

Vector Bundles: Homework 1

Anthony Narkawicz

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Article #1 Name: The Short Talk

Location: <http://www.cs.cornell.edu/cv/ShortTalk.htm>

Description:

The author first discusses limitations of giving a short talk as opposed to a 50 minute talk. He writes that under these constraints, the purpose and structure of a short presentation should be different than that of a longer presentation. He says that given a short time constraint, a speaker should present his topic as a long abstract, a general introduction to the subject that should be aimed at capturing the interest of the audience rather than verifying details. He then discusses the structure of a good short talk, pointing out the importance of anticipating certain things before the talk, such as the nature of the audience and what questions they might ask. Moreover, he mentions that simpler examples should be used to save time and preserve the nature of the short talk, which is that it is an abstract of a subject. Finally, he focuses on some of the specific things a speaker should focus on during a short presentation. In particular, he gives examples of good and bad body language and reasons each should be used or not used.

Was it useful?

I think that this article is particularly useful, especially because it describes very well the types of specific things are good and or bad to include in a talk. I will certainly read over the last part of the article before giving any short talks, as it gives good examples of what types of body language to avoid.

Any suggestions that could be used here?

I think that every suggestion is directly applicable to this communications seminar. Specifically, after reading it, I know that I should structure my talks as abstracts and leave out any tedious proofs.

Article #2 Name: How to give a talk.

Location: <http://csmr.ca.sandia.gov/tgkolda/slides/giving-a-talk-whitebg.pdf>

Description:

The author first discusses the importance of giving talks if one hopes to have a career in the mathematical sciences. She stresses the importance of starting early in your career in order to get as much experience as possible. Next, she mentions that a good talk must contain a concise thesis statement; It is important for your audience to know what you actually did, specifically so that they don't see a bunch of theorems but you do not accurately convey the main point. Then the slides turn to the importance of structure in a talk. A talk should have some (but minimal) background material, a presentation of the current work, and it is very important to speak about the impact of the topic being presented. Again, as in the previous article, the author mentions that simple examples should be used. In addition, she discusses good and bad properties of slides for a talk and gives examples. She then writes that a speaker should talk about future work in the research area. This is very important for students and recent Ph.D.s as it shows that you are thinking beyond your current work. Finally, the article discusses specific dos-and-don'ts of giving a talk, focusing as in the previous article on good/bad slides, body language, appropriate responses to questions, etc. In addition to this, she writes that you must practice!!!

Was it useful?

I think that this article is also useful. It focused more on the mechanics of good mathematical talks in general, as opposed to the previous article, which was specific to short talks and stressed the differences between short and long presentations. One part that might be useful to me is that the author mentioned that nerves are natural and that you should just keep going. I'll be sure to think about that when I give my talks.

Any suggestions that could be used here?

One thing that I think will be useful to me in giving my talks is that I should try to speak slowly. I tend to speak quickly anyway, and if I am a little nervous, I will talk even faster. Thus, after reading this article, I know that I need to specifically concentrate on speaking slowly and enunciating during my talks.

Article #3 Name: How to prepare a poster.

Location: <http://www.siam.org/siamnews/general/poster.htm>

Description:

First, I chose this article because the other two articles were about giving talks, and a lot of information in the other articles restates what is in the two articles mentioned above. The authors here demonstrate that a good poster is akin to a good talk in that they both should be a rough outline of the topic, designed to intrigue the audience. Along these lines, a good poster should be simple, and a poster-maker should keep in mind that a typical reader will not look at a poster for very long. With this in mind, a poster should clearly (and concisely) state the problem and solution. Next, the authors give specifics of the mechanics of a good poster, from typeface to the arrangements of individual sheets of paper on the poster. Finally, the authors give advice about the best ways to transport and present your poster.

Was it useful?

I know that I will have to make a poster at some point, and I think that one idea found here will be useful. The authors' advice to keep a poster simple will be something that I keep in mind in the future.

Any suggestions that could be used here?

There is nothing here directly relating to this short-talk seminar. However, this does reinforce the idea that any presentation, whether it be a poster or a talk that is meant to be read or heard quickly should keep simplicity and conciseness as priorities.