Advice on Poster Presentations at BSODR September 2017

Your poster will present work to an audience standing in an exhibition. It will have to compete for attention with many other attractions so it has to gain attention and then communicate your work quickly and accessibly.

Before you start
- Your poster should be of **maximum size A0 Portrait** (that is 841mm wide x 1188 mm high) **or A1 Landscape** (that is 841mm wide x 594mm high)
- Posters of the wrong size look untidy, soon get damaged and announce that you cannot plan your work properly.
- Create your poster electronically. For most people that means Powerpoint.
- Use your organisation's poster template if it has one, which should give important starts to formatting and take care of corporate identity.
- Explicitly state the aim of your work on your poster. A well defined aim will also help you restrict the content to the relevant information.

Working on your poster
- Allow yourself time for iterations and rough drafts. Produce a rough draft (in real size) several weeks in advance, and then get the rest of your team to critique it
- Mini versions on letter-sized paper help with overall design but are hard to critique.

Poster Design - *In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing* (Wilde)
- Posters are primarily a visual medium. In addition, images convey meaning more attractively, more succinctly and more effectively than words. Images may be graphs or photographs etc. Plan your poster around the images you need to use
- Minimise 'non-data ink'. All ink makes your poster look uninviting. There are many ways to reduce non-data ink. Avoid dark backgrounds, 3-D formats, grid lines or coloured backgrounds etc.
- Conversely, blank space (margins, gaps between columns etc) makes posters attractive and approachable. One third of the space on your poster should be blank.
- Your poster must have a narrative that leads the reader from top left to bottom right. Design the poster so that the individual sections can be found and read easily.
- Be creative! As long as you stick to the other rules you can be creative.
- Arrange text in columns or text boxes ≈40 characters wide (11 words per line). Shorter or longer lines are harder to read. Two columns are often good for portrait posters.
- Use (coloured) subheadings to structure the work and break up the text.
- Your poster should be legible from 2m. The bibliography is only exception to this rule.
- Make the title prominent (centred or left justified at the top). Use a much larger font size and use small words (*of, with,* & *and*) to separate details in the title. If your organisation template permits it, use a sans-serif font for title and headings.
- Use as few words as possible. More than 800 words would make the poster "text heavy" and unattractive. Many posters need far fewer. A viewer should be able to digest your poster in < 10 minutes.
- Whenever possible, use bullet points rather than blocks of text. Use a serif font for body text, which make longer sections easier to read.
- Use italics instead of underlining.
- Institutional logos are *de rigueur* nowadays. They are usually part of your template, but if not, place them discretely in the corner.

Graphs, Tables and Photographs
- Graph and table titles lead the viewer through your poster.
- Mini illustrations in graphs & tables attract and inform viewers more effectively than text alone.
- Where there is room, Y-axis labels should be aligned horizontally to make them more legible.

- A thin grey or black border can make a photograph more appealing. It should be subtly pleasing but barely noticeable.

Content

The standard format of background, objectives, method, results and conclusion aids succinct and logical presentation.

<u>Title</u>: This should be the same as the abstract and should orientate the audience to your work [Max length: 1-2 lines.]. Titles should use sentence font and do not need full stops.

<u>Introduction</u>: Get your viewer interested while using the absolute minimum of background information and definitions.

<u>Aims & Objectives</u>: A sub header and separate section for these are best. Alternatively, your aim and objectives could form the last part of your introduction.

<u>Methods</u>: Briefly describe your methods and resources used, but in far less detail than used for a manuscript.

<u>Results</u>: Present your results logically, starting with key general points. Then add sufficient detail to support your conclusions and exclude other explanations. Use graphics when possible.

<u>Conclusions</u>: Remind the reader of aim and whether it was met. Say whether your results are conclusive and interesting. Consider the relevance of your findings to other published work or developments etc

<u>References and bibliography</u>: Use name and date citations in the text so that informed readers know what you are talking about without having to refer to the bibliography. Use a tiny font and abbreviated style in your bibliography. Many posters need no references. Few need >5.

<u>Acknowledgments</u>: Thank specific contributions. Also disclose any conflicts of interest or commitment

<u>Optional further information</u>: Include an email address; attach a little box of business cards or a wallet of A4 versions of your poster.

Presenting your poster

- Make sure your poster is in position before 9am on Thursday 7th September
- The local team will provide Velcro tabs for you to attach it to the board
- **You will need to stand by your poster from 10.30 to 11.30am on that day.**
- Place a small picture of yourself on or near the poster and wear a name badge.
- Look the part. Apparently there are data that indicate that your poster will be avoided if the colour scheme of your outfit clashes with that of your poster!
- Viewers may be embarrassed to talk to you. So, if someone shows the *slightest* interest in your work, greet them and introduce it to them.
- Prepare a *one-sentence* overview of why your work is interesting. One way to deliver this sentence is to point at a figure. Get them hooked so that they want to hear more.
- If more viewers arrive as you are halfway through, finish the tour for the earlier arrivals first. If you must leave your poster, attach a note with your expected time of return
- Thank your viewers. If they stay more than 4 minutes, you have succeeded.

References The material in this advice has drawn heavily on:

Alley, M. Design of Scientific Posters. http://writing.engr.psu.edu/poster.html. Accessed 1.9.10.

Purrington, C.B. 2009. Advice on designing scientific posters. http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrin1/posteradvice.htm. Accessed 1.9.10.