

Proposing Conference Panels

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Overview

- Discuss role of academic conferences
- Explain difference between individual presentations and panels
- Review structure and strategies for writing panel proposals

Academic Conferences

- Conferences are important outlets for discussing emerging research
- Many publications begin as conference presentations

Academic Conferences

- Discussing your research can help you get feedback from peers

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- Hearing about other research can highlight new trends
- Also provide networking opportunities

Academic Conferences

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- Multiple types of presentation proposals
- Focus of this webinar: proposing an entire panel
- A panel is a group of presentations that all revolve around the same theme or topic

Proposing a Panel

- Discuss the general structure of a panel proposal, then review useful writing strategies

Proposing a Panel

- Typical panel proposal has a main section that identifies common foundation

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- Common foundation = theoretical frameworks, keystone texts, or shared data that all presenters will discuss

Proposing a Panel

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- After main section, there are subsections that explain each individual presentation
- Subsections identify the goals and basic structure of each presentation
- Quickly identify main argument, research question, type of evidence that is examined

Proposing a Panel

- A majority of a panel proposal should be the main section
- 500 word proposal = 300-400 words for the main section and 50-75 words for each subsection

Proposing a Panel

- Panel proposals assume you've already networked with other scholars
- Can be colleagues in your institution
- Can be peers from other institutions

Proposing a Panel

- Quickly review some writing strategies that can be helpful and some strategies that should be avoided

Conference Themes

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- Theme = a foundational premise that ties together all sessions
- Themes can be single ideas, specific events, or keystone authors

Conference Themes

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- A theme is often discussed in the initial CFP and/or chair's address
- Sometimes the theme is discussed directly
- Sometimes the theme is implied in how the chair contextualizes the conference

Conference Themes

- Here are two important lessons about conference themes

Conference Themes

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- **Second: many times, conference themes are abstract and require interpretation**

Conference Themes

- Main section of a proposal needs to explain how you are defining the conference theme

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- Main section of a proposal needs to explain how you are defining the conference theme
- Can cite authors and sources to help clarify your own interpretation of the theme
- Don't assume theme "speaks for itself"

Conference Themes

- Subsections don't need to be as detailed when discussing conference theme

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- Subsections don't need to be as detailed when discussing conference theme
- Instead, focus on the unique claims, evidence, or outcomes
- Show how ideas from main section can lend themselves to new findings

Conference Themes

- **Key issue to note: the main section needs to accomplish two things simultaneously**

Conference Themes

- Key issue to note: the main section needs to accomplish two things simultaneously
- Define conference theme and identify the “common ground” between each presentation
- This requires coordination between all participants before writing the proposal

Writing Proposals

- Conclude by noting a few writing strategies that you should avoid

Writing Proposals

- Avoid oppositional language

Writing Proposals

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- Don't use words such as “right” versus “wrong” when discussing previous research or other scholars
- Oppositional language is bound to offend the conference reviewers or attendees

Writing Proposals

- Avoid speaking in overly-vague or universal ways

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- We all hope that our research can change the world
- However, most advanced research is highly- specialized.
Focus on the discipline-specific benefits of your work

Writing Proposals

- Don't overlook contemporary context

Writing Proposals

- Don't overlook contemporary context
- Main section of proposal needs to explain why we should consider key ideas here and now
- Referencing real-world events or trends can reinforce relevance of your panel

Writing Proposals

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Writing Proposals

- Lastly, be selective. It is fine if you need to pass on applying to a conference
- Sometimes a theme is too different from your research
- Avoid spending time writing a presentation that won't advance your research or teaching

Writing Proposals

- Time, energy, and money are all limited resources
- Attending a conference requires a lot of planning and logistics (setting aside time to write, moving around teaching schedule, etc.)
- Going to many different conferences a year may not be the most effective use of your energy

Conclusion

- The ORSSP Lab has consultants to help with both quantitative and qualitative research questions
- Webinars that discuss writing strategies
- Resources to help authors draft writing at every stage