

## **Making Successful Poster Presentations**

James Helmer, Oral Communication Center, Hamilton College

Presenters of posters, like other kinds of public speakers, always must think about the *situation* in which they will be presenting and the *audience* to whom they will be presenting so that they can make necessary adjustments. Among the issues you should consider are the following:

- Characteristics of the venue (traffic, noise, other activities, etc.)
- What kind of occasion (social? formal? ceremonial?)
- Number and types of posters on display (How wide a range of choices for audience? How does yours relate to the others?)
- People moving in and out of your “sphere of influence”
- People joining the conversation at different points
- Viewers’ backgrounds and familiarity with subject
- Viewers’ uncertainty about where and how to begin interpreting the poster

Besides *flexibility* and *adaptability*, poster presentations require skill in *organization*, *development*, and *oral expression*. You should be prepared to do the following:

- Concisely and clearly put the work in a context. Explain why it’s important or interesting, how it relates to the field, what inspired you to do it, etc.
- Concisely and clearly state what the work is about and what you did. Give a concise overview.
- Concisely and clearly state the 3-5 most important things you want the viewer to know about the project.
- Explain and elaborate in a way that is direct, concrete, and accessible to the viewer. Use examples, comparisons, explanations, and language that are appropriate to the viewer’s level of experience and knowledge.
- Anticipate the 8-10 questions most likely to be asked and plan how you will concisely and clearly answer them.
- Make eye contact with the person or persons with whom you are speaking.
- Share your enthusiasm and interest.
- Use your voice expressively to enhance meaning and add interest.
- Be sensitive to your listeners’ signs of comprehension and confusion, and make appropriate adjustments.