Lecturer, Speaker, Teacher: What's the Difference?



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Genealogical speakers are asked to give many kinds of presentations, which may require different hats. The principle types are lectures, speeches, and workshops or classes. The approach for a lecture is vastly different from a class, which is not at all like a speech. Knowing which is appropriate for your intended audience is crucial, and preparing accordingly may mean the difference between success and failure.

Lecturer, Speaker, Teacher

What do they have in common? They are all presenters. However, they educate their audiences in different styles.

Here are some considerations to help you, as presenters, identify the most effective niche for your style and subject matter:

1. Your comfort is irrelevant—it's what the audience needs or expects that should drive your mode of presentation.
2. Adults have different styles of learning—all modes of presentation need to address all styles.
3. Know when to lecture, speak, or teach—and be prepared to switch if the audience is not what you expected!

It is the **audience's** presentation, not **yours**! Repeat, **your** comfort is irrelevant.

By Definition

Lecturer: An informative speaker on a specific topic, especially as a professional. Genealogical presentations are most often in this category.
Speaker: Somebody who makes a speech or gives a lecture. Some lectures may become speeches if presented to a very large audience, especially when there is a formal paper being presented or there is no opportunity for questions or feedback from the audience.

Teacher: One who imparts knowledge or skill to others. Albert Einstein said, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." And Confucius said, "If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher. I will pick out the good points of the one and imitate them, and the bad points of the other and correct them in myself." In the genealogical setting, this most often takes the form of workshops and other hands-on opportunities.

Adult Learning

Each adult has a "preferred" method of learning or absorbing information, which is usually identified as Visual, Auditory, or Tactile. To be successful, ALL of these must be addressed in any kind of presentation, or some of the audience will miss your message. Here are some keys:

Visual Learners need to SEE the information in order to understand and learn. This could be through the use of visual aids, role-playing, or videos. This might be the person who preferred to have the comic book or see the movie of the classic rather than read the novel. A picture is worth a thousand words—but you need to use words to make the picture come to life! You just need to find the right words to make that picture real. Describe the scene in vivid detail. Explain the action clearly and precisely. Make sure your words "draw the picture."

Auditory Learners need to HEAR the information to understand and learn. The spoken word is usually sufficient, and relying on too many visual aids may be confusing. Be sure that when you show an illustration, you explain it verbally as well. This type of person wants to hear someone tell

continued on next page

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continued from previous page

them about it. Since you're giving a verbal presentation, you are already on the right track talking to this person; make sure that your words will sound appealing when spoken. If they sound good, the meaning should stick.

Tactile Learners need to TOUCH the information to understand and learn. These are people who learn best by doing. This type of learner will usually need to write something down or manipulate objects or draw their own pictures. Even taking notes will often satisfy the need to touch for a tactile learner. (Some tactile learners will take notes that they will never read again, but the act of writing has satisfied their tactile need.) Having exercises in your hand-out will be a great help to tactile learners, so they can learn by doing.

Now that you know how people learn, each presentation needs to address each of the above styles in order to meet the needs of all styles of learners. Meeting these needs may be different for the lecturer, speaker, or teacher. Here are some suggestions:

Lecturer: Paint visual pictures with words, vary voice patterns for interest, call on listeners to participate mentally, even as far as asking for feedback, conducting polls, or handing out a syllabus for note-taking. Combining these techniques throughout the presentation will keep all types of learners engaged.

Speaker: As with the lecturer, use visual aids, vary voice patterns for interest, call on listeners to participate mentally, and provide summaries for taking notes. Be sure to include all the learners throughout the presentation or you may never grab some and will lose others before the end.

Teacher: Use visual aids, use audio aids (recordings), use interactive exercises to involve the learners. In teaching, the use of these techniques comes much more naturally and is expected. Teaching is especially effective for the tactile learners, since there is usually more participation than in speaking or lecturing.

Keep It SANE

When considering the mode of presentation, ponder these factors to determine whether you are speaker, lecturer, or teacher:

Subject: what are you trying to convey?

Audience: are you addressing novices, experts, or total "newbies"?

Needs: what do you want the audience members to take away with them from your presentation?

Expectations: what does the **audience** expect to take away with them from your presentation?

If in doubt (particularly to the Audience and Expectations), consider taking a one or two question poll at the beginning of the presentation. This will give you a chance to correct any misunderstanding before you get too far into the program.

Planners may mislead as to the audience level, interest, or other factors—what then? Be prepared to switch to another mode of presentation, with appropriate learner aids. In other words, if you have been told that this will be a small group of "newbies" and you arrive to find that most of the audience has been researching genealogy longer than you (or vice versa), think fast, rework whatever you can in your presentation to fit the new demographics, and plunge on. It is not the end of the world, and you are the expert, so you should have information that will still be relevant whatever the situation.

Remember!

1. Your comfort is irrelevant—it's the audience needs or expectations that should drive your mode of presentation (lecture, speech, or workshop).
2. Adults have different styles of learning—all modes of presentation need to address all styles to keep everyone involved.
3. Know when to lecture, speak, or teach—and be prepared to switch if the audience is not what you expected!

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