

TIPS TO DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMS FOR AFMS COMPETITION

You may have attended, and even enjoyed, a 60 or 90 minute presentations given by enthusiastic speakers. However, if a narrator reads the same information, the majority of the audience will be restless or asleep within a few minutes, because a narrator can rarely project the same enthusiasm as a “live” presentation.

A careful rewrite of a “first person” script can make a very effective presentation that will be well received. But, please remember: a good length is 20 to 25 minutes: Junior programs may be shorter. New Programs can be live action or static pictures, just as long as the total contents completes a story or gives a full explanation.

When considering your program, choose your topic or subject and decide who the target audience will be. You will not do the same type of presentation for Junior Rockhounds that you will do for adult club members or people who are much more knowledgeable of your subject. The Classes 1 through 5 are intended for amateur producers. These Classes need to pay close attention to the Tips and Judging Score Sheet for the areas on how each production will be carefully scored. The Excellence in Education is specifically for professional producers, considered “commercial” productions, and will be judged separately and with more emphasis on professionalism. The Junior Category will also be judged separately, giving credit to the age level of the producer.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

The AFMS Scoresheet for New Program Competition can be used as a guide to strengthen your presentation. If possible, ask a novice rockhound or a friend not involved with the production to read the script and show the visual program– as if to a group. You can be the “judge.” LISTEN WITHOUT COMMENT, but make notes on any comments made or things that you see that need changing. Use the Judging Form to evaluate your program. Listen for words or phrases that are difficult to understand or read and should be spelled or phonetically presented, any abrupt transitions, any words or phrases not spoken clearly, etc. Then you can make changes.

Look at the visual production critically. Is everything clear and easy to understand? Be aware, even professional writers employ editors to comment upon or help revise their material. Sometimes it takes someone else to “see” or “hear” something you haven’t noticed. Be willing to consider comments made by “judges.” When all is said and done, it’s better to have viewers wanting to know and see more than to having them fall asleep from overload. Include all the important aspects but don’t dwell on too many details – especially if items / specimens are similar.

Narration should be simple and direct rather than flowery. A speaker can give such a presentation “live,” but a narrator will be uncomfortable with such a script and this

carries over to the audience. Vary the length of sentences and the amount of information given for a series of pictures to avoid monotony. If at all possible, avoid repetition of phrases – “Here we have ... ,” “In this slide...” and, especially, “This is...” should be avoided at all costs!

Avoid too much narration for any of the first few images. Catch the audience’s attention quickly! You want to introduce your topic and tell the viewers what they are going to be seeing. Then, take them through what you want them to know.

If there is more than half a page of narration for any image, find a way to divide it up. Sometimes you can move some information to a later illustration - or find another picture or two to “carry” part of the information. But do make sure the story you are telling has a beginning, middle and ending.

There should be lots of good information in that middle section. Be sure your narration and pictures flow smoothly from one to the next, with no abrupt changes. The use of sub-titles are helpful in some explanation. And Maps and Charts are really great at showing locations and facts that you are emphasizing.

Narrators and audiences may not be as informed as the show producer. Phonetic (foh NET ic) spelling of words and explanation of terms not in common use are very helpful. Place names are often unfamiliar – Sault Ste. Marie (SOO Saint Marie), Michigan; Beatrice (Bee AH triss), Nebraska. Help your viewer to learn along with viewing your program.

Audiences appreciate inclusion of a known object with a pictured specimens so they can see their relative the size. (Include a recognizable coin or a 6-inch ruler, etc.) A typed label is also helpful, if it’s easy to read. Use large simple type (Arial typeface is good), with three lines maximum.

It is very important to your quality of production to have clear, well-focused pictures, with very little or NO shake or vibration to the picture. Backgrounds should be clear of distractions for both pictures and any person speaking. It is a good idea to take more pictures than you think you need, because you will most always need more pictures.

The use of music under narration or pictures can be done, but do realize most music is copyrighted and you must pay royalties for using it. If you know someone who can do some original music, that is another possibility, and might be a good effect. Speaking of effects, they are nice, but soooo easy to over-do. The use of fade-in and fade-outs, and dissolves from one picture to another are good, but be careful of over-use. Unless you are going for the comic effects, keep star-bursts and color sweeps to a minimum.

Each program needs an Opening Title, credits at the end for material borrowed from other sources, and The End to bring the program to its conclusion. You may want other readable pictures, but try not to over-do them.

Just as it takes time to develop an effective exhibit, it takes time to develop a good program. The effort is worthwhile because “great” programs have a long life in the Federation Libraries! Well-prepared presentations with “timeless” topics will be appreciated for many years. As technology changes, such programs can be transferred to new formats. Clubs across the country are waiting to see your program.

So take the plunge - enter the New Program Competition!