

# Poster Sessions for the Public

## A unique outreach and education opportunity

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I organized a poster session as part of a science expo at the end point of the Miami March for Science on April 22, 2017. While the March as a whole was intended to support science in the abstract, the goal of the poster session was to connect the public with the wide range of science being done in their community, and the scientists doing that work. It served to promote science and science education, and to give the public a concrete idea of the projects that local and national science policy and funding support.

On a short deadline and with little funding, manpower, or institutional support, I ran a popular and well-received event where a dozen local scientists from Miami universities were able to present their research to thousands of interested community members.

### Host (event)

People won't come out for just a poster session, but Miami March for Science Miami brought out a receptive audience. Science fiction conventions, political rallies on other topics, and environmental events would all be good hosts for sessions with different themes. Pitch the session as a low cost way to illuminate the event topic from multiple new angles.

Humanities and social science poster sessions could work too!



### Recruitment

Recruit presenters from local universities. The research offices were not as helpful as I thought they would be, so go through the librarians instead! Emphasize that researchers at all levels can participate; it's a great opportunity for grad students. Warn presenters to be prepared to discuss their research in an accessible way, their field in general, and careers in science. Let them know what else will be happening at the event and how they fit in.

### Topics

Aim for diversity, but with public, local and event relevance. If the head of a research group wants her team to participate, suggest a group poster. Ask for both a technical abstract and a layman-level explanation of their research and its points of interest. Citizen science projects can present and recruit, so make particularly good participants.

### Poster Design

Simplify! No, more than that. Even more. OK, maybe not that much. Scientists already ignore this advice for poster sessions for other researchers, so point them to the many good advice sheets available, and supervise to make it actually happens. Work with your digital media lab to get design help and discounted printing.

Too complicated

Too simple?

About right

### Venue (physical)

Big partitions are expensive and giant posters on easels fall over (particularly outdoors). Find a big wall! Somewhere away from the loudspeakers, but close enough to grab the crowds, ideally. Scout beforehand to be sure you understand what's really there.



### Logistics

Provide regular updates on progress to participants so they always know what's going on as details about the event evolve. Make sure everyone knows where and when to be on the day, and what they need to do. Make sure YOU know where and when everyone is supposed to be, and what they need to do.

### Day of

Get there early to make sure everything is in order. Be visible so everyone can find you. Bring extra supplies, and keep your presenters fed and watered. Clean up afterwards.

### Follow up

Collect pdfs of the posters and put together a virtual poster session on the event's website. Do a survey of attendees and let presenters know that the poster session was well received. Use your contacts and experience to do it bigger and better next year!