There are a number of skills that you will need to hone in order to be a successful librarian. For instance, you need to be able to work in groups. You may find that librarianship is all about committees. You’ll also need to be able to tell other people about what those committees are doing—people like other committees, the public, your board, the press, and the mayor, who might decide whether or not your library should continue to be funded! Libraries are very visible public entities and a strong leader will be able to talk to all of the constituents.

There are other opportunities for public speaking, as well: successful librarians are expected to present papers at state and national conferences from time to time. Providing opportunities in class to present your papers is one way to help you prepare for this challenge, and to increase your comfort level for upcoming on the job challenges. You might be asked to present your ideas formally or informally in any of your classes. Remember, libraries are not all about books. If you enjoy books, you can shelve books in a library. A librarian is expected to take on leadership roles and work through problems with staff, the budget, and the public.

Fortunately, Southern Miss has excellent resources for this sometimes daunting and scary endeavor. Another recommended source is *A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking* by Dan O’Hair, Hannah Rubenstein, and Rob Stewart, published by St. Martin’s Press. If you are an on-campus student you should check out the Speaking Center; they have rooms where you can practice and record your talks and tutors to help you work through issues that might arise. If you are off campus, you can set up a camera and record your presentation, and then watch it. This will improve your presentations.

**Some general rules for presenting a paper or public speaking:**

- If you are presenting a paper, start planning your presentation when you begin writing the paper. Think about the differences between writing and speaking and what parts of the paper will work well in the presentation. You don’t need to present all facts and figures or all parts of your paper; pick out the most interesting issues and present those.

- Create a speaking outline that is different than your writing outline. You will need to reorganize the information for the presentation, making sure that the audience can follow your
argument.

♦ Translate for your audience. Don’t get wrapped up in your own paper. Think about whom you are speaking to and what type of background information they do/do not need.

♦ Use support material (evidence) to keep your audience interested. Develop your ideas with stories, examples, vivid descriptions, statistics, etc. Be sure to give credit where credit is due by properly citing your sources.

♦ Start and end with a bang. If you seem unexcited about speaking, your audience certainly won’t be interested in listening to you. Have an interesting and well-practiced introduction and conclusion ready to go. Start and end with good energy, eye contact, and volume.

♦ Powerpoint is generally expected, but if it does not add anything to your talk don’t feel as if you must use it. It can be a real bore and a distraction, or it can enhance your talk.

♦ Do not read your talk. Most beginning (and some seasoned!) speakers are not good at reading speeches from a manuscript. Instead, sketch out an outline for the speech and talk to your audience based on that outline. For particularly complicated parts, you can read small sections. This takes practice, so give yourself plenty of time to work on practicing the presentation.

♦ Practice your speech in front of someone else. They will be able to give you feedback and assure you that you are communicating effectively.

♦ Time your presentation while practicing. Make sure that you know the time limits/expectations for the speaking occasion and that you stick to them. People react in different ways to nervousness. Some people talk more when nervous, while others speed through their presentations.

♦ Speak up! Volume makes you appear to be more confident and can make that shaky voice go away. Don’t forget to breathe—it makes all the difference.

♦ Take note of your appearance on the day of the presentation. Think about what you are wearing (some suggest dressing one step above your audience), how you are standing, how you are using hand gestures, etc.

♦ Deal with nervousness by being well-prepared, visualizing yourself giving a successful speech, and taking deep breaths.