You don't write because you want to say something; you write because you've got something to say — F Scott Fitzgerald quoted by Steven Krantz.

This book will be of great help to any academic (teacher, research worker or student) who writes papers, books, expository articles, referee reports, letters of recommendation, CVs, book reviews, does collaborative work, corresponds by e-mail, applies for academic jobs and above all uses the computer for doing so.

Steven Krantz leaves nothing to chance. With the typewriter moving out of departmental offices and the PC moving into the rooms of individual faculty, and academics doing much of their work like correspondence, typing of papers etc on their own, he has seen the need for a primer on mathematical writing. What is quite extraordinary is the comprehensiveness with which he has approached his task. He has thought of everything. A list of some of the topics he has covered — how to write a paper, the etiquette of collaboration, how to write an expository article, a letter of recommendation, a referee report, your vitae, a job application or even what is expected of a book review; how to write a book and how to get it published; email etiquette or even how to do collaborative work via email; software available, the internet, or why writing is important.

Krantz's recommended style is extremely proper, one with which the Oxbridge academic would certainly agree. He prefers a style that is simple (avoid big words and jargon wherever possible), formal (no place for contractions like 'don't', 'I'm' etc), avoids using cliches like 'nice', 'interesting' and, in fact, discourages expressions of opinion. He deals with doubts about usage, like when to use 'all', 'any', 'each' or 'every'. If you have a manuscript you would like to get published but do not know what to do with, Krantz has some useful tips.

This is what the author advises about organising a talk. He feels that the first twenty minutes should be accessible to a graduate student, the next twenty minutes within the ambit of 'a mathematically literate person who is not a specialist' and the last ten minutes 'for experts, for God and for you'. It is, of course, assumed that all these categories of people are present in the audience. Eminently sensible.

For the conservatively minded, who value etiquette and form, this book would be a useful reference.

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