ANNUAL GSSA CONGRESS

GUIDELINES FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS

General

Posters should be no larger than A0, and preferably portrait in format. Adhesive will be provided at the registration desk.

Poster presenters will be given a 3 minute slot during the relevant session to give a brief summary of their poster with 2 minutes for questions, i.e. a total of 5 minutes. Time for more detailed discussion of posters is available during the general poster sessions.

Posters are judged on their presentation as well as their content. They are supposed to be concise communication tools. They should attract attention and provoke curiosity. Remember, that the poster's audience often has distractions of noise and movement of other people.

A **good guideline for posters is that one should be able to read them in 3 minutes**. The best way to test this is to ask a friend to do this before you go to the expense of printing the poster.

The aim of posters is usually that they are presented with the author next to them. This means that a) a lot of detail is unnecessary, and b) you need to be prepared to answer questions and guide your audience through your poster.

So, how do you make an effective poster? The poster should be able to tell a passer-by what it is about at first glance. This is usually done using the title and supporting images. Make sure the information is properly arranged, that the poster is graphically appealing, and that data are clearly represented. Bear in mind that the clarity of the presentation stems from proper arrangement of information, and that to make the poster appealing, you need to keep the design of your poster simple.

Different people will read your poster with different levels of interest, based on their fields of interest and expertise. Many will only read the background and objectives and then move on to the conclusions. Others, with a deeper interest, might read the entire poster. To facilitate both these groups of people, make sure that the specific sections are clearly labeled and easy to find. It should also be possible to read the individual sections of your poster quickly – in other words, avoid large blocks of text. Also avoid long sentences.

1. **Don't say too much**. The temptation is always great to give as much detail as possible in presenting your work. This ultimately results in a poster with too much small text. Not only is this not visually appealing, it demands too much from the audience.
2. **Before you even start to think of design, plot the research story**. What details are needed to make your point, what is extraneous? Make sure the information flows logically. Plot the flow of information, first, on scrap paper, so that you know what you want to say and how.
3. **The information should follow a narrative**. Tell a story; use words, tables and graphics to lead the reader through the presentation.
4. **Effective posters can be** *both* **viewer-friendly and contain complex data.** The trick is using design cleverly to present these data. Posters may be simple, but shouldn't patronize the audience.

Tips towards "viewer-friendliness":

1. It often helps to state the conclusion of the investigation in the title.
2. Lettering for titles should be readable from at least 2m away.
3. Avoid abbreviations; if you do use them be sure to explain them on first use.
4. Heading should include authors' names and affiliations. A photo of the author(s) is very useful as it helps people who read the poster and want to know more to find you.
5. Text, tables and graphics should look integrated. The same typeface should be used throughout. Try to choose a "user friendly" typeface (i.e. one that is clear, not, say, *Blackadder* font).
6. Lettering for the body of the poster should be legible from 1.5m away.
7. Be careful with colour, avoid garish contrast.
8. Use figures and tables whenever possible to help illustrate your point.
9. Graphics tend to look better if they are wider than tall. Some put this at 50% wider than tall. Try to avoid elaborately coded shadings and cross-hatchings, try to rather use very definitely different colours, with clear patterning, if necessary. Bear in mind members of the audience who may be colour blind.

10. Use explanations to explain diagrams and other graphics, wherever possible. You can place these explanations on the graphic – using callouts, if you are short of space.

Many thanks to the Arid Zone Ecology Forum (www.azef.co.za) for allowing us to use their excellent guidelines!