How to give a good research talk

Talk at Future of Programming

- Ghost of testing past, present and future
- Concrete—examples! Resist temptation to be abstract and general
- Demo—albeit simple
- Surprise! Showmanship—no-one was reading their email
- Competing with email, the newspaper, Facebook… keep their attention!
    - A talk is a performance, an act
    - Don't be afraid to go over the top
- Phil Wadler & shirts
- Look audience in the eye; talk *to*, not *at*
    - ask audience a question, let me ask you: who really really loves testing?

Outline slide

- Learn anything? Wasted 1 minute. Can waste 5 minutes! Why is it useless?
- Related work likewise. Time is short! [time slide?]
- Time is short: you must focus and cut mercilessly

What are you trying to achieve?

- NOT explain your paper in depth
- SELL your paper to the audience
- *Who is your audience?*
    - Don't try to show experts how clever you are
    - Talk to the *least* knowledgable members
    - Explain too much, rather than too little
- *If they remember one thing from the talk, what should it be?*

- Explain one interesting thing well, not many superficially. Cut mercilessly!

What is your problem?
- Show an example!
- And why should I care?
- SPIN selling—implication
    - P before I!
    - CAN stack bug… stereo and brakes **[SLIDE]**

What about your slides?
- Overfull slides: nothing you don't intend audience to read **[SLIDES]**
- Serve only to distract the audience from what you say!
- Can you read this?
    - Default fonts are too small (Powerpoint, Slitex)
    - aimed at a small room, not a conference
- Screen is often small, and low!
- Sample slides from ICFP keynote—impact **[slides]**
- Your slides are not your teleprompter! Talk *about*, don't read.
- Animated bullet points… emphasize the medium, not the message
- Use animations to show a *diff* between two slides, or to draw attention **[slide]**
- Pointing: arms, jump if need be, big stick! *NOT* a laser pointer; animate instead

Demos
- Nothing is more concrete!
- Fonts need to be enlarged
- Make sure your demo fits in 1024x768
- Practice; timing is unpredictable

Timing

- is vital—nothing worse then going over time
- give talk to yourself and time it—if it's too long, then cut!
- Plan one or two places where you can cut if need be; check watch
- Finishing a few minutes early is fine

Nerves

- Use the adrenaline—jump about, let them see your passion!
- Remember it's a performance!
- Script
    - Bullet points in a large font—read at a glance
    - Plan key phrases… "This looks easy. It's not. Read the paper"
    - More so if not your native language
- Rehearse talk to yourself, over and over again, incl just before your talk

Technical problems

- Connect laptop to projector during break beforehand
    - Windows usually works
    - Mac users: remember the adapter, often requires manually changing resolution
    - Linux is often problematic—consider slides on a memory stick too
- Last week Windows 8 began installing updates—turn that off!
    - Could continue thanks to practice runs; everyone remembered my talk!

Finally

- Be concrete—use examples
- Don't put too much on your slides
- Put on a good show--I'll look forward to listening to you!