Best Practices for Academic Poster Design
What makes a good poster?

• Important information should be readable from about 10 feet away and someone standing 3 - 4 feet away should be able to read everything on your poster

• Your title should be precise and draw interest

• Word count should be 300 to 800 words

• Text is clear and to the point

• Use of bullets, numbering and headlines make it easy to read

• Strategic and effective use of graphics, color and fonts (more on this later)

• Consistent and clean layout following design best practices, which makes it easy for your content to be absorbed

• Includes acknowledgments, your name and institutional affiliation
Content Patterns

There are several ways to design your content patterns. At Plymouth State University we recommend the column option. There are options as well, please proceed in this presentation to see the other patterns that exist that may be useful to your poster design.
Content Patterns

Columns
If your poster includes columns, readers will tend to look at your poster from top to bottom and from left to right.

Look here first!
Content Patterns

F-Pattern

The F-pattern refers to the tendency of a viewer to first scan a horizontal line across the top of the screen (this is why websites often include a long banner or navigation bar across the top of pages). Next, the viewer may look left, vertically, for keywords, graphics, subsections, etc. at which point their eyes naturally tend to move horizontally.

This is a banner
Content Patterns

Z-Pattern
The Z-pattern refers to the tendency of a viewer to start by looking in the upper left area, followed by the upper right area, then back down to the left just below the area they started with (just like when typing, the text flows from left to right and then down to the next line). This creates a triangle, which can continue as a Z-pattern (or a zig zag) all the way down the poster.
Symmetry

Layout - Symmetry

The more visually appealing your poster is, the more likely your audience is to be attracted to it and stick around to read it.

Symmetrical designs are visually pleasing and will give your poster a sense of balance. Keep in mind that when designing a poster, symmetry of the title or horizontal top area does not necessarily need to be symmetrical with the content.

Also, perfect symmetry is not always required to ensure a sense of balance, but the largest elements or the majority of elements should be symmetrical.

Never in all their history have men been able truly to conceive of the world as one: a single sphere, a globe, having the qualities of a globe, a round earth in which all the directions eventually meet, in which there is no center because every point, or none, is center – an equal earth which all men occupy as equals. The airman’s earth, if free men make it, will be truly round: a globe in practice, not in theory.

Symmetry in action
The use of visuals for poster design is very important. Visual elements such as pictures, graphs, charts and tables can quickly communicate key concepts and data to your audience.
Visual Display

*Visuals - High Resolution vs. Low Resolution Example*

In general, the larger an image will be printed, the higher the DPI should be (a minimum 300 DPI for printing is a good rule of thumb).

To check an image's DPI on a PC right-click on the image and go to “Properties” > “Details”

On a Mac open your image in Preview and select “Tools” > “Adjust Size” to see the DPI.

If you need to edit photos programs include Photoshop (available in Lamson 031), Pixlr.com or Gimp (free via https://www.gimp.org/).
Finding a High Resolution Image

There are a number of places online where you can download high resolution images but remember to be careful of copyright restrictions. Great ways to search for high resolution images are using Google’s Image Search or using Creative Commons on Flickr.

For Google
- Go to Google’s Image Search, available from the top right hand corner of the Google homepage
- Enter keywords for the image you are trying to find
- Click on “Tools” up top to see additional setting options
- Open the drop down marked “Size” and choose “Large” for an image with high pixels
- In general, the larger an image is, the higher the resolution will be
- When looking at the options under Google’s “Size” drop down, the choices that say “Larger than ## x ##” are referring to the number of pixels on each dimension of the image
- You may also want to consider narrowing down images by “Usage Rights” to help with copyright concerns.

For Flickr
- Go to https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/
- You’ll see several categories things like Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License - those are the Creative Commons licenses and restrictions for each category of licensing.
- Where it says (see more) underneath a category and some images - click - then use the search box at the top to sort through that category
- Each photo is available in different download sizes - medium sized generally would work well for printing purposes.
- Be sure to cite your images appropriately.

Icons: consider using https://thenounproject.com/ or http://www.freepik.com/
Text

- Try to minimize text, using bullet points and phrases instead of full sentences and paragraphs
- Use visuals instead of text whenever possible
- Shoot for a balance of text and visuals
- Text should be left justified to make it easier to read

Fonts

Serif fonts, like Times New Roman and Garamond, are easy to read and should be used for most text. Serif fonts are those that have small lines at the ends of characters (these lines are called "serifs").

Sans-serif fonts like Helvetica and Arial can be used for large text and do not have small lines at the ends of characters. For example:
This text (Times New Roman) uses a serif font
This text (Arial) uses a sans-serif font
We do have a new Powerpoint template for 2017 that you are welcome to use as you design your academic posters. The template follows all of these best practices and on the second page provides some additional information in regards to how the template was designed so you too can edit the template to your needs.
Resources and Citation List

http://libguides.snhu.edu/posterdesign
hsp.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ScientificPosters.pdf
http://guides.nyu.edu/posters
http://getready.napier.ac.uk/pages/how-to-succeed.php#topic
http://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design#organizerplea
http://research.lib.buffalo.edu/poster-presentations#DesignTips