Your voice

Powerpointlessness?

For over twenty years ACHLIS (Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science) has been endeavouring to collect and abstract all library and information science items published in Australia, and by Australians in the international literature. The outcome is probably the most comprehensive record of such publication of any country.

However it is not a task made any easier by library conferences which produce no edited print or electronic proceedings, or allow speakers the shoddiness of providing a PowerPoint presentation as their contribution to the record of the conference. If a conference is worth running, it is worth having an enduring record of it. Of all the professions, librarianship should be setting the example.

I can thus only concur with the points made by John Levett (*inCite* Jan-Feb 2004) in his letter about the 'gross reductionism of PowerPoint', whose uptake apparently has amazed even its developers.

And whilst on the topic of PowerPoint, could all ALIA conference organisers inform speakers that library conference participants are literate and do not need to have the text of PowerPoint slides read to them? Dr Jamie MacKenzie, the US educator who will be well known to Australian teacher librarians at least, refers to this as 'Powerpointlessness', a coinage he attributes to an Australian.

Dr Alan Bundy, ACHLIS, University of South Australia

And more...

Like John Levett, the Ivan Trundle's *Death by bullet-points: shortchanging the audience and dumbing-down the conference* struck a chord which resonated when I read John's letter. I am in total agreement with John and have been appalled that a supplementary technique that can aid in the exposition of graphical concepts (also easily manipulated to distort the underlying truth of any given data set) has taken over from the professional discourse. As a presenter I have been known to assume that the delegates to library conferences have the capacity to read a paper that has been printed in the conference proceedings (where this is available either at or before the conference) and to discuss topics arising from the paper rather than to merely read the paper to the trapped audience.

My brother was an engineer and his description of both national and international engineering conferences has always seemed to me to the model that we should follow. Essentially he described a system wherein the person(s) presenting the paper was required to submit the paper in advance of the conference to a panel of professional peers deemed to be knowledgeable on the topic of the paper. The paper was then vetted and, if accepted, would be printed and distributed *before* the conference. At the presentation the author(s) were permitted a few minutes of 'additional exposition and/or explanation' and were then required to defend the paper. The review panel started the discussion of the paper and this was followed by questions and comments from the audience. This methodology was being successfully implemented by my brother's professional colleagues more than twenty years ago. With modern communication technology I am sure that we could implement something similar now.

Richard Goodram, Mt Nelson Tas

Your letters on any issue of relevance to the library and information sector are welcomed.

All letters should be addressed to the inCite editor and may be e-mailed to **incite@alia.org.au**, or faxed to 02 6282 2249, or posted to: Your voice, ALIA, PO Box 6335, Kingston 2604. Please include your name and postal address with your letter or e-mail.

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