Team F Final Report:
Learning Round Table Conference Presentation Guidelines and Review Service

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I. Executive Summary
Emerging Leaders Team F worked with the Learning Round Table to create a plan to revitalize its presentation review service. We built Google forms that will allow LearnRT to solicit reviewers and reviewees, created eight tip sheets about best practices for different types of presentations, and updated the ALA page for presenters in collaboration with the Conference Accessibility Task Force (CATF).

II. Introduction
A. Project Overview
Team F created a plan to help LearnRT revive and grow its presentation review service, which will pair ALA presenters with LearnRT members who offer feedback to help the presenters improve their presentations. To meet this goal, Team F designed a Call for Volunteers to staff the review service, created Google forms to gather information about presentation reviewers and reviewees, and created a plan for next steps to promote the review service. In addition, Emerging Leaders Team F produced guidelines for successful conference presentations and training to share with members of the American Library Association, in consultation with members of the ALA Conference Accessibility Task Force.

B. Planning Process
To plan the project, members of Emerging Leaders Team F met with Caitlin Moen, the chair of the Learning Round Table, at the ALA Midwinter Conference to discuss the project. Then, we set virtual meetings every two weeks which included detailed agendas and action items for each member of the team to accomplish between meetings. After gathering feedback from Caitlin and other past and present members of LearnRT about their desires for the project, we began developing best practice tip sheets designed to help presenters improve their presentations. At the same time, we used feedback from LearnRT to develop two Google Forms designed to gather basic information about people wishing to volunteer as reviewers as well as those wishing to have their project reviewed. On May 1, the team met with Lily Sacharow from the ALA Conference Accessibility Task Force (CATF). The goal of CATF is to promote universal design and accessibility, especially at ALA Conferences. We worked with them to add additional information about creating accessible presentations to our guidelines and to update the material on the ALA Information for Presenters web page.

III. Deliverables
By the end of the project, we created eight tip sheets that can be downloaded electronically but also printed as single page tip sheets. We created two Google Forms, one for those who wanted to review presentations and another for those who wanted their presentations reviewed. We also created a call for volunteers to request reviewers. Finally, we updated the language of the Information for presenters web page on the ALA Website. These tip sheets are available as appendices to this report.

IV. Recommendations
We also offered several recommendations to LearnRT to help them sustain their revitalized presentation review service, including:
1. Designating a single point person on the LearnRT board to be responsible for monitoring the review service forms.
2. Using the materials we created to market the service across multiple Round Tables and Divisions in ALA.
V. Appendices
Appendix A: Best Practices for Lightning Talks
Appendix B: Best Practices for Paper and Panel Presentations
Appendix C: Best Practices for Poster Presentations
Appendix D: Best Practices for Presentation Handouts
Appendix E: Best Practices for Roundtable Presentations
Appendix F: Best Practices for Webinars and Virtual Presentations
**Lightning Talks**

A lightning talk is a very short session that briefly introduces and touches on a topic. Lightning talks are anywhere between 3-15 minutes, typically lasting about 5 minutes. They are often part of a larger session of lightning talks on a variety of topics or topics surrounding a common theme.

The goal of a lightning talk is to connect the audience with an idea and provide attendees with a name and face to follow up with if they want more information on the subject presented. Due to their nature, these talks are not deep. Focus on the key points regarding what matters most.

When developing your lightning talk…

- **Limit Your Slides:** Stick to a small number of slides with only the most pertinent information on your topic. Further guidelines may be provided by the presentation coordinator.
- **Use Good Design:** Check for high color contrast, choose simple sans-serif fonts sized 36 or higher, and limit use of animations or transitions.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Your presentation should be simple and direct. Be prepared to summarize content portrayed visually, such as information detailed in a graph.
- **Ask Yourself:** What is most important for your audience to take away from the session?
- **Use Handouts:** Provide handouts or links for further information and resources, including your contact information. Include more than one handout format (e.g. Word and PDF) if uploading to the conference website.

**Resources for Further Exploration**


https://www.software.ac.uk/home/cw11/giving-good-lightning-talk

http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/
Tips and Best Practices for Professional Presentations

Paper and Panel Presentations

Conference presentations highlight original research or special projects, sometimes on a set theme. Some organizations require a brief written document to accompany the presentation. Paper and panel presentation guidelines vary by conference; be sure to review individual requirements beforehand. These tips can help with paper and panel presentations, regardless of the venue.

Planning

- **Consider the Abstract:** Use your accepted conference abstract as a map for your presentation development. Does your presentation address all the information your abstract promised to deliver? If not, it’s important to note why.

- **Know Your Audience:** Are the attendees of your conference primarily academics? Are they members of the public, or a variety of information professionals from different backgrounds and levels of expertise? All of these are important to consider before developing your presentation.

- **Collaborate Wisely:** If you are speaking on a panel, make sure you and your fellow presenters are in sync with timing, content division, and slide design.

Development

- **Use Images:** Use meaningful images, charts, and graphics to clearly demonstrate your message. Be prepared to describe their content and purpose for your audience.

- **Design with Care:** Use sans-serif fonts with text sized 36 or larger. Check for strong color contrast and avoid placing text over busy backgrounds. Limit use of animations and transitions. Any video content you include should be closed-captioned. Ask yourself: Could an audience member in the back row of a large room read your slides?

- **Plan for Time Limits:** The time allotted for your presentation will vary by conference. Be sure to coordinate timing with conference instructions, your session moderator, and any co-presenters. Leave more time than you think you’ll need for questions or discussion.

- **Ask Yourself:** If someone misses the presentation but is reading your slides, would they understand your topic?

Delivery

- **Check Your Tech:** How will your presentation be delivered to conference organizers? Will you need to upload your slides to a central site, or bring them on a flash drive? Will you need sound or additional equipment for your presentation? Be sure to have a plan in
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Place before your session and request advance assistance from Conference Services if necessary.

- **Stay Aware of the Space:** Speak clearly into microphones provided, as your session may be recorded and some audience members may be relying on live captioning or sign language interpretation. If you are moving around a space, please ensure you remain audible. Encourage quiet or limited applause to make the event more sensory-friendly.

- **Have a Conversation:** Slides are a roadmap, but they should not become a script. While you should avoid reading your slide text aloud verbatim, do remember to describe data and image content shown on screen for attendees who may be unable to view it—use specific phrases like “this photo of weeded books from our collection project” or “the bar graph shows that 60% voted ‘yes’” rather than vaguer language such as “here,” “this result,” or “in the picture.”

- **Repeat Questions:** When an audience member asks a question, please repeat it into your microphone prior to answering for clarity.

- **Check with Your Moderator:** The moderator for your session will hold up cards with your time guidelines, including warnings when you are running out of time. Make sure to make occasional eye contact with your moderator to manage your time effectively.

- **Share Your Work:** If you are creating a handout to accompany your presentation, please see the “Presentation Handouts” best practices tip sheet. If uploading handouts or slides to the conference website, post in more than one digital format (e.g. Word and PDF).

**Resources for Further Exploration**


Penn State University. (2017). [Microsoft Office accessibility: Word, PowerPoint, Excel](http://accessibility.psu.edu/microsoftoffice/)


Poster Presentations

Poster sessions are a popular means for sharing current research or the mechanisms of recent projects. An effective poster presentation highlights, with visual display, the main points or components of your topic. Posters may include a description of an innovative program; an analysis of a solution to a problem; a report of a research study; or any other presentation that would benefit the larger community.

Content

- Remember to follow any guidelines required for posters given by the Conference Committee.
- Create a visually appealing layout with enough blank space for readability. Avoid using too much dense text or, alternatively, a sparse bulleted outline format.
- Focus on making sure that you convey the most important parts of your project first. Avoid the temptation to oversimplify your work because of limited text space.
- Include evidence of how you evaluated your project: if you gathered feedback from patrons, did a survey, or found another feedback mechanism, please show this in your poster.
- Every poster should include a clear, concise title, the name and affiliations of the presenters, and a brief abstract (250 words or less) that describes the purpose and findings of the project that the poster describes.

Visuals

- Use easy-to-read, sans-serif fonts (e.g. Arial, Calibri, Helvetica): size 60 or larger for headings; 36 or larger for body text; limit to only two or three different fonts altogether. Short, large-text titles and headings enable people to read your poster from several feet away; even better, they are eye catching from afar.
- Check for strong color contrast throughout. Remember that colors on a screen can look different once printed on paper.
- Enhance viewer understanding of your project using visuals. Charts, graphs, and other images help to break up the text. Be prepared to summarize the content of these visuals aloud to viewers.

Presentation

- Plan a short description of your research and findings that you can share when people come to talk to you.
- Ask questions of viewers and passers-by to engage them and find out what their interest might be in your work.
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Resources for Further Exploration

Presentation Handouts

Creating presentation handouts is often an afterthought of the presentation process, but a well-thought-out handout may be your best tool toward ensuring your message is effectively communicated. Handouts allow your audience to focus more on what you are saying during the presentation, and serve as a tangible reminder of your content afterward.

When developing your handout, remember:

- Handouts are an excellent way to include pertinent information that you did not have time to cover during your session. Consider offering references and suggestions for further research.

- Strive to create a document that can stand alone. Ideally, your handout should be useful to interested parties who were not present to view the session, as well as audience members who review handouts months later.

- Take the handout creation process seriously. Give yourself enough time to create a professional-looking handout, complete the proofreading process, and make appropriate changes.

- Include your contact information. Your handout serves as a sort of “working business card,” demonstrating your expertise and bringing interested parties back to you for follow-up questions.

- While your entire slideshow should not serve as a standalone handout, it is a good idea to have a few hard copies of your slides available for audience members who may want to follow along in print.

- If you are uploading handouts or slides to the conference website, include copies in more than one format (e.g. Word and PDF).

Resources for Further Exploration

Round Tables

A round table is a discussion that invites attendees to informally share ideas on a specific topic. They are particularly useful for brainstorming new ideas and learning about the projects and perspectives of peers.

When developing your round table...

- **Consider Your Topic:** Round tables often address hot topics and trends, but are also good venues for under-discussed issues.
- **Consider Your Audience:** What topics will be of most interest to conference attendees? Even if attendees come from different professional specialties, what topics unite them?
- **Develop Questions:** Be prepared with a list of questions to facilitate discussion if needed.

When moderating your round table...

- **Avoid Presentation:** Round tables are discussion-oriented, and should be a conversation between peers. Do not use slides or spend a large amount of time speaking.
- **Be Aware of the Space:** Round tables may occur in a small or closed-off area. Make sure that there is room for everyone to be included around the table or within the circle. Monitor volume levels to ensure that speakers are audible to those seated further away.
- **Facilitate:** Read questions aloud for all participants. If conversation slows, help prompt by asking guiding questions. Ensure that all attendees have the opportunity to speak and share if they choose.
- **Maintain Professional Interaction:** Round tables sometimes address controversial issues. Make sure that everyone feels welcome to share their individual perspectives, and maintain courtesy and professional communication.
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Virtual Presentations

You may be called upon to present virtually or remotely through a conferencing software such as Skype, WebEx, Adobe Connect, or Zoom. This may be part of entirely virtual conference events, in which all attendees and presenters are in different locations, or it may be targeted for an audience that is largely together in one location. It may be synchronous (live), or asynchronous (pre-recorded).

Many presentation formats can be presented virtually, including papers, lightning talks, posters, workshops, and more. It is important to note that virtual presentations often require different types of preparation than in-person presentations.

Note that most online meeting and presentation software is not accessible to people with print disabilities, including those using screen readers. You should plan to discuss with software administrators or ALA program planners what you can do to promote equity of access and make sure that everyone who wants to participate can do so.

Before the presentation...

- Check in with event organizers on requirements or expectations for hardware and software, including:
  - Microphone
  - Webcam
  - Conference or chat software
  - Login information for using conferencing platforms
  - Accessibility and accommodations for audience members or presenters with disabilities
  - Requirements for slides or other presentation materials, including file types, file sizes, fonts

- If presenting as a group, check to make sure that you will have the number of logins into the conference interface that you are expecting. This will affect whether your group presents together in one room, or separately from various locations.

- Try to learn the conferencing software’s capabilities beforehand. Topics of exploration might include:
  - Interaction with your audience. For example:
    - Is there polling capability? Is there a chat box? Is there an open “whiteboard” sketch space to share visual ideas?
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- Will audience members communicate with presenters through chat, or through microphones and/or webcams? How will this be managed during the presentation to prevent bandwidth overload or audio feedback?
  - Interaction with other presenters, if there are multiple. For example, will you take turns sharing your screens with the audience to display slides?

- Please refer to the “Papers and Panels” best practices tip sheet for creating your presentation content and visuals.

Resources for Further Exploration


