

ISLP Poster competition 2014 - 15

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What makes a good poster good?

- Focus on a research question
 - can be in the title of the poster
 - can be in the text
 - the reader should know quickly what it is you feel is important for them to know more about
- Make key messages clear
 - structure (layout) of the poster is important
 - use simple language (where possible)
 - provide evidence and interpretation together; in graphs or tables and commentary

Research question

- Why have one?
 - if there is no ‘need to know’ then a lot of effort could be saved by not producing the poster and no-one reading it!
- Where should it be?
 - no ‘right answer’ – sometimes it is in the poster title, sometimes stated in the text, but in some entries it was not clear what the poster would allow you to say something meaningful about.

structure (layout) of a poster

- You want people to look at the poster, and then to understand the messages
 - attract people from a distance – striking visual aspects (may be the colours, or strong images)
 - detailed content is engaging and interesting
- Things to avoid
 - too much clutter, text which is in small font and in big blocks (and not in simple language)
 - ‘less is more’ is the key

Content

- Primary or secondary data?
 - primary data needs clear explanation of how data was collected (including whether some people refused to participate) – so readers can decide how reliable the conclusions are
 - secondary data needs clear referencing, and careful thought about what to use because there is often so much data available now. You also need to ‘add value’ to already published analysis – not just reproduce someone else’s ideas.

An alternative approach

- Use both primary and secondary
 - in some contexts it may be possible to make use of secondary data on some of the issues, and also to collect some primary data looking at some specific aspect of the problem chosen in more depth, or more locally.

Analysis and representing the data

- Needs to be appropriate
 - Judges are more concerned with whether it is an appropriate analysis or representation than they are with seeing very sophisticated techniques
 - the critical thing is communicating the message in the data effectively and often (though not always) that can be done using simple techniques

Interpretation and conclusions

- Critical part of the poster
 - goes back to the first thing – the research question the reader needs to leave your poster knowing more about something than when they started looking at it
 - does not have to be an important issue for everyone, but it does need to be important to someone – so it may be about traffic accidents locally as much as about global warming
 - conclusions **must** be supported by evidence in the poster!