
The Benefits of Attending a Story Telling Course via Video-conferencing

Committing myself to a 2-day story telling course to prepare for a public engagement session felt like quite an undertaking, especially when I already had so much other work to do; papers to write, research participants to contact, admin to sort. Plus, how good could a public engagement session be when it was via the medium of video-conferencing, rather than face to face? But I am very glad that I attended the [Futures 2020 Researchers' Tales](#).

On Day 1 myself and about 15 other apprehensive researchers, all with the same worries, attended. [Claire](#), our storytelling coach immediately put us at ease. We were encouraged to be generous with our feedback about physical and verbal presentation styles as both can be an issue when presenting on the impersonal platform of video-conferencing, and we definitely weren't allowed to turn off our videos! Through different tasks, activities, and breakout rooms, we learnt how to make our research accessible and interesting to non-specialists, as well as having lots of fun throughout. Day 2 and we were feeling much more comfortable about our public engagement session. Claire's energy remained high as we honed our talks.

The group kept in touch over the next few weeks having a practice presentation session attended by Tim, our storytelling MC for the Futures night. It was amazing to hear the presentations at this stage; everyone's research sounded so interesting, and it reminded me of why I wanted to be a researcher in the first place.

The Futures event went really well - apart from an audience member throwing up bogus questions! But, having bonded as a group we coped well with the situation. Being able to see and give each other feedback was great and made the session very rewarding. I have learnt so many skills that have improved my presentation abilities greatly on video-conferencing, and hopefully in real-life too.

Subsequently, we have been keeping in contact through a very active email chain, discussing our careers and lives and what a strange year it has been. Claire threw a virtual Christmas party for us and previous cohorts of researcher-storytellers for one final celebration in 2020.

To any researcher considering getting some storytelling training, I would encourage you to do it. Although it is a bit of a time commitment, you will develop abilities that will give all your professional presentations an edge, as well as helping greatly to understand how to explain your project to non-specialists. And to have some fun too, of course, something we all need a lot of at the moment.

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