



A Reflection from Atla Annual 2021

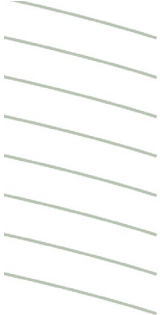
By Siong Ng

Library Manager, Carey Baptist College

Atla Annual 2021, initially planned to be held in Fort Worth, Texas, was moved to the virtual platform. The conference was held from Thursday, 17 June 2021, to Saturday, 19 June 2021 (Australia and New Zealand time zone). As this was an online event, the registration fee was affordable. There were grants available if a delegate was unable to pay the fee. Before the conference, four workshops were held online. Together with Kelly Campbell and Matt Ostercamp, I facilitated a two-hour workshop on strategic planning entitled *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. The workshop aimed to be as interactive as possible. Therefore, the session was capped at 25 attendees. There was a demand from delegates, and thus, the workshop was presented again in July and in August. The session in August was mainly devoted to ANZTLA members, where the session was held during office hours. Several Asian librarians were also invited to attend. Therefore, the session was attended by delegates from 3 continents.

This year's online conference was more organized and creative. For example, we were invited to select a snack box from Snack Magic that we could eat during the sessions. To the delight of my family, the box consisted of a variety of treats that were delivered to my doorstep a few days before the event. Due to the time difference, which is very early morning in New Zealand, I had no desire to snack.





One of the aspects of making the programme easy to navigate was Sched, an online platform that lists the programme and the Zoom links. Registrants were required to set up a Sched account. Sched has the functionality of selecting the appropriate time zone of the session, and that was very useful. Way ahead of time, I knew which sessions I would attend and which sessions I would listen to the recorded sessions. Once a delegate selected the sessions they wished to attend; the Zoom link will appear.

Another major highlight this year was a majority of the sessions were recorded. A month after the online sessions, conference delegates were notified that the forty recorded sessions were accessible on Sched. Attendees may also be able to view presentations slides or any other documents that the presenters uploaded. This was a bonus as I listened to the plenary sessions and several other sessions that I had missed. With an easily accessible platform such as Sched, I was also able to re-listen and watch sessions that I found helpful later.

On the second day, there was a time slot designated for vendors. A passport competition was conducted to encourage delegates to attend the vendor sessions. We had to participate in the session to find out the colour of the vendor and then submit the completed passport online. To my surprise, I won a USD 25 Amazon gift voucher by participating in the competition.

Every day, the session ended with a social hour. The social gatherings after each day were on the virtual platform Remo. On the first day, I was pretty skeptical but later on, was drawn to it. The host provided a quick overview of the platform, and then we had sufficient time for a competitive but fun time. There were prizes for the winners. In the end, we had time to invite those we want to catch up with to a virtual 'table.' I took the opportunity to socialize with some of my friends during that space.

The online conference has passed but is not a distant memory. I often find myself accessing Sched to listen to the sessions that I have missed. Overall, it was an eventful, busy, and informative online conference.