Resources for Presenters – Paper Sessions

Papers are the bread and butter of academic conferences. The first thing to keep in mind when presenting at IUT is that **this is a very friendly conference**, so some of the standard rules may not apply. For example, nobody will chastise you for missing a critical reference to a minor piece of work published years ago. If anything, audience participants will help you out if other participants in your session start to get a bit "persistent." That said, this group has little tolerance for people who make things up on the spot. So prepare well, be honest with the group, and have fun with your session.

Please plan your presentation to fit into the time allowed, which is generally twenty minutes. If you are unsure just how much time you will be allowed, then please check with the conference organizers (iutconference@gmail.com). If need be, practice to be sure your delivery does not exceed the allotted time. There is no point in lamenting to your audience that you do not have enough time to cover the material. No one does, and this simply frustrates the participants. Please know that we would have given you more time if it were possible.

The use of PowerPoint is now standard procedure for most papers, but we would like to issue two caveats. First, please do **NOT** fill PowerPoint slides with overmuch text. Visuals such as graphs and photographs are powerful teaching tools and should be combined with text whenever possible. Second, please do **NOT** read your slides to the participants. (They can read, too.) Use PowerPoint text for major headings and bullet point lists and expand on them in your remarks.

Consider making a handout to complement your presentation. At any conference, participants are exposed to a great deal of information in a short period of time. Handouts allow them to process this information at greater leisure afterwards. You can include the major points you wish to raise and include any references or links to resources you used for information. If this is a live session, try to bring at least 10 copies with you to distribute. If someone wants a copy and you have run out, get their contact information so you can email it right after your presentation. If you are delivering your paper remotely, please give us a pdf that we can post along with the recording of your session.

The participants at the IUT conference include experienced teachers who bring a good ideas to the sessions. Not everyone in your audience is a neophyte. Your presentation will gain by leaving time enough to tap into their expertise.

The following points may prove helpful:

1. **Preparing for your presentation**

   A. **Session Content:** What is the principal message you are trying to convey? Be sure you are supporting your main message and that you have appropriate examples to offer. Concrete examples are your friends.

   B. **Handout:** This should include the major points of your session with elaboration on some of the main issues. Please be sure to include any references or links to resources you used for your paper. Bring at least 10 copies of the handout with you to the conference. If you use PowerPoint, your handout may be a copy of your slides if you wish. As noted above, the point of a handout is to counter information overload. Many people will be exposed to a great deal of information at this conference in a very short period of time. Handouts help individuals to digest and process what they have learned at greater leisure once the conference is at an end.

   C. **Audience:** Your primary audience members are college and university faculty from throughout the world. Most have taught for a few years, but some will be relatively new faculty members. Administrators make up the second largest group. As noted above, IUT conferences tend to be relaxed and informal. Thus your presentation can also be a bit informal. One thing for certain it is that this group **DISLIKES** being lectured to for the full length of the session. Your participants already know a great deal. Although they will respect you as the authority of the issue you are presenting, they will also appreciate the opportunity to share and participate.

   D. **Questions:** Think of possible questions that might arise during the question and answer period and prepare answers to those questions.

2. **Preparing your visual aids**

   A. Keep your PowerPoint slides or overheads simple. It is best to use these only for abbreviated outlines or visuals to demonstrate a point. It is typically best to **NOT** include cute animations or sounds.

   B. Check ahead of time for errors (particularly spelling errors) so they don't detract from your presentation.

3. **Practicing your delivery**

   A. Especially if you are new to public speaking, please take time to practice your presentation. Be sure that if you can speak slowly and clearly, you still finish in

the allotted time. Some members of your audience may not be native English speakers, so clear diction is especially important for them.

B. Activities: Also practice any activity you plan to use at the conference. Try a variation of it in a class or meeting. The IUT conference is **NOT** a good place to try something for the very first time.

4. Presenting effectively

A. Especially if you are new to public speaking, please take time to practice your presentation. Be sure that if you can speak slowly and clearly, you still finish in the allotted time. Some members of your audience may not be native English speakers, so clear diction is especially important for them.

B. Be ready to set-up when the session before yours ends. Show up at your session room at least 10 minutes before you are scheduled to begin. If this is a live session, allow yourself time to check the equipment, meet the moderator, and get your materials in order. If your session is remote, you will need to be admitted by the moderator and will then be mad the co-host.

C. As noted above, please try to speak slowly and clearly and allow yourself and the audience time to process what you are saying. Unless you have a powerful quote and want to give it special emphasis, do **NOT** read to the participants from your slides. Reading is the fastest way to create a boring presentation. Try to incorporate a more conversational tone as well as visual elements instead.

D. **PLEASE FINISH ON TIME.** The most consistent complaint of the moderators—those whose job it is to keep sessions moving along on schedule—is that paper presenters tend to lose all sense of time once they begin speaking. Please don't make the moderators' job harder than it already is. That is to say, please end your session within the time allotted. This means leaving a few moments toward the end of your session for questions. Do not plan on using the interval between your session and the next presenter's session, as this time is needed by the next presenter for setting-up.

If you're unsure of how long your presentation is, this would be a good reason to practice it ahead of time and time yourself as you do. Many moderators will signal when you have five minutes or even one minute left, but don't just rely on them to tell time. Have a portable clock or watch handy so you can monitor this yourself. This will help you to stop yourself in time to answer questions. If you are unsure how much time remains for your part of the paper session, ask the moderator.

5. Answering questions

A. Be sure to repeat and paraphrase all questions to ensure they were heard correctly by both yourself and other audience members. Not infrequently what we think the question was is not, in fact, what the questioner wanted to know.

B. Try to answer questions clearly and concisely. Speak to the entire audience, not just the person who asked the question. Do not be afraid to let the group know you don't know the answer to a question. You might ask if anyone in the group has a good answer to the question, or simply note it is a great question and you will need to look into that issue. In that case, try to get contact information from the questioner so you can get back to them later.

C. Enjoy yourself! This may be easier said than done, but try anyway. The most successful sessions are those where the presenters are relaxed enough to smile.

NB: If you have any questions regarding your paper presentation, please let us know by emailing Jim Wilkinson at iutconference@gmail.com