking advantage of early bird discounts.
- News and information that you collected through networking, plus specific ideas and strategies you learned at the conference that will help your library better serve patrons in the future.

## **Scholarships and Financial Assistance are Available**

MLA maintains a scholarship fund to assist individuals with defraying costs of attending MLA

educational events. Applicants must be an individual member of MLA to qualify. Organizational members may apply for a scholarship on behalf of any staff member if the person is an individual member of MLA. [Visit our website for more information and submit your application online.](#)

MLA Scholarship Fund applications for Annual Conference 2022 are due September 9.

The Library of Michigan offers the Library Continuing Education Program to provide continuing education stipends to public, academic and school library staff. [Visit the Library of Michigan's website for program details and criteria and to apply.](#)

Any questions about registration or scholarships can be directed to [MLA@milibraries.org](mailto:MLA@milibraries.org).