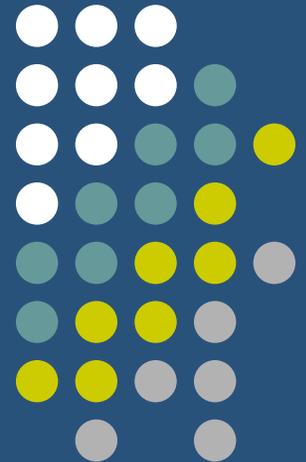# Making the most of your conference poster

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Why present a conference poster?

Why present a conference poster?

- 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%.
- http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrin1/posteradvice.htm Accessed 26th October 2007.
- 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
- 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