

GUIDE FOR ULA PROGRAM SPEAKERS

The Utah Library Association offers its members several opportunities throughout the year to plan and present programs: at the annual conference; the fall workshop; Great Issues Forum; and through individual sessions planned by sections, committees, and/or roundtables. In an effort to improve the quality of ULA programs and the coordination of individual program planners, committees, conference planners, and the ULA Program Board, we have developed this general list of duties/expectations for all ULA program planners and speakers. Some duties apply only to the annual conference, other apply to all planned programs. This is a work in progress, so please address any comments or additions to the ULA Program Board.

People

ULA Program Board is responsible for the overall coordination of programs. Additional responsibilities include manage program budget; assist ULA units; communicate information; represent ULA membership; support ULA officers and conference committee; encourage participation and networking.

Program planner is anyone who is planning any type of ULA program. This may be a chair of a ULA roundtable, section, or a committee chair or their designee. It may be a representative of any ULA unit or an individual ULA member. On conference program submission forms, the program planner is the **sponsor**.

Speaker is anyone who is presenting a program for ULA. This may be an outside contractor or a ULA member.

Guidelines for Program Speakers

Selecting a Topic

Topics range from the practical and instructional to the whimsical and conceptual. ULA encourages programs to be inclusive of all of the library types. While not true of all topics, most presentations have applications in more than one library type.

There are a number of ways to find people to help you if you don't want to tackle a topic all by yourself or you want to lead a session with panelists. One way is to approach other people you have seen or heard speak on the topic. You can also post a message through ULA's e-mail list about your interest in a topic and desire to find co-presenters or panelists.

Your Presentation

Concentrate on the main points you want to make. We recommend you answer the following questions, and consider the following important points, when putting your presentation together.

- ❖ What is the topic I wish to present/problem I am solving? Are there any previous precedents/solutions? If so, briefly summarize them.
- ❖ How did I solve the problem? How good is the solution?

- ❖ What is the relationship of this work to other work in the field?
- ❖ What are the unanswered questions or problems which still remain to be solved in this area? (i.e., your recommendations for future work)

Keep a logical thread running through your presentation which relates each part to the theme and helps the audience to comprehend the whole.

If you answer these questions in your presentation and stick to the main points of what you have done, we can guarantee the audience will be interested. This is what everyone wants.

Be sensitive to the diversity of types of libraries in the audience (public, academic, school, special, law, medical). When there are differences, more than one library type's point of view should be presented. You can do this by including co-presenters or panelists from other library types, or include examples of your topic from other libraries.

Start your presentation by outlining the structure of the talk, i.e. the titles of your main sections. Then summarize the main points of your talk in the conclusions at the end. The old guideline for preachers and politicians is still true for conference and technical presentations:

1. Tell the audience what you are going to tell them
2. Tell them
3. Tell them what you've told them

Remember: a short, effective presentation concentrating on the main points of your work makes a more lasting impact on the audience than a longer, diffuse one.

Program Materials ("handouts")

Having written program materials is almost always a good idea, especially if you wish to draw attention to textual material, bibliography, or visual details during your presentation.

Tips:

- ❖ You should always include your name, affiliation (and/or address) and the title and session number of your talk.
- ❖ Keep it very short, strictly relevant to the topic being covered and easily understood.
- ❖ Number passages/sections in the document and refer to them as you speak.
- ❖ Include only essential bibliography.

Powerpoint Slide Preparation

It is now increasingly the case that audiences assess the technical quality of what you say not only by what is in your presentation but also by the effectiveness of your visual aids and how smart they look. Someone who has prepared carefully for the session will come across more effectively and make a better impression. Thus most people will not use handwritten transparencies today (even though they could use

multicolor pens and write in big letters) simply because it makes the presentation look as if it has been done in haste at the last minute.

The trend today is to use computerized presentation software. Below are some "Do and Don't" guidelines for creating your slides:

- ❖ Do use a title or introductory slide. Have this slide on the screen as attendees enter the room.
- ❖ Do use a summary slide or two at the end -- one for major conclusions and another for recommendations.
- ❖ Don't plan on more than about one slide per minute of your talk. (There can be exceptions if you talk to and instruct from a particularly clear and important slide.) Limit each slide to one main idea.
- ❖ Do talk to your slides -- also use your slide to talk from and lead easily into the next.
- ❖ Do keep it simple. Don't try to put too much information on one slide. Limit the number of words on each slide.
- ❖ Don't use long columns or figures or a big tabulation. Include these items in handouts.
- ❖ Do use capital and lower case letters. Make limited use of ALL CAPS (for emphasis only); it is difficult to read.
- ❖ Do use a large font size (24 point, minimum).

While many colors are available, try to hold the colors on any visual to three, and aim for two. That is: black, red, blue, green: or black, red, and brown. Use black for axes on graphs. Of course if you are making a pictorial sketch, more colors can be used if it appears naturally that way.

Remember, the quality of your presentation depends upon you, your voice, and the visuals -- all three integrated during your presentation.

Audio/Visual (AV)

ULA does not supply computers at its conferences -- you must bring your own laptop, software etc. Computer data projectors, video cables, and power connections for each room are supplied, though. Program Sponsors have the opportunity to specify additional AV as they submit their Program Proposal Form.

We recommend NOT using a computer unless you are experienced and can guarantee to get it to work. Given the time allocations in the program we wish to have very efficient change-overs between presenters. If you cannot get your computer to work at the last minute, this is likely to cause a major problem. Computers can be very effective for presentations (e.g. PowerPoint slides with fades and dissolves between successive frames) and for interactive demonstrations -- but we have seen many examples of computers not working during the actual presentation even though they have been tested beforehand. Be prepared for hardware/software problems and be ready to speak without these tools if necessary.

Practice

Practice your completed oral presentation at least one time in front of a live audience which approximates the level of expertise you might expect to encounter. They will provide the best barometer of the effectiveness of your argumentation.

Above all else, make certain that your presentation will be (not "can be") delivered within the time allotted. If possible, aim for making the presentation short by a couple of minutes. No one has ever been criticized for taking less than the allotted time, but Program Sponsors are requested to hurry or even cut off speakers who exceed their limit. It is both unfair and rude to the other speakers in the session when one person takes more than his or her share of time.

Prior to your Talk

- ❖ Check the room where it will be delivered to make certain that it has everything you will need.
- ❖ Meet with the Program Sponsor and other presenters at least ten minutes before the session.
- ❖ Sit with the other presenters near the front.

During your talk

- ❖ Make every effort to hold your audience by maintaining eye contact, modulating your voice, and employing a lively delivery.
- ❖ Speak slowly and into the microphone so that you can be heard and understood. Encourage audience members to move forward when the room is not full to make it easier to hear questions and discussion.
- ❖ Do not attempt to compensate for a lengthy presentation by speaking fast.
- ❖ Remind the audience of any program materials that you have available.
- ❖ If everyone has stuck to the time limit, there may be an opportunity for the Program Sponsor to ask for questions or comments.
- ❖ Stay for the entire session. It is extremely rude for a presenter to leave before hearing the other presenters. If there is some compelling reason to leave early, inform the Program Sponsor ahead of time.
- ❖ And finally, stay within your time limit!

Suggestions for Effective Presentations

- ❖ Turn off screen saver before beginning your presentation.
- ❖ Limit your speaking notes to headings and key phrases.

- ❖ A bit of humor early in your talk will relax you and your audience.
- ❖ During your talk, make eye contact with a few friendly faces.
- ❖ Wear your lucky socks.
- ❖ Relax and enjoy yourself.

If you use overheads, and need to point to the text or diagrams, always point to the screen not to the overhead itself (since your body would now obscure the view for part of the audience.)

The Program Sponsor controls the session time and may stop you when your time is up, whether you have finished or not. The reason is simple: it is not fair to the next presenter for you to overrun, as the session then ends up by overrunning and everyone is then late for the next event in the program.

Remember -- the audience does really appreciate a shorter presentation which covers the main points and allows time for discussion. It is much better to patronize the few than confuse the many.

Question/Answer and Discussion Periods

- ❖ Be prepared with one or two "starter" questions given out to friends and associates to use if questions are slow to start.
- ❖ Always repeat the question before answering.
- ❖ Answer briefly and to the point. If a lengthy response is necessary, offer to meet with the questioner after the session.
- ❖ Handle uncomplimentary discussion or questions without demeaning the asker. Try to figure out in advance what negative comments or tough questions are likely to be asked, and be prepared.
- ❖ Be ready for the odd "jerk" input -- off the subject or just talking to be heard.
- ❖ To retain control, be ready to admit to any soft spots which may require more experience and study.

Characteristics of an Excellent ULA Program

An excellent program can be described as meeting the following criteria:

- Starts and ends on time
- Is interactive and involves participants
- Topic and speaker are stimulating
- Topics cover new and/or emerging ideas or trends and are of practical use to participants
- Topics are presented in different ways to meet the needs of different learning styles
- Speakers are interesting and/or entertaining to listeners, have a good voice, can be heard and understood
- Speakers prepare handouts (in sufficient quantity) for detailed content information
- Participants are asked to evaluate program content and speakers

An excellent program also has the following characteristics:

- Program is advertised accurately to reflect the planned content
- Technology is pre-tested, is working, and is used appropriately for session content
- Room layout and size is appropriate for program
- Program signage is obvious and participants can easily find location
- Adequate parking is available for all participants

A disappointing program often has the following characteristics:

- Too much/little time is allotted for the speaker's introduction
- Speaker's presentation is boring, either in content, delivery style, or both
- Speaker's presentation is uninformed or irrelevant to participants
- Speaker is unprepared
- Speaker fails to engage the audience
- Too many speakers are planned for the topic
- Different speakers do not coordinate their remarks ahead of the program
- Speaker panel appears to be a group of "talking heads"
- Moderator does not control the speaker's use of time
- Moderator does not introduce speaker or conclude the program

Other factors can negatively impact a program. These include the following:

- Technology that doesn't work, including microphones
- Wrong size room or layout
- External factors such as noise that make it difficult to hear the program
- Room temperature is too hot/cold
- Poor signage or difficulty in locating the room
- Lack of accessible facilities
- Double booked facility
- Lack of time between programs
- Error in the publicity for the program