# 2021 Evergreen International Conference

Report for The Evergreen Project Board

2021 Conference Committee: Andrea Buntz Neiman (Chair), Jason Boyer, Galen Charlton, Garry Collum, Ruth Frasur, Rogan Hamby, Debbie Luchenbill, Katie Greenleaf Martin, Gina Monti, Amy Terlaga, Jennifer Weston

## Summary

In response to the continued Covid-19 pandemic and cancellation of the 2021 Evergreen International Conference in Missouri, the 2021 Evergreen International Online Conference was held May 24-28.  The Online Conference Committee applied the lessons learned from the 2020 online conference and the 2020 Hack-A-Way coupled with a little more lead time to offer a full-featured conference including pre-conference workshops, regular sessions and interest groups, and unstructured "hackfest" time for both development and documentation.

This year's conference tagline was "Vital Libraries, Healthy Evergreen" and, in line with that theme, delved into issues of privacy and data protection as well as managing collections. Becky Yoose, founder of LDH Consulting Services, kicked off the regular conference with an engaging keynote speech entitled "The Curious Case of Library Data Privacy" which seemed to inform many of the in-session conversations throughout the next few days.  Presenters and participants also discussed the major work of converting older interfaces to those built in Angular.

The Hop-In platform, while not as functionally seamless as the organizers had hoped, provided the means to host an exhibit hall for vendors to engage with attendees as well as informal gathering spaces for ad hoc conversations and social events.  Eight vendors were on-hand with information about their services and products.  With nearly 300 registrations for the regular conference and almost 4000 views of sessions, the 2021 online conference was one of the most attended conferences to date.  It was also the most profitable conference to date at a time when The Evergreen Project, as a young non-profit organization, is rebuilding its fiscal stability.

## Budget overview

The conference budget as approved by TEP is available to view here. It estimated 50 preconference registrations, 150 regular conference registrations, 10 non-sponsor exhibitors, and 9 sponsors. The actual numbers ended up as 107 preconference registrations, 295 regular conference registrations, 2 non-sponsor exhibitors, and 10 sponsors. Major expenses were platform costs, captioning costs, and keynote, all three of which were offset by specific sponsorships. Final numbers are still being analyzed by the Treasurer, but the Conference Committee is very proud to have delivered a total net revenue of approximately $30,000 to The Evergreen Project.

# Technology

The Conference Committee chose the platform Hopin, in part because members of the committee were familiar with its use from the 2020 Hack-A-Way. Unfortunately, we cannot recommend using Hopin for future large events. Many attendees experienced significant disruptions, particularly the first day, with audio feeds cutting out and video freezing. Tickets filed with Hopin did not resolve the issues.

Some issues were related to individual browser configurations. Using browsers in incognito mode, disabling plugins, and other practices helped alleviate many issues for users. Additionally, the versatility of the event being usable in multiple tabs and browsers led to confusion for some users. For example, one user who reported video freezing later updated us to let us know that they had been looking at the wrong browser window. While these issues may not be specific to Hopin they do impact the use of Hopin as a platform and provide a view of what supporting an event on any browser based platform would be like. In comparison our 2020 conference using Zoom, which is a dedicated application, had far fewer end user issues to address.

However, not all issues were attributable to browsers. Some attendees who had experienced very stable use of the platform found random issues with loss of audio and connectivity with no changes on their end and no other applications having networking issues. We can only conclude that those issues were with the Hopin platform itself which were never acknowledged by Hopin except to recommend that we troubleshoot local issues with browsers.

In addition, there were navigation difficulties within the platform. While the Sessions feature was designed to provide continuous access to the same virtual space, the existence of past events in a Session would actually prevent them from being displayed on the schedule requiring persistent removal of them from the schedule. This could be alleviated by creating each event in it's own session but that would create new issues with users needing to constantly jump between sessions. This in turn would be complicated by the very narrow window of time that events were activated on the visible schedule by Hopin which would frustrate users trying to view upcoming events. A careful consideration of all the changes this would require made this unfeasible within the existing schedule and undesirable on a newly planned event. Every option to streamline attendee navigation would create new problems for them.

The Committee did our best to mitigate the impact on the attendees after evaluating the issues and deciding on a course of action that would provide the best experience for attendees. Attendees were understandably frustrated, especially on the first day. The second and third day whent much more smoothly as we found best practices for mitigating the issues. Our conclusion is that Hopin is not well suited to long multi track events with numerous scheduled sessions like a traditional conference. It does however remain viable to less scheduled events.

# Registration & Attendance

As noted above, there were 107 preconference registrations and 295 regular conference registrations. For the regular registrations, 116 were earlybird and 179 were regular registrations.

Session moderators used the active viewers count in Hopin to estimate session attendance. The highest attended session was the Opening & Keynote, with 235 viewers. A summary of session attendance is below:

| Average Session Viewers | |
|---|---|
| All Sessions (n = 39) | 99 |
| Interest Groups (n = 8) | 67 |
| Lightning Talks (n = 2) | 134 |
| Regular Sessions (n = 23) | 110 |
| Preconferences (n = 4) | 46 |
| Opening / Closing (n = 2) | 180 |

| Total Session Viewers | |
|---|---|
| All Sessions (n = 39) | 3,877 |
| Interest Groups (n = 8) | 539 |
| Lightning Talks (n = 2) | 268 |
| Regular Sessions (n = 23) | 2,527 |
| Preconferences (n = 4) | 184 |
| Opening / Closing (n = 2) | 359 |

Incident Responders did not receive any reports of Code of Conduct violations, nor were any other incidents reported.
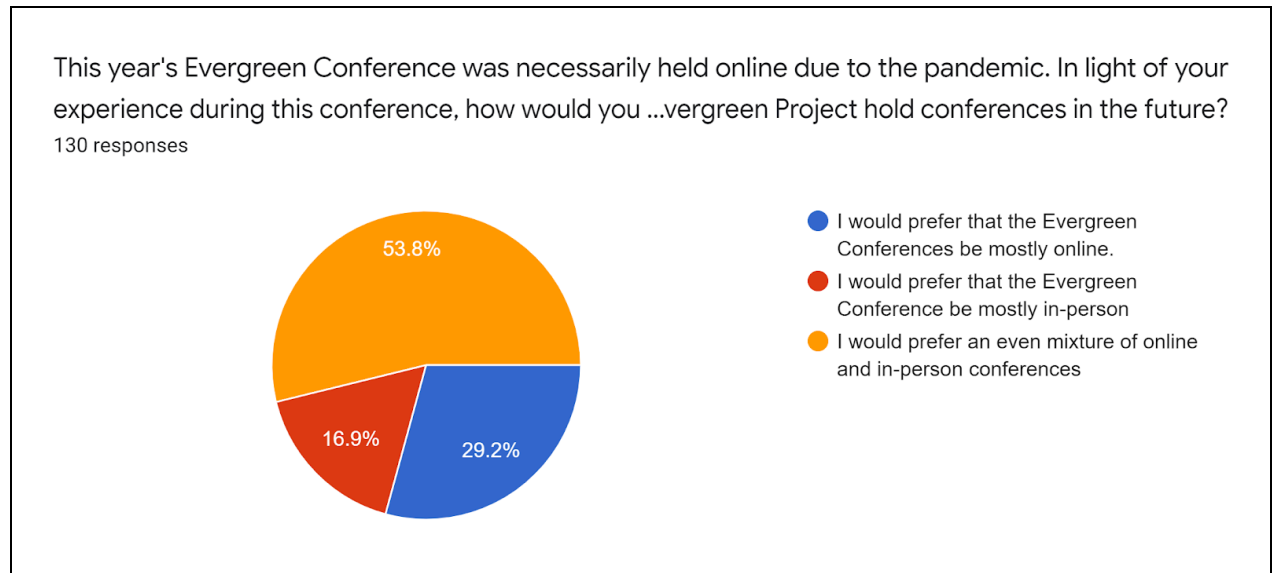
## Post-Conference Survey

A post-conference survey was sent to all registered attendee email addresses on June 2 and responses were collected through June 11. The survey had 133 participants, 45% of total registrants. Of the respondents, 49 had attended the pre-conference (46% of pre-conference registrants). Full survey results can be made available to the Board upon request.

Highlights from the Attendee Survey:

- 33% of respondents were attending their first Evergreen Conference, and fully 75% had attended 4 or fewer Evergreen Conferences.
- Specific sessions that were called out positively include:
    - "Making the Most of Evergreen Reports" (some from repeat attendees)
    - "Intro to Launchpad"
    - "Let's Take a Spin! Using Carousels in Your Library"
    - "Unpredictability is the New Predictability: Evergreen Serials Module Walkthrough"
    - Keynote, Becky Yoose
- Several respondents described problems and frustrations with the Hopin platform.
- A few survey responses pointed to the need for better communications:
    - Some respondents noted that there were occasions where terms and/or jargon were not defined, which was less welcoming to newer community members.

- A slight majority (56%) of respondents were not aware of the presence of Incident Responders.
- 67% of respondents said they would 'definitely' or 'probably' attend the 2022 conference.
- 72% of respondents reported that they did *not* visit any exhibitors.
- A strong majority of respondents (83%) indicated that they preferred only online conferences or an even mix of online & in-person conferences - with only 17% preferring in-person conferences every year.

This year's Evergreen Conference was necessarily held online due to the pandemic. In light of your experience during this conference, how would you ...vergreen Project hold conferences in the future?

130 responses



- I would prefer that the Evergreen Conferences be mostly online.
- I would prefer that the Evergreen Conference be mostly in-person
- I would prefer an even mixture of online and in-person conferences

53.8%
16.9%
29.2%

## Recommendations

The 2021 Conference Committee makes the following recommendations to The Evergreen Project Board:

- While Hopin is fine for smaller or more causal events, we do NOT recommend using it for any future large and/or multi-track events.
- Given the higher profitability of an online event, consider comping presenters for the full conference event in order to open up presentation options for those with limited budgets.
- Consider alternating years with online vs. in-person conferences. This also gives the committee for in-person conferences a longer lead time.
- Provide more opportunities for social interaction in online events. Casual or serendipitous interaction is more difficult at an online event.
- Make Incident Responders more visible, particularly at online events.
- If an online platform is used for large events, ensure that there is more than one person serving as platform admin, even if this results in higher platform costs.
- Consider ways to be more welcoming to newer community members, both in terms of presentation content as well as minimizing and defining jargon terms.