

Conference Basics

for Those Joining for the First Time



Created by
OHA Diversity Committee
October 2021

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Oral History Association's Annual Meeting/Conference! We're so glad you are joining us.

The OHA Diversity Committee designed this information packet to help answer questions you might have if you're attending this or any conference for the first time.

The Diversity Committee encourages participation and representation of, and research related, to diverse groups in the OHA. Its charge in 2021 was to "support the Association's work with regard to diversity and equity within the membership, leadership, annual meetings, and in the field more generally. The committee works independently and collaboratively with other committees to foster inclusivity and promote the meaningful involvement of historically marginalized populations, in

particular those based on race/ethnicity, spiritual beliefs, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. The committee also advances the inclusion of unaffiliated oral history activists and practitioners.”

At the time of creating this packet, the Diversity Committee included: Anna F. Kaplan (co-chair), Daisy Herrera (co-chair), Alphine Jefferson (committee historian), Benji de la Piedra, Francine D. Spang-Willis, Janel Te’o, Nairy AbdElShafy, and Rebecca Swann-Jackson.

QUICK LINKS

OHA Annual Meeting General Information: <https://www.oralhistory.org/annual-meeting/>

OHA 2023 Final Program: <https://oralhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/OHA-Final-Program-2023.pdf>

FAQs

What’s the difference between “annual meeting” and “conference”?

Nothing! Technically the “conference” includes all of the sessions and networking opportunities, and the “annual meeting” refers to the organization’s meetings (including the business meeting and all of the committee meetings, which you’re invited to attend). But people use these terms interchangeably.

What do I need to do or prepare before the conference?

Look through the preliminary program and strategize which sessions and activities you want to attend and if there’s anyone in particular you want to try to meet. If it’s an online/virtual conference, log in to the platform and set up your profile. Also, think about how you might introduce yourself and describe the work you do to new people you’ll meet at the conference.

Are there any suggested readings or pre-conference material it might be helpful for me to go through?

It’s not necessary to read anything before the conference – just come with your curiosity! However, if you’d like to start with a foundational and theoretical understanding of oral history, you might look at Alessandro Portelli’s work, *The Oral History Reader* edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, and *Rethinking Oral History and Tradition* by Nēpia Mahuika. For some of the most current writing on and thoughts about oral history, check out [The Oral History Review](#).

What are the Pre-Conference Workshops?

These are workshops supported by OHA. They are designed and led by professions and are offered as professional development resources. They require registration before the conference begins (usually as part of the process when you register for the conference) and often limit the number of attendees. Although some are recorded, the recordings will not be publicly available; only for those registered for the workshop.

Do I need to attend them?

No, but they are a great way to get additional training and to develop skills in new and different ways. They're also a great opportunity to connect with others before the conference begins!

What are grants and awards?

OHA gives grants to support critical oral history work and awards to recognize outstanding achievement in oral history. All of the recipients are acknowledged at the conference each year. You can learn more [here](#). Everyone is welcome to apply for a grant or award, and to volunteer to serve on the selection committee (if interested, email OHA at oha@oralhistory.org).

How do I decide which sessions to attend?

Pick what looks interesting to you! Read the session descriptions and look up the presenters and their projects to help you find out more about what they might be talking about during their session.

Why are there different types of sessions?

There are a range of session types to help engage everyone in different ways and in different types of conversations. Some will also facilitate making connections and building collaborations between attendees.

Can I attend all conference workshops/ sessions?

Yes, all workshops/sessions are open to the conference attendees! However, due to time constraints sessions overlap with each other if they are scheduled for the same timeframe (ex: 11am-12:30pm). It's a good idea to go through the conference schedule at least a day ahead of time to choose which sessions to attend. You may attend as many as your schedule permits!

Do I need to sign up to the sessions beforehand?

While completing your conference registration you should have seen a list of pre-conference workshops that require advance registration. They are the only ones requiring registration ahead of time since they are not part of the main conference sessions.

Can I attend Committee Meetings and the OHA Business Meeting?

Yes! These are open to everyone and you're encouraged to attend and get involved with the development and path of OHA.

Can I join a Committee?

Yes, OHA is always looking for more volunteers to serve on its Committees, no matter your experience level. If you're interested in joining a Committee, email OHA (oha@oralhistory.org) or contact the [committee's chair\(s\)](#). Please be aware that Committee membership is voluntary and unpaid.

What is the Exhibit Hall?

The Exhibit Hall is where organizations and companies connected to oral history show their products (for example, books and journals, digital programs, and platforms, etc.) or their work. Representatives will be staffing their booths, so strike up a conversation to learn more about what they do and how you might work together. This is also where you can sign up to write book reviews for the *Oral History Review*, the OHA's academic journal.

What opportunities are there for networking during the conference?

Attend panels/discussions and connect with attendees and presenters by asking a question about their presentation. You can also start conversations in the Exhibit Hall, during poster sessions, during coffee breaks and receptions, and/or when people are wandering around!

What opportunities are there to talk to the presenters outside of the Q&A in their sessions?

You may be able to speak to the presenter after their panel, but please be mindful of time as many times sessions are booked back-to-back. Consider sending a private message to or briefly introducing yourself to the presenter and exchanging email addresses so you may have a conversation after the conference. You may also introduce yourself to them if you see them at other times during the conference, including at receptions, gatherings, etc.

Will I be expected to do anything after the conference?

No, but OHA will ask you to complete a post-conference survey to help us improve in future years. You're also invited to attend Committee meetings taking place after the conference. And keep in touch with OHA as it offers grants and fellowship opportunities, and public workshops throughout the year!