First Global Conference on Research Integration and Implementation 2013

Evaluation report #1: Attendance and overall impressions of the conference

Gabriele Bammer[1]
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Attendance
There were 321 registrants: 137 (43%) onsite in Canberra, 96 (30%) at co-conferences and 88 (27%) who participated exclusively online (see Table 1 for more details). Fifty-two percent of the registrants participated in the evaluation, including 14 (8%) who ended up not participating in the conference (although two participated pre- and post-conference).Ten percent of the Canberra and co-conference participants also reported participating online[2].

Among the evaluation survey respondents, Canberra participants were slightly over-represented[3] and co-conference and online participants were slightly under-represented. Exact response rates for each group cannot be calculated because it is not known which group those who did not participate came from.

Table 1. Overview of conference registrants and evaluation survey respondents

	Conference registrants N (%)	Evaluation survey respondents N (%)	Respondents who also participated online
Canberra	137 (43%)	78 (47%)	7
German co-conference	21 (7%)	11 (7%)	1
Dutch co-conference	46 (14%)	20 (12%)	2
Uruguay co-conference	29 (9%)	9 (5%)	2
Co-conference total	96 (30%)	40 (24%)	5
Online exclusively	88 (27%)	34 (20%)	-
I ended up not participating	-	14 (8%)	-
TOTAL	321 (100%)	166 (100%)	12/118=10%

Overall ratings
Ninety-six percent of respondents rated the conference as 'very good' (51%) or 'good' (45%), with 4% 'neutral' and 1% rating the conference as 'very poor' (Table 2). Taking the rating of 'very good' as a guide, the Canberra onsite participants were most satisfied, with 67% giving that rating.

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[1] Thanks to Alison Wain who assisted with the survey design and analysis, to the eight participants who piloted the questionnaire and the survey respondents.
[2] The online responses reported throughout come from those who participated online exclusively.
[3] The Canberra registrations included a block booking for an undergraduate student group, some of whom did not participate. If the block booking is removed from the calculation, there were 95 Canberra registrants, 68 of whom participated in the survey – a 72% response rate.

Table 2. Overall experience of the conference (N (%))

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very poor	No response
Onsite in Canberra	52 (67%)	26 (33%)	0	0	0	0
German co-conference	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	2 (18%)	0	0	0
Dutch co-conference	5 (25%)	14 (70%)	0	0	1 (5%)	0
Uruguay co-conference	4 (44%)	4 (44%)	1 (11%)	0	0	0
Online	14 (41%)	17 (50%)	3 (9%)	0	0	0
I ended up not participating	0	1	0	1	0	12
TOTAL	77 (46%)	69 (42%)	6 (4%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	12 (7%)
TOTAL for participants only (N=152)	77 (51%)	68 (45%)	6 (4%)	0	1 (1%)	-

What was most valuable?
Most valued by the participants (mentioned by 19-36 respondents) were:
- the plenary talks and presentations (mentioned by Canberra, German, Uruguay and online participants)
- learning and exposure to new areas, with many specifically mentioning the diversity of inputs (mentioned by respondents from each participation option)
- networking (mentioned by participants in Canberra and the Dutch co-conference)
- connecting with like-minded people and feeling a sense of community (mentioned by Canberra, German, Dutch and online participants
- online availability (mentioned by respondents from each participation option)

Nine of the Canberra participants also commented on the value of the workshops.

Most comments about what was most valued were brief, but those that were more detailed included:

…the structure of the getting to know each other dinner at the start was the best I have ever seen, it set things up for great networking and friendliness all around!! Congratulations on a terrific idea, well implemented (Canberra participant)

… being in a conference where I felt I belonged rather than … feeling like a fringe dweller in most disciplinary based conferences (Canberra participant)

Being introduced to people/bodies of work really relevant to my own interests. More personally, enjoying the ease of being with a bunch of people who had a predisposition (+ training) to a systems way of thinking about the world. (Canberra participant)

Experiencing the synergies by bringing together such a disparate group. Most participants seemed so open-minded (Canberra participant)

The fact that this co-conference aimed to join together researchers from different continents and remains keeping us in contact in order to establish synergies and join forces (German co-conference participant)

The experience of the combination analogue/virtual conference to address the issue of research integration and implementation from the different viewpoints/research communities (German co-conference participant)

Was great to have the online option for those of us who couldn't travel, and then the availability of extras such as downloads online afterwards for the flexibility. I enjoyed seeing diverse perspectives - made it so much more real than when reading things in solitude. Helped confirm a sense of community out there. (Online participant)

Hugely valuable!! I learned a lot and was able to do the dishes and fold laundry while learning! Superior educational value! (Online participant)

What was most disappointing?

While the qualitative responses about what the participants found most valuable fell into a relatively small number of categories, responses about what was most disappointing were very varied.

Two large response categories (20-25 responses) were a) those who reported that nothing was disappointing or who made a humorous remark like "*when everyone went home*" (Canberra participant) and b) those whose disappointment related to their own circumstances, such as "*That I had other demands on my mind and time!*" (Canberra participant) or "*That I couldn't manage to be there in person*" (Online participant).

A category that had a moderate number of responses (17 responses) was that there was not enough diversity at or covered by the conference or that key issues were missed. The following are examples of such comments:

Didn't address the dominance of a basically science model - so not really transdisciplinary (Canberra participant)

Speaking as one outside the budding discipline or working group of I2S, many of the talks seemed to address similar problems and similar approaches to solving them, e.g. transdisciplinarity - industry and academic translation. I suspect it's a matter of perspective. There were ideas from many disciplines - but those tended to be the disciplines that first come to mind, the ones that seem most relevant. For instance, a climate change project may involve interdisciplinarity, but only groups that one would typically expect - environmental and other scientists, stakeholders, people from business, maybe psychology. I was hoping for more open and wild combinations; unusual mixings. Consequently, I found it confusing and a little amusing that people would say "there is so much diversity" or "there are so many different ideas". Some of the speakers seem to have defined the boundaries of interdisciplinary work already - discounting, or not being open to contributions from music, art, and the humanities. I got a sense of fixation and rigidity of mindset. There is so much focus on pinning down what we do know and what we can do (and what we can do better), that the things we don't know or don't think about are left behind. I feel as though the boundaries for interdisciplinary collaboration, at least by many the speakers at the conference have been prematurely laid; not enough exploration has been done. Much was said about the need for better collaboration - one of the students at ANU pointed out that artists and musicians have long been practicing methods of collaboration, of combining disparate ideas in novel ways, and these are quite organic and different form organisational ways of seeing things. I suppose the most disappointing thing about the conference was the lack of openness that I perceived among many of the speakers. It seems a shame that those working towards interdisciplinarity have already limited the disciplines to be included. (Canberra participant)

Given the nature of the area, I am still unclear as to where to go exactly to improve/develop skills. (Online participant)

Too much abstract theorising and lack of applied thinking to real wicked problems (Online participant)

The remaining disappointments were mentioned by between two and six respondents:
- poor quality sessions or workshops
- inability to talk to online presenters
- not enough opportunities to network
- lack of facilitated discussions
- problems connecting
- time difference
- small number of participants at the German co-conference

Comments included:

There were not more informal opportunities to network - the lack of conference lunches etc and the formality of the initial networking event were disappointing. I didn't get as much of a chance to mingle and talk as I would have liked. (Canberra participant)

Probably the workshops were not as interactive as they could have been but this was due to the large numbers of people and the venue. (Canberra participant)

Felt as though there needed to be more facilitation & curation to integrate the different perspectives, paradigms, and approaches. The dinner on the first night was a great effort at doing this, but would have loved these efforts to continue throughout the event. (Canberra participant)

The online presentations were ok, but there was no further interaction with the speakers. They were not present at the conference, only for their talk. This is not true for the co-conferences (Canberra participant)

The live online attendance was too difficult to follow from Port Moresby. It would be good to have just audio option available for countries that do not have widespread access to broadband. (Online participant)

I would have probably focused more if l had been onsite- it is actually easy to be distracted when being online, and to miss presentations. You also miss the buzz and networking experience- l missed that and the chance to be able to discuss ideas with people- l tried to do this with others also interested in the conference, but they couldn't participate in the end. So in the end l felt isolated. (Online participant)

Issues that were commented on by individuals, include:
- no group photos
- not enough time for the presentations
- no parallel sessions
- no 'eureka' moments
- nothing that could be applied in the respondent's work
- misinterpretation of Twitter questions

The Integration and Implementation Sciences (I2S) underpinning of the conference was commented on by a small number of respondents, some as valued, others as a disappointment. Examples of the comments are:

Hadn't heard before about I2S. Now I'm familiar with the concept, the practical use of it and the people who are dealing with it. (Dutch participant)

A preoccupation with the discipline rather than the doing (Canberra participant)

There were a moderate number of comments – both positive and negative – about the digital posters, which will be dealt with in the more detailed evaluation of the digital posters.