

# Simpson Research Symposium Poster Presentation Guidelines

## *Purpose of a Poster*

A poster is a standard format for presenting results at science conferences but can be used to present research in any academic discipline. The poster presentation allows a number of researchers to present their work and get feedback from the audience immediately, rather than waiting for question-and-answer sessions after a talk, or for reviews from a paper. The poster format is often used to present research that is in progress or recently completed, and therefore is an ideal format for students to present their work.

Your role as the poster presenter is to provide a tour through the poster's content. You will be on hand to provide answers to questions about the content of the poster during the symposium. At the end of the symposium, though, the poster may be on display for a long time after. Therefore, the poster must be sufficiently clear and complete so that anyone can follow the content and understand the conclusions even without a "guided tour" by the authors.

## *Preparing Your Poster*

- Microsoft PowerPoint is an easy program for constructing your poster. Other programs, such as Adobe Illustrator, are also good for creating posters.
  - Start MS PowerPoint
  - Open a "new presentation"
  - From the menu bar, select File > Page setup.
  - In the box that appears, the first section is "size."
  - Next to the heading "slides sized for," select "custom" from the pull-down menu
  - Enter dimensions (width 48", height 36"). Click "OK."
  - You will see this prompt: "the current page size exceeds the printable area of the paper in the printer." It will offer three options: cancel, OK, and fix. Click "OK."
  - Set the slide layout to "blank." This is done differently in different versions of PowerPoint. If you are having difficulty, type "layout" in the PowerPoint help menu, and you will find instructions on how to create or change slide layouts.
  - You can look at the poster at different sizes. Using a smaller size (e.g. 25%) will allow you to see the whole poster at once. Using a larger size (e.g. 75%) will allow you to read your text more easily.
  - If you find it difficult to keep track of what you are doing, create a second PowerPoint file, with a regular sized PowerPoint slide presentation. You can make a series of slides and then copy the text boxes and pictures from those slides into the custom poster file.
- Your poster should have
  - an abstract, outlining the goals of your research
  - a brief introduction to the particular research you are presenting
  - a description of methods used in the research
  - the results of your research, which should be the bulk of the poster
  - a discussion of the research results
  - all conclusions drawn from your research
  - any future directions for related research.

## Simpson Research Symposium Poster Presentation Guidelines

- Keep a 1-inch margin around the content of the poster, to prevent clipping of text and graphics when you print.
- Place the title prominently at the top of the poster board to allow viewers to identify your paper, in at least 48-point font. Larger titles are better for getting attention.
- Highlight the authors' names just below the title so that readers know who created the poster, and to whom to ask questions.
- Poster text and figure captions should be at least in a 24-point font and titles and other headings at least in a 36-point font.
- A serif font (e.g., Times New Roman) is often easier for reading main text, and a non-serif font (e.g., Arial or Helvetica) is most legible for headers and figure labels. Do not vary your fonts too much, though, and avoid the use of **Comic Sans** font.
- Organize the presentation so it is clear, orderly, and self-explanatory. People may read the poster without guidance from the authors long after the symposium is over.
- Use squares, rectangles, circles, etc., to group similar ideas in the poster.
- Avoid cluttering your poster with too much text. Use phrases and bullet points rather than entire sentences and paragraphs. Label different elements as I, II, III; or 1, 2, 3; or A, B, C, to make it easier for viewers to follow your display.
- Prepare tables, diagrams and charts legibly in a size sufficient to be read at a distance of at least 2 meters. If people cannot read the poster from a short distance away, how will they know whether the topic is interesting to them?
- When working with graphs or charts, use different colors and symbols for each line or bar.
- Be judicious with the use of different font sizes and styles, perhaps even color, in your poster. The use of color should *emphasize* the main points of your poster, not obscure them by turning the poster into a difficult-to-read jumble of colors and fonts.
- Avoid the use of gradients or backgrounds in your poster. They do not print well, often obscure the text, and add to the size of the finished file.
- Note that the colors you select for your poster on a computer screen will not necessarily translate to ink-on-paper. Some color combinations only work on screen or on paper, not both.
- Include the background of your research followed by results and conclusions. A successful poster presentation depends on how well you convey information to an interested audience.