Making Conference Posters

DESIGN APPLICATIONS

Adobe Illustrator and PowerPoint are available on the PSC Library computers. Poster designers can also use any of the software available from U-M Virtual Sites through remote connectivity. (Requires authentication.) Applications include PowerPoint and all Adobe products. Guidance for using Virtual Sites is available via U-M ITCS. Contact PSC computing if you need further help.

Using PowerPoint.

Even given the drawbacks of using PowerPoint for creating posters – it is not intended to be a print design tool and file formatting, images, and colors may alter from screen to print – it seems to be the application of choice among conference poster makers. Most suggestions below assume its use.

PowerPoint poster-making tutorials:

    Excellent overview from P&D Graphics

    More detailed tutorial from MakeSigns.com

Using Adobe Illustrator or Adobe InDesign.

The U-M Media Commons strongly suggests and supports the use of AI to create posters. It provides related how-to advice, templates, and workshops. However, **InDesign** is the Adobe application most suited to poster making and is supported by the PSC Publications office. (Contact: mailto:nebarr@umich.edu)

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Format.

Most posters are created in a landscape format. Typical printed sizes are: 36 or 40 inches on the vertical side by 5, 6, or 7 feet on the horizontal side.

Use multiple columns and a 1.5-inch margin on all sides.

Text-only columns are optimal at about 10 to 12 words per line, 10 to 20 lines.

Size considerations:

- Because a PowerPoint page size can be no wider than 56" inches, scale your presentation to print to the desired enlarged size. If, for example, you want a 36x72 inch poster, your page size can be set to 18x36, 24x48 or any other proportionate dimensions.

- Printers vary in their maximum width (short side). For instance, FedEx-Kinkos (Liberty and Maynard) can print up to 60"; U-M Media Commons (North Campus) can print up to 36".

- If you plan to put your poster in a mailing tube, consider standard tube lengths in your design and make the short side two inches less than the tube length (say, 40" rather than 42"), so the end caps fit.

- If you plan to take a mailing tube on a flight, many airlines limit carry-on pieces to 42" in one dimension.

Content.

Most posters include the following:

- Title; Authors + affiliations; Unit logo (banner)
- Introduction/Background/Objectives
- Methods
- Results/Conclusions
- References
- Acknowledgements
- Contact information

Type.

All type should be legible at about 6 feet from poster.

Title: At least 1.5 inches tall, or 100 pts, bold face *

Subtitles: At least 32 pts, bold face *

Body text: 22-28 pts *

Serif type, such as Times, is often used for body text; and sans serif type, such as Verdana, is often used for headings.

Upper and lower case type (rather than ALL CAPS) is easier to read, even in headlines.

If type appears against a background, make sure the contrast is high, especially for reverse type (light type on a dark background).

* These recommendations are for final *printed* posters. If you're using a smaller format for design purposes and intend to enlarge it for print, adjust type sizes downward proportionately. For example, if your PowerPoint template is 18 x 40 inches and you intend to print it at 200% (to 36 x 80 inches) your initial type size should be 50% of above recommendations.

Graphics.

Your poster should be driven by graphical elements that provide information in a simple but compelling way. Diagrams, charts, and figures should present methods and findings whenever possible. Tabularized data tend to be more difficult for viewers to assimilate.

Each illustration should have a heading and a concise description of content in legends or labels.

Saturated colors are eye-catching, but for optimal cohesion and impact, choose a small range to use for all charts, figures, and graphics.

Web graphics are generally 72 ppi – much too low a resolution for printing on a large poster. Aim for images of about 250 ppi for inclusion – large enough to print well, small enough to keep the file size manageable.

Save scanned images as JPG or TIF files, which are easy to incorporate in design applications.

A narrow rule or border around all graphics helps give them definition.

Avoid using pattern fills in Excel charts and graphs, which don't translate well from screen to print.

All graphics, like type, should be discernable at about 6 feet.

Official U-M Logos.

U-M Logos and Word Marks downloads require authentication with U-M uniqname and password.

Before Printing.

Converting your poster from PowerPoint or another design application to a high-resolution PDF file will help ensure that the components print as expected.

In PowerPoint, use the Acrobat feature to create a PDF, with a conversion setting of Press Quality (highest resolution) or High Quality Print. This PDF file can be enlarged for printing.

LOCAL PRINTING

Digital Media Commons (North Campus)
Duderstadt Center, 2281 Bonisteel Blvd.; 647-5739

Large format printer (up to 36" in height)

$15 per linear foot

FedEx Kinko's
530 E Liberty (corner of Thompson); 761-4539

Large format printer/laminator (up to 59")

Printing on matte paper [prices as of September 2008]:

- $5.95 per sq foot, with U-M discount (need U-M ID and shortcode, or P-card)
- $7.75 per sq foot otherwise

Lamination (matte or gloss; matte generally works best to cut glare):

- $.95 per sq foot, with UM discount
- $3.00 per sq foot otherwise

GALLERIES and TEMPLATES

PAA 2008 poster session winners

PAA 2008 posters, Minnesota Pop Center

PAA 2007 posters, U-Penn Pop Center

PAA 2005 posters, Carolina Pop Center

Poster templates for PowerPoint at MakeSigns.com and PosterPresentations.com

Poster templates for Adobe Illustrator at U-M Digital Media Commons

PAA Poster Guidelines (2008)

Lettering on the banner should be at least one inch high.

Illustrations: Figures should be designed to be viewed from a distance, and should use clear, visible graphics. Each figure or table should have a heading in large typeface. Detailed information should be provided in a legend below in smaller typeface. Since there is no text accompanying a poster, the figure legend should describe concisely the content of the figure and the conclusions. Details of the methodology should be kept brief and should be placed at the end of the legend.

Layout: Materials should be mounted on colored poster paper. Use thin mounting materials. Heavy board is difficult to keep in place. (Push pins will be provided.) For easy viewing, arrange materials in columns rather than in rows. The sequence of figures or graphs should be indicated with numbers or letters at least one inch high. Avoid long textual passages and use graphs and diagrams as much as possible. You may have copies of abstracts available for distribution during the poster session.

If you have any questions, please contact the PAA office, telephone 301/565-6710, fax 301-565-7850, e-mail: info@popassoc.org