



## URMA Conference

### Call for Proposals

Could you see your institution hosting URMA 2022? URMA is now taking proposals to host our annual conference!

Why host an URMA conference? URMA is the world's only organization dedicated to the success of professionals who communicate about university and institutional research. Organizing the URMA conference means hosting communications experts from top research institutions – giving you the opportunity to highlight your university or institution and its research profile.

URMA conferences are truly special. Few conferences offer the ability to connect with so many professionals who experience the same challenges and the same joys inherent in communicating about research at an institution. This is your chance to bring your creativity and passion to your colleagues by hosting URMA 2022.

Hosting the URMA conference enables you to develop deeper relationships with other research institutions in your region. We encourage you to invite communicators from your own institution as well as nearby institutions. Building these relationships is beneficial when your institutions collaborate on research projects.

As host, you'll develop the conference agenda in consultation with the URMA board and in response to our membership survey. You may feature your institution's faculty and staff as well as bring renowned outside journalists, communications professionals and other speakers to your campus. You can show off your institution's state-of-the-art research facilities.

URMA conferences run typically from Wed-Fri with an optional Tuesday excursion to a nearby research facility or institution for a tour and conversation with the facility's communicators. While at the University of Houston, we visited the NASA Johnson Space Flight Center. At Brown University, we traveled to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. At the University of Tennessee, we toured nearby Oak Ridge National Laboratory. We've also been to museums, aquariums, river tours – anywhere that people communicate about research.

Typical attendance for an URMA conference is about 50 people. The host contributes an amount ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000, depending on variables such as speakers' fees and catering and transportation costs. URMA typically contributes to some costs. URMA sets the cost of the conference (typically \$250-\$300 per member) and collects registrations.

The host is responsible for creating the agenda, marketing the conference, selecting the hotel and venues, arranging transportation to research facilities and tours, and hosting a reception. Often the reception begins with a welcome by the institution's top research officer, such as the Vice President of Research.

The URMA Board is accepting proposals through **July 1**. Send proposals to [board@urma.org](mailto:board@urma.org) or to any board member! See the list here: <https://urma.org/about>. Or reach out! We are happy to answer questions.

For more information about what it takes to host an URMA conference, see the attached document, or contact a board member at [board@urma.org](mailto:board@urma.org) (or directly via email).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the benefits of hosting URMA?

Hosting the URMA conference raises the profile of your institution by increasing awareness among the research communications offices of institutions in this country and abroad as well as by bringing journalists, professors, communications professionals, and other speakers to your campus. Previous meetings have resulted in collaborations between institutions and even in an occasional national story about the institution. The meeting can also serve as great professional development for on-campus staff members who might not normally be able to attend such a meeting.

### What kind of financial investment does hosting URMA entail?

That varies from institution to institution. It can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$20,000 depending upon what your institution wants to do and hopes to get out of the conference. The money goes to such things as a welcome reception, lunches with researchers and speaker fees and travel. URMA pays for parts of the conference, including the hospitality suite.

### How do we get financial support from our institution?

That varies widely. Some institutions use cost sharing among units to spread out the costs. Other institutions get the funds from one particular unit.

### What kind of logistical support do we need at our institution?

The conference hosts usually arrange for the hotel and for the venues for the talks. They also arrange any campus tours that might take place. Most institutions also host a reception, and some have had optional field trips for the members who can arrive on Tuesday morning or Monday evening. Conference hosts also are responsible for the program.

### What kind of help can we get from URMA?

Once we know who the conference hosts will be, they are added to the URMA board listserv, where they have immediate access to the president, treasurer, secretary and several people who have hosted the conference. The URMA board has previous budgets and other types of information that can be shared to help people move forward in hosting the conference. The URMA board and URMA members can help with the program and can set up a conference committee made of URMA board members and regular members to assist with deciding on topics and organizing speakers and panels. URMA helps financially with the conference through conference registration fees and membership dues.

### How many people usually come?

The conference usually has somewhere between 30 and 60 people. It varies from year to year with locations and travel budgets. The URMA board can give you a good idea of an approximate number based on these factors at your institution.

### What should the program look like?

That varies from institution to institution. Typically, the program runs Tuesday-Friday with Tuesday being an optional educational excursion to an institution or museum that conducts public outreach. The goal of the excursion is to meet and learn from another institution's communicators, tour the institution, and provide a relaxed networking environment for URMA members. Past excursions include Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, NASA Johnson Space Center, and Aquarium Atlanta.

The conference starts in earnest on Wednesday morning. A typical program might be talks on Wednesday morning and a campus tour Wednesday afternoon, talks all day Thursday, and end with talks Friday morning and the URMA business meeting wrapping up by noon.

- Some institutions host a reception Wednesday night.
- Some institutions have hosted lunches with researchers in addition to a campus tour.
- Some institutions have co-hosted and had campus tours at one place on Wednesday and the other place Thursday. You are welcome to look at past programs at [urma.org](http://urma.org) while thinking about how to make the URMA conference your own.

## How do we find speakers?

Again, this varies from institution to institution. The main thing to keep in mind is that you want speakers and topics that will make your meeting irresistible to the membership so you will have a good crowd. We can help you to conduct a survey of members to find out what topics are of interest. Here are a few ideas for where to find speakers:

- Your faculty: if you have anyone who can talk about any aspect of magazines, from writing to editing to photography to design.
- Your alumni: see above.
- Your staff: see above.
- URMAans: this might be people who have done something new or unusual with their magazines, or who have a particular expertise in one area.
- Journalists: You may be able to tap local talent or bring someone in from a regional or national publication based in your area.
- Communications professionals, be they web communicators, independent designers or photographers, editors, etc.

## What is the timeline for the things that need to happen if we host URMA?

This can vary widely by institution. Some general guidelines include:

- August: Secure campus support.
- September: Have dates and location picked. Announce to membership. Reserve hotel and conference rooms at this time.
- October: Start thinking about time slots, possible speakers, a reception, and a possible field trip.
- November: Discuss potential conference line-up with board. Get feedback from membership. • January: Begin lining up speakers.
- Mid-February to March: Have a preliminary program ready for the web. Open hotel reservations and send information to membership.
- April to May: Keep list of registrants. Finalize program and speakers. Make nametags and conference materials as desired.
- May to June: Host conference.

## What if we have more questions?

That's easy! Just contact a board member or ask a question on the listserv.