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A Periodic Broadside
for Arts and Culture Workers

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Institute for Community Arts Studies
Arts & Administration Program, University of Oregon

So, what's a broadside?

In this issue:

Seeing the Whole Picture: An Investigation of Factors that Influence Contemporary Native American Artist

Participation in "Mainstream" Fine Art Markets [1]

Staci Golar

Artists of any heritage need access to art markets in order to promote themselves and become successful. However, many Native American [2] artists who wish to market their work are on the "outside" of the commercial art world, making their marketing task more complex. Many internal and external social, political, economic, and aesthetic factors are playing important roles in determining the viability of Native American artists in mainstream art settings. In 1994 *The Oregonian* addressed this problem in an article on Northwest Native American artists' desire to find a place in the world of art marketing. They face challenges as mainstream artists despite the plethora of artistic activity that takes place within the Native American community (Ulrich, 1994).

Many of the challenges Native American artists face in marketing their work in the mainstream are different than those that non-Native artists face. These challenges are rooted in an art history "created" by dominant European culture that has just recently "allowed" Native American made art to be thought of as legitimate in the fine art world.

The landmark gallery shows that formally recognized Native American made art as fine art in the mainstream did not occur until 1931 and 1941, respectively (Monroe, 1996). Currently established and emerging Native American artists are the first and second generation to become a part of the "mainstream" art community. Therefore, these artists face obstacles inherent in being only recently legitimized and categorized by people outside of their culture. To achieve success in this particular venue, Native American artists have to overcome these built-in challenges created by people with artistic values and belief systems often different from their own.

The structure of this mainstream art market also created expectations and standards of what Native American fine art is, classifying it differently than art that has European origins. The term "primitive" was (and often still is) used to describe Native American made art, as well as terms such as "ethnic" or "tribal" (Monroe, 1996, p. 17). Such terminology has a tendency to marginalize Native American-made art from any other. The constructed view of Native American art as "different" when compared to the mainstream has persisted into today's fine art market. Native American artists that enter the mainstream art setting are usually "determinedly self-trained or have acquired degrees in mainstream institutions, but in either case, recognize that their cultural background sets them apart" (Allen, 1992, back cover).

The popular history of the Native American Fine Art Movement hides the

Native American artist as a professional behind ethnic stereotypes (Archuleta, Strickland, Gritton, Rushing, 1991). By considering what is causing the perpetuation of these stereotypes, this study hopes to contribute information on the misrepresentation of Native American artists' identity so that they may gain more respect as arts professionals. As Native American artists gain more success in the mainstream, they will "help all mankind appreciate the dual tasks of preserving historical values while building new traditions" (Archuleta et al., 1991, p. 10).

Method

After a preliminary literature review was done in order to discern specific conditions that may be affecting Native American artist participation in the "mainstream," the study gleaned data from two other areas: art gallery surveys and interviews with currently practicing artists.

Definitions and/or categorizations mainstream art galleries or art markets place upon Native American art were examined for the influential role they play in determining the success or failure of artists. The definitions were taken from surveys answered by directors/curators of the following galleries: the Froelick Adlehart Gallery, PDX Gallery and Quintana Gallery (all located in Portland, Oregon) and Gallery 10 (Santa Fe, New Mexico). Indian Art Northwest, an organization in Portland, Oregon that has an outdoor gallery, and the Heard Museum responded to the survey as well. Gallery participants were chosen to include a cross section of those that only represent Native American art, those that may represent Native American artists but are categorized as "mainstream," and two non-profit gallery spaces.

The third leg of data collection was to analyze successful Native American artists' personal experiences via interviews to discover what situations they may have encountered when working in the mainstream. Interviews were open ended and questions were structured to elicit responses that reflect the challenges and/or opportunities they have been presented when promoting themselves and their work, as well as their thoughts about identity and overall marketing issues. The artists who were interviewed represent important names in the contemporary Native American art world. These artists are James Lavadour, Marcus Amerman, Joe Feddersen, Elizabeth Woody, Gail Tremblay and Lillian Pitt. Although these names are included to show the larger group from which the interview data came from, responses were not directly linked to particular artists. This was done to ensure confidentiality and to increase the likelihood that answers would not be self-censored.

After an analysis of all three sources, specific factors were identified, and recommendations made related to marketing for current Native American artists who wish to exhibit in mainstream settings as well as for those who administer the exhibits. These factors are outlined next, immediately followed by the recommendations.

Findings from Literature Review, Questionnaire

Responses, and Artist Interviews

The findings that arose from the emergent categories from the literature review, questionnaire responses, and artist interviews are presented as factors and are based upon all responses. If there were consistencies between each group of data they were combined to eliminate redundancy. The factors are:

- The U.S. Government has influenced the promotion and "definition" of Native American art and culture in the mainstream, promoting deep-rooted expectations of what Native American art is or is not. Current Native American artists must deal with these when marketing their art in mainstream venues.

- Notions of Native American identity influence the way patrons think of Native American art and artists, forcing Native American artists to deal with "expectations" of who they are and what art they "should" be doing. The mainstream's complete lack of knowledge or being inaccurately informed about Native American artists and artwork present marketing challenges for current Native American artists.

- Mainstream categorization of art in "traditional" and "contemporary" groups can be a creatively stifling categorization system for currently practicing artists, regardless of what kind of art they produce.

- Differences between Native American and mainstream cultures present obstacles for Native American artists to overcome in regard to communication and understanding in the mainstream art world. The mainstream often differentiates the "other" within gallery settings, but often associates the "other's" characteristics as faults, discriminating against different world beliefs and ways of interacting with others.

- Native American artists can find more success in mainstream venues by being persistent about marketing themselves, talking with people in art circles and educating those people about their artwork and their cultural background.

- The mainstream is important to be validated in if a Native artist wants to make a living, but too much validation can be negative if it creates the perception of a "sell out."

- The potential to sell, stylistic choices of the artist (closely related to the work's strength and innovative quality), subject matter and craftsmanship are reasons why artwork is selected to be exhibited by gallery owners.

- Press coverage about Native American artists often focuses more on the artists' ethnicity than on the artwork. Focusing on ethnicity in publications is mandated by the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 if one is selling work as "Native American made." Sometimes this may help the viewer understand the artwork. However, this focus can also reflect the gallery owner's and art buyer's underlying beliefs about what Native American work is according to mainstream definitions. Additionally, art patrons are interested in Native American artists' ethnicity, believing it brings a certain authenticity and originality to the work.

- Stereotypes perpetuated by United States popular culture are an overriding influence on most of the above factors, adding to the expectations and assumptions about what Native American art (and culture) is or is not.

Recommendations

After a careful consideration of the previous factors that provide insight to what may be contributing to the inclusion or exclusion of contemporary Native American artists' participation in mainstream art venues, the following are presented as recommendations for artists and arts managers.

Educating the Mainstream

A consistent aspect of many of the factors found in this study was that of the mainstream's expectations (whether good or bad) of Native American art and artists. Although the reasons for the expectations are numerous and varied, a lack of education or an inaccurate education about Native American made art, artists and people is at the root of them all. Although it should not necessarily be the responsibility of Native American artists to educate the mainstream, it is a consideration to take a role as an "educator" to eventually achieve more recognition in the mainstream.

Educating the mainstream can take many forms. Not only can education take place in school system settings but also in face to face interactions. For instance, to help educate the mainstream about Native American art, it is important for artists to involve themselves in as many arts roles as they can. Native American artists should join arts organizations in advisory or board member roles whenever they are able to. If possible,

Native artists should be involved in school curriculum planning that focuses on Native arts to make certain that the information being taught to students is being presented accurately. Additionally, Native American artists can educate patrons and others by talking to them face to face about their work in venues such as gallery show openings, art booths at markets, interviews with local media, etc. This process of education is already occurring in many cases, but these recommendations are made to emphasize the continuing need for this process to take place. Education can be and is one of the only ways to annihilate incorrect beliefs about Native people, Native culture and the many forms of Native-produced art.

Moving Past Art Categorizations within the Art World

The way in which art patrons think of Native American art in contemporary and traditional categories can be harmful to artists. This is not to devalue artists in either genre. In fact, “traditional” artists often use “contemporary” subject matter and vice versa, and both artistic categories can be wonderful in their own way. However, this recommendation is fueled by the need to move past those categories instigated by outsiders that keep things “in their place” and can be stifling to individual creativity.

Suggestions for moving past categorizations include more Native American artists in "artists in the schools" programs. It is important to present contemporary artists as well as those in the past. General art history curricula should include more Native American artists in their contemporary art sections, to supplement historical Native American art sections. Another suggestion is for artists to continue to exhibit “traditional” work in contemporary focused venues and vice versa.

This section does not hold one category more valid than the other, or suggest artists need to change their work. It aims to dissolve distinctions that sometimes force artists to adhere to standards that may not reflect what is happening in the artwork. Categorization can be limiting to artistic expression, and therefore limiting to artists’ potential to create and make a living from their creations.

Learning How to Best Utilize the Mainstream

Gallery interactions can present challenges to artists of *any* ethnicity. However, when a group is categorized as an “other” the challenge is even greater. The recommendations of this report may be challenging to implement because the suggestions are based within the confines of the mainstream. Gallery owners may not take cultural differences of artists into account, and may see differences only as faults, excluding artists from taking part in management decisions.

To move forward in the mainstream art world, Native artists should learn as much as they can about the business end of art. This can be done by taking classes about arts marketing at schools and arts centers (such as Crow’s Shadow Institute in Eastern Oregon), and by talking to other

artists about what one needs to do to make it in the mainstream (which can also lead to more networking). It is also important for Native American artists to learn how to appropriately price their work and how to best prepare artwork for display to meet gallery standards. Again, these things can be learned from art service organizations, other artists, and by keeping up with the art "scene" through periodicals and magazines aimed at the fine arts world.

When and if attempting to enter art galleries, Native American artists should keep in mind that gallery directors look for the artwork to maintain standards of high craftsmanship, originality, and interesting subject matter. Once accepted into a show, Native artists should involve themselves in as many ways as possible in their gallery negotiations and shows—even writing press information if possible. Contracts should be read carefully, with help from an outside source if necessary, to secure honest representation and a fair deal.

Utilizing Alternative Gallery Spaces

The "mainstream" adheres to specific "rules" that often make it difficult for Native American artists to find success. While trying to educate and find more opportunities for "mainstream" exhibits of artwork done by Native American artists, Native artists can utilize alternative gallery spaces. Examples of these alternative "gallery" spaces include local gathering places where space is available for a show—hospital halls, libraries etc. The World Wide Web presents a unique opportunity for exploring new marketing strategies as well, offering artists one way to directly control the promotion of their work. Because the World Wide Web is not regulated by mainstream art "authorities," artists can advertise work all over the world in whatever way they choose. Use of these alternative "gallery" spaces is one way of marketing that could lead to more interactions with those more intimately associated with "real" gallery settings. It is important to make the work visible, even if it means breaking out of the mainstream to do so.

Maintaining Involvement with Legislation that Can Potentially Affect Native Arts

Another recommendation for success in the mainstream would be for all Native American artists to keep abreast of the Indian Arts and Craft Act of 1990. This act mandates that artists be enrolled in a federally recognized tribe or be designated a tribal artist if they advertise their work as Native American. The act includes severe penalties for those who cannot verify an artist's background if the work is advertised as Native American. If enforced, these penalties will no doubt affect the way work done by Native artists is marketed to potential art patrons. The act has already changed some mainstream institutions policies for representing artwork. Therefore, artists must keep up to date with the workings of this act and make their opinions heard—whether they support or oppose it.

Suggestions for Additional Study

Because this topic was specific to finding what factors may be influencing Native American artist participation in the mainstream, the nature of this discussion presented many opportunities for additional study. Some of these suggestions for future study are outlined as follows.

Quantitative Research on Native American Artist's Access to Arts Services

Quantitative research that would disseminate information in regard to Native American artists' access to arts services would be a helpful supplement to this study. New data could reveal inequities between Native American and other artists' access to grants, learning opportunities (about marketing and selling their work), and galleries. Inequities uncovered by such data have potential to reveal how Native artists might work and promote themselves differently than non-Native artists.

Regional Marketing Differences

The way in which Native American art is marketed may have a lot to do with the region the art is being sold or made in. For instance, the Southwest is well known for its art markets, especially "Indian made" art. The Northwest, on the other hand, has only recently started to offer a major market where Native American artists can sell their work. This could be a topic for further study because regional differences in artwork, art prices and expectations of artists and buyers are unique to the histories of the different areas of the United States. This could potentially reveal helpful marketing insights for artists.

Conclusion

This research does not address every issue that pertains to how mainstream institutions include or exclude Native American artists from their shows. As a non-Native American person I might have inadvertently missed relevant subject matter because of my cultural background. I nonetheless believe the study touches upon important issues. These issues must be considered now and in the future by Native American and non-Native American artists, art patrons and art managers alike. One artist or arts manager can pass knowledge on to the next, creating awareness along the way, because "Information changes the system" (Lavadour, qtd. in EORAC, 1991, p. 9).

It is imperative for arts managers to educate themselves about all groups of artists that have historically been or presently are marginalized from art exhibits for any reason. Arts managers can take a proactive role in helping to change harmful paradigms about art into more inclusive beliefs about the interaction of art, creation and culture. From the response of most of the participants in this study, the time is overdue for these topics to become more visible. Positive changes are taking place within arts

communities to finally welcome the rich variety of artists that live and work in the United States.

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NOTES

[1]This advisory is based upon a master's project finished for the Master of Science degree in Arts and Administration at the University of Oregon. The project was titled: "An Investigation of Factors that Influence Contemporary Native American Artist Participation in Mainstream Art Markets," written by Staci Golar.

[2] To maintain consistency within this writing, the term "Native American" will be used to refer to people whose ancestors were the original human occupants of the North American continent. I recognize that by naming a group based on ethnic background, certain presumed divisions may occur as a result of grouping them as "other." I make no claim as to one term being correct to refer to a diverse group of people, especially since the term is not necessarily defined or used by the group.

Memories of Professor Robert Gard

Michael F. Warlum

Founder and director of the Wisconsin Idea Theater, Robert E. Gard (1910-1992) was a full professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to his extensive community arts development work, he published over forty books, twenty of them novels.

Gard was born in Iola, Kansas. At the University of Kansas, he studied theatre with Allen Crafton. He was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow and instructor at Cornell University. While there, he worked with A. M. Drummond, founder of the Country Theater. He also was director of the Alberta Folklore and Local History Project.

Beginning in 1945, Professor Gard traveled tirelessly for nearly half a century as director of The Wisconsin Idea Theater. This organization developed grassroots programs throughout the state, particularly in rural areas where people had little access to the arts. One of its major projects was the Arts in the Small Community Project, a three-year research and development program funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. The project produced The Arts in the Small Community: A National Plan, commonly known as “The Windmill Book.”

I worked with Professor Gard from 1963 to 1969, first as a graduate assistant and then as director of the National Finnish American Festival in Hurley, Wisconsin. It was there that I did my Ph.D. research. Beginning in 1966, I was director of the Arts in the Small Community Project.

I met Professor Gard at a time when all things seemed possible. President John F. Kennedy had declared the arts a priority. I entered graduate school believing that individuals could actually make a difference.

As a twenty-one-year-old student in Adult Education, I felt disadvantaged. I had barely reached adulthood myself and had very little idea of how to educate one. It was high time I got some practical experience. Because I’d expressed an interest in the arts, my major professor, Dr. Burton W. Kreitlow, arranged for me to do an informal internship with Wisconsin Idea Theatre, Professor Gard’s organization.

What did I have to offer? Nothing, as far as I could tell. I was nobody from nowhere with no experience. I was sure I would end up making

copies and stuffing envelopes for ten hours a week, coming away with nothing but paper cuts and a sticky tongue.

Professor Gard's tiny office was at one end of a long room on an upper floor of the new University Extension Building. I presented myself to a handsome, auburn-haired woman who sat behind the desk that guarded the door to the Professor's "hidey-hole." Her name was Ora Barry. I felt an instant rapport with her. Why wouldn't I? From the first, Ora treated me as though I were an adult. Not many people had done that up to then. I liked it a lot. Ora was a writer and a board member of Wisconsin Regional Writers Association, founded by Professor Gard in 1948. She adored her boss."Mr. Gard, she said, would be with me shortly. He was on the phone with his publisher in New York.

I might have been nervous about meeting this unknown entity, this full professor who had his own publisher, no less, but Ora didn't give me time for that. She kept me entertained with a stream of wonderful talk. At the moment, she was screening the entries for the Wisconsin Regional Writers playwriting contest. She was particularly bemused by the entry she was currently reading. It was a protracted monologue. During the course of it, the protagonist was required to urinate six times--on stage and in full view of the audience. Where on Earth, Ora wondered, would a director find an actor with a capacity like that? Pretty racy talk for a kid like me in 1963. I loved it.

"Ah," Ora said, glancing at the buttons on her telephone. "He's off the phone." She got up, tapped at the Professor's door, opened it, and announced me. I followed.

My first impression of Professor Gard was that he was the most dynamically homely man I had ever met. He had a swarthy complexion. His face was deeply wrinkled. He had warts, big warts. His shiny black hair was slicked back flat and wanted cutting. He seemed very old and wise, although at the time he would have been in his forties.

Professor Gard has been described as Lincolnesque so often that it's become a cliché. Like many clichés, it's accurate. He was tall, thin, wiry, stoop-shouldered, had large flat feet and big rough hands with blunt fingers. He seemed completely unconcerned with personal appearance. Instead, he focused on things he considered more important.

He gazed up at me over thick, black-rimmed glasses held together with a large safety pin and broke into a slow, easy smile. "Sweep the manuscripts off that chair and sit down," he invited. His voice came out in a slow Kansas drawl, redolent of summer days along a lazy river with cicadas singing in the willow trees.

I found a place to put the manuscripts, no easy task. Every horizontal surface of Professor Gard's office was stacked with books and papers in no obvious order. I sat down. We talked. I explained that I had come to

work for him. When I assured him that I would cost nothing, that I was supported by a National Defense Education Act fellowship, his eyes lit up. I also mentioned that my major professor had told me I was to keep a journal so he could check once a month to see what I was up to.

It was then the Professor said the first of many things that would change my life. “A journal you say? It seems to me that if you'd jot down your impressions of the projects you work on here, and I added my viewpoint, we might come up with something publishable. Could be of value to other people doing this kind of work. You interested?”

Was I! I could hardly breathe. Needless to say, I had produced plenty of prose in the last few years. It’s impossible to spend four years as an English major and a year in graduate school without vomiting out thousands of words. But to actually produce something useful, something publishable; that was beyond my dreams. The amazing thing was that it never occurred to me that I couldn’t do it, that we couldn’t do it by working together. He suggested the idea so casually. He made keeping a journal of experiences other people would want to read sound so reasonable. It was a simple matter of putting my impressions on paper. Anybody could do that, couldn't they?

My journal never came to anything, really, but the seeds Professor Gard planted that day definitely took root. I subsequently published a book of poetry and several novels as well as a college textbook and many articles. What the Professor did for me was typical of what he did for thousands of individuals throughout his long career. He gave us faith in our own ability and in our right to make art.

When I went to see him, I had no idea what I was getting into or of the incredible variety of experiences I would have during the next seven years. First, he asked me to assist him in mounting a pageant for a women’s group, the Madison Civic Club, to commemorate their fiftieth anniversary. What, I wondered, did coddling a covey of clubwomen, the kind shown in old New Yorker cartoons, have to do with bringing art to the people? Professor Gard wrote the script for a slide show and a short play, assembled the slides to be shown, and cast and directed the play. I got to help, even playing a small role—the town drunk. And my question about why any of this was important went unanswered.

Next, I helped him coordinate the annual Wisconsin Idea Theater Conference, a gathering of community theatre enthusiasts from throughout the state. The meeting, held at a huge resort complex, featured a weekend of workshops, meetings, a banquet, and a lot of high-volume hi-jinx by the participants. Did Professor Gard’s mission include watching a bunch of party-crazed thespians push one another into a hotel swimming pool, and, if so, why?

After that, we tackled the Milwaukee Holiday Folk Fair. This event, sponsored by the International Institute, attracted thousands of people every Thanksgiving weekend. It showcased some forty ethnic groups in a

celebration of diversity and cooperation. The fair was held in a huge downtown arena-auditorium. It included a food circus, displays of arts and crafts, and a sales area featuring goods imported from countries across the globe. It fell to the Professor to write and direct the centerpiece of the whole shebang, an elaborate pageant with a cast of hundreds, which highlighted one particular nationality, a different one each year.

A major brewing company hosted the first meeting we attended together. “Mike,” Professor Gard counseled as we drove to Milwaukee, “you want to ask for their import-quality beer. It’s a real treat, and a guy doesn’t get to drink it very often.” As usual, I followed his advice.

When it came to the Folk Fair pageant, the trick was that all participating groups had to be part of it. Professor Gard conceived of the show as a made-up folk tale in which members of one ethnic band—in 1963, it was the Croatians—roamed an imaginary countryside on a sort of quest. Along the way, they ran into happy groups of drumming Africans, dancing Thais, singing Welshmen, Scottish pipers, and anyone else who had been chosen to perform. Chinese dragon dancers provided the inevitable monster to be bested by the questors. The Professor made a laundry list of all the groups and folded them into the script.

I remember helping as he directed the dress rehearsal from a point far up in the bleachers. Huge groups milled about the arena floor like ducks circling breadcrumbs. Whenever Professor Gard spotted something that had to be changed, he dispatched me down the long flight of steps to the performing area. “Tell those Bavarians in the leather shorts to cut toward the south so they won’t run into the Italians,” or “Have the acrobats form their pyramid in the center where the spotlight is, not over there beside the Cubans. They’re not even supposed to be on stage yet. Tell them that too.”

By the end of the evening, I could hardly crawl to the car to head back to Madison. The miracle was that the Professor made the whole thing work. But why, I wondered, were we directing a folk pageant in Milwaukee, where people had access to all sorts of cultural activities? What did this have to do with bringing the arts to people in need of them?

Immediately before the 1963 Milwaukee Holiday Folk Fair was to open, President Kennedy went to Dallas. His assassination threw the entire nation into shock. Public events were being cancelled right and left. Would the Folk Fair be among them? With all the work and planning that went into it, there was no way. The show had to go on. Rising to the challenge, Professor Gard penned a short and moving opening announcement, dedicating the entire effort to the memory of John F. Kennedy, and the event went off as scheduled.

All I have described here happened in the first three months of my time with Professor Gard. During the next several years, I had experiences I never could have imagined. I also formed answers to at least some of my questions as to what Wisconsin Idea Theater’s mission really was.

Commemorative shows for clubwomen, why not? The Madison Civic Club included the wives of most of the people Professor Gard worked with at the university. Helping them was good politics. It paved the way for bringing the artistic resources of a great state institution to the people of the state.

Weekend conventions for community players? Of course. During the annual Wisconsin Idea Theatre Conference, professionals from places like the University of Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre trained participants from all over the state. These theatre lovers received exposure to the world of which they'd declared themselves a part. Thrice, Professor Gard managed to bring Lee Strasberg of Actor's Studio fame to Wisconsin to conduct community theatre workshops.

The Milwaukee Folk Fair? Participants might not be from farms or small towns, but they were Wisconsin citizens and, thus, entitled to the services of the state university. Moreover, what the International Institute was promoting was not art as presented by major institutions but as produced by the folks.

Everything Professor Gard did was a means to an end, helping people express their artist selves. It's an obvious thing, really—or it should be--that all of us have a right to our own creative expression. The gift of letting people know this and making them believe it is a rare thing. Professor Gard had that gift. He devoted his life to using it to full advantage and to our advantage as well.

Staci Golar received her master's degree in arts management from the University of Oregon in 2000. A three month internship at Crow's Shadow Institute, an arts center on the Umatilla Reservation in Eastern Oregon, sparked her research on issues surrounding contemporary American Indian artist representation in "mainstream" venues. Golar now resides in northern New Mexico.

Michael F. Warlum holds bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and was a National Endowment for the Arts fellow at the Harvard University Institute of Arts Administration. He has held positions in higher education, not-for-profit corporations, and government. As an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and as a faculty member at a community college in Seattle, Washington, he taught courses in arts administration, business administration, and English composition. Dr. Warlum was employed by The Boeing Company, where he was involved in technical and speech writing, oral presentation development, and management training. He works as an independent trainer and consultant, and is the author of a number of published books and articles.

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Editor: Richard Bear. Advisor: Dr. Douglas Blandy.
Comments to: mfinison@darkwing.uoregon.edu