

# Preparing for ACRL's 11th National Conference

## How to create competitive contributed papers

by Gloriana St. Clair



Giving a contributed paper at the 2003 ACRL National Conference, "Learning to Make a Difference," in Charlotte, April 10–13, 2003, is an excellent way for librarians to share research and to advance their careers.

Feedback received in the contributed paper forum can be used to improve the quality of the work and ensure its acceptance by a journal in librarianship. This short article makes a few suggestions for creating a successful abstract. Abstract authors can improve their chances for acceptance by reading and following these suggestions, which focus on five key areas:

**1) Generalizability.** The author's challenge is always to show how the work relates to the challenges facing academic librarians. Clear statement of the problem the research will address is an excellent beginning.

**2) "So what?"** Like articles in most library journals, the contributed papers abstracts will be read by a panel of experts who will decide which ones will be selected for presentation at the conference. These experts want to know why the work proposed should be presented to the ACRL

conference audience. The significance of the research at hand should be made as clear as possible.

**3) Writing quality.** High school and college professors who hammered students about the need for quality writing to succeed professionally were correct. Well-written abstracts with good organization, grammar, spelling, syntax, and word choice will outperform less well-written abstracts. Recruit the best writers in your organization to review the abstract before it is submitted.

**4) Research and statistical quality.** Poor survey and research design are heartbreaking for reviewers because so much effort has been put into a piece of work that can never be valid. Consult the experts on campus or in the profession about the design of the study and about its statistical dimensions.

**5) Scholarly grounding.** Abstracts are brief—only 250 to 500 words. They allow little space for the author to indicate the body of scholarship that informed the thinking behind the contributed paper. Abstract authors should indicate briefly that the work explores an idea unpublished in library literature or that it derives from and is a part of the work of several other studies in the field.

### About the author

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Quality contributed papers will enliven the Charlotte conference. Attendees will be buzzing with comments about the thought-provoking presentations they have heard. Creating a successful abstract can be easy if the suggestions above are noted.

Contributed papers are due on May 31, 2002. The Call for Participation is available

online at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/charlotte/cfp.html>. Abstracts of 250 to 500 words should be sent to: Gloriana St. Clair, University Librarian, Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, 4909 Frew Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890; (412) 268-2447; fax (412) 268-2793; e-mail: [gstclair@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:gstclair@andrew.cmu.edu).

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## Tips for successful workshops

by Rosemary McAndrew and Susan Richards

**R**emember the workshops at the 2001 ACRL National Conference in Denver? Innovative, engaging, focused, these workshops were an opportunity to concentrate on one issue or topic for an extended period of time. Four of these workshops were offered in Denver for the first time, and participants gave them rave reviews. As you contemplate the development of a workshop for the 2002 conference, keep in mind the following:

- Workshops are three-hour sessions.
- During this lengthy session, you will be able to engage your audience in a variety of active learning exercises.
- Participants expect to develop a new skill, plan, or program.
- Limit the number of workshop facilitators. Remember, learning, not presenting, is key. (This is not an opportunity for a large number of presenters to impart information. It is a chance for attendees to actively take part in a learning opportunity.)
- Limit the content. While you have three hours, it is better to cover less information in-depth than to overload the participants with information.

- Clarify your format and the learning outcomes you expect to accomplish. Ask how you will encourage participation. What will the participants learn or take away at the end of the workshop?

- Let your imagination fly. Here is a chance to develop an interactive learning experience for librarians who are eager to engage in a topic you chose.

At the Denver conference, workshop participants developed marketing plans, created library faculty collaborations, devised plans for partnerships, and assessed their information literacy initiatives. A workshop is more than a focused discussion. Those who participate will expect to have something to show for their time and effort. Is there a tangible, like a written policy or plan, that attendees will complete at the end of the workshop? Is there a particular skill or set of skills participants will develop during the workshop?

We know you have a workshop idea that will help all of us "Learn to Make A Difference." Send in that application by May 31, 2002. The Call for Presentations is available online at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/charlotte/cfp.html>. ■

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### About the authors

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