Why didn’t someone tell me this!

Well, we will. Here is our top 10 list of things we are asked or hear all the time about the AALL conferences in general.

1. **Take time for yourself.** It is possible to fill every waking hour of AALL with committee meetings, programs, exhibit hall breaks and receptions. Make sure you do not burn yourself out. Schedule some breaks in your time. Some attendees take naps in the afternoon, others do a little sight seeing, and others simply take some quiet time in their hotel rooms to read or watch TV. This is not only ok, it is expected.

2. **Bring lots of business cards.** You will use them for everything from entering the daily contests to making sure your new friends have your contact information.

3. **What do I wear?** Proper dress is always a big question and it will depend on what you are doing during AALL. If you are interviewing or presenting at a program, you will want to bring a suit. However, if you are simply attending the different programs you will want to dress more casually. Most attendees dress in business casual attire. For men, this means khakis and a collared shirt or polo shirt. For women, summer skirts or pants and simple tops are acceptable. Bring a jacket or sweater because the convention centers tend to be chilly. At the dinners and dances, lots of people continue with the business casual look but many will dress more formally.

   The most important thing is to look clean, pressed and professional even in casual clothes. You might want to check that your hotel has an ironing board in the room. Remember you may be meeting potential employers and co-workers at every function. First impressions are everything so you don’t want to look like you just rolled out of bed.

   Shoes are another important factor. They must be comfortable. Most people do a lot of walking and standing in lines, especially in the exhibit hall. Check out some of the old issues of the AALL Spectrum magazine and look at the pictures to get a feeling of what is appropriate. Finally, remember AALL is held in July and many times you need to do a fair amount of walking outside. It is not uncommon for attendees to change their clothes over the course of the day. You should bring at least one spare outfit so you have a little wiggle room.

4. **What programs do I go to?** When you signed up for AALL you selected the programs you planned on attending. Months later you may not have the same pull or inclination to attend them. That is OK. There is no need to tell anyone that you have changed your mind, simply go to the ones that interest you in the final program. Also, many times you will have to pick between two great
programs during the same time. If you get to one and you do not like it, quietly
get up and leave. People do it all the time. You have much to do during AALL,
don’t waste your time if you are not getting anything out of a particular program.
If you enter a program already in progress, be as quiet as possible and simply
take an empty seat.

5. Does everyone get an AALL bag? Yes, every attendee gets a bag
when they check in at the registration desk. These bags become important for
many reasons. First, it will give you a convenient place to put all the gifts and
promotional items you will be receiving in the exhibit hall. Second, it also makes
it very easy to spot other attendees around town. Many conversations have
been started at the local bus, metro, or light rail line just because of “the bag”.
You can also follow a line of them to different events. No need for MapQuest
when you see 5 or 6 librarians caring “the bag” down the street.

6. Is the Exhibit Hall important? YES! This is a place to learn all the new
and exciting developments in databases and products. Yes, they are selling
products, but this is a good thing to know what is new out there. Most vendors
focus on firm librarians, but other librarians, especially academic, will benefit from
listening to the song and dance as welL.

The vendors may give away anything including flashlights, books, candy
and pens. Most vendors will have a pile of goodies sitting out for the taking. For
some of the better items, you will need to sit through a lecture/advertisement.
Some of the popular booths, like BNA, Lexis and Westlaw are very crowded.
BNA offers coffee, tea and light snacks which everyone loves. Westlaw and
Lexis offer the biggest prizes. Most attendees bring a partially empty suitcase or
mail back home various items. Finally, the exhibit hall is where you’ll find the
internet café is so you can check your email or use the web. However, be
warned there is usually a line.

7. How can I eat for free? If you want to save some money during AALL
make sure you attend some of the meetings and receptions for the different
groups and sections. Everything from soft drinks to full meals will be provided.
Some events are by invitation only, so make sure you double check in the final
program before making the trip.

The full registration at the conference you will get tickets to a few extra
meal events. The opening Lexis event is generally a big glorious buffet of
deserts. There is afterwards dancing to work off the extra calories you have
consumed. The West party will have a full meal and dancing but beware there
will be long lines. The closing banquet is a sit-down event with speeches, toasts
and dancing afterward.
8. **Make friends with librarians in different fields.** Some of the most rewarding experiences during AALL come from meeting other librarians with different expertise, experiences and backgrounds. Academic librarians will be better librarians if they know what is really happening in the firms or court libraries. On the flip side, the firm and court librarian will better understand what is and what is not being taught in ALR classes. If you work in Public services get to know some Tech Services librarians, if you work in tech services get to know a public services librarian. The more we know about each other and what we do, the better our libraries will work. Lastly try to attend a program or exhibit dealing with a different section of the library.

9. **Is it OK to be a tourist?** Again, yes, this is fine. Many attendees bring family members and turn AALL into a family vacation. Some spend a few extra days before or after the conference and others simply set a little time aside each day to see something in the area. AALL will offer tours and other events, check them out in the program. If you feel you want to do one or two sign up early for two reasons: 1) they sometimes sell out; and 2) if there is no interest it may be canceled.

10. **Talk to anyone and everyone!** The people who do not get as much out of AALL are the ones who never leave their comfort zone. Don’t talk to only your co-workers, branch out. At one event, walk up to a new group and start chatting. You will find you have a lot to chat about. This is one of the best places to network and many employers feel this is a large part of why you attend AALL in the first place. So take advantage and make some new friends, it will make this years and future AALL conferences that much better.