

AMERICAN LITERARY TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

Guide for First-time Attendees

Never been to an ALTA conference before? You are welcome here!

This is not your typical, gigantic, stuffy conference. Literary translators are an overwhelmingly nice group of people, and the atmosphere at our annual conference reflects that. Just be yourself, be comfortable, and don't worry.

To put you even more at ease, here are a few pointers and things to expect.

Before the Conference

- Sign up for the **Wayfinders Program** to be paired with an experienced ALTA conference-goer, so you know you'll have a friendly face waiting for you. (Be sure to check the [ALTA website](#) for deadlines.)
- Staying in the **conference hotel** is most convenient, plus it benefits ALTA. There are usually plenty of people looking to share a room—check out [the ALTALK listserv](#) (for members) and [the ALTA Conferences Facebook group](#).
- The full **conference program** is usually available a month before the conference. In the program, you can use the suggested session tracks to find panels and workshops that are most relevant to you/your interests. The tracks are organized according to language or topic, based on tags that session organizers have selected, such as sessions relevant to emerging translators.

At the Conference

- There are many ways to engage at ALTA. In addition to conference sessions, take advantage of the coffee and lunch breaks to meet and chat with people more informally. Most people at the ALTA conference are extremely friendly (including those you think are “big names”), so feel free to introduce yourself and attach to a random group for an offsite activity.
- That being said, be mindful and respectful of people's time. This counts double for editors—they're going to have a lot of people trying to pitch projects to them, so consider just introducing yourself and

having friendly conversations. Asking informed questions about their press is always a good way to go.

- **A few things to definitely attend:** the Opening Reception, the First-time Attendees session, the Fellows and Mentorship Program readings, the Awards Ceremony, and the Keynote Address. Consider stopping by the bookfair to chat directly with editors.

Panels, Workshops, & Readings

- ALTA's conference is **not set up like a typical academic conference**. Panels and workshops are all completely organized by the people who want to present. Individual paper submissions aren't accepted.
- Panelists are encouraged to give interactive presentations and **foster discussions**, rather than read a formal or scholarly paper/essay. In fact, it's a tradition! This means that panels and workshops are designed to be more like conversations between presenters and the audience. Feel free to contribute and be as engaged as you'd like.
- Finally, the **Bilingual Readings** are highly recommended. Choose based on what languages you work with, or someone you've always wanted to meet, or just pick at random.

Offsite Events

- Some **offsite events** are organized by ALTA each year.
- Others are "**Community Events**" put together by conference attendees. If ALTA receives their information early enough, these events are listed in the conference program book. However, you can learn about events that come together closer to the conference by checking the calendar on ALTA's website.

Caucuses

- Two ALTA-supported independent caucuses typically meet during the conference: the **BIPOC Literary Translators Caucus** and the **Queer Translation Caucus** (QT). The BIPOC caucus often hosts an offsite reading as well.

And the fabled ALTA friendliness starts now! If you have questions, feel free to email info@literarytranslators.org. Check out the ALTA Conferences Facebook page, as well as ALTA's [Instagram](#) and [Bluesky](#) accounts.