BS/LBS159H, SS’04: Group Project: Poster

Objectives:
Scientists use three primary ways of communicating the results of their research:
1) articles published in scientific journals,
2) oral presentations or ‘seminars’ at meetings and conferences, and
3) poster sessions also conducted at meetings and conferences.

Posters can be a very effective and efficient way of conveying information and are frequently favored by scientists because it allows the most interaction with colleagues.

The primary goals of this assignment are three fold. First, we wish to let others (e.g., those in our class and other Briggs students and faculty) get a glimpse of what your group found during your inquiry project. Secondly, we want you to see and understand what your classmates were doing for their research. And, finally, we hope you gain a certain level of expertise in using posters, as they are by far the most common method undergraduate and graduate students use to present their research at national conferences.

The Assignment:
The Poster (15 pts): (group assignment) Each team will present their poster in a poster session held during the last week of class (i.e., the week before final exams). Your posters will be evaluated for clarity, appearance, quality of the science and your interaction with viewers.

Poster sessions are social events as well as being academic ones. They are generally fun, stimulating, and abuzz with talk about experimental design, what went wrong, and what went well. The session is a nice way to conclude the semester.

The Worksheet (18 pts): (individual assignment) Each student will be given an evaluation form and asked to interact with six other teams and evaluate their posters—3 (easy) pts per evaluation.

This year’s poster session will be held on Thursday, April 29, 2004 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm in the East Lounge of Holmes Hall. We will have panels set up for you to attach your posters for display. You will need to use Velcro to attach your poster to the panels. You have a 4’x 4’ space for your poster.

The building manager has kindly offered to provide refreshments for the poster session!

The rules are as follows:
- You can set up your poster from 5:30 to 6:00 PM. ALL POSTERS MUST BE UP BY 6:00 LATEST.
- At least one member of the team must be at the poster at all times to answer visitors’ questions.
- Each team member must be present for at least some part of the 6-8:00 period (but not the whole two hours—unless you want to of course) to answer questions about their poster and evaluate others for the worksheet.

(If you have a conflict that encompasses the entire poster session, you need to contact John about alternate arrangements)

- Each poster will be graded as follows:
  1) Clarity of presentation (3 pts)
  2) Science (i.e. completeness of research and results) (3 pts)
  3) Appearance of poster presentation (3 pts)
  4) Interaction with visitors (3 pts)
  5) Overall (3 pts)

- Each team member will be required to complete a worksheet evaluating six other posters. The evaluations you do for the worksheet will be based upon the same above criteria.
Writing a Poster:

General:
A good poster is informative and complete but concise and efficient in the information it conveys. Stick to the main points you are trying to get across without being verbose. Nobody wants to stand in front of a poster and read long passages of text. Use figures, graphs and tables to summarize data, methods or samples analyzed whenever possible. A poster should be aesthetically pleasing. Figures and tables, used properly, make your poster a more pleasant experience for your visitors, help convey information and can actually draw attention to your poster, drawing in more visitors.

For your general text, use a big enough font such that your poster can easily be read from five feet away. The appropriate size will vary with your chosen font (usually anywhere from 14pt to 22pt). Usually a sans serif type of font is more readable (e.g. Arial or Helvetica).

Components:
Like a scientific paper, your poster should contain the following components:
- Title & Authors
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- References

BUT in as concise a manner as possible that still makes the work understandable.

Abstract: The Abstract should be a concise, yet complete overview of your entire body of work. You already have practice doing this.

Introduction: Should state the problem being addressed, the hypothesis being tested (if your project is hypothesis driven) and brief background. The Introduction should give visitors a context for your work but should be shorter than the introduction found in your scientific paper.

Materials and Methods: M&M should be very abbreviated!…almost as succinct as in the Abstract. The only specific details you should include are those you deem critical for visitors’ understanding of the work. Remember, you are there to answer any specific questions they may have.

Results: As in your Oral Presentations, Results should be summarized in as concise a manner as possible (i.e. text, tables, graphs or figures—whichever makes the data easiest to interpret), but tables and graphs should also be complemented with a little textual description to help readers easily interpret the figures. Usually a one-sentence statement of the results with a pointer to the appropriate table or figure. (e.g. “We found no difference between the survival of transformed and non-transformed strains. Survival data is summarized in Table 1.”)

Often it is most space efficient to include the brief result statements (and sometimes the relevant M&M) as part of the legend for that figure, table or graph.

Conclusions: Along with Results, should have a prominent presence on your poster. You should devote more effort and space to this section than to the Introduction and M&M.

References: Most of you won’t have many, if any at all. If you do have some, they should be in an abbreviated format. Skip titles. For any papers with more than two authors, cover the other authors with “et al”. Use the accepted abbreviations for journal names (PubMed uses these if you want to find the official abbreviations).