

Dear SITE Executive Committee,

First, to all members of the Executive Committee (EC) and SITE, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your leadership and support during these difficult and challenging times!

SITE/AACE, '*The Friendly Society*,' is fortunate to be a devoted and strong community of members willing to pitch in and help not only SITE but each other.

Over the years, the SITE/AACE conferences experienced and overcame many disasters hampering the events. A few examples include: forest fires threatening Denver, an earthquake in San Diego, a volcano erupting near Kona Hawaii, power outages due to a heat waves in Amsterdam and Vienna, a hurricane near Orlando, a G8 Summit riot and flood in Toronto, an earthquake and resulting power outage in Honolulu, and more.

Despite the many conference challenges over the past 30+ years, no SITE/AACE conferences ever were cancelled. We met and overcame those challenges. How?

SITE/AACE persevered and adapted. I remember in Honolulu after the earthquake, power was out and everyone was bracing for a possible tsunami to strike the coastal conference hotel. However, high-tech Michael and the staff were scurrying around in the dark collecting candles from the hotel so presentations could continue by candlelight. By the way, those sessions still are recalled fondly by attendees as the best for interaction.

And I recall Sarah donning a helmet and nightstick to make her way through the G8 riots to the downtown conference hotel in Toronto.

SITE 2020 Online

Although the current pandemic crisis certainly is more severe and unlike previous disasters affecting our events, The SITE/AACE organization and members have the leadership, knowledge, expertise, persistence, and determination to persevere and rise above the obstacles to organize their annual conference albeit a virtual one. There is no better time than now to meet and share our latest research, practices, and innovations.

Fortunately, over many years, we have developed the infrastructure and applications such Academic Experts and LearnTechLib.org required to use with, not only the annual F2F conference, but also online events.

The SITE/AACE staff are working diligently with the SITE leaders and Committees using all their experience, creativity, and resources to make the conference a success. Although we have never put together an online conference this quickly, we will do our best to give participants the best experience. Our goal is not only to meet but surpass the current challenge and possibly set the stage for future online events.

SITE 2020 Online will include live Keynote and Invited speakers, panels, SIG meetings, SITE-180 posters, award papers, NTLI award presentations, and workshops. Also, nearly all sessions will be recorded for later access.

In addition, SITE/AACE is assisting other both large and small academic non-profit organizations who have contacted us in this crisis requesting advice and assistance in producing their own online events.

The Future

This pandemic crisis will cause changes in our field. For one, online teaching and learning will become a more essential, widespread tool used in schools and universities. SITE/AACE as an organization and as individual leaders and members have the knowledge, expertise, and responsibility to help lead in these efforts. We may want to discuss this topic at another time.

Over history, many creative ideas and innovations arose during the most difficult societal and economic times. We see the same for SITE/AACE! We will emerge even stronger and better able to serve our members and the educational community.

This crisis too shall pass but we must remain positive and also remember to spend some time outside. Time spent in nature or natural environments does wonders for the body, mind, and spirit!

I wish you all and your families good health.

All the best,
Gary Marks



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