“Scientists are very often consciously or unconsciously driven by agendas well outside science, even if they do not acknowledge them.”

—Neil Turok, Director, Perimeter Institute, 2012 CBC Massey Lectures

“You, Your Slides, and Your Posters: Allies or Foes?”

Tuesday, May 10, 2016
1:30 – 4:30 pm, Room ITB 137
Information Technology Building
1280 Main Street West, Hamilton
All welcome. Admission is free.

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In the first few blinks of an eye after you stumble onto the stage, or make an opening stab at your poster, most of your audience has likely made up its mind—and you may not even have “started” your presentation. Perhaps the projector isn’t working, or your microphone has a mind of its own, or you apologize for not finding the room in time. Perhaps your visitor(s) caught you eating at your poster, or you just returned from chatting with a colleague across the room and found someone squinting at your fine print.

Whatever the case, the rest of your performance serves as confirmation of your audience’s first impressions, of its new-found likes and dislikes. And besides you, your slides and your posters have their own agenda, subplot or series of subplots that reflect you, your expertise, your authenticity, your passion for your subject, and your attention to issues such as relevance, context, clarity, citations, acknowledgments, respect, consistency of fonts, spelling, and those excruciating details in your visual aids that you can’t bear to leave out, and even their artistic composition. At your poster, you have just moments to pitch the importance of your work. As for your oral presentation, remember that your audience may have already sat through several presentations that day.

I use my expertise as a writer and director of plays as well as a professor and entrepreneur (with experience at trade shows) to elaborate on effective presentations at a conference: embracing your audience’s needs; gaining trust; the importance of clarity, citation and acknowledgement; the importance of “story” and admitting setbacks; those crucial first few seconds, and your first few slides; and how to identify and avoid potential traps and pitfalls.

McMaster professor emeritus John Bandler is an engineer, entrepreneur, innovator, researcher, artist, speaker, and author of fiction, including stage plays. A play that he directed himself—*That The Multitude May Live*—can be seen on YouTube, along with other examples of his theatrical work. Some of his talks, including his 2014 TEDx McMaster U talk, are available on the internet. He has published some 500 technical papers and contributions to books, and has won numerous professional awards. In 1997, Hewlett-Packard acquired his company Optimization Systems Associates Inc. He is a Fellow of several societies, including the Royal Society of Canada, and has been honoured by a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He actively mentors individuals for public presentations, including 3-Minute Thesis competitions. In July 2016 his play *Christmas Eve at the Julibee Motel* returns to Hamilton’s Fringe Festival.