#ICA20 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE DETAILS: (MANY OF) YOUR QUESTIONS, ANSWERED!

Please note that the information below is a "sneak peek" of sorts regarding the plan for the virtual conference. It is by no means an exhaustive representation of EVERYTHING you will need to know. We are working as quickly as we can to get everything prepared but changing gears to virtual for a 2000+-person conference is a large undertaking and we can only move as quickly as our platform provider can get things built on the back end. We do anticipate everything being up and ready for business by 15 April to begin video uploads, but that is only an estimate.

First, a few GENERAL questions & answers about the conference overall:

Am I going to have to watch sessions at 03:00 (in the morning) my time?

No! That wouldn’t be fun for anyone. The conference will be asynchronous, as we have members/attendees in 87 countries and there is no time zone that accommodates everyone for a live session. The platform will be open 24 hours a day from 20 May to 26 May and you can log in, view content, and make comments at any time during that time. Do note that because our platform provider is in Canada, customer service/tech support will be available only during about half of that time (daytime at their office). At any point during that week, you may log in and engage with as much or as little content as you desire.

So how do I record my paper session?

You have two choices. Recordings can be done outside of the system and then submitted to the platform for upload, OR you can wait and use the platform itself to record your video (they use an integrated Zoom function). There will be training sessions/webinars available on how to upload/navigate the platform for those who want them. You will upload your video in the weeks leading up to the conference, prior to the conference going live. Please see below for information on different types of sessions.

I don’t have a professional-looking background, a quiet office space, or the energy to look presentable right now. How can I record this video?

Honestly, I think we are all in the same position right now.

Try to:

- ensure you can be heard clearly through your microphone
- don’t put a window directly behind you (to avoid being nothing but a silhouette)

But DON’T worry about:

- background distractions like your partner walking through the room
- needing to hold your child
- what you’re wearing or whether your desk/kitchen counter/floor/life looks cluttered. *We will meet you where you are.*
I can’t handle this right now! I have a small child/an elderly parent to take care of/my anxiety is through the roof!

We absolutely get it. There’s nothing you need to do right now. I have two sons and the very active 6-year-old one is driving me bonkers right now while I’m trying to get all this conference planning done, while I’m receiving daily emails from school about all the things I should be doing for homeschooling! I am immune compromised, so I haven’t left my home in a month except for dog walks, and our government just extended a shelter in place through 10 June. It’s a lot to handle. But I also know that my ability to handle things changes by the day: there are good days when you feel like you’ve got it under control, and days when this all feels hopeless. I am absolutely there with you. I am worried for the health of those I love, too. But for many of us, we may be less anxious and more used to the routine of living in isolation by May, so we ask that you not make this decision now. Again, as we mentioned in the prior message, if you get to the first week of May and just cannot fathom making space in your life for uploading your video, you can let us know then.

How will the conference support those who need accommodations for hearing and other issues?

For all types of sessions, we ask that you turn on the automatic captioning provided by Zoom (if available) because we have several attendees with hearing impairments. Please also, if you can, make one of the first chat comments on your own video your contact information so that audience members can contact you for more information/to collaborate (if you’re open to such contacts). If you have an “access copy” we highly encourage you to put a link to that document in the chat. The chat function unfortunately will not allow document uploads. See these guidelines for accessibility from a sister association.

Why should I bother with this with everything else going on in the world?

There are several compelling reasons we are still doing this conference despite the need for completely reimagining it as a virtual event:

1. **Students and early-career scholars need you.** Especially those who are building their CVs for an imminent or already-under-way job search. They NEED US to have this conference. They need ICA to stay the course and provide them with a place to present their work not only so it can be listed on their CV but so that they can have access to FEEDBACK FROM YOU. They need your input to make their work stronger. Help us help them.

2. **Your colleagues need you.** This is ICA’s 70th Annual Conference, as we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of our identity as the International Communication Association. In the past several weeks we have seen how readily our members band together to provide help to each other, whether it’s expressed through universities and individuals funding the Hardship Fund; scholars tweeting each other with #protips on how to move your classes online; or our members rallying behind ICA as we became one of the first groups to cancel our physical conference for the sake of our attendees’ health and safety.

3. **ICA needs you, too.** ICA is a non-profit organization, and over a third of our annual budget comes from the Annual Conference (grossly oversimplified, the other two thirds come from membership dues and royalties from our journals). ICA will lose a lot of money on penalties for cancellation and sunk costs for the in-person meeting we had to cancel, and those losses will be much exacerbated by any refunds we process, including the 25% refund we are giving to each attendee. Despite these expenses and this lost revenue, the Executive Board decided that the health and safety of our attendees was the top consideration. But ICA still needs the support of its members, attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors.
All non-profit membership associations to which you belong need you to support them with your participation, where applicable, in order to not only survive (so they will all still be here when the dust settles, to publish the journals and hold the conferences where you can present your research and interact with old friends), but also to preserve our sense of community. From ECREA to NAB/BEA, from IAMCR and AoIR to SFSIC and DGPuk, membership associations have been here to help you grow your career, make new connections, and disseminate your research, and we want to continue to be here after we have collectively weathered this storm together.

Now for the types of events and how each will be handled:

- **Will there be a print program?** Yes, in a way. We will still generate a "print" program that has all the ads and the cover and the information for every paper, which will be available as a PDF online for you to print yourself if you want (we had already decided to cancel the printing of the large program before the pandemic happened), or you can just save the pdf and do a control + F to search for phrases and names. You will also be able to search for specific presentations either in the virtual platform or, if you want full papers that have been uploaded in many cases, you can search for them in ScholarOne’s paper submission system.

- **Will the presentations be schedule-specific?** No, the conference will be 95% asynchronous, and we won’t have a schedule-at-a-glance grid this year, because without the construct of 27 rooms for the X axis and time slots for the Y axis, the whole "schedule" construct falls apart. The program will be organized according to the 33 divisions and interest groups. More on this later.

- **When will the conference go "live"?** The conference will be live for 24 hours a day beginning 20 May through 26 May. This is the IRL calendar footprint of the live conference if one were to include pre and post conferences, so we are keeping those dates. You can access at any time during that week, no matter what time zone you are in. You will upload your video prior to that, however.

- **How do I log in?** The platform is very user-friendly, but we will also have several trainings for those who want to familiarize themselves ahead of time, plus a how-to guide. For everyone who has registered directly with ICA, we will upload that list and contact information to the platform and they will each receive an invitation email. *(side note: since moving to virtual, we have received over 100 new virtual registrations).*

- **Can I visit the conference without paying?** Unfortunately, no. We have to use the same registration system as always, and that list will be given to the platform administrators. Only those who are paid registrants will have password-protected access to the platform. You may not visit the exhibit hall, upload a video, view videos, upload or view posters, or anything else within the app without a registration log-in.

- **What about "zoom-bombing?"** While our platform is Zoom-based, it is its own system, and because it is password protected no one can "bomb" the sessions. In addition, most sessions are recorded, further eliminating this risk.

- **When do I need to upload my full paper?** You will be able to upload your full paper (or revised work) from 1 April to 30 April within ScholarOne (the same procedure we had last year). We cannot extend this deadline because to do so would mean we cannot open the system in time for people to read the papers. The system can either be open for uploads or open for read-only, not both at the same time.

If you are NOT able to upload your paper during this time frame, please know that you a. don’t have to do this at all (may people never do, even in a “normal” year, and b. You can always put a link to a final version in the first comment of your Q&A next to your video.
Do papers presented via video, or uploaded on the ScholarOne site, count as “published”? No, because the S1 system only provides the full papers via password access for 60 days after the conference, and the videos are only open for one week, these do not count as publications.

How do individual paper sessions work? Each presenter can do their own 7-minute (or however long you’ve been allotted) video and upload it, OR the chair can contact everyone in that session to call in for a Zoom (or other service of your choice) call and record that as one video. The chair should talk to the group (all presenters in the session) via email, to get consensus. If you’re doing ONE group video, we encourage you to record it and have the chair moderate just like any other session, and then you can ask each other questions to start off the Q&A. However, the “audience” portion of the Q&A will be conducted over the course of the week the conference is open, via a chat box to the right of the video screen. You will receive an email from your session chair (who will have received an email from the division/IG planner) when it is time to do this.

How long are sessions? Each session should still take only 75 minutes. So, if you’re doing a panel, 75 minutes. If you’re doing separate papers (whether together or as separate videos), you still divide up this time as you normally would. There are two ways to do this:

- Preferred method: If you are doing a group call to conduct the session, and you have 4 presenters, just as in an in-person session this would be a brief intro from the chair, 15 minutes per paper, and then 10 to 15 minutes of Q&A (which you will ask to each other, to get things rolling before the conversation continues on the chat). The chair will upload the video to the platform.
- Also okay: If your group decides to do separate videos, your chair will tell you how long your video should be, and you will each record and upload them individually. The chair will have no real function vis a vis the videos unless the chair wishes to record a brief intro to upload.

What if our session decides unanimously to do separate paper videos? That’s fine, and in that case, there would be no need for involvement of the Session Chair, except possibly to moderate comments on the Q&A chat if desired. See above.

How do we handle plenaries and other panel discussions? We encourage each panel to work together (the chair of the panel should take the lead) to get everyone on a Zoom (or other service) call, and record the videoconference, asking each other questions for the Q&A as above, with the audience Q&A conducted by a weeklong chat alongside the video. If this is not possible for your panel, please contact c.h.devreese@uva.nl, lsawyer@icahdq.org, conference@icahdq.org, and your div/IG planner to discuss.

Will there be a presidential address? Yes! Terry Flew will record it from Brisbane, as close as he can get to our original location as possible!

Will there be an awards ceremony? No, sadly, but we will send an email (and publish in the newsletter) all the award winners and the newly inducted Fellows. They will wait until #ICA21 in Denver to come on stage and receive their plaques, along with the 2021 winners and Fellows.

How will you handle awards? ICA-wide award winners for 2020 will be published in the ICA newsletter, but will wait until #ICA21 in Denver to receive their plaques and be recognized on stage. Some awards might not be given at all this year, depending on whether they had reached a decision prior to the pandemic hitting its stride and disrupting everything.

Will new Fellows be inducted? Fellows will be listed in the newsletter but will wait until #ICA21 in Denver to come onstage and receive their plaques. Despite not being “inducted” onstage, they will be considered inducted and will be added to the online Fellows listing in June, following the conference.
• **Will there be opening and closing plenaries?** Yes, Claes de Vreese is making plans for those as we speak!

• **Are posters going to be videos as well?** No. Just as with the in-person conference, there is a difference between papers and posters. Posters will be included together in one virtual "poster hall," organized by div/IG, and will be uploaded PDFs. Because we cannot have 270 individual chats for each PDF, we encourage poster authors to embed their contact information in their poster PDF so that those who want to know more can contact them directly.

• **What about the Michael Haley Memorial?** Any online version of this would not be adequate to the occasion, so we will postpone the memorial until the #ICA21 conference in Denver. At that time, Barbie Zelizer and Cynthia Stohl will put together a fitting tribute where friends can come together to share their memories of Michael from his 16 years at ICA. Michael’s family had planned a small gathering for March 2020 that also had to be canceled due to the pandemic, so we have invited Michael’s husband Edward and their daughter to attend the Denver memorial.

• **Will we have a Planners’ meeting for Denver #ICA21 at the virtual conference?** Mary Beth Oliver (the 2021 Planner and President-Elect-Select), Jennifer Le, Katie Wolfe, and I will record a video that outlines what planners need to know for planning next year’s meeting, which will be accompanied by a Planners’ Guide document (as usual) as well as the ability to ask us questions in the chat during the conference week. All planners for Denver 2021, particularly those who have not planned an ICA conference before, are encouraged to attend at some point during the week. However, if this is impossible, we will also save the recording and send out a link afterwards so you can catch up in June. This meeting is normally 2.5 hours, but we will keep it to under an hour this time so it’s not too excruciating. ;-)

• **How do we conduct our business meeting?** You have several choices.
  o First, it is completely fine not to have a business meeting if you don’t have the bandwidth (literally or figuratively) to do one.
  o If you DO have one, your second choice is to have it LIVE. The platform can handle this BUT we do caution about this because of the aforementioned time zone issue with members in 87 countries.
  o Therefore, we recommend you choose the third option, which is that you handle it like a panel presentation: have your officers do a video conference that you record, to give out the information and show the types of slides you normally use for your business meeting (membership, budget, etc). You will upload this to the platform. Your audience can then ask you questions using the chat during the week the conference is open.
  o **IMPORTANT:** As with the live conference, it is not permitted to take binding votes via your business meetings, as (whether in-person or virtual) those who aren’t there are disenfranchised of their vote. You can ask for a "sense of the room" or "feedback" on something (via the chat) but anything that requires real voting approval, such as a dues increase or a bylaws change for your group, MUST be conducted via the October election.

• **Can we do committee meetings?** Yes! Obviously, these can’t be pre-recorded, as they are collaborative, so:
  o You can schedule one and do it via the Zoom-integrated platform (at a mutually agreeable time for the people who are on the committee, behind the firewall if all are registered), or
  o you may handle it outside the platform via another system. If you already have a committee meeting on the schedule (submitted to headquarters), please let us know what you choose.
You also can choose not to have a meeting at all and just defer it to another time, or to have one before or after the conference week using any other platform. If you want to have a committee meeting that is not yet in the program, it’s not too late. You can email conference@icahdq.org to ask for a slot.

- **What's happening with pre and post conferences?** Currently, 21 of these events have told us they are still planning to go ahead, one of which is going ahead and definitely using an outside platform (the others will need to let us know if they wish to use our platform or not), and 13 have canceled with hopes to revive their ideas for Denver 2021.

- **Will there be an exhibit hall?** Yes! The exhibit hall is actually an impressive and interactive function of the platform we are using! All our exhibitors are choosing, so far, to participate in the virtual hall in order to provide a robust experience for attendees. They can upload videos and documents to their virtual booths, and you can visit each one and ask questions.

**WHAT WE STILL OWE YOU IN TERMS OF DETAILS:**

We will have this information ASAP....

- The time/URLs for training sessions on how to record and upload videos (and step by step manuals for same)
- Screenshots of what our conference environment (currently being designed) will look like
- Specific dates for the time frame during which you can upload your videos
- Log-in information
- ....and more!

**A last note:**

THANK YOU to each of you for your insightful questions, your support via email and social media, and your patience as we work to get #ICA20 “2.0” up and running. This has been a stressful time, but it’s also been a heartwarming and intellectually stimulating experience so far, as we explore the reaches of what we can do together, reinventing our event with no advanced notice! We appreciate you all and send you the very best wishes from the ICA headquarters office in Washington, D.C. (or rather, from the people who are normally at that office, from our desks and kitchen counters at home). Stay safe, stay well. We miss your faces and hope to see you online soon!

Laura Sawyer  
ICA Executive Director, on behalf of the ICA Global Headquarters staff  
Washington, DC