

MLA DISCLOSURE POLICY AND VENDOR GUIDELINES

Disclosure Policy: The Medical Library Association requires that all speakers at MLA national and chapter sponsored programs and publications include a slide or statement at the beginning of their presentations or publications disclosing any relationship with companies, associations, etc., related to their topics.

The disclosure policy is designed to protect all parties involved from any potential conflict of interest that may arise when working or serving in any association programs and services. It is not to prevent people with a significant financial or other relationships from serving in official capacities, writing, or presenting, but to provide decision-makers and participants with the information to form their own judgments in regard to exposition or conclusions reached in presentations, courses, publications, etc.

Copies of the disclosure statement are sent out to new leaders along with appointment/election information. The speaker disclosure information form will be sent along with speaker contracts as well as to Sections, etc. It will be posted on MLANET.

Relationships with Vendors and Vendors Gifts

Background: In the course of MLA's review of its Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest Policies, and business practices, there was considerable discussion concerning the various activities that vendors engage in during the annual meeting. MLA recognizes that the annual meeting is an important venue for vendors to share information about new products, to engage in educational activities concerning their products, to build the relationships with current and potential customers, and to show their appreciation to their customers.

Institutions of all sorts, but particularly educational and health care entities, have been paying attention to conflicts of interest and to the appropriate relationships between employees and those companies with which those entities do business. In some cases, institutional policies make it impossible for librarians to participate in activities (e.g., meals) that in the past were considered to be quite the norm. In that spirit we suggest the following "best practice" guidelines for vendors to follow when planning their activities during the annual meeting. The Board approved the following statement at the February, 2010 board meeting.

Statement on Relationships with Vendors and Vendor Gifts

1. Sponsorship of specific official activities at the MLA meetings are always welcome and greatly appreciated, while sponsorships of branded items are discouraged. Sponsors of official activities (programs, breaks, etc.) are acknowledged in numerous ways throughout the meeting.
2. Meal events sponsored by vendors which are not an official activity are allowed but cannot be scheduled in conflict with official MLA programming. Organizers should realize that increasingly strict institutional policies will prevent some librarians from participating or accepting giveaways that might accompany such events.
3. MLA encourages vendor sponsorship of educational activities rather than social activities since, increasingly, institutional policies prohibit participation in vendor sponsored social events.

Studies show that vendor gifts and promotions can influence behavior. Librarians are committed to unbiased, informed decision-making and should recognize that gifts, including meals, may create a conflict of interest.

The Medical Library Association recognizes that fostering productive business relationships is an important part of the annual meeting activities. As the norms governing such relationships continue to shift, MLA looks forward to the continuing engagement of all stakeholders in establishing best practices that can effectively balance the various interests of all stakeholders.