

2026 MLA|DLA Conference Program

Submission Guide

The 2026 MLA|DLA Conference will take place in Cambridge, Maryland, May 6-8, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa, and Marina. The MLA|DLA Conference represents the full range of library organizations (academic, school, public, specialized, etc.) and positions within the library and encourages submissions from staff at all levels and organizations.

Submission and Deadlines

Proposals are gathered through an open call and submissions are approved or denied by the MLA|DLA Conference Committee.

Program Proposals will be accepted from August 25 - October 17, 2025.

Conference Theme: "Our Stories, Our Shelves"

Our theme, "Our Stories, Our Shelves" celebrates the power of stories in our communities and the library collections that reflect those communities. We'd love to see how you might weave this theme into your program titles and descriptions, but don't feel limited. We welcome all submissions that contribute to our conference, whether or not they directly tie into the theme.

Proposal Planning

A completed proposal includes the following:

1. Your email address
2. Program title
3. Program description (100 words or less)
4. Three learning objectives
5. Timeliness and demand OR innovation of your topic
6. Main audience for your program
7. Program category
8. Program format
9. Program length
10. Interest in doing a poster session if program isn't selected
11. Presenter(s) Information (limit 3 total speakers per session)
12. Honorarium/Travel Costs Expectations for speakers who are non-Maryland or Delaware library employees

Step by Step Proposal Submission

All proposals are submitted using the [submission form](#). Please complete all required areas at one time as information added on the form may not be saved if you return at another time.

Proposal Creation

The person who fills out the form will become the primary presenter contact and should share any information they filled out to their co-presenters, as needed. All of the information will be used if your proposal is accepted.

(Section 1) Program Information

- **(Q2) Program title and (Q3) description**
 - Feel free to use the theme, “Our Stories, Our Shelves” to get creative with your titles and descriptions.
 - Title: 12 words max. Be descriptive and concise
 - Description: 100 words max. Be clear, concise, and compelling and put the most important information first. Tell attendees how your presentation will be innovative and provide new insights into your topic. Focus your description on outcomes for attendees.
- **(Q4) Learning objectives**
 - You should have three learning objectives that describe the knowledge, skills, or attitudes attendees will gain from your presentation.
 - See the [Learning Objectives Guide](#) on page 4 for more information on creating learning objectives. We also recommend reviewing [Bloom’s Taxonomy of action verbs](#) if you need more ideas.
- **(Q5) Program criteria prompt**
 - You will be asked to briefly describe how your session will present fresh and innovative ideas, information, methods, or resources OR how your session will respond to a topic that is in high demand.
- **(Q6) Main audience**
 - Select the main audience your program is geared toward. This will help the committee funnel proposals to the correct sponsoring groups for review.
 - We recognize that some programs span multiple audiences. If this is the case for your program, you can provide additional information at the end of the form.
- **(Q7) Program category**
 - Select the category that best fits your presentation based on its subject matter. You may select up to three (3) if your topic is cross-functional.
 - If you are unsure, select “Not sure” at the bottom of the list, and the planning committee will later select for best fit.
 - This is for internal purposes to help the committee funnel programs to the appropriate sponsoring groups for review. There will be an opportunity to

tag your program with more specific topics once they are approved and added to Sched, the conference app.

- o A related division or interest group will eventually be responsible for assisting with your program (communicating with you/your group leading up to the conference).

- **(Q8) Program format**

- o The following formats are available for the conference:
 - Panel (theater seating with table/chairs for panelists)
 - Lecture (theater seating with podium)
 - Hands-on workshop (round tables with chairs)
 - Ignite session (a 10-15 minute brief presentation)
 - If you're new to presenting, or you prefer to keep it brief, Ignite Talks could be just the kind of session for you! Ignite Talks are a great opportunity to share experiences or lessons learned, or to entertain your fellow conference attendees. A 10-15 minute ignite session can look like storytelling, a quick how-to, or sharing research and resources – anything you can think of that sparks interest or new conversations.
 - Poster session (a 5-10 minute interactive research showcase in a visual poster format)
 - A poster session is a way to present your work or research in a visual format through informal conversations. Instead of delivering a formal presentation, presenters create a visual display, typically a large poster, summarizing their work or research findings and methods. Attendees at the session walk around, view the posters, and engage in discussions with the presenters.
 - Check out this photo from last year's conference as an example:



- Social event: DO NOT USE unless you are part of the social committee

- **(Q9) Program length**

- o 1 hour
- o 2 hours
- o 3 hours (half-day pre-conference)
- o 6 hours (full-day pre-conference)
- o 10-15 minutes (Ignite session)
- o 5-10 minutes (Poster session)
- o Social event: DO NOT USE unless you are part of the social committee

- **(Q10) Interest in doing a poster session if program isn't selected**

- o Due to high demand for our limited program slots, we sometimes receive more excellent proposals than we can accommodate in the main sessions.
- o We want to accommodate as many valuable sessions as possible! If your program isn't selected as a main session, let us know if you are open to sharing your work as a poster session instead.
- o Selecting "yes" won't affect how we evaluate your initial proposal. All submissions receive the same thorough review process regardless of your poster session preference.

(Sections 2, 5, 8) Presenter(s) Information (limit 3 total speakers per session)

By limiting the number of people on each program we can better expect all presenters to use a mic if they are speaking to ensure sessions are accessible to all attendees.

If you have more than 3 people on your proposal, follow up your submission with an email to the conference director at MD.LA.Conference@gmail.com. Your request will be evaluated and considered, but cannot be guaranteed.

The Primary Presenter is asked for their information first and, when applicable, they will fill out the same information for their co-presenters.

- **(Q11-15) Name, pronouns, organization, and job title**
 - This information is what we will use for the website and conference program, so please be sure to double-check for spelling errors and write this information exactly how you would like it to appear in the program.
- **(Q16) Email address**
 - This is the email address we will use for ALL conference communications, including access to the Sched conference app. It is very important to make sure the email address is spelled correctly and to share an email address you check often.
- **(Q17) Cell phone number**
 - This is for internal use only if we need to get ahold of you the day of the conference.
- **(Q18-19) Maryland or Delaware associations**
 - The form will ask if the presenter is a MLA or DLA member or a Maryland or Delaware library employee. This will help us funnel the information to the appropriate sponsoring groups, as well as help us determine whether the presenter is eligible for an honorarium or travel reimbursement.
- **(Q20) Honorarium, travel reimbursement or lodging requests**
 - This question will ONLY show if the presenter is NOT an MLA or DLA member or a Maryland or Delaware library employee.

(Sections 3, 6, 9) Honorarium/Travel Costs Expectations for speakers who are non-Maryland or Delaware library employees:

Only external speakers (non-Maryland or Delaware library employees) are eligible for honorariums and travel expenses. If this applies to your proposal, you will be asked to provide an estimate of these expenses and note whether you will be requesting lodging. *Note that we have a limited budget and we may not be able to accommodate every request.*

For this section, you will need:

- **(Q21) Speaker fee/honorarium cost**
- **(Q22) Round-trip mileage for each speaker, if driving**
- **(Q23) Whether 1 night, 2 night, or no lodging is requested**
- **(Q24) Estimated costs of other travel expenses (like plane, train, and/or rental car)**

You will then be asked if you have additional presenters. These same questions will be asked for EACH presenter in your program.

(Section 10) Additional Information

If you have additional information or special requests for your program that were not included in other parts of the form, please include them here.

Proposal Accepted

If your proposal has been accepted, you will be notified the week of December 8th.

As there will be some time between submission and being notified of an accepted proposal, there will be one additional opportunity to make slight modifications to title, description, and/or learning objectives after the program has been accepted.

Questions and Concerns

- Email the MLA Office and Conference Director/Co-Chair here:
MD.LA.Conference@gmail.com

Learning Objectives Guide

Learning objectives are concise statements of what the participants will be able to do as a result of the program. Objectives also direct the presenters toward developing and conducting the kind of program that meets the target groups' needs.

Effective objectives:

- Use active verbs (see [Bloom's Taxonomy of action verbs](#))
- Describe observable behavior
- Are written from the participants point of view

Examples of learning objectives:

- Participants will be able to explain the two main differences between the Dewey Decimal and the Library of Congress Classification systems.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate three appropriate behaviors for dealing with angry patrons on the telephone.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate five book repair techniques.

Examples of active phrases to **use** in learning objectives:

write
classify
prepare
define
demonstrate

explain
list
apply
describe

Words to **avoid** in learning objectives, because they do not describe observable behavior:

be aware of
remember
be familiar with
know
appreciate

comprehend
feel
enjoy
understand