

to provide early-career scholars with a complementary, cost-free networking environment.

Another challenge facing virtual conference and workshop organizers is avoiding their burnout. We benefited from having a six-person organizing committee, which allowed us to share and divide responsibilities based on schedules and expertise. These tasks included constructing panels, recruiting discussants, and preparing questions to facilitate audience discussion about each paper. We also stayed in frequent contact using Slack, which allowed us to coordinate without overloading one another's email inboxes. Overall, having enough people to help with organizing tasks is critical. Many in-person conference panels are organized by fewer people, which can result in less in-depth feedback for presenters. Therefore, we are identifying deficiencies in our organizing team in terms of research interests and networks, and we recruited an additional team member for the 2021–2022 academic year.

Overall, we hope to solidify JAWS as a mainstay in American politics and to encourage others to pursue virtual workshops as a way to provide cost-free opportunities for junior scholars from diverse institutions to interact with their peers and senior scholars. We believe that these workshops complement traditional conferences by removing barriers to participation and promoting diversity and inclusion in the post-pandemic world. Many of the inequities in academia that were highlighted by COVID-19—particularly financial and caretaking responsibilities—will continue to be problematic after the pandemic subsides. We believe that virtual workshops provide one way to address those inequities.

Overall, we hope to solidify JAWS as a mainstay in American politics and to encourage others to pursue virtual workshops as a way to provide cost-free opportunities for junior scholars from diverse institutions to interact with their peers and senior scholars.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Charles Crabtree for inviting us to contribute to this Spotlight. We also thank all of our JAWS community members who helped to make our endeavor a success. ■

NOTES

1. We define early-career scholars as graduate students, tenure-track assistant professors, and those in non-tenure-track positions (e.g., postdocs and visiting assistant professors). We chose to focus on providing opportunities for early-career scholars because they were uniquely affected by the pandemic. Still in the career stage in which they are building research experience and network connections, these scholars are most in need of the feedback and exposure unavailable during the pandemic.
2. We thank Patrick Rickert, postdoctoral researcher in the Center for Effective Lawmaking at Vanderbilt University, for generously hosting these trivia events.

REFERENCES

- American Political Science Association. 2021. "Membership Dashboard." www.apsanet.org/RESOURCES/Data-on-the-Profession/Dashboard/Membership.
- Gather. 2021. www.gather.town.
- McCrain, Josh (@joshmccrain). 2020. "Are there any American politics workshops/conferences out there taking submissions? I miss having these deadlines but I am loathe to pay conference-level money for a virtual conference." August 12, 7 a.m. Tweet.

EUROPEAN POLITICS ONLINE WORKSHOP

Catherine De Vries, *Bocconi University*

Seth Kincaid Jolly, *Syracuse University*

DOI:10.1017/S1049096522000257

In Summer 2020, we organized the European Politics Online Workshop (EuroPOW) to strengthen the European politics research community during the pandemic. This article discusses best practices, including a regular schedule on a simple website advertised via newsletter and listservs, a mix of talks and roundtables on salient topics, and public recordings for broader reach and for teaching purposes. In addition, we discuss how we approach diversity and inclusion, ranging from professional rank to topical to gender diversity, with a particular focus on highlighting junior scholars whose typical conference forums for feedback and early-career networking were decimated by COVID.

We first discussed the idea of a workshop in early June 2020 and hosted the first Zoom workshop only three weeks later, which highlights a key strength of online workshops: much simpler organization and coordination without travel and associated expenses. Thus far, we have hosted six series (i.e., Summer 2020/2021, Fall 2020/2021, and Spring 2021/2022), including 11 roundtables and 26 paper presentations, all of which are available on europow.com. In terms of best practices, the article focuses on the following three: (1) a mix of topics and speakers; (2) a simple and accessible website and advertising; and (3) low costs for hosts and participants.

From our first discussion, we realized that we needed to offer participants exciting roundtables and presentations with well-known senior scholars to provide well-attended and useful venues for more-junior scholars who were missing out on crucial opportunities to present and receive feedback on their work. Anyone attending in-person conferences knows that certain names draw more attention. For the 11 roundtables, we invited senior scholars to lead roundtables on topics ranging from recent elections (e.g., Germany and the Netherlands), to current events (e.g., the war in Ukraine), to teaching workshops on topics of interest to Europeanists (e.g., democratic backsliding, social democracy, and US–EU relations). For example, an early roundtable on democratic backsliding included presentations by Anna Grzymala-Busse, R. Daniel Kelemen, and Daniel Ziblatt, who discussed the many issues facing several Eastern European countries and the EU more generally before engaging in a rewarding discussion with the audience.¹

This strategy worked well, with in-person attendance at the workshops ranging from 30 to 100 participants and subsequent asynchronous viewings by as many as 1,300. We used this success to our advantage to create a stable, engaged, and consistent audience that would provide a useful forum for junior scholars, and we achieved a consistent and regular audience (although, admittedly, we think the quality of presentations merits higher

participation). Of the 26 paper presenters, almost 50% were untitled scholars and several were postdoctoral or PhD candidates.² Because many of the junior scholars either were approaching or already on the job market and suffered from a lack of typical conferences, the EuroPOW presentations offered a great venue to present their work and receive feedback from outside their usual networks.

In addition to professional-rank diversity, we targeted gender diversity. COVID research shows that the pandemic has had adverse effects especially on female researchers (Mandavilli 2021). We have been successful in this strategy as well, with women representing more than 55% of our presenters. Notably, we must continue to work on ethnic and racial diversity, which also is an issue for the broader European politics community.

Finally, although both authors specialize in party politics and related subfields, we wanted a broader set of presentations. Whereas many of the presentations focused on European party and political behavior, we have diversified the topics to include immigration, foreign policy, political economy, religion and politics, democratic backsliding, and environmental politics. Furthermore, presenters used a wide range of methodological tools, from observational quantitative studies and experiments to text-as-data analysis and qualitative case-study research. Although we did not explicitly target methodological diversity as a goal, the diversity of methods emerged naturally from the topical and geographic diversity.

In terms of best-practice guidance, we first relied on our networks for participants but quickly expanded. Especially with more-junior scholars, we used a simple variation of “snowball sampling” and asked participants (and Twitter) for recommendations. For instance, after Saskia Bonjour presented on civic-integration policies, she recommended several junior scholars who were working on refugee issues. Similarly, Jae-Jae Spoon connected us with several scholars working on environmental issues. Also, it was beneficial that the authors have overlapping but not identical networks, such as different geographic bases (i.e., one co-organizer is in Europe, the other is in the United States). Fortunately, the European politics community is collegial and we have enjoyed great success in booking speakers.

Although we miss in-person conferences and networking, we think virtual workshops have a place in the post-COVID world.

To be clear, there are challenges in this approach. Some challenges are similar to those associated with in-person workshops (e.g., the weekly time commitment in an already-busy schedule) but others are exacerbated by being online. For instance, everyone certainly experienced Zoom fatigue after the 2020–2021 academic year. We tried to counter this with different topics, such as a teaching workshop. In late spring 2021, we hosted Catherine E. de Vries, Sara B. Hobolt, Sven-Oliver Proksch, and Jonathan B. Slapin, the authors of a new textbook titled *Foundations of European Politics*. This workshop was a change of pace and offered potential instructors a behind-the-scenes preview of the content choices, along with syllabus examples. In addition, we increasingly asked presenters to invite their own networks to join the workshop, which created a broader ongoing audience. However, we observed declining weekly attendance at the paper presentations

and an increase at the roundtables. This trend suggests that we either should shorten the length of the series (i.e., from eight to six weeks) or add a roundtable in the middle.

Unfortunately, by their nature, virtual panels miss out on informal in-person interactions. Therefore, we open early to allow for personal, informal conversation and we leave the room open after the talk concludes for continued discussion. We hope to increase this new community building by hosting an in-person meet-and-greet at the next European Union Studies Association (EUSA) annual meeting.

Our second best-practice suggestion is to have a simple, accessible website including a schedule and list of past recordings, along with a newsletter for advertising content. Our newsletter subscriber base has almost 600 scholars, and this number has grown steadily as a result of advertising on other established listservs (e.g., the EUSA listserv). In-person attendance has varied from 20 to more than 100 and, in some cases, the recordings have been viewed more than 1,000 times. The recordings make the workshops more valuable for participants and hosts. For instance, the co-organizers have used several of the roundtables in our undergraduate courses, such as the democratic-backsliding roundtable. These informal workshops are more accessible forums for scholars to talk about their innovative scholarship.

Third, our model streamlines the operation in terms of time and attention to keep costs low. For hosts, a virtual workshop requires only a website, no travel or other associated costs. Conversely, in-person workshops require not only travel costs but also entertainment for participants, which is beneficial (and fun) for networking but also is challenging for those with other responsibilities (e.g., children at home). For speakers, we require only one hour of their time with no travel involved. In return, speakers receive useful feedback and participate in stimulating discussion.

Although we miss in-person conferences and networking, we think virtual workshops have a place in the post-COVID world. Given environmental and health concerns about international travel, it is difficult to justify a trip for a single talk or even two. For parents who have small children or other caregiving responsibilities, even domestic travel has logistical problems. Virtual

workshops complement traditional workshops and presentations, and seminars like the EuroPOW will be a useful forum in the post-COVID future. ■

NOTES

1. All recorded roundtables and presentations are available at europow.com.
2. In terms of geographic diversity, most of the presenters were based in the United States or Western Europe. Although several presenters were from Eastern Europe, we did not have any representation from universities in the region. We intend to be more inclusive in the future.

REFERENCE

- Mandavilli, Apoorva. 2021. “Could the Pandemic Prompt an ‘Epidemic of Loss’ of Women in the Sciences?” *New York Times*, April 20. www.nytimes.com/2021/04/13/health/women-stem-pandemic.html. (Accessed March 18, 2021)