

COLUMN: PRESIDENT'S HOOK

Speed is the Name of the Game



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The AFS Annual Meeting is a tremendous opportunity for fishery professionals to meet, interact, and share information. Time and time again, meeting attendees indicate that one of the most valuable aspects of the Annual Meeting is the ability to reconnect with colleagues and to facilitate the establishment of networks of individuals who share a common interest in fisheries. Typically, our Annual Meetings include both oral and poster presentations, the latter promising to provide authors the chance to interact one-on-one with interested colleagues. However, in terms of effectiveness or visibility, the poster session has not always delivered what it has promised. The challenge presented to the 2008 Program Committee was to incorporate posters into the Annual Meeting, but breathe new life into this format. Here, I've asked Michael Donaldson of the AFS 2008 Arrangements Committee to join me in introducing an exciting new way to encompass posters in the Annual Meeting—the speed presentation.

A speed presentation refers to a sub-session of a symposium where participating poster presenters are allocated three minutes to deliver a focused oral presentation that highlights the key points of their poster. Although several scientific societies, such as the Society for Conservation Biology, have used the speed presentation format at meetings, this is a novel approach for AFS. To help introduce this unique format, we will offer speed presentations along with the traditional poster session at the 2008 Annual Meeting. The speed presentation format will enable presenters to publicize their posters to a like-minded audience to garner more exposure for their work and to facilitate greater interactions among poster presenters and their audience.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

Speed presentation sessions will be scheduled as part of the symposia and will occur independently of the traditional poster session. Like authors delivering conventional oral presentations, authors of speed presentations will deliver a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. However, speed presenters will be allocated a strictly enforced time slot of three minutes and will be permitted to present a maximum of three PowerPoint slides. Following the speed presentation, authors will attend their posters for a one-hour period to address questions from interested parties. Posters that accompany the speed presentations will be displayed with other symposium posters and will remain posted for the duration of the meeting (similar to traditional posters).

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE SPEED PRESENTATION?

At AFS Annual Meetings, the sheer number of posters often can be overwhelming, resulting in audiences having difficulties finding time to view all of the posters of interest. One of the main advantages to the speed presentation format is that it provides greater exposure to each poster by enabling audiences to familiarize themselves with the posters that align with their interests prior to the poster session. For speed presentation authors, this is an occasion to share either completed works or "works in progress." From a student perspective, this approach can be a great opportunity to gain experience with oral presentations without feeling besieged by the prospect of delivering a full-length oral presentation to an audience of experts.

HOW DOES AN AUTHOR DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE SPEED PRESENTATION?

In the dissemination of scientific information, speed is often the name of the game. However, the rapid delivery of top-notch scientific material is inherently challenging. The test for speed presenters will be to deliver quality over quantity by highlighting only the key context and findings of their work. Although presenters are confined to presenting three slides in three minutes, the delivery of the presentation is up to the discretion of the presenter. However, we recommend simplifying slides as much as possible by minimizing verbose text and using visuals to enhance the conveyance of information. Time limits will be strictly enforced by symposium moderators, so brief and focused presentations are encouraged. Although the presentation time slots are short, remember that as an author, you will be relying on your poster to transmit the rest of the material.

The speed presentation format promises to be an exciting means of enhancing communication among fishery professionals at the AFS Annual Meetings. We look forward to seeing this format in action at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Ottawa next August. For further information, consult the 2008 Call for Papers (www.fisheries.org/afs08/program/call.pdf), which provides details on abstract submissions for speed presentations as well as for oral and poster presentations. Questions and comments on the speed presentation format can be sent to Nigel Lester (nigel.lester@ontario.ca), Mark Ridgway (mark.ridgway@ontario.ca), Michael Donaldson (mdonald2@connect.carleton.ca), or Mary Fabrizio (mfabrizio@vims.edu).