

Making the Most Out of Conferences



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In Today's Session...

1. What are conferences for?
2. What to do before you go
3. What to do when you are there
4. Chatting up, and being chatted up
5. Being in the audience
6. Handy hints and tips

What Are Conferences For?

With the people sitting next to you, discuss what you think conferences are for (there may be quite a few reasons!).

They are an opportunity to “plug in” to an academic, scholarly community



What To Do Before You Go?

How do **you** prepare for conferences?



Preparation

- Don't leave your conference schedule to chance
- The bigger the conference the more preparation is needed
 - Why are you going?
 - Who do you want to see?
 - Who do you want to meet?
 - How can this conference contribute to or advance your work?
- Conferences are **far more** than just papers
- **Study the conference programme**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00	M11199 Ordinary Differential Equations: 17th		LABC 10171 Computer Graphics: 10. Dual	M11210 Numerical Analysis I: Wilkinson: 1981	
9:00	M11219C Ordinary Differential Equations: 10/15 / Resona: 2/3		LABC 10171 Computer Graphics: 10. Dual	M11210 Ordinary Differential Equations: Bessis Engineering, Research Theatre 2A M11210 Numerical Analysis I: 1020	M11201 Ordinary Differential Equations: 16/10
10:00	C10042 Algorithms and Data Structures: 1.1		M11210 Further Linear Algebra: 1.6		M1204 Ordinary Differential Equations: Bedford, Theatre 1
10:00	M11212 Further Linear Algebra: Resona, Theatre 2	M1204 Numerical Analysis I: Wilkinson: 040	C10072 Computer Graphics: 1.3		M1213 Further Linear Algebra: Bedford, Theatre 1
11:00			PA19 Paper Accepted: 2004 1481 / 1491 / 1497 / 1498		M1211 Further Linear Algebra: Bessis Engineering, Research Theatre 2A
12:00	C10072 Computer Graphics: 1.1			M11212 Further Linear Algebra: 10/11	
13:00		C10072 Tutorial			
14:00		C10072 Algorithms and Data Structures: 1.1			

What Events Are You Preparing For?

- Plenary lectures
- Seminars
- Receptions
- Special interest group meetings (PG students; international scholars...)
- Seminar Planning meetings
- Book halls (and potential publishers of your work)
- Informal end of day 'gatherings'
- Plan, plan, plan...



Planning

- PLAN, PLAN, PLAN
- What must you be at?
 - Who you want to see
 - Sessions most closely related to your work
- What do you want to go to, but is not crucial?
- Be flexible
- Plan free time
- Plan 'meeting' time
- Make yourself a timetable (including receptions)

Preparation

- Planning meeting time
- Everyone, even the greatest scholars, need coffee and a break
- Email in advance and suggest coffee, but give them a reason for meeting you
- What's the worst that can happen?
- Be flexible enough to accommodate important coffee dates
- KNOW YOUR TIMETABLE
- Have fun and meet people

Chatting Up, And Being Chatted Up

1) In two groups, think of (suitable!) chat up lines for “networking”. How do you get the conversation going?

- Think about different occasions (plenaries, paper sessions, receptions).
- Think about the different people you might meet (publishers, keynotes, PG students, ECR)



2) Now think about how you might respond, when someone (academically) “chats **you** up”.

So, You're In The Audience...

- Discuss: what is the point of an audience at a conference paper?
 - Feedback?
 - Support?
 - Challenge?
 - New ideas?
 - So the room is not empty!
- Discuss: Think of conferences/department seminars when you've heard a question being asked.
 - What do you think makes for good questions?
 - What do you think makes bad questions/comments?
 - What goes through your head when you hear both kinds of questions asked? (Be honest!)

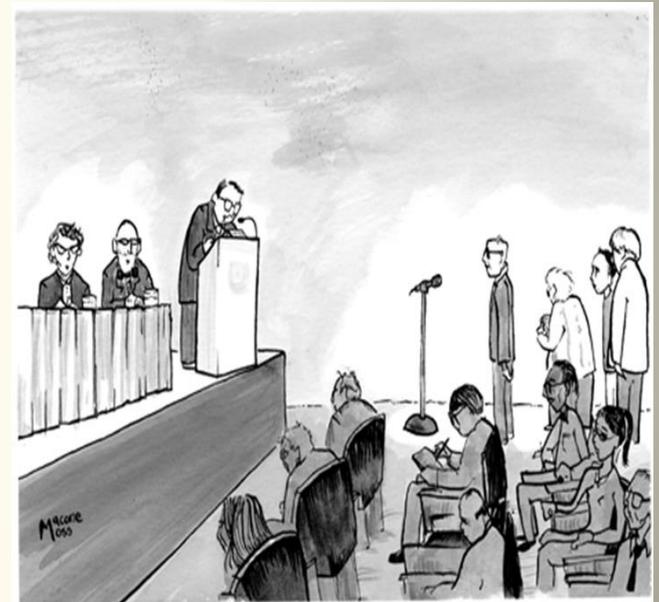
So, You're In The Audience...

EVERYONE KNOWS...

- Most questions are not really 'genuine' questions – it's a scholarly conference for peers!
- Speakers want to talk about their work; questioners want to talk about their own.

BUT SINCE WE PRETEND THIS IS NOT THE CASE...

- Question time is a complex space
- It's an opportunity for you to contribute and be noticed
- Be interested and interesting
- Tone can vary enormously



"We'd now like to open the floor to shorter speeches disguised as questions."

So, You're In The Audience...



- Judge the mood
- Decide whether it's for you
- Ask your question

So, You're In The Audience...

- Keep your questions to the point – an introduction is fine
- Even if you are talking about your work, keep your question focussed on the speaker
- If you have additional information that will help the speaker's case, frame it as a question, but not 'Have you read these 56 books?'
- Be civil and positive, but don't be afraid to take a speaker on (if you know what you're talking about)
- Don't feel it's your responsibility to break the silence if no-one (including you) has anything to say
- Be constructive
- Leave a positive impression even if you've asked a 'negative' question

So, You're In The Audience...

- Sit in a good place to enable you to ask a question – don't hide at the back
- Speak clearly and slowly and project (introduce yourself if everyone else has) – your question is for the benefit of **everyone** in the room!
- Know when to stop
- If you're asked to repeat your question, this is not really an invitation to 'repeat' it.
- In short question sessions, it is rude to assume the right to a follow up
- Never go back for a third go unless invited – it is the speaker's show!
- Aim to speak to other audience members/the speaker at the end of the session

Some Handy Hints and Tips

- Business cards – get some!
- Check out the room (lay out, stand, microphone, stand up, sit down?)
- Name badge – wear it!
- Prepare a handout for your paper: name, email, abstract, bibliography, data, quotations, twitter
- Twitter
- Keep going to conferences and annual meetings of academic organisation and networks
- Networking continues after the conference (emails, asking for papers)
- Don't apologise for “only” being a postgraduate
- ENJOY IT!