

NordMedia23, Bergen, Norway

Overview

The year 2023 witnessed the NordMedia conference reaching new heights in terms of participant numbers and research paper submissions. With a record-breaking 401 registered guests and an impressive count of 375 presented research papers, the event marked a pinnacle in the 50-year history of the NordMedia conference series.

Nordic countries were notably well represented, with substantial participation from Sweden (111), Norway (107), Denmark (78), Finland (71), and Iceland (5). The conference, however, also welcomed researchers from outside the Nordics, including Belgium (6), Germany (4), Czechia (3), Japan (2), Australia (2), Canada (1), Estonia (1), Scotland (1), Spain (1), UK (1), France (1), Greenland (1), Hong Kong (1), and Israel (1).

The NordMedia23 hosted 12 divisions and 3 temporary working groups. Of particular note, *Games Studies*, previously a temporary working group, has in 2023 taken on the status of a division.

Here is an overview of the divisions and temporary working groups in 2023:

Division 1. Audience studies

Division 2. Environment, science, and risk communication

Division 3. Journalism studies

Division 4. Media and communication history

Division 5. Media, globalisation, and social change

Division 6. Media industries

Division 7. Media literacy and media education

Division 8. Organisation, communication, and promotion

Division 9. Political communication

Division 10. Television and film studies

Division 11. Theory, philosophy, and ethics of communication

Division 12. Games studies

TWG1. Sensory and immersive extended reality media: AR/VR/XR

TWG2. Visual communication and culture

TWG3. Media, communication, and health

NordMedia23's theme, "Technological Takeover? Social and Cultural Implications – Promises and Pitfalls", offered a lens into the profound impact of technology on communication. The conference featured two keynote speakers: Professor Nicholas Diakopolous from Northwestern University in Chicago and Professor Vilde Schanke Sundet from Oslo Metropolitan University.

A one-day academic workshop preceding to the main conference was organised for doctoral candidates in media and communication studies. That was the fourth time such a pre-conference was held. The pre-conference attracted 22 participants and 12 senior discussants.

Evaluation of the NordMedia Conference 23 – the four Cs:

- Cost vs. Convenience
- Conference Capacity Considerations
- Communication and Continuity
- Crew

Cost

1. In Bergen, the organizers faced a trade-off between keeping costs low and ensuring convenience for conference participants.

On one hand, NordMedia conferences tend to be expensive due to the high costs associated with Nordic countries. Therefore, it is crucial to minimize expenses, ensuring accessibility for a diverse array of participants, including doctoral students. It is also important to account for the cost of keynote speakers, lunch, venue charges, the dinner, and the entertainment during the dinner.

On the other hand, feedback from participants and division leaders gathered through the conference survey, indicated a strong desire for greater convenience, including the use of an app for the conference program (costing at least €4000), more coffee, snacks, and alcoholic beverages. Fulfilling all these requests would be costly and thus significantly raise the overall conference fee.

Recommendation: It is important to have a discussion regarding this trade-off between cost containment and ensuring a satisfactory level of convenience, and accessibility for a wide range of attendees.

Conference Capacity Considerations

1. The organizers need a timely assessment of the venue(s)' room capacity. Balancing capacity limitations and the convenience of selecting a conference location near the hosting institution or at the city center where the conference is held presents a trade-off. Selecting a location that can accommodate 400 (or more) participants often comes at the cost of the centrality of the venue's location. For instance, the only conference hotel that could accommodate over 400 participants in a single location is outside the city center of Bergen. We thus opted for two locations that were close to each other. Another solution could be to set a stricter limit for the number of participants at the conference, but this could potentially conflict with NordMedia's ideal of being an inclusive arena.

The choice of conference location and its centrality has consequences, impacting both the conference's capacity to accommodate participants and the overall cost of the conference.

Recommendation: It's important to discuss this tradeoff when deciding on the conference location and venue.

2. Additionally, divisions and TWGs will need information on how many papers they can accept shortly after the abstract submission deadline.

Recommendation: Organizers should provide room capacity estimates for each division right after the papers' submission deadline to streamline planning.

3. Our initial estimate for the number of dinner participants fell notably short of the actual demand for dinner reservations.

Recommendation: To estimate the number of dinner tickets required for the conference, the organizers should consider the ratio of dinner participants to the total number of attendees in Bergen. Additionally, we recommend keeping the cost of the dinner separate from the default conference fee, allowing attendees to opt in or out of the dinner event according to their preference.

Communication and Continuity

1. Organizers should prioritize maintaining continuity among key team members. This is essential, as the experience in Bergen demonstrated that changes in personnel during the planning phase slowed down communication with division leaders, TWGs, and conference participants.
2. In Bergen, we faced challenges where the deadlines given to division leaders and TWG leaders were not always met. This resulted in delays in finalizing the conference program and increased resource allocation to address these issues.

However, it's worth noting that overall, communication from division leaders and TWGs was rated positively in our survey.

Recommendation: To improve efficiency, we suggest implementing stricter deadlines and setting them as early as possible, recognizing the difficulties in enforcing them effectively.

Crew

1. During the conference week, we made the decision to engage three research assistants, each highly recommended by one of the hosting department's study advisors. They were responsible for guiding participants to their designated rooms, among other things. They had prior conference experience and were enthusiastic about working for the NordMedia23 conference. This, along with the distinctive pink sweaters bearing the NordMedia logo worn by our key personnel, proved to be a success.

In fact, this initiative achieved the highest rating among all conference elements, with an average score of 4.6 out of 5 in our post-conference survey.

Recommendation: We suggest moving away from using volunteers and, instead, investing in hiring qualified and motivated research assistants for future conferences.