

# Pulling in the punters: from the Poster Prom(enade) to CLS Showcase

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In June 2008 the department of Computing and Library Services (CLS) at the University of Huddersfield ran its first Poster Promenade. This was the brainchild of the then director, John Lancaster, who devised the event as an internal staff development activity to showcase the work of the various teams to CLS staff. After seeing the high quality of the posters, he invited the Vice-Chancellor's office to view the displays. The CLS Poster Prom thus became an annual event in the university calendar, and was opened up to staff from across the university. It was officially opened by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, who awarded a prize for the best poster.

In addition to the posters, a couple of presentations were made on a library and computing theme. Topics included video streaming software, Summon (our resource discovery tool) and MyReading (in-house reading list software development). A regular stall, known as 'Trevor and his Techie Toys', featured new technologies that staff could test while talking with Trevor (IT Purchasing and Deployment Manager) about how they could be used to support teaching and learning.

Attendance figures for early events were disappointing, so ways were sought to increase the profile of the Poster Prom. One idea was to invite guest speakers to deliver workshops, aimed particularly at academics and researchers.

Workshops were delivered for the first time in 2011. These included Emerald's 'Demystifying the publishing process: how to maximize your chances of publication', Scopus' 'Research tips and tricks: how to find out who is citing you and more' and Dawson Books' 'Updating your reading lists: how to find the latest books / e-books published on your subject'. Each workshop ran twice, and advance booking was encouraged. Registration was in the Poster Prom venue to encourage potential attendees to peruse the posters between workshops. A buffet lunch was sponsored by Emerald and Elsevier. At previous Poster Proms, CLS managers had been responsible for deciding on the themes for posters. However, in 2011 staff were invited for the first time to come up with ideas for a poster based on any new service developments or on-going work that they wished to promote. They were invited to submit poster ideas (in no more than two hundred words) to the Poster Prom committee, who would then decide which would be turned into posters by our Publicity Officer.

Appropriate marketing of the event was essential to ensure attendance from all areas of the university. To this end, posters, flyers and electronic notices were produced. Administrative staff in particular were targeted, and staff were personally emailed by a member of the Poster Prom Committee. The free lunch was highlighted in order to entice people to the event!

The 2011 event was well attended, although there were some challenges, and changes were made for 2012. For example, feedback showed that attendees had struggled to hear the presentations because of the constraints of the venue, so it was decided not to have presentations the following year. Additionally, the number of workshops was reduced from three to two. They were delivered by the JISC Regional Support Centre, who conducted the workshop 'Using Apps for Education: iPad, iPhone and Android apps', and Emerald, who delivered a writing skills workshop. A group of education consortium librarians were also invited to the event, which was integrated into their annual summer conference at the university. This formula worked well, and proved to be the busiest and most successful event to date.

In 2013 there was an emphasis on the whole stall rather than just the posters. As well as awarding a prize for the best poster, a prize was also given to the best stand. This was won by the shelving team, who, as well as their poster display, had a trolley full of books, and challenged attendees to sort them whilst being timed. It was, however, the feedback from one of the attendees that has influenced the direction of future events. This member of support staff was very enthusiastic, saying that she had thought from the term 'Poster Prom'

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that she would be simply reading posters. She was blown away by the fact that she had spoken to the 'experts', who explained the reason behind their poster and stand, and by the fact that she had been able to view products. This led the committee to debate whether calling the event a Poster Prom actually detracted from the interactive elements. Would changing the name make the event more inviting and draw in more people from across the university?

We decided to change the name for 2014, and transform the Poster Prom to CLS Live, a natural progression for an event that had started with an internal focus driven by senior management to a peer-led experience with a university-wide focus. Like the Poster Prom, CLS Live provided an opportunity to publicise innovative projects and service developments in CLS. However, there was no longer a restriction to posters. Thus the call for contributions also invited animations, video, and table-top events. Feedback from the 2014 event confirmed the popularity of these creative and interactive displays, prompting the suggestion that the 2015 event include a 'people's prize' for the best stand. A further change in 2015 included the introduction of a form on which delegates could collect 'stamps' from each stall they visited: a complete set of stamps entitled them to enter a prize draw.

Although attendance was up last year, it has been decided to change the name in 2016 from CLS Live to CLS Showcase, in order to provide clarity the nature of the event, and thus encourage even better attendance.

Each year the event is branded with a new look and feel, thanks to our Publicity Officer, Mike Spikin, who designs a 'brand' to be used on all the promotional material and on each of the poster designs (see images for the different brands). Not only does Mike create all the promotional materials, he also works with each of the successful submissions to turn proposals into interesting poster designs. This is no small feat, and much of Mike's time throughout May is dedicated to the event.



Year on year as the event grew, more posters were submitted. There was a close call in 2012 when posters were being collected from the printers on the morning of the Poster Prom. They were still being hung, and displays finalised, as the Pro-Vice Chancellor walked in! The committee therefore decided on stricter deadlines for subsequent years, and this has proved successful.

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The committee meets regularly throughout the year. A call for proposals is circulated in February, with a deadline of mid-March; the committee then meets to confirm successful proposals and emails candidates with a deadline of early May for sending ideas to the Publicity Officer. This gives a full month's development time until the event.

Evaluation of the events is something we are aiming to improve on. Each year we have sought feedback on the event, and on CLS as a whole. Initially, delegates were emailed after the event and asked to fill in a short questionnaire, but the response rate was lower than hoped for. We subsequently trialled feedback cards, which were handed out as delegates entered the event or registered for workshops. In 2013 we used Poll Everywhere. We had hoped that as attendees saw things they liked while wandering round they would text / tweet feedback, with responses projected onto screen. However, they did not engage with this method of feedback as much as we had expected. Our most valuable feedback continues to be generated through conversations between attendees and stand holders. Whilst we would welcome more feedback, what we have received has been overwhelmingly positive.

A lot of planning and organisation goes into all areas of the event, but ultimately it's a fun and unique way for us to promote our work to a wider audience. For this one day, we get to showcase to our various customers, both within and outside the university, the various projects we are involved in and the initiatives that have been put in place.

For further information and to view examples of previous year's posters visit the website: [www.hud.ac.uk/cls/clslive/](http://www.hud.ac.uk/cls/clslive/)

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