

# Adapting the Poster Session to Benefit Scientists and the Broader Community

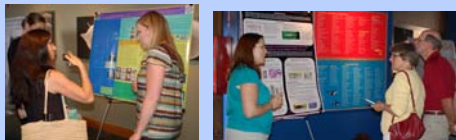
## Introduction

COSEE-Ocean Learning Communities (COSEE-OLC) experiments with strategies to catalyze and support a community of ocean scientists, learning science researchers, educators, and citizens interested in the marine environment.

COSEE-OLC has experimented with adapting the **poster session** of scientific conferences as a tool for connecting ocean scientists and learning science researchers and their research with the public.

The goals of our poster sessions are to:

- Connect citizens to current research.
- Provide scientists with feedback on their presentations.
- Increase scientist participation in COSEE-OLC events.



## Methods

COSEE-OLC has held three poster sessions to date. Each poster session was part of a larger event, co-hosted by Washington Sea Grant.

**Choosing the Audience:** The invited audience consisted of citizens who had demonstrated an interest in marine research via their marine related volunteer work.

**Supporting Poster Presenters:**

- Presenters were invited to use an existing poster, or were offered printing costs if they wished to create a new poster.
- COSEE-OLC offered to support presenters in creating posters specific to this audience.

**Data collection:** Demographic information was collected through event registration, attendees were surveyed at the closing of each event, and poster presenters were invited to participate in group interviews with our evaluator.

**Features unique to each COSEE-OLC poster session:**

**Poster session 1:** Held in an urban location (UW campus), during lunch at a full-day event co-hosted by Washington Sea Grant. Posters were presented by ocean scientists.

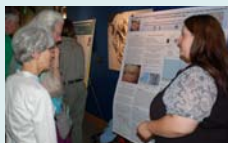
**Poster session 2:** Held in a rural location, during lunch at a two day event co-hosted by Washington Sea Grant and Port Townsend Marine Science Center. Posters were presented by ocean scientists, agency scientists, and environmental groups.

**Poster session 3:** Held in an urban location (The Seattle Aquarium) as the opening to an evening event, co-hosted by Washington Sea Grant. Posters were presented by ocean scientists and learning science researchers.

## Key Findings

### I. Scientists sharing posters with the public is a mutually beneficial model.

- **Scientists** gain feedback on the effectiveness and their presentation and often reconnect with the broader relevance of their research.
- **Audience members** gain exposure to a range of research and opportunity to learn the human story behind research.



*"I mostly learned how to improve my own presentation and interaction skills!"*  
-Poster presenter



*"Having a fresh set of questions made me think again about my research."* -Poster presenter

*"It is great to hear from the poster authors 1st hand about their projects and research."*  
-Audience member

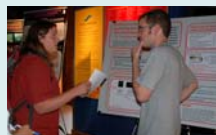
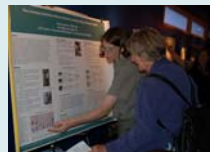
### II. The inclusion of presenters from other disciplines enhances benefits for all participants.

- **Presenters** learn about research in different disciplines.
- **Audience members** choose from a variety of current research, personalizing their learning experience.

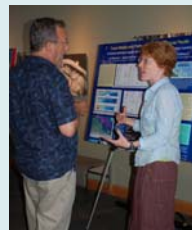
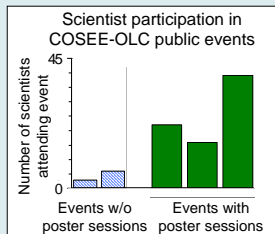
*"I'll definitely use info from (the learning science) posters in my work developing educational programs."* -Audience member

*"I will (use learning science into to) make beach walks more learner centered."*  
-Audience member

*"It would be good to add an hour for interaction (between ocean scientists and learning scientists)."* -Poster presenter



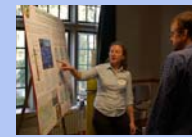
### III. Use of poster sessions increases scientist participation in COSEE-OLC events.



*"I have never, never observed a poster session that had this much energy...I had 6-8 people around my poster at all times asking me questions – like really engaged. So this was really fun for me and different."* –Poster presenter

## Conclusions

- The benefits of poster sessions are robust to changes in event detail, suggesting model is adaptable to fit a variety of contexts.
- Poster sessions are an inexpensive, minimally time-consuming broader impact activity.
- Poster sessions are a useful model for increasing scientist and public interaction.



## Guidelines for Scientists Presenting Posters to Public Audiences

*"The most important question from the public is not how confident you are in your results, it is more like why should we care."* –Poster Presenter

### Poster Design

- Demonstrate relevance of topic to audience.
- Anticipate background needed to understand your work.
- Use concise, non-technical language.
- Be clear about study objectives.
- Minimize text, maximize use of figures.
- Use bullet points instead of narrative.

### Presenting the Poster

- Prepare a 2 minute justification of research.
- Prepare for broad social concerns and questions.
  - The public takes content into their own world concerns.
  - Put research into a broad perspective – beyond the incremental contribution to your field.
- General audiences want relevance of the findings – either to themselves or from your perspective.
- Include personal experiences.
- Be prepared describe why you chose this study.
- Talk less about specifics and more about the process.
- Be aware of body language.
- Appreciate the energizing effects of talking to the public.

## Acknowledgements

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