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Poster Competitions: Teaching Effective Scholarly Communication

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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

**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)