

SLE 2020 Digital conference: A brief report

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COVID-19 caught us in the middle of the reviewing process for SLE 2020 and forced us to cancel the physical conference planned to be held in Bucharest from 26 to 29 August 2020. As an alternative the Executive Committee proposed a digital alternative, with an extension to 1 September, which was called the SLE 2020 Platform. The meeting hosted 11 workshops as well as general session and poster session presentations. Almost all thematic panels were synchronous with full papers (20 min. presentation + 10 min. discussion). For general session and poster session papers, we opted for asynchronous presentations, to avoid parallel sessions, so that the time allocated to each presenter was mainly used for discussion (10 min. per paper).

For this digital conference, we used three tools: Zoom for videoconferencing, the OSF platform for storing asynchronous presentations, and Slack, a shared social space, for communication among participants. We hired technical assistance, which was useful and necessary, especially since some participants faced problems with the OSF repository platform. Preparing the digital conference was a challenge, due to the lack of experience. It was difficult to predict what would work and how it would work, but in the end it turned out to be less difficult than expected. All in all, the conference went smoothly; no technical problems occurred.

The SLE 2020 Platform was successful in bringing scholars together and promoting linguistic research. According to the feedback we received, the majority of the participants (72,9%) evaluated their experience positively between 8 and 10 on a scale going from 1 (min.) to 10 (max.). For many of them, it was an opportunity to meet new people. Many members told us that they enjoyed the exchange of ideas and the scientific discussion. Many participants appreciated the fact that SLE 2020 was not cancelled: despite the limitations, "it was great that it took place". Yet, a future digital conference will need several improvements. Now we know more, we can plan the registrations differently and we need to think how to stimulate the interaction among the participants.