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SIGecom

ACM SIG Meetings on Virtual Conferences

Summary

Virtual Conference on Gather.town > Physical Conferences

Goals

1. Maximize exposure

Get accepted papers in front of a large and relevant audience.

2. Generate interaction

Create an environment which allows attendees to strengthen existing relationships and create new ones.

3. Broaden participation

Make it possible for many more people to attend EC.

Constraints

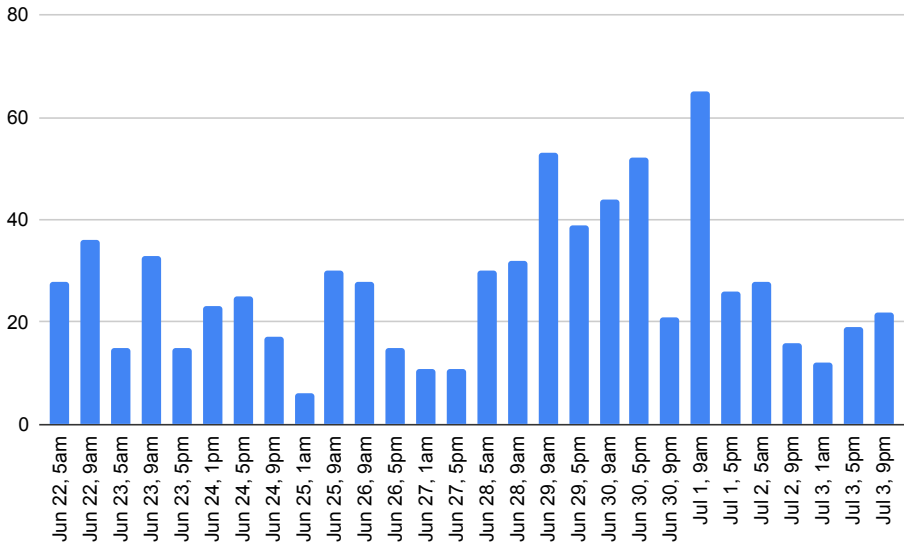## Time zones

Attendees from every time zone.

Zoom fatigue

Limit to number of hours per day that people will passively listen to talks over Zoom.

1. Maximize exposure

Solution

1. Plenary pre-recording watch parties
2. Parallel paper watch parties
3. Plenary paper poster sessions

2. Generate interaction

Solution

1. Run conference almost entirely on Gather.town

2. Emphasize text chat, panels, polls and live Q&A at events

3. Schedule planned social events

2. Generate interaction

Entire conference on Gather.town

1. Virtual platform with avatar that moves around space
   (simulates spontaneous interaction)

2. Tables with chairs facilitate private conversations
   (only people in chairs at your table can interact with you)

3. Papers in scheduled watchparties   (with text chat)

4. Plenaries in Zoom Webinar   (via Gather integration)

5. Calendar with "whens & wheres"   (via Gcal integration)

Comments from Attendees

- "Thanks for organizing this virtual gathering. It is amazing!!!!"

- "Games, fun, and research, just perfect. it sets a very high benchmark for future virtual conferences"

- "This was a wonderful conference. Thank you so much for the great experience."

- "I think the lightning talks (across all parallel sessions) was one of the best features, and the most useful for future in-person conferences (along with posters). If you were interested in two simultaneous sessions, you still got a peak at the other session, and then you could visit the poster to find out more!"

- "This was really fantastic.
  It's hard to create a sense of community especially on an online platform. It's equally hard to teach people how to do this. You've been very successful…"

Conclusions

1. Gather.town is an incredible technology for conferences.

2. Main barier: configuring content   (needs development here)

3. Rethink scheduling: not 3ish ten-hour days.
   (can be in hybrid conference; cf. two-weeks of pre-recording)