Chapter 4
From Attending to Presenting at Conferences

Abstract This chapter will guide the reader through the process of proposing a presentation at a major professional conference. An orientation to the different venues and categories of presentations is included. This chapter offers step-by-step instructions for generating a conference proposal as well as helpful templates for drafting a brief description of a conference session, a schedule for a workshop session, and a structure for conference proposal. The chapter concludes with a strategy for converting a successful conference presentation into a professional journal article.

A new doctoral student is waiting outside a faculty member's office for an individual appointment to discuss a class assignment. As she stands in the hallway, she notices a bulletin board and announcements about several different professional meetings; a few of them are calls for proposals to make presentations. Later that week, a professor who is on the planning committee for a regional conference invites doctoral students to serve as volunteer peer reviewers of conference proposals. He suggests that, this year, the doctoral students gain practice in assessing the proposals using a rubric and next year, they will have some insider's knowledge about how to prepare conference proposals of their own. Table 4.1 highlights the general criteria that they will use to evaluate conference proposals.

At first, the students question their authority to judge others' conference proposals. Submitting proposals themselves also seems out of reach; however, a look at last year's conference program indicates that their institution is well represented by doctoral candidates and faculty. Most of the presentations are collaborative, so a discussion ensues about working with mentors and peers to fashion a successful conference proposal and ways to make an effective presentation. With guidance and support, practically all of the doctoral candidates emerge from their doctoral programs with several conference presentations on their curriculum vitae.

As this situation illustrates, writing in order to make a presentation at a professional conference frequently is one of the first scholarly achievements of graduate students. At the other end of the experiential spectrum, the most widely published researchers and well-known scholars frequently are the keynote presenters at major conferences. For scholars at all stages in between, the professional conference is a major venue for sharing expertise, disseminating research, and networking with peers.

Table 4.1 General evaluation criteria for conference proposals

Does the proposal conform to the guidelines? Too often, conference proposals are prepared in haste and are disqualified from review because the authors failed to follow the rules. Always read the guidelines multiple times to ensure the proposal's compliance with the entry rules
Is the session appropriate for the venue? There should be a clear match between what has been proposed, the overall mission of the organization, the category of presentation, and the specific conference theme
Is the proposal representative of effective scholarly writing? Proposals that are not well written do not bode well for an effective session. Awkwardly worded sentences, disorganized thinking, and careless mistakes will get the proposal rejected
Does the proposal have a clear focus? It is unrealistic to assume that a broad topic can be adequately addressed in a brief session. Conference presentations need a clear focus and an emphasis on what attendees would gain from investing their time in a particular session
Does the presentation hold promise for advancing thinking in the field? One major motivation for attending conferences is to update knowledge and skills. Proposals that seem dated in topic or in resources tend to be rejected
Does the proposal reflect audience awareness? Sessions that demonstrate a sincere desire to share expertise and information with fellow professionals in a respectful way are likely to be welcomed

About Professional Conferences

The professional conference has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other types of gatherings. It provides a forum for deliberating and discussing topics of interest to a group of professionals with specialized expertise. Those topics typically include such things as recent trends, issues, and controversies; advances in practice, research, and technology; and matters pertinent to the sponsoring organization, such as policies affecting the group and the status of the profession. Usually, the sponsors of professional conferences are learned societies, professional organizations, government-affiliated groups, and higher education institutions or research centers. The types of professional conferences range from local to national and international meetings. General content of the conferences may be focused exclusively on research, practitioner oriented, or a combination of the two. Large meetings typically offer many different sessions presented by various speakers on different topics that are scheduled during the same time slot. The format of the sessions varies as well. It may be a formal speech, a workshop, panel discussion, debate, round table, collection of posters in an exhibit hall, a virtual presentation on screen, or an all-day institute. Large conferences also may have a career/job search and interview activities for members of a professional association or offer trainings on gaining accreditation for higher education programs. Leading professional societies in the field often sponsor meetings. Typically there is a conference planning committee to manage the event in relation to sending out a call for proposals,

abstracts, and/or papers; reviewing the submissions and notifying the proposers of the decisions rendered; generating a schedule of events that will be published in the conference program; and evaluating the success of the meeting. Prospective presenters can learn about opportunities to present at conferences, both large and small, on the sponsoring organization's website, calendar, and journal. Calls for proposals and papers include detailed information about what the organization is seeking, the format requirements, and the procedure for submitting abstracts, proposals or papers. Typically, these submissions for major conferences are submitted online.

For researchers, presenting at conferences is an efficient and exciting forum in which researchers can share their research and findings. Researchers use academic conferences as the major social arena to discuss their work. Successful conference presentations are an opportunity for researchers to communicate their research, receive feedback from others working in the same area, establish research/writing teams, and build a network of fellow professionals with specialized expertise (Jalongo & Machado, 2015).

Five Steps from Presentation to Publication

Although professional conference presentations play a role in tenure, promotion, and other types of evaluations of faculty members, many people learn how to write conference proposals primarily through trial and error. Others have the advantage of support from an experienced, successful presenter to orient them to the process, collaborate with them, and/or supply them with examples to follow. Still others approach making presentations as they would conducting a review of the literature; they search for published resources that will provide them with guidance on how to get on the conference program and ways to be more effective when they actually lead a session.

Rowley (2012) offers a five-step sequence for transitioning from a conference presentation to a published article as depicted in Fig. 4.1.
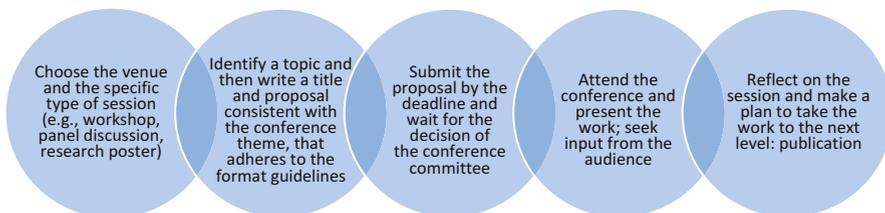

Fig. 4.1 Five steps from a conference proposal to a publication

Locating Suitable Venues for Making Presentations

When seeking an outlet for a session presentation, there are several strategies for identifying possible groups and meetings.

- *Identify suitable content*. Read the call for proposals very carefully to determine if the topic and approach that you have in mind suits the venue. For example, if a meeting for a group of counselors has the theme of family-centered practices, any session proposed needs to mesh with this goal. It is a mistake to expect that you can "recycle" a conference proposal—even if it was successful with another organization and different theme—and get a positive response. Be aware also that, for faculty members, committee members who review scholarly activity will look askance at curriculum vitae that list the same specific topic repeatedly.
- *Conduct a search*. Begin with the professional organizations in which you hold membership. If you are relatively new to the field, talk with accomplished faculty members about the organizations in which they are active members or officers. Visit the websites and journals of leading professional associations to view a calendar of their national, regional, state, and local meetings. Graduate students should check the postings in their academic departments because calls for conference proposals frequently are shared in this informal way. While you are attending a conference 1 year, plan for the next. Usually, there are bulletin boards or tables with information at these events to advertise other professional meetings, so be certain to peruse those materials. The October issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* publishes a list of many of the major conferences as well.
- Go to the next level. From a professional development perspective, it is good to "stretch" and try to advance to the next level. So, after being accepted for a local conference is no longer a challenge, consider submitting a proposal at the state or regional level and, after presentations at the state and regional level are easy to accomplish, try for a national or international venue. At first, it might be necessary to "oversample" a bit and submit several conference proposals in the hopes of getting a few accepted. Eventually, most professionals reach a point where nearly every conference proposal that they submit gets accepted and the time, energy, and money invested in making conference presentations is too much of a drain on resources. Faculty members seldom are fully funded for travel to professional conferences by their employers and usually, only the invited keynote speakers have their expenses paid by the group sponsoring the event. If getting on the conference program is relatively easy, it may be time to redirect some of that effort toward research and writing.

As a first step in considering the writing tasks associated with making conference presentations, prospective presenters need to think about how the participants in their sessions will benefit beyond acquiring authoritative information—as important as that is. Given that travel is expensive and information is easy to access, interactivity is the main thing that makes attendance at a conference superior to simply

staying at home and reading about a topic. The appeal of the conference is face-to-face interaction that enables participants to:

- Acquire new or improve existing professional skills
- Get feedback on a strategy, project or research
- Gain opportunities to network with other presenters, researchers, and authors (Galer-Unti & Tappe, 2009).

Whatever type of session you propose, be certain to consider ways to engage the audience.

Activity 4.1: Analyzing the Call for Conference Proposals
Look online and review the guidelines for submitting a conference proposal to a leading a professional organization in your field. What is the deadline? Who is the audience? What are the various types of session formats possible (e.g., institutes, seminars, workshops, panel discussions, virtual presentations)? Is there a conference theme? What is the process for submitting a proposal? How will the proposal be assessed and by whom? When will proposers be notified of the decision?

Scholars may wonder about the relative status of various having a conference proposal accepted for various venues. Some considerations are:

- *What is the group's reputation/visibility in the field?* If it is the premier organization in the field, then the competition for the available presentation slots is apt to be more intense.
- *How much writing is required?* For a less competitive/local conference, all that may be required is a brief description for the conference program. This obviously is less prestigious than a conference that requires a detailed proposal or a paper.
- *How are decisions rendered?* The highest level of rigor is when conference proposals are independently reviewed by two to three peers using a set of criteria and the feedback from those reviews is shared with the proposer. For other, less competitive, conferences a selection committee may make the decision and no formal review process exists.

Unlike journals, the acceptance rate for conference proposals may not be public information. For less prestigious groups and smaller conferences, it may be the case that nearly all of the proposals are accepted in the interest of boosting attendance and generating revenues from conference fees. This might be particularly true with organizations that herald their meetings as international when the event is a study tour in disguise. Some ways to gain insight into the acceptance rates would be: (1) read the calls for papers to determine if the organization shares this information, (2) serve on the conference planning committee to gain insight about the process, and (3) engage in discussions with disciplinary colleagues about their own experience and that of others with acceptance/rejection of proposals. All of this helps to gauge the selectivity of the process. There are many different types of professional writing associated with proposing a conference session; they are discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

Writing the Title and Abstract

When you write a title for a conference session think, first and foremost, about setting attendees' expectations appropriately. The title should capture the essence of the session and attract the participants who stand to benefit the most. For example, I presented a session called "Writing the Practical Journal Article: A Workshop for Aspiring Authors". This title made it clear the session was designed for less experienced academic authors (i.e., aspiring), that it would not focus on reporting research (i.e., practical journal article), and that it would be more interactive (i.e., workshop). As a result, nearly all of the participants were doctoral students and new higher education faculty members—exactly what I was seeking. In some ways, conference session titles are like billboards at the side of the road in that they need to catch the reader's attention, and convey information in just a few words. Session titles should represent "truth in advertising" to avoid disappointment among prospective participants.

A good way to begin with writing the title for your session is by referring to a copy of a conference program from the previous year in hard copy or online. This will provide some sense of an appropriate title. In general, some guidelines are:

- Consider the audience and meeting theme
- Stress benefits and results
- Identify concerns, issues, trends
- Match carefully to your content
- Stimulate interest
- Make the session purpose clear
- Motivate attendance
- Avoid being cute, inventing forced acronyms, or generating cryptic titles that confuse the reader

Most major conferences publish a brief statement about the session suitable for publication in the program. This might be called a session description, brief description, or abstract. As with the title, these short pieces of writing need to be very carefully crafted and may take a surprising amount of time to write.

Activity 4.2: Session Descriptions in the Conference Program
Look online or browse through the print conference program of a professional organization. What do you notice about the session titles? What was the word limit on the abstracts? Now search, not based on content that interests you, but on how well written the titles and short descriptions are. Locate three good examples of session titles and descriptions to serve as examples for a session you would like to propose.

In many cases, the brief description or abstract will be a major determinant of the outcomes of a scholar's effort to have a proposal accepted. Although it is a short piece of writing, it is important to craft the brief description carefully. First of all, if it is confusing or poorly written, the entire proposal is likely to be rejected. Second, the brief description is what appears in the conference program, so any flaws will be

exceedingly public. Many times, a place to begin with presenting at professional conferences is the workshop that will be attended by practitioners as a form of professional development. Those who are new to making conference presentations may find the workshop less intimidating than presenting original research, for example. Use the information in Activity 4.3 to compose a brief description of a professional workshop.

Activity 4.3: "Formula" for a Brief Description of a Workshop
Try this strategy for drafting a session description: (1) Opening statement—Write a somewhat general (and fairly indisputable) statement about the situation; (2) Approach—your "take" on the issue, the focus/purpose, (3) Benefits—What will attendees do besides sit and listen? Begin each item in the list with a verb; list 3 or 4 main outcomes, (4) Resources—what will they will receive? (e.g., an annotated list of websites, a checklist, a synthesis of the research).

Writing the Proposal

The great majority of major professional conferences require a proposal of some type. These proposals can range from an outline to a complete, 20-page paper, so you will need to determine what type of presentation would best suit your skill level and match the material you intend to share. After you have made those decisions, you will be ready to write your conference proposal.

Table 4.2 highlights some categories of conference sessions and what is typically required. Different types of sessions make different writing demands on the proposers, so choose a format that is matched to your interests and level of skill.

Workshops are a way to contribute to the professional development of practitioners. Before you can write an excellent conference proposal for a workshop, you need to plan the entire session and all of the activities in it. It will be important to apportion your time—usually not more than 1 h—in the most effective way. Carter and Carter (2000) offer the following sample structure for a 1-h workshop.

Welcome, introductions, overview (5–10 min.)
Opening activity to reflect on topic (10 min.)
Presentation of core ideas (10–15 min.)
Practice applying ideas (15–20 min.)
Next steps and follow-up (5–10 min).
Summary and evaluation (5 min.)
If co-presenting, make a schedule that indicates who is responsible for each part.

Activity 4.4: Planning a Workshop
Using the time allocations outlined above, make a plan for a 1-h workshop session. It should include: a minute-by-minute schedule of activities, a way to immediately capture audience interest, a list of outcomes for participants (each should begin with an action verb), various activities (e.g., individual, small group, total

Table 4.2 Writing demands of different types of conference presentations

Type of session	Definition	Writing Tasks for presenters	Resources
Keynote address	A speech delivered by an outstanding speaker to the general group of participants in a conference; usually these are 1–1.5 h in length. Keynoters often are selected on the basis of instant name recognition, reputation for engaging large audiences and ability to set the tone for the event	Although a written manuscript is not required, most keynoters do prepare a script for the speech. Many professional speakers also create a "mind map" that is a diagram of the speech so that they do not need to read or memorize the speech	For the basics: http://www.ehow.com/how_4966252_write-keynote-speech.html Tips on keynote speeches at: http://www.speaking-tips.com/Articles/Making-Your-First-Keynote-Speech.aspx Garmston (2005)
Paper presentations	A written paper—either brief or full length—that is presented by the author. These may be clustered together thematically with each author allocated a short time (e.g., 10–20 min) to present key points. A moderator may coordinate the session and a respondent may recap/highlight future trends	Papers must be submitted in advance so that others have time to read them prior to the meeting. Some conferences will publish abbreviated papers, selected papers, or all of the papers delivered at the conference as a book of conference proceedings. Authors need to follow the specific format for publishing proceedings as well as the style guide exactly (e.g., APA, MLA). Typically, papers are not copyrighted, so authors are free to pursue publication in a peer-reviewed outlet	For a template to write microarticle, see: http://fr.slideshare.net/lichtfouse/micro-arten

Panel discussion	A small group of professionals design a collaborative presentation that would be of interest to the conference participants. They may discuss different aspects of a timely topic, debate different perspectives on the subject, or explore an emerging or persistent issue. Each presenter has a clear role and time limitation	Each conference's call for papers specifies what is required in the proposal and for particular session formats. Although it may not be required, a minute-by-minute schedule and group rehearsal are essential to the smooth functioning of the session	Galer-Unti and Tappe (2009) For the basics, see http://www.wikihow.com/Conduct-a-Panel-Discussion; for more subtle considerations, see: http://www.scottkirsner.com/panels.htm
Workshop	A session with a professional development emphasis that builds new skills through active participation and enhances the effectiveness of practitioners. Most commonly, the workshop is 60 min; however, there may be other, longer formats ranging from 3 h to a full day (e.g., a preconference institute). Usually, there are many of these sessions running concurrently at a large conference	Conference selection committees have guidelines for the proposal. Often, participant-centered outcomes and an overview of the interactive activities are required. Presenters of workshops usually prepare a packet of materials to distribute to participants that includes objectives, a schedule, activities, examples, online resources and references	Jalongo (2013a, b), Happell (2009), and Rogochewski (2001)
Roundtables	A collection of individual presenters is seated, literally, at round tables. The goal is to facilitate informal interaction with others interested in their projects or research. Presenters of roundtables are required to be stationed at their post throughout the time period specified in the conference program	Usually, presenters are required to submit a one-page overview of their project or research suitable for distribution to interested participants. The evaluative questions for each type of research in the chapters of this book can be used to prepare this manuscript	American Evaluation Association http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=171

Table 4.2 (continued)

Type of session	Definition	Writing Tasks for presenters	Resources
Poster presentations	Literally, these are posters that highlight the key components of a study. Usually, they are displayed in a large conference hall. Presenters remain positioned next to their posters throughout the designated time to respond to questions and discuss their with conference participants who stop by	Typically, presenters use a tri-fold display and are required to produce a professional-quality visual depiction of their research in a poster format that conforms to the specific guidelines of the sponsoring organization. Some conferences also require a one-page handout so that interested participants can take away a copy of the findings	Miller and Bloustein (2007) University of Wisconsin http://www.uwex.edu/ces/tobaccoeval/pdf/postertips.pdf
Virtual presentation or Webinar	A presentation that uses technology so that the presenter can participate from a remote site. It may be prerecorded or broadcast in real time. The major advantage is that the time and expense of travel is overcome. This may be particularly important for an international conference	Presenters rely on many of the same tools that they would use in person, such as PowerPoint slides, video clips, and so forth. At the conference site, registered participants can view the presentation on screen or register for the session and view it on screen at a different time	Tips on structuring a Webinar at http://www.speakingaboutpresenting.com/content/webinar-questions-answered/ See also: http://elearningindustry.com/14-tips-to-create-and-present-a-highly-effective-webinar For examples of book authors' PowerPoints, visit www.edweb.net

group), and a description of the teaching materials and handouts for the participants. For more detailed information, see Jalongo (2013a, b).

Online Tool
The Writing Studio of Colorado State University explains the basics of preparing poster sessions. http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/pdfs/guide78.pdf

Guidelines for writing proposals for other types of sessions are in Table 4.3.

Online Tool
For advice on making various types of conference presentations, refer to Nancy Karlin's page at http://www.kon.org/karlin.html

Table 4.3 Guidelines for writing conference proposals

If the session is primarily for practitioners, it should focus on what they will gain from participating. If the abstract is for research, it should describe original findings that are worth sharing and were not presented previously
If you are not the sole presenter, you must contact everyone and get their permission before submitting a conference proposal. Check and double check how others want their names, titles, and institutional affiliations to appear in the program if the session is accepted. Errors with any of this are very troublesome
When composing the proposal, consider such things as: the organization's mission, the conference theme (if applicable), the goals of the prospective participants, and the expectations of the reviewers. If there is a scoring rubric or a set of criteria for evaluation, study it carefully while developing the proposal and refer to it again after the proposal is written
Check the submission deadlines, format requirements, and word count restrictions before you begin writing. Brief descriptions and abstracts that do not conform to the group's requirements are routinely rejected
Make the purpose of the session clear and generate interest in the session. If submitting a very brief research abstract, consider this "formula": allocate about one sentence to background and use the remaining words to establish the purpose of the study, its methods, results, and conclusions/contributions/implications. For longer research abstracts, apportion the sections accordingly
Do not "overpromise"—for instance, it is implausible that participants will master technology in an hour or that the results of a single study will dramatically change the field
Ask a respected, experienced colleague to read and critique the proposal well before the deadline and revise accordingly. If you are inexperienced with proposal writing, seek the opinion of two or three colleagues
Follow the organization's directions very carefully; failure to do this undermines credibility of the presenter. To avoid technology glitches, plan to submit your proposal electronically at least 24 h prior to the deadline. These sites can become overloaded shortly before the submission deadline and may malfunction
Do not make the mistake of thinking that you can quickly compose your proposal in the online boxes for proposal submissions. It is better to create a Word document apart from the conference site to avoid losing your work. After it is thoroughly refined, cut and paste it into the form
Proofread carefully—not only for errors and content but also for flow (Andrade, 2011; Daniels, 2013; Jalongo & Machado, 2015; Rowley, 2012; Russell & Ponferrada, 2012; Tappe & Galer-Unti, 2009)

Distributing Materials to Session Participants

Irrespective of the particular type of session, participants frequently expect to have something tangible to carry away. For a person delivering a keynote address, that might consist of a one-page list of publications with a link to the PowerPoint presentation or key talking points at the conference website. Increasingly, presenters are using a QR code to save paper and make sure that any participant has access to their materials. For the uninitiated, the QR is the little box with black marks inside, such as those that appear on the back of a print catalog; it stores information similar to barcodes that are scanned at the grocery store checkout. For those presenting a research poster, the QR might lead to an image of the poster as well as a one-page description of the study. For a researcher delivering a paper, it might be the research abstract, a list of talking points, a short paper, or a link to the complete paper—depending upon what the conference planners require or recommend. Practical, workshop types of sessions tend to include the most in terms of material distributed to the participants, such as activities, case studies, and annotated lists of print and online resources. Table 4.4 offers general recommendations on preparing handouts.

Table 4.4 Advice on handouts

1. *Be selective*. Do not assume that you can duplicate articles or pages from books without permission; many publications are copyright protected—including your own. If you signed a copyright transfer agreement for a manuscript that you published, you will need to request permission to use it
2. *Synthesize*. It is far better to combine the best elements from a number of different resources and "make it your own". For example, a table that highlights key research findings and has a reference list attached is more helpful than complete copies of articles. Not only does it save on paper, it also allows you to travel light. Do not assume that the conference planners will make copies for you; this usually is the presenter's responsibility and can become quite expensive
3. *Be precise*. Scholars will expect you to provide the complete reference when you cite others' work. Make sure that you cite the name and date for paraphrased material and the exact page number for direct quotations. For popular quotations, do a search online to find an authoritative source for the original quotation. Proofread very carefully; any errors will be pointed out to you and the person whose name you spelled incorrectly may be attending your session
4. *Be inventive*. Instead of simply delivering the message or falling back on audience brainstorming, try something more engaging. For a workshop, you might, for example, begin with a "quiz" that addresses several major misconceptions about your topic (and the evidence to support each answer) as a way of addressing them early on. For part of a dinner speech, I once created a readers' theater script about a current controversy for members of the audience perform; this held the group's interest better than a speech delivered at the end of full workday and after a big meal. If you are doing a workshop or webinar and want to use examples, anecdotes, or case studies, draw upon your own experience and write your own (while maintaining confidentiality) instead of using previously published ones. This not only demonstrates your expertise but also avoids sharing something that may be familiar to some members of the audience already

Table 4.4 (continued)

5. *Make it manageable*. A half-day or all-day session will require quite a bit of material. However, you'll want to consider the best way to distribute materials. If you create a packet with the entire session and hand it out at the start of the session, some attendees may browse through everything quickly and become bored later on. On the other hand, if you stop to distribute each piece of paper separately, it can interrupt the flow of the session. Creating some clusters of material strikes a balance between these two extremes. At times, it may not be necessary for everyone to have a paper copy of something. Just say that you are "going green" and, for example, put the instructions for a small group activity up on the screen instead. Be sure to number the pages for ease of reference
6. Follow up. If a session is more popular than anticipated and you run out of materials, either give attendees a way to contact you or create a sign-up sheet. Send the material out to them promptly after the conference. The QR code, described above, can be particularly helpful in this instance

Writing and Presenting a Conference Paper

Even if a conference does not require the submission of the full paper, many academic authors choose to write one anyway to serve as a guide for their presentation (Happell, 2009). In some instances, paper presentations are selected to be published as conference proceedings. These papers may be a synopsis that is three to five pages or a full-length paper. In most cases, these papers are peer reviewed in advance of the meeting so it is very important to meet the deadlines in order to give others the opportunity to complete their reviews. If, for example, a research paper has been clustered into a small group by the conference planning committee, a chair or discussant will need to read all of the papers prior to the event. Many times, four presenters will have just 10 min apiece to share the highlights of their research with the remaining 20 min for discussion and questions. It is very important that everyone adhere to the time limits; otherwise, a person who traveled to the conference may not have a chance to speak at all (Table 4.5).

Preparing a Speech or Keynote Address

As a professional in the field, you may be invited to give a speech. This might occur early in your career when, for example, the local chapter of a professional organization invites you to speak at a dinner meeting. It might occur much later in your career after you are a well-established author, such as when the professional organization's state or regional conference planning committee is seeking a speaker who can travel to the site. Keynote addresses at major conferences typically are reserved for scholars who are widely known and highly respected in their fields. In every

Table 4.5 General guidelines for presenting a conference paper

1. If at all possible, check in early and pick up your presenter's packet. Often there is a separate line at the registration desk for presenters. Some conferences will not allow you to enter the presenters' area without your conference badge
2. Give a paper when you have something to say and can make a commitment to producing the paper on the timeline and in the format required of the specific conference
3. Instead of trying to "cover" everything, pull out key talking points. Those who want more detail can contact you. Practice your presentation not only for substance but also for style and adherence to the time limit
4. Most audiences have a low tolerance for papers read aloud. They will appreciate it if you speak directly to them rather than relying heavily on written text. Stand up to speak and move about the room somewhat rather than sit motionless—unless it is clear that you are expected to remain seated
5. Adhere to the specified time limit out of courtesy to other presenters and participants
6. Be enthusiastic and enjoy the attention given to your work
7. Be sure of the time, day and room assignment of your presentation—last-minute changes are sometimes made to the program
8. Double check the amount of time you have to speak and locate the room where your session is scheduled in advance
9. Do not put all of your spoken text on PowerPoint slides: this makes the presenter redundant. Text on a PowerPoint slide should be legible to the audience; this means at least 24-point print and not more than about 6 points per slide
10. Locate your room and double-check all AV equipment before your session begins
11. Learn to field questions expertly
12. Remember that participants are mainly interested in your findings and the implications; allocate the most time to that (Garaffa & Brians, 2011; Hardicre, Coad, & Devitt, 2007)

case, a speech is very different from the other types of writing tasks associated with professional meetings for several reasons. First of all, speeches at conferences tend to be delivered to larger groups with fewer expectations for interaction. Secondly, speeches often have the purpose of stimulating thinking and generating enthusiasm for the meeting rather than training (as in the case of a workshop) or making an original contribution (as in the case of research). Many times, authors are invited to deliver a speech based on a successful book. This task poses the same major challenge as generating a brief research article from a 300-page dissertation; namely, distilling the message to its very essence.

If you are invited to give a speech, start by making a study of effective public speaking. Some resources to support you include:

- *Vital Speeches of the Day*—This publication is the actual script of effective speeches that have been delivered to various audiences. You can access their archives through a university's online search engines and use them to understand key elements of public speaking.
- *TED Talks and TED X Talks*—Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) has a wide assortment of expertly-delivered speeches available on YouTube. They demonstrate how to identify a central message, sustain audience interest, and

incorporate examples. To build your confidence, read Chris Anderson's How to Give a Killer Presentation: Lessons from TED at https://hbr.org/2013/06/how-to-give-a-killer-presentation/ published in the June 2013 issue of *Harvard Business Review.*

- *Recorded speeches from the discipline*—At least some of the keynote speakers at prior meetings of your professional organizations may have been video recorded, so viewing some particularly effective ones can be helpful. At times, the text of a keynote speech will be published as an article in the professional journal, so this is another way to get a glimpse of how highly effective speeches are structured.
- *Talk with program planners*—Be sure to inquire about the best speeches that were delivered to the group in the past. The better that you understand your audience, the more likely you are to produce an effective speech.
- *Publications on effective speaking*—consult general references on public speaking (e.g., Russell and Munter, 2014; Sprague, Stuart and Bodary, 2015; Verderber, Sellnow and Verderber, 2014) as well as resources that focus specifically on presenting at professional conferences (Jalongo & Machado, 2015).

Reflecting on Outcomes

When a conference session is well received, it can be exhilarating. It is a form of validation because fellow professionals with no vested interest in your or your work are favorably impressed. However, there are instances in which the audience response is less than enthusiastic; for example, a discussant may be critical of the conceptual framework for a study or questions from the audience during a workshop may be difficult to answer. In either case, making an oral presentation can improve a written manuscript on the same topic in many ways. This can occur only if presenters are:

- Accepting of different perspectives. In the spirit of professional dialogue, unanimity is not the goal. Accept that it is possible to respectfully disagree without defensiveness or rancor.
- Humble about their contributions. No one designs a flawless study or makes a perfect presentation. A single study seldom revolutionizes thinking in a field; this requires an accumulation of evidence from many studies. Therefore, presenters openly acknowledge the limitations of their work.
- Willing to rethink. Presenters need to be willing to modify their stance when presented with compelling counterarguments. If the situation warrants it, it may be necessary to go "back to the drawing board." When someone suggests revisions, it is important to think it over rather than becoming confrontational or deflated.

These same attitudes serve authors well as they strive to publish work that is based on a conference presentation because they characterize the peer review process.

A team of five researchers, for example, submitted an article to a highly respected journal after presenting their research at a conference. One of them wanted to write a rebuttal of sorts, disagreeing with nearly every point that was raised by the three independent reviewers. Another who had many years of experience as a journal editor took a very different approach; she assumed that "none of us is as smart as all of us" and recommended that they make any and all changes unless they really could not "live with them". In one case, there was a recommendation that the team did not comply but, instead of being indignant, the rationale for that decision was explained—and the editor accepted that departure from the reviewers' advice. Criticism of scholarly work needs to be carefully considered rather than rejected in a show of ego. Many times, thoughtful critique from others prevents us from making an embarrassing mistake.

Generating Publications from Presentations

Two recently hired professors who are colleagues at the same university have been working on a research project for almost 2 years. After they share their ideas in a 15-min research panel, a journal editor stays afterwards to share his business card and suggest that they submit an article to the publication. They are flattered and excited at the prospect of taking their work to a wider audience; they also are uncertain about how to proceed. No formal paper was required to present at the conference, so they would be starting at the very beginning where writing research is concerned. One of the professors thinks that they should seize upon the opportunity and quickly submit a paper to the journal while the other thinks that they should make contact with the editor but proceed more slowly and carefully to give themselves the best chance for a successful outcome. During the trip home, they begin discussing what they will need to do to convert their oral presentation into a publishable manuscript. As a shorthand way of organizing their thinking, they make a list of positives and negatives. On the plus side, they list:

- The most time-consuming tasks—conceptualizing the study, gathering the data, and analyzing the data—are already complete
- The talking points for the session have organized the material into the main categories of a research article
- More experienced peers have already responded to favourably to the work
- The comments and questions from a real, live audience have highlighted some areas that could be clarified or strengthened

    On the minus side, they list:

- It may be difficult to convey the information concisely and effectively in written form
- The prospect of submitting the work to anonymous peer review is daunting

- The learning curve will be steep due to lack of prior experience with writing a research article
- Both have heavy teaching loads and other professional responsibilities, so it will be difficult to find time to work on the article
- They have very different writing styles and aren't sure how to blend them seamlessly

Clearly, these presenters are not the first to face this challenge. Fortunately, in addition to this book, there are many publications that offer guidance on transforming a conference session into a publication (Happell, 2008; Huff, 2009; Joubert and Cronje, 2003; Steefel, 2014). Where research papers are concerned, Chap. 7, 8, and 9 of this book suggest ways to structure presentations that will lead to publication and the chapters on quantitative and qualitative research offer also templates that can be used to generate a first draft.

> **Online Tool**
> Review Texas Tech University's guidelines for Writing Research Papers and Posters at: http://www.tltc.ttu.edu/teach/TLTC%20Teaching%20Resources/PresentingConferencePapersAndPostersInTheHumanities.asp

The main consideration is to, from the very start, organize the presentation in the structure of a research paper. It also is helpful to conduct a search, not only on similar content, but also on similar method. For example, if you have conducted focus group interviews, find several excellent examples of published focus group research. Study how the authors explained the methods and procedures section before attempting to write this yourself. In many ways, it is like the artist who imitates the masters as a form of practice. One resource for drafting a research paper that our students have found particularly helpful is Creswell and Plano's (2004) "scripts". Their structure for drafting the purpose statement is:

> The purpose of this qualitative [insert type, e.g., grounded theory, case study, focus group interview] study is to_____(understand, describe, develop, discover) the _____(central focus) for_____(participants: person, process, groups) at _____(site).

Suggestions on various ways that a conference presentation can lead to a publication are offered in Table 4.6.

Ethical Issues in Conference Presentations

Presenters at professional conferences need to make ethical decisions that show respect for the time, money, and effort of fellow professionals. To illustrate, a doctoral candidate traveled to a national conference with the goal of attending sessions related to her dissertation. However, when she arrived at the first session,

Table 4.6 Conference presentations matched to types of publications

Type of conference session	Publication opportunities
Workshop, training or webinar	To publish a brief explanation a particular strategy, look into the newsletters of the organization, their informational brochures, and journal articles. For a more thorough treatment of the subject investigate books for practitioners published by commercial publishers (e.g., Scarecrow Press for librarians) or by published by professional associations as a service to their members
Report on a model program	Publishable articles about model programs are highly innovative, housed in a premier institution of higher education, and/or affiliated with a prominent researcher in the field. If your project does not meet these criteria, "flip" it. Instead of a detailed report on the local initiative, conduct a thorough review of the literature on other successful programs of this type to produce a theoretical/review article or practical article. Then use the local initiative as just one example. If the program has greater visibility and a wider audience, pursue publication with a scholarly publisher or university press
All-day or multiple-day institute for professionals	Investigate publishers of training materials and resources for professionals in your field. If the material is aligned with content that is taught in college-level coursework, consider a commercial publisher
Panel discussion, debate, or roundtables	Contact the editor and publishers of edited book series as a possible outlet for the work of various presenters unified by a theme. A theoretical/review type of journal article could emanate from the work as well; for instance, a "point/counterpoint" article could be based on a debate. Chapters in an edited book are another possible publication outlet for such material.
Research poster	Many organizations publish brief reports of research and a well-written poster results in an outline for a short contribution. In addition to features within a national journal, such as "Research in Brief" type of columns, the poster may lend itself to publication in one of the association's print or online newsletters or in a state or regional publication of the group
Research paper	The research paper might be publishable with the professional organization as conference proceedings, a peer-reviewed journal article, as a monograph (short book), or a book that would be of interest to the membership. Commercial publishers often publish monographs that have are of general interest to the international community of scholars, such as SpringerBriefs. Scholarly publishers may be interested if the authors have considerable prestige and visibility. University presses may be an outlet for the work if it is consistent with their mission
Keynote address	Develop the text of the speech to publish as conference proceedings, a journal article, as the basis for a book proposal, or as the introductory chapter for a book that you would edit

the presenter began by asking everyone to arrange their chairs in a circle. He then indicated that he had left the university (and grant project) and had not completed the research that was described in the conference program. He then said, "I'm sure that all of you have expertise on the subject, so let's just brainstorm together for the next 55 minutes". As you might predict, quite a few members of the group exited the session immediately. Several marched down to the conference headquarters table to

fill out an evaluation form or register their complaints with the conference planners. Situations such as this one are inexcusable. The ethical decision would have been to cancel, well in advance of the publication of the conference program. It is unfair to professional colleagues to be completely unprepared to fulfill the promise of the session description but attend anyway, just to add a line to the curriculum vitae. Likewise, it is not ethical for a "big name" professor to include his/her name on many conference programs and multiple sessions that are conducted by graduate students. If a name is on the session, that person should be in attendance unless there is some sort of emergency. It is fraudulent to do otherwise. The conference planners have every right to expect that all persons listed as presenters are, indeed, acting in good faith with every intention of participating.

Ethical considerations also apply to the review of other scholars' conference proposals. It is important to provide helpful critique rather than to get frustrated when a proposal is flawed. As a general guideline, reviewers should not put anything in writing that they would not say to that person if he or she were sitting there. Anonymous peer review is not a license to be rude or hostile. When writing reviews, be certain to mention what was done well as well as what needs to be improved. Strive to be helpful, remembering that you were not always this well-informed about how to write a proposal and no doubt committed some beginner's mistakes yourself. Think about what you hope for when your work is reviewed: not only some general comments, but also remarks about the details. This lets you know that your work was reviewed in a thoughtful and well-balanced fashion, rather than given a cursory glance. Another mistake in reviewing is to presume that you need to agree wholeheartedly with the proposal in order to think it is worth sharing. This occurs when, for example, a qualitative researcher is more critical of quantitative research or vice versa. It might also occur when reviewers give a proposal a more positive evaluation, however flawed, because the proposers are from their native country or other group to which they belong. Reviewers need to bear in mind that quality criteria, rather than personal affiliations and professional biases, are the basis for assessment of conference proposals.

Conclusion

There is extensive, cross-disciplinary research to support the assertion that only about 8–10 % of the conference presentations are published as research in peer-reviewed outlets (Joubert and Cronje, 2003; Richling et al., 2014). Given that insufficient time is cited as a major reason for generating few publications, it makes sense for scholars to capitalize on the time already invested in a successful conference presentations and generate publications from them. Rather than allow the positive energy of a highly effective conference session with peers to dissipate and let the data get stale, make a plan for pursuing publication. Figure out the kind and amount of support you will need and start assembling it as, even as you make the trip back home. In fact, gaining insight into what you need in order to progress

professionally is a key to success as a scholar. It is this metacognitive approach—the ability to "think about your own thinking"—that holds the greatest promise for improving outcomes. Unlike some jobs, scholars' careers can be surprisingly long. If you get very comfortable and confident about making conference presentations that surely is to your credit; however, it becomes important to raise expectations for yourself periodically in order to avoid stagnation. The worst in our profession deteriorate into the deadwood of an academic department. They contribute little to their chosen fields, drone on from yellowed lecture notes, suffer from pervasive ennui, fail to engage their students, and have a litany of complaints about their colleagues and institutions. The best way to counteract this decline is to keep intellectual stimulation high and to continually pursue projects that generate enthusiasm and interest. At its very essence, professional development consists of growth and change in positive, hoped-for directions. Pursuing publication based on presentations—a task that so many scholars evidently neglect to complete—is one way to accomplish this.