# ALA NMRT Online Discussion Forum – March 2013

Summary by Sarah (Thomas) Brown

Thanks to everyone who shared in the March Discussion, **Public Speaking skills**. I've briefly summarized the key points for you here. Hope everyone learned about a new organization, tip, or trick that may be useful.

Several people mentioned joining a [Toastmasters](#) local chapter to get experience with public speaking.  The organization gives you the opportunity to prepare and deliver speeches on topics of your choice as well as "table topics" – short, assigned topics. Everyone who mentioned Toastmasters has had positive experiences giving and receiving constructive criticism within the group and building their public speaking skills. Some have even had networking opportunities at Toastmasters.  However, it was mentioned that Toastmasters speeches are limited to 5-7 minutes (especially for beginners). This is great for getting your feet wet, but as information professionals we tend to present for longer amounts of time. If you want practice with longer speeches/presentations, you may want to consider taking a course at a local community college. This will be more expensive than Toastmasters, but may be more in line with getting the experience with longer speeches.

Also for gaining in-person public speaking experience is to present to your coworkers. You are more comfortable with them, so may be less nervous. You know they'll be forgiving!

For gaining experience presenting/speaking in an online environment, someone mentioned [Library 2.013](#). The Library 2.013 Worldwide Virtual Conference is held over 3 days online, and they need volunteers to present and to moderate. Seems like a great way to get started with online public speaking! Another suggestion for online public speaking practice is to download GoToMeeting's free trail and record yourself and play back to hear what you sound like.

While actually giving presentations, several people offered tips to better organize yourself, calm nerves, etc.

Some people prefer a "less is more" approach to PowerPoint. Using mainly pictures and bringing your notes on a tablet or pad of paper will hopefully engage the audience more.

Another great tip is to forego the PowerPoint entirely, and use a white board (or a chalkboard if those still exist in your environment) to draw while you present. This seems to be especially useful in a class where you have students at individual computers while you are teaching about a database or other tech tool.

Having props – white board, handouts, markers, pointer, etc. helps some presenters focus. Having something to do with your hands is important to beginner and experienced presenters alike.

To help calm nerves when presenting to large groups, it was suggested that the first part of the class could be group work, with students in smaller groups. This gives the presenter time to walk

around to each group and speak to them. Then, when the class joins up again the presenter has some friendly faces to look at and is more familiar with the group.

Nancy shared some great tips for public speaking techniques. Waiting for the room to quiet instead of speaking over people, responding to people's questions by using their name and paraphrasing the question to ensure everyone heard, and including sharing time by asking specific questions of your audience helps engage.

Thanks again to all who participated. I certainly learned a lot, hope everyone else did as well!