



## Karaoke enthusiasts unite for MRS Meeting event

The 2019 Materials Research Society (MRS) Fall Meeting attendees are invited to participate in the popular PowerPoint Karaoke, which will be held on Thursday evening, December 5, as part of the **MRS Frontiers Reception: Building Communities, Featuring PowerPoint Karaoke**. MRS is looking for participants who want to showcase their research in an interactive and fun way. Slide topics will be centered around emerging hot topics, such as artificial intelligence, biomaterials, responsive and adaptive materials, sustainability, and quantum materials.

The debut of PowerPoint Karaoke at the 2019 MRS Spring Meeting attracted an impressive audience to watch the participants present unfamiliar PowerPoint slides. The event challenged both the authors of the slides and the presenters to improve their communication skills while under a strict time limit.

The competition is unique in that it is open to everyone—participants do not have to attend the Meeting. Participants can send in their slides and be part of the fun.

Simi Grewal, one of the organizers of the 2019 MRS Spring PowerPoint Karaoke, said the event helped her network with individuals from around the world. “Working with these individuals as a team helped me develop ‘soft skills’ that I would have otherwise not developed in my own graduate program,” said Grewal.

“It was the first time I served as a committee member for a conference event,” said Duanduan Han, Spring PowerPoint Karaoke organizer. “I have attended several domestic and international conferences, and I was always curious about the event planning process. After attending the MRS conference for the first time during Fall 2018, I was thrilled to join the Student Engagement Subcommittee to help organize a Spring 2019 event.”

“Initially, the idea of PowerPoint Karaoke was only a short description: A speaker makes a short speech based on a one-page slide he/she has not seen before. All details were left to be filled. Who will be the speaker and slide author? What are the basic requirements of the

slide? What is the judging criteria, and where are the judges?” said Han. “The Subcommittee worked together for two months, posted hundreds of Slack messages, and held multiple conference calls to answer every question and create advertisements, invitation emails, judging rubrics, and surveys. The progress was slow at first, but I was amazed by the final event we presented.”

Besides the thrill of giving a presentation, participants have the chance to win prize money. There is a jury and a People’s Choice winner for the slide author and presenter (four prizes in total). According to organizers Daniel Stadler and Christoph Bohr, “By creating a presentation for someone else, authors have to design their slides with respect to understandability and clarity without losing the required scientific deepness.”

“People who participate in PowerPoint Karaoke can expect to push into a very uncomfortable place without having the fear of ‘looking’ ridiculous. In a way, it is pushing graduate students to become more comfortable with speeches. Both authors and speakers can learn how to effectively communicate as a scientist,” said Grewal.

“Making a slide is a basic presentation skill that every graduate student should master. However, making one for a stranger to present, who only has one minute to prepare a speech, is challenging,” said Han. “The slide creator has to deliver information concisely with well-balanced text and images. It is a good opportunity for the creator to think twice about his/her research and choose materials carefully. The speaker role has challenges of understanding the scientific content of the slide and telling a good story, based on limited information available on the slide. The speaker experience helps build confidence in public speaking and improvising,” added Han.

Join us for this exciting, interactive event, either as a participant or audience member. For more information, visit [mrs.org/fall2019/powerpoint-karaoke](https://mrs.org/fall2019/powerpoint-karaoke).



Organizers, presenters, slide authors, and judges were excited to be a part of the PowerPoint Karaoke competition at the 2019 MRS Spring Meeting.