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Subject: **On behalf of Warren Wiscombe, ARM Chief Scientist**
Date: March 21, 2008 8:06:56 PM EDT
To: <armall@arm.gov>

Dear ARM colleagues:

The winning posters from the Norfolk ARM Science Team Meeting are posted at:

Chief Scientist Awards, http://stm.arm.gov/2008/winning_posters_cs.stm
People's Choice Awards, http://stm.arm.gov/2008/winning_posters_pc.stm

I invite you to look at them as exemplars.

While there has been a distinct improvement, especially in those who are only one degree of separation from me and have listened to my guidelines, most of the rest of you still have a ways to go. Let us keep our goal firmly before us: to make our posters excellent advertisements for our work. People still fall victim to a temptation to pack too much information on their posters, ignoring the limits on peoples' time and memory. These posters are like the bad ads you see on TV or in the newspapers -- they throw too much at you and don't give you a clear take-home message. Let us all resolve to simplify the lives of your viewers -- that should be your goal. You can do that by walking in their shoes and worrying about how they can get the essence of your work in 3 minutes or less (that is why I suggested putting a colored or otherwise clearly demarcated Summary box in the upper right of your poster for the fast browsers who might otherwise pass you by completely).

Many of you feel an almost physical pain in deleting information from your poster. I know, I have felt it too. But what I have discovered, as have many others, is that it is possible to communicate almost as much in far fewer words and figures. In each pass through a poster, you can find things that are extraneous, and after several such passes, you can arrive at a spare and elegant poster that still has good information content -- probably still more than your 3-minute visitor can assimilate, but spare enough. Try that process and I think you will be amazed at the results.

Viewability problems (the four-foot rule) for text have declined dramatically as more people follow the font-size guidelines, but too many figures were not re-done for the poster -- rather just pasted in from a journal article or plotting program without increasing the font size or in some cases the size of the figure itself. Thus, most figures are finally large enough to see, but the curves are still hairlines instead of thick bold lines, the parts of complex contour plots that you want the reader to focus on are not circled, and axis labels, legends, and titles are far too small. And while many of you may have evolved to read vertical text, I have not, so let me request that you add horizontal y-axis labels.

Warren Wiscombe
ARM Chief Scientist

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