

## EDITORIAL

### Professional Presentations and Lectures

Readers of this journal no doubt communicate with the public in various forms of media and formats occasionally or frequently. As a university professor since 1969, I have been giving lectures, presentations, seminars, discussions and rap sessions to groups large and small for more than 35 years and have seen interesting trends and changes in professional presentations.

My first presentation was when I was 11 years old. I gave an account of the movements of the heavenly bodies – the sun, the moon and the stars – in a Sunday school class. I had such a great time that I decided that I would be a speaker the rest of my life!

Indeed I have. I sought opportunities to be in front of groups to tell my stories of all kinds as I grew up. In college, I took Public Speaking Class 101 twice. As a graduate student, I volunteered to give oral presentations of my research as often as possible. I remember in 1967 I gave my first official research paper presentation at North Carolina (NC) State University in Raleigh. Dr. Melvin Speck, a most respected food microbiologist at NC State University, was in the audience. Years later, he would tell people that he heard Dan Fung gave his first talk and that Dan Fung has not stop talking ever since! What an honor to hear that from the inventor of sweet acidophilus milk.

I gave my first lecture as a young assistant professor at Pennsylvania State University in September 1969 as a guest lecturer in an undergraduate microbiology class on immunology. I was greatly surprised that at the end of the class, the students spontaneously clapped in appreciation of my inaugural lecture. I have not received such a reception in a regular class since!

At first, presentations were made with very little supportive materials – blackboard and white chalk, paperboard with marking pens, transparencies and overhead projectors. The major development was the introduction of standard size slides, first in black and white, and then in color. Speakers around the world were carrying large numbers of slides and several carousals to speak here and there using the ubiquitous Kodak slide projector. In every meeting, there would invariably be speakers with upside-down, reversed and tangled slides during presentations.

Several times, the slide projector would jam and people would be running around frantically trying to solve the problem. Occasionally, the light bulb would burn out and create chaos in the meeting.

Another problem in those days was the type of slide projector being used around the world. I remember once, about 500 scientists were in a meeting in Hungary. Many of them expected to use the standard Kodak projector, but the projector there was made in Germany. It took almost half

of the meeting time to figure out how to work out the problem. What a waste of valuable time!

Luckily, the age of the 2- × 2-in. slide format has rapidly disappeared in the past 5–10 years. I remember when I used to carry about 500 slides and two carousals for my long trips. That was about half the weight of my luggage! The good thing about slides was that I could arrange my slides on site and could design my talks according to the audience and the situation. I miss doing that in these days of computer presentations.

Of course now we are in the PowerPoint era. Even I have converted to using PowerPoint presentations after much persuasion from my assistants. I have no objections to that on the conditions that my assistants make the PowerPoint presentations for me. Therein lies some problems for me.

First, I do not carry a computer when I travel so I cannot make any changes in my talks on the way, which I could do with the slides. Second, which to me is more of a problem, I am asked to send in my PowerPoint talks *ahead* of time before the meeting. Sometime months ahead. I really do not like this for several reasons: (1) I cannot change my talk once I send in my PowerPoint information; (2) the organizers usually print the talk ahead of time and distribute the talk along with other talks in book form to the participants. That is both good and bad. The good part is that the participants will have valuable information to bring home. Those who cannot come to the meeting can have some materials to read. The organizers usually make some money by selling the “book” during or after the meetings.

The bad part is that everyone knows about all the talks ahead of time. There is no element of surprise and creativity for a speaker. It is no fun to try to tell an exciting story with pun lines when everybody already has the story in print, in front of them. Many times, I see people just falling asleep while I talk or worse yet, flipping pages of the book to look at other talks while I was talking – what an insult!

Well, as a frequent speaker to groups, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, I am accustomed to all kinds of situations in public speaking. I have been giving talks to thousands of people at a time and to *one* person once. I have seen people coming in the room late, going out early, falling asleep, snore, yawn, smile, read, write, laugh, cry, flirt, eat, drink and all manners of behavior in my lectures and presentations. I welcome them all and feel very honored to be asked to make a presentation in public – that is what excites me and makes me work hard to generate new information and ideas to spread the good news of Rapid Methods and Automation in Microbiology everywhere.

Yes, indeed, Dr. Speck, wherever you may be, Dan Fung has not stopped talking since that lovely day in North Carolina so many years ago.

DANIEL Y.C. FUNG  
Editor