

FIRST TIME CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

Welcome!

Each year a number of people come to a BCSLS conference for the first time. If you're a first timer, here are some suggestions to help you have a positive, fabulous experience and appreciate how to discover "Where Rivers and Knowledge Meet".

Before You Go

- For the best conference rates, check the website for Early Bird Deadlines.
- Check out the program, read the "Presentation Teasers". This year you will need to register for Congress first. Then in August when the program is 100% complete, then you will be emailed and asked to register for the sessions that interest you. Try to diversify – learn about something new.
- Register for the Social Events – they are fun and a great way to reward yourself after a day of learning, and an excellent way to meet new people and reconnect with some you may not have seen for a while. You can register for social events during your general congress registration, or if you decide later to add a social event to your schedule, then you may do so. You can do this by going to the website and go to the "social events only" registration button.

The Basics

- Turn your cell phone off or set it to vibrate during the conference sessions.
- Bring business cards (if you have them) and address labels to help enter all of the draws!
- Wear your name tag high so people can see it. Take it off when you leave the conference. It's never a good idea to have strangers calling you by name! ☺
- Upon arrival, orientate yourself. Familiarize yourself with the conference location. Know where the food and coffee is – you'll be surprised how much you'll want it. Take a look at the conference program.
- If you decide to explore the area, know how to get home!

The Sessions

- Try to go to the opening session – the keynote speaker will set the tone for the whole conference. Important introductions and announcements will be made there.
- Pre-select your sessions carefully. Read the "Presentation Teasers" and biographies of presenters to see if a session suits your needs. The ability to switch sessions will be limited and based on seat availability. Try a session ... just for interest sake OR choose a session for the latest information on a particular subject. Your time at this conference is important. Try to get the most out of your investment in time, effort and money.
- If you attend an annual meeting and wish to be heard on an issue, you have a right to speak as long as you are in order. Just ask permission and you will be heard.

The Exhibits

- Don't miss the exhibits!!
- Learn about the latest, greatest products and meet the vendors.
- Gather great gifts.
- Play a game to have a chance at winning a prize.
- As well, many of the meals and snacks will be served in the Exhibit Hall.

Networking

- Learn these 'Ice Breaker Questions'. Even if you're shy, they will often induce even the most recalcitrant and shy person to open up.
 - "Hi – I'm [Name] and I'm from [city/facility]. Where are you from?"
 - "Attend any good sessions?"
 - "Learn something new?"
 - "Is this your first conference?"
 - "What area of the lab do you work in?"
- Come to the conference with specific people or institutions in mind that you'd like to meet. Learn the art of the name tag glance to see what networking opportunities you might find. Don't project false status on people – ALL of the people you'll meet were in your shoes once.
- You're going to be in lines for food, for coffee, etc. at the conference. Network with your line buddies – don't just stand there!
- Leave the office at the office – professional networking does not ALWAYS have to have a 'pure' business purpose. It's great to have professional friends and acquaintances that are outside of your normal 'box'. Turning colleagues into friends is one of the great values of the BCSLS conference.
- In general, assume anyone who's on the BCSLS Executive Board or Congress committee is extra-approachable. They will tend to be people who have volunteered to make BCSLS and the conference a success. Help them by networking with them.
- Invite those people who are looking for a place to sit during breakfast or lunch to join you. Eating with others is a great networking opportunity!
- Make an appearance at the late night socials. It's a great chance to put your feet up, meet some new people, and share a laugh.
- Who you know is as important as what you know!

The Sessions

- Do not feel guilty for taking time for yourself. You are working much longer hours at a conference than 'average' and it is just fine to enjoy yourself!
- Create your own social opportunities with a walk along the river or a drink break at one of the local café's or pubs.
- Attend the Exhibitors Reception – free with a full conference registration or Thursday Registration. Listen to relaxing music as you stroll among the exhibits.
- Friday night: This reception will be unique and fun, be sure to attend.
- Saturday night: The Ainsworth Hot Springs will be a relaxing evening to remember, don't miss it.
- There are many things to keep you busy on Sunday or to just soak up the area.