ASABE Meeting/Conference Speaker Guidelines: POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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*   Preparing Posters for Technical Presentations by Art Teixeira

Thank you for participating.

If you have any questions, please contact:
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DEADLINES

CONFERENCES: The conference proceedings chairperson will be contacting you with deadlines for submission of your prepared conference paper. You will need to follow this schedule so that your paper will be included in the media for this conference and posted to the ASABE Technical Library in a timely manner.

ANNUAL MEETING: You will receive your Control ID Number/Paper number when you submit your abstract to Abstract Central. The deadline for submission of your full meeting paper will be listed. You must register by the Early Bird Registration deadline for your paper to be included in the program and posted on the ASABE Technical Library.

POSTER PRESENTATION

Poster presentations are a innovative approach to allow maximum flexibility in presentation style. The display area is configured like a trade show to allow for effective traffic flow. Each speaker is provided with poster board:

POSTER BOARD DIMENSIONS: 4 foot deep by 4 foot wide poster board (Poster board backgrounds are usually of neutral color and your presentation can be affixed by push pins/thumb tacks) The exact display area is 44 inches wide (from left to right) by 44 inches deep (top to bottom).

Set your poster display up for viewing 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the poster session and will be display during the specified poster session time (Annual Meeting is usually 2.5 hours). At the end of this time period you must remove your presentation (within 30 minutes) so the poster boards can be used for another session. Speakers are asked to be present at their poster board during the scheduled time of their session.

REGISTRATION

All lecture and poster presenters are eligible for the ASABE member registration fee and will be required to register for the meeting to present their lectures and posters and for their presentation to be included in the meeting program and the ASABE Technical Library. Failure to register for the meeting will result in your presentation being removed from the program. NO EXCEPTIONS!!

GUIDELINES FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTER OPTIONS

As a poster presenter, you have an enhanced opportunity to explain your work to a targeted audience of intensely interested peers.

A poster exhibit offers you flexibility in selecting the most effective technique to help your audience understand the technology you are presenting and quickly grasp the principal findings.

SET-UP

Posters are scheduled in a conveniently located room. A standard bulletin board (4 foot high x 8 foot long which holds 2 presentations) will be provided. Background of the poster board is usually a neutral color. It is your responsibility to provide push pins, velcro or other means of attaching your poster information to the poster board. A very limited supply of materials are usually available at the ASABE Registration Desk.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

You should focus on the introduction, methods, results and discussion, summary, and references. Make a small-scale sketch of your poster on an 8 1/2- by 11 inch piece of white paper. Emphasize the points you want to stress in your poster. Think of headlines, text, charts, graphs, illustrations, photos, etc. Incorporate these ideas into your sketch.

Once you are satisfied with the initial sketch, make a rough layout. A chalkboard is excellent for the rough layout since it has dimensions similar to a poster board.

The poster should flow from left to right and top to bottom. A suggested layout is as follows:

- Title of presentation and full name of author(s) - centered across top
- Objectives - upper left
- Conclusions - upper right
- If there is room between objectives and conclusions, show key parts of procedure or methods. (Organizing this information at the top allows the audience to conveniently and quickly grasp the value of your work.)
- Graphs, tables, photos, and other visuals - remainder of the board

SIMPLICITY

Don't crowd too much information into the presentation; concentrate on two or three main points. Highlight trends and comparisons with simplified charts, graphs and diagrams. Make key points in the legends of figures or tables. Use text cautiously and make sure it is easily understood by the audience. In fact, outlines of important points often work better than paragraph-style text. Use abbreviations and acronyms sparingly. Avoid overwhelming your audience with too many numbers, words and/or complicated graphs. Remember, some people will read or study your poster while you are away; make certain the message is clear and simple.

COLOR

If you want a particular background color, you may use index stock, construction paper, or fabric to cover the entire poster board surface. Use contrasting colors where appropriate in charts, graphs, and diagrams. Permanent felt-tipped color markers can be used for adding color to posters prepared with black text and line art. Computer graphics generated by color printer are another alternative.

LETTERING

All lettering must be easily read from a distance of 6 feet. Use a bold or semibold typeface for headings and labels to add weight (blackness) to the type, thus enhancing readability of your headings or labels. Lettering for subheads and figure captions should be larger than typewriter type, but smaller than type used for the main heading. This type should also be bold or semibold in weight. Avoid type with thin strokes--such type reduces readability. Text in upper and lower case letters is more readable than all capitals. However, capitals for titles, headings, and labels are acceptable.

What is the best size of type to use? For the title, plan on using finished type that is at least 1 inch high. The lettering for authors names, sponsoring institution, and address should be at least 3/4 inch high. Major headings should be at least 1/2 inch high. All other type should be at least 1/4 inch high. Remember, your poster must be readable from a distance of 6 feet.

COPY FOR TEXT

Keep your text in short, concise, legible statements; minimize complete sentences and paragraphs. A few summary statements are encouraged. Use a typewriter or word processor to prepare your text copy. Make sure that the type is very black--some word processors/printers generate gray copy that reproduces poorly. Use sans serif type such as Orator, Times or Letter Gothic for text. Serif type such as Courier or Helvetica is much harder to read. Try typing your copy single spaced on a 3 inch by 5 inch format. Use the typed original and enlarge it to 200% or more. Alternatively, you may produce your text directly on the computer using a larger font. In either case, the final copy should have letters at least 1/4 inch tall (preferably larger) and should be readable from a distance of 6 feet.

MOUNTING

Some of the best paper to use for mounting is 110-pound index stock which is available in a variety of colors. Do not use very heavy (thick) stock as it is difficult to secure to a poster board with push pins. Plan on leaving 1/4 to 1 inch of mounting stock around your artwork. Keep your poster sections small enough to fit into a suitcase or briefcase, 17 inches by 22 inches or smaller in size.

Pictures must be mounted to avoid curling. Mount your pictures, graphs, charts and diagrams on paper of contrasting colors. Use a spray adhesive, available from art supply stores, when mounting artwork. Rubber cement is also a good mounting adhesive.

MISCELLANEOUS

Tape cannot be used to attach your display to the poster board. Push pins are a good choice for mounting -- you should bring along enough to mount your poster. Or if you wish, you can use "hook-type" Velcro to attach the poster to the felt-covered surface of the poster board.

It is always a good idea to bring along a few tools for last-minute problems that pop up. Scissors, liquid paper, and a marking pen should be considered. You'll find that a measuring tape comes in handy when trying to make sure the artwork is properly mounted on the poster board.

A suitcase or briefcase is a great way to carry your poster to the meeting since it offers ample protection and is something you already have available. You may wish to further protect your poster pieces during transportation by using an "envelope" made out of corrugated cardboard or similar material. You can store the envelope in your suitcase of briefcase, or carry it by itself. Be sure to seal the ends of the envelope with tape.

Bring a supply of business cards or other form of identification to hand out at your poster session. This is a quick way of distributing your name and address to interested attendees. Have a sign-up pad available to record the names and addresses of individuals wanting more information. You can also use the pad to write down interesting comments from attendees. You may also want to have a supply of handouts available.

WRITTEN PAPER
All presenters (lecture and poster) at ASABE meetings are asked to submit written transcripts. A written paper helps provide maximum visibility and allows your paper to be indexed in ASABE's worldwide library and website.

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Preparing Posters for Technical Presentations*

Compiled by Art Teixeira†

Advantages of poster sessions have long been extolled by both presenters and attendees at technical meetings and conferences over the years and around the world. A major benefit of the poster session is that the audience determines the speed at which the material is viewed. All of us have attended oral presentations where we have wished that a key slide or overhead had been left on a little longer. In poster sessions, participants have time to study complicated and technical information at their own pace.

Poster sessions are also more informal. Many attending oral presentations would have liked to ask a question but did not for one reason or another — time constraints, intimidation by the audience or by the speaker, uncertainty of the appropriateness of the question. At a poster session, there is an opportunity not only to ask quick and specific questions, but also to develop conversations which often evolve into in-depth discussions of underlying principles.

The good design of a poster can maximize all these advantages. This means developing an intellectually organized, concise, structured and pointed presentation. It means visually arranging the elements to optimize audience understanding. It also means excluding extraneous information. Most researchers have more information to present than can fit into a 15-minute oral presentation, or into a poster session. A key planning decision is what to exclude, and what to incorporate.

Designing the poster

A poster presentation [4-ft by 4-ft. at ASABE meetings] will generally contain several panels or frames of text. Several panels include important messages and data. Each frame must be designed to be read by an audience, some of whom are interested, and most of whom are moving quickly past the display because of limited time. Objectives and conclusions must be clearly and quickly grasped by the viewer.

The design and layout of the text and statistical panels provide certain messages to the viewer. Each poster arrangement furnishes a quick, first "feeling" about the kind of information contained in the poster and "about ways to use it." Systematic planning of the poster design and its layout is crucial in effectively communicating with the audience.

Usually, the individual sections of the poster (methods, results, etc.) should be placed on separate panels, with good visual spacing between sections. This "white space" contributes to eye flow and readability, and is a positive visual aesthetic, showing taste and style.

The presenter's technical content will provide the major organizing theme — a description of an experiment, a discussion of a process, a comparison of two or more methods, or an assessment of patterns. Most often, then, the theme will be divided into sections and will be organized around a generalized research presentation format — title, abstract, introduction and problem, literature review, methods, results, discussion, implications and references.

The technical poster's main message must be easy to grasp. Therefore, the major poster design tool is effective text design.

Text attributes of importance for posters include sentence and word length, sentence structure, degree of abstraction, and commonness of words. The ideal text for effective technical posters would contain short sentences, to-the-point words, simple sentence structures, a moderate or low degree of abstraction, and the use of common words, not jargon. These five text elements are critical for poster readability.

Design attributes that improve text comprehension include choosing the text font; designing titles; dividing the poster into sections and subsections, with appropriate headings; crafting the sections; and using color, graphic enhancements, and photographs and illustrations.

Dividing into sections

As authors divide the content into purposeful sections, they will give each one a title or heading. Usually sections are labeled "Abstract," "Methods," "Results," or "Discussion." Headings for these sections should stand out from the body text.

Headings give the viewers organizing hooks — ways to categorize and find information quickly. Typical headings such as "Literature Review," "Discussion," and "References" aid viewers in searching for particular areas. Section headings also

serve to sequence the content and identify the visual flow. To draw and guide the eye, therefore, section heads should be bold, providing a powerful, organizing graphic element.

Placement of the headings is another design decision. The most popular location is directly above the section, either centered or flush left. When a section heading is placed within the text as part of the first paragraph, it becomes less distinguishable as an organizing element, even if bold. While tolerable for subheadings, we do not encourage placing section headings in the paragraphs.

Using photographs and illustrations

Photographs can be a positive element in the technical message.

Care should be taken to have the photograph enlarged for clear viewing and labeled. Today, with color copying, photographs can be incorporated into the poster effortlessly. If actual photographic paper is used, a matte finish is recommended. This nonglossy surface will be more readily perceived by the audience. If the photograph is printed on copy paper, it should be mounted on heavy background paper such as cover stock or mounting board to keep the edges of the print flat. In either case, the photograph should be labeled and described, and any key elements highlighted either in the caption or on the photograph itself.

Illustrations of equipment or flow charts can and should be used if they add information. They should be big enough to be conveniently viewed, and the labeling should be appropriate to the final image. Too much extraneous text will clutter the illustration, and not enough labeling encourages ambiguity. Testing illustrations with colleagues before finally incorporating them into the poster is the best way to make certain they communicate.