VRA Travel Award Rules & Guidelines

Eligibility

- If you have never received a VRA Travel Award, you are eligible to apply for either a full award or a top-up (partial) award.
- If you have received a travel award from a local chapter during previous years, but not from the VRA Travel Awards program, you are eligible to apply for either a full award or a top-up award.
- If you received a full ($600-$1000) Travel Award during the previous three years (2017-2019), you are ineligible to apply for a full award.
  - Example: If you were awarded a full award in 2018 (for the 2019 conference), you wouldn’t be eligible to apply for a full award again until the 2021 application period (for attendance at the 2022 conference).
  - You can apply for a top-up award if you received a full award during the past three years (2017-2019).
- If you received a Top-up ($300 or less) award last year, you are not eligible to receive another Top-up award this year.
  - Example: If you were awarded a Top-up award for the 2019 Conference, you wouldn’t be eligible to apply for another Top-up award until the 2021 application period (for the 2022 conference).
  - You can apply for a full award if you received a Top-up award in the most recent year (2019).
- Travel awards are available to non-members (including international applicants), with the stipulation that awardees must become members of VRA prior to their Conference registration. Here’s a link to the VRA membership page: http://www.vraweb.org/membership/
  Please note that Travel Awards may not be used for payment of VRA membership fees.

See the list of past award winners if you are unsure of your eligibility:

Conditions Upon Receipt of a VRA Travel Award

- Award checks will be presented at a designated event during the conference; you must attend this event to receive the award. You will not be able to use the amount for travel and other expenses in advance of the conference.
- The full amount of the award must be used towards your attendance at the 2020 conference. Award funds cannot be carried over to next year. Any funds not spent during the designated conference year must be returned to the Association.
- After the conference each recipient may be required to provide proof of all expenditures by submitting receipts to the VRA Treasurer electronically, by making a scan of receipts. Please submit these receipts as one document if possible, i.e. PDF.
- Award recipients will be encouraged to give back to the VRA either during or after the conference by completing one of the following activities:
• Assisting at the conference registration desk during the conference.
• Participating in a Conference session as a listed speaker or moderator.
• Writing an article for inclusion on the VRA website or in the VRA Bulletin.
• Facilitating a meeting or other conference event.

**Award monies may be used for:**
• Conference registration (including workshop fees)
• Transportation (includes airfare, ground transportation to and from the airport, car expenses, train travel, etc.)
• Hotel accommodations (note that if you split a room, only 50% of accommodation costs may be covered by your travel award)
  
  *We strongly encourage you to stay at the conference hotel. Not only will this increase opportunities to meet with colleagues, but it will also help the VRA meet its hotel contract obligations.*
• Meals (starting from the time you leave for the conference until your return; includes snacks, coffee, etc.)

**Unacceptable uses of award money include, but are not limited to:**
• Visual Resources Association and regional Chapter membership dues
• Transportation and registration fees for optional outings (e.g. tours)
• Alcohol
• Exceptionally expensive dining costs
• Personal expenses charged to hotel room (i.e. dry cleaning, room service)
• Donations to VRA or any other affiliated organizations
• Supplies needed for conference presentations or posters
• Other optional expenses (souvenirs, books, entrance fees, unusually high transportation costs, etc.)
• Any costs accrued on days before travel to, or after travel from, the conference destination
  
  *If you are unsure about the allowable use of funds, please contact the Chair of the Travel Awards Committee.*

**Tips for Completing Your Application**

We can’t wait to read your application! We find that successful applications have a few specific qualities, and here are some of the most important things to keep in mind:
• Please be as precise as you can with your answers.
• Think about your budget! Provide a thorough breakdown of your proposed travel costs and explain the rationale (example: “Round-trip flight from San Francisco to BWI: $420 on United Airlines, as determined through an expedia.com search.”)
  
  *When considering transportation, shop around! Check prices and availability on several popular travel sites to get the lowest fare (i.e., expedia.com, travelocity.com, orbitz.com, priceline.com, etc.).*
• Be willing to take that red-eye or overnight flight, or use Amtrak.
• Another note on travel costs: if your institution requires you to use a specific airline, or has set a corporate airfare rate, please note this in the section for additional budget comments.
  Note on travel within the conference city: a shuttle to/from the airport is typically a less expensive option than a taxi. A round-trip shuttle ticket may be less expensive than two one-way fares. Shared taxis might be an option. Public transportation, where available, is another way to save money!
• To save on lodging costs, share a room! Lodging can be your biggest conference expense if you’re not flexible about cost-reducing strategies.
  • If you don’t have a roommate in mind, put out a call on VRA-L once conference registration information is available to the membership. This is a great way to meet professional colleagues AND cut your accommodation costs in half.
  • If you’re sharing a room, only include your portion of the cost in your budget and note that you’ll be sharing.
• When budgeting for meals, check the conference program first for hosted breakfasts or evening events. These usually have generous food offerings. Be realistic and thoughtful about what you’ll actually need to spend on meals, and check the per diem rate for the conference city at www.gsa.gov/perdiem

● Be as specific and thorough as possible in your Conference Goals Statement.
  • Aim for about 500 words or less.
  • Tell the Committee how certain workshops, sessions, and roundtables will directly benefit the work that you do in your collection or academic program.
  • Avoid generalizations such as “I will get to talk with colleagues about their digitization projects” or “I hope to learn about copyright law.” We want to know the specifics of why and how these conference opportunities will benefit your career.
  • Be brave! **Participate** in the Conference as a presenter, moderator or volunteer. **Connect** with your VRA colleagues. **Attend and participate** in regional chapter meetings, or consider **joining** a committee and attending its meeting. And be sure to note your intended participation in your Conference Goals Statement.
  • Think about how you will give back to VRA in advance, and mention this in your Conference Goals Statement. Some ways to give back include:
    o Assisting at the conference registration desk during the conference.
    o Writing an article for inclusion on the VRA website or in the **VRA Bulletin**.
    o Facilitating a meeting or other conference event.

● If you haven’t already done so, join the VRA listserv! ([http://vraweb.org/membership/vra-l-guidelines/](http://vraweb.org/membership/vra-l-guidelines/))
  o Room shares, shuttle/cab shares, and other conference information is posted often to the listserv. Plus it’s a great place to learn more about VRA, the annual conference, and your colleagues. We look forward to hearing from you!

*Updated October 2020.*