

When I first learned I was going to be in the new ePoster section for SAS Global Forum 2014, I did not know what an ePoster was so I looked on the internet and this is what I found out. Electronic poster (ePoster) presentations are similar to traditional poster presentations, but presented on a large computer screen. It should be designed so that it is self-explanatory and covers your topic with clear and concise areas.

I will try to show you how I tackled this problem with my topic and show you some of the ways you can use PowerPoint to do an effective ePoster using what I learned about ePosters and my ePoster for SAS Global Forum.

I found a set of general guidelines from NIH¹ which I adapted to my effort for SAS Global Forum which I believe may be helpful to anyone attempting an ePoster.

1. Defining the purpose

Before you start preparing the poster, ask yourself the following questions: What do you want the person passing by your eposter to do? Engage in a discussion about the content? Learn enough to go off and want to try something for themselves? Want to collaborate? All the above, or none of the above but something else? Style your poster accordingly.

2. Sell Your Work in Ten Seconds

Your ePoster will be one of many different ePosters at the conference. You need to understand that you need to fight for attention. The first impressions of your ePoster, and to a lesser extent what you might say when standing in front of it, are crucial. It is analogous to being in an elevator and having a few seconds to peak someone's interest before they get off. The sad truth is that you have to sell your work. One

approach is to pose your work as addressing a decisive question or topic, which you then address as best you can. This is what you did when you submitted an abstract for the conference. You can use it as submitted but usually you should adapt it so it can be used in your initial section of the ePoster. Once you have posed the question or topic, which may well also be the motivation for the study, the focus of your ePoster should be on addressing that question in a clear and concise way.

3. The Title is Important

The title is a good way to sell your work. It may be the only thing the conference attendee sees before they reach your poster. The title should make them want to come and visit. The title might pose a decisive question, define the scope of the study, or hint at a new finding. Above all, the title should be short and comprehensible to a broad audience. The title is your equivalent of a newspaper headline—short, sharp, and compelling.

4. Poster Acceptance Means Nothing

Do not take the acceptance of a ePoster as an endorsement of your work. To get endorsement from your peers, present your work well on the ePoster and show methods as well as how you used SAS to address the problem.

5. Many of the Rules for Writing a Good Paper Apply to ePosters

Identify your audience and provide the appropriate scope and depth of content. If the conference includes non-programmers, cater to them. Just as the abstract of a paper needs to be a succinct summary of the motivation, what you did, major results, and conclusions, so does your poster.

6. Good Posters Have Unique Features Not Pertinent to Papers

The amount of material presented in a paper far outweighs what is presented on an ePoster. An ePoster requires you to distill the work, yet not lose the message or the logical flow. ePosters need to be viewed from a distance, but can take advantage of your presence. ePosters can be used as a distribution medium for copies of associated papers, supplementary information, and other handouts. ePosters allow you to be more speculative. ePosters allow you to include multimedia effects which enhance your presentation of ideas which cannot be done in static Posters or papers. Microsoft PowerPoint has many animation effects to liven up your ePoster. This is your opportunity to say more than you would in the traditional proceedings. Take advantage of these unique features.

Rule 7: Layout and Format Are Critical

Pop musician Keith Richards put the matter well in an interview with *Der Spiegel*²: “If you are a painter, then the most important thing is the bare canvas. A good painter will never cover all the space but will always leave some blank. My canvas is silence.” Your canvas as ePoster presenter is also white space. Guide the passerby's eyes from one succinct frame to another in a logical fashion from beginning to end. Unlike the literature, which is linear by virtue of one page following another, the reader of an ePoster is free to wander over the pages as if they are tacked to the poster board in a random order. Guide the reader with arrows, numbering, or whatever else makes sense in getting them to move from one logical step to another. Try to do this guiding in an unusual and eye-catching way. Look for appropriate layouts in the posters of others and adopt some of their approaches. Finally, never use less than a size 24 point font, and make sure the main points can be read at eye level.

8. Content Is Important, but Keep It Concise

Everything on the ePoster should help convey the message. The text must conform to the norms of sound scientific reporting: clarity, precision of expression, and economy of words. The latter is particularly important for ePosters because of their inherent space limitations. Use of first-rate pictorial material to illustrate an ePoster can sometimes transform what would otherwise be a bewildering mass of complex data into a coherent and convincing story. One carefully produced chart or graph often says more than hundreds of words. Use graphics for “clear portrayal of complexity”³, not to impress (and possibly bewilder) viewers with complex artistry.

Use multimedia effects to draw attention to the point you want to make. If you use a short video or animation, use it to enhance the presentation. Allow a figure to be viewed in both a superficial and a detailed way. For example, a large table might have bold swaths of color indicating relative contributions from different categories, and the smaller text in the table would provide gritty details for those who want them. Likewise, a graph could provide a bold trend line (with its interpretation clearly and concisely stated), and also have many detailed points with error bars. Have a clear and obvious set of conclusions—after the abstract, this is where the passerby's eyes will wander. Only then will they go to the results, followed by the methods.

9. ePosters Should Have Your Personality

An ePoster is a different medium from a paper, which is conventionally dry and impersonal. Think of your ePoster as an extension of your personality. Use it to draw the passerby to take a closer look or to want to talk to you.

10. The Impact of an ePoster Happens Both During and After the Poster Session

When the considerable effort of making an ePoster is done, do not blow it on presentation day by failing to have the ePoster achieve maximum impact. This requires the right presenter–audience interaction. Work to get a crowd by being engaging; one engaged viewer will attract others. Don't badger people, let them read. Be ready with Rule 2. Work all the audience at once, do not leave visitors waiting for your attention. Make eye contact with every visitor.

The visitor is more likely to remember you than the content of your ePoster. Make yourself easy to remember. As the host of the work presented on the ePoster, dress appropriately, be attentive, open, curious, and self-confident but never arrogant and aggressive. Leave the visitors space and time—they can “travel” through your ePoster at their own discretion and pace. If a visitor asks a question, talk simply and openly about the work.

Good ePosters and the presentation of the ePoster can improve your reputation, both within and outside your company or institution.

Here is how I used these rules in my SAS Global Forum ePoster and some of the mistakes I believe I made because of my inexperience with this medium of presentation.

I started out by designing essentially a static poster. Figure 1 shows what I started with:

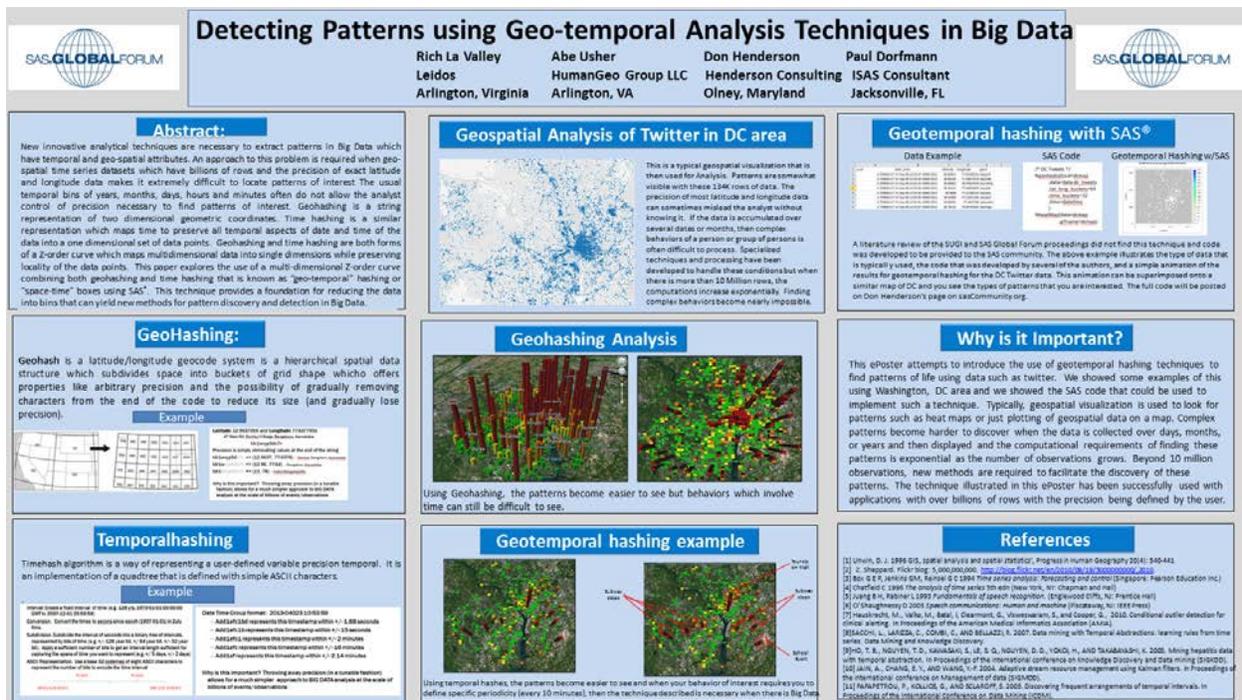


Figure 1: La Valley, Usher Henderson, Dorfmann Poster⁴

This effort allowed me to organize the ideas of what I wanted to present. You will see that I did not follow the rule of being concise but rather wanted to use more words to tell the story. I suggest that you follow the following advise:

Try to keep 40% of the poster area empty of text and images.⁴



White space, which is only white if your background is white, is the space around images and text. It fills borders, helps to keep things separate, can keep things together,

and can be used to focus the viewer's attention.

People often make the mistake of trying to fill all of their poster in their enthusiasm to include as much as possible. People may find a poster filled from edge to edge a bit intimidating. You want people to find the information easily and feel that they can absorb it quickly and comfortably while standing at a poster fair. Open space helps give them this impression and invites them to read.

My inexperience and what I wanted to do with the ePoster guided me in a different way so I will try to explain what I did to help you understand.

I wanted each of the nine sections to stand on their own without someone having to explain it. And paraphrasing Mark Twain's famous quote, I did not leave enough time to create a clearer and concise set of sections so I did the longer versions. Do not make the same mistake and begin the process sooner than I did.

I created a two slide PowerPoint Presentation using all of the guidelines for SAS Global Forum for ePosters for size of font, aspect ratio of 16:9 for large video displays and colors.

The first slide was the static poster so people could see the overall concept I was trying to present.

The second slide used the static poster as a background and each section was "blown-up" for easier reading and presented in the center of the screen on top of the background. I did this by layering each section on top of each other and animated it to move from the original position to the center area of the background and then enlarged the

section so it could be easily read. Each section was written so that it could be easily understood or read in under a minute.

I took each section and enlarged it to fit the same size of rectangle for the center of the ePoster. Using the Animation Pane, I took the first section which was the “Abstract” section and put it in the center of the background and animated it to look like it moved from the upper left part of the poster to the center using the **Fly In** effect with the direction being From **Top – Left**. Next I took the second section, “GeoHashing”, and moved it to right over the top of the first one and animated it to make it look like it moved from its place in the background to the center using the **Fly in** effect with the direction being **From Left**. I did this for each of the nine sections using similar animations of the **Fly in** effect. It was important to make sure each of my sections were the same size and covered the previous section completely to have the effect I had hoped to have. Each of the sections was presented with a mouse click which can be done with the **Animation Pane** using the **Start** as an **On Click**. I could have had each section be presented with a certain amount of time using the **Duration** option but I decided that I wanted each section to advance with a mouse click. The last section that was displayed, I added an arrow that users could click to go back to the first slide and repeat the presentation or leave it available for others. I only had one of the sections which had animation which was the “Geotemporal hashing with SAS®”. I would have liked to have more animations or movies but I just did not allocate enough time for them to be created.

The reason I did this was so whether I was presenting the ePoster or someone was reading the ePoster when I was not there, it told the story I wanted in an order that made sense. I could have had standard

PowerPoint slides but using animation made the Eposter more inviting and interactive.

If you would like additional help in creating an ePoster, I will gladly help guide you with what I know and also hopefully we can learn together. I can be reached at rwlavalley@gmail.com.

References

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1876493/>

² Interview with Keith Richards. Meine Leinwand ist die Stille. Der Spiegel. 1998;45:167–170.

³ Tufte ER. The visual display of quantitative information. Cheshire (Connecticut): Graphics Press; 2001. p. 191.

⁴ La Valley, et al, Detecting Patterns using Geo-Temporal Analysis Techniques in Big Data, 2014 SAS Global Proceedings.