A Path to Stunning Research Posters
Elizabeth Cottrell, Gene Hunt, and Virginia Power
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
Host of the NSF REU Site: Natural History Research Experiences (NHRE)

1st workshop
week 3 of 10

A. Circulate a handout with technical details: acceptable formats, document setup, image resolution, color handling, print date and procedure. Have your IT image tech there.

B. Bring in a graphic designer to reveal poster do’s and don’ts. We show dozens of example posters, and critique them.

C. Ask students “what goes on a research poster?” List the answers (title, authors, motivation, methods, results, images).

2nd workshop
week 8 of 10

Place students in groups of mixed discipline around tables. Have each student walk the others through their poster. Try to sketch out the poster. Practice giving “the spiel.”

- does this graph make sense?
- here’s my 2 minute elevator pitch
- do I need to reference this statement?
- what do you think of this color scheme?
- this is why my research is important...
- I haven’t started my poster yet... Neither have I.
- is this a result or an interpretation?

Preliminary results suggest the discovery of 13 new species. The two specimens shown below are problematic because the absence of these veins is a defining characteristic that separates it from all other known species. Leptopteromyia americana (Hardy, 1937) is predominantly yellow with one longitudinal stripe on the scutum and no spots on the pleura (Fig. 6). An Olympus Pen Lite E-PL5 camera, attached to the stereomicroscope, was used to capture high-resolution images.

Conclusion

- don’t use icky colors unrelated to the research
- don’t use non-standard fonts
- don’t set the alignment tool to “random”
- don’t have > 800 words
- harmonize colors
- use sans-serif fonts
- show what was done
- standardize widths & alignment
- provide “breathing space”

Acknowledgments & References

- Fig. 1. This graph is an important representation of my data. Is it clear and easy to understand?
- I haven’t started my poster yet... Neither have I. Is this a result or an interpretation?
- Liz & Gene, co-Directors. CottrellE@si.edu
- Virginia, Program Admin. NHRE@si.edu