Reactions to the COVID-19 Pandemic

This year the SSRC like every organization has faced new challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Mississippi State University transitioned quickly to a remote work and class plan in mid-March, our scientists and staff adjusted to an unprecdented work enviroment. The following are a few of our members experiences.

Dr. Holli Seitz
Assistant Professor and
Director of The Message Laboraotory

As part of MSU's response to COVID-19, I joined a working group of colleagues and students tasked with developing a health communication campaign to promote COVID-19 prevention behaviors among MSU students. This presented an opportunity to leverage my communication research skills to address an urgent issue of importance to the campus and community. Working together, our team (which included undergraduate and graduate students) conducted surveys and interviewed approximately 15 MSU students and 15 parents of MSU students to examine their beliefs about COVID-19 prevention behaviors such as wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distance while interacting with others. Based on the survey and interview data, we were able to make recommendations to the working group to inform the Cowbell Well communication campaign for students. We are currently conducting a detailed analysis of the data and working on a manuscript to inform other college public health campaign efforts.

Dr. Ronald Cossman
Associate Research Professor and Research Fellow

Every crisis is also an opportunity. I have been overwhelmed at the dedication, innovation and creativity that my colleagues have shown in surmounting every barrier to research during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Charlie Schloemer
Systems Administrator

When we got the word this spring to evacuate the campus, no one knew much about the virus, only that it could not be contained. Most of SSRC's staff were eager to get equipment checked out and get out of the building. We checked out dozens of desktop computers, laptops, webcams, printers, scanners, and peripherals. It was a scramble, fast-paced and chaotic, and as quickly as it began it was over. Our IT group spent the next couple of weeks fielding support calls and emails from our newly at-home workforce, making sure everyone was settling in well and could access their usual programs and data.

As any systems administrator, I have responsibilities for the computer systems, servers, databases, and web sites, but the most important and urgent tasks I perform are related to end user support. These are also the most gratifying. I like people, and I like helping them to solve problems, or to find new or better ways for working smarter, to scope out projects, or sometimes just to commiserate. It is nearly always my preference to come to my user's desk when providing support, but with COVID-19 that has changed to its opposite. Even though many of our staff have returned to our building, our support is now remote whenever possible. We're making the most of it, and doing pretty well, I think, but I welcome a time we can be safely together again.