

CHAPTER-7

DIGITALIZATION – A COMMUNICATIVE BRIDGE IN SCIENCE DURING PANDEMIC ERA



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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic situation has forced scientists to work from home and paused the trials and experiments reluctantly. It has led the scientists extremely stressed to have a continuity of the research in progress towards disentangling, especially those who are on the nib of graduation, job seekers, moving abroad for higher studies, and also lacunae in executing one's idea and interest to upgrade themselves.

Intuitively, the lock downtime has obsessed the researcher deep into the literature and completion of writing/submitting manuscripts or project grants. The initial gap -phase, led to the omission of being a scientist — discussing and devising ideas. The COVID-19 situation has a completely interrupted mode of interactions.

Appreciatively, few pioneers comprised the situation to come up with innovative ways to maintain connections within the scientific communities via webinars and decided to switch completely to a virtual

mode at short notice (the original conferences were used to grab nearly a year or so to get accomplished and notified and with economical burden). Consequently, the intellectual scientific groups comprised (of institutes and universities) got motivated to start the virtual journal clubs/seminar series related to their field of interest to keep the students and research community in the touch with the latest research. The apps such as Teams, Zoom meetings, etc. popped up discussing a wide spectrum of topics from protocol troubleshooting to virtual happy hours. It almost appeared as though if your field didn't have an online webinar series, was it a field at all? These interactions upraised the sanctity and identity of a student/ researcher/ scientist/academicians positive during those bizarre times.

This approach of science without boundaries has been a complete change in the scientific scenario throughout the globe, particularly those who are not physically located in an international scientific hub and given a roadmap for 'virtual' exposure to leaders in the

field more frequently than before. Such platforms offer better visibility to young scientists gearing up to build networks to collaborate with established scientists in the interesting field of research.

This has provided our student community with an opportunity to observe and interact with their peers at the national and international levels. This is found to be very useful in accumulating or gathering scientific information at the fingertip. Situations and capabilities are not very different, and one can perform at par with those in developed countries given the right attitude and approaches. This peer-to-peer setting overcomes inferiority complexes that are more effective than a discourse from their educator. The pandemic has enforced us to the concept of virtual conferences in the form of webinars, something that academics have fiercely debated the pros and cons. It is a really interesting fact that the virtual editions of conferences have geared up with a good count of participants across the globe. Conspicuously, significant effort has been

sprouted by the organizers, volunteer to host online/virtual events. This sparks as ignited the science at any given time and space by providing added inclusive open science approach to nurture in the post-COVID-19 world.

This skeptical transition has bridged science accessible, has catalyzed discovery and propelled us towards rapid solutions to this pandemic with promising drugs to put an end or combat this pandemic event sensed or sensing very abruptly in countries throughout the world. The virtual participation in conferences will reduce the disparity in participation from underrepresented communities, among other benefits including a reduced carbon footprint. Sure, there is no replacement for in-person meetings - so hybrid meetings, that allow in-person as well as virtual attendance, maybe the way to go in the future.

Paradoxically, social distancing measures have implemented during this pandemic has ridiculously given a pause for scientific communities to get closer

physically, but on the other hand, it has revolutionized scientific communities through virtual stratum by unifying scientists around the world get connected with the advanced technology and has made a gateway, that nothing is impossible in this digital era, this digital model is a fantastic bridge to gain and explore the knowledge.