

Letters

Presentations

To the editor:

As a recent scientist-turned-librarian, I read with great interest Mignon Adams's contribution to the January 1991 issue of *C&RL News*, "Making your presentation communicate" (34-35). I agree wholeheartedly that librarians could learn a great deal from scientists about making effective presentations. Furthermore, I believe that science can serve as a role model for librarianship not just in the quality of visual aids used in presentations but in other ways as well.

Library education could take a lesson from graduate science education in the methods used to train presenters. I have observed that, aside from a number of short, relatively informal presentations, library school offers few opportunities to communicate research or other ideas in a public forum. This is in contrast to the extensive training that I received as a graduate student in science.

In the zoology department where I received my first master's and Ph.D. degrees, students were required to enroll in at least one one-credit "seminar" course per semester. The seminar was coordinated by a faculty member and usually had a theme (e.g., smooth muscle physiology, organic evolution,


etc.). Each student selected a topic, researched the literature on that topic, and made a formal presentation with visuals (usually slides). Each presentation lasted about 45 minutes and was followed by 15 minutes for questions. Through these seminars, we learned how to organize material for an oral presentation, how to make our own slides, how to decide what slides to make, how to remain professionally poised during an oral presentation, and how to handle a period of questions. We learned that effective presentations are not created overnight. We learned from our own mistakes, from the mistakes of other students, and from input from the faculty.

In addition to these seminars, my fellow graduate students and I had many formal opportunities to present our research and ideas in another relatively unthreatening setting—local, state, and regional meetings.

Presentations by librarians could be enhanced by greater training in oral communication skills in library school and through the promotion of alternate forms of presentation such as posters.

—Natalie S. King, Assistant Director, Shiffman Medical Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan



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