

Cet effort, qui explique le succès numérique du congrès (environ 550 participants sur l'ensemble de la semaine, venus d'une cinquantaine de pays), a permis d'offrir un tableau large et diversifié de la recherche archéologique en Afrique, tant sur le plan de l'état de l'art que sur celui des institutions, des méthodes et des moyens.

Ensuite parce que le remarquable dynamisme des recherches archéologiques africanistes qui a pu être constaté à l'occasion de ce congrès conduit dans beaucoup de domaines à une perception beaucoup plus complexe et moins linéaire du passé. Ainsi, l'archéologie pré-historique, notamment sur le thème de l'apparition et la dispersion de la modernité comportementale (3 sessions) ou encore sur celui des changements de la période holocène et de la food production (4 sessions), mais aussi l'archéologie de la complexification sociale et des formations politiques étatiques (6 sessions) ou encore celle des technologies céramique, lithique et métallurgique, ont constitué les dominantes scientifiques illustrant les trajectoires multiples des sociétés africaines et, dans bien des cas, la coexistence dans la longue durée de modes de production et d'organisation sociale très différents.

S'il y a un enseignement à tirer de ce congrès, c'est qu'il a illustré ce que les passés de l'Afrique peuvent, en dehors de notre milieu d'archéologues, enseigner à tout un chacun : la diversité et la cohabitation des cultures.

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Some suggestions for our younger colleagues on how to present a conference paper

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We came away from the recent SAfA conference, in Toulouse, with admiration for its excellent organisation and appreciation of the very many interesting papers and presentations we had seen and heard. We applaud the conference organisers' advice that powerpoint and verbal presentations be divided between French and English. Where this advice was followed, it worked well. As always at such events, it occurred to us that some of our less experienced colleagues might do well to think about the craft of speaking to a large audience. To this end, we offer some suggestions based on our cumulative experience of more than one hundred years of attending archaeological conferences.

The first and most important consideration is the speaker's need to recognise that his or her talk has only one primary purpose. This is to benefit the listeners by informing them about matters in which they are likely to be interested. It is particularly important for students and young archaeologists making their first "public appearance" to give more thought to the audience's interests than to their own nervousness. If you succeed in this, you will also be doing well in introducing yourself to people who will be your future colleagues and, perhaps, your employers.

Your listeners will want to know what you have investigated, what methods you used, the results of your investigations, and the significance of those results. They will be particularly interested in recent discoveries and in the reinterpretation of older material if it is well-supported by new evidence. In a short presentation, it can be difficult to encompass these several aspects. Some students allocate too much of their talk to describing their study methods and too little to what results they have obtained. Even more frustrating for the audience are presentations by students who have scarcely begun their research and, as yet, have no results to report. Might listeners feel that hearing the details of your future plans was not time well spent? If what you have to report is an incomplete work in progress, consider whether it might better be presented as a poster rather than as a lecture.

A problem for some is judging the length of a presentation and how much material to include. In thinking about your audience, it is worth considering that at an international conference perhaps half of your listeners may not be accustomed to hearing presentations in whatever language you use and a similar proportion may be unfamiliar with your particular topic. It is therefore important that you speak clearly and somewhat more slowly than you would in normal conversation. For a formal presentation, a rate of about 100 to 110 words per minute is optimum. Such a rate allows time for you to pause at the end of each paragraph and make eye contact with your audience. Most importantly, it also allows time for them to understand and keep pace with what you are saying. You can understand quickly because you are reporting on material which you have pondered for many months; your listeners will follow less rapidly what is for them new material.

At Toulouse, participants were allowed just 10 minutes to speak. This equates to not more than 1200 words of written text. This is not much, so it is necessary to work on clarifying and simplifying one's presentation. Decide what is essential and shorten or omit whatever is inessential. It may take several attempts, timed trials and revisions in order to prepare a successful talk. This may seem frustrating, but the alternative is to face the greater frustration of preparing something too long to deliver within the time allocated or having to speak so rapidly that you cannot be properly understood.

Some factors in addition to speed of delivery affect an audience's ability to understand and appreciate a presentation. It is accepted as a matter of course that it is impolite to turn your back on someone with whom you are in conversation. It is equally impolite to turn your back on an audience while you are speaking to them; they may not be able to hear or understand what you say while your back is turned or while you are looking down. Unless you are disabled or infirm, stand to make a formal presentation. To do so lends dignity and authority to what you have to say and it assists with projecting your voice so that you may be more easily heard and understood.

Projected images should also be considered from your audience's point of view. Pictures, charts and tabulations which are clear on a laptop or similar screen can become illegible or nearly so when projected, and there is no good purpose in showing images that cannot

be read. Graphics and text with a typeface smaller than 16 point, small symbols, thin lines and coloured text on a coloured background are usually difficult or impossible to read. For people with poor colour vision and those sitting in an inadequately darkened room, lines and symbols that are differentiated only by colour and not by shape or size are hard to distinguish. It is best not to use your presentation as a place to demonstrate your facility with Power-Point gimmicks, fancy graphics and other visual distractions. As with your spoken text, simplify and concentrate on whatever is most important.

If you show tabulated data or complex images, please ensure that your audience will be able to perceive what you are showing and will be allowed sufficient time to do so. It takes about 30 seconds for someone to recognise and appreciate a relatively simple image which they have not previously seen, but much longer if the image is particularly important or complex -- as with several pictures shown in a single projection or a map or chart that needs to be read in detail. For this reason, graphs and tables should not be loaded with unnecessary detail, neither should they be doubled up on a single slide. Drawn maps showing only essential information are much easier to distinguish and comprehend than are those based on satellite images, which too often appear as a murky grey splotch. As a general rule, do not attempt to show more than 1 image per minute.

In summary, we suggest that when preparing a conference presentation, our young colleagues will do well to:

- consider what their audience will be most interested to hear;
- concentrate on whatever is most important;
- stand up and face the audience;
- speak clearly and not too rapidly;
- ensure that projected material will be legible;
- allow sufficient time for projections to be read and appreciated;
- practise in advance to be sure your talk can be delivered in the allotted time.