

## Remote learnings, a year on; connecting, adapting and amplifying - a view from Institutional Marketing

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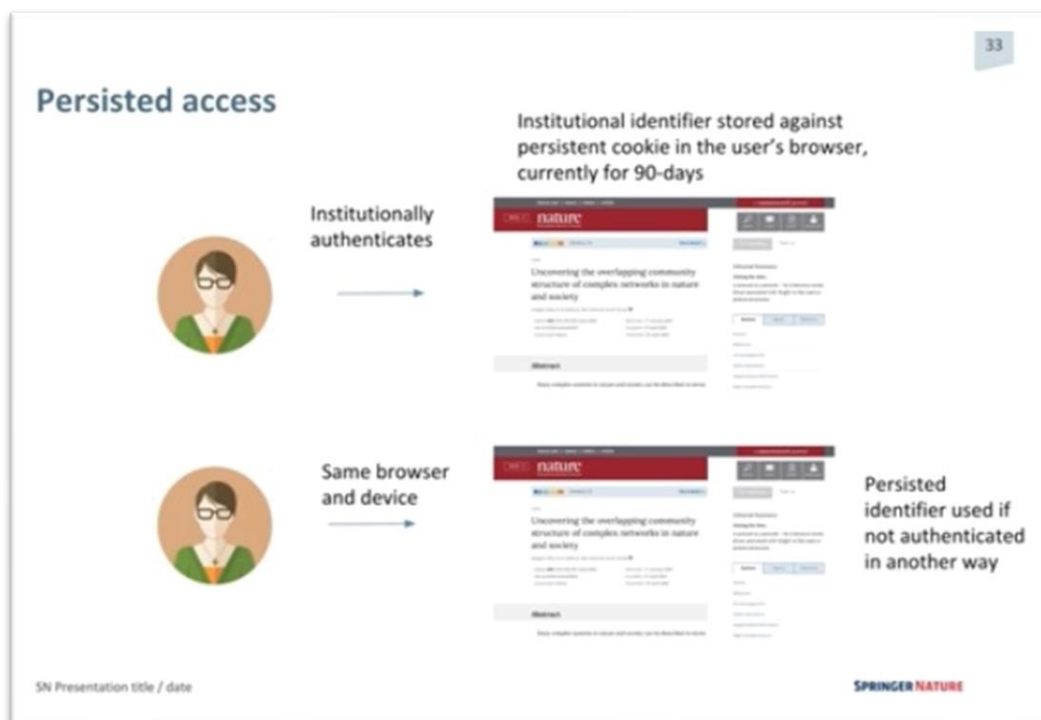


When the global pandemic took hold at the start of 2020, none of us could fully anticipate the impact that it would have physically, mentally and economically. As a research and education publisher, we keenly understood our responsibility to support continued access to research and learning; to maintain access to essential research needed to slow the spread of COVID-19 and for researchers and students to be able to access content remotely as universities were closing.

Whilst we at Springer Nature are largely office based, we have always worked in global teams and communities, so our focus shifted to supporting others in doing the same. Our editorial and publishing teams received a flurry of submissions, worked hard to accommodate an increase in publications, and found innovative ways to connect to and support researchers. On the Institutional Marketing and Account Development side, our focus was to provide and communicate support quickly; whether it be through ensuring our platforms could sufficiently support remote access methods, amplifying free content initiatives, sharing tips for promoting library content online or quick customer outreach and support as the situation evolved.

### **Drop-ins, webinars and working groups**

In early 2020 we created our new remote access page, and a dedicated COVID-19 & Library Resources space to house useful information centrally. With persisted access and remote access methods in place, our Account Development (AD) teams were on hand to offer practical webinars and 1:1 support.



After COVID-19 hit China at the end of 2019, our AD team on location were the first ones adjusting to new ways of living and working. They quickly organized a number of webinars in February and March around topics like publishing articles, and getting the best out of the content and functions of our platforms. In Latin America, AD offered virtual drop-in chat rooms every Friday during April, so customers could ask questions about remote access, the Librarian Portal, and anything else to help them set up an effective remote library. Recognising this was essential, we set up a working group to continue offering a regular, global series of practical webinars, hosted in collaboration with our in-house teams and the broader community. As one librarian attending our SeamlessAccess webinar put it; "Access and authentication of Library resources is a critical topic! And it can also be confusing so the more I am able to learn about, the better I will be able to serve our Library users".

Similarly, in a webinar we hosted in June, we heard from Librarians at Shanghai University and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who told us about their learnings and initiatives such as setting up dedicated working groups focused on the latest reading activities, e-resources use and virtual references, and safety guarantee and remote access support. They set up safe study spaces, delivered workshops online, and arranged online meetings with student representatives. They also offered new library and learning "How to" guides, established a digital course pack service with additional university funding, and even obtained permission to make 22,335 local archive TV programs temporarily accessible via the university's VPN.

For our Account Development and Engagement teams, used to hosting lively, in-person summits or visiting librarians at their universities, virtual solutions have become the way to work, and will not only continue to complement our partnerships here but remain a key part of them.

## Getting smart with social

Many of our editorial teams relied on in person events, meetings and lab visits to immerse themselves within their respective fields, exchange ideas, and present to researchers. They have maintained these relationships in new ways, with social media inevitably playing a huge part in this. One of the most organic of these was led by the Chief Editor for Nature Chemistry, Stuart Cantrill. After a tweet from a peer lamenting the lack of social interaction, a few of the community got together for a “virtual social”. 50+ of these social-isolation socials (as they coined them) later, the group continues to meet with different attendees joining each week and at every stage of their career, discussing chemistry, coronavirus, and “lots of other stuff besides”.

Some of our colleagues even conducted their own light-hearted WFH experiments, with Product Director, Robin Padilla, studying the impact of dressing professionally whilst working from home - his conclusion? Being virtual doesn't mean you can't dress to impress!

## Supporting, adapting, amplifying

2020 really illustrated the importance of getting timely research into the hands of those who need it to make critical decisions.

As one of our efforts to support lecturers, teachers, students and librarians during this time - we provided free access to more than 500 key textbooks, and 70k COVID-19 articles. These initiatives reached a significant number of users.



Despite the impact of lockdown, researchers were busy; in the first 6 months of the year, our editorial teams saw a 26% increase in submissions, and stepped up to support the increase in volume by publishing an impressive 192k articles, marking an 11% year-on-year increase. The pace of publication needed to match the speed at which the virus had

evolved, so we also encouraged early sharing of research submitted to all our journals through preprints.

The pandemic fundamentally changed how researchers live and work, and our communication and editorial teams sought to provide a platform for the community to share their experiences and perspectives too. Throughout 2020, our researcher blog, The Source, published a regular series - “Research in the time of a pandemic” - including insights from WHO, and stories from researchers in lockdown on constructive adaption, resourcefulness, and motivation. Nature and Scientific American released podcasts from global experts, published a regular feature, ‘Coronavirus Diaries’ and Nature Briefing provided - and continues to provide - the latest research updates.



We know that the pandemic will continue to have an impact on our communities, and commissioned three reports 'The Impact of COVID-19 on the research enterprise' as a means to contribute to a better understanding of what is going on behind the well-reported financial implications and provide insight and critical thinking into the

possible long-term impacts, and importantly the less-well reported human, personal, impact.

### **Moving forward, mindfully**

Whilst working remotely has its benefits, many of us took for granted the micro-meetings and happenstance we'd benefited from in an "in-person" environment. But in turn, we've been able to broaden our connections and communities through the level playing field that working remotely has brought. Whilst circumstance and personal or professional pressures will vary - there's always been a common theme in the ways and reasons we connect. Being able to offer a framework for that, in a changing landscape, has been essential.

What the last 12 months has shown us, more than anything, is the resilience and importance of our sector, our communities, the work we do collaboratively and the importance of the roles we and our customers play in such a setting. Despite the current climate, and its impact on both home and work life, collaboratively we have all strengthened our partnerships and working practices to ensure that the content that was needed can be accessed when and where needed, and our connectivity - virtual or in-person - can thrive.

These views are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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