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Poster Competitions: Teaching Effective Scholarly Communication

Michael C. Goates

Brigham Young University, michael_goates@byu.edu

Gregory M. Nelson

Brigham Young University, greg_nelson@byu.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Michael C. Goates, Gregory M. Nelson, Megan Frost, and Jed Johnston



Poster Competitions

Teaching Effective Scholarly Communication

BYU
LIBRARY

Michael C. Goates, Gregory M. Nelson, Megan Frost, & Jed Johnston

Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602, michael_goates@byu.edu

BACKGROUND

Scholarly communication is at the heart of science. Poster sessions are a time-honored method of presenting research results in a visually appealing, concise format. However, designing scientific posters that are both informative and easy to navigate can be a daunting task, even for the most experienced researcher. What role does the academic library play to help students learn the artful skill of conveying complex scientific results in a clear and succinct poster presentation?



METHODS

Collaboration between College of Life Sciences and BYU Library

Library contributions

- Teach poster design workshops
- Provide venue to display posters and hold competition
- Arrange poster competition adjudication
- Host open house and awards reception

College contributions

- Fund prize awards for winning posters
- Promote poster submissions within college
- Encourage student and faculty mentor attendance at open house

Poster design workshops

- Invited students to attend at time of registration
- Taught two 50-minute sessions in library
 - Session 1: Poster content elements and messaging
 - Session 2: Design principles and tools



Poster competition

Preparation

- Provided discounted poster printing in library
- Displayed posters in high-traffic area of library for two weeks prior to open house

Poster judging

- Evaluated poster organization, appearance, & content
- Averaged scores from three science librarian judges
- Judging rubric and registration information available at: http://guides.lib.byu.edu/2017LS_PosterComp

Open house

- Engaged participants in explaining research posters
- Held awards reception at conclusion of open house

Assessment & Follow-up

- Emailed poster feedback to students from judges
- Highlighted winning posters in science area of library
- Invited competition participants to upload posters to library's online digital repository https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/library_studentposters/

RESULTS

Positive student outcomes

- Received constructive feedback on poster before presenting research at scientific conferences
- Learned poster design skills to present research in clear and impactful way
- Improved scholarly communication skills for general academic audience
- Submitted poster to digital repository with link for résumé

Positive institutional outcomes

- Fostered greater collaboration between library and academic colleges and departments
- Showcased current campus research in library
- Developed partnership to teach scholarly communications to students

CONCLUSIONS

Student researchers typically need additional support communicating complex scientific findings. At academic institutions, librarians and other educators can facilitate hands-on learning opportunities to improve student scientific information literacy and communication.

Important considerations:

- Consider academic timing of event (Spring better than Fall)
- Incorporate meaningful teaching opportunities (e.g., workshop, judging feedback)
- Include participation incentives (e.g., awards, poster archiving)

