



# Growing a JGS: HYBRID MEETINGS

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By the end of 2022, JGSes around the world were contemplating a return to in-person meetings. There is no question that many JGS program directors became very adept at holding meetings on Zoom. They started to appreciate the conveniences of virtual meetings and the ability to hire expert presenters on Jewish genealogy from all over the world. JGS members, however, did not forget the value of in-person meetings as well as their social and networking benefits. As the pandemic started to wane, in-person gatherings began to gradually resume. Many JGSes pondered the possibility of holding hybrid meetings as a way to balance the needs of members who wanted to keep meeting on Zoom and of those who wished to return to personal meetings. Some JGSes saw an increase in members outside of the geographic area for whom Zoom or recorded sessions was the only alternative. Others preferred the ease of Zoom.

For purposes here, *a hybrid meeting is one where people gather together but others come to that same meeting remotely*. Just as JGS leaders learned how to run great virtual meetings over this past year, they now need to learn how to conduct great hybrid meetings as well.

Hybrid meetings are vastly more complex than meeting in-person or virtually. They are easy to do poorly and hard to do well. Let's consider two possibilities:

## *Hybrid meeting with in-person presentation*

Assuming your presenter is physically in the room with audience members but there are virtual attendees as well. You also want your remote members to hear and see the presentation, so equipment and meeting environment have to be considered: Review the suggestions regarding equipment and setup made by a Rotary club here: <https://rotary6440.org/documents/en-ca/dd0252e9-60aa-4888-a03b-cf86242d8daa/1>



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Note that the Rotary article suggests the use of a “room monitor.” You will need to have a meeting technician at the meeting who is familiar with Zoom host controls. That individual will monitor participants and help with tasks such as - muting when necessary, monitoring chat and raised hands, - screen sharing, and connecting equipment.

Managing a hybrid meeting is harder than when the whole group is in person or on Zoom together. The monitor or another individual, such as a facilitator, should help guide the conversation and keep it on track.

A facilitator should draw the remote participants in, keep them engaged and ensure their voices are heard, not interrupted, or talked over. At times, the facilitator may need to call on in-room or remote participants to ensure that all voices are heard.

If desired, virtual attendees can be projected on a second screen or monitor although there are complications to consider regarding their participation in the meeting (cited also in the Rotary article.)

#### *Facebook Live*

Another perhaps simpler way to have a hybrid meeting with a live presenter involves Facebook. If your JGS has a Facebook Group, you can “live stream” a meeting as it occurs. There are limits to how remote attendees participate using livestreaming on Facebook, but it is a way to meet the needs of those who want to meet in person and those who want to attend virtually. Here’s a YouTube video that shows you how to do it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqrRqL6uxSw>

#### *Hybrid meeting when the presentation is on Zoom*

The purpose of holding an in-person meeting even though the presenter is remote might not be intuitive. Why not just have all your members dial in on Zoom? But many JGS members like the opportunity of gathering together for the social networking and sharing the mutual experience of listening to the presenter together. It’s similar to the choice of watching a movie on your TV at home or going to the theater to enjoy the movie with others.

This type of hybrid meeting is relatively easy to set up since all that is required in the meeting room is a laptop, projector, projection screen and sound system so that the in-person attendees can successfully hear and see the Zoom presenter.

#### *Disadvantages/advantages of hybrid meetings*

There are concerns that the convenience of attending meetings remotely will cast a long shadow on in-person meetings. Consider, would you travel 10 miles, say, to attend an in-person genealogy meeting when you could simply turn on your laptop and attend by Zoom? It’s possible that hybrid meetings will be poorly attended in contrast to the attendance

experienced when members have no other option but to attend in person. It's a lot of work to prepare for an in-person meeting and disheartening when it is poorly attended.

On the other hand, total attendance may improve if members have choices of how to enjoy a meeting.

As the pandemic eases and we resume gathering in person, hybrid meetings will likely become a permanent part of how organizations function. These meetings bring added complexity at the same time that our collective Covid-driven years of meeting virtually raised expectations for remote participation. By leveraging technology and tools, being thoughtful in meeting design, and providing strong facilitation we can create hybrid meetings where more members can attend and be engaged.

A note: as we end 2022, our JGS plans to alternate in-person meetings with Zoom meetings. We may attempt to do a livestream feed on Facebook with our return to in-person meetings. We'll let you know how that goes.