Council of Chapters Annual Workshop: “Virtual Technologies: From COVID to the Future”
By Jeff Dawson

Connected with the Joint Statistical Meetings, the Council of Chapters Governing Board (COCGB) hosted an online workshop on August 16, 2021, led by COCGB Chair-Elect Jeff Dawson. Forty-five individuals were in attendance in this Zoom meeting, representing dozens of ASA Chapters and the COCGB. The original intent of the workshop was to discuss some things that ASA chapter leaders had learned about virtual technologies during the COVID19 pandemic, and to see what aspects of such technologies would remain useful as we move beyond the pandemic. With the mid-summer increases in COVID19 cases, particularly due to the Delta variant, the context of the workshop changed slightly since the pandemic is unfortunately not yet in the past.

There were multiple topics covered by the workshop.

First, the participants were asked to participate in an anonymous Google Forms poll regarding workplace practices, chapter activity formats, and technology platforms. Thirty-six attendees responded, and some of the interesting findings included:

- over 70% of the respondents were still working at home at least 80% of the time
- 96% reported some level of mandatory masking at their primary work location (when not working at home)
- 57% indicated that their chapters had at least 3 events during fiscal year 2020-21, with all such events being virtual only
- Many more events are anticipated in 2021-22 than in 2020-21, with the majority of anticipated events still being virtual only.

Also, Zoom was the most popular venue for virtual chapter events, with a few reporting using Microsoft Teams and a few other platforms, too. The most common ways of publicizing chapter events included:

- email messages (including Listserv registries), ASA and other web pages
- LinkedIn
- communications via educational staff and faculty
- Twitter.
In terms of scheduling chapter events, Google Calendar, 123SignUp, Doodle Polls, Zoom, Eventbrite, Microsoft Outlook, and MeetUp were all mentioned by at least four respondents.

After some discussion of the results of the poll, attendees were divided into nine Zoom breakout rooms, and asked to discuss and note “at least one specific hint or recommendation related to virtual meetings”, and “at least one ongoing frustration”. These were recorded in a Google Doc by the individual breakout room groups, with some very insightful discussion afterwards. This Google Doc can be viewed at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ml7dN_GYc6R41GP8x98u1mar3BeppZC-qZvklAexc3s/edit?usp=sharing.

Also, participants were reminded that the most recent version of the “Resources for Chapters” PowerPoint presentation, which can be helpful when navigating the ASA and COC webpages, is still available. This can be found directly at https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/AMSTAT/b29d5b39-37da-4e94-b3b7-ea8b6b5e73c6/UploadedImages/JSM_2020_COC_Workshop.pdf

If you would like to watch the recording of the presentation it can be found here.