

## No Hands Across the Water: The Cancellation of Plans for International Travel

Every three years, the international librarian community in astronomy holds a conference. The conference is attended by individuals from all over the world, and it is a valuable forum for sharing thoughts, presenting ideas and projects, networking and building international collaborations, and planning joint projects. The conference was scheduled to be held in London in June 2020 but was cancelled. Because of the uncertainty of the pandemic during the early days of its outbreak in spring 2020, alternate plans were not made for the conference. The planners thought we'd be able to hold it later in the summer without any problem. That, of course, was not possible. So there was no conference held this year. This may not have been as bad if the conference was a yearly one, but it will probably be another year before we have another one, which means there will be five years between conferences. The astronomy librarian community is a small but tight one, and the conference was a wonderful experience both personally and professionally. The loss of this professional conference is a blow to my professional development. And, of course, going to London is something I had look forward to for the last three years since the last conference. London is fabulous.

International travel and networking at conferences is a fantastic way to build cross-cultural understanding. I feel it is vital in these days for us to interact with each other globally and inhabit each other's worlds. When I travel, I make a point to try not to be a tourist but rather a traveler and open myself up to learning about another culture and establishing ties with people in those cultures. The loss of my summer vacation meant the loss of that education and interaction.

I was hoping to stop off in Ireland for a few weeks to travel around the land of my ancestors and also do some genealogy research. I've been involved in a genealogy project along with some of my relatives, and my trip to Ireland would have given me the opportunity to do some family research. I've been to Ireland before and one of the best sources of information on my family came about when I stepped into a small store in County Limerick that had my great-grandfather's family name on it, and I had a lovely conversation with the proprietor about the Ryan clan. This would not have happened over email or Zoom or through the internet, and I was looking forward to doing this on-the-ground research again.

So the loss of my summer vacation meant both the loss of fun times but also the lost opportunity to learn more about other cultures, build international friendships, and share my culture with others.