



Botany 2021 Debrief and Financial Performance - Melanie/Johanne

Botany 2021 was a financial success! I am one credit card bill from having it wrapped up and will be sharing the profits by the end of the month.

According to the post conference survey, 95% of attendees rated the conference favorably and 84% giving it a ranking of 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale, (with 1 being the highest rating and 5 being the lowest). Attendees enjoyed the content, the social events, and the platform worked well. The enhancements added this year (yoga, drawing lessons, author chats, etc.) were very well received. Although not very well attended, the joint symposium with ASPB was also given high marks!

According to the survey, most of the attendees appreciate that the virtual conference allows the talks to be available to a more diverse audience as well as the ability to view talks they may have missed. They enjoyed the conference but really miss the networking that happens at an in-person conference.

For the last 2 years, we have shown our members how they can have an awesome Botany conference experience right from the comfort of their own home. No need to travel, no need to worry about Covid, no need to spend money on food and hotels, or that occasional beer or two, yet gain all the Botany they could desire! And for students, they had a great registration cost as a bonus!

So, what happens in 2022? Is it another virtual conference, or a physical conference only in Alaska, or some combination of both, aka Hybrid Botany?

From a contractual basis, it would be very challenging to go virtual only in 2022, especially after we renegotiated everything for an onsite 2022 meeting from when we were supposed to be going to Alaska in 2020. There are many fixed costs to be considered, such as AV per meeting room, hotel attrition penalties, meeting space rental if we do not meet the F&B minimums, etc. a completely virtual-only 2022 is a non-starter, it's either onsite or hybrid for 2022.

Some additional thoughts for consideration

A major consideration is our financial risk for onsite vs hybrid. The hybrid case has the largest financial risk potential, where if attendees don't travel, we could be impacted by significant costs and each of the societies could be exposed to significant financial losses.

As part of the traditional onsite contract, Anchorage anticipates that Botany 2022 would draw a significant number of attendees to their city, filling hotels, restaurants, all while attending sessions in the Conference Center, and consuming 2-3 meals per day. That type of economic attraction is why they build these significant convention centers which are generally paid by local tax dollars generated from spending by the attendees. In some of our contracts, we pay the same significant contractual price whether 1 person or 500 people attend! Most times we are contractually committed to spending a set minimum amount for food and beverage, which in

the past could exceed \$150,000. For the hotels, we have commitments to fill a certain number of rooms or pay a penalty like we had to do in Fort Worth a few years ago. We took a significant loss that year.

To offer a hybrid meeting for all sessions, it means considerably more AV equipment must be rented for each session room, and significant dollars for the hybrid meeting platform, all more than a normal onsite meeting costs.

We could do all of that. But after the success of virtual conferences the last two years, what if everyone decides Alaska is too expensive? What if the airfare might be too much given a limited budget? What if many attendees are hesitant to travel due to Covid or international restrictions are still in place? What if attendees don't want to travel when they can participate from the comfort of their living rooms? And these are all concerns raised in the conference survey! Why travel if I don't have to?

This is the challenge for 2022, the potential for significant society costs if attendees decide to say home.

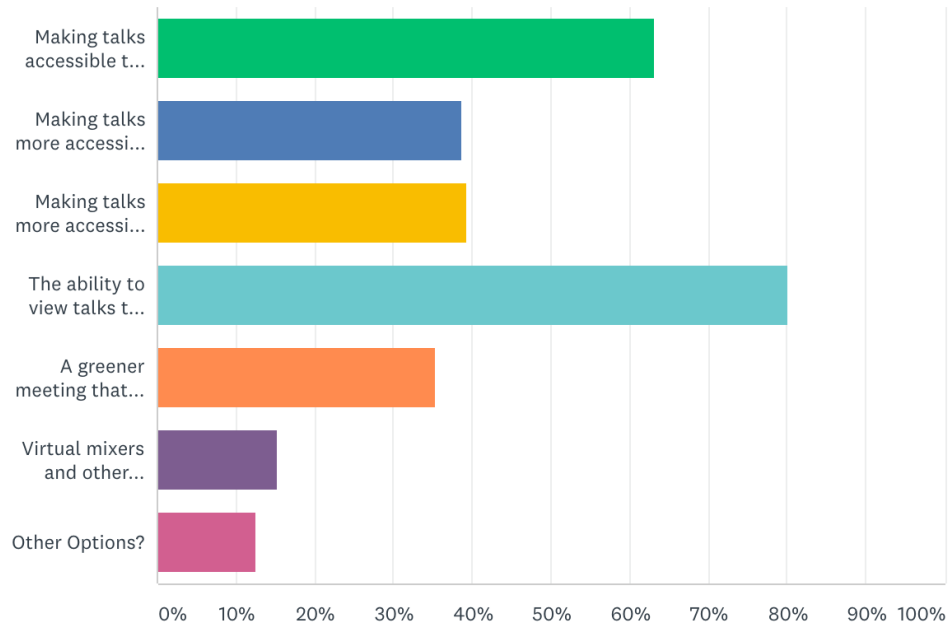
If we choose a hybrid model, we need to develop a registration for virtual and onsite attendance. Do we record everything during the onsite conference and offer it virtual simultaneously...or post it later for those that choose not to travel?

We have a planning meeting in Anchorage planned for mid-October. We may have more concrete answers to the AV and other fixed costs after that time.

If anyone is interested, I will be happy to share the results of the survey. Just let me know! Here are a few survey results pertinent to planning for 2022.

If Botany conference attempted a hybrid meeting approach, what 3 aspects of the virtual conference do you feel are most important to bring into an in-person meeting?

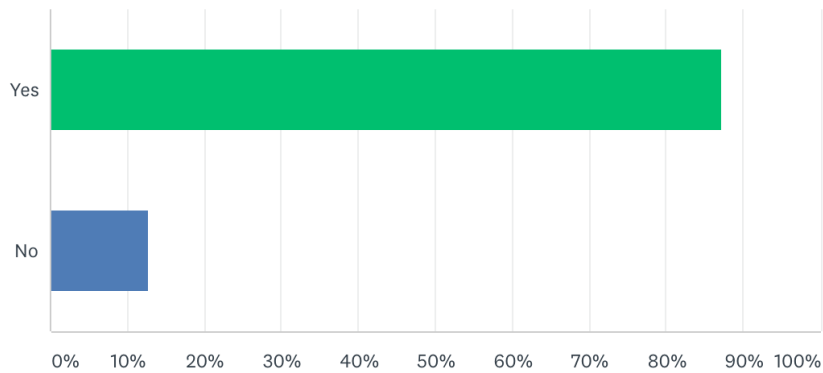
Answered: 302 Skipped: 109



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Making talks accessible to a larger more diverse audience	63.25%	191
▼ Making talks more accessible to participate synchronously in discussion/ask questions remotely	38.74%	117
▼ Making talks more accessible to present remotely	39.40%	119
▼ The ability to view talks that you missed via a recorded version	80.13%	242
▼ A greener meeting that reduces the carbon footprint	35.43%	107
▼ Virtual mixers and other social activities that allow for small-group discussions and online networking	15.23%	46
▼ Other Options?	Responses 12.58%	38
Total Respondents: 302		

If Botany conference attempted a hybrid meeting approach would you be willing to record your poster or talk by July 1 in order for it to be uploaded and made available for a hybrid conference and still present your research in person at the conference site?

Answered: 280 Skipped: 131

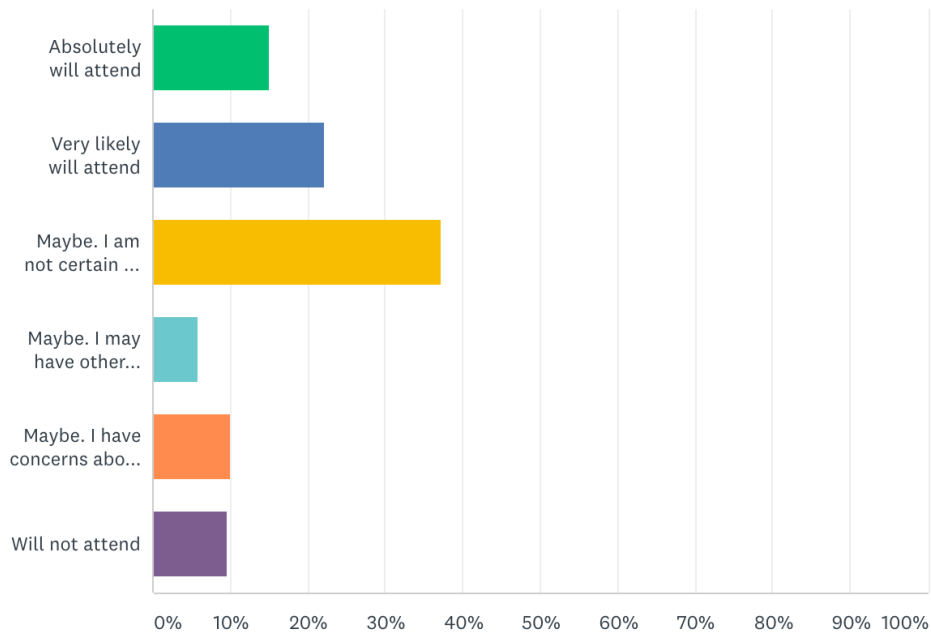


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	87.14% 244
▼ No	12.86% 36
TOTAL	280

[Comments \(56\)](#)

And finally.....Do you plan to attend Botany 2022, July 24-27 in Anchorage, Alaska? (registration rates for the conference will return to their more normal levels associated with the expense of an in-person meeting)

Answered: 311 Skipped: 100



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Absolutely will attend	15.11% 47
▼ Very likely will attend	22.19% 69
▼ Maybe. I am not certain if I will have the funds necessary to make the trip.	37.30% 116
▼ Maybe. I may have other conflicts at that time.	5.79% 18
▼ Maybe. I have concerns about travel and the pandemic.	9.97% 31
▼ Will not attend	9.65% 30
TOTAL	311

[Comments \(62\)](#)