

Here is the first of two excerpts from a treatise on "Slidesmanship" by Denys Wilkinson of the University of Oxford:

Slidesmanship is merely one facet, and not the most important one, of the wider subject of Conferencemanship. I have not space enough here to explore that wider field, and I shall have no opportunity to enlarge upon, for example, "How to mention your collaborators without actually giving them any credit" or upon "How to discredit your rival's theory and experimental technique without understanding either."

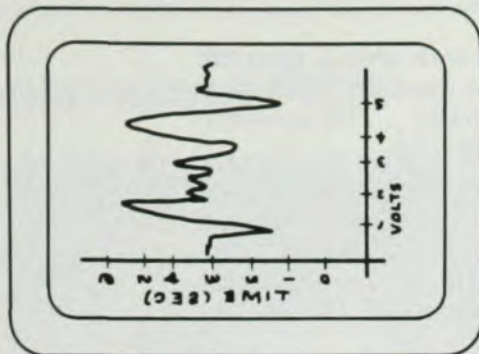
The two main subdivisions of Slidesmanship that I shall treat here are "The subjugation of the projectionist" and "The subjugation of the audience."

It is the Slidesman's task to wrest the apparent initiative from the projectionist and to reduce him to a nervous pulp. It may be a little tricky to be sure when he has been pulped, but I myself find it quite satisfactory to continue until his gibbering is clearly audible. After this he is in a self-sustaining condition and can be safely left to take care of himself while the Slidesman turns his full attention to his audience. The unnerving effect of the projectionist's gibbering on the audience is also useful.

I do not recommend, to any but the veriest tyros, crude and vulgar techniques such as the intimate interleaving of 35mm and regular-size slides, or even the use of the once-popular pentagonal slide. A satisfactory beginning for the more aspiring is the "3-2-1" technique. It exploits the fact that the projectionist always loads up the first two slides when the chairman announces the talk so that he can snap one onto the screen as soon as the speaker says "First . . ." and follow like a machine gun with the second if need be. The Slidesman therefore begins: "Third slide please" and is well away. (It is elementary to note that this should be followed by the second slide and then the first in rapid succession.)

This can be followed by a "Parity Non-conserving Slide," which does not project correctly no matter how placed in the projector (see illustration).

Communications direct to the pro-"Slidesmanship," by Denys Wilkinson, was first published in the *Proceedings* of the International Conference on Nuclear Structure, Kingston, Canada, 29 August-3 September 1960. Excerpts appear here by kind permission of the author and the University of Toronto Press.



jectionist are always good and should be made in such a manner that it is not immediately obvious whether the Slidesman is addressing the projectionist or the audience. The Slidesman says something like: "After the next slide but two I shall want to look again at the last one but four." After the next slide: "I meant of course that slide that was then going to be the last one but four after I had indeed had that which was going to be the next but two, not that which was then the last but four." Follow this by skipping one slide.

These are elementary techniques, but they should suffice for most projectionists. If resistance is offered, more advanced techniques are available; I have space only for a brief description of one of these, the "Unfocussable Slide." This consists of two identical glass sheets, each bearing the Figure to be projected, that are fixed in precise registration with each other by a small amount of low-melting-point wax. After a short time on the screen the heat of the projection lamp melts the wax and one sheet slips about a millimeter relative to the other, thereby throwing the Figure out of focus. The Slidesman's sharp cry of "Focus please" rouses the projectionist to frantic, vain and incredulous efforts. The Slidesman's advice of "No, no, focus it up and down, not side to side," produces a useful effect.

(Next month: The Subjugation of the Audience.)

Seen in a recent issue of *Physics Bulletin*, published by the Institute of Physics in London: news of a PhD thesis on the topic "Response of a Weekly Ionized Argon Plasma to Turbulent Gas Flow." We wonder whether the British have an improved plasma "bottle" with a containment time of seven days—or perhaps this was that all too common kind of apparatus that only works on Tuesday afternoons? □

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