

Reasons to be ... present (at the UKSG conference)

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I have just moved into the vice-chair role at UKSG, having been treasurer for the last 3 years. I may no longer be so closely involved in the finances but as one of your trustees I still have a responsibility to ensure the financial health of the organization. As you can imagine, it has been hard work to come up with sensible financial plans for the last few years - and while you might think we are 'out of the woods' now, actually this year's figures have been the hardest of all to come up with because we are holding our first hybrid [conference](#). This means we have to budget for all the costs of running both in-person and digital events - without having any certainty or precedents as to what proportion of people will want to attend in person versus online.

On that basis, all those involved in the financial management of UKSG are living on tenterhooks at the moment, and I want to make a personal plea to anyone planning to come to the conference to [book as soon as possible](#). With every booking, we can release a little of that pent-up breath!

Personally I cannot wait to get to Telford and see everyone in person. I've been working at home, by myself all day everyday, for over 2 years now and I crave human interaction. But I know even people who have been continuing to work on site during the pandemic are looking forward just as much to the UKSG community coming together. What is it about in-person events that we love so much?

- Catching someone's eye across the exhibition hall and having a **fruitful** catch up that results in a cool new pilot project.
- Seeing an **unexpected**, interesting feature mentioned on a stand graphic and realising this product could actually be really **useful**.
- Bumping into an old contact and **discovering** their new job makes them the perfect person to **help** you with something you've been tasked with sorting out.
- Taking a **shortcut** through the back of the lightning talks and learning about an **important** new bit of tech.

- Feeling the **warmth** and friendliness in an audience – giving you the **courage** to ask a question.
- Seeing from other people’s faces and body language that **you are not alone** in being lost during a talk and feeling **encouraged** that just maybe it is the topic or the speaker to blame, not you.
- **Getting to know people** in a more rounded, less formal way - paving the way for trading of experiences, sympathy, favours, introductions, and all the other currency of your **career success**
- Making lunch-time **small talk** with someone who one day will offer you a fantastic **new job**.

These are genuinely all things that have happened to me at UKSG in-person that I don’t think could ever have happened in a digital setting. I know not everyone has the luxury of being able to look forward to an in-person conference. I know that if you haven’t been to an event in over 2 years, it’s actually quite daunting to imagine things that were once so normal - travelling, staying away from home, being in a room with lots of people, talking to strangers. (Despite my excitement about the conference, I’m genuinely feeling these anxieties). And I know some are still shielding. Some are coping with heavily slashed budgets that won’t accommodate travel however strongly you make the case for joining us in person. This is why we have committed to a full virtual conference alongside the in-person event, and will be (for example) streaming all the breakout sessions for the first time.

If you have a hope of getting the budget (and / or the overnight pass!) and if you’re on the fence about whether to be there in person or online, have a think about my examples above, and remember that in-person conferences are powerful and valuable for us personally as well as professionally.

And ultimately, however you plan to attend, please [book sooner rather than later](#) so the trustees and staff can get some sleep before heading to Telford!



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