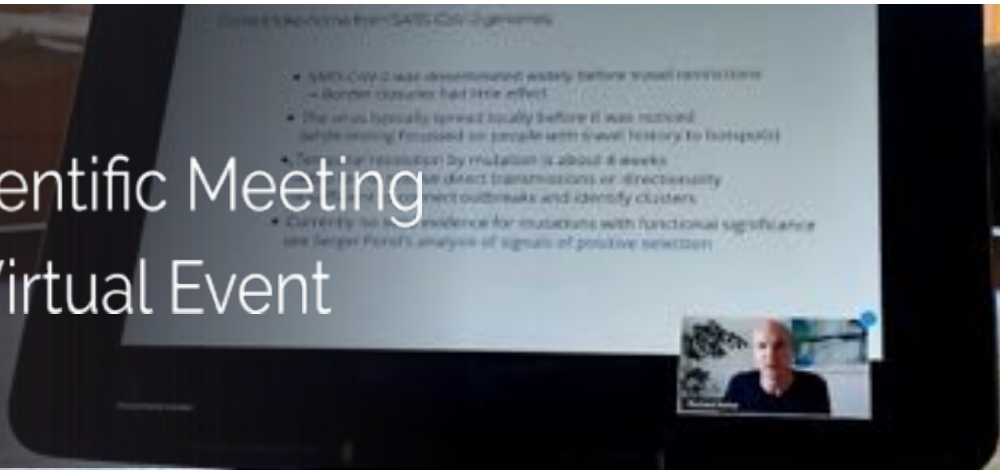


# Transforming a Scientific Meeting into a Successful Virtual Event



Conference

Registrations

In-Person (2019): 3,000

Virtual (2020): 14,518

## Challenge

With research submitted and ready to print, the event planners faced the decision of canceling the entire conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Solution

The [EventPilot® conference platform for scientific meetings](#) allowed the organization to easily convert their existing program into a [virtual meeting](#).

## Coronavirus can't stop science: How a large scientific meeting pivoted to virtual in record time

The Genetics Society of America (GSA) is an international community of biologists advancing the field of genetics. Every four years they hold The Allied Genetics Conference (TAGC). This unique meeting brings together multiple smaller GSA conferences to foster collaboration between biological research communities.

With an anticipated turnout of 3,000 scientists from all over the world, and a program filled with critical research, abstracts, and posters, the conference needed to take place. Yet that very same crisis was threatening to shut down the event.

"As countries closed borders, our speakers and attendees were facing travel difficulties," said Suzy Brown, CMP, Senior Director of Conferences at GSA. "Canceling meant losing everything – the talks were programmed, the schedule was complete."

GSA needed a fast and reliable solution to go virtual. The meeting professionals turned to ATIV Software — their mobile app and desktop planner provider — for help.

*“ATIV designed a solution that not only worked, it exceeded all expectations”*

GSA has been using the EventPilot scientific conference app built by ATIV Software since 2016. Conference attendees use the powerful mobile and desktop tools to access the program and build their schedule. GSA had confidence in the team at ATIV to deliver a virtual conference solution in less than a month. “The folks at ATIV really understand the needs of scientific meetings like ours,” said Suzy Brown.

### Virtual Event Planning and Setup

While people were being kept apart because of the pandemic, science needed to come together.

“We took this crisis as an opportunity to give back to the scientific community and offer the event at no cost. We wanted to help bring researchers together at a time when it was most needed,” said Tracey DePellegrin, Executive Director at GSA.

With the event now offered for free, registration numbers swiftly quadrupled. Since the EventPilot platform is designed for large scientific meetings, it easily scales to tens of thousands of users. EventPilot allows attendees to effortlessly navigate the entire program containing over 1,000 research talks with full abstract text. EventPilot was the ideal hub to access the conference content for GSA. Now the biggest concern for the meeting planners was the unknown virtual component.

Thanks to EventPilot’s tight integration with a leading virtual meeting platform, GSA could convert their entire program into nearly 100 webinars and interactive virtual sessions. EventPilot generated all these automatically with the push of a button. Links to all the virtual events appear only to authorized attendees and thereby prevent disruptions like “Zoombombing.”

### Virtual Components

Live Poster Q&A Presenters	378
ePosters	634
Auto-generated Webinars	57
Auto-generated Q&A	26
Concurrent Sessions	9
Live Oral Presentations	371
Recorded Video (hours watched over 14 days)	+70,000

The conferencing software itself is fully integrated into the EventPilot platform to ensure the smoothest experience possible. This integration means attendees immediately access a presentation just like walking into a room on site. Session moderators and panelists automatically receive all the information they need to present. GSA worked with their A/V company to practice with speakers and to host all webinars to ensure smooth transitions. Webinar attendance ranged from 1,500 to over 5,500 participants, and attendees raved about the seamless session management on social media.

At scientific conferences, organizers arrange large poster halls with the opportunity to meet scientists face-to-face and learn more about their research. The talented team at GSA found a way to bring that interactive experience online and do so in an affordable way. Posters were made available directly via the app for on-demand viewing, while 142 interactive 30-minute Q&A sessions were housed within 26 parent sessions enabling a face-to-face experience between the poster presenters and poster viewers. With text-based Q&A and chat features built into the technology, even the shyest participants were willing to dip their toes into the talks.



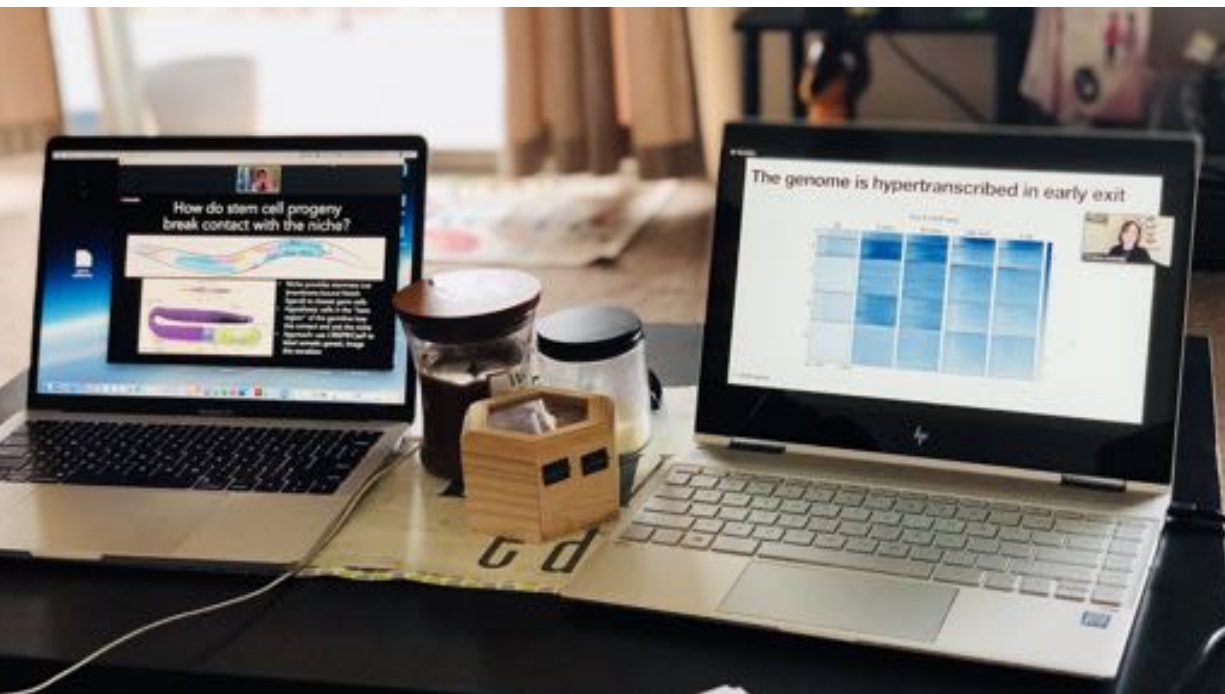
*“The folks at ATIV really understand the needs of scientific meetings like ours.”*

## Conducting a Virtual Meeting

The scientists' response was overwhelming. From the many positive social media comments to the 11,000 hours of recording hours watched within one week, GSA quickly realized the value and impact of virtual events.

"People that usually criticize us became our biggest cheerleaders on Twitter." Cristy Gelling, PhD, Communications Director.

By only giving access to registered attendees, the virtual environment was secure. Users were excited and happy to be able to attend online. Up-and-coming scientists, who would not typically have the means to join, were able to participate virtually and save on travel cost and time.



A core benefit of the virtual event was the EventPilot recording management. A few minutes after each live session, the recording automatically displayed. Researchers no longer had to choose between concurrent talks. Instead, they could watch them all. Busy parents could easily participate from home and watch recordings at any time. Scientific meetings are about sharing the science, and virtual session recordings broaden the reach far beyond physical conferences.

## Future Plans

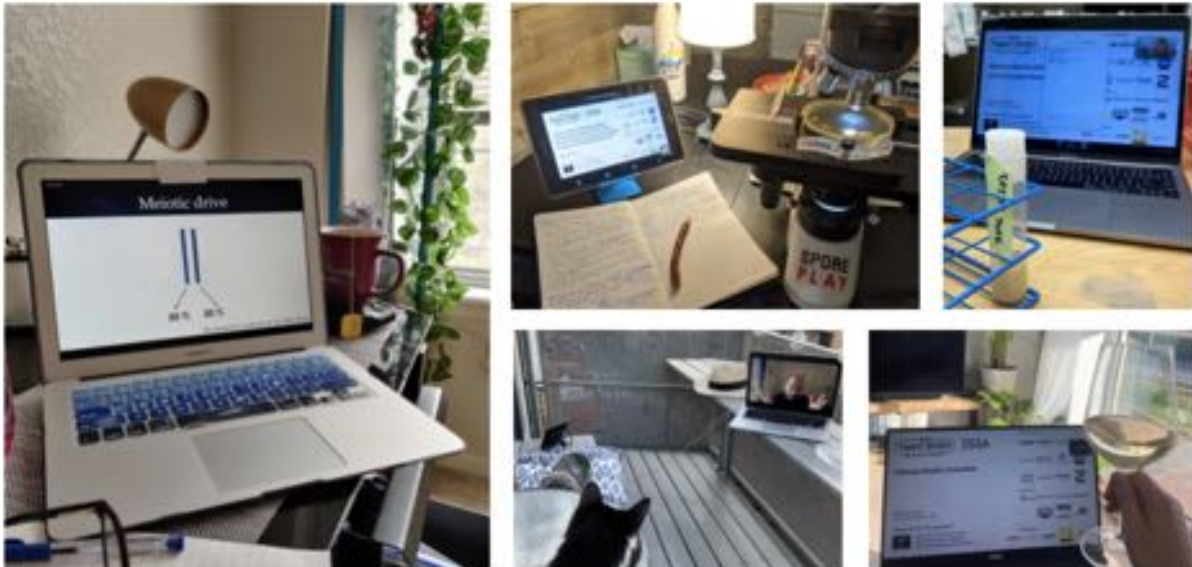
With more time to plan in the future, virtual event design includes:

- **Hybrid meetings:** virtual component for future meetings
- **Networking:** Virtual "coffee breaks" for interest groups and niche audiences
- **Sponsors:** Build out additional sponsorship opportunities in the virtual components
- **Poster Sessions:** Re-design interactive sessions to allow for even more discussion time

## Virtual is Here to Stay

In the face of naysayers telling the GSA team virtual was not going to work, the event planners defied all expectations. As Suzy Brown said, "We came to ATIV with a problem and they had already been working on an answer. ATIV designed a solution that not only worked, it exceeded all expectations." GSA chose the right technology partners and has set a high bar for other scientific meetings to go virtual.

Future meetings will now have a virtual component to help share research and foster collaboration, so every scientist has the opportunity to participate, regardless of physical location.



## About ATIV Software

ATIV Software supplies the leading mobile conference app and integrated virtual platform for scientific and medical meetings. Solutions include the EventPilot® conference app; ScanHunt™ gamification app, a scavenger hunt app for gamification and engagement; and RouteInside® wayfinder app, an indoor navigation app. Apps designed by ATIV Software are consistently chosen for professional, scientific conferences from as small as 200 people to over 30,000 attendees. Learn more at <https://www.ativsoftware.com>.