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Hi, welcome to this recording of how to write an abstract specifically for the Wolfson research event.

My name is Laura Jeffrey and I'm the Librarian here at Wolfson.

We're going to be talking a little bit, first of all, about what the Wolfson Research Event is.

So it is an annual interdisciplinary conference.

It takes place every year run by students.

So there is a student committee who are currently organising the Wolfson research event and it is specifically for Wolfson students to give a presentation of their research.

That's everybody from undergraduates right through to PhD students.

It's a really fantastic opportunity to learn from your peers, find out what they're doing.

It's very rare to be able to go along to a conference.

It is plain completely different to your own.

So we would really encourage you to come along to the Wolfram Research event, but also to submit an abstract which will be unpacking a bit more today. It takes place in May next year, in early May, over two days. Lots of people don't attend for both days, but.

They come along to see a few sessions and this is your opportunity to think about how to sell your particular talk so that you get lots of people coming to see you.

It's a combination of oral and poster presentations, the oral presentations.

Normally there are slides to accompany them, and the poster presentations. If you haven't done one before, is your opportunity to put together in a visual form your research and then you have the opportunity to talk to that research during some of our networking sessions.

But we will support you in this if this is the first time that you've given either type of presentation and that's really what sits behind the Walton Research event. It's very much for people who this is your developing your research career.

This is a really safe space in which to communicate your ideas to a non-specialist audience.

As it's often quite nice that you feel like the expert on it before, you might go off to a disciplinary conference.

So the call for abstracts. It's quite short. The abstract that we're looking for just 250 words. That's only six to seven sentences.

So you have to really pack quite a lot in there, and that's a real skill to be able to kind of communicate what it is you're working on and why it's really important to other people to hear about it.

We also asked for some keywords, and whenever you've read a general article, you'll know that within a database or just underneath the abstract on apdf, you'll see keywords and these are words that will speak to a really broad range of people.

They're often not specialist words, but you know, if you're writing about education experiences at university, a word like higher education, you would expect to see in your keywords.

So think about what those words are and again why they might draw people to your particular paper.

So as we've already said this, this conference is interdisciplinary.

You will get a talk on, you know, coming from classics. Next one from economics, next one from physics, followed by one from music.

They will be really, really broad.

So think about the people who are in your audience.

Make your language really inclusive. If you think about how you describe your research to a friend or a family member.

Who knows nothing about what it is that you do think about?

You know, putting some of that language into your abstract.

At the same time, we want to be confident that you know what it is you're talking about.

So it's a really careful balance between using specialist language, but also making that understandable to a really broad range of people. And then as we said, there's two different types of presentation and you'll just need to elect which one you would like to be considered for or if.

You're not bothered then just put in an open application.

We always get more applications for oral presentations, so if you're not successful and we offer you a poster, I'd really encourage you to take up the offer.

It's a really nice chance to do something a bit different.

We pay to get the poster printed.

And you get to take it away with you. So it's a really nice memento.

I think it's helpful just to reiterate the selection criteria which you would have had in the e-mail that's gone out about.

Submitting an abstract again, this just kind of reiterates stuff that we've said already, but make sure that it's suitable for the audience.

Don't recycle an abstract that you've already submitted to another conference or something.

A talk that you've been doing within your department.

The selection criteria are there because we were going to have again really interdisciplinary selection panels.

So rather than just it going out to lots of single reviewers, there'll be a group of people around the table who will be from different disciplines.

My fellows, but there will be research students, possibly master students and undergraduates, on those panels as well.

We want your work to be original.

We don't just want this to be a kind of literature review or summary of work that other people have done.

Tell us about your research.

What's really exciting?

What is it that you're kind of pushing forward and the kind of original nature of what it is that you're doing?

Tell us a story, you know, don't just describe it.

Make sure that you kind of cover all the different elements of the research process. In that story.

But this is something we're really going to delve that into a little bit more detail into in a moment. And then finally, just take a little bit of time to proofread before you submit that present that abstract to us.

Obviously the odd Eric is absolutely fine, but make sure it's the right word count as well.

It's really frustrating for the editorial team if they get really long wordy abstracts, so try and stick to that limit.

So when we're talking about an abstract, I guess it's helpful just to kind of clarify what it is.

We mean it's not a summary.

It's not just a slow summary, a kind of straight summary of what you're doing.

This is your opportunity to sell what it is you're doing.

As you'll know, if you've ever been to a conference, there are quite often parallel sessions.

That's not the case at the walls and research event, but you are still competing for people's time and attention. As we mentioned at the start, not everybody will just come and sit through a whole 2 day. So we want your abstract to sound exciting. We want people to make the effort to come and see your particular talk, Ron, someone else is.

There's a couple of key elements that we want you to include in there.

There might be a little bit of background information.

There might be your kind of key research questions, particularly the start of the research process. If you're a bit further on, you might want to tell us about some of your findings in there as well, and the impact.

I think that's a really exciting bit that kind of.

So what I'm doing all this research, but why does it really matter?

And you might want to think of that as telling a story. You've only got six or seven sentences, so it's quite difficult to do that. But I think it's helpful to have some kind of structure to hang those ideas off.

So there's quite a few works out there who talk about storytelling or narrative in the abstract form, and somebody I wanted to draw is Randy Olsens work: Houston, we have a narrative.

And Randy Olson was a scientist, but also a filmmaker.

So brings kind of expertise in the Academy as well as specifically in kind of storytelling as well. And as a model the and but and therefore model the ABT model. So this idea that there's momentum, so something happened and then something else happened. It moves the story on.

And then there's this idea of conflict.

Kind of. What is the challenge that you're facing?

What? Why are you even researchers in the first place?

That must be a kind of unresolved element to the research area that you're working in, and then this resolution and all good stories have something happening at the end.

How is this resolved?

That's the kind of, therefore element. So this gives you a structure to abstract to bear that in.

And also ultimately you can extrapolate that out to a presentation.

You're going to have 10 minutes. You're going to have a little bit longer than you will in your 250 words, but still the idea of moving through a story rather than just piling a detail on top of detail on top of detail.

So, for example, we're going to unpack.

An abstract that's been provided that we have for a particular journal article.

And th

of distilling down the real, the kind of core essence of what it is that you're working on.

OK.

So that's one model.

useful and interesting or surprising or wrong, whatever it is that's going to add a little bit more tension into that storyline that we were talking about.

And.

And then are you able to answer those research questions that you have or do you have a clear argument or is something emerging from your preliminary research that's actually going to take your research in a perhaps slightly different direction depending on what it is that you found out?

Thus far.

And then finally, yeah, why does it matter at all?

Why is it important to the people sitting in the audience that you're doing this research? So this could be the impact of the research that you're making.

It could be possible further research that you want to carry out as a result of this, you might be posing additional research questions for other practitioners or academics to pick up. But yeah, I think that idea actually, if there are any policy implications or practitioner.

Uses for your research.

This might be a nice time to introduce that idea as well.

So this gives you the sense that there's like a tiny text as a way of condensing down everything. It is that you're working on, particularly if you're in the later stages of your PhD research and you're looking towards having eighty to 100,000 words you're trying to.

Bring all that down into just seven sentences.

It's it's difficult. You're trying to get like the absolute kind of the power of what it is that you're talking about rather than trying to just summarise kind of slightly duller parts that may not be a particular interest to those in the audience.

But I think what it can do is putting in a little bit of thought now is going to help you in the long run. Now, of course, if you're at a masters level, you may not know what your research findings are going to be.

So as I said, I've I took an abstract that was written by Inger Mewburn just because we're using this isn't something that she's provided.

I went off and searched for an article that she'd written with some co-authors, and that's what I was distilling down into that ABT model and but and therefore model and this is the abstract as it appears with the journal article.

And there's the reference below there.

So this was a language model that they were producing in order to help.

PhD students find jobs, particularly outside.

The Academy.

So that's what it looks like.

I then tried to apply the ABT model to it and you can see that actually in those first few sentences, that is something that she has done. As I said, this is these two models aren't aligned at all.

This is me mapping. You know, overlaying one model onto this abstract so they make a statement. They don't use the word and, but then they go on to say this is happening.

And this is happening as well.

There have been calls to more closely align the curriculum with ease of industry, and then there's that friction, but there's not enough evidence.

So that's that's why this research is taking place.

That is the gap that they identified that meant it was worthwhile doing some research and ultimately producing this paper.

So this is where the therefore comes in.

Therefore, we need to find better ways to understand what they want from graduates.

Again, they don't use the word therefore, but you can easily see that little narrative structure in those first three sentences.

Then go on to provide a little bit more information.

So what I thought would be useful is to then overlay that other model on top. they go on

So they locate, so we've got the ABT in the first few sentences and then they go on

They then go on to report some of the findings.

The results showed that and then the significance our model offers a new perspective to look at PhD level job skill requirements.

So that's kind of where this is going.

This is kind of the changes that this research is making, so they have essentially followed, you know, their own advice, which is good.

So what?

I'd like you to do now again, is to pause this recording and to have a go.

You could write out the subheadings of locate, focus, anchor, report, argue, explain.

See if you can do that for your research. If you can't, as I said, you might want to think about the kind of shape of your abstract and where you have got more information.

But as we said, we don't just want this essentially to be a literature review.

So try and think about where your research might be going.

You'll be pleased to know that if your abstract is accepted, we will give you the opportunity to revise it.

So that will probably be around Easter time.

We'll be looking to put together.

The final program, but we will give you an opportunity to change that. So if your research moves on quite significantly.

Next term, you will have the opportunity to include that. So for now, think about grabbing that review panel with a kind of really interesting story to tell.

OK, so that is one sort of scaffold that you could use.

There are lots and lots of other templates out there, but I think it's a good way of making something engaging, particularly when you haven't got disciplinary language or you can't make assumptions about the knowledge of your audience and your reviewers.

But there's other ways to do it as well, and one that I found that's available online that's free to use is called to write abstracts, and this gives you a little bit of structure.

Rather than just drafting something kind of from a blank page, it lets you create almost like a questionnaire with a series of building blocks that you can drag.

Into yeah, a series of questions that you then answer and those answers then hopefully formulate an initial abstract, which of course you're going to need to revise.

You're going to need to make sure it meets our criteria, but it might just help you

with that structure if this is something that is new to you, so it breaks it down into planning.

So again, it uses these words things like narrative construct, a narrative for your abstract.

You can then check the flow and that's something that's really important. OK.

It's only 6 sentences, but you don't it to jump around too much.

You will then have these kind of questions that you can answer, so make sure it makes sense.

Then actually do some writing and then as it says, it's really important that you edit that.

But I'd recommend having a look.

It's quite a novel way of approaching.

A task which is quite pressured.

The amount of words we've given you.

OK. Then we also just want to cover quickly the idea of keywords. As I mentioned at the start, this is how you might describe your research in just five words. And I think the best way to think about what words you want to use for your abstract is.

To kind of work backwards and think if I'm searching for some literature in my field for my gestation, for my thesis, what does my search string look like?

Which keywords have I identified?

They're important in my research question.

That I would then go off and input into Google scholarly scholar, or to Scopus or web as science or international bibliography or social science is or j-stor.

Or I discover how am I going to get research out?

So you need to think of words that are well used and well known in order to get a nice high hit rate.

So you can think about what keywords would be used for the abstract that we've just read, like I said.

You could put educate higher education in there.

I would probably put out things about graduate employability.

I might specifically want to mention PhD students.

We're not just talking about undergraduates. We're specifically talking about people with doctoral degree.

Seem to be very much in a kind of emphasis on skills development. You know, in the workplace we might want to get that in there.

How people design curriculum in order to make it applicable for those who want to leave academia.

And then of course, the model that they were actually using this large language model, artificial intelligence AII might want to get that in there as well. Now, of course, if I put something big in like AI that's going to bring people to this article that might have very.

Very different interests.

There might be computer scientists.

They might be interested in the model that was developed, but they may not.

So it's that combination of keywords that's also really, really important that you need to think about.

So again, this is an opportunity for you to pause the recording and to go off and do a little bit of preparation for writing your abstract. Perhaps go to web of science.

That's a particularly good one that highlights the keywords in the results that you get rather than having to click through to the journal itself.

But if you're from the arts, you might not find so many relevant resources in there.

So go to the A-Z database listing that's available through Cambridlcrouintgyou need

Just make sure to check e-mail for the deadline for that abstract submission. Otherwise, good luck with the process.

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