AN ASSESSMENT OF VIRTUAL EVENTS ORGANIZED AND SUPPORTED BY THE NASA ASTROBIOLOGY INSTITUTE

introduction

ASTROBIOLOGY is a grand challenge that requires significant levels of collaboration and interdisciplinary cooperation [1], [2], [3]. There is a great need to utilize data, theories, models, and samples from many different fields in order to address this grand challenge [4]. In order to address this challenge and keep the greater astrobiology community updated about the latest developments the NASA Astrobiology Institute (NAI) organizes virtual seminars and also introduced a virtual workshop series entitled Workshop Without Walls [5], [6]. This study is an assessment of the seminars and workshops conducted in 2014 in regards to remote communication and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration.

methods

An online survey was applied after six NASA Postdoctoral Program Alumni Seminars, four Director’s Seminars, and two Workshop Without Walls that were conducted in 2014. Ninety-nine responses were collected after the events. The survey is a combination of both open-ended and multiple choice questions – 24 questions in total. It starts with asking about demographic information, followed by questions on the technology & software used for the event, content of the presentation(s), and potential impact of the event.

results

The events were quite beneficial for researchers in regards to interdisciplinary collaborative research. Fifty-one respondents expressed that they “learned new concepts in another field”, 48 said that the event “helped them to understand the big picture”, 32 of them were “able to make connections to their primary field from another field” (n=99). As for technological issues at the events, 70 participants found the software “easy to use” and also liked “being able to tune in from anywhere”. Sixty of them mentioned that “no need to travel” to attend the event was great. Approximately two thirds of the participants enjoyed the “interaction opportunity in the chat feature” which led to parallel discussions simultaneously during the presentations. Less than 10% of the participants reported a technical failure for these events but praised the support from IT staff at NAI Central for troubleshooting.

discussion

A virtual institute NAI has been quite successful in organizing and supporting these events. The participants overall were content with the virtual events and expressed their gratitude in the survey to NAI for organizing these events. They found that these events were great to increase their knowledge and network. Being low cost and less demanding on their time were also useful. A future study is being planned to track the outcome of these virtual interactions among participants.

references


for online CV

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WHAT INSIGHTS DID YOU GAIN?

[Image showing survey responses]

**ENLARGED MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE SUBJECT**

**LEARNED NEW CONCEPTS IN ANOTHER FIELD**

**HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE**

**PROVIDED FRESH IDEAS**

**RAISED NEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**NAI CONNECTIONS TO PRIMARY FIELD FROM ANOTHER FIELD**

**HELPED EXPAND MY NETWORK/MEET NEW PEOPLE**

**LEARNED NEW CONCEPTS IN MY PRIMARY FIELD**

**EXPLORED THE LIMITS OF THE SEMINAR**

**THE SEMINAR WAS USEFUL**

**THE SEMINAR PRESENTED CUTTING EDGE MATERIAL**

**THERE ARE POTENTIAL COLLABORATION-I WILL EXPLORE AS A RESULT OF THE SEMINAR**

**51 PERSON SAID “I LEARNED NEW CONCEPTS IN THE FIELD”**

**48 PERSON SAID “I EVENT HELPED TO UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE”**

**55 INTERACTION WITH THE CHAT FEATURE**

**33 LOW COST**

**33 NOT USING A TELEPHONE LINE**

**32 ABILITY TO RECORD AND VIEW LATER**

**27 INTERACTIVITY IN ADOBE CONNECT**

**99 SURVEY RESPONSES**

**90 PERSONS JOINED**