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University Libraries > Find Library Materials > Resources by Subject > Poster Presentations - Designing Effective Posters

## Poster Presentations - Designing Effective Posters

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### Designing Effective Posters

- A. [Introduction](#)
  - B. [Background Readings](#)
  - C. [Design Tips](#)
  - D. [Resources/Guides](#)
  - E. [General Remarks](#)
  - F. [Examples](#)
- 

### Disclaimer

Please feel free to create a link from your own pages to this and suggest this site to others, **especially** if you are planning or organizing a poster session for a professional meeting where **quality** posters are sorely lacking.

Poster sessions are frequently used as a means to convey information in a brief format (typically 4' x 8') in classrooms, conferences and symposia, and workshops. Designing effective poster presentations is an art unto itself. This guide provides resources to make the process easier.

Fred Stoss

University at Buffalo Libraries

*"It takes intelligence, even brilliance, to condense and focus information into a clear, simple presentation that will be read and remembered. Ignorance and arrogance are shown in a crowded, complicated, hard-to-read poster."*

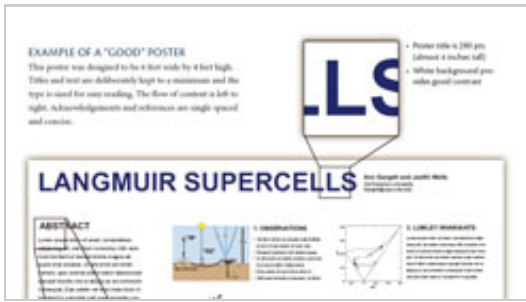
Mary Helen Briscoe

The *Oceanography Society* provides examples of a "[bad poster \(PDF\)](#)" and a "[good poster \(PDF\)](#)" in their online book, "[Scientifically Speaking](#)."





**A BAD POSTER**



**A GOOD POSTER**

Colin Purrington provides a remarkable guide, "[Designing Conference Posters.](#)"

This is the single-best resource for helpful hints in designing effective poster presentations.

## A. Introduction

The rate at which scientific and technical information grows continues to increase. National and international conferences provide a mechanism to facilitate the rapid communication of scientific ideas in the form of poster presentations. The poster presentation is NOT the pasting of a scholarly article on poster board or foam-core and standing by to defend the results reproduced in miniature on the "poster." However, it is far too often that one attends a conference poster session and finds this format to dominate the method of poster presentations.

The poster presentation should represent a "...well-designed, eye-catching, and engaging... display of research or scientific information." The poster should convey the results of research activities as to promote the scientific achievements of the poster's presenter. There is, unfortunately, a lack of presentation standards or authors' and presenters' lack of adhering to such standards, even when loosely defined.

This guide provides an inventory of print and Internet resources that provide guidance and instruction for the presentation of scientific and technical information in the form of a poster presentation. This guide includes information resources in the forms of journal articles, books, book chapters, and Internet sites that focus on the planning, design, construction, and presentation of a scientific poster.

If you find a resource you feel would be useful to include on this site, please send your comments to [Fred Stoss](#).

### Using Posters in Case Studies: The Scientific Poster as a Teaching Tool

This case study prepared by Charles R. Fournier, Mary Bisson and Christopher A. Loretz from the Department of Biological Sciences, University at Buffalo, State University of New York, describes the rationale and mechanics of introducing undergraduate biology majors to actively engage in a project to conduct bona fide library research and to then "express

themselves in their own discipline." These researchers/educators "adapted the scientific poster as a mode of learning and instruction for our departmental majors" through a General Physiology course. The specific goals of this teaching strategy are to instruct the students:

in researching the primary literature and topical reviews on a specified subject

in the evaluation of the methodologies, technologies, and experiments serving as the basis of the research they have read

in determining the pertinent data and analyses leading to the conclusions reached by experts in the field

in concise and logical preparation of data for presentation in a poster format

in the oral defense of the material they have presented on their posters

in the importance of group discussions and interactions as they develop their formal presentation

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## B. Background Readings

Some resources on the shelves:

Block, S.M. Do's and Don'ts of Poster Presentation. *Biophysical Journal*. 1996. 71 (6): 3527-3529. (Online)

Briscoe, M.H. *Preparing Scientific Illustrations: A Guide to Better Posters, Presentations, and Publications*, (2nd ed.). New York: Springer; 1996. Posters; p 131-149. (SEL REF Q222.B75 1996)

Brown, B. S. Poster Design--Six Points to Ponder. *Biochemical Education*. 1997. July; 25 (3): 136-137. (Online)

Davis, M. *Scientific Papers and Presentations*. San Diego, Academic Press: 1997. Poster presentations; p 174-185. (SEL T11 D324 1997)

Davis, M. *Scientific papers and presentations* (Rev. ed.). Burlington, MA: Academic Press: 2005. Poster presentations; p 181-204. (SEL T11 D324 2005)

Day, R.A. *How to Write & Publish a Scientific Paper* (4th ed.). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press; 1994. How to prepare a poster; p 148-151. (SEL T11.D33 1994)

Gosling, P.J. *Scientist's Guide to Poster Presentations*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Press; 1999. 139 pp. (SEL REF Q179.94 G67 1999)

Hailman, J.P. & Strier, K.B. *Planning, Proposing and Presenting Science effectively: A Guide for Graduate students and Researchers in the Behavioral Sciences and Biology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 1997. How to present research: posters at scientific meetings, p 112-115. (SEL QH315.H25 1997)

Hartman, K.J. Designing Effective Poster Presentations. *Fisheries*. 1996 . 21 (7): 22. (SEL Per SH1 .F815)

Knisely, K. *A Student Handbook for Writing in Biology* (3rd ed.). Gordonsville, VA: W.H. Freeman: 2005. Poster presentations, p 137-146. (SEL QH 304. K59 2009). [Sample posters](#) and form for evaluation of poster presentations are at [www.sinauer.com/knisely/](http://www.sinauer.com/knisely/).

Koning, R.E. Standards for Effective Presentations. In: Salisbury, FB, editor. Units, symbols, and terminology for plant physiology: a reference for presentation of research results in the plant sciences. New York: Oxford University Press; 1996. p 188-201. (SEL REF QK710.5 U55 1996)

Pechenik, J.A. A Short Guide to Writing about Biology, 3rd ed. New York: Longman; 1997. Writing a poster presentation; p 258-265. (SEL QH304.P43 1997)

Salisbury, F.B. editor. Units, Symbols, and Terminology for Plant Physiology: A Reference for Presentation of Research Results in the Plant Sciences. New York: Oxford University Press; 1996. Some suggestions about scientific writing; p 163-187. (SEL REF QK710.5 U55 1996)

Schowen, K.B. Communicating in Other Formats: Posters, Letters to the Editor, and Press Releases -- Tips for Effective Poster Presentations. In: Dodd, JS, editor. The ACS style guide: a manual for authors and editors, (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: American Chemical Society; 1997. p 27-47. (SEL REF QD8.5.A25 1997)

Scientifically Speaking: Tips for Preparing and Delivering Scientific Talks and Using Visual Aids. 2005. The Oceanography Society. [tos.org/pdfs/sci\\_speaking.pdf](http://tos.org/pdfs/sci_speaking.pdf)

Silyn-Roberts, H. Writing for science and engineering: Papers, presentations and reports. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann; 2000. A conference poster; p 151-166. (SEL T11 .S529 2000)

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## C. Designing Tips

Do's and Don'ts of Poster Presentation: Steven M. Block

This guide offers advice on preparing a good scientific poster.

BIO 801, Scientific Literature and Writing: Poster Presentations

<http://www.people.eku.edu/ritchisong/posterpres.html>

A good guide with very useful illustrations show poster elements and designs.

Creating Effective Poster Presentations: An Effective Poster

<http://sph.washington.edu/practicum/ppposter.asp>

A good site with tips for style, design and skills for presentation of posters. Includes examples, such as:

Creating a Poster Using MS PowerPoint [http://sph.washington.edu/practicum/ppposter\\_3c.asp](http://sph.washington.edu/practicum/ppposter_3c.asp) This teaching model provides instructions for creating a poster presentation using PowerPoint 97.

Creating Effective Poster Presentations: Create Your Poster: Planning

<http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/CreatePosterPlanning.html> This revised site provides

instructions for step-by-step development of effective posters and offers great examples of posters done for research. The authors address planning and development, software options, formatting and layout. In addition, poor poster techniques are discussed.

Designing Effective Posters [http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster\\_Presentations/PstrStart.html](http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/PstrStart.html) This 29-

page tutorial is one of three Kansas University Medical Center Web sites on [Effective Presentations](#). This site illustrates elements of layout and design for poster presentations, common errors in design and how to avoid them, and it provides a convenient reference for students and faculty. Click on these topics for descriptive details: Planning the poster, creating the title banner, layout of the poster, dealing with illustrations and with text, and poster assembly. There are even a few Folklore, Tidbits & Hints. "A nifty example of a poster

presentation (complete with a quiz at the end!)" is provided.

Developing a Poster Presentation in the Social Sciences <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?p=389> Allows for downloading the twenty-three slides demonstrate how to assemble a poster presentation following APA style guidelines. Slides take the audience step-by-step through the research, design and presentation stages.

Expanded Guidelines for Giving a Poster Presentation

[http://asp.org/education/howto\\_onPosters.html](http://asp.org/education/howto_onPosters.html)

This document has been compiled in hopes of providing some helpful guidelines on effective ways to present scientific information.

How to Make a Great Poster <http://www.aspb.org/education/poster.cfm> Design suggestions regarding layout, formatting, and color selection are shared on this American Society of Plant Biologists education site.

Introduction: Poster Sessions <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/speaking/poster/index.cfm> This university writing guide is a great place to start when faced with a poster assignment. Straight-forward instructions and guidance along with examples and additional resources steer tenderfeet and veterans in effective design.

The Poster Session: A Guide for Preparation

<http://www.sou.edu/aaaspd/PosterPrep.html>

A detailed account of preparing a poster (session) presentation.

University at Buffalo PPT Poster Template

[http://www.buffalo.edu/toolbox/downloads/research\\_posters.php](http://www.buffalo.edu/toolbox/downloads/research_posters.php)

This is the site from which University at Buffalo faculty, students and staff may download a template for a 44" x 36" Research or Informational Poster.

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## D. Resources/Guides

Career Development: Providing Poster Sessions

[http://cte.umdni.edu/career\\_development/career\\_posters.cfm](http://cte.umdni.edu/career_development/career_posters.cfm)

Links to 19 sites (all in this guide)

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## E. General Remarks

Crucial Poster Guidelines

<http://www.biology.duke.edu/undergrad/distinction/poster.html>

Creating a poster on a single Power Point slide is made easy.

Dealing with Presentation Disasters <http://www.strategiccomm.com/disasters.html> Knowing your objective and continuing to smile despite any interruptions are just two means of dealing with presentation disasters. Check here for more tips.

Google Images <http://images.google.com> Google Image search can help locate appropriate graphic images or photographs or other illustrations for your poster presentations. Just enter the topic, concept, or object for which you are seeking an image and review the results. An advanced search is also possible.

How to Make a Poster? Posters Have Advantages Over Talks! <http://www.bio.vu.nl/thb/users/tmbm99/poster.html>  
This site provides reasons for creating a poster to present research, and discusses formatting considerations.

Poster Guidelines

<http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/Provost/GRAD/posters.html>

A brief guide on designing posters.

Poster Presentation of Research Work <http://lorien.ncl.ac.uk/ming/Dept/Tips/present/posters.htm> A textual description of how to plan and deliver a poster presentation (compiled by the Chemical and Process Engineering Department at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne [U.K.]).

Poster Software <http://www.postersw.com/main.html>

Preparing Professional Scientific Posters <http://www.ce.umn.edu/~smith/supplements/poster/guide.htm> This poster minicourse provides a bullet list for start-to-finish poster design guidance.

Society for Technical Communication <http://stc.org/> A tremendous resource for the science or engineering or health science student interested in pursuing career options as a technical writer, illustrator, editor, or communications specialist.

Tips for Effective Poster Presentations <http://www.osti.gov/em52/workshop/tips-exhibits.html> The U.S. Department of Energy site provides a rather comprehensive document series on effective poster design, including a Guidelines for Preparation of Online Poster Presentations  
<http://www.osti.gov/em52/workshop/em52-gl.html>

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## F. Examples

EPA: Community Involvement Conference & Training: Posters and Exhibits, 2006  
<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/ciconference/previous/2006/posters.htm>

EPA: Community Involvement Conference & Training: Posters and Exhibits, 2007 (scroll down the page)  
<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/ciconference/previous/2007/posters.htm#>

IAU Symposium 170 Electronic Poster Presentations <http://www.tuc.nrao.edu/meeting/posters.html>

Leiden Dynamics Group Posters/Talks <http://www.strw.leidenuniv.nl/~dynamics/Posters/>

If you know of sites, especially from professional associations and societies providing examples of posters, send me the URL - [fstoss@buffalo.edu](mailto:fstoss@buffalo.edu)