

Half a Decade of ALMA: Cosmic Dawns Transformed

Renaissance Indian Wells Resort and Spa, Indian Wells, CA

September 20-23, 2016

Attendee Feedback Survey

Survey sent to 212 attendees and we received a 47% response rate. 100 attendees completed the survey.

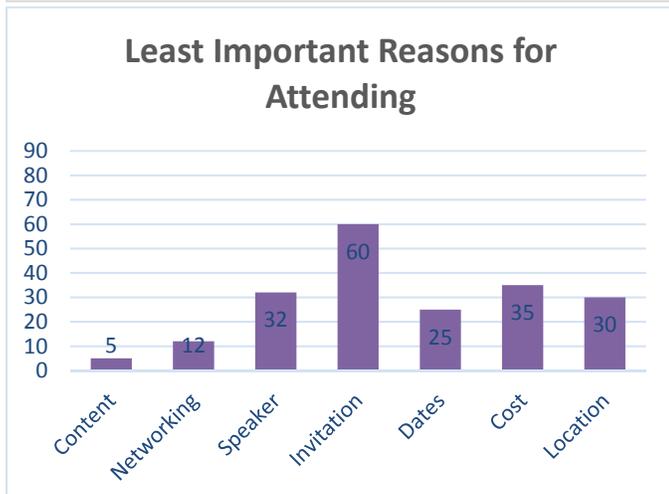
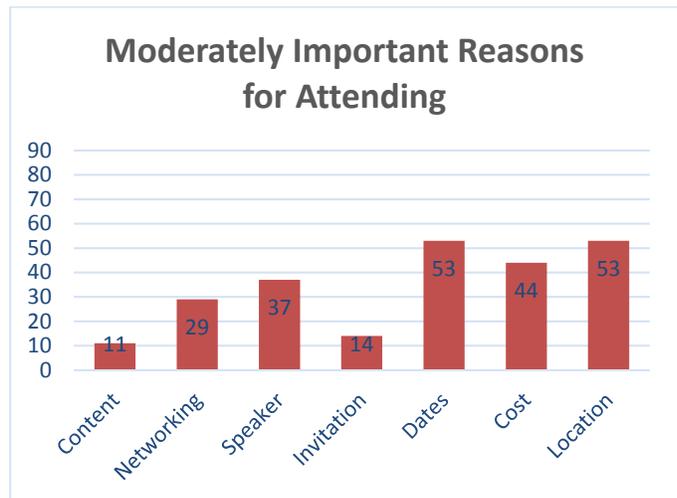
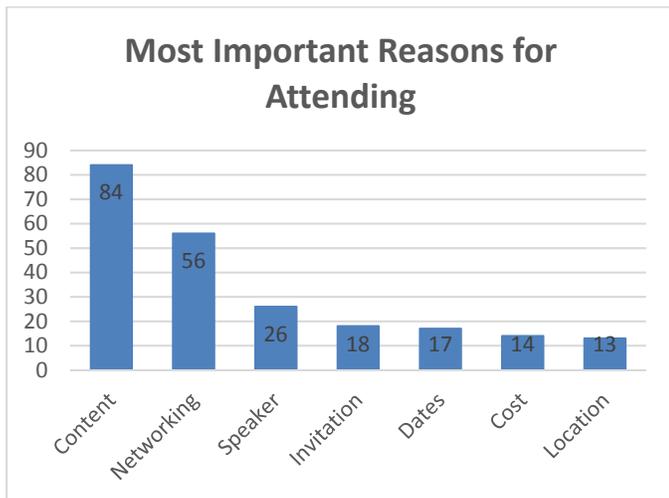
Q: How did you learn about this conference?



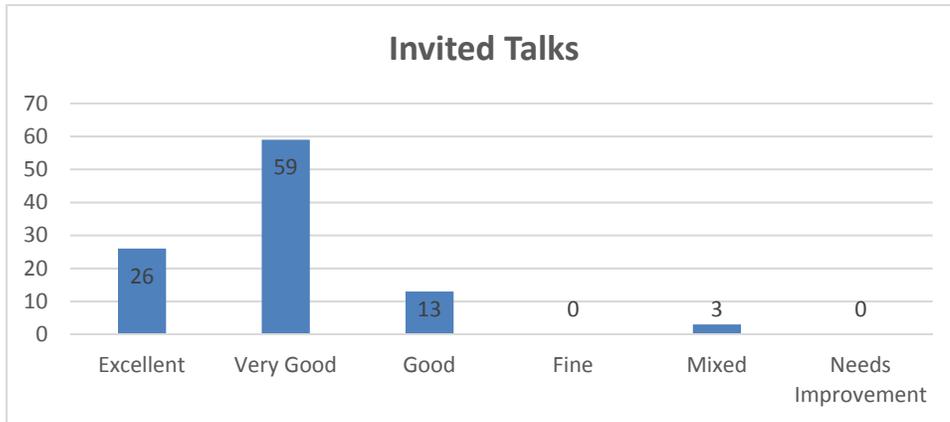
Other:

- Advertised online
- my student receiving ALMA support was encouraged to attend

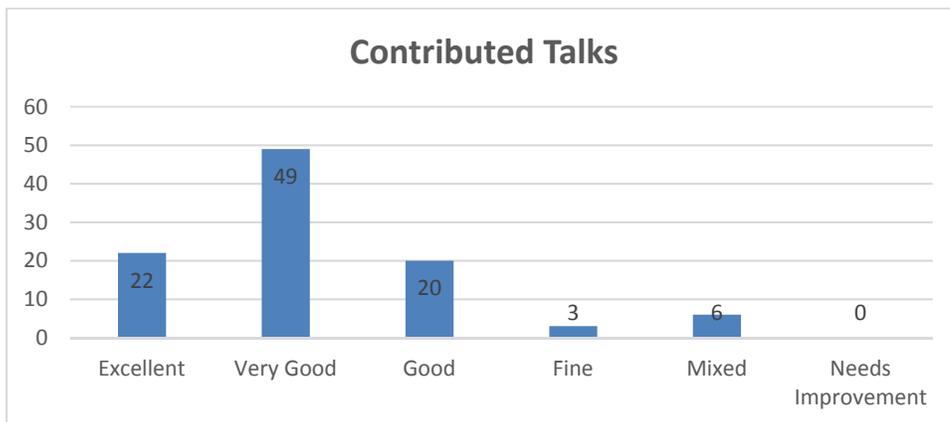
Q: Rank, by importance, the reasons you attended this conference.



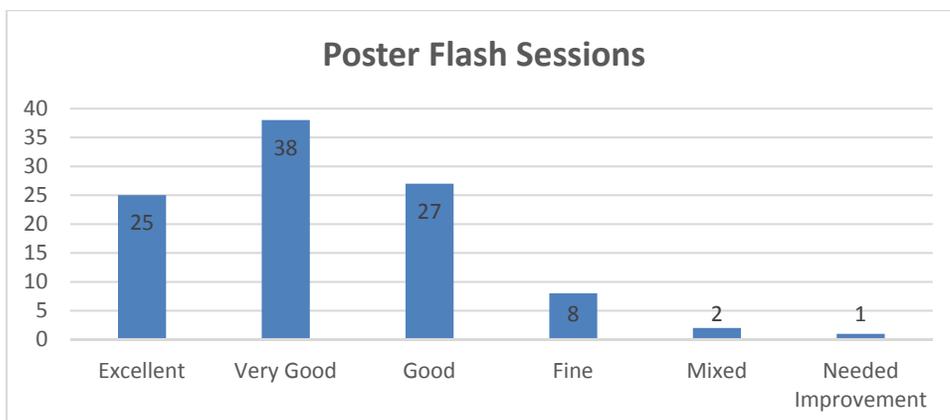
Q: Please rank the quality of the following.



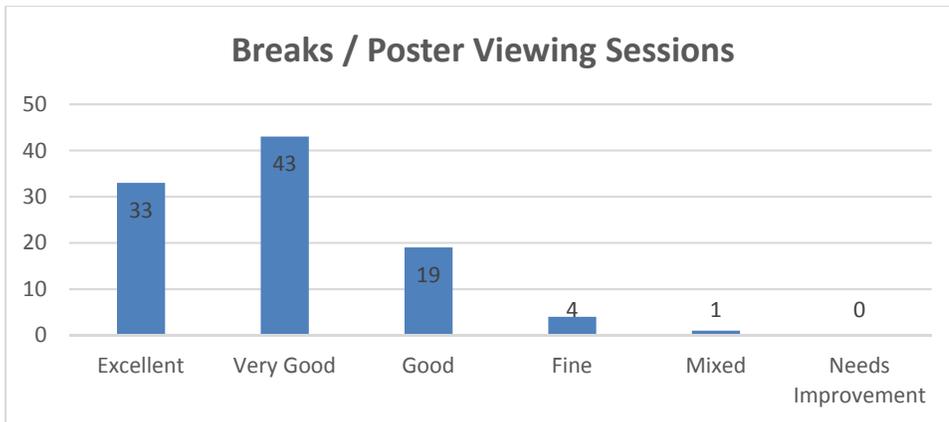
- I appreciated that the invited talks were had broader focus given that this was a conference spanning a broad range of science topics.
- Invited speakers were asked [to give a brief introduction and overview of the current state of the topic and to outline the current 'big open questions']. I found this extremely difficult partly because the topic assigned to me had 50-yr history and also because the vast majority of the audience do not have background knowledge of the topic. I was only helped by other speakers who already introduced some of ALMA highlights in my assigned topic before my talk.
- Unusually excellent invited/summary talks at start of each session, liked the interleaving of extragalactic/Galactic/stars/planets.



- Great pacing and high quality talks the entire time
- I felt that both invited and contributed talks were on a very mixed level: some were excellent contributions but there were also a number of talks not engaging the broader audience at this conference but rather just speaking to the specialists within the respective fields.
- There was a good number of talks.



- I think the poster flash sessions were great, and a very good opportunity to learn about very interesting projects.
- It would have been helpful to be able to submit the poster flash slide after we had our poster assignments to include that information on the slide



- As usual for most of the conference, I thought that we did not have enough time for the poster session.
- My only comment on the poster sessions was it was hard to find people because they were organized alphabetically. I think by topic is a much easier way to organize posters.
- There was a lot of time for viewing and discussing posters - a good thing.

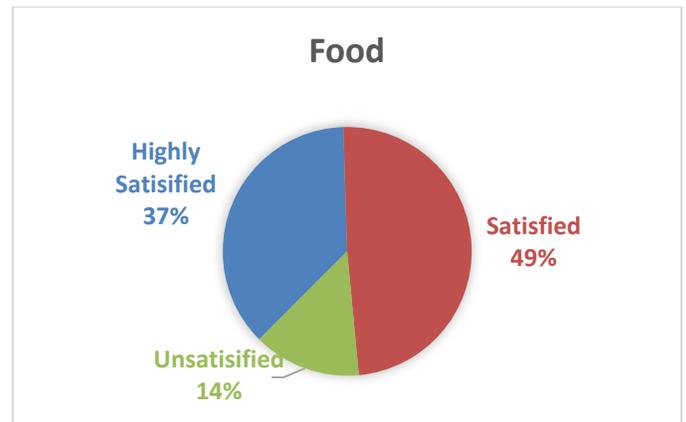
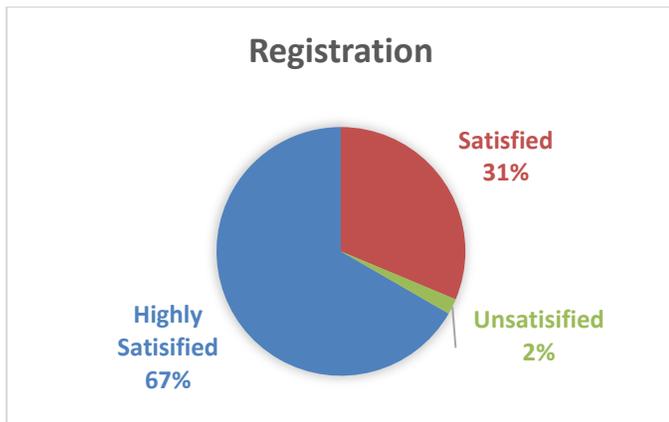
Additional comments on Scientific Content:

- Crystal did a great job, and for the most part things went smoothly.
- Having such a broad range of science is hard, because most speakers are really only trying to communicate with a small portion of the audience. That said, I think this went pretty well, mostly because everyone was trying hard to show off their coolest ALMA results!
- I absolutely liked mixing in Galactic/extragalactic solar system, this prevents people from taking a day off and it forces you to listen to things you don't work on
- I admit that I find it very hard to concentrate during meetings that cover literally all of astronomy. I think maybe these annual ALMA meetings should be discontinued now that ALMA is pumping out so much amazing data. Maybe multiple shorter meetings every couple of years about just disks, just galaxies, just star formation, etc.
- I didn't like much how randomly distributed were the different topics. I do see the advantage of having it that way, I just didn't like it.
- I personally had mixed feelings about the sessions in this conference -- many of the nearby galaxy studies were located in galaxy evolution sessions, and the recent exciting discovery using ALMA (Trembely+2016, Nature) was not presented nor mentioned.
There were many things to learn myself though, and I did enjoy the conference.
- I thought the SOC did an outstanding job of selecting talks and organizing them so that we had a variety each day.
- I very much liked the fact that there was one big room with all of the talks happening and a poster room next door. I think it would have been more interesting if there was a different talk from each science theme during each section, but I understand how that would be difficult to chair and that some specialists might not prefer that.
- I very much liked the idea of spreading similar topics all through the conference, instead of having an entire day dedicated to an individual topic.
- I was glad to see more women and minorities represented so well. Sadly, and perhaps as a result, one or two of the invited talks were not as usefully focused as they could have been by a more seasoned presenter. I suspect the lack of attendance by more senior people in the field was also tied to these decisions. Of course the dates - right at the beginning of the teaching year for university folks - was a deterrent too. On the other hand there were a LOT of really fascinating contributed talks. In some ways these conveyed the excitement in the field best.
- I would have liked to see more on evolved stars and solar system science. For me there was too much emphasis on high-redshift stuff and star formation, the scientific topics were not well-balanced. The poster flashes were a

great idea as they gave visibility to the many interesting projects that were not awarded a talk. The structure of the program (length of talks, number of talks a day etc) was perfect, and I very much enjoyed the invited review talks, which were all excellent.

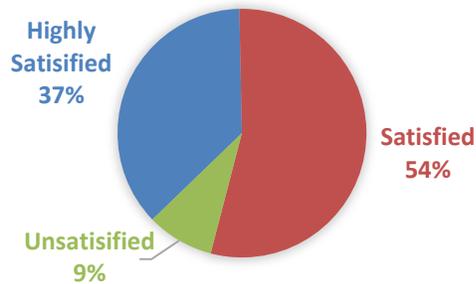
- It was a good idea to mix up the topics. Overall though the talk quality was uneven and there were not enough talks by US participants.
- less North Americans and more from other regions would have been beneficial.
- Nice balance of ALMA member countries; many of the talks were really well presented. In future, getting those solar system scientists out would be great!
- there should have been more time for general discussions and the session chairs should not cut off questions
- Very diverse, which was nice
- A little more unstructured time might have been good - the meeting was packed VERY tight with excellent talks - of which I caught every one.

Q: Logistics Satisfaction:



- Many people needed breakfast before the start of morning sessions, as was provided in the NRAO conference held in 2016 Apr in Charlottesville.
- No included breakfast really hurt interactions.
- The food was exceptional. As a vegetarian, I very much appreciated having protein options at not just meals but also breaks! Karen Ransom is a gem.
- I loved the tea and coffee selection available all day, and the snacks in the break were fantastic!
- The food was excellent, and the location was actually better than I might have expected.

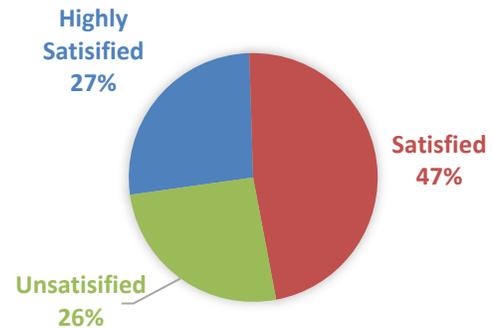
Venue



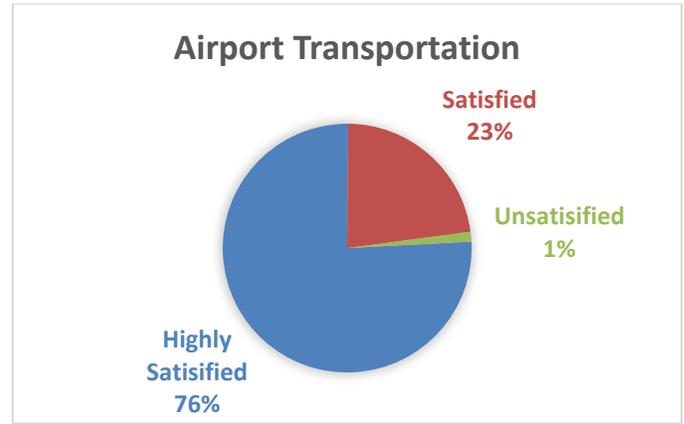
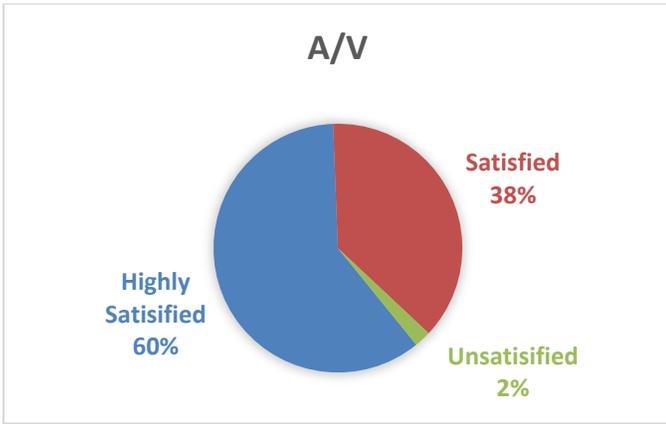
- I don't like being trapped in these expensive conference hotels, but the advantage is that you get more time to talk to people (even though it gets costly).
- I thank organizers for getting a great deal with the Hotel for the conference. But still it was a pricey hotel, above the maximum per Diem allowed in my case. I know some people did not come because of the cost. For future meetings, find cheaper hotels, please.
- I think the hotel was too expensive for some of us with a limited budget.
- I am just a bit skeptical about the Hotel (expensive with a service questionable) - although the conference room & poster room were excellent.
- the air conditioning is crazy, one freezes inside the building and has a temperature shock going outside. The meeting rooms without windows! Lunch room without windows! it is absolutely crazy. Being in a wonderful landscape and not having the possibility to enjoy it.
- the conference room was way too cold.
- The cost of the upscale venue was an obstacle for postdocs and grad. students in Taiwan.
- The hotel is too expensive.
- The hotel is too far away from restaurants and markets. The conference room was freezing cold.
- The hotel rooms had some problems that made it a very uncomfortable place to stay, unfortunately. The A/C in the rooms was extremely loud and could not be turned off and it was difficult to sleep well! I really enjoyed the meeting but did not like the hotel.

- The hotel was good, but it was unfortunate that there are no places to eat with reasonable price outside the hotel within walking distance.
- Very pleasant hotel staff, very pleasant LOC folks, quickly and easily accommodated when I asked for a chair for the poster session.

Location



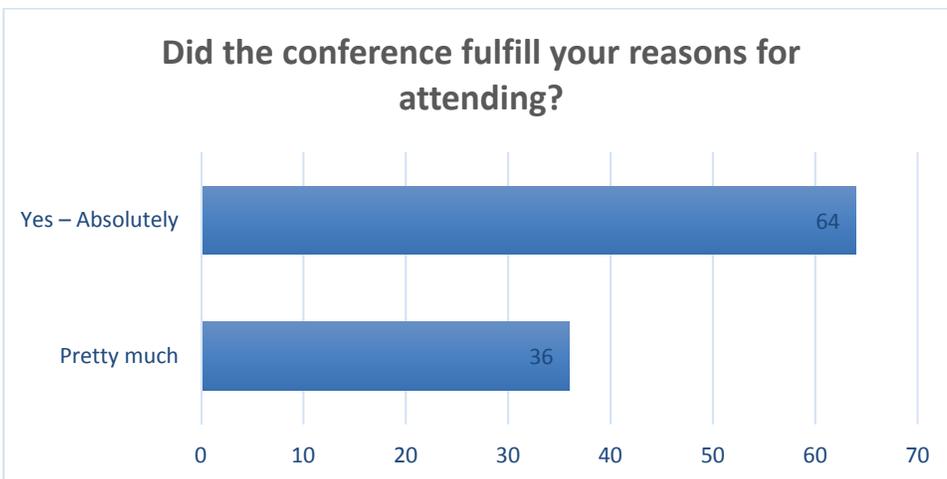
- I'm not a fan of hotels in the middle of nowhere for conferences so you should probably disregard my comment on the location
- I'm sure a lot of thought went into this...but why was it in Palm Springs? WAY too expensive. Way way way. And hard to get to.
- it would be nicer to have conference in a place where you aren't isolated in a hotel, i.e. without outside restaurants. omni is much better
- AC in indoor rooms too cold. The hotel was a waste of money and was too isolated from interesting places for walking. The venue was inconvenient to get to, even for Americans.
- The location - though very nice - was quite difficult to reach intercontinentally, as it required layovers (several in some cases) regardless of origin, and hence long travel times. A location accessible via ground transport from a major intercontinental airport would probably have been an easier option for attendants, and likely played a factor for people who decided not to attend. Though I understand that most times it is difficult to find a place that is nice, accessible and economically viable.



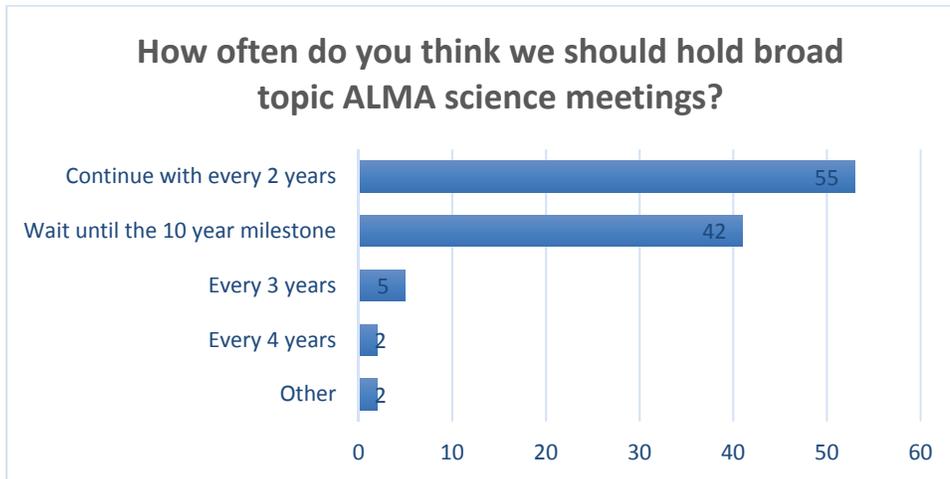
Additional comments on Logistics:

- I was part of the logistics. It would have been nice to have more concrete instructions further in advance. Some of the information that we were working with was incomplete or incorrect. I think everything went well for the most part.
- I'm glad that I had a car. I liked the \$50 discount for staying in the conference hotel.
- Logistic support was really smooth and was very happy about that.
- Logistics were generally great, except for the lack of power outlets.
- One of the best run conferences I've ever been to
- Thank you very much! it was great
- This conference was truly well done, perhaps the best ever that I have attended.
- Well done, thanks!
- Logistic was great.
- As invited speaker it was unclear if there would be any benefits (i.e. reduced registration fee), and in the end there were not.

Q: Did the conference fulfill your reason for attending?



Q: How often do you think we should hold broad topic ALMA science meetings?



Comments:

- In case of every 2 years, EVN symposium may conflict every time.
- space them out more later on when the results become more routine
- every 4 or five years to see more clearly the changes with respect to previous years
- Unless there are some abnormally huge developments to some fields, 5 years is the perfect cadence.
- Every 3 years would be better. It takes a while for data to be given to PIs and then analysis takes a while. 3 years would give PIs enough time to get work done to present
- Given ALMA is a multi-nation collaboration; I see a clear argument for every 2 years in different countries. Not as clear for every 2 years in US.

Q: What was the most beneficial aspect of the conference for you?

- Being able to meet with people I wouldn't normally see face-to-face who are working on similar research as I am. So I think having lots of breaks and poster time really helped that.
- Being able to show my own results. Learning about many ALMA results. Networking.
- Broadening the range of my knowledge in different fields, networking
- Catching up on science. Seeing old friends.
- Catching up on the vast amount of work that ALMA has accomplished!
- Connecting with ALMA users.
- Discussion with researchers with similar interests
- Frequent breaks and opportunities to go through posters, talk to speakers, while still covering a large amount of science
- Getting a broad overview of ALMA's current discoveries and where ALMA is headed in the future.
- getting an overview of the ALMA outcomes
- Getting to meet collaborators of mine and hear about all the amazing work ALMA is doing.
- Getting to see all the great new ALMA results
- giving a talk
- Got a good overview of current state of my research area.
- Great opportunity to meet and talk with ALMA experts and hear about progress in many different fields.
- Hearing about the great new results.
- Hearing ALMA results over a broad range of fields

- I could listen to the new results from different programs in my research field. I also talked to people that I did not know before.
- I enjoyed having time to focus on my project, talk to collaborators, and learn about other projects.
- I feel up to date with what ALMA is doing and what people are doing with ALMA - especially people who are combining the results with those from other telescopes or who are finding unexpected treasures in what is for them a new wavelength band. I feel I can defend ALMA's costs and complications - the new science is really transformational!
- I finally got to meet some collaborators that I had yet to interact with face-to-face
- interacting with my ALMA colleagues as well as PIs. I also really liked the invited review talks as they gave a great introduction to a broad range of topics.
- Interacting with the diverse and prolific NRAO/ALMA staff in an informal setting. Also, the invited review/summary talks.
- interactions. the review talks were not very stimulating
- interesting talks to me and meeting with colleagues
- invited reviews of various fields
- Knowing the latest ALMA results, discussion with participants.
- Launching my students into the ALMA world, and catching up with colleagues working in areas of interest to me.
- learning about results in other fields than my own
- Learning about all the great science being done with ALMA in fields other than my own
- Learn about the most up-to-date news in my field
- Learning about the up to date status and future of ALMA, learning about the wide range of science that has been done and interacting with colleagues.
- Learning the latest output from ALMA. Also it was very helpful to see all the ALMA related colleagues from all over world to talk in person (since we usually work remotely by e-mail and ticket bases).
- Long term: learning about all the ALMA science being done. Short term: conference was made super affordable for students.
- Meeting and interacting with international collaborators
- Networking
- Networking
- Networking with ALMA colleagues and collaborators.
- Networking with other staff and users of ALMA
- Networking with others using ALMA
- Networking with people I usually am in email contact with but now being able to speak face to face.
- Networking.
- Networking. Neat new results
- Opportunity to learn what ALMA is being used for in other fields of astronomy, networking beyond field of study
- opportunity to talk my research
- Opportunity to talk to NSF and NRAO management, and to a number of Board members.
- Recent ALMA results and collaboration
- science
- scientific content
- Scientific discussion with related researchers
- See what science is being done with ALMA.
- Seeing the broad topics covered by ALMA.
- Seeing my collaborators around the globe, and seeing presentations from research areas outside of mine.
- seeing the breadth of science being done with ALMA; connecting with other members of ALMA's organization -- the ALMA staff reception was a great idea.
- seeing the highlights of the ALMA achievements at once

- Seeing the new results from ALMA and how they compare with results of other existing radio astronomy facilities.
- Show our recent results to colleagues and learn new development in my research field
- Talking with people using the same tools and data.
- The conference allowed me to network with experts in my research area.
- The general overview of new ALMA results.
- The opportunity to hear advances in numerous areas.
- The science results.
- There were people in attendance who cared about more than CO and dust emission.
- This conference bring me new ideas on what science pursue and to analyze my data.
- to know the progress relative with ALMA in many fields
- To know up-to-date infor of recent ALMA results
- to meet collaborators and other astronomers and discuss about science
- To meet some specific persons in my research field.
- To understand latest ALMA information.
- To find some research collaborator.

Q: What was the least beneficial aspect of the conference for you?

- contributed talks outside of my field of expertise that were more specific (and reasonably so given that they only have 12 minutes)
- Costed my time.
- distance travelled
- Excursion to a local festival.
- I failed to catch and talk to some ...
- I would complain about Palm Desert being far from everything, but honestly, the location worked out well for me. And the off-site restaurants nearby turned out to be brilliant, if a bit \$\$.
- I would have killed for a nearby Mexican restaurant
- It was expensive (why was registration nearly the cost of a AAS meeting??) and there was little participation from modelers. Q&A sessions fell a little flat.
- Lack of breadth in presentations given within each session, they should cover each field more evenly, which means a larger variety of researchers in each field needs to be attracted. A more accessible location for intercontinental travellers may be beneficial in future, or perhaps parallel sessions to allow more talks and hence a larger contribution from each single field, attracting more researchers and hence making the conference more useful for networking and collaborations within one's scientific field.
- location -- was hard to get there from europe.
- Lots of talks in areas I am not working in.
- Lousy weather.
- I thought the perpetually available coffee was a great idea.
- Lunches were fine, though I preferred the boxed lunch - we could eat them outside.
- Many people in our community did not attend. This might have been due to price, especially for those coming from Chile.
- Not sure that sitting inside for lunch with such wonderful weather was beneficial. It would have been good to be able to get outside for fresh air more often.
- I would like you to make poster award.
- If the meetings were to continue with the same frequency I think an even stronger effort should be made to identify invited speakers who can frame the overall questions that ALMA can address, also promoting synergy across the different (typical) topical borders, and also be a bit more selective when putting together the program of contributed talks.

- It could perhaps be interesting to ask the broader base of ALMA users what their feelings are about the frequency of these meetings. It seemed that the attendance/enthusiasm for this meeting was somewhat down compared to previous ones.
- No nearby appropriate restaurants
- not enough on my specific field
- not enough talks on the science I am interested in (evolved stars, solar system science)
- Not enough time for touring
- Not your fault, but having it in September (during the teaching semester) made my life difficult. I generally don't go to September conferences because of that.
- Number of attendees per research area was not great.
- Possibly add another day to the meeting to spread it out
- Probably it would have been helpful to have an extra day in total so that there could have been more relaxed time for discussions - with the talks, posters, meals, there was limited downtime to absorb and process the information.
- Science talks.
- scientifically too broad, but I knew this already.
- Some of the contributed talks on topics not related to my field were a bit too detailed to be of interest to me, but that wasn't unexpected
- Specialist talks focused on, e.g., modeling with no or little presentation of ALMA specific results.
- Talk sessions outside my topic area that I still attended
- the cost
- The poster flash talks were least beneficial to me. The poster room wasn't large enough that we needed to sacrifice ~an hour of science talks for a brief summary of peoples' poster numbers.
- The resort not being within walking distance to places to eat in town.
- the sensation that ALMA is ONLY a NRAO project. It would have been fairer to openly say and advertise that ALMA IS AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT
- The set up for drinks at the end was not efficient. I eventually left the line and just went to the regular bar. This is very minor, but all I could think of...
- The way the posters were organized (see comment above).
- To inform ALMA users our science outputs
- too expansive and too far from the main city, adding time to transportation
- Too much participants and had not enough time to talk all of them to discuss in individual topics in the same time check talks and posters. May be one day longer (full week) conference could help on this?
- very few talks in my field (evolved stars)

Q: Please list any additional comments you have.

- Although it's awful to have many people come for only their own specialty areas - cosmology, galaxies, disks etc - it's easier to assimilate what is going on in the field if the relevant talks are grouped together. I found the way galaxy talks of one kind or another (including high-z) were mixed throughout the conference to be a bit disorienting. And now that I think about it, the transitional disk invited talk was also oddly scheduled. I think the lack of continuity makes it difficult for non-aficionados to get real feel for the nuanced differences between sub-fields of a broader area. In future, it may be necessary to clump things together and deal with the shifts in audience - there is just so much coming from ALMA!
- Despite of the critics I truly thanks the organizers for all the hard work done.
- I think ALMA impact on Science is significant, so encourage the ALMA institutions to keep organizing ALMA meeting bit a more focus. The 10ys may have some general talks and then parallel sessions?
- Excellent organization.

- For those who gave flash poster talks, there was an odd situation where right after you gave your minute talk, you are mostly likely to want to stand next to your poster. But, the other posters you mostly likely want to see (i.e. the ones closest to your field) are also stuck at their posters because you all gave your flash talks in the same group. That said, you could find them later given the number of poster breaks, but it was harder to track them down. One small solution to this could be to organize the posters in the poster room by the order of the flash talks, instead of alphabetically. That way, all of the poster speakers could easily step over to another poster they would want to see without having to leave their poster for too long. This is, however, extremely minor, as this conference was extremely well run from the venue to food to social events to talks. All in all, a great success!
- Great conference overall.
- great job Karen and the LOC!
- great job, everyone!
- I am puzzled at why the postdocs had a meeting afterward when no one else was around. How does this serve their interests?
- I recommend exploring other ways to bring the ALMA user community together, such as special sessions in AAS and IAU meetings, poster session at the TAC meeting, etc. I think these meetings still serve a useful purpose.
- I could only attend for 2 days because of constraints, so I couldn't take full advantage of all the activities, and the conference was somewhat expensive.
- I enjoyed the meeting. I'd like to thank all the organizers!
- I think the 2-year schedule can remain viable. I think the cause of low attendance for this meeting compared to the last one is largely because 1) it was held after the semester started in most US universities and 2) it was held in a place that was rather inconvenient and/or expensive for most people to get to, compared to a major city somewhere.
- I think we've gotten to the point where it's really hard to have an all-encompassing ALMA meeting that will cover the most interesting ALMA results of the previous N years. So I think waiting for 10 would be good so there can be more of a retrospective and we can see what some of large programs produce etc.
- Just thank you so much for this great conference!
- Logistics were very well done. Venue was OK. I like the resort, but it felt isolated from town and difficult to access much without a car. A long trip to get there.
- Many people, including those who attended this conference and those who didn't, described this meeting more as a social event of the ALMA community than as a science conference. Indeed, the holistic coverage of research areas made the number of talks and expert audience small for individual subjects, and that probably contributed to the generally low-key Q&A after individual talks. An alternative option may be smaller and more focused meetings for maybe? ALMA-science category N?, where N being 1, .., 5. On the other hand, ALMA has changed the way we study our targets; for example, high-z galaxies are now studied in the way nearby galaxies used to be studied, and nearby galaxies are studied like Galactic sources. And there are some scientific and technical issues common to multiple research areas. Moreover, it is interesting to learn how ALMA has made significant progress (or transformation) in research areas outside of mine. So having this BIG ALMA Meeting from time to time (less frequent than every 2 years), is probably worthwhile and good for the ALMA science community. Thank you for organizing one!
- overall, run very efficiently.
- Overall very happy with the conference, the organizers were very nice and helpful, it was a good experience.
- Thank you again to organizers, you did a superb job! I especially appreciated the food arrangements and labels on food for allergies.
- Thank you so much for the wonderful conference. Special thanks to Karen and Sabrina for helping me.
- Thank you very much for giving me to attend the conference. I spent very nice time.
- Thank you very much for organizing the conference. We had a great time and hope to continue this to see more ALMA science results regularly from colleagues from all over the world also have regular opportunities to see colleagues.
- Thank you very much for organizing this conference. Overall it was quite nice.

- thanks!
- The conference room was very cold...
- The reason for suggesting 10 years rather than every two years is that it allows it to be much more of an update of the fields that ALMA is impacting rather than a quick overview of latest results. The latter would tend to make it more likely that people would come in for a few sections (one or two days) rather than to hear the grand overview. I.e. I felt the sense that it was a conference on the level of a Protostars and Planets or other major review - but in this case with the review being the instrument was what was in common!
- the venue is too artificial, for spoiled rich Americans. I would have preferred something more simple but closer to nature
- There should be other international meetings like this held more frequently (maybe every year or 18 months) where science is not necessarily the emphasis. Meeting and interacting with our coworkers from other ARCs is invaluable.
- this was a good meeting!
- This was a very expensive conference compared to others I have attended in the past 5 years. The coffee and food were great (except the boxed lunches; those were mediocre), but the location was overpriced and difficult to access.
- The A/V setup was the best I've seen. The poster setup was very good.
- Very well-organized overall. It was clear that a lot of attention was paid to small details (e.g., coffee/tea, food during poster breaks, duration of talks+breaks, etc.), and these little things can really add up to either make or break the experience.
- We can subject-divided conferences instead of every-two-year big overall conference.