

How to give a great poster presentation

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Preamble

Giving a poster presentation at a conference is a great opportunity to get your work out there! Here's a workshop of helpful hints and tips to make up a great poster!

Some resources

There is lots of advice out there:

1. A [great set of slides](#) from an outreach librarian at the Bod (very comprehensive)
2. UCL's [design guide](#) (advises UCL'ers to only use UCL colours but the webpage is beige)
3. University of Liverpool's [guide](#) (I particularly like their notes on graphs, text and colours)
4. Brief [guide](#) from NYU

Making a plan

Audience

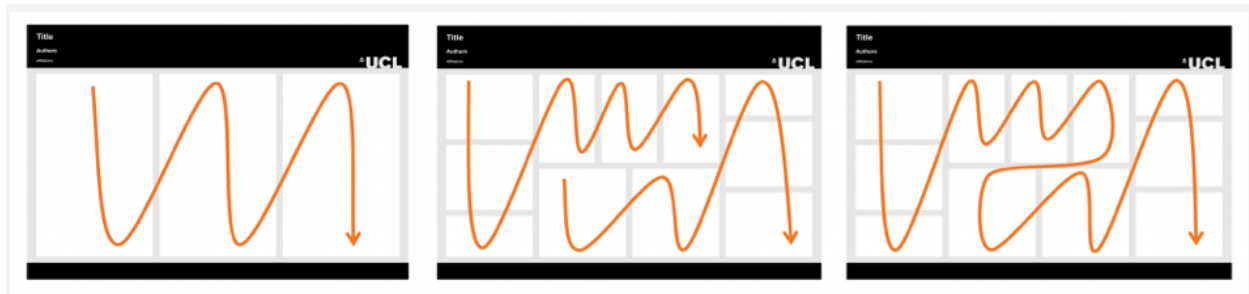
Before you start thinking too hard about what your poster will look like, consider your audience. Are they likely to:

- ...be academics? Or should your poster be accessible to industry representatives, public servants, etc.? *People who are not academics might have some surprising insights into your work - be prepared to translate your work to public health workers, policy-makers, or industry representatives*
- ...have clinical training? Have statistical training? Have some specialist knowledge relevant to the focus of the event you are presenting at? *Remember, at every global health conference there is a poor lost modeller (me) who has no idea about the physical/clinical/ecological details of your research that are important to you!*

Layout

Consider reading flow:

Imagine you are reading your poster, or ask someone with fresh eyes to read it: does the natural order your audience reads your poster in match your expectation?



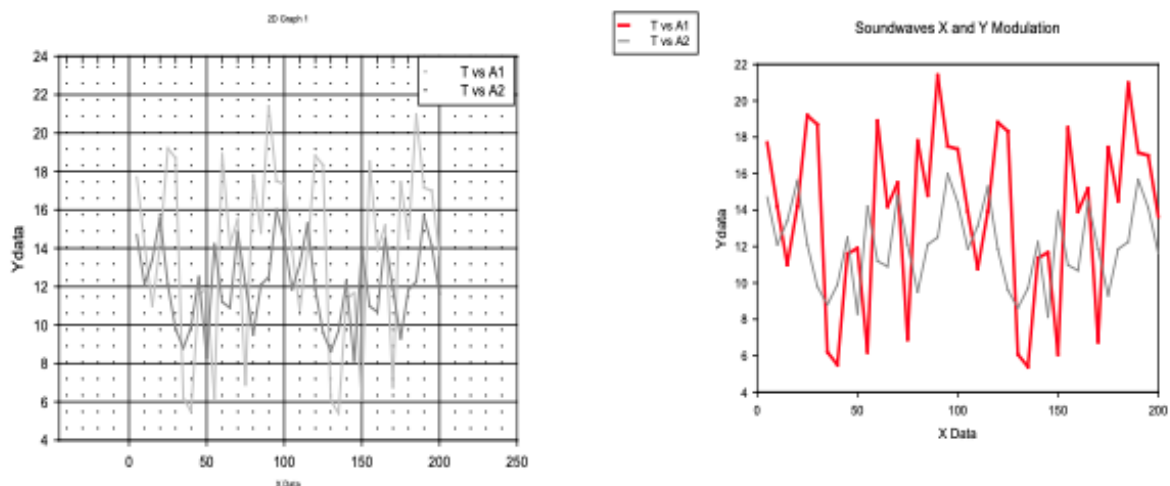
Text

- Bite-size pieces of information are easier to digest than large chunks!
- Use bigger text than you think you should!
- Consider organising the text of your poster into bullets,
- highlighting words that you want to **jump** off the page,
- and removing 90% of all jargon!
 - For example, *I* know what the word *zoonotic* means in the context of *malaria*, but lots of people at a public health/applied maths/epidemiology conference may not! I'll use "*malaria that infects monkeys*" instead! And, of course, a *picture* of the zoonotic malaria transmission cycle ...

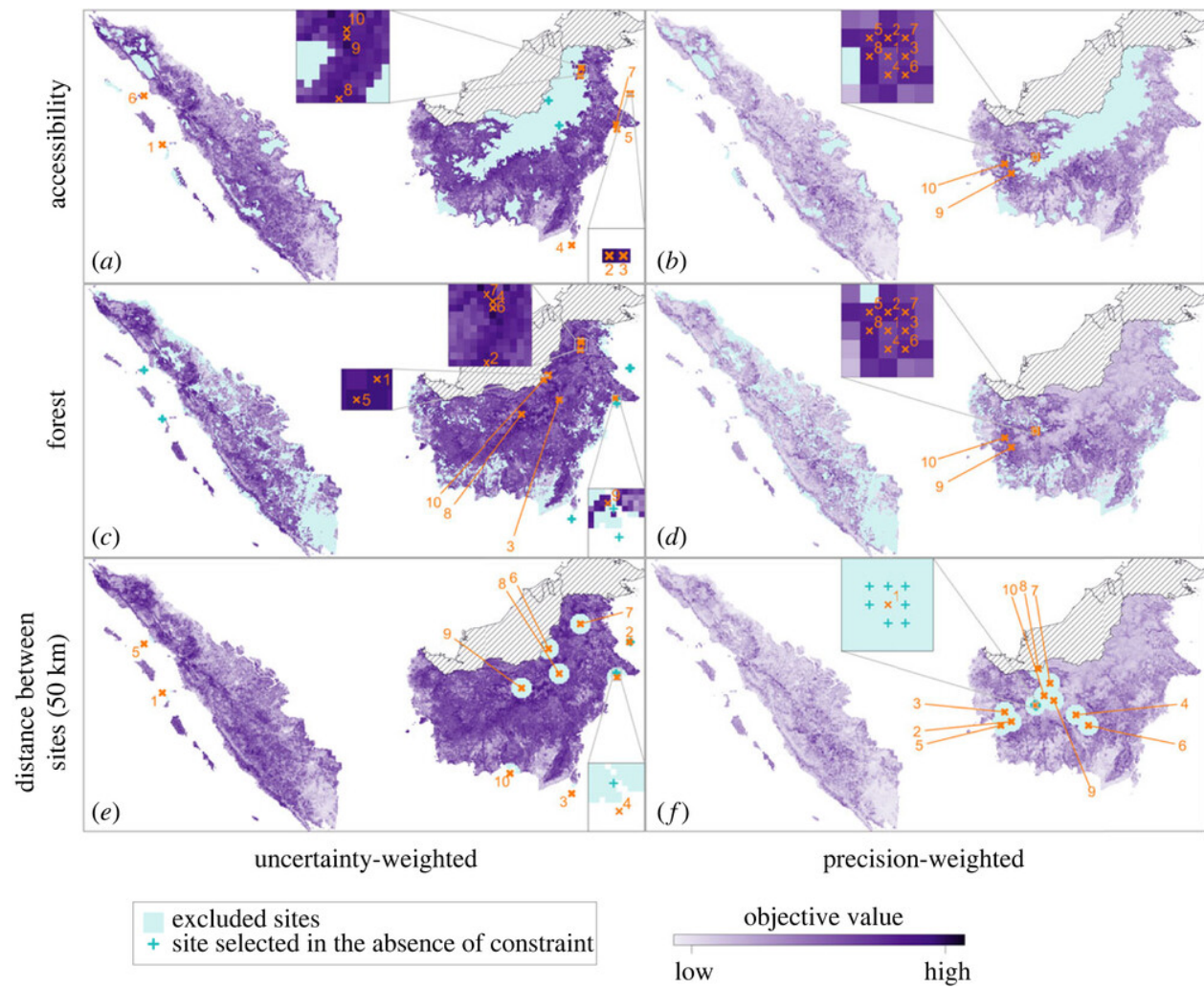
Pictures

There are lots of details that are important to a figure when we include it in a paper, that we should subtract when we use the same information in a slide deck or research poster. Supply the minimal detail to understand the idea/result that your figure is communicating. Make text big and concise and avoid technical language that we would need to read your paper to understand. Consider colourblind-friendly colour palettes ([these resources](#) might be helpful).

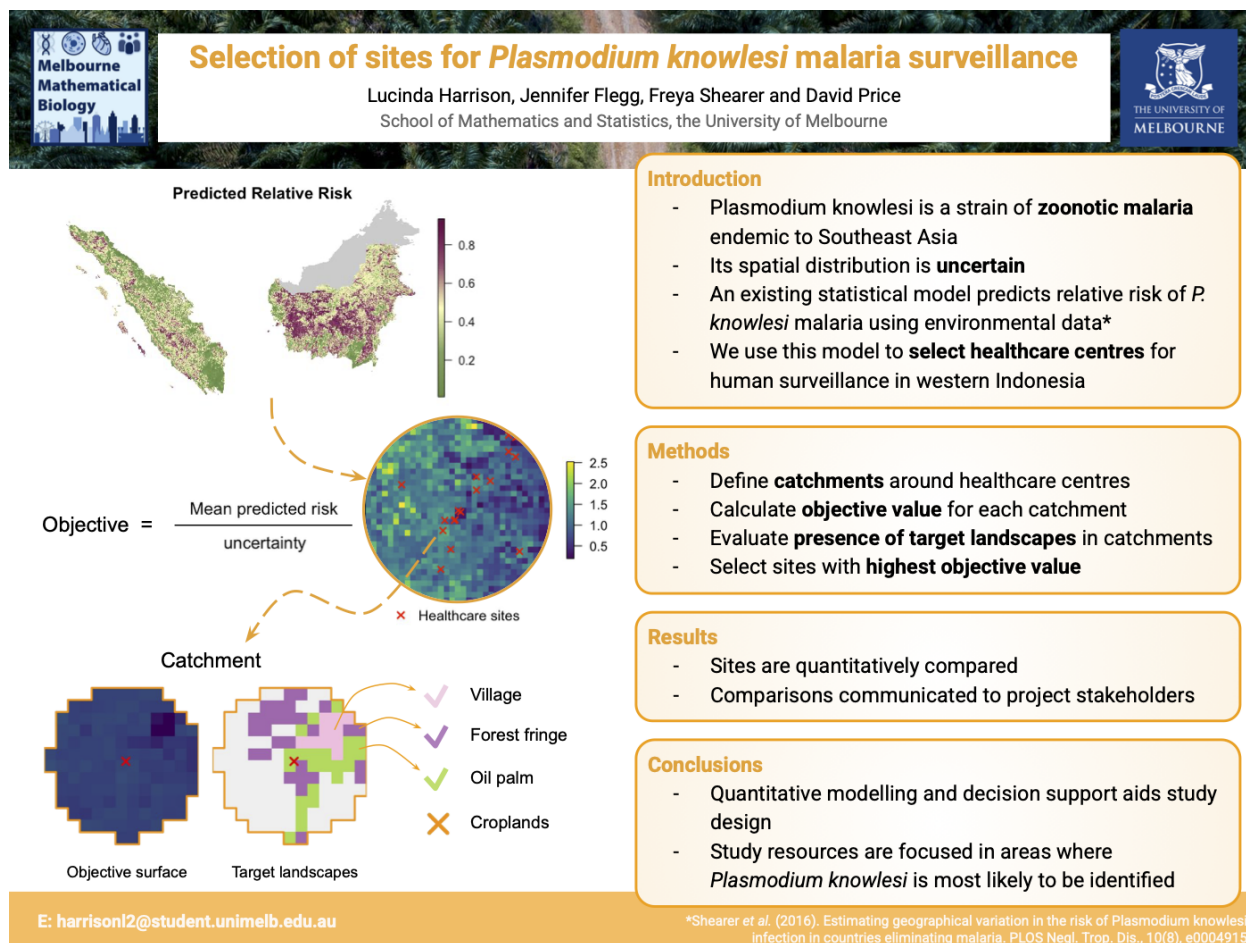
The University of Liverpool resource has a great example of how to format graphs for a poster:



Another example - here's a figure I put in [this paper](#):



... and here's what the same information looked like when I presented the project as a poster:



(This poster was for an online conference!)

Interactive elements

During a poster presentation, you only have a short window to catch the attention of your audience. You also have an advantage over giving an oral presentation: your audience can get right up close with your presentation! Interactive elements to a poster presentation can really increase audience engagement, and they don't need to be direct or obvious. My favourite poster presentations have involved **chalk annotations** over a mathematical model diagram, a **spring attached to a poster** to explain the forces involved between cells in a mathematical model of wound-healing, and a **jar of sand** to start a discussion about the dynamics of a landslide. I presented a **Shiny app** as a poster with fishing wire to animate buttons and sliders!

Miscellaneous tips

- Don't forget to acknowledge co-authors/research groups/sponsors/grants involved in supporting your work (e.g., with a logo for a grant/sponsor)
- Include a QR code to your website/LinkedIn/preprint - if your audience has bookmarked you, they're more likely to remember your research at a later date!
- Once you have a draft, **stand back!** Imagine your draft at A0 size, across the other end of Radcliffe square - what things in your poster stand out from far away? Does it send a clear message when a reader can only see the title, pictures, and maybe some sub-headings?

Some examples

Now let's have a look at some example posters from me + my friends :)

Let's discuss:

- Who is the audience of each of these posters?
- What do we think the poster is about when we look at it from a distance?
- How much reading time do we need to get the gist of the poster?
- What do these posters do well?
- Where could these posters improve?

Conclusion

Hopefully now you're feeling confident and ready to whip up a great poster!

UniOxford has a [print studio](#) which I think is available to students and staff!