Hi all from Linnaea Knisely, Ed Chair, 2016 SLF. As SLF has not recently offered a poster session, I thought it might be handy to have a quick overview about what we're hoping to achieve. Posters should be considered a snapshot of your work or idea intended to engage colleagues in a dialogue about the concept, or, if you are not present, to be a summary that will encourage the reader to want to learn more.

The following is from a great article which I paraphrased, which you can find here: http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030102
Here are a few simple rules for maximizing the return on the hopefully not too time-consuming process of preparing and presenting an effective poster.

Tips for the Poster Itself: (which most of you would just get from going to the Presentation Manual created for our youth members)

Rule 1: Define the Purpose: Before you start preparing the poster, ask yourself the following questions: What do you want the person passing by your poster 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.

Rule 2: Sell Your Work in Ten Seconds Some conferences (not ours, though) will present hundreds of posters; you will need to fight for attention. The first impressions of your poster, 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 pique someone's interest before they get off. The sad truth is that you may have to sell your ideas. One approach is to pose your work as addressing a decisive question, which you then address as best you can. Once you have posed the question, which may well also be the motivation for the poster, or project, or idea that you're sharing, the focus of your poster should be on addressing that question in a clear and concise way.

Rule 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 a study, or hint at a new idea. 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.

Rule 4: Layout and Format Are Critical. Again, the State Presentation Manual has good resource information, here, such as colors that stand out when used together, to never use less than a 24 point font, and make sure the main points can be read at eye level.

Rule 5: Content Is Important, but Keep It Concise Consider using pictures, or a graph, or having handouts if the full story needs more information to be effectively shared! (See Tip 2 below)

Rule 6: Posters Should Have Your Personality Yes, make them inviting - use your poster to draw a passerby to take a closer look or to want to talk to you. And for SLF, we'll be looking for you to include a photo of yourself. That way people who want to know more about your ideas can find you over the course of the conference if they didn't have time enough to stop at your poster station!

Tips for Audience Interaction!

1. Work to get a crowd by being engaging; one engaged viewer will attract others. Don't badger people, let them read. Be ready to make your elevator pitch (Rule Two above) Work all the audience at once, do not leave visitors waiting for your attention. Make eye contact with every visitor.

2. Make it easy for a conference attendee to contact you afterward. Have copies of relevant papers on hand as well as copies of the poster on standard-sized paper. Have your e-mail and other contact information (photo too) clearly displayed. For ideas which you'd like to have ongoing discussions, enable a follow up with people who come to the poster by having a signup sheet.

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