We had a well-established SSP Regional Subcommittee. Then came COVID-19. What next?

Introduction
The SSP-DC Regional Subcommittee has always enjoyed a robust, loyal, and enthusiastic following. Pre-pandemic, the group served as an extension of the larger Society for Scholarly Publishing, allowing professionals in the DC area to meet often and in-person to network and partake in educational events and conversation. The group held its last event before the quarantine on January 25, 2020. "Career Development Labs: Professional Development and Transferable Skills in Scholarly Publishing" featured industry leaders and professionals at varying stages of their careers, in a career development lab format, which showcased "a networking opportunity and panel audience discussion on the profession of scholarly publishing, developing your career, and mentoring others." Of course, no one knew at the time that January 20 would be our last in-person meeting. This poster explores the journey of our group as we navigated the evolution from a full-time, in-person networking and educational group exclusive to DC members to an all-virtual, international group and our successes and challenges as we did so.

Objective
The purpose of this poster was to reflect on the growth of our group. How did our leadership adapt to serve our changing membership? How did our membership change? And most importantly, we considered how we will move forward post-lockdown to accommodate what we’ve become.

Methodology
We didn’t do anything fancy to create this poster. We have spent a lot of time as a leadership group (all authors listed on this poster) talking about where we were in March 2020 and where we are now. We also spent time talking to other regional SSP groups. Most importantly, we spent lots of time talking to the people who were showing up at our events and what they were getting from our group.

Results
We learned that pieces of the 'old' way we did things combined well with the 'newer 'post-pandemic' way of doing things.

- Finding 1: It was hard to replace the value of in-person networking, yet it had been challenging to find locations and times that were inclusive of the needs of all speakers and attendees (transportation, child care, etc.).
- Finding 2: Virtual meetings allowed us to invite speakers and attendees from all over the world.
- Finding 3: We were able to allow people to join us who never would have found us pre-pandemic because of geographic or time limitations.
- Finding 4: We were able to include non-SSP members, too, which introduced them to SSP and got them involved when they might not have had a chance to be previously.

Conclusion
The SSP-DC group will never be the same. We have learned a lot from our COVID experience and we look forward to adapting a dual approach to our future activities. Some events will be in-person, and some will remain virtual. We will also begin to survey our membership about what works for them and what doesn’t.

Future Plans
- Continue to provide quality programming in both in-person and virtual formats. We have discovered that a “one or the other” approach works best, as opposed to gatherings that merge in-person and virtual attendees.
- Offer skills-based educational opportunities as well as meaningful discussions. For instance, our virtual conversations on topics such as career changes in a pandemic and burnout were some of our most well-attended events with the highest participation.
- Refresh our group leadership. We are looking for new voices to help us enrich our offerings.
- Develop unique opportunities for conversation. As one example, an upcoming 2022 event will study NFTs in scholarly publishing.
- Ensure opportunities for diverse voices to propose and lead events.

Measuring Future Success
This one’s easy, and we will commit ourselves to studying the impact of our future programming in the following ways:
- Surveys: to include both post-event and general surveys to assess our community’s needs.
- Continued open communication and anecdotal feedback.
- Understanding of how events draw the most participation.

Get Involved!
Do you live in the DC area? Join our group full time and attend our in-person and virtual events. Live elsewhere? You’re still welcome.

Even if you don’t choose to participate in this group, find the SSP committee for you. And you’ll always be welcome to drop by for single events at any time!