

GOEMP CONFERENCE SURVIVAL GUIDE

Welcome to The EMP Conference Guide, brought to you by the Group of Ontario Emerging Museum Professionals (GOEMP)!

Whether you're a student, someone looking to break into the museum sector, or someone just getting your museum career underway, a conference can seem a bit intimidating. It might seem that everyone already knows each other, and has a dazzling career under their belt, but GOEMP is here to assure you otherwise! We have put together this guide, as well as a whole range of activities and initiatives,* to help you make the most of your conference experience. This guide contains everything you'll need to know before, during, and after the conference in order to meet people, build your professional network, and have fun!



Social Media at Conference

There will be lots of activities at conferences to help you engage with others on social media, so be sure to have your smartphone handy!

Most (if not all) conferences have their own unique hashtags. Find out the hashtag, follow along, and join the conversation!

Follow the Association: find their handles, follow/like them, and tag them when appropriate!

The Group of Ontario Emerging Museum Professionals' hashtag is: #GOEMP

Don't forget to join us on Facebook for more Ontario EMP news and events!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/306357482771679/>

Pre-Conference Planning

If you're reading this, you have already registered for the conference, so congrats! Other than actually showing up, you've done everything you need to do to have a pretty good conference.

To have a truly great conference, though, there's just a little more work you might want to put into your planning. This page contains the basics of what you should know and do before arriving.

Choosing Sessions

When you registered for the conference, you likely selected the sessions you were most interested in. You're not bound to those sessions, though, and are free to go to whichever one you would like. If you're still on the fence about which ones to attend, here are some tips for choosing the best sessions for you:

- If there's a topic you're interested in/presenter you admire, go to that session!
- If your co-worker is presenting, go to their session.
- But on the other hand, mix it up a bit! Plan to go to a combination of:
 - Sessions you feel you should go to
 - Sessions that look fun/interesting/different
 - Sessions that are relevant to your own work
 - Sessions outside your comfort zone
- And be flexible! Be ready to throw out your plans if, for example, you hear about how great the speaker at another session is.
- Have a back-up session in mind for each time slot in case the one you wanted to go to fills up.

Dress Code

- Business Casual during the day
- Think comfortable, but professional
- Cocktail attire if there is an Awards Reception/special dinner
- No need to break out the diamonds, but this is your chance to dress up a little!

Packing Suggestions

- Layer-able clothing (room temperatures can be unpredictable)
- Phone/computer/etc. chargers
- Water bottle (water will also be available at the conference)
- Comfortable shoes
- Bandages (for if you ignore the above)
- Pen and note pad
- Business/personal cards

Networking, aka “How to talk to people (and not be intimidated)”

While the presentations form the essential structure of a conference, all the informal networking that goes on between sessions is just as important. Your time at the conference will give you the opportunity to meet both emerging and established museum professionals from all over. While the conference should be all about sharing ideas and making connections, approaching other delegates can be intimidating. However, museum professionals are a friendly bunch, and the following tips should be all you need to make yourself part of the conference conversation.

Networking Tips

- The conference you’re at is likely designed for people who are all interested in museums... You’ve already got something in common with everyone at the conference, so take advantage of that!
- Introduce yourself to people sitting next to you at sessions. You might only have time for a quick hello, but they’ll be a friendly face when you see them during meals or networking breaks.
- Even if you don’t feel confident that you have anything to say, it’s perfectly fine to join a group of people who are talking by introducing yourself and simply listening to the conversation. Asking lots of questions is also a great thing to do! People love to talk about their museums and projects.
- Don’t be afraid to be a “loser” and go meet people. If you come with friends, make sure to find time to mingle on your own. It’s easier to meet new people when you’re not hanging in a group.
- Bring business cards or personal cards with your contact information, and exchange them with people you meet.
- Stay for the Q&A at the end of each presentation. If you don’t get the chance to ask the speaker a question then, find an opportunity to talk to them during a networking break or mealtime.

Tip: Elevator Pitch

When meeting people, you’ll want to have a memorable, quick (elevator ride-length) introduction at the ready. It should include:

- Who you are
- What you do and/or want to do
- Why you’re here

Conversation Starters

"I was at your presentation and wondered/loved/wanted to know more about..."
"You work at X museum? I love it there/want to go/can't wait to see your new exhibit!"
"Which session did you go to this morning/are you planning to attend this afternoon?"*
*This one works best if you do a bit of research ahead of time. Take a quick look at all the sessions, even those you don't plan on attending, and try to come up with a talking point for each session/presenter so that you'll have something to talk about no matter which session the person you're talking to attended.

Self Care, or “What to do when the conference gets a bit overwhelming”

Your conference experience will be full of great stuff, and we hope you'll take advantage of all the learning, networking, and socialising opportunities it has to offer. Still, that's a lot of activity crammed into two or less intense days, and it's perfectly normal to need a break after a while. Here are some tips for avoiding conference burn-out:

- Take breaks! You don't have to fill every time slot with activities.
- Research the Conference and its participants ahead of time. Doing this will mean you'll have less to try to absorb while you're there. You'll likely find the list of their biographies and social media handles on the conference website or program.
- Pick a quiet spot to escape to if you need a moment away from the crowd.



Introverts at Conference:

A Mini Survival Guide

Introverts are “in” these days, which means that even though a conference may seem like the natural worst nightmare of those who don’t particularly love the idea of spending two whole days interacting with strangers, there are plenty of resources out there for surviving and thriving at conferences! *The Quiet Changemaker Project* has some great tips, and below are some of our own:

- Know your limits
- If you know the conference will be a challenge for you, set yourself a goal which seems reasonable to you (i.e. meeting five new people);
- Recognise when you’re getting tired out, and take a break.
- Schedule “recharging” breaks ahead of time.
- Ask people you already know to introduce you to people they know.
- If you’re active on social media, connect with delegates online before the Conference to break the ice.

Extroverts to the Rescue!

If you’re not the slightest bit fazed by the idea of chatting up strangers, then you have a valuable role to play! You’re in the perfect position to make introductions and get conversations going. Do this simple service, and gain your more reserved colleagues’ eternal gratitude...



What to Do During The Conference: Other Useful Things To Know

- Check-In: Arrive early to avoid lines and get yourself familiar with the venue! The process is simple, and there will likely be floor plans posted to show you where to find the check-in tables.
- EXPO: Many conferences have expos/tradeshow components. This is a chance to meet individuals, businesses, and museums providing state-of-the-art products or services to the museum community. From archival and conservation materials, to consultants, to the latest travelling exhibits, the EXPO is a great way to find out what's going on in the museum world.
- AGM: Is your association hosting its AGM in conjunction with their annual conference? This may sound like a great opportunity to sleep in, but aside from the fact that this is where you'll find breakfast, it's a really important part of Conference and a great opportunity to learn more about how your professional association works. As a member, it is your responsibility to actively engage with the association, vote, and stay informed. There are also opportunities to join committees and become more involved in leadership.

Post-Conference Follow-Up: Conference Doesn't End

When You Go Home...

Hopefully by the end of the conference, you'll have made lots of useful connections with others in the field. Here are some suggestions to help make those connections stick:

- Don't give people a chance to forget you... Send a follow-up email the day after the conference to anyone you'd like to continue talking to. Or send a LinkedIn connection request! Also have an updated resume ready to go so you can send it to anyone who asked for one as soon as you get home.
- The occasional mention or link on social media is another great way to stay in touch with people you've met.
- If there was someone who you were disappointed you didn't get a chance to talk to at the conference, send them an email saying so!
- And if you participated in Conference Connections, don't forget to thank your mentor after the conference ends!



Social Media

While part of Conference is about putting away your phones, and making real-life connections with others in the museum sector, you're also strongly encouraged to engage with the conference, and its speakers and delegates through social media! Whether you're writing the occasional Facebook post for your museum's Facebook page, participating in the conference's social media activities, or live-blogging/Tweeting the whole thing, here are some ideas to consider:

PRE-CONFERENCE

- Connect with conference speakers! Check out the bios of speakers, usually made available on conference websites and/or conference programs, and get the Twitter handles of people who will be speaking.
- Connect with other delegates! Use the conference hashtag in the lead-up to the Conference to see who else will be attending, and what they're looking forward to most.
- Connect with other EMPs heading to the conference! Use the hashtag #GOEMP, or join the GOEMP Facebook Group, or the US based National Emerging Museum Professionals Network Facebook Group.

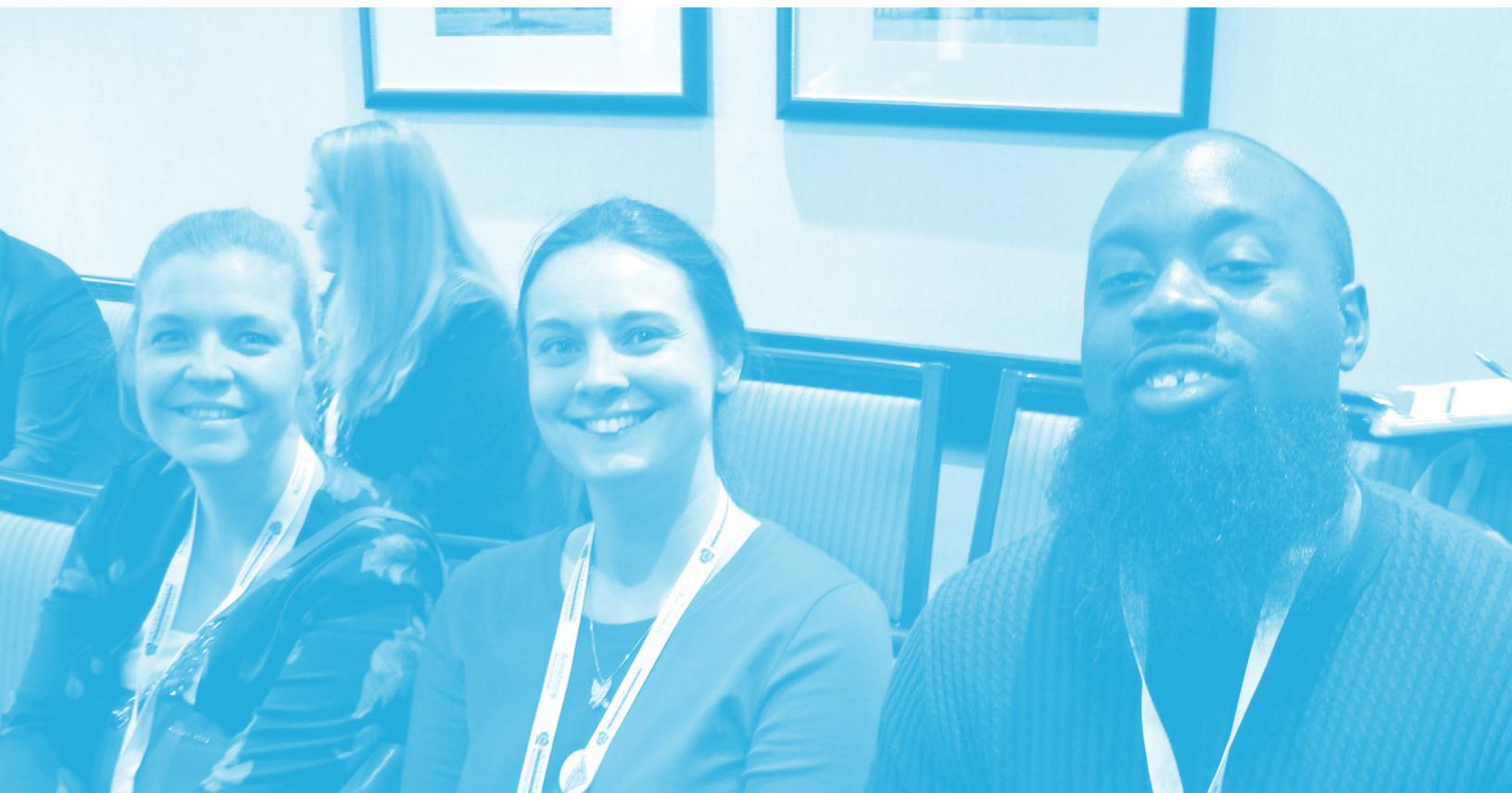


FORM CONNECTIONS

- You won't get to have a face-to-face conversation with everyone at the conference. Connect with those you don't get to talk to by using conference hashtags.
- Reach out to those who couldn't make it to the conference through Twitter, Facebook, or your blog. Share what you've learned with them!
- Read other conference delegates' social media posts to learn about sessions you didn't get to attend... Then use this as an icebreaker if you meet any of the writers in person!

EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

- Include lots of links! Try to include the speaker or institution's website or Twitter handle
- If you can, have Alt Text included with your photos so screen readers of folks with vision difficulties can pick up on what your media is all about
- Be aware of who you'll be reaching—will your posts be read only by other conference-goers? Or outsiders as well? Keep your tone professional either way!
- If live-blogging/Tweeting, be sure to quote accurately
- And make your posts interesting! Include lots of photos and videos



GOEMP is represented by the GOEMP Committee, who act as a voice and a resource for the GOEMP community, providing programming, communications, and resources both digitally and in-person, fostering a supportive, professional network among Ontario's EMPs.

GOEMP started in 2013 as an initiative of the Ontario Museum Association (OMA), and since then, opportunities such as networking events and conference activities have been offered for emerging professionals.

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