



The 10th Technical Symposium on Mekong Fisheries

Guidelines for Poster Exhibits, Oral Presentations
and Technical Papers

Pakse,
Lao PDR

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Introduction

This booklet provides instructions and guidelines for exhibitors and speakers who intend to give poster displays and oral presentations during the 7th Technical Symposium on Mekong Fisheries. It also provides authors who wish to publish their work with instructions about the style, structure and standard format required of papers in the proceedings of the symposium.

We expect that the majority of you will be MRC counterpart staff working for national fisheries agencies. Some of you will have little, or no, experience of writing and presenting technical papers, especially for an audience of international scientists. We have prepared this booklet specifically to help you.

General comments

Publishing is a vital part of research. No matter how good or important your results, your work has limited value, unless it is written up, published, read and understood. Going through the process of preparing your work for publication will also benefit your future research. This is because writing with clarity makes you think clearly about the problems you set out to investigate, how you studied them, what you discovered, and what these discoveries mean. We hope these guidelines will help you in this process.

Whether you are exhibiting a poster, giving an oral presentation or writing a paper you should:

Choose your subject carefully.

Do not attempt to cover too broad a subject or try to include too much material. There will be no time to explain everything about your particular field or to present all your research so it is important to choose a subject that you can explain simply in the short time (20 minutes) or space available to you. You will have plenty of other opportunities to present your work in the future.

Know your audience.

While the audience will contain people who are experts in your field, the bulk of the audience will be unfamiliar with your much of what you intend to present and nobody will know your research as well as you do. Therefore, do not assume what is common knowledge for you is common knowledge for them. You will have to explain some of your points carefully and slowly, even though they may be obvious to you.

On the other hand, most of the audience will have worked in the fisheries sector, so do not over simplify your subject. Finding the right balance between over-complication and over-simplification is one of the keys to a good presentation.

Therefore, it is a good idea to run through the outline of your presentation or paper with colleagues who are not fully familiar with your work and ask them to tell you which parts are not clear and which require further explanation.

Structure your presentation/paper so that the audience can follow the logic of your research.

Structure your presentation/paper methodically in the following sequence:

- describe the problems you set out to investigate;
- explain how you studied them;
- say what you discovered;
- discuss what these discoveries mean.

By doing this you will lead your audience clearly through the logic of your research and on to your conclusions. The presentation should go from the general (the problems), to the particular (how you studied them and what you discovered), and back to the general (what these discoveries mean).

Poster Displays

Introduction

Some topics are better covered in poster displays rather than in formal presentations. Often they concern research that is ongoing and not yet ready for publication. Descriptions of new techniques or equipment, faunas and habitats, research facilities and development and community projects also make good poster exhibits.

Poster stands are good places to talk informally with fellow researchers and colleagues because they have a less intimidating atmosphere than the lecture theatre or main conference hall. They can provide a focal point where people working in your field can meet and share information and opinions. In addition, because there is less pressure on time, more people that are interested in your topic can talk to you at your stand than can following an oral presentation.

Do not chose to do a poster because you think it will be less work (or because you will be less nervous) than preparing a oral presentation - they require a lot of careful preparation.

Posters must be visually attractive to grab the attention of people passing by. Draw a large banner heading so that the subject of your display is immediately apparent. The display should be full of photographs, pictures, charts and graphs and contain a lot of colour and little text.

Schedule

All posters will be on display throughout the duration of the symposium. Exhibitors must set up their displays the evening before the symposium starts. We will group posters by Component and give each a specific location in the exhibition room.

Exhibitors should be in attendance throughout the scheduled posters sessions. We will announce the times of these later.

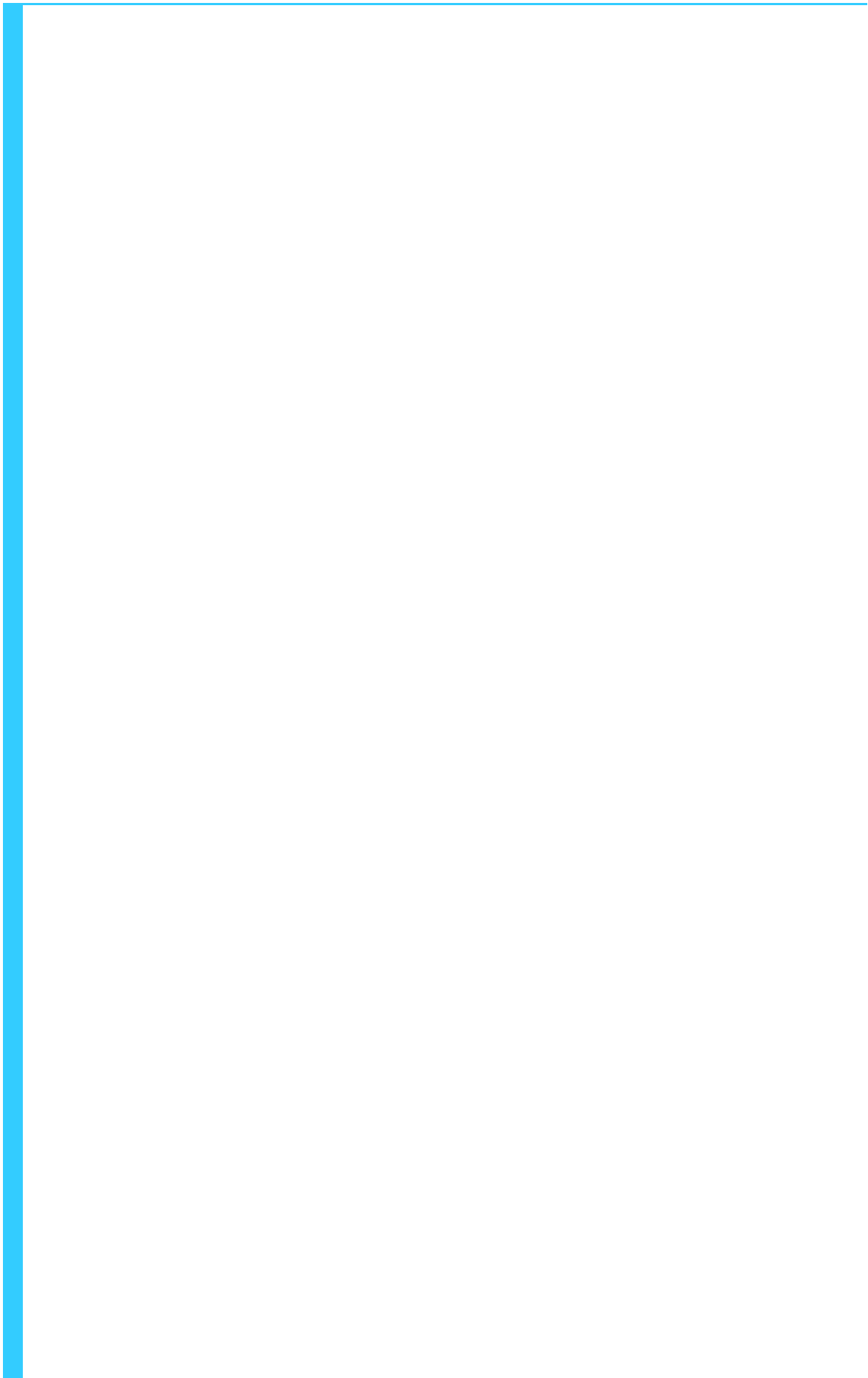
Format

Posters must be approximately size A0, or 841mm x 1,189 mm. Display boards will be suitable for pushpins and Velcro.

Lettering should at least 24 point (18 for super and subscripts) so that the display is legible from at least 1.5 metres away.

Bring all the necessary materials (such as pins, Velcro tape, hook tapes and adhesive tape) that you need to hang your exhibit to the symposium with you.

Prepare some attractive handouts about your exhibit. Miniature versions of the display are good so long as they are legible. Bring other relevant material such as papers, brochures and flyers for distribution. Bring a plentiful supply of your business or name cards.



Oral Presentations

Introduction

Oral presentations differ from poster displays and papers in one important aspect – time.

People looking at poster displays or reading technical papers can take in the information you present them at their own pace. If they want to they can pause, stop to think, then continue reading. If necessary, they can go back and reread any part of the display or paper they do not understand.

In an oral presentation however, the speaker controls the pace at which they present information to their audience. Therefore, you must plan the structure of your presentation carefully to ensure your listeners can keep up with what you are trying to tell them. To help them you can:

Include summary slides.

At appropriate times during your presentation, take time to summarise the major points you have made so far. If necessary, remind them of the objectives of your study or research.

Take pauses.

When making an major point, give the audience time to take it in and think about it, pause for 5 or so seconds before moving on to the next section of your presentation. This may seem a long time for you while you are waiting, but the audience will hardly notice the pause.

Simplify slides containing tables or graphical data.

Your audience will not have the time to study the details of tables and charts as they would if they were reading a paper or looking at a poster. Therefore, simplify slides containing tables and graphical data. If necessary, be selective about what data you display, and take time to explain or describe charts and tables. “This chart illustrates the relationship between the depth of the river and the number of fish species. On the horizontal axis ...”

Notes

Uses notes if you are nervous or if you are worried that you will lose or forget the thread of your talk. However, you should avoid reading the whole of your presentation from notes. Therefore, make note of one or two important points for each slide - write the notes in large letters so that you can read them easily and find them quickly.

Above all, speak slowly and clearly and look at your audience not your slides.

Timing

You have 20 minutes for your presentation; 15 minutes for speaking and 5 minutes for questions from the audience. The chairperson, depending on how kind he or she is, may stop your presentation if you go past your allocated time. Slides usually take about 2 minutes each to present. Therefore, plan your presentation around 10 slides as a maximum.

Have a practice run of your full presentation with colleagues. This is the best way to estimate the time it will take to give. Just reading your notes

through is poor measure, as you will underestimate the time needed for pauses.

Do not hurry your talk by trying to present too much information – leave some for questions at the end. It is much better to finish your talk slightly early than have the chairperson cut you off in mid sentence.

Structure

Plan the structure of your presentation around the outline we described earlier...

- what are the problems you set out to investigate;
- how you studied them;
- what you discovered;
- what these discoveries mean

... but bear in mind the constraints the nature of presentations put on the audience's ability to absorb information. To help them, follow practice used by many journalists, "Tell what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them you have said it".

You can help prepare the audience by outlining the material you intend to present in the introduction (as well as describing the problems you set out to investigate). During the main part of your presentation, place greater emphasis on what your research has discovered. Detailed descriptions of methodology are unnecessary in oral presentations, unless your talk is specifically about a new technique or process. Use your interpretation of what the discoveries mean as the climax of the presentation.

Ending a presentation can be difficult. Unlike with a poster display or a paper, your audience often doesn't know when your talk is about to end. (In some instances, they don't know it has already ended!) Therefore, finish your presentation with a brief summary; again, this helps your audience absorb the information you have given them. Then, *pause* and thank them for their attention.

Visual Aids

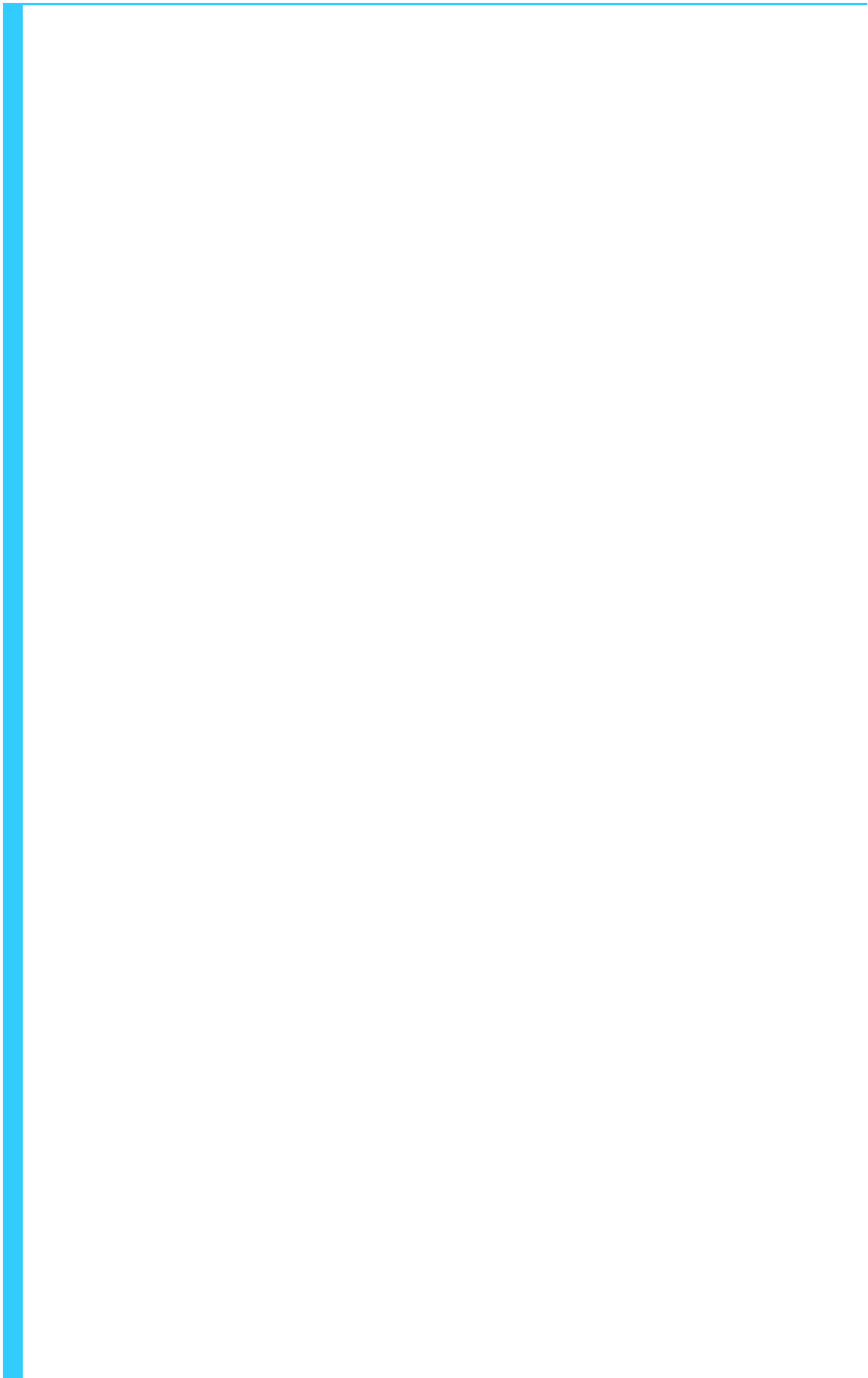
Please use Microsoft PowerPoint. The conference venue has LCD facilities but not overhead projectors or slide projectors. Bring a spare copy of the slides on CD and paper copies with you.

Choose the colour scheme of your slides carefully and try them out well in advance. Contrast is important (white on a black or dark background works well), but remember many colour-blind people cannot distinguish between red and green. If in doubt, use one of the templates available in PowerPoint.

Keep your slides simple. Avoid using fancy animation (such as spinning fade-ins and fade-outs) and over-elaborate backgrounds, these will distract the audience. Only present photographs if they are relevant to your talk. Make sure they are clear when projected onto a large screen.

Use large (20pt or larger) and simple fonts (Arial, Verdana and Times New Roman). Avoid too many bullet points on slides containing lists – more than 5 bullet points clutter the slide and are usually illegible.

In general, use charts to show trends and tables to highlight exact values. Do not use the same charts and tables you intend to include in your paper, particularly if they contain a lot of detail. Draw new and simplified versions for your slide presentation. Avoid using 3D graphs, these rarely add to the clarity of the data and often distract the audience.



Papers for Publication in the Proceedings

Introduction

As in previous years, we will publish the proceedings of the symposium as a volume in the MRC Conference Series.

The technical content and typographical quality of the Proceedings has improved year on year. We aim to continue raising the standards of the Proceedings until they meet those of an 'internationally recognised' science publication.

In order to do this we have developed a set of guidelines for authors to follow. These will ensure that the papers have a standard format inline with that of most technical journals.

An editorial panel will select those papers that are suitable for publication. It will only accept original work; do not submit manuscripts that are under consideration by another publisher. Articles must be technically sound and written in English (UK). Make sure the appropriate Component Advisor has read and approved the manuscript before submitting it to the editor.

Responsibilities

The **editor** is ultimately accountable for the quality and merits of the contributions chosen and the technical quality of the Proceedings as a whole. He will ensure consistency; good grammar, spelling and punctuation; and a clear and sensible structure and style for the Proceedings. The result should be a text that is as easy as possible to read and understand.

The editor is responsible for reading and approving each contribution for publication. The editor may ask the contributor to clarify parts of the text (or tables and figures) that are ambiguous, unclear or inconsistent and, if necessary, he can request that contributors rework and resubmit parts or all of their texts, including figures.

Authors are responsible for the factual content of their contributions. In addition to the accuracy of scientific and technical data, they must also ensure that all names (of people, animals and plants, chemicals and places) are spelt correctly and that these spellings are consistent throughout the text (including the title and the abstract). They must make certain that all the citations in the text match are correct and are included in the list of references; these must be complete and presented according to the format defined later in these guidelines.

Manuscripts

Text

The editor will format your paper to the style of the Proceedings. In order to help:

- please submit your paper as a Microsoft Word 2000 (or later version) doc file;
- use double-spaced regular 12pt Times New Roman font;
- set the language (found in the Tools tab) to English (UK) with no hyphenation.
- Insert a space in between sentences and a line-break in between paragraphs. Do not indent the first line of paragraphs.

Please indicate section headings and their level with consecutively numbered Arabic numerals (1., 1.1., 1.1.1., etc.). Do not use more than three levels of heading. Insert two line-breaks before and after headings.

Number all pages consecutively, including the title and abstract page.

Figures and Tables

Please submit figures and tables (with appropriate titles, legends and notes) on separate pages at the end of the main body of the text. Identify the location of each table and figure in the text by typing '*Insert table x or figure y*' in bold italics.

Do not format tables. Provide a copy of the original data as an Excel file if the tables are taken from a spreadsheet. If you use graphs and charts, please also send the original data set as an Excel spreadsheet. Do not submit scanned tables – the editor will reject them!

If possible, submit other figures as vector images not bitmaps. These allow our designers to edit artwork that otherwise may be illegible when it is reduced. Adobe Illustrator or CorelDraw files are preferable.

Photographs and Line Drawings

Include plates as numbered figures. Please submit both photographs and line drawing at the size you wish them to be published or larger. Submit photographs as TIFF files with 600 dpi resolution. Do not write annotations on top of the photograph. If annotation is necessary, send annotated and un-annotated versions. Pictures of line drawings should be a minimum of 800 dpi.

Maps

Maps must have scale-bars, a compass (preferably with north at the top) and an inset map (or inset maps) to show their location in the Lower Mekong Basin. Avoid including unnecessary geographic information. If possible, send maps as vector images.

Writing Style

We want the Proceedings to be easy to read and understand and most of all - interesting. Therefore, keep the words and sentences as clear and simple as possible, try using the active voice (the dog bit the man, not the man was bitten by the dog) and the first person (I did this, we did that). Experiments do not do themselves. People do experiments. Data does not interpret itself. People interpret data. Be proud of the ownership of your work and your interpretation. As an example, do not write, 'the fingerlings were transferred to an earthen pond', write instead, 'we put the fingerlings in an earthen pond'. Using the first person does not make your work less objective.

Avoid jargon and unnecessary acronyms and abbreviations, especially when referring to people or communities. If you must use them, define acronyms and abbreviations when they are first employed, unless they are commonly known and internationally accepted (e.g. DNA).

Avoid repetition.

Follow *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* or the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* for spelling. Use italic type if you use words and phrases taken from the riparian languages.

Structure

Papers must follow the structure outlined below:

Title

Keep your title short, precise and simple, if possible to less than 12 words.

Authors Names

Give the author or authors full family (in capital letters) and given names in the order customarily used in their country. (Use initials of the given name or names if the author so chooses.) For example:

Cambodia: SAM Nuov

Lao PDR: Soulivanthong KINGKEO

Thailand: Wimol JANTRAROTAI

Viet Nam: NGUYEN Xuan Ly

England: Timothy J. BURNHILL

Follow each name with an superscript number (^{1,2,3}, etc.) that links each author to the institution where they did their work. On the next line list these institutions in numeric order, giving their name and address, with the appropriate superscript number placed in front of each. Identify the author to whom people should correspond, with a superscript asterisk*. Give the full contact details and, if possible, the e-mail address of the corresponding author in a footnote at the bottom of the title page.

Abstract

An abstract is a summary of the whole paper. It must be self explanatory so that readers can understand it fully without referring to the main body of the paper. The abstract should be no more than 250 words long.

Keywords

Provide a list of up to 10 words or terms that relate to the important topics of the paper.

Citation

The editors will insert the correct citation for the paper in a footnote at the bottom of the first page.

Introduction

This is a description of the problems you set out to study. It should present the nature and scope of the problem, review previous work and relevant literature and describe the objectives of your work. It should also say who undertook the work and who, or which organisation, supported it.

Main Body of the Paper

The arrangement of the paper after the introduction is not fixed. However, you should follow the broad outline we gave earlier, i.e.; how you studied the problems, what you discovered, and what your discoveries mean. These equate to the 'Method, Results, and Discussion' format required by many scientific journals. You may choose to follow this system.

However, we realise it is difficult, and often repetitive and clumsy, to write about some subjects and research in this rigid format. (This is particularly true of material presented at symposia, which often describes research that is ongoing or incomplete.)

If you choose not to follow the format of a standard scientific journal, you must nevertheless write your paper in a clear, well argued and logical way with headings and subheadings structured appropriately.

Conclusions

The main body of all papers however, must finish with a set of conclusions that includes a summary of the important findings of your research, how they have helped clarify the problem you investigated, the unresolved questions and ideas for future research.

Acknowledgements

These should be brief and include only references to sources of financial and logistic support.

References

See below.

References in the text

References must follow the Harvard style as shown below. Please make sure that the references in the text match those in the reference section.

These should given be along the following lines:

Bray (2003) or Jacobsen and Forbes (1999) or (Williamson and Watanabe, 1987; Rodrigues, 2002a, b) and be ordered chronologically. Abbreviate references to papers by three or more authors, even on first mention, to the name of the first author followed by *et al.* (e.g. Hortle *et al.*, 2005). If two different authors have the same given name, their initials (e.g., N.H. Kawano, 2003) to avoid confusion.

Only refer to papers as 'in press' if they have been accepted for publication in a named journal, otherwise use the term 'pers. comm.' (e.g. W.T. Jones, University of Oxford, UK, pers. comm.).

Reference Section

Arrange the reference list alphabetically by the first-named author. Ensure that each reference cited in the text is in list of references. It is very important that references are complete, fully accurate, and retrievable.

Do not cite internal reports, contract reports, conference abstracts or handouts or other difficult-to-obtain material; if this is unavoidable, give the full address where readers can obtain the document.

Examples of reference formats are:

Books

Author, A.B. (2000) *Book Title in Italics with Upper-case Initials to Nouns etc.*, 2nd edn. (Series Title, Vol. 24). Publisher, City.

Author, A.B. (2001a) Chapter title in full. In: *Book Title in Italics*, Vol. 1. *Subtitle also in Italics* (eds. J.K. Editor and L.M. Editor), 2nd edn. Publisher, City, pp. 000-000.

Symposia

Author, A.B. (2001b) Full title of symposium contribution. In: *Title of Symposium Volume in Italics* (Proceedings of the Full and Exact Name of Symposium, City, 00 Month-00 Month, Year). F.X. Editor, ed. Publisher, City, pp. 000-000.

Theses

Author, A.B. (2001c) *Thesis title in italics with important capitals only*. PhD thesis, University of Wherever, 000 pages.

Journals

Author, A.B. and Author, C.D. (1999) Title of article. *Full Journal Title in Italics* 00, 000-000. [In Language if appropriate.]

Author, A.B., Author, C.D., Author, E.F. *et al.* [if more than 7] (2002) Title of article. *Full Journal Title in Italics* (in press).

Reports

Author, C.D. (1998) Title of published report. *Occasional Technical Report of Fisheries Science* No. 00, 000 pp. [for complete report] or No. 00, 000-000.

Websites

The content of websites change regularly and sometimes the sites may close, therefore, cite them sparingly, stating the date of your most recent access.

Author, A.B. Title of article in full, *Title of complete work* [type of medium, e.g. online journal], (date created, published or posted (day month year)) <address of electronic source> pagination or online equivalent, date accessed.

Tables and Figures

As a guide, use tables when you want to draw exact values or quantities and charts or graphs if you want to show trends in data.

Tables.

Please think carefully about what data you want to display in tables. If you want to present all your data as a reference set for future workers to use, include it as an appendix. Otherwise, tables placed within the text should contain only information that you refer to in the text.

The purpose of a table is to display data as plainly and concisely as possible. Think carefully about how many rows and columns the table needs and the size of font (7 pt is a minimum). Tables are much easier to read set in 'portrait' than 'landscape'. Although the editor will format the tables according to the set style of the Proceedings, you must think about how easily the reader will be able to find the information to which you refer. If necessary, split the data in two or more tables.

If you take data from a spreadsheet, 'cut and paste' it into your Word document. This will ensure standard formatting, help avoid typing errors and that make certain that numerical data is 'rounded' uniformly.

The title of tables must be comprehensible without referring to the text and it must explain the content and context of the table. Notes must be included at the base of the table to indicate sources of data (if it is not the author's), expand abbreviations and provide other general information. If a note is specific to the contents of a particular cell, indicate these clearly with a unique superscript annotation ^{a,b,c, 1,2,3} etc.

Charts and Graphs.

Bar and line charts are by far the easiest type of graph to read. Pie charts may look visually attractive, but they can be misleading. It is very difficult to judge and compare proportions accurately when the pie segments are small. They are also difficult to annotate.

Keep your charts simple; again, be clear about which points you want to illustrate and select the data accordingly. Do not attempt to show too much, or irrelevant, data. Include an additional chart rather than attempting to explain too many things on one figure. Avoid fancy graphics, such as 3D bars and exploding pie segments.

The title of figures must be comprehensible without referring to the text and must explain the content and context of the figure. Notes must be included at the base of the table to indicate sources of data (if it is not the author's), expand abbreviations and provide other general information.

Scientific Notation

Use metric SI (Système International) units and symbols, with base units, metre, gram, second, litre, mole, joule, etc. The editor will also accept common units such as day, tonne, hectare, watts etc. However, do not use obsolete units such as tons, gallons, miles.

Numbers

Unless they are part of measurements, write numbers up to and including ten in letters. Write all numbers above ten in numerals except at the start of sentences. Use only numbers between 0.1 and 1,000. Use powers or larger units for numbers outside this range (e.g. 2.5 million rather than 2,500,000, 22 km rather than 20,000 m and 3 mm³ rather than 0.003 cubic centimetres).

Express decimals and fractions as numerals. Numerals less than one must be preceded by a zero (e.g., 0.75), except for probabilities, which never exceed unity. Use 'per cent' rather than '%' except in the abstract, tables and figures.

Use abbreviations of units only beside numerals (e.g. 5 m); otherwise spell out units in full (e.g. only metres away). Do not use plural forms or periods for abbreviations of units. Use superscripts and subscripts (e.g. 10 g m²).

Dates and times

Use the 24-hour clock: 16.00 hours or 16:00. Format dates as day month year (e.g. 31 March 1999).

Names of animals and plants

These should be written in full in italics (*Genus species*) in the abstract and again in the main text for every organism. The taxonomic authority is not required unless it is controversial.

After the first full mention of a species, later references may be shortened by abbreviating the generic name to its capital followed by a full point (*G. species*) - expect where abbreviation lead to confusion.

After you have given the generic name in full, you may refer to animals and plants to using common or quasi-scientific names without italics or uppercase letters (e.g. snakeheads, climbing perch, giant catfish).

Finally

Please contact Tim Burnhill at tim@mrcmekong.org or telephone him on 263 263 ex 4064 if you have any questions about these guidelines.