

36 SOME TIPS ON LECTURING

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One of the peripheral but important aspects of going on expeditions is talking about them afterwards. It can be both pleasurable and profitable. If the expedition has sprung from some institution (school, college, university, exploration society or whatever), the leader and his or her team may feel obliged to offer a presentation to the other staff and members of their institution. This will normally be a team effort rather than a solo performance by the leader.

The points that follow are, however, addressed mainly to the expedition leader or member who has it in mind to give lectures to audiences single-handedly: not just “duty” talks, but talks that might raise a bit of money in the often-critical post-expedition phase. Although it naturally forms part of this phase, bear in mind that you can, in a limited way, use lecturing as a money-raiser before the expedition. This is more easily done if you have slides or film from some reconnaissance expedition or previous visit to the expedition area.

GETTING THE LECTURE TOGETHER

Aspiring lecturers must make sure before the expedition that they are going to have access to a large enough range of good images with which to illustrate the lecture. If they are confident of their own photographic work there will be no problem. Otherwise, they must arrange to have copies of the best slides that the other members have taken. Most leaders get their members’ written agreement on this before the expedition.

An hour’s talk should be accompanied by between 40 and 100 slides. Don’t over-ice the cake by showing more than 100 unless (1) you are a very good speaker who can hold an audience in comfort for over an hour, or (2) you don’t intend to speak on all the slides but merely present them rapidly as a pictorial “essay”. They must, of course, all be of excellent quality. Discard all poorly exposed, badly focused slides unless they are of exceptional interest. As a general rule never be tempted to show more than one

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slide of the same thing. Endless views of the same glacier from slightly different angles can pall. In general, pictures of people are more interesting than landscapes and some shots of local people should be shown even if they were not directly involved with the expedition. You should try to find a slide to illustrate every aspect of the expedition, from the journey out to the culmination. When you have chosen a set, make high-quality duplicates and get them protectively mounted as soon as possible. Never project your originals if you can possibly help it.

Have plenty of good anecdotes: the funny story that people chuckled over during the expedition, or on the way back, is the sort of thing to remember. Amusing little things about the way you lived, the way people behaved or what they said go down best. After the first few talks you will soon find what is well received, and you will jettison some stories and introduce and refine others as time goes on.

Don't write out your lecture as a script. At all costs it must not be read out. Speak from the heart. If you need an aide-memoire have a list of all the slides with a brief caption and, if necessary, a codeword that will remind you of some anecdote or observation that you wish to make while the slide is on the screen. At first you may find that the slides act as your notes and jog your memory as they appear on the screen. After giving the lecture a few times you will begin to know what is coming up and be able to lead up to the next slide with a few anticipatory remarks. In this way the talk will begin to flow. Glance only fleetingly at the screen to check what is there. Address your remarks to the audience, never to the screen.

FINDING THE AUDIENCE

This is the most difficult bit. There seem to be more speakers with a story to tell than there are audiences to listen to them. And yet the lecture, that joy of our Victorian forebears, is not dead – despite television – and in the winter months it flourishes.

For the young prospective speaker, with no ambitions at this stage to get on the national networks, I suggest the following audiences: Townswomen's Guilds (TWGs); Women's Institutes (WIs); Rotary Clubs; Round Table; National Housewives' Register (NHR); young wives' clubs; wine circles; university exploration societies; parent-teachers associations (PTAs); preparatory schools; and old people's day centres. There are many other potential audiences, but these are tried and true, and all of them proliferate at a local level.

There are no firm rules about getting in touch with these bodies in your own locality. Personal contacts are the best. The phone book is useful. TWGs and WIs are organised in County Federations. The WI County Federation HQ (find it in the phone book) will give you the name of the woman who produces, in booklet form, an annual panel of speakers for her county's institutes. If you can get on to this panel (there is sometimes an audition), your name, the subject of your talk and your fee will all be circulated to the institutes in your county and you should be off to a good

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start. TWGs are also grouped in County Federations; their Edgbaston HQ will give you the name of your County Federation Secretary who may be prepared to send a circular to all the guild secretaries in your area. Most of the women's institutions listed above meet monthly and some of them all year round, except for August. They often have outside speakers. Travel and exploration are popular subjects.

Schools make excellent audiences. All schools can be approached. I only singled out prep schools because they are the most receptive and pay better. They, like public schools, favour Saturday evening, whereas state schools expect you to talk during the morning and for little or no fee. Wine circles are the most hospitable: you may have to arrange to be collected at the end. Old people's day centres are run by local government and offer a set rate for talks. The Expedition Advisory Centre maintains a register of lecturers on expedition topics, which is circulated to enquirers, especially school and university exploration societies. Ask them for a form to be added to the list.

THE TECHNICAL SIDE

University exploration societies will put you into a smart lecture theatre with all the most modern facilities. You need only to bring your slides. All the others will, as a general rule, offer only a darkened room. You should have a portable projector and an extension lead, and remember to ask the organiser to provide a screen or a white wall.

If your projector has a remote control, so much the better. Make sure that its flex is long enough to enable you to change the slides yourself from in front of the audience. If offered the choice of a projectionist or self-operation, and other things being equal, opt for self-operation. Volunteer projectionists, especially in schools, have a way of dropping magazines, putting slides in upside down, and not catching your prearranged signals for "the next one, please". A pointer torch with a tiny illuminated arrow is a useful bit of kit, as is a spare projector bulb.

THE LECTURE ITSELF

Remember to pay tribute, however briefly, to those who made the expedition possible. Mention your major sponsors – this is one of the few chances that you have of repaying them with some publicity. Show slides of their product in use, if this is appropriate.

The beginning should be arresting, with some unusual fact or figure. The end should be fairly resounding and point hopefully to the future. The middle bit is quite important, too. I wish you luck!