SciPy2020

Scientific Computing with Python
Virtual Conference • July 6-12

Jon Guyer – co-chair SciPy 2020 & 2021

@guyer guyer@nist.gov

Disclaimer

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About

SciPy, the Scientific Computing with Python Conference, is a community dedicated to the advancement of scientific computing through open source Python software for mathematics, science, and engineering. The annual SciPy Conference allows participants from all types of organizations to showcase their latest projects, learn from skilled users and developers, and collaborate on code development.

Format (typical)

- Tutorials - M & Tu half- and full-day, interactive classroom setting, 2-3 parallel
- Conference - W–F
  - Keynotes - plenary
  - Themes and Minisymposia - ~30 min talks, 3 parallel tracks
  - Birds of a Feather (BoF) Sessions - self-organized and proposed, room provided
  - Lightning Talks - 5 min talks for an hour every afternoon, no going over
  - Posters - either to side of plenary room or out in sponsor space
- Sprints - Sa & Su - self-organized, intense development of Python packages in SciPy ecosystem
- Proceedings - http://conference.scipy.org/proceedings/
  - double-open peer review

Format (virtual)

- Tutorials - live, 2 parallel tracks
- Conference
  - Keynotes - live, plenary
  - Minisymposia - recorded talks / live Q&A, serial
  - Birds of a Feather (BoF) Sessions - live, serial
  - Lightning Talks - live, serial
  - Posters - author-hosted poster / live Q&A(?)
- Sprints - 48 h live
- Proceedings - http://conference.scipy.org/proceedings/
  - double-open peer review

Tools

- Crowdcast
  - Plenary and Minisymposia sessions, Posters, BoFs, Lightning Talks
  - Chat (no DM)
  - No breakout rooms
- YouTube
  - SciPy 2020 playlist under Enthought channel
  - Recorded talks, dropped several days in advance
- Slack
  - Dedicated scipy2020.slack.com workspace
  - Many channels, including attendee initiated

Attendance

- Students $25 / Standard $75
  - Student $275 / Standard $500 for SciPy2019 conference, same again for tutorials
- 1412 Attended ≥1 Live Session
  - 727 Attended 10 or more Live Sessions
  - ~800 registrants for SciPy2019
- 1216 Attended ≥1 Tutorial
  - 879 Attended 3 or more Tutorials
- 802 Registered for Sprints in Aventri
  - 208 Registered for Sprints in Crowdcast
  - 103 Attended Sprints Kickoff

Diversity & Code of Conduct

- Diversity – https://www.scipy2020.scipy.org/diversity
  - Diversity Statement
  - Diversity Plenary – “What Are You Measuring when You Analyze Race”
  - Diversity BoF – “Diversity and Inclusion: Incident Response”
  - Statement of Support for the Black Community (new this year)
- Code of Conduct – https://www.scipy2020.scipy.org/code-of-conduct

Feedback (276 survey respondents)

- Impressions of Virtual SciPy2020
  - “I would not have been able to attend SciPy in person, so it was a nice opportunity to attend the virtual version this year - I was positively surprised by how 'personal' it felt and how engaged I was in the tutorials.”
  - “A virtual conference meant that more people could afford to attend (normally, at my job, we are only able to send one person to SciPy - but this year we all could go!)”
  - “Flexibility of pre-recorded lectures means you never have to miss an interesting talk!”
  - “Having done a few remote conferences now, I think that having the videos pre-recorded was a great idea. That and the sessions for questions and discussion seemed like a great model. Better than presenting live to a blank screen”
  - “Unlimited attendance for tutorials being able to watch recorded talks and tutorials that I missed, being able to access tutorial materials to go through them myself after the conference.”
  - “virtual format made it easier to "graze" among the content, and e.g. sit in on a tutorial where you weren't sure if you had the prerequisites, and watch the talks in descending order of interest.”

Feedback (276 survey respondents)

- Suggestions for SciPy2021
  - “be virtual next year. Making it virtual will reach much broader community. I believe it is future's learning trend. Save money, save time and save the environment.”
  - “I would offer a virtual format for those who don't want to or can't travel. It's way more expensive to travel and some people can't afford that. Also, some people can't be away from home due to family constraints.”
  - “Even if the talks were recorded, it would have been nice to plan a time slot in the schedule to broadcast them, like at an in-person event. Having them release only the day before was difficult to watch everything I was interested in.”
  - “Explore ways to allow a merged virtual and in-person event. The tutorials were much easier to follow (and they never sold out!), not to mention that I was much happier running the tutorials on my powerful home machine and fast home network instead of a laptop on an overburdened conference center network.”
  - “Having the talks pre-recorded was not as engaging as having them live. The trouble was that all my usual work still existed since I was not away, so carving time out to watch the recorded talks was harder than if I was away at an in person conference or if they were scheduled at a set time which could be blocked out on my calendar.”
  - “It was exhausting to attend all the events packed into the week as well as having to watch the talks outside of the event hours. This meant that I would have to basically be "at" the conference from 9AM to 8PM every day with almost no breaks (most tutorials either didn't have breaks or answered questions during breaks which meant that it didn't really feel like I could leave). This method of conferencing works fine in-person since energy is high with everyone in a new city, meeting new people, etc. but attending a virtual conference for almost 12 hours a day for a week straight is not tenable.”

Lessons Learned

- Many people missed the informal interactions of an in-person meeting
- Many (more?) welcomed the opportunity to attend without travel costs / much higher overseas attendance than usual
- Live Talks
  - Any pre-recorded talks should be dropped far enough in advance to allow people to watch them
- Platform constraints on number of “presenters” challenging for, e.g., Lightning Talks
- Quasi-anonymity makes managing conduct issues a challenge
  - No way in Crowdcast to DM people or clearly identify them
  - We could communicate with people in Slack, but couldn’t always correlate

SciPy2021

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Tools

- AirMeet
  - Keynotes
  - Minisymposia
  - Lots of attendees (~10k?), 10 “presenters”, breakouts
- Gather.Town
  - Posters
  - BoFs
  - Lightning Talks?
  - Interactive, “avatar” experience
- Discord
  - `Sprints
- Slack
  - Throughout
  - chats, impromptu meetups, …
- Students $50 / Standard $125 for Tutorials & Conference