Practical tips for making your online meetings better (and why bother)

Vanessa Moss • @cosmicpudding

2020

the year that was...

MARTY, WHATEVER HAPPENS
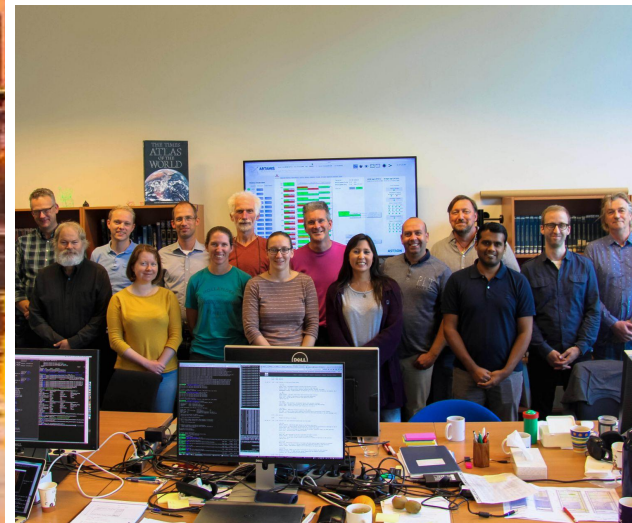
DON'T GO TO 2020!!

CATASTROPHIC FIRE DANGER TUEDAY

The last thing I did before COVID-19 closed Australian borders was a Perth trip for training, meetings and collaboration

URSI GASS 2021
28 AUGUST – 4 SEPTEMBER

In 2020, I was meant to travel to Italy for PHISCC, to Georgia for HVCs, to ASTRON for collaboration and to Italy for URSI
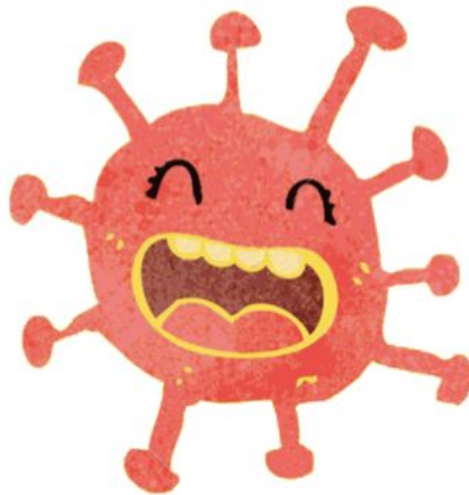
PHISCC in Perth 2019

(cancelled) family reunion trip

I love to travel...

and to jump from hand to hand to say Hi

HIGH FIVE

HELLO !

I am a VIRUS, cousins with the Flu and the Common Cold

My name is Coronavirus

When I come to visit, I bring...

Difficulty breathing

Fever

Cough

... so we shifted online

"You're on mute."

- says everyone in pretty much every online meeting ever

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May 19, 2020 / Libby Sand...

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How to Combat Virtual Meeting Fatigue

What exactly makes virtual meetings so draining, and what can leaders do to improve them?
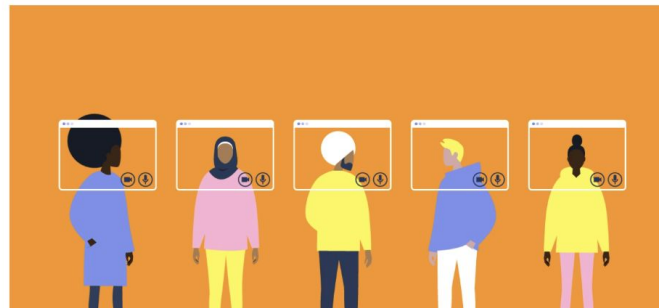
Katie Kavanagh, Nicole Voss, Liana Kreamer, and Steven G. Rogelberg • March 30, 2021

READING TIME: 5 MIN

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Topics

Leadership   Workplace, Teams, & Culture

Leadership Skills   Collaboration

Organizational Behavior   Remote Work

What to Read Next

01   Why Every Executive Should Be Focusing on Culture Change Now

02   Strategy as a Way of Life

03   What's Holding Your Data Program Back?

04   Summer 2021 Issue

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adic tone used on
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Google Meet, Microsoft Teams,

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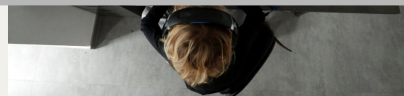
PUBLISHED JUNE 11, 2021 IN
TEAMWORK

JILL WALDBIESER
Contributing Writer

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happens?

Video calls seemed an elegant solution to remote work, but they wear on the psyche in complicated ways.

A student takes classes online on the Zoom in El Masnou, Spain, on April 2, 2020.   Albert Gea / Reuters
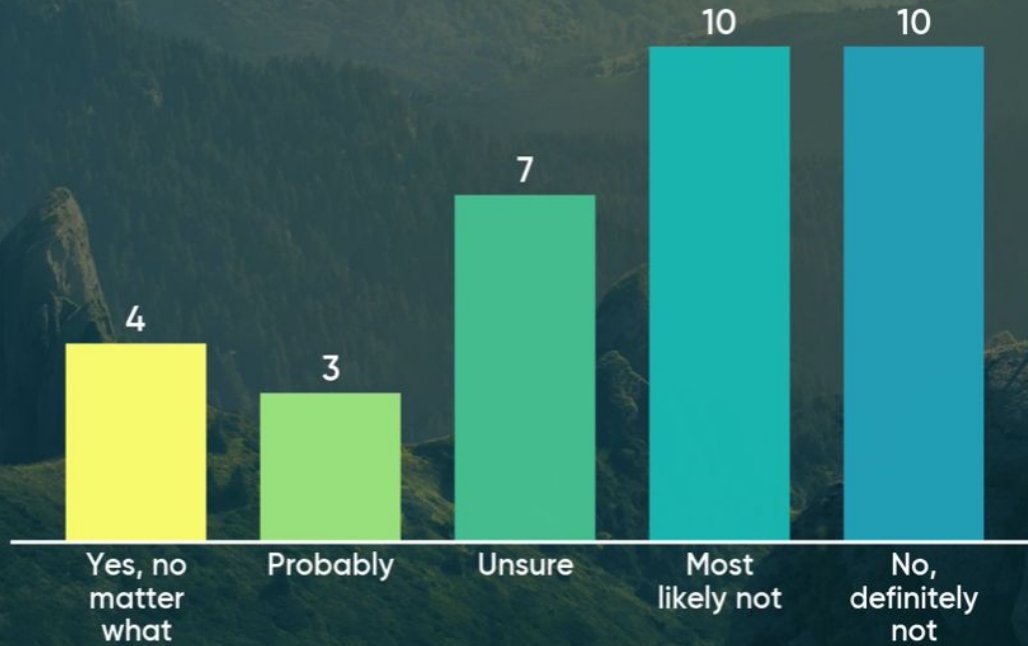
Science just confirmed what you already knew: Zoom fatigue is real

Here's what managers can do to help combat it.

Z…
Z…
Z…

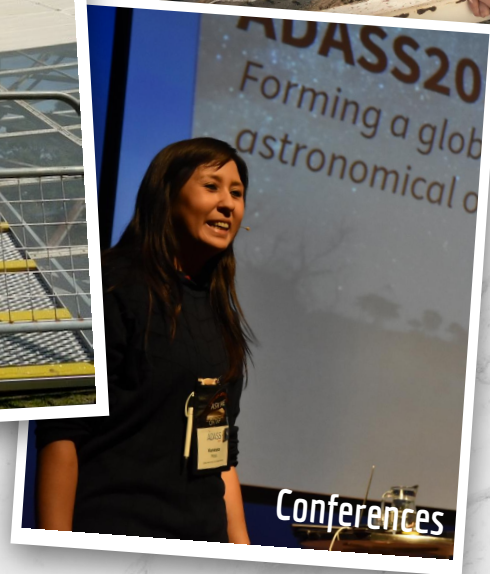# Would you have been at SIGGRAPH 2021 if it was in person?

Yes, no matter what	Probably	Unsure	Most likely not	No, definitely not
4	3	7	10	10

Sydney, February 2020

CSIRO

WHY WE CAN'T GO BACK TO NORMAL

Vanessa Moss • @cosmicpudding

← Sydney, 2020+ 😢

Collaboration

Unconferences

Schools

Observing

ADASS20
Forming a glob[al]
astronomical [...]

Conferences

So was it worth it?

The travels of a classic astronomer

To do: *Take the time to make a list of three meaningful, impactful, productive meetings you've had in the last few years. What were their characteristics? Why did you think of them?*

- Conferences of various scale
- Observing trips
- Workshops and busy weeks
- In-person training sessions
- Collaboration visits
- Presenting results
- Education/schools
- Work retreats
- "Job tours"
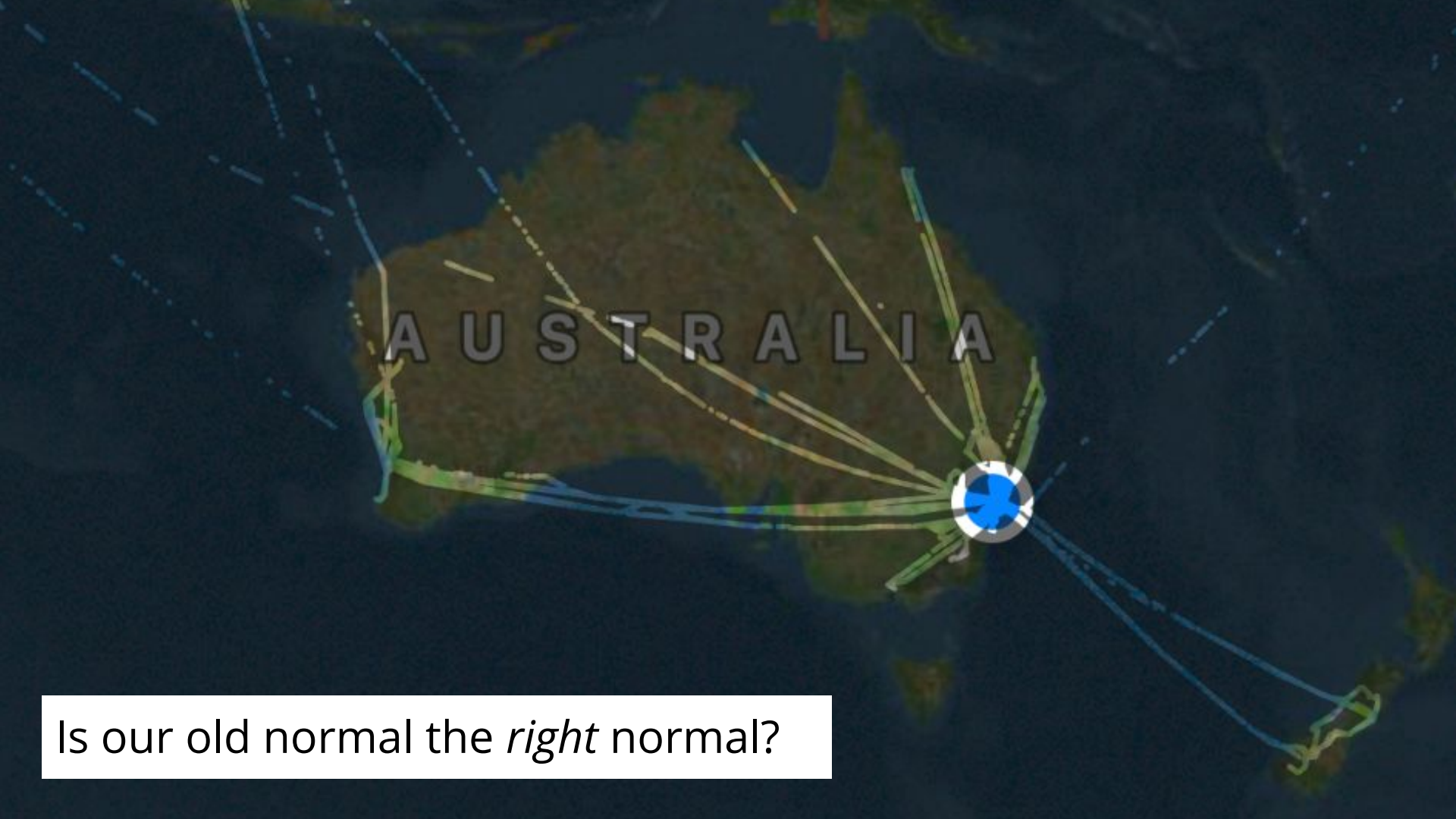- Long-term visits

———

Radio School 2010
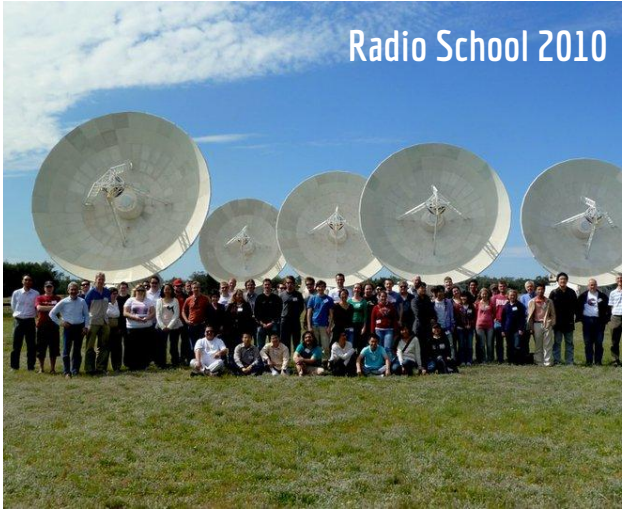
.Astronomy 7

RFI 2016+

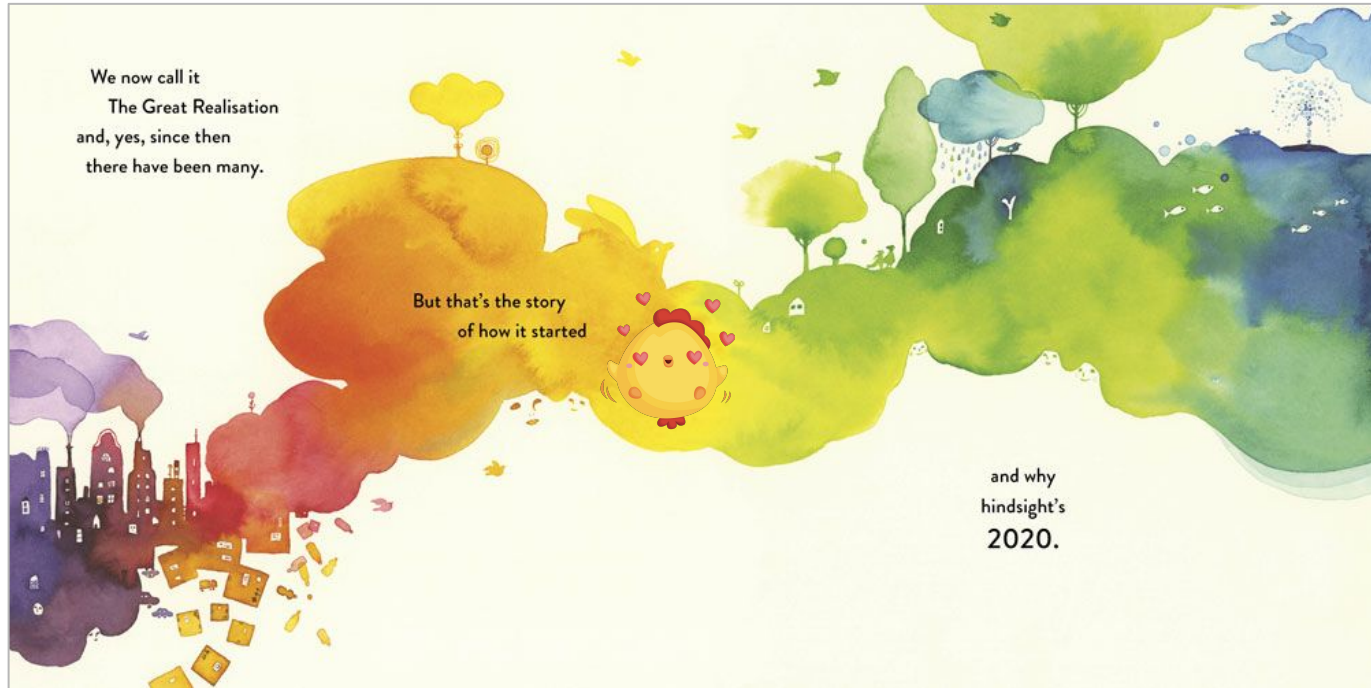Travel which had the most impact on me

Is our old normal the *right* normal?

What happens when you're not "in the room"?

Can we be together with people when we're apart?

Was everything about COVID-19 bad?

We now call it
The Great Realisation
and, yes, since then
there have been many.

But that's the story
of how it started

and why
hindsight's
2020.

The Future of Meetings Symposium, 15-17 Sep 2020

RESEARCH+ SYMPOSIUM

The Future of Meetings

COMING IN Q3 2020

VIRTUAL | REMOTE | COLLABORATION
SUSTAINABILITY | INCLUSIVITY | SOCIAL

CSIRO

REGISTER INTEREST NOW

Click here

Human collaboration is fundamental to sustaining and progressing essential economic, scientific and cultural activity. The precipitous governmental and social response to COVID19 enforces physical distancing, and effective climate action relies on making significant shifts towards sustainable commuting. Large parts of the "knowledge" workforce have adapted by scaling and expanding use of existing remote collaborative technologies so that these are ubiquitous, fundamental, and sometimes sole channels of communication. For science, this amplifies and emphasises existing problems in running remote participant inclusive, semi-distributed meetings and conferences.

Specific and urgent reflection and research is required to optimise distributed meetings and conferences to maximise generated value and minimise harms. Dual concerns of future meetings include "how do we make best use of existing and emerging collaborative technologies" and "what culture and practices are there and could there be that would help"? How do we maximise contributions and creativity, while minimising negative interactions or outcomes?

THE FUTURE OF MEETINGS SYMPOSIUM

TFOM: BEST PRACTICE FOR INTERACTION

@FUTUREMEETINGS

ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSIVITY, SUSTAINABILITY

Maximise accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability in all activities

Your choice of technology, approach and structure for any activity or interaction determines how accessible, inclusive and sustainable it will be as a result, which translates to positive or negative impact on both people and the environment

1 DIGITAL FIRST

Embrace a digital-first approach to interaction where possible

Going digital-first offers a level playing field for those involved and brings many opportunities for innovative ways to connect and collaborate

3 EXPERIMENTATION

Experiment regularly to build awareness of new solutions

Experimentation with new tools and approaches gives you diversity of experience, which then feeds into the suite of available solutions you have at your disposal

RIGHT TOOL/APPROACH

Find the right tool/approach for the given situation

Tools such as Whova, Altspace or Gather work best for very different contexts, so it is worth clearly defining your goals and choosing the tool/s to suit these desired outcomes

VALUE

Recognise the value that your team brings

By utilising the expertise of your team and taking ownership, it is possible to minimise outsourcing to where it is best applicable which maximises value for investment

6 EVALUATION

Evaluate at every step of the process for maximum impact

Evaluation of how well you are meeting your goals consistently provides useful reality checks and encourages you to adjust or adapt where needed

https://tfom.org

✓ **D**igital-first
✓ **A**ccessibility
✓ **I**nclusivity
✓ **S**ustainability
✓ **E**xperimentation
✓ **R**ight tool/approach
✓ **V**alue
✓ **E**valuation

Digital-first

- Give preference to digital forms of communication over in-person
- Ensure that chosen methods allow everyone involved to have an equal voice
- Design networking to be via virtual means regardless of location
- Avoid scenarios with a majority of people in-person and only a few virtual participants
- Focus on ways of connecting people that remove emphasis on their physical location
- If doing things in-person, consider who is not given access and whether this is okay
- Establish methods to check on whether the ways of communicating are working for everyone
- Ensure there is always an effective digital-first way of connecting (by design) for any interaction

Embrace a Digital-first approach to interaction where possible

Accessibility, Inclusivity, Sustainability

- Be clear about accessibility measures in place for a given interaction
- Give participants a way to make any further accessibility needs known
- Enable accessibility features for all meetings, not just when required (e.g. live captioning)
- Make content available before and after a meeting, to allow others to participate asynchronously
- In group interactions, give ample opportunity for everyone to contribute
- Assess your interactions to see if anyone might have been unable to fully participate (and why)
- Consider, quantify and minimise the carbon impact of your research or work activities
- Calculate the carbon footprint of interactions, and offset them via appropriate schemes or trees
- Use in-person interaction sparingly, as it minimises accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability

Maximise Accessibility, Inclusivity and Sustainability in all activities

Experimentation

- Encourage and be open to the trial of new approaches and tools for a given interaction
- Set aside dedicated time on a regular basis for experimentation to try new tools
- Keep track of possible new tools and approaches in a centralised location, e.g. a Padlet
- Carry out experiments in a group that can provide diverse perspectives on the outcome
- Consider aspects such as accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability when experimenting
- Channel a growth mindset as much as possible when it comes to existing processes/structures
- Ensure that policies do not impede the ability to find the best and most suitable solution

Experiment regularly to build awareness of new solutions

Right tool/approach

- Clearly define the goals and outcomes from an interaction, as well as requirements
- Make a shortlist of potential candidates and trial these where possible to see if they are a good fit
- Ensure you are aware of constraints within your organisation when seeking the tool/approach
- If a tool/approach requires investment, consider short and long terms gains/costs from adopting
- Treat the adoption of a new tool/approach as experimental, and be open to feedback or change
- Discuss your needs with others who may be aware of other solutions to your context
- Evaluate the approach on a regular basis, combining with experimentation for new approaches

Find the Right tool/approach for the given situation

Value

- If designing an event, conference or meeting, list what capabilities are needed for it to succeed
- Actively recruit committee members based on their expertise, capabilities and interest
- Consult with other organisers for advice based on their recent experiences
- Be willing to share advice and lessons learned on the conclusion of your event or conference
- Discuss your needs with external parties and be clear about what your expectations are
- Balance outsourcing against the factors of time, cost, processes involved and expected result
- Rank capabilities needed in terms of in-house, nice to outsource and necessary to outsource

Recognise the Value your team brings

Evaluation

- Make sure the goals and outcomes of any event or interaction are clearly defined from the start
- Alongside goals, identify ways that success will be quantitatively or qualitatively measured
- If relevant, partner with experts in evaluation to define a clear path for evaluation
- Involve organisational representatives of ethics and/or privacy as early as possible in the process
- Provide ways for stakeholders to give insight and feedback through the process of an interaction
- Ensure that as well as evaluating, you commit to taking action on addressing the outcomes
- Keep track of choices and decisions made (and why) to help you evaluate success later
- Hold yourself accountable to evaluation and make the outcomes clear to stakeholders as well

Evaluate at every step of the process for maximum impact

What's wrong with our current normal?

|	
❌ In-person format directly ported online	✅ Design the format to suit the interaction
❌ People in the room ignore online people	✅ Use digital-first to give all a voice
❌ Time zones make scheduling impossible	✅ Maximise asynchronous communication
❌ Several hours straight without a break	✅ Mandate breaks every hour
❌ The "void" of online webinars	✅ Have ways of signalling presence
❌ No hallway/serendipitous conversations	✅ Use tools that allow organic interaction
❌ Too many (long) meetings	✅ Only use a meeting when needed
❌ Technical failure is super common	✅ Prepare, practice, test, have back ups!
❌ Tech stack has too many apps	✅ Build purposefully but keep it simple
❌ Video calls aren't serving the need	✅ Use the right tool for the job
❌ Don't get feedback as a speaker	✅ Develop skills, allow audience feedback
❌ Hours and hours of conference talks	✅ Prioritise many-to-many interaction
❌ Can't attend virtual without distraction	✅ Develop cultural norms and boundaries

When to "in-person"

Maximising the value of F2F interaction

- **Social events/activities**
  - Lunches, farewells, BBQs
- **Difficult conversations**
  - c.f. "Up In the Air" movie
- **Catch-ups / sharing ideas**
  - The "hallway conversation"
- **If the work requires it***
  - CSIRO: Labs of the Future
- **Building personal networks**
  - Especially for new people
- **Immersive collaboration**
  - e.g. sabbaticals, long-term stays
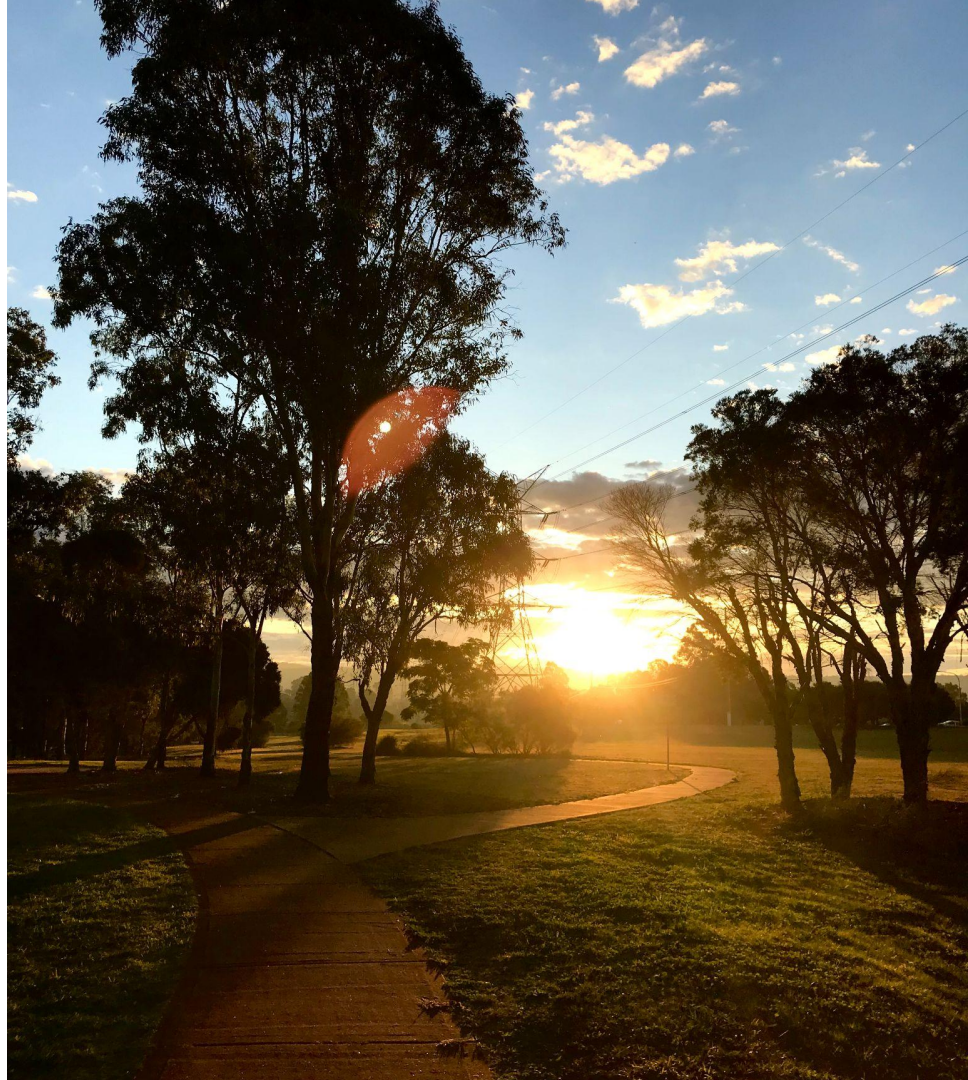
https://readyplayer.me

#EASU Leiden 2021 Virtual
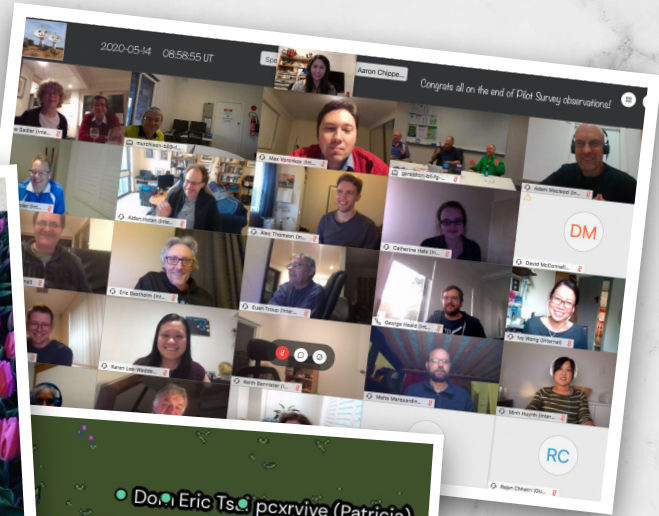
To do: *Actively challenge yourself that the next time you convene or speak at a meeting, you will avoid lamenting on the fact that it is not taking place in person and is thus an inferior substitute*

"Don't just try to emulate F2F - make it better."
- Ron Ekers

2020

the year that showed us what could be

(LIVE) THE CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION OF ANIMATION:
A CONVERSATION WITH THE LEGENDARY ANIMATOR,
GLEN KEANE

I'm curious to know how the Pearl Studio-Netflix
collaboration was handled for "Over The
Moon", as it's been noted that it was a very
international and diverse team. How was the
geographically-distributed team kept connected
and engaged during the project, and were
there any particular initiatives or structures that
helped with this?

Vanessa Moss

Glen Keane & Ian Failes

SIGGRAPH
ASIA 2020
VIRTUAL

*"I want to live creatively without walls... I want to be able to work with people
all around the world... and I realise that's what is happening right now."*

- Glen Keane ("Over The Moon")
🔗 SIGGRAPH ASIA 2020

#TFOM

DAISERVE