Society of American Archivists

Tip Sheet for No-Cost Web Conferencing Options
(Prepared July 2012)

In response to SAA component group leaders' requests, provided below is information about two of the most widely used options for no-cost web conferencing. Other options are available. The information provided is current as of the date in the header. Requirements and functionalities for using these tools may have changed.

Both options require a computer, an internet connection, and the freely downloadable software. You may find them easier to use if you have a microphone or headset or a webcam.

Tips for a Successful First Meeting Using the Software

- Set up your account and download the software in advance of your meeting.

- Set up a practice call with a colleague or friend in advance of your scheduled meeting to make sure everything is working correctly. If you want to use video options, practice using them. It helps to be aware of how others will see you on the video.

- If you are using a laptop with a built-in webcam, it may automatically default to using the webcam.

- Determine whether you want to use the video or audio-only conferencing option or a combination for your meeting. Make sure you know who will be trying to participate via video and audio.

Google+ Hangouts

Features:
- Google+ allows video chat with up to nine people.
- You must have a Google+ account to start a meeting/"Hangout." You'll also need to have a Google+ account to participate in a Hangout using video.
- You don't have to use the video chat option. People can also participate with voice only (via Google+ or telephone).
- People can participate either by having or starting a Google+ account or you can use Google+ to call people using their telephone number.
- You can schedule a Hangout and invite participants using the Events feature in Google+.

Resources:
About Hangouts:
http://support.google.com/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1215273&topic=1257349&ctx=topic

Getting started with Hangouts (this assumes you're using the video option):
http://support.google.com/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1340083&topic=1651183&ctx=topic

Starting a Hangout:
http://support.google.com/plus/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1215275&topic=1651547&ctx=topic

More info:
http://support.google.com/plus/bin/topic.py?hl=en&topic=1257349

Skype

Features:
- Also has options for video or voice-only conferencing for up to 25 people.
- You just have to set up a free Skype account to start a call.
- Skype is free to use if everyone on the call has a Skype account. If you want to call people on a telephone number, there is a charge.

Getting started:
https://support.skype.com/en-us/faq/FA2831/Making-a-conference-call-Windows

Complete list of available FAQs:
https://support.skype.com/en-us/