Composing Conference Proposals

Matthew Kelly, PhD
Assistant Professor of English
ORS Research & Data Analysis Lab

Overview

- **Discuss role of academic conferences**

- **Explain goals of conference proposals**

- **Review strategies for writing proposals**

Academic Conferences

- **Conferences are important outlets for discussing nascent or early research**

Academic Conferences

- **Most conference presentations discuss research that has already been conducted but has yet to be translated into a formal publication**

Academic Conferences

- **Most conference presentations discuss research that has already been conducted but has yet to be translated into a formal publication**

- **Many publications begin as conference presentations**

Academic Conferences

- **Discussing early research can help you get feedback**

- **Hearing early research can highlight new trends**

- **Also provide networking opportunities**

Conference Themes

- **Most conferences revolve around a theme**

- **Theme = a foundational premise that will tie together all presentations and sessions**

- **Themes can be single ideas, specific events, or keystone authors**

Conference Themes

- 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

- **First: conference organizers <u>really</u> like their themes**

- **Second: many times, conference organizers don't <u>really</u> know what their theme means**

Conference Themes

- **A proposal needs to explain how you are defining and/or applying a theme within your research**

- **Show how your research can help expand a conference theme (not just repeat a theme)**

Writing Proposals

- **Lastly, you need to explain the structure of your presentation**

- **How will your presentation engage with the ideas you've put forth?**

- **What evidence, methods, guiding questions, and findings will you discuss?**

Writing a Proposal

- **Length varies between 200-500 words**

- **Word lengths are usually outlined in the CFP**

- **Pay attention to different word counts for different different proposals (such as roundtables vs individual presentations)**