

THE SCOPE NOTE RULE BOOK

Here are instructions for writing a scope note that will not be rewritten! Or, at least, following these rules will limit the types of edits on your scope note.

- 1. Less is more!** Keep your scope note to 40 words or less. While we may allow up to 50 words, 40 or less is a sound number.
- 2. Truth in advertising.** Your scope note should reflect accurately the content of your program.
- 3. Run your scope past your speakers.** Make sure you all understand what the program is about; that consensus will help you write an accurate scope.
- 4. Hit the highlights.** You don't have to include a statement about every single detail or section of the program.
- 5. Step up to the plate.** If your speakers/authors don't tell you what they want to do for their program, you tell them! An invitation to speak at conference is part of creating a valuable experience for our members based on what we—you—believe is a needed and worthwhile topic.
- 6. Stay in the here and now.** Use **complete** sentences in the present tense.
- 7. Few people get their names in lights.** Unless the speaker is a national author or an out-of-state library professional, do not use the speaker's name in the scope note, as the credits will describe who is presenting.
- 8. Don't be repetitive.** Let me say that again—avoid redundancy. Don't use the title phrase again in the body of the scope.
- 9. Be interesting and lively.** Make your scope note a statement that generates excitement about your program. Use your scope to grow your market share.
- 10. You don't have to climb Everest for a great perspective.** Metaphors are great, but don't carry them to excess and don't use ones that have to be explained in a lot of words. If the metaphor works, it will be understood immediately. If someone doesn't get the connection easily, go on to something else.
- 11. Avoid using fantastic, awe-inspiring superlatives** (e.g., the acclaimed author, the award-winning poet, the dynamic speaker, the well-known director, the unforgettable this or that, etc.). Simple nouns and verbs work best.
- 12. Passive voice should be avoided.** It sounds so...so...unsure. In other words, *use active voice*.
- 13. Have a least two content-rich sentences.** If you are struggling to say something interesting, re-examine your program.
Bad scope: "The author of 500 children's books will talk about her work. She will describe how to motivate kids and her writing process."
Analysis: This program sounds like 50 others, and it doesn't convey anything unique about the author or the program.
Better scope: Having published 500 children's books, Benita Bizarre can tell you how to keep kids reading from cover to cover. As she shares her secrets for creating captivating characters, you'll learn what engages young imaginations. (32 words, in case you're counting.)
- 14. PC is still in.** We're librarians and, while we are fun and appreciate great satire, we are a considerate lot and want to be respectful of all groups. Jokes are great, but please write with a view that being PC is important. Better safe than sorry. Trust us.

15. An ounce of prevention... If you don't know the content of the program and come up with vague language to compensate, your scope will be rewritten—and it may not be what you intend. Before you write the scope note, make sure your program is set.

16. Aim toward the middle. You're way smarter about your program than we are. So, if we "dumb down" something, it's just because we know less than you do, and we're probably a good indicator of most other folks reading the conference program. We'll do our best to not muck up too badly, but we may need to call you to get things just right.

17. The buck stops here. Any professionally written publication goes through multiple edits. That process is standard, and it speaks to the overall quality and collaboration of those involved. It is never a statement about any one writer. If your scope note is rewritten, please know that Elise did not do this to you as punishment for a late form submission. The decision to redraft a scope note is made by a body of your peers and conference chair people.

Don't take anything personally. The collaborative process of planning and presenting a conference succeeds because of the cooperation of multiple voices at various stages in a process. Sometimes, a scope will read very differently to an audience not involved in its creation.

Keep in mind, you will have a chance to review any changes to the original scope note. If something isn't right, we can negotiate language that is true to your intent but that will also flow with the rest of the conference text. And, please check with your speakers again if you have any doubt about the program description.

18. Be consistent. And, be prepared. Conference proofers will edit *at minimum* for consistency. We must insure that the entire conference program reads as a seamless whole and that all the scope notes are uniform in style and presentation.

Also, be aware that we use *The Chicago Style of Manual* for all punctuation decisions. This is the same style guide we use for the *Texas Library Journal*. Decisions about capitalization, punctuation, etc. are all dictated by this standard. Additionally, TLA procedure calls for the alphabetical listing of all authors and sponsors. The procedure keeps us honest and objective.

P.S. Believe us, we'd rather leave your scope untouched! Less work for us. Enough said.

ON PROGRAM TITLES

1. Three words (including "the," "a," and "an") are plenty. Six is pushing it. Seven is an invitation for editing.
2. Don't use the same language you use in the text. Why use up your word count that way???
3. If you use a metaphor in the title, make sure it makes sense with the scope note.
4. 4. Avoid using the name of the presenter or author in the title.

And by the way, THANKS for all you are about to do!

ENJOY and GOOD LUCK!!!