

Guidelines for posters and poster sessions

Hans J. Scheel 1976/1994

Posters are an efficient approach for short intensive discussions between scientists at large conferences. Obviously posters allow to accommodate large numbers of participants (contributed papers), but invited lecturers should be stimulated to present posters in addition thus to permit complementary discussions. Frequently, poster sessions allow to reduce the number of parallel oral sessions, and at less than 500 participants even a simple oral session might be desirable and possible.

However, the effectiveness of poster sessions depends critically on poster preparation and on the arrangement of sessions. For instance, in one conference the duration of the session was 45 minutes which is definitely too short. In another recent international conference all posters (20 to 50) on specific topics were arranged for the same session : this had the effect that all scientists of a specific topic were fixed to their posters and therefore could discuss only with colleagues of other topics, the desirable interactions between scientists of the same topic were practically suppressed. Therefore, in the following, a few rules are given for idealized poster presentations. Obviously, these rules have to be modified to match the reality of existing rooms and poster walls etc. Frequently the preparation of a poster takes more time than to prepare a talk. It is worthwhile to spend sufficient time for a poster not only for the specific conference, but also for other benefits : presentation at home for managers, students, visitors, use of the material for publications, and, not negligible, the learning of clear efficient presentations.

Poster stand, poster session hall

The ideal poster stand should be fixed to the floor and to the ceiling, have a height of 210 cm above the floor, and a presentation area of 200 cm x 110 cm, see enclosed figure 2. The title of the poster including poster number, authors and affiliations should be readable from far, above the heads of the discussion group, and therefore should be 190 to 210 cm above ground. Further details are given in figure 2.

The hall for poster sessions is well-ventilated and, depending on site and season, equipped with airconditioning. Smoking is not allowed. The distance between poster rows should be 3 to 4 m depending on the number of participants, and a row should not have more than 10 (12) posters. All passages are 3 to 4 m wide. Further details are given in the figure 3. Corners and the regions around entrances/exits should be free of posters.

The cluster principle

If for a specific topic 50 posters are to be shown, then these posters should be distributed throughout the week. Each poster session would then have a cluster of 10 posters on this topic, which are arranged in close neighbourhood, see Fig. 3. This allows nearest-neighbour-interactions between the 10 posters, and free communications with the 40 others. The size of clusters should not exceed 12. If there are more participants for the same topic, then it should be split into specialized sub-groups with poster distribution in smaller clusters.

At the entrance of the poster hall a map gives the (sequential) positions of the poster numbers, and of the topics and sites of the clusters. A list containing all poster titles, authors, and numbers is desirable, the authors also in alphabetical order.

Experiences have shown that 2 hours is a reasonable duration of poster sessions. However, for large numbers of posters per session (>120) and participants (>400) a duration of 2¹/₂ to 3 hours may be necessary. Frequently, a poster session is combined with coffee during the day, and with soft drinks/beer/snacks in the evening (to save time and costs for dinner).

Design of posters

The presentation should be clear and condensed : only major important topics and results should be shown with a minimum of text and formulae. An experienced scientist should not need more than 6 (maximum 10) minutes to read all text, see all figures, and understand goal and major results. The letters and figures should be so large that other visitors up to a distance of 2 m can clearly read everything, even when their glasses are not optimized for that distance. More details are self-explanatory and given in the figure 1. The use of (light) colours is favorable. Valuable fotos should be protected by well-fixed transparent covers. It is practical to use enforced paper, or normal paper in transparent envelopes ; to lay-out the poster on a large table at home, with ca. 2-4 mm distance between the A4-sheets, and to fix the sheets together by long stripes of adhesive tape (scotch tape). The adhesive gap between sheets (2-4 mm) should then be neutralized by talcum powder or baby powder. By careful systematic folding the whole poster can be packed together to fit into a C4-envelope. This is convenient both for transport and for quick fixation of the whole poster onto the poster stand (at the beginning you may try this with two halves of the poster).

Oral presentations

are welcomed in general. They are necessary when the session time is less than 2 hours, or when there are more than 150 (200) posters per session.

For each poster 4 minutes are optimum, with 1 minute for change and for the session chairman's announcement. Maximum 3 transparencies are allowed (letter size 6 to 10mm) : the first with title and number of the poster, authors, affiliations, and with the "compact information" from the left upper corner of the poster (see figure 1), then 1 or 2 transparencies with the most important features or results of the work. After 1 hour, latest after 1.5 hours (18 poster presentations) there should be a short break.

Suggestions for further improvements of poster sessions are welcome. Hans J. Scheel.

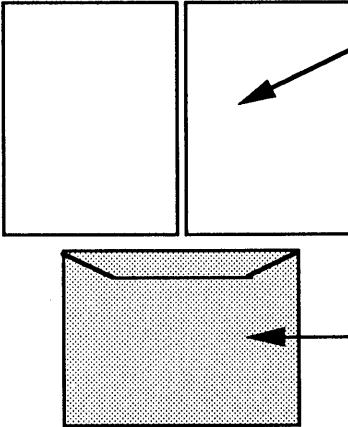
Fig.1. Poster design.

Fig.2. Poster stand.

Fig.3. Poster session hall.

Fig. 1

bold, letter size 25mm (for reading at 6m distance)

No.	Title of the paper, authors, affiliations		
<p>Goal : Atomically flat YBCO layers & surfaces for HTSC tunnel device technology.</p> <p>Approach : Liquid-phase epitaxy with low misfit substrates.</p> <p>Results : First single-crystalline YBCO layers with macroscopic (μm) distances between monosteps</p>	<p><u>Method</u></p>	<p><u>Results</u></p>	<p><u>Conclusions</u></p>
	<p><u>Equipment</u></p>	<p><u>Characterization & Measurements</u></p>	
<p><u>Introduction & Problem</u></p>	<p><u>Experiments</u></p>	<p><u>Acknowledgments</u></p>	

Reprint request sheets
(for address labels, writing
addresses, address stamps)

Open envelope for business
cards & communications
to the authors

Compact
information
to attract
visitors
(with example
given)

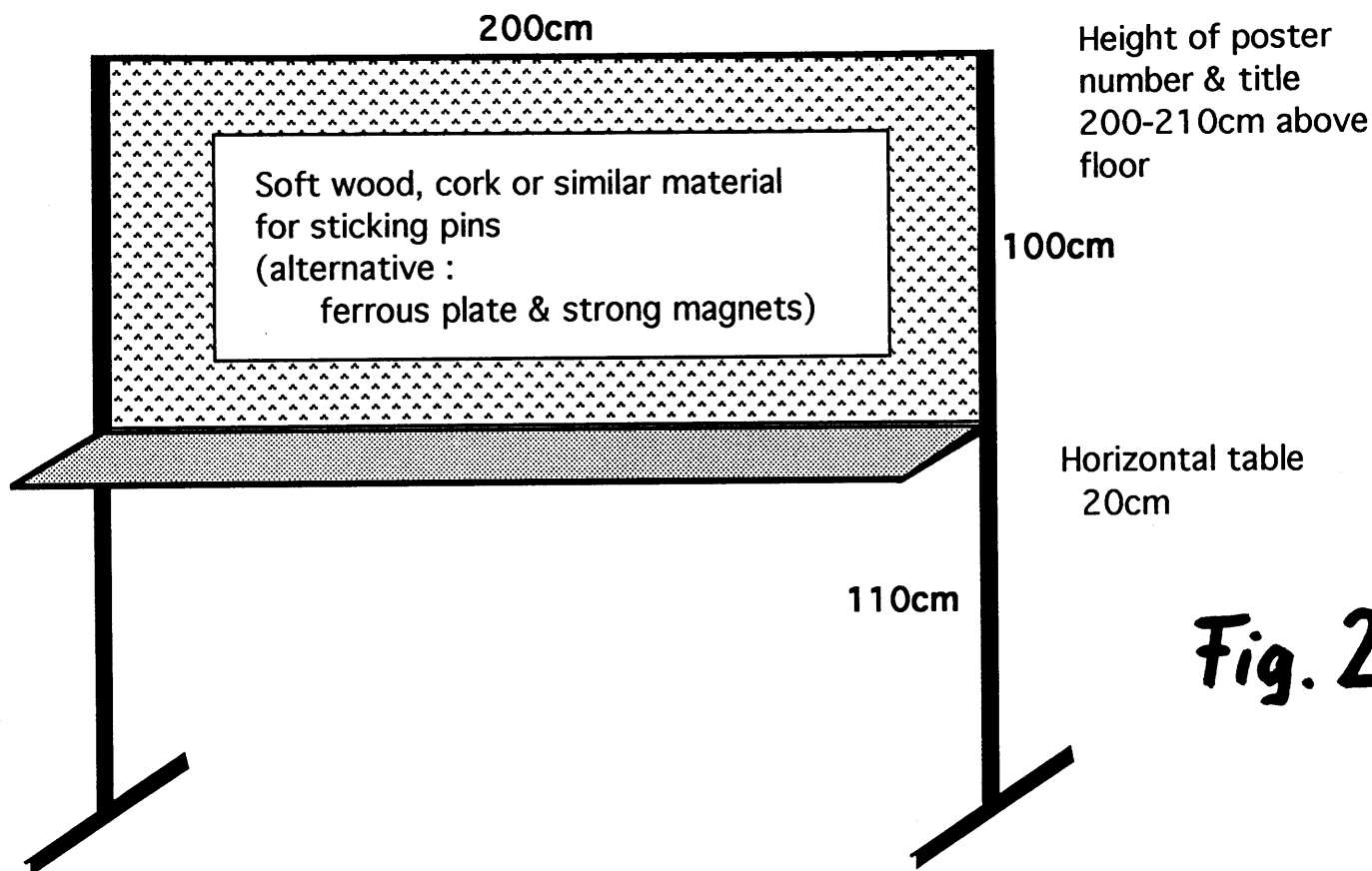
100 cm
-110 cm

Fig. 1

200 cm

All texts, diagrams, figures etc. should be for easy reading at 2 m distance (letter size 1cm throughout)

Poster stand



Poster hall

