Tips for Designing an Effective Poster

1. Know the amount of space that you will be allotted and plan accordingly. A common size for professionally created posters to exhibit research, scholarly, and creative work is 4ft. by 4ft.
2. You may use any color you wish as a backing material for your poster (you do not have to use white or cream); just use good judgment in your choice of color. Fluorescent colors are extremely distracting.
3. When cutting edges, be certain that the edges are straight. Use a ruler or T-square.
4. Put the poster title on a separate line(s) at the top of the poster. Your name, your mentor's name and the name of any collaborators should appear on the next line(s). The name of your university should be listed on a separate line below the list of names (if space is an issue, the list of names and institution may go on the same line in order to save space). The font size for the title of your poster, list of names and institution should be at least 1" high (100 point font). The line that contains your project title should be in a larger-sized font than your name/institution.
5. You should attach the title/list of names/institution name as a single banner across the top of the poster. If you cannot print one continuous banner, you can glue together separate pages on which the words are printed in order to form the banner. Do not cut between words or glue words separately onto the poster.
6. Use black or some other dark color for the text.
7. Use an easy-to-read typeface like Times Roman, Courier, or Ariel. While Gothic, Italic, or Script fonts can be used to highlight words and phrases, they should not be used over the entire poster. Use the same font for all parts of the poster: titles, section headings, and text (except when using a special font to highlight a word or phrase).
8. The text of your poster should be large enough to be easily read from a distance of 3 feet. Text should be printed in 20-, 24-, or 30-point font (no smaller than 20 point!!). The same applies to tables and figures. Use the same size font for axis labels, legends, etc. that you use in the text of your poster. When printing the text, you may use 0.5" margins rather than 1" margins if necessary, but do not crowd.
9. This is a poster, not a manuscript, so focus on the most important information and say it efficiently. Use a heading for each major section: Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion (or Conclusions), and References (if you had citations). Single space the text in each section. Ideally, each section should take up no more than a single page. You may use half or three-quarter size pages for shorter sections. When appropriate, a bulleted list saves space and gives your reader the most important points in an easy-to-understand format. Arrange materials in columns rather than rows. It is easier and more logical for viewers to read from top to bottom and left to right than to have to scan across or zigzag across a page.
10. Use either rubber cement or spray adhesive (especially designed for paper) to adhere text pages, title banners and other paper materials to the poster backing. DO NOT use white glue (Elmer's glue), paste, mucilage, glue sticks, craft glue, airplane cement, or other similar adhesives. They either do not adhere well (as in the case of glue sticks) or

they cause the paper and even the poster board to shrink, wrinkle and generally look terrible.

An excellent tutorial on preparing effective posters can be found at the following web sites:

"Designing Effective Posters" –Jeff Radel, Univ. of Kansas:

http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/PstrStart.html

Very attractive posters can also be designed and printed if you have access to a large format printer. If laminated, these posters are also easily transportable. You might discuss this option with your faculty mentor. Designing these posters can be done much easier than imaginable using Microsoft Powerpoint. As for printing, MSU's MARC Program provides poster printing services (no lamination) for a fee. They can be reached by calling 270-809-3370. Printing and lamination services are also available for a fee from CopyPlus in Murray. They can be reached by calling 270-753-7117.
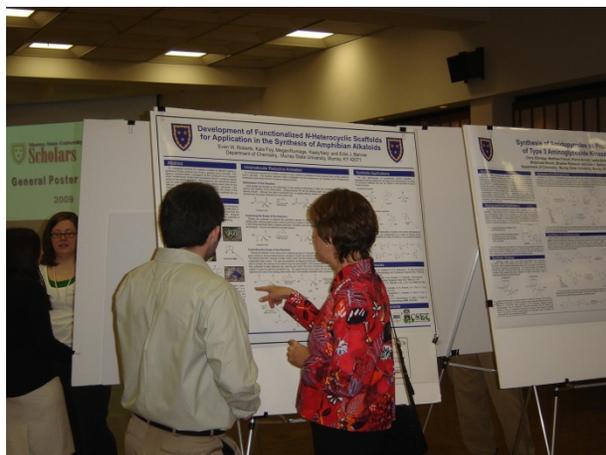
Remember that people will make assumptions about your project and even your intelligence based upon the appearance of your poster. While those assumptions may not be accurate, they nevertheless make lasting first impressions. Work carefully on your poster. Allow yourself plenty of time to create it, arrange it, and get it right.

Make it look professional!

For more information on creating professional posters to present your research, scholarly, and creative work, please contact Jody Cofer in the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholarly Activity at 270-809-3192 or visit http://campus.murraystate.edu/services/URSA/index.html.

Updated: 8/12/09