

Traditions of the Literary Club

Since the founding of The Literary Club of Cincinnati in 1849, practices have varied greatly, from debates led by members on current topics, followed by voting on the winner, to papers written by individual members read straightforwardly, without any discussion following. Stated below are the most recent practices, which are not to be regarded as fixed rules but as normal expectations:

A regular paper should take no less than 30 minutes nor more than 45 minutes to deliver. The paper should be delivered verbatim as written. Since delivery is as important as the written text, the author should read his paper aloud to himself prior to giving it at the Club. Each member will be expected to produce a regular paper every other year, but budget papers may be invited at any time.

Occasional, limited use of audio or visual aids is permitted, but there is no expectation or requirement for this component for any paper. Some papers may benefit from brief musical selections or occasional images, but images or sound bites should never take the place of the challenge of a well written description of the image or sound. A member must receive approval for use of audio or visual aids from the President prior to the date of the meeting. Power Point presentations and text-based visual aids are prohibited. The Club insists that a paper should be read, not delivered ad lib. The necessary equipment, provided by the member, must be set up and in working order at least 30 minutes prior to the presentation.

Budget papers are more flexible than regular papers. They may be a single paper or two or three short papers. A single paper should take no more than 45 minutes to deliver, while two or three short papers should take the same total amount of time, each paper being no more than 15-20 minutes long. The member who is assigned to do the budget has the privilege of choosing the number of papers. He may elect to write the paper himself, or he may invite one or two other members to join him in writing on a common theme, or he may let each author improvise a topic of his own choosing. He may deliver all the papers himself, or he may invite each author to deliver his paper individually.

The subject of a paper may be personal or impersonal, but a paper should be written for a general audience and should not be too technical or academic. Trite subjects such as book reports or travelogues are to be avoided. Controversially divisive subjects should also be avoided. Papers can be non-fiction, fiction, or poetry. Every paper should be original, and should not have been published or presented to another audience before it is given to The Literary Club.

A member who presents a grossly inadequate paper in composition and delivery

will be required to meet with the Board so it can outline the criteria that must be followed before giving another paper.

Topics of papers are not limited, but are usually drawn from the author's own experience, or from reading and research. A paper may be humorous or serious, but what is paramount is that it should be interesting to others. The title should be suggestive, not explicit, leaving the audience to guess what the true subject may be.

There will usually be no formal discussion period following the paper, but members customarily commend the author (or authors) with a round of applause, followed by handshakes, and informal discussions continue at the supper tables. There is no applause after a memorial has been read for a departed member.

It is the normal practice to wear coats and ties at every meeting, but at the Anniversary meeting, on the last Monday in October, a black tie dinner at the Club is followed by papers given by the President and the Historian. At the Holiday meeting in December, dress is normal, but dinner at the Club is followed by short papers given by the Trustees. The last meeting of the Club season in June is an Outing, at which the dress is informal, a buffet supper and refreshments are served, a regular paper is given by a member, and the gavel is passed to the new President.

Only the President can bring guests to the Anniversary Meeting and the Summer Outing. Members are encouraged to bring guests, (particularly candidates for membership), to any other meeting, including the Holiday Observance. Since camaraderie is a hallmark of The Literary Club, our custom is to use first names only, without titles like Doctor, Professor, Judge, etc.