



I-RITE / I-SPEAK Program Overview

**Carolyn Gale
Stanford University, USA
PCST-7**

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Stanford Research Communication

“Elevator Talk”



- ✦ We teach academic researchers how to communicate their work to a lay audience
 - ✦ Researchers = mostly PhD students, postdocs
- ✦ We implement the program through
 - ✦ I-RITE: written statements
 - ✦ I-SPEAK: oral presentations
 - ✦ Outreach: taking the “finished products” into the world

Outline



- ✦ Program Goals
- ✦ (Very Brief!) Background
- ✦ I-RITE Overview / Process
- ✦ I-SPEAK Overview
- ✦ Outreach Efforts
- ✦ Next Steps

Program Goals



- ✦ Enable researchers to communicate their work to a lay audience
- ✦ Bring aspects of the research culture into the undergraduate/high school world
- ✦ Allow cultures of engineering/natural science and humanities/social science to interact and learn from each other
- ✦ Address need for improved contacts across cultures and time zones created by globalization of research

In the beginning...



- ✦ How do we better integrate research and teaching activities
 - ✦ For faculty
 - ✦ At a research university
- ✦ The concept of “pedagogical content knowledge”
 - ✦ Education jargon that argues for strong knowledge of a field **and** how to teach it

In the beginning...



The Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman was once asked by a Caltech colleague to explain why spin $1/2$ particles obey Fermi Dirac statistics.

He responded, “I’ll prepare a freshman lecture on it.”
But a few days later he returned and said,

“You know, I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t reduce it to the freshman level. **That means we really don’t understand it.**”

In the beginning...



- ✦ So, why not get faculty to explain what they do to this freshman audience?
- ✦ I-RITE piloted in 1999 with 12 PhD students
- ✦ Currently, we have
 - ✦ 200 I-RITE statements
 - ✦ 10 I-SPEAK presentations
- ✦ Representing
 - ✦ 40 disciplines across all fields
 - ✦ 4 universities in the USA; 8 in Sweden

I-RITE Process



- ✦ Voluntary program in US; some course credit offered in Sweden
 - ✦ encourage participation in a variety of disciplines
- ✦ Participants write about their work in 750 words, with drafts that
 - ✦ should be compelling and understandable to a 17-year old
 - ✦ contain a compelling title and “elevator talk”
 - ✦ discuss own research, and why it’s important in a broader context

I-RITE Process



- ✦ Program length: Choose your flavor
 - ✦ 2-3 day workshops
 - ✦ 6 week online workshop
 - ✦ 6 week face-to-face, 1 meeting/week
- ✦ Curriculum
 - ✦ Best suited for face-to-face interactions
 - ✦ Focus on learning aspects of writing, critical reviewing, and revising

I-RITE Process



★ “Peer” Reviewing

- ★ Statement drafts undergo multiple review cycles, using communication experts (NCA) and undergraduate writing students
- ★ Participants learn to review others’ work, and better reflect on their own feedback

★ Peer Review Software

- ★ Prototype created in 2000, customized for I-RITE process
- ★ Enables program to be delivered online

Example Titles



- ✦ Why Does My Grandmother Need a Total Knee Replacement, While Yours Just Ran Her 50th Marathon?
- ✦ How Can a Gene Make a Male Court a Female?
- ✦ Letters to the Editor As a Forum for Public Debate
- ✦ How Does the Earth "Relax" After an Earthquake?
- ✦ Breathing House Dust Is Nothing To Sneeze At
- ✦ Never Change Your Batteries Again!

I-SPEAK Overview



- ✦ Piloted in 2002
- ✦ Participants use I-RITE statements as a basis for 10-15 minute talks
 - ✦ ...along with the 1-minute “elevator talk”
- ✦ Participants gave final presentations in a public forum
- ✦ Issues
 - ✦ Delivery style vs. content
 - ✦ Expert vs. peer coaching

Outreach Efforts



- ✦ Ideas for I-RITE/I-SPEAK results
 - ✦ Use in class “course readers” (teaching)
 - ✦ Offer program participants a chance to deliver an oral presentation of their statements to classes
 - ✦ Provide lessons in critical reviewing to undergraduate and secondary school students
 - ✦ Use statements as a basis for more in-depth interviews
 - ✦ Use journalism and filmmaking students as apprentices
 - ✦ Establish a website that focuses on research
 - ✦ Feature statements on informational kiosks

Addressing Issues



- ✦ Interdisciplinarity within academic communities, both nationally and internationally
- ✦ Broader dissemination of academic findings among the general public and policy-makers
- ✦ Quality and accuracy of journalistic representations of academic research
- ✦ Greater appreciation from the broader community for the importance of academic research
- ✦ Graduate student professional development

Next Steps



- ★ National/International Expansion

- ★ Due to interest in the US and beyond, we are considering options for the next academic year and beyond

- ★ Looking Specifically at

- ★ instructional models
- ★ increased outreach
- ★ basic research on the program
- ★ potential partnerships

Further Information



Program website:

<http://i-rite.org/>

Questions/comments can
be addressed to

cgale@stanford.edu