Making the most of your conference poster

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Why present a conference poster?
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- communicate a message (your research)
- reach a large number of people (potentially)
- obtain feedback
- become known
- network
Challenges faced

- being noticed given
  - lots of other posters
  - many competing distractions including food and drink
  - time slot
  - format of a poster session

- communicating effectively with this medium (visual rather than written)
Some practical things to consider

- size of allocated space
- portability of poster
- ease of assembly
- ease of attachment to poster board
- additional resources (handouts, models, samples, animations etc)?
- should you include your photo?
Some key considerations when designing your poster

- It's about your audience and not about you.
- Your poster is a visual form of communication:
  - Layout given size and shape of poster
  - Balance of text and graphics
  - Can text be replaced by graphics?
- People usually spend little time in front of a poster.
- Most posters are viewed from a distance of at least 1.5m away.
Therefore:

- design poster to be easily seen and easily scanned by eye

- focus on the central question and take-home message (use and repeat key words)

- aim to limit text to 350 words

- use bullets points not sentences

- use simple and clear but appropriate language
Evaluating some posters
Some Tips: layout

- Title should be across the whole width of the poster
- Organise text/graphics in “eye-sized” chunks
- Columns and text boxes

- 2 columns for a “portrait” oriented poster
- 3 columns for a “landscape” oriented poster
- The order of reading should be down columns rather than across rows
Some Tips: fonts

- Use no more than 3 different fonts (usually 2)
- In general use sans serif fonts
- Arial is good for titles and for axis labels
- Century Gothic or Avante Garde are good for text
- Times or Times New Roman don’t enlarge well, so don’t use
- Serif fonts that are OK for text are Palatino, Bookman or Courier
Some Tips: fonts

- Main text: at least 36 point
- Sub-headings: 48 point
- Title: 120-200 point
- Graphs: 24-26 point
- Acknowledgements: 24 point

- Restrict boldface to title or headings
- Do not underline
Some Tips: colour

- Choose colours wisely
- Don’t let use of colour or your background detract from the message
- Do not combine either primary colours or complementary colours
  - primary = red, green, blue
  - complementary = cyan, magenta, yellow, black
    (except yellow on black)
- Choose light rather than dark colours
Some Tips: text boxes

- if you put text in a coloured box, make sure there is a text-free border of colour around the text to increase readability

- default margins inside textboxes are not wide enough in Powerpoint

- increase internal margin through format, textbox, internal margin menu
Scientific posters

- need to effectively communicate the research
- may require more text than other types of posters
- but omit much of the detail that would go into a paper (use handouts to elaborate)
Scientific posters: content

- Title - enticing but short (question?)
- Background – justification for study
- Objectives – purpose of study
- Methods
- Results – usually use figures rather than tables; if used, tables should be simple
- Conclusions
- Scanning from top left to bottom right
Software issues

- Powerpoint commonly used but not necessarily the best package

- Sometimes has memory problems and omits bits (copy into Corel Draw and save as Tif)

- Print out poster as a pdf file before final printing to check layout and see if everything is there
Most importantly

- give yourself enough time to experiment with different layouts
- give yourself enough time to get feedback from a variety of other people
- use the poster checklist to help you modify drafts of your poster
Most importantly

- proofread a printed copy before the final print
- pin up an A3 sized copy and walk past it
- eliminate unnecessary detail
- check spelling and grammar AGAIN before printing
References and additional resources

1. Advice on designing scientific posters and link to a poster template in Powerpoint. This template will prompt you if the amount of white space in the poster decreases below 35%.

2. Effective Poster Presentations on-line tutorial
   http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/effective.html

3. How to Prepare a Poster
   http://www.siam.org/meetings/guidelines/poster.php

4. Online journal for Scientific and Medical Posters
   http://eposters.net

5. You can view a large number of posters at this site, and submit your own posters to it. You may also use this site to obtain feedback on your poster.

6. http://phdposters.com/gallery.php displays a number of PhD posters and includes some evaluative commentary