

<http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/News/2006/March/29030601.asp>

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Australia is doing well on that score, said Australian Brian Lynch, now professor of chemistry at St Francis Xavier University, Canada. 'It's virtually standard practice to record every lecture in Australian universities and make them available online,' said Lynch.

Putting all the presentations at an ACS national meeting online would be invaluable, he said, avoiding the common dilemma of choosing between two or more relevant lectures presented at once.

About 95 per cent of ACS members don't make it to the national meetings, he added, so many would gain from such a service. The ideal set up would be to offer MP3 audio files separately from powerpoint or pdf files, he said, so delegates could dictate the pace of a presentation. The RSC offers a similar service already called 'Chemical topics', which evolved from an earlier 'Chemistry cassettes' service. 'I should've done my literature search a bit earlier,' admitted Lynch.

But the ACS is not about to take up Lynch's plans. There are numerous downsides, he warned, including copyright issues (would each presenter own the copyright on their presentation?) and the possibility that some journals would consider this as prior publication and refuse to publish data. There is also, Lynch conceded, the possibility that nobody would bother turning up to meetings at all if everything was online.

One delegate that didn't make it to the meeting still managed to present a talk at the session. Jonathan Coffman of Wyeth Biopharma, US, presented his experience with a series of web symposiums he devised to increase membership of the ACS biochemical technology division. He spoke over the phone from New Hampshire, and presented his powerpoint presentation from home with the help of a laser pointer-like device. The web symposiums have proven so successful (four last year, six planned this year) that 75 per cent of the ACS divisions are expected to follow suit within three to five years.

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