

Creating Knowledge X: Evaluation report

Helene N. Andreassen

UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Creating Knowledge 2021 took place as an online conference on June 3-4, 2021, hosted by UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Shortly afterwards, all delegates were sent an evaluation form so that we could learn from our mistakes and further improve all the good elements.

190 delegates responded, yielding a response rate of between 35-45 %. This report will summarize results from the evaluation, and we hope it will be of use, both for the next Creating Knowledge, which is scheduled to take place in Helsinki in 2024, and other similar conferences.

Attendance

56,8 % of the respondents attended both days of the conference and 42,6 % only parts of it. Respondents were asked why they didn't attend the entire conference, and 73 respondents gave an explanation. Some answered lack of time or that they were only interested in some parts, but a large majority said they had work obligations to attend to. The difficulty to commit 100 % to an online conference, as you would a physical conference, was pointed out by many.

62,1 % were new to Creating Knowledge and 37,9 % of the respondents had attended previously. This illustrates one of the upsides of (free) online conferences: attendance from colleagues who would (or could) otherwise not have participated.

Nationalities

Most respondents came from a Nordic country. 8,9 % attended from somewhere else. This is not surprising, given that the Creating Knowledge conference is primarily announced in the Nordic countries. We do however wish to highlight that six presentations (not counting the keynotes) were given by people outside this region (Ireland, New Zealand, Switzerland, UK), which illustrates the usefulness of distributing the call for papers more broadly.

***Contact:**

e-mail: helene.n.andreassen@uit.no

“Where did you hear about the conference?”

The answers to this question (see graph below) should be interesting for future organizers of Creating Knowledge, as it seems that knowledge of this conference to a great extent is spread by word of mouth. Some delegates commented that they only heard about the conference by coincidence. This indicates that a good information network of HE library workers in the Nordic countries is called for.

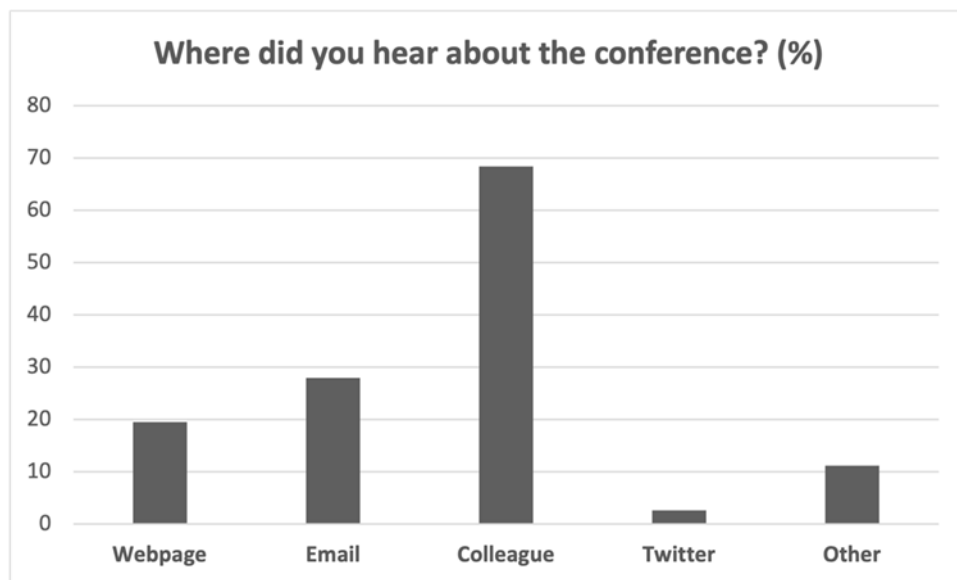


Figure 1. Where did you hear about the conference?

Satisfaction

The conference as a whole was very well received, with 48,9 % rating it 5 (very satisfied) and 42,1 % rating it 4. No one rated it 1 (not satisfied). Also, the four keynotes were appreciated, with 45 % or more rating each and every one of them 5 (very satisfied) or 4.

Presenters could choose between two formats, 25-minute presentations and round tables. The programme was organised with 25-minute presentations in two or three parallel tracks, and round tables in two parallel tracks. The programme was very well received (see graph below), but the results show that the round tables were in general less appreciated and also less attractive than the 25-minute presentations, with almost 40% of the respondents not attending them.

The original plan, for the physical conference, was to have interactive round tables with maximally 30-40 people in each. We acknowledge in hindsight that round table sessions are challenging to organize in an online conference, and one main take-home message is that the number of participants needs to be strictly regulated to allow for interaction and

engagement in the discussions. We did in fact ask the delegates to state in advance which round tables they wanted to attend, but it was impossible to foresee how many would actually turn up. Because we didn't regulate the number, some presenters and some participants experienced too many people in the round tables, which took away some of the benefits of this format.

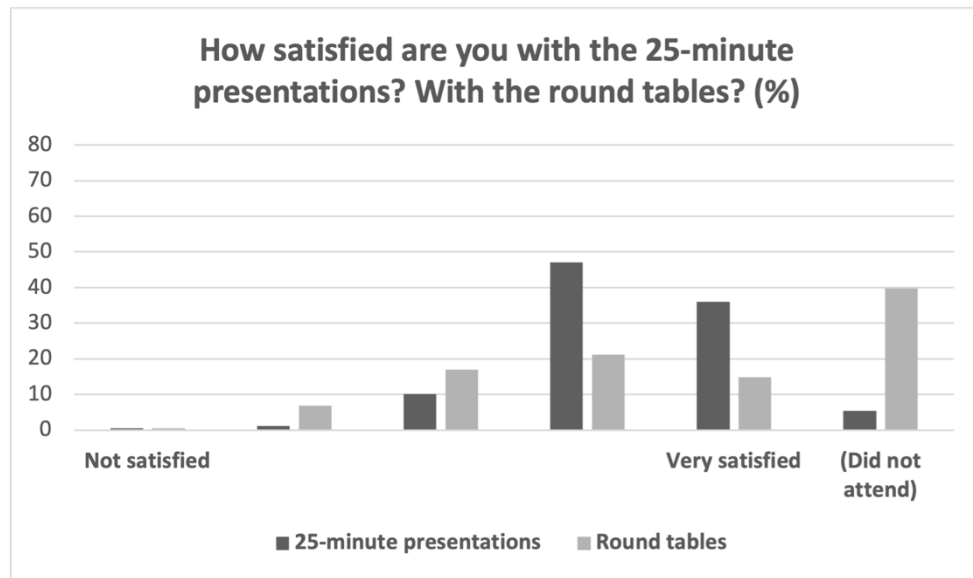


Figure 2. Satisfaction with presentations and round tables.

The programme contained a rich diversity of topics. On being asked if there were any sessions they found particularly interesting, more than 30 single sessions and a number of entire tracks were mentioned by respondents. This could indicate that having a generous list of possible topics in the call for papers may lead to attracting participants with different interests.

Many respondents mentioned that one important part of conferences is to socialise with others. Although we had to organize an online conference, we decided to encourage people to meet in breaks and to be entertained when possible. We created a separate Zoom room where people could hang out between sessions. Here participants also could listen to lunch presentations given by colleagues at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. The large majority of respondents did not attend any of this, and many explained in the comments section that they needed to go off Zoom in the breaks to avoid getting too tired. Those who participated, however, were (very) satisfied with it. Also the musical contributions, pre-recorded music videos that were played when opening and closing the conference, were appreciated. Some however complained about the quality of the videos when transmitted via Zoom.

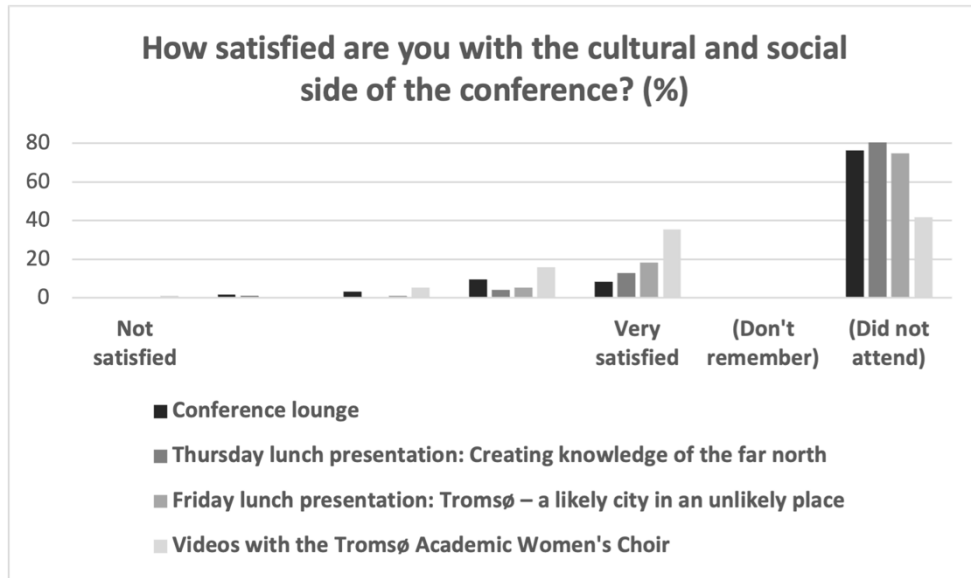


Figure 3. Satisfaction with cultural and social aspects.

Quality of the conference organization

The respondents were all in all very satisfied with the organizational aspects of the conference (see graph below). In particular, the success of the technical implementation was highlighted by many also in the comments field. Here it is worth mentioning that teaming up with colleagues working with studio filming, having enough people to run the sessions (one chair and one technical support per Zoom room), testing all aspects in detail prior to the conference, and having one person monitoring the schedule throughout the conference were key factors for managing the complexity of the event.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that using Twitter as social media platform to promote the various presentations was seemingly not noticed by the vast majority of the delegates.



Figure 4. Satisfaction with conference organization.

Conference format

In 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic was the one reason why the conference was run online. The success of the conference – leaving aside the lack of social activities – should nevertheless make us think creatively about format in the future. There are at least three options: online, hybrid and physical. When asked about what they would prefer, 18,9 % would prefer the physical option, while 17,4 % would prefer the online option. Interestingly, 63,7 % say that both would work for them, and this may indicate that people see advantages in both options. See comments below that relate to this.

“Comments on topics not covered by the other questions? Feel free to share them!”

We had more than 60 comments from respondents on this final question. The majority was very positive and emphasized both the keynotes and other content, as well as the organizing of the conference. On the downside, quite a few commented on the online format. Even though there were few technical hiccups, there were quite a few comments from delegates missing the social aspect of a conference and preferring a physical conference. On the other hand, some delegates also praised the online format because it enabled them to participate, since they wouldn't have been able to travel to Tromsø for a physical conference.

Other aspects with an online conference were also pointed out, like don't make it too long each day, and don't forget to have proper breaks in between presentations.

Final comments from the organizing committee

We are overwhelmed by the positive reactions and thank everyone for sincere and useful feedback to Creating Knowledge 2021. Your suggestions will be passed on to the Helsinki University Library, who will host the next Creating Knowledge conference in 2024.