

# Advice for First-Time AIC Annual Meeting Attendees

So you're going to be attending your first AIC Annual Meeting! With 900 in-person attendees, over 200 talks, up to ten concurrent sessions and ~75 posters to look at, this can be an exciting and overwhelming event. To help our first time attendees have the best possible experience, we are providing some tips and advice for navigating the conference.

If you are not very familiar with AIC, one of the core values of AIC is equity and inclusion; we respect and honor all individuals. It is our firm intention that all attendees to the annual meeting should feel welcome, included, valued, and respected, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, profession, or professional experience. We ask that all attendees abide by our [code of conduct](#) (given later on in the document) to ensure that this conference is enjoyed by all, especially you—a first-time attendee!

## Before the conference

- **When should I arrive?** The main conference runs from May 28<sup>th</sup> - May 31<sup>st</sup> but there are pre-session events that you may want to attend. If you are only attending the main conference, we recommend arriving before 1 pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> and departing on June 1 (unless you can take a flight after 8 pm on May 31) in order to ensure you can attend all sessions. The first all-attendee event is the Awards Ceremony, which starts at 4 pm on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Following the Awards Ceremony there is the reception in the exhibit hall. If you have not had the opportunity to see the AIC Exhibit Hall you are in for a treat as this is THE place to meet sales reps, learn about new products and meet up with friends and colleagues.
- **Where should I stay?** The conference hotel is the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis at 1300 Nicollet Mall. The room rates are \$189 plus tax per night and information about them and the registration link are located [here](#). If you are driving, there is parking available at the nearby Loring Parking Ramp for \$30 per night.
- **How do I get to the hotel from Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP)?** The MSP Airport has a [webpage](#) outlining ground transportation options including light rail and public bus services. In addition to taxis (which will average \$39-49), ride share services such as Lyft and Uber are also available. The Metro blue line, which costs \$2 to ride, runs from the airport to a stop on Nicollet mall that is an approximately 15-minute walk to the Hyatt.
- **What does my conference registration include?** Conference registration includes access to the Awards session, all General, Concurrent General, and Specialty Group and Special Interest talks as well as access to the exhibit hall, poster sessions, coffee breaks, and the Exhibit Hall opening.

- There are additional workshops, lunchtime programs, tours, and specialty group receptions that can be added to your registration for an additional cost. You may purchase these add-ons before the conference or by visiting the registration desk at the conference itself if there are still spaces available. Because space is often limited in these events, we do recommend pre-purchasing tickets.
- **Are there funding opportunities to offset travel and registration costs?** AIC offers a variety of different funding opportunities, but most have an application deadline of December 15<sup>th</sup>; so we encourage mark your calendars for next year if you've missed this year's deadline. A full list of scholarships is available [here](#), and a webinar describing the application process and some tips for creating a strong application is [here](#). Some relevant scholarships include:
  - [The George Stout Scholarship](#) supports meeting attendance for students or those who have graduated in the past two years.
  - The [FAIC/Kress Foundation International Speaker Scholarship](#)
- **In order to facilitate my experience, I need specific accommodations; what should I do?** AIC is committed to making the Annual Meeting as accessible as possible.
  - Flexible bathrooms: Hyatt has a single stall Gender Neutral/Family restroom located by the exhibit hall and Nicollet Ballroom. Additionally, for AIC, one of the women's rooms on the 2nd floor will be designated as a gender-neutral safe space.
  - There will be a Quiet Room on the second floor in the Walker Room.
  - There will be a Lactation Room on the second floor.
    - Please see the map in the program booklet or ask one of the AIC staff members at the registration desk if you need help locating these spaces.
  - If there is something that will facilitate your experience such as access to a wheelchair lift-equipped bus for transportation, a seat at the front of the lecture hall, a seat near an electrical outlet for a talk-to-text translator, or gluten-free foods at the meals, please reach out to AIC Annual Meeting Director Ruth Seyler at [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org).
- **Can I bring my partner or a friend to the social events?** Yes! Guests are able to attend all tours and Specialty Group receptions as long as an additional ticket is purchased for them.
- **Plan your schedule in advance.** With up to ten concurrent talks happening at once, there are a plethora of choices to make. The meeting program is available [online](#) and you can create an account on Sched, bookmark talks and other events you're interested in, and then access this to information on the fly! Sched will also email you each day of the conference with a list of your chosen sessions.
  - Read the abstracts for each session and think about what sounds relevant, interesting or just fun. Remember that this meeting is an opportunity for cross-pollination between different disciplines and specialties and we encourage you to explore the abstracts outside of your own specialty.

- As you make your decisions remember that the programming will also be available as a virtual recording that you can watch after the meeting ends. This virtual component is freely accessible with your registration.
- You do not have to attend every session! Sometimes continuing a conversation with a new friend is more important than getting to the next session. And if you're overwhelmed or tired, please take a break.
- **What should I wear/pack?** The general dress code is business casual. Dressing in layers is often wise as temperatures in individual lecture rooms can vary widely; you may appreciate the ability to put on or take off a sweater or jacket. Although not necessary, those who enjoy dressing up may find the receptions a chance to do so. Of course, the RATS drag after party at Roxy's Cabaret, which is right next door to the hotel (tickets available from \$39-75), is also a great excuse to shine!
  - Tours will take place rain or shine, so if you sign up for one, consider bringing comfortable shoes, a coat, and an umbrella.
- **Additional things to pack.** Networking is important, so bring business cards to hand out to new acquaintances. Some way to take notes, be it a notebook, tablet, or computer, is also a must. Please also consider bringing your own water bottle to help reduce waste. While snacks will be provided at coffee breaks, consider bringing some of your favorites, too.

## During the conference

- **Registration desk** is your point of contact for help during the conference. If you need anything, do not hesitate to ask individuals attending the desk, AIC staff members, for help. It's where you will:
  - **Pick up your registration packet.** This will include your name badge; wearing it is necessary for admittance to the sessions. Tickets to all of your workshops and special events will be printed on the back of your badge. Please check to make sure what you pre-registered for has been correctly included.
  - AIC provides ribbons that can be attached to one's name tag to indicate preferred pronouns, please use them if you wish.
- **Types of programming.** The AIC annual meeting features a variety of programming including:
  - **Awards.** Every year AIC presents a [set of awards](#) that recognize members and allied professionals for outstanding and distinguished contributions to the field of conservation. This is a chance to join in the celebration of these individuals.

- **Opening General Session.** This year we're opening the scholarly portion of the conference with a set of five 15-minute talks centered around the conference theme. After a coffee break in the exhibit hall, there will be a panel led by AIC President Suzanne Davis and featuring representatives from agencies that fund conservation work including Bank of America, the Kress Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation and others, who will offer their unique perspectives on the intersection of funding, storytelling, and collaboration. These are single-track sessions where all attendees come together to share and learn as a community.
- **Concurrent General Sessions.** These are a limited set of themed tracks that fit within the overarching meeting theme. They were proposed by individuals and the sessions are moderated by the proposers.
- **Specialty Groups and Network/Interest Sessions.** Each Specialty Group and some networks and committees have the opportunity to run their own tracks centered on their particular subject of interest. These are often 20-minute talks, but individual tracks may include shorter talks, panels or tip sessions.
  - Tips sessions are made up of short talks, often ~ 5 minutes, and provide a way for an individual to share a method, material or technique that they've discovered useful in their own practice. There is usually a separate call for tips presenters.
- **Poster session.** In addition to talks, there are usually around 70 posters every year. The posters will be up during exhibit hall hours – May 28-30 and join us at 3:30 – 4 pm on Friday, May 30, when poster authors are asked to be available for questions from the attendees.
- **Workshops.** Workshops are usually held in the one to two days before and after the regular meeting program. The subject matter varies every year and may include hands-on components. There is an additional fee associated with these.
- **Lunch Sessions.** The lunch programs are widely varied every year. There is usually one Socratic Dialogue session, the purpose of which is not to find a solution to the subject, but instead to provide a safe, open environment for participants to investigate what the essence is behind their own points of view as well as those of others.
- **Tours.** Every city has its own unique culture, cultural heritage sites, and attractions. To enhance your visit to the host city a variety of educational and entertaining tours are offered. There is an additional fee associated with these.
- **Member business meeting.** For the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic we're bringing back an in-person business meeting. This will also be available for virtual

attendees and all members, whether they have registered for the conference or not. This is a perfect opportunity to learn more about AIC as an organization, meet the board members, ask questions you might have, and participate in shaping the future of AIC.

- **Mistakes Session.** Formally titled “A Failure Shared is Not a Failure, Learning From Our Mistakes,” this session offers attendees a chance to share and learn from others’ experiences and can be truly cathartic. We are all human, we all make mistakes, and we are never alone! This is the traditional close of the conference, and is made more festive with snacks and a cash bar.
- **Exhibit hall (AKA the Hub).** This is an opportunity to speak to representatives from a variety of different businesses about their products. Many of the exhibitors are long-time attendees of the conference and can become valued colleagues.
  - Vendors of conservation materials will have sample materials for you to handle and examine.
  - Instrument manufacturers may have demo instruments (i.e. microscopes, x-ray fluorescence spectrometers, IR cameras). Speaking with representatives is a good way to establish a relationship that may lead to temporary loans of instruments or to ‘friendly’ pricing.
  - Publishers will have books for purchase
    - Often the display copy will be available for purchase at a substantial reduction. These are first-come, first-serve, so if you are a bibliophile, visit these booths early!
  - Groups such as NCPTT, Friends of FAIC, Sustainability, and the Health & Safety Committee often have booths with useful information and resources.
- **Networking.** The Annual Meeting isn’t just about hearing new projects, ideas, research, etc., the social aspects are equally as important! This is a great time to meet new colleagues that can lead to friendships, productive collaborations, fellowship opportunities, and the like.
  - **Reach out beforehand.** If there’s a colleague you particularly want to meet, email them before the meeting to see if they’ll be attending and if so, try and set up a coffee date. There will be tables and side spaces in the Exhibit Hall where you can catch up and have a conversation.
  - **Notice Board.** There is always a notice board set up near the registration desk. This is where fellowship and job opportunities will be posted, but you can also post notes to other attendees.

- **Say hello!** If you don't know anyone at the meeting, you have to start somewhere. Many of us are introverted or shy but opening a conversation can be as easy as asking someone if a seat is taken in a lecture hall, or commenting on the coffee break offerings. Then introduce yourself and don't be afraid to mention it's your first time attending.
- **Fill your Dance Card.** For the second year in a row, the Member Engagement Subcommittee will be sponsoring a dance card initiative, which is a great way to meet new people. The dance card is a small booklet that lists a variety of different types of people that you try to meet and get signatures from. If you fill out your dance card, they've arranged a special prize as a reward!
- **Talk to the speakers.** While you might feel too intimidated to ask a question in a session, do take the opportunity to introduce yourself afterwards to speakers to ask questions or to let them know that you liked their presentation. Q&A time after each talk is limited so it's perfectly acceptable to ask questions outside of the lecture, and it's always nice to have your efforts be of interest – they will welcome this interaction!
- **Take advantage of the posters.** The posters are a great way to not only meet the authors of the posters but also to engage with other attendees. Strike up a conversation about the poster with someone else who is reading it.
- **Introduce yourself to the AIC Board and Staff.** The AIC board members and the AIC staff members will be wearing special ribbons on their name tags. Please introduce yourself to them – they are friendly, want to make your acquaintance, can introduce you to other attendees, and are always happy to make sure that you are not left standing awkwardly alone! The board is currently arranging a 'Meet the board' time, so look for upcoming announcements with further details.
- **Smaller events.** The large number of attendees gathering in the exhibit hall can seem overwhelming! Take the opportunity of less populous events such as workshops, tours, lunch programs (particularly the Socratic Dialogue session), and Specialty Group receptions to make new acquaintances. Sitting beside someone on a bus or sharing a ride to a venue is a great chance to make a new friend.
- **ECPN?** Are you an emerging professional? Please reach out to [The Emerging Conservation Professionals Network](#) they are an active community that is incredibly supportive. Their officers would love to meet you, describe what they do and tell you about ways to become involved if you are interested. There are often annual meeting events geared towards helping our younger colleagues that may include:
  - **ECPN happy hour:** This year it's on May 28<sup>th</sup>, from 7:30- 9:30pm at Brit's pub, and is kindly being sponsored by the Getty Conservation Institute.

- **Graduate reunions:** The conservation graduate programs often host a reunion at the annual meeting. Even if you are not an alumnus, you are free to attend. If you are considering applying to the programs, this is an excellent way to meet people who have attended a given program and find out more about it.
  - **Speed Mentoring:** This organized meet and greet provides a way for emerging professionals to meet colleagues who are more established in their field. This year INCAA and CAN! are co-hosting a speed mentoring lunch session on Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - ECPN also has prepared a lot of valuable resources focused on emerging professionals, including a tip sheet on [attending conferences](#), a [YouTube video](#) guide to presenting talks and posters (and a [follow-up commentary](#) on it), and a [PowerPoint presentation checklist](#). A complete summary of these and other helpful resources can be found on the [AIC Wiki page](#).
- **Necesita ayuda?** Individuals fluent in Spanish will be wearing tags that say 'Spanish Speaker' on their name tags. Even if you don't need help, feel free to stop and introduce yourself to them. They are a good way to network with the Spanish speaking community at the meeting.
  - For emerging professionals, ECPN has prepared a [rack card in Spanish](#) describing their network.
- **Hungry?** Having lunch or dinner with a new acquaintance is a great way to cement the connection. There are a lot of nearby restaurants, cafes and coffee bars near the hotel- let Google Maps be your friend.
  - If you forgot to pack something or want to stock up on snacks, there is a Target Grocery 8 minutes away (walking) (900 Nicollet Mall) that also has a CVS pharmacy within it.
- **Code of Conduct** AIC and FAIC are dedicated to providing a positive experience for everyone participating in a conference, workshop, or other event, regardless of age, profession, professional experience, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, and physical appearance. Embracing diversity and promotion of an inclusive environment and accessible opportunities are central to our organizations' [mission and values](#).

We expect event participants to maintain a cordial tone and respectful attitude during any and all exchanges. Listen with an open mind when others are speaking, be respectful of differing viewpoints and experiences, and if you have a dissenting opinion about a topic under discussion, express it in a polite, non-confrontational, and professional manner. Personal attacks or slurs towards other attendees, organizational staff, host and/or venue staff, or anyone connected to the event or venue will not be tolerated, nor will any form of mistreatment, including abusive, harassing, or threatening language or behavior.

We strive for a culture that openly addresses and works collectively to resolve any behavior that may violate the code of conduct. If you feel secure doing so, you may speak up immediately if something makes you or other attendees uncomfortable. If you feel you have experienced or witnessed behavior that violates this code of conduct, please report the incident as soon as possible. Reports can be made at the registration desk, in person to an F/AIC staff member, or by emailing an AIC or FAIC staff member (AIC Annual Meeting: [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org), FAIC events: Deputy Director Tiffani Emig at [temig@culturalheritage.org](mailto:temig@culturalheritage.org)). At all times, we will protect your confidentiality.

If a participant engages in behavior that violates this code of conduct, we may take any action we deem appropriate, which at minimum will involve warning the offender and explaining to them why their behavior is unacceptable and cannot continue, but may include their expulsion from a session, event, or entire meeting with no refund. AIC members, who have agreed to abide by the organization's Code of Ethics, may be reported to the Ethics and Standards Committee to determine if their conduct has violated said code.

## After the conference

- **Business meetings.** In addition to the AIC member business meeting, which will be held onsite this year, all specialty groups also have business meetings, many of which will also be held virtually (check the meeting schedule for exact dates). Please feel free to attend them. This is another opportunity to put faces to names and hear about the state of the group, ongoing efforts, and perhaps even volunteer to help.
- **Follow up.** Capitalize on those new personal connections you made at the meeting. Send short emails to people expressing your enjoyment at meeting them, or following up on their offer to share contacts, publications, potential collaborations, etc.
- **Complete the post-meeting survey.** This will be sent to all attendees by email. Your answers help us understand what you enjoyed and what improvements we can make to have the next year's meeting be even better.
- **How can I present next year?** The call for oral and poster abstract submissions will go out in July with a September deadline. Look for the announcement by email and on the Member Community and Global Conservation Forum (ConsDistList).
- **Help make this guide better!** Was there something you wished that you'd known that was not mentioned in this guide? Please share it with Cory Rogge, AIC Vice President, [crogge@menil.org](mailto:crogge@menil.org) and Ruth Seyler, AIC's Meetings & Advocacy Director, [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org).

## Additional resources



Many other organizations and individuals have created helpful guides. Some of them may resonate more with you or offer additional insights and tips that will help. Enjoy!

[American Historical Association first time attendee guide](#)

[28 tips for attending an archaeological conference](#)

[American Alliance of Museums 10 tips for first-time annual meeting attendees](#)

[Ten simple rules for attending your first conference](#). This contains tips for virtual and in-person conferences and for both first time attendees and their mentors.

[How to make the most of an academic conference](#), Tomas Tobin, Sept. 20, 2021, *Chronicle of Higher Education*. If you are working for an institution, you may have institutional access, if not you may also register as an individual for limited access to articles including this one.