

The Exhibit Hall at ALA Annual can be overwhelming, especially if it's your first time at an ALA conference. Here are some tips that a former YALSA local arrangements committee came up with for how to handle the exhibits like a pro.

- **Target what you want to see FIRST.** There's so much to see, including all of the publishers, technology and furniture companies, as well as a plethora of other library-related booths. If you need to talk with specific vendors or publishers, be sure to visit these booths first. Take a look at the exhibit hall map and make sure you know where they are located in the hall. Check the [current list of exhibitors](#). Check the [exhibit floor maps](#) before you go to the conference.
- **Give yourself enough time.** Don't wait until the last day to visit the exhibits. First, you may miss out on some fun promotions and second, you may not have enough time to see what you want (or need) to see. After targeting specific vendors, allow some time to peruse other booths. If your schedule allows, come back a second day, when you have a better idea of where everything is located.
- **Talk to other librarians.** When you go to workshops or networking events at the conference, talk to other librarians who have already visited the exhibits. Some will know the inside scoop on where to get the unadvertised Advanced Reader Copies (ARCs) or what booths to go to for specific titles. If it's your first time, it might be a good idea to make a plan to meet up with a seasoned conference-goer librarian who can walk around the hall with you.
- **Network with representatives at the booths.** While most booths are great for browsing, you can also strike up a conversation with the representatives managing the booths. This is especially helpful if you are looking for specific genres or products for your readers or community. It never hurts to ask, so if you don't see something that you are expecting to see, just ask. These representatives know their stock best and may even introduce you to something new. At larger booths, talking with someone will save you a little time and get you to the sections that you are really interested in.
- **Check out the smaller publishers.** Although we often aim to visit the large publishers, this conference is also an excellent opportunity to learn more about small presses and publishing houses. Some are more specialized and might be able to connect you with just the right type of book or series for your library. They may also be more open to suggestions for future titles or subjects. Remember, publishers see this as an opportunity to network with librarians just as much as we see this as an opportunity to network with them. Share your opinions and let them know what you're looking for, and more importantly, what has been difficult to find.
- **Do you REALLY need that?** Yes, some booths have very impressive giveaways. And who can turn down a free book or ARC?! Our advice is to be selective. Ask yourself, "Do I really need that additional poster?" or "Do I have the room for 'X' amount of books in my suitcase?" Find alternatives to carrying around huge amounts of items. Perhaps you can give a publisher your card and have titles mailed to you (it doesn't hurt to ask!) or you can split the load between another librarian from your library. Either way, try to be picky and think before you grab.
- **Don't forget about the POST OFFICE!** If you do happen to grab lots of stuff, then don't forget about the Post Office. Yes, there is a post office located inside the Exhibit Hall, and if you can afford to mail boxes back to your library, take advantage of this

service! Instead of lugging everything back to your hotel room, onto the plane, or to your car, mail it back to your library and avoid the backache. If you do plan on using the post office, don't wait until the last day to mail things out, as it can get especially crowded and frustrating.

- **Have fun, and don't stress.** The Exhibit Hall is a great place to learn about new companies and services, find out about new books and publishers, network with a variety of people [and enjoy a range of events]. It is a place to exchange ideas and tell others about your library and where you work. So have fun, take advantage of this unique opportunity and don't let the size overwhelm you.