

The Ontario Library Association Super Conference Planning Team Experience

This handout is intended to orient new and experienced Super Conference planners in the development of a well-attended, exciting, entertaining and successful conference. Each Super Conference is unique in its theme, activities, participants and current issues. However, much remains the same from year to year. The program is built brick by brick, time slot by time slot, over many months by some twenty coordinators working with their divisions to identify the needs to be addressed in this time and place.

GOAL OF THE CONFERENCE:

- to provide programs that enhance the professional skills and understanding of conference participants
- to provide a forum for the discussion of significant issues affecting library service now and in the future
- to provide time for conference participants to meet socially and exchange information on an annual basis
- to celebrate achievements in the field of library service
- to provide opportunities for the divisions to hold their Annual General Meetings to discuss matters related to the Association.

THEME OF THE CONFERENCE:

The Conference Planning Committee, in consultation with the OLA Staff and Board, establishes the general theme and “look” of the Conference.

DATE AND LOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE:

The OLA Super Conference is Canada’s largest continuing education event in librarianship and within the Super Conference event is the country’s largest library tradeshow. It is held in Toronto at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in the early part of the year.

ACRONYMS (related to the OLA):

OLA	Ontario Library Association
OPLA	Ontario Public Library Association
OSLA	Ontario School Library Association
OCULA	Ontario College and Universities Library Association
OLBA	Ontario Library Boards Association
OLITA	Ontario Library and Information Technology Association
ABO-Franco	Association des bibliothèques de l’Ontario-Franco

Related Associations:

OHLA	Ontario Health Libraries Association
OALT/ABO	Ontario Association of Library Technicians
FOCAL	Friends of Canadian Libraries

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS OF SUPER CONFERENCE PLANNERS

All Super Conference planners are members of OLA. Most Divisions have two planners: one with experience and one new to the planning process. The minimum commitment is 2 years. The experienced planner usually takes the lead, but works in close collaboration with the new planner, so that the new person gains the experience to take the lead in the second year. Each planner is expected to:

- attend all planning meetings either in person (preferred, if possible) or by teleconference

- submit regular progress reports at the Conference Planning Committee meetings, either verbally or in writing
- work with their Division Council to create a varied and interesting program that reflects the current and ongoing needs of its members. Normally the Super Conference planners will be part of each Council agenda until the program and speakers are finalized,
- seek speakers for the sessions; accept proposals submitted by speakers
- organize the session details with each speaker, including content of session, expenses covered, and honorarium, if there is going to be one
- follow up and communicate with the session speakers ensuring that contracts, photographs, and audio visual requirements are received by OLA by the established deadlines.
- find convenors for all sessions in their Division's program
- ensure the convenors are following through with the speakers and checking AV requirements, obtaining biographical information, and providing key session information
- assist the OLA office by publicizing and talking up the Super Conference within their own divisions
- during the conference, planners ensure that convenors and speakers are in place at their scheduled times; visit the exhibitors and thank them for attending
- ensure that thank you notes are written to all speakers following the conference
- work with OLA Staff to ensure that all expenses are properly documented and that bills and expense records are submitted to the Executive Director for payment by the deadline
- follow up with speakers to ensure they submit their handouts for posting to the Super Conference website

Timelines and workload (a detailed work plan will be provided to planners):

February – May: program development (most intense part of the process for divisional planners)

May – September: speaker confirmation, program approval and proofing

October - January: call for convenors, promotion, a/v logistics

February:

- The first planning meeting is actually held at the current Super Conference!
- Wrap up meeting; 2-3 weeks following Super Conference

March:

- Second planning meeting
- Begin soliciting program ideas

April:

- Third planning meeting

May:

- All proposals submitted

June:

- Speaker contract form posted online
- Fourth planning meeting

July:

- Speaker contracts due
- Planners review draft program and complete details

August:

- OLA office creates draft program
- Planning team proofs the program

September:

- Fifth planning meeting

October:

- OLA office produces and mails the print program and launches online registration.

November:

- Planning team recruits session convenors
- Planning team confirms speaker A/V and room requirements

December:

- Sixth planning meeting
- Planning team ensures all final program changes are submitted.

January:

- Seventh meeting – Conference Centre site visit
- Final program printed
- Super Conference! (end January/early February). Planners monitor and manage each of their sessions as needed.

Expenses:

OLA covers the cost of travel expenses for attendance at planning meetings.

At Super Conference, the Conference planning team is entitled to complementary registration for the conference, accommodations, and travel expenses (for up to two planners per OLA Division).

GLOSSARY (Commonly used terms)

Plenary Speakers:

Plenary speakers are selected by OLA with suggestions from the Conference Planning Committee at large. Their fee may range from \$5,000 - \$20,000. Division planners are not responsible for organizing these speakers as they form part of the OLA Speaker Sessions. OLA policy requires that keynote speakers not be repeated within any five year period.

Spotlight Speaker:

Most divisions have several sessions offered concurrently within each time slot. In past years, each division has been encouraged to have one prominent speaker, a highly regarded member of the profession, designated as a “spotlight speaker.” In other words, the spotlight is on this session alone and the Division does not offer competing sessions during that time slot. The standard fee normally paid to a spotlight speaker is between \$500.00 and \$1,000. If your speaker’s fee is beyond the limit established OLA, ensure that you *consult with Shelagh Paterson prior to confirming their spotlight speakers to ensure that the budget is sufficient to pay for these stars.*

Session Speakers: The OLA Board sets the policy re: remuneration of our session speakers.

- ***External Speaker:***

An external speaker is someone who does not work in libraries, nor earn a living from doing business with libraries. OLA pays selected expenses as outlined in the Speaker Contract Guidelines. External Speakers attend Super Conference at no cost for one day and at greatly reduced rates for two days or full conference. These speakers *may* receive an honorarium ranging up to a maximum of \$200.00. This is a point of discussion between the planners and the speakers.

- **Internal Speaker:**

An internal speaker works in libraries and/or has a vested interest in publicly funded libraries. Administrators and staff in public, school, academic and special libraries, as well as Public Library Trustees, consultants and individuals who earn a livelihood from doing business with libraries are all considered to be internal speakers. Since it is assumed that they would attend the conference as part of their professional development, their travel costs are not paid by OLA. The Speaker Contract Guidelines contains additional information.

Poster Sessions:

Invitations are extended via the OLA listservs and in the preliminary program to interested libraries, librarians, and related professionals to submit a proposal as a Poster Session. There are approximately 32 – 36 sessions approved each year. The poster sessions are exhibited in the Registration Lobby according to a schedule created by the Poster Session Convenor. There are two time slots on each of Thursday and Friday when the exhibits are open. Poster sessions are 45 minutes in length, and they are listed in the final conference program. Poster Session providers do not receive reduced conference fees.

Guests:

OLA provides an opportunity for registered delegates to bring a guest free of charge for one day of the conference. A guest is defined as “a senior administrator outside the library who makes decisions or who influences decisions affecting libraries.” This could be a school principal, Director of Education, senior administrator in a hospital, mayor, reeve, senior faculty member or dean. A special guest registration form is required and the guest must attend and be escorted hosted by his/her librarian.

Convenors:

A convenor is a member of the profession chosen by the Division planners to oversee one session in the program. A checklist of duties has been prepared for convenors and is circulated to planners for distribution closer to the conference date. Convenors’ must be registered delegates (EXPO or regular conference). Their names are listed in the program, but they do *not* have their conference fees reduced

Volunteers:

While everyone who works on the Committee volunteers his/her time, a “volunteer” is considered to be a student who commits to work for a full or half day, at the conference without pay. Volunteers assist with signage, direction, distribution and summary of evaluation forms, and perform a variety of other tasks as needed. In return, volunteers are encouraged to attend one or two sessions during that time at no cost. Volunteers are directed by two Volunteer Coordinators, who are part of the planning team.

Exhibitors:

Exhibitors are an integral part of our conference, as they provide displays and information on library supplies and services. OLA guarantees a certain amount of free time within the conference schedule so that participants will have ample opportunity to visit the exhibits. Exhibitors have the opportunity to submit Exhibitor Proposal Forms, and each year a limited number are selected for the regular program.

Exhibit Hall: (Sometimes referred to as Expo or the Trade Show)

The Exhibit Hall is where our exhibitors display their information and services. Questions relating to the exhibits are referred to Jeff Gilbert.

Speakers' Reception Centre

Speakers are welcome to use the Speakers' Reception Centre **on the day they are speaking**. There is coffee, Internet access, a place to hang coats, and tables/seating for a few quiet moments of preparation. The speakers' badges are located in the Speakers' Centre, and convenors often arrange to meet their speakers in this room. The Speakers' Reception Centre typically closes at 7:00 pm.

OLA Office

At the Super Conference, the OLA Office is set up on-site. Jeff Gilbert is available there from early morning until late afternoon. Other OLA staff is available until the Office closes at 9:30 pm.

Conference Budget:

The overall conference budget is handled by the OLA office staff. Super Conference planners negotiate honoraria and coverage of expenses in accordance with information provided and in conjunction with OLA Executive Director.

Additional Information

Planners receive many pieces of information in the early days of the planning process, all of which contain important and useful information. Planners are always welcome to contact the Super Conference Co-Chairs, OLA Education Director, Liz Kerr, or OLA Executive Director, Shelagh Paterson to discuss any aspect of the process. Planners also work closely with their Division Council to shape their portion of Super Conference.

Have a wonderful experience!

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