

Khue Duong, Kelee Pacion, Melanie Radik, Jessica Martinez, and Roxanne Bogucka

It always happens over lunch!

The powerful serendipity of informal networking

How did five science librarians in four different U.S. time zones end up going on (virtual) tour together, giving presentations at two national conferences, one ACRL webinar, and three workshops on five campuses? It all started with lunch.

In February 2020, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting was held in Seattle, Washington. Each year, the ACRL liaison to AAAS sends out a survey that offers 30 sponsored registrations to the conference, solicits lightning talks for the librarians' meeting, offers roommate matching, sets up local tours, and schedules lunch-arounds in walking distance from the main meeting venue. The 2020 liaison, Roxanne Bogucka, arranged for a tour of the University of Washington libraries and lunch at a small Salvadoran restaurant in the U-District.

At lunch, we talked about the conference (Bill Gates spoke), what we were all working on at our respective libraries, who was on the tenure track and how they were aiming to get it, the future of publishing and open access, and how often (or not) we got a chance to eat Salvadoran food. We also talked about librarians who had presented at AAAS before, and some of the topics they had covered. We all agreed that we wished more librarians would submit proposals for AAAS, and that we represented an important viewpoint that was necessary at a national science conference.

Together, we headed back to the conference venue to watch the lightning talks at the librarians' meeting. Listening to the work being done by our colleagues stimulated all kinds of ideas to take home, as well as surfacing common challenges that STEM librarians share. These lightning talks led us to discover a shared interest in submitting a proposal for a librarian-led workshop for the 2021 AAAS meeting, both for the opportunity to reach out beyond libraryland to address scholarly communication issues and to give back to AAAS in appreciation for its commitment to including librarians in its annual meetings. Once we all got back from Seattle, Bogucka sent out a survey to connect sponsored librarians who wanted to collaborate on session proposals.

This led to the formation of a team of librarians across the country who were interested in collaborating on a proposal for AAAS 2021, whose theme was "Understanding Dynamic

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Ecosystems.” Khue Duong, Kelee Pacion, Melanie Radik, Jessica Martinez, and Bogucka began meeting via Zoom and discussing the ways that we might exchange knowledge and preferences about publication choices with scientists. In the end, we proposed a workshop that asked participants to evaluate the effect journal decisions made on their careers and contributions to their disciplines, as well as learn more about the scholarly publishing ecosystem, and that ended with an exercise in future thinking, asking participants to envision their ideal scholarly publishing landscape. Some questions we asked were: What was working for them in scholarly publishing? What were the signs of the future they were seeing in academic publishing?

Our workshop proposal was accepted to AAAS, and, in 2021, we presented it virtually to an audience of scientists, students, and science librarians. After working on our presentation and materials for so long, we wanted to keep sharing the activities with other audiences. We started to look for other opportunities to present.

That spring, we presented our material to all five of our campuses as a workshop series. We used the University of Idaho LibCal registration form and put it on all our individual websites and campus calendars. While we had people register, very few showed up to the event. The interactive nature of our workshop means that we can't record it, so there wasn't an asynchronous option for registrants. We also reached out to the ACRL Science and Technology Section's Scholarly Communications Committee and pitched a “train the trainer” webinar for librarians. This event was really successful, and we enjoyed comparing what we'd learned that scientists prioritize in scholarly communication with what librarians think is important. We also proposed and were accepted for the August 2021 Special Library Association Conference, where we heard from a whole new audience that included corporate librarians, publishers, and solo librarians.

Based on our experience, here are a few things to keep in mind when collaborating across time zones:

- Schedule meetings between 9 a.m. Pacific/12 p.m. Eastern and 2 p.m. Pacific/5 p.m. Eastern.
- It's easier to schedule your next meeting when you're all together rather than sending out a Doodle or When2Meet poll (although that works, too).
- Zoom and Google Docs make things pretty easy.
- Communicate about what you all want or need to get out of a collaboration.
- Be flexible. Sometimes not all members are able to participate at a scheduled time.

Overall, the conversation that got started over lunch in Seattle became a collaboration that has spanned two years, five time zones, and three national presentations. It has also been a connecting experience during difficult pandemic times. So the next time—pandemic permitting—that there's an opportunity to grab lunch at a conference, definitely say yes. //