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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Using Discord to hold online poster sessions

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The poster session is a form of interactive session which encourages good presentation skills in preparation (distilling the important elements of work and organising them in a way that works visually) and in execution (discussing work and answering questions in a face to face setting). Taking this online requires a change of focus, but is vital in a world where we have to stay 2 metres apart.

Discord is a live text- and audio- chat system, popular with computer gamers, and since lockdown this has become a popular means in computer science for staying in touch with other staff and with our students. Each Discord server contains channels, which can carry either voice or text/image traffic. Within CS, since March, many modules have used Discord servers to hold practical sessions and general real-time interaction.

We have used Discord for poster sessions in three different settings, and the setup is the same each time. Each poster presenter submits their poster in advance which is converted into an image format (PNG, or JPG). For each poster presenter, two channels are created - text and voice. The text/image chat has the poster image as the first post. During the "poster session" students monitor the chat on their channels, talking either in real time using voice communications or asynchronously in text. Attendees can move between the posters by moving between the channels, much in the same way as one would in a real poster session.

One of the great advantages of Discord is that it is programmable via "bots", small programs that can carry out all sorts of administrative tasks within a server. Thus we use a posterbot to create the channels for student posters. This means that given a set of posters and a CSV file with metadata, we can automatically build a Discord server with the required channels (and poster uploads) in seconds.

This talk will describe Discord, talk about the experience of running Discord poster sessions in three different settings (student conference, MSc module, and postgrad module), and introduce the posterbot for creating such events for new modules.