



american
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conservation

**Preserving Cultural
Heritage**

Guidelines for AIC Annual Meeting In-person and Online Events and Presentations

The following guidelines are to help speakers and moderators navigate presentations, both in-person and online. We hope that these guidelines will help explain the meeting process and ensure that presentations and conference sessions are more accessible to attendees with a focus towards those with disabilities. This makes the presentations and sessions more inclusive of all members including participants with different learning styles and non-native English speakers. Online presentations can pose particular issues for those who are hard-of-hearing, deaf or have low visual acuity as well as those with slower internet connections. This guide is also intended to help avoid some common pitfalls of presentations.

Keep in mind disabilities may not always be visible or obvious. It is also important to recognize that some issues of accessibility for speakers, moderators, and attendees may conflict or may not happen as outlined below. We encourage everyone to continue to learn and work to make their presentations more inclusive and accessible. Resources and further reading are included at the end of the document.

Presenters:

- **Ensure that the author list is appropriate.**

Appropriately crediting contributions is an ethical mandate for our organization.

Authors, whether of oral presentations or posters, have contributed to the work through:

1) Scholarship – an author should make substantial, direct, intellectual contribution to the work. This could include the conception, design, analysis and/or interpretation of data.

Anyone who meets qualification 1 should have the opportunity to participate in actions 2-4. However, these later criteria should not be used as a tool to disqualify individuals from being an author.

2) Authorship - all authors should play a role in the drafting and/or revision of a presentation or poster.

3) Review and Approval - all authors must approve that their contributions are accurately noted and be satisfied with the quality of description of their portion of the work.

4) Responsibility - all authors are responsible, to the best of their ability, for the integrity and accuracy of their work.

Authorship is not limited to colleagues in the conservation field. Under these criteria, it is important to recognize that if a project has involved collaboration with an artist, with a community, or outside organization, they should be appropriately acknowledged as authors.

All people named as authors must have approved the inclusion of their name on the presentation/poster

- **Provide formal acknowledgments for those who have contributed to the project but are not authors.**

At the end of the talk include a formal acknowledgments slide for those who have supported the project, or on a poster include an acknowledgments section. These individuals might include technicians who acquired data, a lab head or key administrator who obtained funding, or a colleague who helped with the work in a tangential but valuable way, such as; providing a key material or sample.

Give photo credits if using images supplied by others.

If feasible, name all individuals shown in images.

- **Speak clearly and use simple language. Try to avoid idioms, unnecessary jargon, and undefined acronyms.**

Idioms can be particularly difficult for those with cognitive disabilities to interpret and may be taken literally. Additionally, they are often geographically specific, making them less comprehensible outside that region.

- **Provide trigger warnings for sensitive material and topics.**

Sensitive topics might include human remains, excavation of burial materials, or photographs of specific groups or with sensitive or violent imagery.

- **Use gender-neutral language when possible and appropriate.**

The use of gendered pronouns (his or her) can exclude those who identify in other ways. “They” is increasingly acceptable for both plural and singular gender-neutral pronouns.

- **Use sufficient color contrast for visuals.**

Avoid busy backgrounds and lots of patterns. Be mindful of how colors appear to those who are colorblind, especially red/green and blue/green.

- **Use an easy-to-read font.**

Sans-serif fonts, such as Arial, Verdana, Helvetica can be easier to read.

Avoid complicated and fancy fonts.

Italics and underlining can reduce the legibility of text. Use them sparingly or not at all.

- **Maintain large font sizes for titles, bullet points, and other important text.**

Font size should be kept above 18 pt. Headers should be between 36 – 44 pt.

The appearance of a font’s size can vary greatly by typeface.

- **Provide minimal text on each slide.**

Try to stick to only a few points or bullets.

Less than 6 lines of text in a block is recommended.

- **Keep text away from edges and bottoms of slides.**

Text near edges and bottoms of slides can be harder to read on small screens, can be obscured by Closed Captioning (CC), and is more likely to be cut off.

- **Do not use the color of the text as the only means of differentiating information.**

- **Provide an outline of the presentation**

An introductory outline to the talk set-up the proper expectation for a presentation and help participants follow along.

- **Use slide templates.**

Templates provide a hierarchy to the information on a slide so that screen readers can read the elements of a slide in the intended order. Templates also make it easier for slides to be turned into outlines. Inserted text boxes can be read out of order by screen readers and should be used judiciously.

- **Read out or describe the content of slides.**

Those with low visual acuity or Visually Impaired People (VIPs) may find small images or text hard to read

Describe what the images or graphs show, for example, say “After aging, all samples showed increased yellowing and darkening.” This is more informative and does not rely on the listener's ability to quickly examine and interpret the image/graph. Whereas “As you can see, the samples didn't age well.” requires more ‘work’ on the listener's part.

- **Avoid flashing lights or quickly changing graphics.**

Flashing lights can cause issues for those with chronic migraines or epilepsy, along with others. If these need to be used, provide a warning to the audience at the beginning of the presentation then again right before they appear.

- **Use Microsoft Accessibility Checker.**

Microsoft PowerPoint has a built-in Accessibility Checker that can identify issues for screen readers and other Assistive Technologies. It is a good check for presentations that will be distributed in other formats but should not be relied on solely to check for accessibility of presentations.

Moderators/Hosts:

Before Sessions:

- **Ask the speakers if they need specific accommodations such as a wheelchair ramp or have visual or hearing impairments or if they have infrastructure needs, such as a table for samples**

Please communicate any requirements to AIC Annual Meeting Director, Ruth Seyler at rseyler@culturalheritage.org

- **Confirm the pronunciation of the speakers' names and their preferred pronouns.**

- **Speakers should bring their talks on USB/flash drives**

AIC recommends that speakers come half an hour before their session to load their presentations on the conference computer and run through them to make sure they are displaying correctly. This system works out well most of the time, but isn't always feasible. If a speaker can't come early for some reason, try to get their USB in advance.

- **Speakers MUST use the computers provided in the session room**

Switching between computers can be logistically difficult and time-consuming, and there are not enough AV staff on hand during sessions to facilitate this.

- **Nature abhors a vacuum**

If the audience has no questions after a session, a good moderator needs to have some ready. Speakers are often delighted to provide 'seed questions' for the moderator to ask that highlight aspects of their work they find interesting or wish they had time to go into greater detail. Email them about 2 weeks before the conference to solicit ideas.

During the Sessions:

- **Always use the microphone when speaking**

Insist that speakers use the microphone when presenting and audience members do so during the question and answer period. If the questioner cannot reach a microphone, repeat their question into your microphone.

- **Keep the speakers and question and answer period to time**

start your session on time, even if the audience is still trickling in

it's helpful to signal a speaker once when they have 5 minutes left and again when time's up. There are various ways to do this. People have had a timer on the podium, used a timer tone on their phone, waved a cat toy, or held up a hand or a sign. Whatever you do, tell the speakers ahead of time so they know what to expect. Be strict about timing

Be strict about cutting off questions if time is short. You can invite people to continue the dialogue later

- **Moderating questions**

Session chairs are strongly encouraged to exercise their discretion and cut off speakers or audience members if dialogue becomes inappropriate.

If an audience "question" is too long, too specific, or otherwise not appropriate for a conference Q&A, interject and say, "Thank you, this is so interesting, but in the interest of time, I suggest that you connect with the speaker after the session. I'd like to get to other questions."

If a questioner is aggressive, hostile, or disrespectful you can step in and say something like, "I'm going to stop you right there and ask you to moderate your tone, because that sounded aggressive (or rude, whatever). Our conference does have a code of conduct and all questions and comments must be respectful. Can you please rephrase what you just said? If not, let's move on."

After the Sessions:

- **Lead the audience in a round of applause for all speakers in the session**
- **Reach out in-person or by email to thank the speakers for participation**
- **Request feedback after the event.**

This will allow participants who experienced issues to let you know so they can be addressed in the future.

- **Clarify what will come out of the event.**

Let participants know if there will be follow-up, minutes, post-prints, or a recording to be shared.

Online Specific Guidelines

General:

- **Face the audience/ camera and do not obscure your mouth.**

This is not always possible due to masks, but it is still important when possible for those who use speech reading techniques.

- **F/AIC now provides live automated Closed Captioning (CC) for online workshops and events.**

Speakers are still encouraged to send slides or other notes in advance to help those who are hard-of-hearing or deaf to follow along; update materials if you make changes.

CC can be activated in the menu bar along the bottom of the screen in Zoom Webinar.

- **Hardwire your internet connection, if possible.**

Hardwired connections can help alleviate issues with an unstable Wi-Fi connection, which can affect your audio quality, make sound drop out, and render the use of speech-to-text programs difficult.

- **Test all technology BEFORE the meeting.**

This includes camera and video functions, Wi-Fi, and screen sharing if you plan on using these. Hosts and all participants should also know how to mute microphones.

If possible, offer a session to test that all technology works beforehand.

- **Only one speaker at a time and take pauses between speakers.**

Don't interrupt other people when they're speaking or attempt to speak over them. Interrupting speakers is difficult for all participants to

understand and especially problematic for those using speech-to-text software.

Most online formats do not support multiple speakers at a time.

Pausing between speakers allows people and software to catch up (such as those using text-to-speech, with slow bandwidth, or taking notes).

- **Minimize background noise and notifications.**

Find a quiet place to host or call into your webinar. If you can't find a quiet environment, use a headset with a microphone to help reduce background noise.

Turn off all notifications on cell phones, messaging apps, and mail clients. Setting your status to "do not disturb" can help reduce interruptions.

- **State your name each time you speak.**

This allows anyone using an interpreter or listening only to voices to know who is speaking.

- **Be mindful of clothing, accessory choices, and the environment.**

If you'll be on video, solid color clothing (instead of patterned) is less distracting.

Be mindful of any accessories or jewelry if you are expressive with your hands. The noise and movement can be distracting and interfere with audio for participants.

The positioning of light and certain virtual backgrounds make speech reading techniques difficult (e.g. backlit speakers, glares from the sun, and low light settings).

- **Wait to share your screen until you are ready to start presenting.**

Sharing your screen before the presentation starts can mean that people who use speech reading techniques can't see participants and speakers.

- **Read out or describe the content of slides.**

Those with low visual acuity or Visually Impaired People (VIPs) may find the smaller format of individual screens more difficult if their standard text reader cannot be used.

- **Incorporate audio description and alternative text of important images, graphs, and charts on your slides; videos should be closed captioned.**

For example: “After aging, all samples showed increased yellowing and darkening.” vs. “As you can see, the samples didn’t age well.”

Alternative text (Alt text) is used by text-to-speech software to describe an image.

Moderators/Hosts:

Before Sessions:

- **Know the call-in option for people without webcams or microphones.**
- **Explain expectations for meeting participants and event attendees.**

Information might include how everyone can participate, how to contribute, and any roles that need to be assigned. A code of conduct can be introduced if you anticipate issues around some of these conventions.

During Sessions:

- **Greet/Introduce all participants or speakers.**

Sign in to the event 5-10 minutes early to allow attendees to join before the content begins. This can also give some time for those with technical issues to resolve them.

Use gender pronouns when doing introductions and/or add gender pronouns to your name as it appears on the screen. Practice names before the session begins.

- **Mute participants for presentations.**

Muting participants ensures the speaker is always the focus of the presentation and their video feed remains prominent.

- **Inform participants of how to turn on the provided Closed Captioning (CC).**

CC will need to be turned on by individual participants if they wish to use it.

- **If a sign language interpreter is present, make sure they remain visible at all times.**

Ask presenters to allow extra time for inspection of visuals after they are done speaking. People using interpreters cannot examine slides while they are watching the interpreter.

Incorporate pauses into discussion and between topics to allow people to catch up (such as those using text-to-speech, with slow bandwidth, or taking notes).

- **Encourage engagement in meetings and presentations.**

Ask participants to submit questions and comments; multiple people have the same one. The online venue is a good opportunity to provide immediate answers.

Be prepared to ask questions of the speakers to start Q&A sections.

The “raise your hand” feature in Zoom can allow people to be equally recognized and contribute. All conferencing programs have a similar feature.

Resources and further reading:

[British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia friendly style guide](#)

[Web Accessibility In Mind, Contrast Checker](#)

[Coblis — Color Blindness Simulator](#)

[Web Accessibility in Mind, PowerPoint Accessibility](#)

[Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing, Accessible Presentation Guide](#)

[Microsoft Office, Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities](#)

[Web Accessibility Initiative, How to Make Your Presentations Accessible to All](#)

[Purdue University Online Writing Lab, Using Gender-Neutral and Gender-Inclusive Language](#)

[Best Practices for Hosting a Digital Event](#)

[7 Best Practices for COVID-19-Necessitated Online Meetings | Learning Innovation](#)

[University of Washington, Hosting accessible online meetings | Accessible Technology](#)

[Accessibility in Video Conferencing and Remote Meetings](#)

[Guide to making your online events accessible for autistic people](#)

[American Foundation for the Blind – 5 Accessibility Actions You Can Take When You’re Moving Your Conference or Classes Online](#)

This resource has been compiled from multiple resources and edited to fit the needs of the AIC community. EIC would like to acknowledge the help of Sarah Reidell, Suzanne Davis, Rebecca Kaczowski, Sally G. Kim, and Corina Rogge, who shared resources, provided guidance, and/or reviewed the document.