



A little planning and research will make it easier to convince your employer to send you to AALL's Annual Meeting. And the rewards of attending the Meeting will more than make up for the effort.

Why I Need to Go to the AALL Annual Meeting this Year

It's that time of year again—time to write a request to attend the AALL Conference

by Lucy Curci-Gonzalez and Christine Graesser
photo by Brant Bender



98th AALL Annual Meeting and Conference

San Antonio, Texas
July 16-20

It's here—that time of year when you must write the “Why I Need to Go to AALL This Year” memo. The memo serves to justify attending the premier educational meeting, trade show, and networking opportunity for law librarians. And while few would call the assignment fun, with a little help, writing that memo can be a lot easier. The following tips provide a template for beginning meeting attendees or a checklist for veteran members.

Lay the Foundation

Do your homework in the fall, a good seven months before the July meeting, when AALL begins to post registration and preliminary program information on AALLNET (www.aallnet.org/events/05_Program_announcement.pdf and www.aallnet.org/events/05_registration_fees.asp).

Begin by budgeting the financial resources and time. If your conference funding comes from your budget, calculate a good total cost estimate, including registration, transportation, and hotel in your annual budget. If funding does not come from your budget, look into AALL, special interest section, and chapter travel grants for financial assistance (www.aallnet.org/committee/grants/grants.asp).

Next, check the meeting dates, make a tentative request for the time off, and determine how your personnel office credits your time out of the office. Consider making hotel reservations as early as possible to assure that you have a place to stay. Reservations can be cancelled should you not be able to attend. Starting in late February you can book your hotel through the AALL housing desk to ensure that you get the conference rate and thus the full value of being an AALL member. Staying at a conference hotel also helps AALL's value in negotiating future Annual Meeting and Conference business.

You Can't Go if You Don't Ask

Just because your employer doesn't send other professionals to conferences, or make a point of listing attendance as a benefit, doesn't mean it's out of the question. After hesitating for a couple of years, the first time one of the authors asked to go to an AALL Annual Meeting, her supervisor said, "Okay." End of discussion.

Don't assume that you can't go, but be prepared to back up your request, even if it's not ultimately necessary. Thinking through the process will help you focus your goals for the meeting and make it a more rewarding experience.

Determine Who Makes Funding Decisions

Find out who in your organization holds the purse strings and approves continuing education. Whether your memo is addressed to a finance, continuing education, or management committee, as well as to the managing partner, legal administrator, chief financial officer, general counsel, chief judge, dean, or board of directors is a function of the governance of your organization.

Are you making a presentation, working on a committee, or serving as a chapter officer? Let the powers-that-be know in

advance that you represent not only your profession, but also your institution at the programs and leadership meetings. There is no harm in letting them know tactfully that AALL members attend meetings from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.—sometimes even later. Indeed, AALL makes no time for golf outings.

Writing the Memo

Keep the memo short and to the point, and write it as early as is practical in your organization. Give even the most supportive library partner concrete examples and practical justification of why attending this Meeting will directly benefit your quality of work for the organization. Good justifications can be found in Betsy Sandison and Hazel Johnson's article, "Information in the New Millennium: Today's Decisions May Limit Tomorrow's," in the November 1998 issue of *AALL Spectrum* (www.aallnet.org/products/pub_sp9811.pdf).

AALL has other great resources to assist you in putting together your lead-in paragraph describing your specific needs for continuing education. "Success in the future requires that we develop our ability to think and act strategically to anticipate change and lead in the face of that change," writes AALL President Victoria Trotta on the Annual Meeting Web page (www.aallnet.org/events). "Effective leadership and strategic thinking require updated knowledge and skills. Our premier educational event, the Annual Meeting, will provide members with the opportunity to learn from outside experts as well as from one another. This gathering is also an opportunity to celebrate our achievements and, of course, to socialize."

In the second paragraph, describe the Meeting. List four or more specific programs directly related to your work that you plan to attend, along with a brief discussion of why they will help you. Also list any SIS, committee, or other AALL-related activities you plan to attend, along with a brief discussion of why they are important. Lastly, describe any vendor-related issues you plan to pursue at the conference, such as billing problems, products you'd like to see improved, or new products to be revealed. Discuss the value of networking, the opportunities to tour other libraries, and other "out of meeting" activities.

Next, state your estimated budget, including registration, hotel, transportation, and meals. (Actually, meals will cost less than you think because there is some sort of event nearly every day where food is provided.) If you plan on sharing a room or staying through a weekend, list that here. Remember that Friday travel may be required because some committees and

Sample Memo

Here is a template for beginning attendees or a checklist for veteran members.

To: Powers That Be
From: You
Re: Attendance at AALL Annual Meeting July 2005
Date: Soon

1. Describe AALL

- Date, time, and place of Annual Meeting you plan to attend.
- AALL is the largest professional organization for law librarians.
- Describe networking opportunities.

2. Describe the Meeting

- List four or more specific programs directly related to your work that you plan to attend, along with a brief discussion of why they will help you. See the program announcement for descriptions of programs (www.aallnet.org/events/05_Program_announcement.pdf).
- Describe vendor issues best dealt with in person at the meeting. Describe new product demonstrations you plan to attend.
- List any SIS, committee, or other AALL-related activities you plan to attend along with a discussion of why they are important.

3. Budget

- List estimated budget, including registration, hotel, transportation, and meals. If you plan on sharing a room or staying through a weekend, list that here. Remember that Friday travel may be required because some committees and workshops meet on Saturday and many SISs hold their business meetings on Sunday.

4. Conclusion

- Respectfully state when you need a decision, reminding employers that late registration will cost more.

workshops meet on Saturday and many SISs hold their business meetings on Sunday.

In your concluding paragraph, respectfully state when you need a decision, reminding employers that late registration will cost more.

With some careful planning and research, writing that memo is a cinch. And the rewards of attending the Annual Meeting more than make up for the effort. ■

Lucy Curci-Gonzalez (lcurci_gonzalez@kenyon.com) is director of library services at Kenyon and Kenyon in New York City. *Christine Graesser* (cgraesser@brownrudnick.com) is a librarian at Brown Rudnick Freed and Gesmer in Hartford.

Resources to Ensure Your Attendance at the AALL Conference

Annual Meeting General Information

www.aallnet.org/events

Annual Meeting Program Announcement

www.aallnet.org/events/05_Program_announcement.pdf

Annual Meeting Registration

www.aallnet.org/events/05_registration_fees.asp

AALL, SIS, and Chapter Grants

www.aallnet.org/committee/grants/grants.asp

“Information in the New Millennium: Today’s Decisions May Limit Tomorrow’s”

by Betsy Sandison and Hazel Johnson, November 1998 *AALL Spectrum*

www.aallnet.org/products/pub_sp9811.pdf