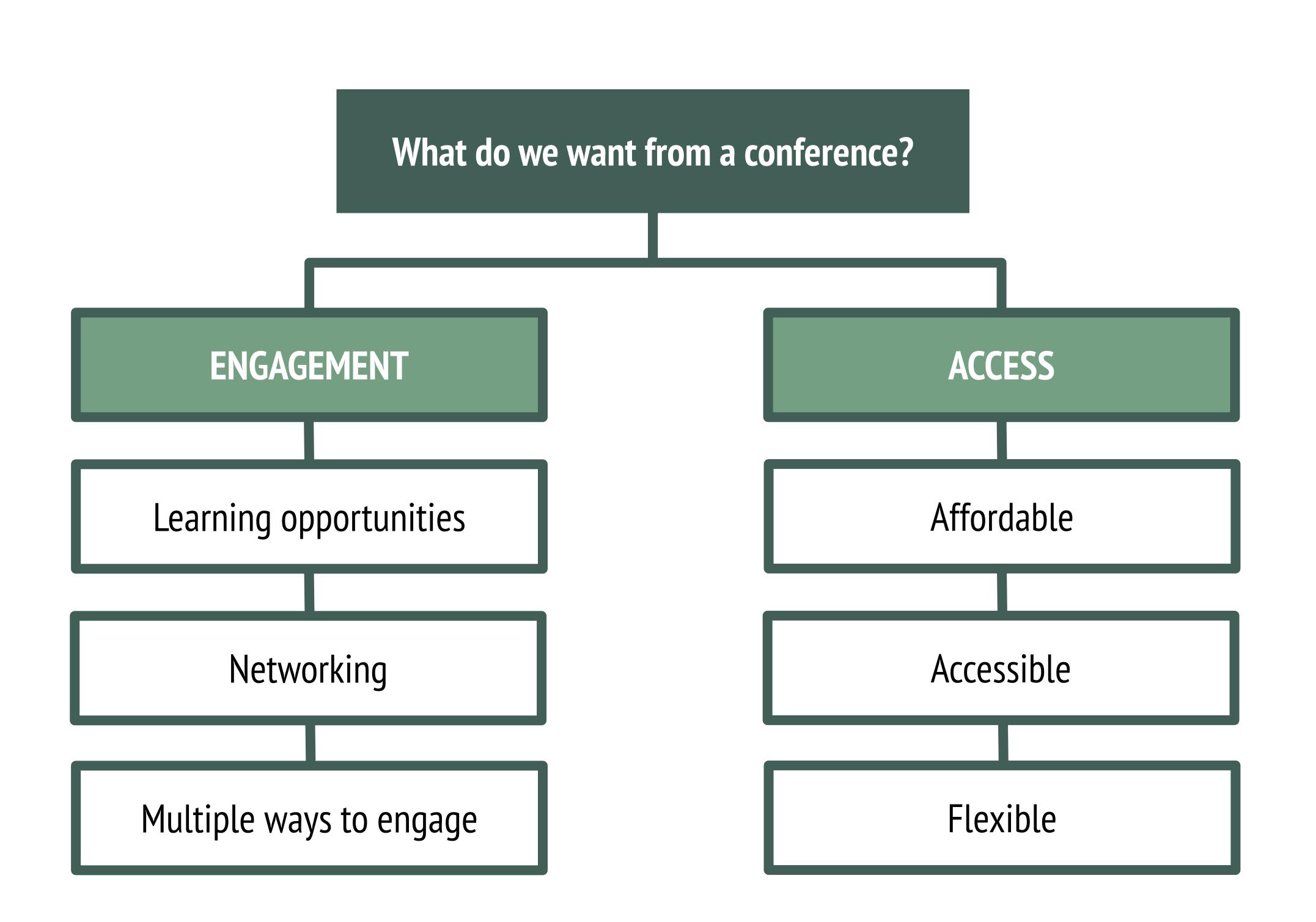
Supporting Professional Development and Work-Life Balance: A New Approach to Conferences

Introduction

Conferences are critical to professional development, serving as spaces for connection and learning. The pandemic challenged the status quo of conferences and the types of meaning that can be generated online versus in person. One library navigated these challenges when planning a conference in 2022, creating a "new hybrid" conference model that included entirely virtual, entirely in-person, and asynchronous offerings. This set-up benefited from the increased access that virtual conferences offer while also providing for the in-person networking people value. Join us to explore and reimagine how to create meaningful professional development opportunities that fit within the value of work-life balance that libraries have committed to prioritizing for their employees.



Conference Models

VIRTUAL

- More people can attend, unrestricted by funding or location
- Promotes COVID safety
- Zoom fatigue
- Long periods of immobility
- Lack of human interaction
- Encourages distractions and multitasking

IN-PERSON



- In-person networking
- More engaged attendance (less distractions, cancellations)
- High costs amongst limited travel budgets
- Fear of in-person interaction during pandemic

HYBRID



- Allows people to engage as they feel comfortable
- More options for attendance re: cost and travel
- Higher risk of technical issues
- X Lack of interaction between participants online and in-person
- More difficult moderation, balancing chat and in-person
- X Often very hard to hear people, especially if it's a discussion

NEW HYBRID



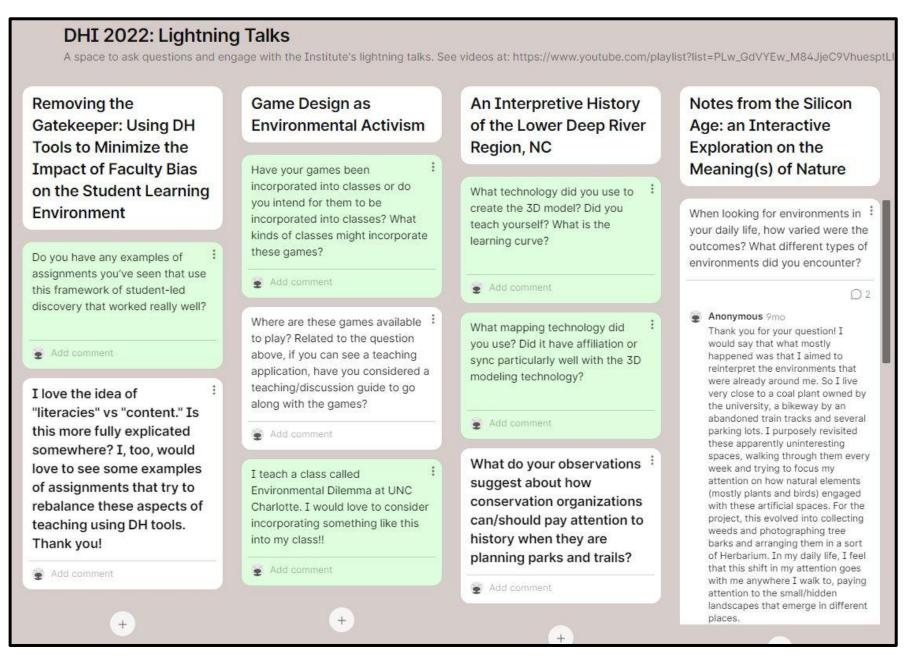
How it works: Offer both wholly virtual and wholly in-person options to get the best of both formats. Eliminates traditional hybrid from the mix. This could look like offering a mix of:

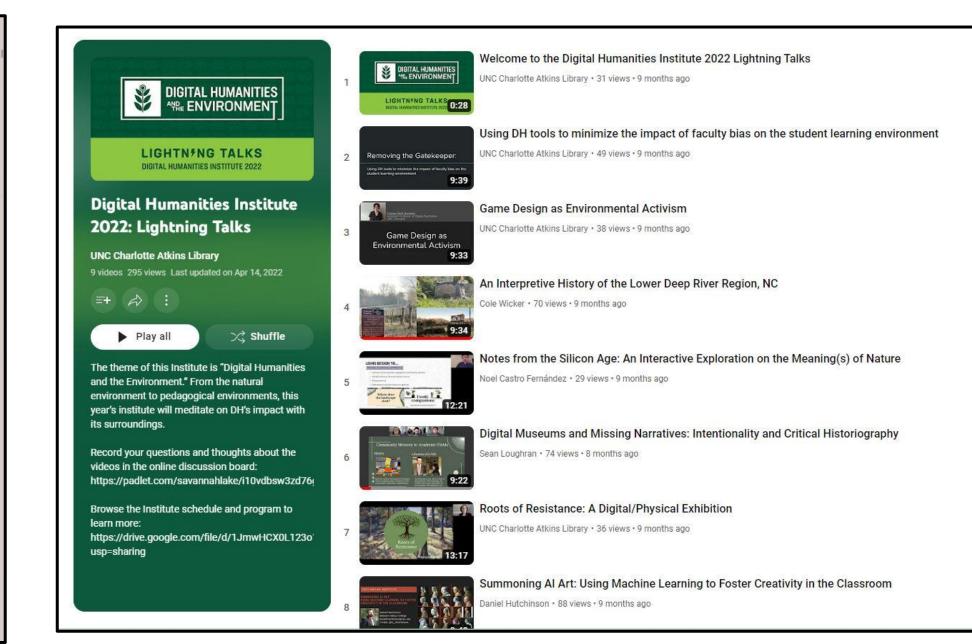
- Remote: panels, pre-recorded videos, presentations, keynote
- In-person: networking meet-ups, hands-on workshops

Allows people to enjoy the flexibility of the remote format while also benefiting from in-person connection building.

The "New Hybrid" Model

VIRTUAL: Zoom presentations & discussions, online discussion board, video playlist





IN-PERSON: Meet-ups throughout North Carolina





Key Takeaways

Communication is essential when offering different mediums for participation

- Reminders are important for virtual sessions and when registration is free. It can be very easy for people to register if free and then forget or not prioritize.
- Participants may assume sessions will be recorded. Be clear on what will be recorded.

Attendees appreciated the flexibility this format offered

- Participant feedback highly rated having the option to engage virtually or in person.
- Asynchronous virtual offerings received high engagement.

