

# REFORMA

Northeast Chapter

The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking  
Connecticut - Massachusetts - New Jersey - New York - Pennsylvania - Rhode Island

## Virtual Joint Mini-Conference Guide



[https://tinyurl.com/  
Facing-New-Challenges](https://tinyurl.com/Facing-New-Challenges)



JOINT MINI-CONFERENCE  
2020



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## Welcome

This document is intended as a guide that shows how the REFORMA Northeast Chapter (RNE) executed the Joint Mini-Conference virtually in June 2020.

As background, every year since 2004, RNE has held a Joint Mini-Conference (JMC) in person. It is the Chapter President's big final program, an annual professional development event that people look forward to.

The global pandemic hit in the midst of planning for this year's conference, and with social distancing in place, Adriana Blancarte-Hayward, RNE 2019-2020 President, proposed the idea of moving the conference online to the JMC Organizing Committee, something new for everyone. Everyone joined in and supported the idea - and worked really hard to make it happen, learning and having fun along the way!

It is definitely a team effort that requires organization, constant communication, and a can-do attitude.

We hope this document helps you in preparing your own virtual events. Thank you for reading!

**Adriana Blancarte-Hayward, RNE 2020 JMC Chair**  
**Website for the RNE JMC 2020 <https://tinyurl.com/2020JMC>**  
**Link to videorecording <http://tinyurl.com/JMC2020-video>**

Committee members: Adriana Blancarte-Hayward (RNE President and Chair of the JMC), Asuncion Cora, Elisa Garcia (JMC Co-Chair), Fred Gitner, Libby Romero, Linda Caycedo, Louis Muñoz, Manuel Figueroa, Mary Marques, Roxana Benavides, Tania Maria Rios, & Tess Tobin.

**Guide created in September 2020**

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## Things to consider when planning your own virtual event

- **Timeframe:** Analyze how much time you have to plan and execute the event. You will need a minimum of two months, but it is recommended to start planning 4 months prior to the event.

Set-up regular check-in meetings for better communication and accountability.

RNE JMC 2020 Total planning time: Two months.

Meetings: Due to the short time, weekly meetings were held up until the week after the event, for one final debrief.

We used Google Meet for our meetings.

- **Committee Task Force:** You need to define the different tasks that need to be accomplished. Aim to utilize each person's unique abilities and interests, as well as provide an opportunity for learning new skills.

RNE JMC 2020: The different task forces below were created to assign responsibilities for the many components to make the event happen.

*Tech Platform* - Charged with exploring different available platforms, and becoming familiar/proficient with the platform chosen; conducted training for other committee members as well as trial runs for all presenters to get familiar with the platform. We chose Webex after exploring the various options available. Please see the Appendix for the criteria to consider while choosing a platform.

*Website* - Tasked with building a website for this event to gather all the information and use for promotion.

We created a Google site.

*Graphic Design* - Tasked with creating our logo as well as a program (in pdf). We used a combination of Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign to build the logo and program.



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*Sponsors* - In charge of reaching out to the vendors, long time supporters, who table at the event.

Because the event would be virtual, and being mindful of economic hardships, we reached out and offered an opportunity to list them as sponsors on the event website and suggested a contribution to our scholarship fund.

*Guest Speakers* - In charge of coordinating all other special guest speakers who were not program presenters; communication and coordination of materials.

In our case: keynote speaker, Juneteenth commemoration speaker, health & wellness presentation, and the author panel.

*Promotion & Registration* - In charge of event registration and promotion.

We used Eventbrite for registration; the event was promoted through our different social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) and via various email list-serves. A hashtag was created- #JMC2020

*Session Presenters* - Tasked with sending out the call for proposals, follow up, collecting and revising all proposals received, and making the final selection of presenters. In charge of communication with chosen presenters and coordination of materials.

We communicated via Gmail and utilized Google Drive to collect all materials received.

*Editor/Proofreader* - In charge of editing and proofreading all our written communications: from the website, to email drafts, to the pdf program.

- **Event production breakdown example:**

- Starting a week prior to the event, we scheduled several trial run sessions on Cisco Webex for everyone who had a role in producing a program: presenters, moderators, all committee members.
- The day before the conference: One final meeting to go over everything and to check on any last minute questions.



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- The day of the event: We assigned different committee members for each individual session to:
  - Moderate
  - Take care of the chat and Q&A
- In addition:
  - One person was assigned to check our main email account all day for any troubleshooting issues: login information, etc.
  - One person was the MC for the event + main Tech person
  - One person was a Tech backup person for the event
  - We created a group text chat for troubleshooting
  - One person conducting social media promotion throughout the event
- A day after the conference  
Sent a thank you letter to all guest speakers and presenters.
- A week after the conference
  - Full Committee debrief meeting; finalize feedback survey (Google)
  - Thank you email to all participants: sharing the conference website again, the link to the video recording on YouTube, and the feedback survey.
- Two months later:
  - The immediate Past President, Chair of the conference, wrote an article for the [REFORMA National Newsletter](#)



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## REFORMA Northeast Chapter 16th Annual Joint Mini-Conference 2020: ¡Sí se pudo!

Every year since 2004, the REFORMA Northeast Chapter (RNE) has held a Joint Mini-Conference (JMC). It's usually the Chapter President's big final program, an annual professional development event that people look forward to.

The global pandemic hit in the midst of planning for this year's conference, and with social distancing in place I proposed to the JMC Organizing Committee the idea of moving the conference online, something new for all of us. I am proud to say that everyone joined in and supported the idea - and worked really hard to make it happen, learning and having fun along the way!

I reached out to the other American Library Association (ALA) ethnic affiliates, who responded with advice or directly participated. With the support of my amazing Committee, our sponsors, authors, presenters, and many others, the 16th Annual REFORMA Northeast Chapter Joint Mini-Conference 2020 "Facing New Challenges: Working in Community, Responding to Crisis" took place on June 19th, 2020. An amazing 203 people, our largest audience ever, attended.

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- A committee member published an article for [IFLA New Professionals Special Interest Group](#)

## Facing New Challenges: Working in Community, Responding to Crisis

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*The following is a guest post by Mary Marques. Mary currently works with REFORMA Northeast. More information, including links to her various projects, is included at the bottom of the post.*

*"In the midst of planning for this year's conference, the global pandemic hit. I proposed to the team the idea of moving the conference online, something new for all of us, and I'm proud to say everyone joined it and supported the idea, and we have been working hard, learning, and having fun along the way," stated Adriana Blancarte-Hayward, President of REFORMA Northeast (RNE) 2019-2020 in her opening welcome remarks. With this statement,*

- Created this guide
- Team group presentation at the [RNE Leadership Institute](#)



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## **Appendix:**

- **Suggested documents to create:**

Prior to the event:

- Save The Date
- Call for Proposals
- Letter of program proposal acceptance
- Registration and program information

For the event:

- Internal agenda
- Land Acknowledgment
- Welcome Remarks
- Scripts for moderators
- Closing Remarks and Acknowledgment

After the event:

- Thank you letter to panelists
- Thank you email to attendees
- Feedback Form

- **Tools utilized:**

- We collaborated utilizing Google Drive: Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms.
  - We created a program grid in Google Sheets to gather all information, track all presenters, programs and contact information, and committee member assignments.
  - We created a Google Doc where we kept track of meetings and task updates.
  - We created a presentation deck for all title cards in Google Slides.
  - We created a feedback survey in Google Sheets.
- Our planning meetings were held using Google Meet.
- Our program was held on Cisco Webex
- Our conference website was a Google site.
- Registration took place in Eventbrite.
- We used TinyURL to shorten links to help us spread the word



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- Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign were used to build the logo and program.

- **Criteria for Selecting Web-Conferencing Platform**

When deciding to host a virtual event, one of the most important considerations is which platform to use. There are many web-conferencing applications available to choose from. While Zoom has quickly become one of the most popular applications during the COVID19 pandemic, there are many other applications available that should be considered. These include WebEx, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangouts Meet, just to name a few. Here is a list of things to consider when comparing applications.

- Cost – While many of the video-conferencing tools offer a free version of their application, the free versions have a number of limitations. If budget constraints limit your choices, it is best to compare the free applications to determine which limitations you can work with, and which ones are a “deal-breaker.” You also need to consider if there are individuals on your team who may have a work-related account that can be used for your event. While there may be limits to some of the free alternatives, you should consider combining applications to overcome any issues that pose a problem in achieving your goal. For example, while the free Zoom application has a limit on the number of people who can join your event, you can combine Zoom with Facebook Live to offer your event to a wider audience. However, the time-limit for events on the free Zoom account may be a limitation that cannot be overlooked.

- User-Friendliness – When considering the participants who you expect will be joining your event(s) you have to consider that not everyone has had extensive experience in all of these applications. It is important to look at how easy it is to connect to an event. Are participants required to create an account? Do they need a password? Can they join using a link? Does the application require that participants download any software? Does the application work well for all operating systems? Does the application work well for all browsers? Once the participants are connected, can they easily mute and unmute themselves? Can the host disable Mics and cameras for all





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participants? How easy is it to find and use the chat and/or Q&A feature? Can presenters easily share their screen or other applications?

- Capacity – Some free applications limit the number of participants and/or the length of time for an event. A number of the platforms offer various types of accounts with increasing costs attached to greater capacity. You will need to ask yourself, “How many participants would I like to accommodate? How long would I like this event to last? Will I need to have the ability to control what the participants can do? While one platform may work for a 45-minute session with 15 participants, it may be inadequate for a two-hour event where you will have 300+ participants.
- Security – Early during the pandemic there were some serious concerns about security. In fact the term “zoombombing” arose as a result of a widespread number of incidents where uninvited attendees would break into and disrupt a meeting on the Zoom platform. While Zoom has addressed this issue, it is important to consider how secure the platform that you will be using is.
- Recording & Storage – The ability to record an event may be very important, as those interested may not always be available to attend the event at the scheduled time. One advantage of hosting events virtually is that by recording an event, you can make the event available at any time by posting it on your organization’s website. Some platforms provide users with the ability to store materials in digital format such as presentation slides, handouts, and feedback forms. Whether the platform provides a transcript of the chat session during your event may be another feature to consider.
- Event Metrics – It may be important to evaluate the reporting features of the platforms that you are considering. Most platforms will provide an attendance report, but you may want more information such as the length of time each participant was connected, or details about the participants such as name, contact information, or what organization they are affiliated with.
- Additional Spaces – Some platforms provide users with the ability to have a waiting room for an event, this would allow the panelists to enter first and get themselves organized before the attendees arrive. Break-out rooms may also be very helpful, allowing participants to form smaller groups within an event facilitating more interaction

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and discussion, and the possibility of letting attendees select which topics they may want to take a deeper dive into.

· Customer Service and Technical Support – One consideration to take into account when evaluating virtual-conferencing platforms is the customer service and technical support offered by the vendor. Is there a toll-free number? Can you chat with a representative? Do they respond immediately? Are they responsive at all? You don't necessarily have to contact their customer service departments to learn about how good their support is. There are many independent reviews available online as these platforms are becoming more popular and even essential to the workplace in the present environment. This will only increase over the next few years.

- **Additional professional development resources**

- ❖ [Fundamentals of Digital Marketing](#). Free Certification at [Google Digital Garage](#).



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