Model 1: [Adapted from ACRL and Stanford Sources]

Preparing Before the Conference

Provide Brief Reading Material

Personal Invites to Ensure Diverse Group

Prepare "Plan Bs" for Possible Lulls in Conversation

Setting the Agenda

The most important thing to do at the beginning of the session is to establish your objectives for the discussion.

- Do you want participants to apply newly learned skills, mull over new subject matter, learn to analyze arguments critically, practice synthesizing conflicting views, or relate material to their own lives? These goals are not mutually exclusive, but they require different types of direction.
- Share your planning decisions with your participants. Let them know what your focus is, and why it is important; also invite participants to contribute suggestions for discussion topics and formats.
- Decide whether to be highly directive—that is, to ask most of the questions yourself and intervene to prevent digressions— or to be relatively nondirective and let the participants' interests and questions determine what is covered.
- Whichever style you choose, be consistent. If participants are responsible for setting the agenda or acknowledging the next speaker, do not suddenly take over the section if it doesn't go in the direction you would like. Similarly, if you normally decide what is said next, don't be surprised if participants don't follow up on one another's comments.
- Do not let the discussion wander. Bringing in specific quotes, problems, or other samples of the assigned material can ensure that even underprepared participants will have something to talk about.
- Distributing preliminary conversation questions in advance demonstrates your own interest and helps focus their preparation. Consider asking participants to email you their thoughts to one question. This will also give you insight into the participants' thoughts while you plan the discussion.

- Use discussion to help participants link concepts to their own lives; to encourage participants to evaluate material critically; and to address topics that are open-ended, have no clear resolution, and/or can be effectively addressed through multiple approaches.
- Provide participants opportunities to "warm up" through brief (one- to five-minute) in-conference writing exercises on the topic, three- to five-person mini-discussions, or reading prior to the session that focuses participants on the topic(s) to be covered.

- Consider using a variety of question types such as exploratory, relational, cause and effect, diagnostic, action, and hypothetical.

Conversation Design Follows Objectives

- Carefully consider your objectives for a discussion. Do you want participants to apply newly learned skills, mull over new subject matter, learn to analyze arguments critically, practice synthesizing conflicting views, or relate material to their own lives? These goals are not mutually exclusive, but they require different types of direction.
- As the facilitator, you will determine the design of the conversation that you prefer. For example, you may want to plan for one large group brainstorming, small group discussions focused on the same questions, small group discussions focused on different questions, etc. Whatever the format you choose for the conversation, we believe these additional tips will be helpful for running the discussion.

Tips for Running the In-Conference Conversation

Asking Questions that Elicit Meaningful Conversation
- How do we ask questions that encourage participants to bring their insight, wisdom, and experience to bear on challenging issues?
- A good question is both answerable and challenging. It will inspire analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and critical thinking. Below are several types of questions and suggestions about when to use which kind. You'll also find useful information on how to manage group dynamics.
- [INSERT TIPS]

Beginning
- Share ground rules for the discussion to ensure the group stays focused on the topic, encourages participation from many people, and everyone understands how the discussion forum is designed.
- Use the introduction period to briefly frame the issues. Practice your introductory remarks beforehand. Make sure you leave the bulk of time for discussion.
- Have a few questions prepared to start the discussion.
- Let participants introduce themselves and describe their intentions for the conversation.

Process of Facilitation
- Give people time to think about the question and respond. Count to ten slowly before intervening or rephrasing the question.
- To generate discussion from someone's comments, try rephrasing it as a question, for example: "What experiences has anyone else had with (X topic or concept)?"
- Summarize frequently and keep the group focused on the discussion forum topic.

- If someone is dominating the discussion, ask if there are other points to be made from the rest of the group. It's all right to say that you'd like to hear from others if that person jumps in again.
- Use the final five minutes to summarize points from the discussion, thank the participants, and let them know that a final digest of the discussion will be posted on [...] web site.

Planning Assistance for Facilitator
- Ensure that someone is keeping track of the time for various segments of the discussion forum. Let the group know when the discussion is reaching the end of its time limit.
- Members of the [...] can assist with taking notes and recording ideas, or you may want to ask attendees to help. If you need additional facilitators for the discussion, you are responsible for recruiting a sufficient number.

- Consider having co-sponsors or co-convenors who are responsible for organizing the conversation.

- If desired, have at least one person assist who has experience facilitating group conversations.

Entire Group Responsible for Conversation
- Use the whole group to contribute to answers to questions. The facilitator(s) is not intended to be the only expert(s).
- Have fun! This is a topic you're interested in and the people who attend are there to discuss — you're not responsible for carrying the whole weight of the discussion.

Model 2: Adapted from ACRL's Tips for Discussion Group Conveners

(https://acrl.ala.org/IS/is-committees-2/committees-task-forces/discussion-group-steering/tips/)

This model includes pre-conference online posting of initial two to three-page discussion digest, tips for in-conference discussion, and post-conference posting of finalized digest.

Expectations for Conversation Group Facilitators

1. Draft an initial two-page to three-page, double spaced Current Issue Digest to be posted [online] at least two weeks before the conference and distributed to attendees at the conversation itself.

Note that the digest needs to be submitted to the Committee for approval before posting. Allow at least a week for that. The digest should follow the format described below. You will note that most of the information going into this initial digest is the same information that was to be included in the proposal.

- Title of Discussion
- Date, Time, Location of Discussion
- Names of Facilitators
- Clear description of the discussion topic's issue.
- Rationale for convening a discussion on this topic now.
- Importance of the topic for theological libraries and/or religion collections.
- Some of the questions that will form the basis for the conversation.
- Very short recommended reading list to prepare attendees for the conversation. Try to include links or DOIs whenever possible and at least something that will be accessible to everyone.

2. Facilitate a "Current Issue Conversation Group" at the ATLA Conference.

- Rooms for discussion groups will have [...]
- We can make available to you: [...]

As the facilitator, you will determine the design of the discussion forum that you prefer. For example, you may want to plan for one large group brainstorming, small group discussions focused on the same questions, small group discussions focused on different questions, etc. Whatever the format you choose for the conversation, we believe these additional tips will be helpful for running the discussion:

- Share ground rules for the discussion to ensure the group stays focused on the topic, encourages participation from many people, and everyone understands how the discussion forum is designed.
- Use the introduction period to briefly frame the issues.
- Have a few questions prepared to start the discussion.

- Give people time to think about the question and respond. Count to ten slowly before intervening or rephrasing the question.
- To generate discussion from someone's comments, try rephrasing as a question, for example: "What experiences has anyone else had with (X topic or concept)?"
- Use the whole group to contribute to answers to questions. The facilitators are not intended to be the only experts.
- If someone is dominating the discussion, ask if there are other points to be made from the rest of the group. It's all right to say that you'd like to hear from others if that person jumps in again.
- Summarize frequently and keep the group focused on the discussion forum topic.
- Ensure that someone is keeping track of the time for various segments of the discussion forum. Let the group know when the discussion is reaching the end of its time limit.
- Use the final five minutes to summarize points from the discussion, thank the participants, and let them know that a final digest of the discussion will be posted on [...] web site.
- Practice your introductory remarks beforehand. Make sure you leave the bulk of time for discussion.
- Have fun! This is a topic you're interested in and the people who attend are there to discuss — you're not responsible for carrying the whole weight of the discussion.
- Members of the [...] can assist with taking notes and recording ideas, or you may want to ask attendees to help. If you need additional facilitators for the discussion, you are responsible for recruiting a sufficient number.

3. Revise and submit a final Current Issue Digest to be posted on the IS web site within one month of the discussion.

- This final version should add a summary of what was learned from the conversation.
- This is an opportunity to add additional readings, websites, etc., perhaps suggested during the discussion.
- You will need to submit the revised Digest to the [...] for approval before it will be posted.