

## **RUNNING A SUBJECT- OR SKILL-BASED ZOOM MEETING FOR SI**

In the current Covid-19 situation, with no 'live' conferences or local group meetings taking place for the foreseeable future, SI members are increasingly turning to Zoom to stay in contact. Many local groups have held regular Zoom meetings, but an alternative is to gather people by subject area or by special skill, such as embedding techniques. You don't need to be an expert in the subject or skill area to host a meeting, just be willing to gather people together and to be welcoming and encouraging. Don't worry if you have never hosted a Zoom meeting before: it is not difficult, and instructions are given below. SI has its own Zoom account which you can use. (If you are not confident to run a session yourself but would like to lead a discussion, contact the SI Office to see if there is anyone who would look after the technical side for you.)

Three Zoom meetings for indexers working in any area of history were held in August and October 2020, with a total attendance of 28 people (some came to more than one). Participants ranged from students to very experienced indexers, and the feedback was very good; the students were fascinated to hear of the everyday experiences of working indexers, and the experienced indexers enjoyed chewing over various indexing conundrums – and seeing people they usually meet at conferences. Participants came from a wide area, including France, the Netherlands and Japan; one of these commented that it was the first time she had spoken to another indexer since the lockdown began.

These meetings were run using the most basic Zoom facilities, though there are additional functions which could be used. These are discussed in the separate document 'Hosting a Zoom meeting for SI: Zoom technicalities' which you should look at if you are planning to run one of these meetings.

### Setting up a meeting

Post on Sldeline your plan to hold a meeting and ask who is interested. The subject could be a broad area or something more specific, if you think there are enough people to make it viable. Suggest possible dates and times; the easiest way is via a Doodle poll (<https://doodle.com/free-poll>) or it could be done by email. Tell people how long the meeting will last (see comments on timing below). Ask participants to contact you by email so that you have their addresses. You probably won't find a time that everyone can do; you could tell the unlucky ones that you hope to arrange another meeting later on.

It is best to keep to a maximum of 12 participants, including the host, so that there are not too many faces on the screen and everyone has a chance to participate. But a much smaller group – say, four people upwards – could be equally worthwhile.

To use the SI Zoom account, contact Paul in the SI office to book your slot; as a paid-for account, there is no cut-off after 40 minutes. Paul will explain to you how to log into the account. If you have not hosted a Zoom meeting before, see the document 'Hosting a Zoom meeting for SI: Zoom technicalities'.

Schedule the meeting, then a day or two beforehand send the Zoom meeting link to everyone by email (using blind copy). Post to Sldeline saying you have done this; ask people to contact you if they have signed up for the meeting but not received your email. If you have space to take anyone else, say so – some people won't know they are free till the

last minute, and others may drop out. Don't post the Zoom link on Sldeline, for security reasons.

Invite them, if they wish, to come prepared to talk about any interesting indexes they have done recently, or to share indexing problems. You could suggest that they might bring along a cup of coffee/tea – this helps to keep things feeling informal.

Consider asking someone in the group to be on standby in case you have internet problems on the day.

### Running the meeting

Welcome everyone, introduce yourself briefly, and then ask everyone to say a little about themselves – what aspects of the subject area they are involved in, how long they have been indexing, or if they are still training.

It's best to keep the 'Waiting Room' enabled to avoid the chance of getting gate-crashers (though this is unlikely if you have only sent the link to the participants). Remember to check the waiting room to let in late-comers!

Ask how everyone is, and how they have been coping during the ongoing Covid situation – are they getting plenty of work, are deadlines slipping more than usual, etc.?

Invite people to talk about recent indexes/problems (see above). Be prepared to share something of your own if others are not forthcoming. People could use the screen sharing facility to show index examples (you may need to enable screen sharing for all participants in order to do this). If conversation dries up, you could ask them all what they think are the particular problems of indexing within this subject area/using this software, etc.

Keep an eye out for people trying to get a word in edgeways, or ask people to use the 'Raise Hand' option if they want to say something. A more diffident participant can find it difficult to jump into the conversation, despite having something they want to contribute, and it's not always possible for the host to pick up on that even if they can see everyone. If you have a co-host they can watch for raised hands.

If you have a very talkative person try to keep them under control. If everyone speaks at once you can consider using the Mute All function, and then the Raise Hand option to see who wants to speak: for details see 'Hosting a Zoom meeting for SI: Zoom technicalities'. Experience has shown that – once the initial ice is broken – conversation flows freely. But it is generally best to stop after an hour – 'Zoom fatigue' can set in after that. Alternatively, you could have a longer meeting with a coffee/comfort break in the middle, announcing a time to restart. Or, if it's a largish group, you could consider splitting off into groups in breakout rooms (see below) for 10 minutes or so, which would give more isolated or new members a chance to actually chat to people; you could perhaps set a topic for them to discuss in these smaller groups. But if you are new to Zoom hosting and all this sounds a bit too complicated for you, you can just stick to a one-hour meeting for everyone together.

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