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CRIPtic ARTS

BEING HYBRID

A CHEAP AND EASY GUIDE TO HYBRID EVENTS

SHORT GUIDE

OVERVIEW

With the world returning to in-person events, it feels like people who cannot attend them have been forgotten. We are constantly told that it would be too expensive to run a hybrid event - one in which people can attend and speak whether they're in-person or digitally.

Actually it's cheap, quick, and easy to turn your in-person event into a hybrid onet - and this guide will show you how.

If you don't offer hybrid provision, a lot of people are excluded. This includes people with low incomes who can't afford to travel to attend in person, disabled people, parents and carers, and people who live a long distance from the event.

This is not a guide on how to run a hybrid event which is accessible for deaf and disabled people - but we will discuss access briefly. Many of the provisions you need to make your hybrid event accessible are ones you would need (and should already have) for your in-person event also, such as BSL interpreters, captioners, and rest breaks. Without these, it would be impossible to make either the in-person or the digital aspect of your work accessible.

1 What is a hybrid event?

A hybrid event is one in which people can participate whether online or offline. When you stream an event, you are showing it to people at home who can watch it but not participate. A hybrid event allows digital audiences and speakers the opportunity to participate interactively.

When we talk about speakers we refer to anyone speaking, reading, performing, facilitating, or presenting at the event.

When we talk about audiences we refer to anyone watching the event (although they may participate, for example by asking questions).

When we talk about the in-person audience or speakers we mean people present in the venue, and when we talk about the in-person work or event, we mean the experience of the event as happening in the venue.

When we talk about the digital audience or speakers we mean people who are not present in the venue and when we talk about the digital work or event, we mean the experience of the event as happening online.

2 What does a hybrid event allow you to do?

A hybrid event allows you to:

- Work with a wider range of potential speakers and attendees, who can come from anywhere in the world
- Demonstrate a commitment to access and equity by reaching out to under-served groups
- Increase attendance without increasing the size of the room because the digital attendees won't count towards capacity
- Increase income from ticket sales by having a new audience to sell tickets to
- Make your reporting easier - by collecting demographic and diversity information from ticket sales, and by recording the digital version of the event for your own reference only (make sure you have the permission of everyone in the stream)

3 Is it hard to make an event hybrid?

Some parts of an event are easier to make hybrid than others. The fewer speakers there are (or the fewer places you need to point a webcam and microphone at) the easier it is. The more participatory an event is, the harder it is.

We think this is the order of how easy it is to make certain events work as hybrid events:

1. Single person talks
2. Single person readings or static performances
3. Static conversations between two people
4. Static conversations between more than two people
5. Round-table discussions with a chair
6. Creative workshops
7. Staged performances with lots of motion

If you're not able to make every part of your event hybrid, you could either concentrate on the easiest parts, or on the parts that are most popular.

If you haven't discussed being hybrid with speakers at your event, it's important to do so now, as they may not wish to be presented digitally or recorded. If they do not wish to run a hybrid event, then you will need to accept that, but you should put it into contracts for future speakers.

Where a truly hybrid event (with equal engagement from digital and in-person attendees and speakers) is impossible, you can also stream the work, letting people watch but not participate.

4 How do you get people to attend your hybrid event?

You will need to make sure that your sign-up and line-up processes allow both digital and in-person participants to register.

If people do not know that the event is also available online they will not attend the online part of the event. This means you need to market the event. There are lots of things you can do to tell people about your event.

- Write on your website that the event will be hybrid and explain what that means
- Write that the event is hybrid in your marketing materials
- Do a press release specifically on your hybrid event
- Use Eventbrite so people can book tickets to the digital part of your event
- Share the link for the digital part of your event so people can find it
- Contact disability arts organisations and international organisations and ask them to advertise your event

When calculating attendee numbers, digital drop-off is probably higher than in-person drop-off. At CRIPtic Arts it seems like only 25%-30% of attendees booked on Eventbrite actually attend our events.

Remember - when you advertise your event, always advertise what access provisions you have in place - the burden shouldn't be on deaf and disabled people to always ask you what is available.

5 What basic technology do you need?

For the in-person speakers and audiences:

- A computer at the event connected to a webcam, microphone, projector (or large TV screen), and speakers
  - You need to point the webcam and microphone at any in-person speakers so digital audiences can see and hear them
  - A TV or projector screen and speakers set up so people at the event in-person can see and hear digital speakers and audience questions
- If you have a BSL interpreter, you will need to have a second computer and webcam (not connected to audio) pointing at the interpreter so digital audiences can also see the interpreter.
- If you have a captioner, they will be able to make their captions available online
- A person managing the technology - setting it up, providing technical support, answering questions, sharing speaker slides, and monitoring the chat on the digital platform

Your digital speakers and audiences will need:

- A device with a webcam, microphone, screen, and speakers or headphones (either using a computer, or a tablet or phone)

6 What is the best streaming platform to use?

We recommend using Zoom. People are familiar with it, it's easy for people to engage with, and has auto-captions, although these need to be switched on manually by the host. While they can be useful, they are highly inaccurate and do not make an event accessible to deaf or hard of hearing people - for that you would need a human captioner.

You have to pay for Zoom but if you only pay for the months you have an event on, it can be more cost-effective.

If you don't want to use Zoom, Google Meet is also a good option. It is free, easy to use, and has auto-captions. However, people aren't as used to using Google Meet and it feels like the host has fewer controls over the meeting space, unless again they have a paid account.

7 How do you manage...

Audience interaction and discussion

If your event is streamed there will be no audience interaction, but a hybrid event relies on interaction. Where the audiences engage in discussion and ask questions, the person managing the tech to ensure people can register and access the space can also be responsible for passing questions to the host of the event where appropriate. Remember that the in-person audience can only see and hear questions from the digital audience if you have speakers and a screen set up.

The digital audience will only be able to see and hear questions from the in-person audience if there is a webcam and microphone pointed at the person in the in-person audience asking the questions. If this is too complicated to manage, the host can always repeat the question asked in-person into their microphone so that the digital audience have had access to the same question.

Making a workshop truly hybrid is going to require a lot of work from the facilitator to make sure everyone has a fair and equivalent experience. The facilitator might not have the ability or the time to do this so make sure to check in with them about what they can manage. If hybrid engagement wouldn't be feasible for them, workshop leaders could stream the workshop (allowing digital attendees to watch and follow along, but not actively participate).

Performances

Making a performance hybrid is surprisingly easy and requires the same provisions as a talk (discussed earlier). The only difference is that you may need the webcam to be further from the performance space so you can fit everyone in that space in.

8 Why should you also use digital speakers?

There are lots of advantages of working with speakers and facilitators remotely:

1. Digital speakers can be anywhere - even at short notice. This means you can choose the best speaker for the job, without worrying about travel and accommodation costs

2. You can save money on travel and hotels because you're not paying these costs to others

3. You can pre-recorded material which helps make your event more accessible - because you know what's coming before the event begins

4. Pre-recorded material gives you a structure. If you know how long something actually takes, it can give you more reliable timings, ensuring your event runs smoothly

5. The event can be structured to meet different audience access needs. The more pre-recorded content people are able to watch in advance, the more they can rest during those parts of the event.

9 The hybrid workload

It would be easy to think that the workload is lower for digital speakers as they do not have travel time, and therefore to decide to pay them less. However, a lot of work goes into preparing a digital piece, and you should not underpay digital speakers.

They have to do jobs including
- Setting up camera and lighting angles
- Setting up microphone and sound angles
- Learning and recording their talk in multiple takes until they are happy with it
- Editing their talk or video
- Uploading their talk or video and sending it to you

Their pay should reflect that there is an enormous workload in preparing the work they bring to the event, and they shouldn't be underpaid compared to in-person speakers.

10 Hybrid events and access

It's important to make your access provision for your hybrid clear from the outset. Just as you (should) have a statement about your in-person access provisions, you need one about your digital access provisions.

This could include (but this is by no means a complete list):

- What platform your hybrid event will be using
- What immediate support there will be (e.g. will there be a host present, what technical support there is) and how this can be accessed
- What the schedule is
- When the breaks are
- That your event is relaxed and people can come and go as they wish
- What content notes are likely and how you plan to deliver these
- What support is in place to help people contribute if they're not comfortable speaking verbally (e.g. putting questions in the chat)
- What provisions you do (or don't) have for BSL interpreters
- What provisions you do (or don't) have for captioning
- Whether and how people can access slides and presentations in advance
- Whether and how people can access scripts from speakers and readers
- What provisions you have for visual descriptions
- Instructions on how guests will access the event
- The event link
- A contact for the event (in case of issues accessing the event)

All information and instructions should be as clear as possible to make them easy to understand.

There are also some specific access provisions you should have in place for the full event already, and which should also be available to digital participants, including:

- BSL interpreters
- Palantypists (often also called Speech-to-Text Reporters (or STTR)
- Scripts and transcripts in advance
- Slides in advance (with image descriptions)

You should agree how audiences could contribute digitally in a way that is accessible for them. It's usually best to have several ways, and we often use:

- The 'raise hand' emoticon on Zoom
- Typing into the chat
- Raising a physical hand
- Messaging the tech facilitator

This is a summary guide based on our full guide https://cripticarts.org/a-guide-to-hybrid-events/. This summary guide will be available as a report, a Word document, a formatted PDF, a captioned BSL video, and an audio file. If you need alternative formats please contact us.

There is a shorter version of typed document in plain English and as an audio file here https://cripticarts.org/a-guide-to-hybrid-events/.

We are very sorry that the full version of the Being Hybrid guide is not available in BSL, audio or video format due to its length. We were not funded to produce it, and therefore had no budget, and could not afford the translation of the full version.

Instead, the full version can only be downloaded as a formatted .pdf file, or a plain word document.

For more information on hybrid events, contact CRIPtic Arts at contact@cripticarts.org.