Guidelines for Poster Preparation
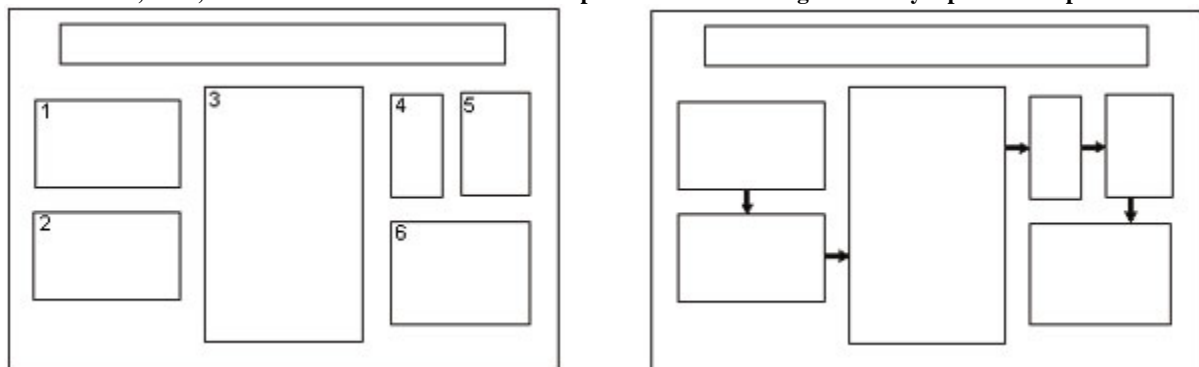
General aim and format

- Posters graphically present your research. You should aim to use the poster as a means for generating active discussion of your research, but it also needs to be complete enough to allow people to learn about your project if you are unavailable when they walk by.
- In general, the body of most posters will have the following elements:
  - **Abstract/Introduction:** a brief (200-500 words), engaging summary of your research
    - Describe the problem that prompted your research
    - Explain your approach to the problem
    - Outline the scope of your project.
    - The thesis statement should be easy to find. Position the abstract prominently (top center or top left, under the title and authors) so readers can quickly understand your project.
  - **Materials/Methods** (if appropriate): For humanities-related research, posters may also be organized around contextual themes or headings that coordinate your main points.
  - **Results**
  - **Conclusion:** summarize your findings and analysis and explain how your study contributes to existing research. Explain the significance and limitations of the present study as well as suggest avenues for future study.
    - Make the connection between your data and your conclusion(s) very transparent for readers who will want to read on their own or while you are not around.
  - Include **References** at the end of the poster to credit outside sources appropriately.
  - Include your **contact information** (email address, website address, etc.) at the bottom of the poster. Allows people to send comments and ideas even if you aren't there when they walk by.

Design and layout specifications

- Poster sizes vary, but for Marquette's Forward Thinking Poster Session, they should be 30"h x 40"w and mounted on a foam-core board. ORSP will provide the pushpins and foam board for the poster session.
- Poster boards are generally oriented in the "landscape" position (long dimension is horizontal).
- A banner displaying your poster title, name, and department (or class, if appropriate) should be positioned at top-center of the board.
- The progression of the information presented should be obvious to viewers. Posters generally read from left to right, and top to bottom. Numbering the individuals panels, or connecting them with arrows is a standard "guidance system" (see Figure 1).
- Leave some open space in the design. An open layout is less tiring to the eye and mind.

Figure 1
From: C. W. Connor, 1992, The Poster Session: A Guide for Preparation: U. S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 88-667.

Visuals

- Visual data (i.e., charts, photos, and diagrams) effectively grabs attention and quickly describes the scope, data, and conclusions of your study. Images should do more than decorate the poster; they should explain and enrich your message.
- Visuals should be simple and bold. Leave out or remove unnecessary details.
- Present numerical data in the form of graphs, rather than tables (graphs make trends in the data much more evident). If data must be presented in table-form, KEEP IT SIMPLE.
- Make sure that any visual can "stand alone" (i.e., graph axes are properly labeled, maps have north arrows and distance scales, symbols are explained).
- Include short descriptions of your images so that readers will know exactly how each relates to the study.
- Use contrasting colors for text/background combos.
- Integrate text and visuals. Figures should be numbered consecutively according to the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.

Text

- Keep the text brief. Rather than full paragraphs, use phrases or short sentences in bulleted lists or tables to organize text.
- Text can be treated as "visuals" also through pull quotes, sidebars, framed or boxed text, etc.
- Use section headings
- Text should be readable from 3-6 feet away. Use a minimum font size of 30 points for the text, a larger size for headings and even larger for the title banner.

Miscellaneous Suggestions

- SIMPLICITY IS THE KEY. Do not try to cover too many things; emphasize the most essential information you want to convey to the audience. Present enough data to support your conclusions.
- Avoid using jargon.
- When you begin to make your poster, first create a list of the visuals that you would use if you were describing your project with *only the visuals*. Write the text *after* you have created the list of visuals.
- Before the poster session, rehearse delivering "guided tours" of differing lengths (30 seconds, 1 minute, 5 minutes) of your project.

A Select List of Online Resources

- Hess, G.R., K. Tosney, and L. Liegel. 2010. Creating Effective Poster Presentations. http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/
- Forrest, David. Presenting Conference Papers and Poster in the Humanities. http://www.tltc.ttu.edu/teach/TLTC%20Teaching%20Resources/PresentingConferencePapersAndPostersInTheHumanities.asp
- Dr. Aimee Roundtree, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Houston – Downtown Posters for Humanities and Social Sciences – Student Research Conference http://www.uhd.edu/academic/colleges/sciences/scholars/files/workshop-poster.pdf
- Colin Purrington – Designing Conference Posters http://colinpurrington.com/tips/academic/posterdesign
- Arizona State University Libraries – Preparing Posters http://libguides.asu.edu/PosterSessions
- The Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/presentations_poster.html