

Navigating through this transition period



We are back at the office and yet still at home working, simultaneously attending virtual and in-person meetings, donning and doffing our masks, eating lunch together in the park and alone at our desks. We are transitioning to a different way of working, which has been easy for some and a challenge for others. In this article, a few colleagues give their insights into how they have been navigating through this transition period.

'... transitions are the boats on which you embark to navigate and get to the next version of yourself'

Ingrid Contreras Arias on being back in the office

I have never been afraid of change. For me, it represents a channel that connects your present self with your future one. If changes are channels, then transitions are the boats on which you embark to navigate those channels to get to the next version of yourself. These past 18 months have marked an important milestone in human history, a marker before and after which our way of life (and the way we breathe 😊) has changed. Although most of us are craving the return to 'normality', I think the reality is that we have just cast off from the dock and will navigate a few months more, not to find that old normal we're craving, but the next version of the world we will live in.

Never stop learning!

In my boat, I've been re-learning how to work at the office: 'Sh...ugar, what was that keyboard shortcut for printing 😞?' My body and mind have been re-adapting to the commute, '*Votre attention, s'il vous plaît, nous sommes momentanément retenus en quai, le train démarrera dans quelques minutes* 🧑🏻🔴'. ['Your attention please, we are momentarily detained on the platform, the train will start in a few minutes.'] I've also been reminding my brain that it doesn't need to send me on hourly visits to the fridge: 'You got this, Ingrid 🍷! Have a coffee instead!' In addition to this, it's been a real pleasure seeing my colleagues again in 3D – joining some for a beer after a long week of work has been great. So too has been catching up on my reading on my train ride home! My boat is still weaving its way downstream and I'm pretty sure there is still a long list of things to learn and re-learn before I get to the next destination.

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So while we may have things to learn and relearn, what has never been in doubt, however, is that personal connections at the Organisation are an integral part of strengthening our work community. They provide colleagues, newcomers and veterans alike, with the opportunity to interact socially and not simply about work.

In this vein, *In-house* asked the Book Club and Knitting Group about their recent activities and how they've been handling this transition period.

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'...the materials and process will drive us to cast on* new things and transition through the winter with warmth'

Emily Tagliaro and Lucy Hogan on the Knitting Group

Although knitting isn't a winter sport, the all-zoomed out Knitting Group hibernated over summer to emerge into the clear light of the autumn sky, needles in hand.

Autumn is breeding season for sheep, which will spend the winter months developing woolly coats (thank you!) and incubating new lambs for spring. While to knitters everywhere, the first breaths of cool autumn air send a clear message: gather up what you'll need for the winter, cast on new projects, and turn the skeins on your shelves into serviceable woollens!

Winter (in the Northern Hemisphere) is coming! But fear not *Game of Thrones* fans, winter is in fact a season of closeness. Livestock cluster together in barns to gain warmth. And knitters? Well, we create mittens, hats, socks and scarves that embrace our loved ones in their handmade woolly layers. Winter is also a time of celebration and enjoyment, of slowing down and savouring. We retrieve our favourite warm garments of previous years and gather them around us as we gather our friends and families close. The appreciation we have for these people, the materials and process will drive us to cast on new things and transition through the winter with warmth.

The Knitting Group is also a celebration of chatter and good company. Please join us with your positive vibes – craft project in hand or not - on Tuesdays at 13h00 (CET) in Salon Leclainche or via the following Zoom link: <https://oie.zoom.us/j/93037366426?from=addon>

* Cast on = (KNITTING) make the first row of a specified number of loops on the needle.

Sonia Fèvre, Christine Leon Rolez and Ingrid Contreras Arias on the Book Club

Did you know the OIE has its own Book Club? We meet every few months to share ideas about literature amongst the multi-cultural OIE community. We launched the Club during the pandemic with *An African in Greenland* by Tété-Michel Kpomassie, who took us from Togo to the Arctic and from colonial and post-colonial Africa to Europe. Kpomassie is a bright and driven adventurer who braved frontiers, bureaucracies, and the biting cold to live with the Inuit communities of Greenland. In his epic tale, he shows us, with humility and affection, how he learned to live like an 'Eskimo', eat their foods and understand their world. At the time, the lives of this indigenous people were changing, transitioning to a modern world, where their values and customs were struggling to maintain meaning. We were moved and intrigued by this story. Here is a [four-minute video highlight of the author's odyssey](#).

As Book Club members were learning to live in transition with the Covid-19 world, it is clear that they were yearning for alternative worlds. The second book we read was *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Some members enjoyed it more than others, but the discussion, held as a hybrid Zoom meeting and live from Salon Leclainche, led to thought-provoking reflections on the decisions we make and how we think about the alternative lives we may have lived had we made other choices.

Such meanderings took us to the choices we had made to be based here in Paris at the OIE, which then led us to decide on a French book for our third reading. Our next book will be *Bel Ami* by Guy de Maupassant. Written in 1885, the novel will show us France in the process of modernisation. It must be a story that has captured the

imagination, as ten film adaptations have been made of it.

The Book Club itself, and the possibility to hold a first physical/hybrid meeting, is in its small way helping us to regain that sense of community we all love about working at the OIE. We hope to maintain our next physical/hybrid meeting in December and find better ways to integrate those on the screen in the interactive discussion. Colleagues from across the world are invited to join us.

Bel Ami by Guy de Maupassant, available [in English from Project Gutenberg](#) and in French from [La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec](#).

Hybrid Yoga classes and the 2022 General Session

At the HQ Retreat held earlier this month, *In-house* ran into **Mara Gonzalez Ortiz** and we talked about the Yoga classes she offers to interested staff. She explained that during this transitional time, she will be giving hybrid classes, in person and virtually via Zoom, on Mondays and Wednesdays and virtually only on Fridays. Should you be interested in attending her approximately hour-long classes, held usually around noon (CET), please [contact Mara](#) directly. And the topic of the ongoing transitions and hybrid models inevitably took the conversation in the direction of the General Session. *In-house* shares the scoop: next year's GS will be a hybrid model, held in person at the Maison de la Chimie in Paris and virtually. Mara will, of course, communicate the details to everyone in due time.

'The only constant in life is change' - Greek philosopher Heraclitus

Everything changes - 'Tout change'

And finally, our in-house poet and comedian, **Alex Ginzburg**, shares his reflections on change in his newly remastered cinematic slam entitled, ['Tout change'](#).

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As we head towards a post-pandemic world, we will undoubtedly continue to undergo a series of transitions within our working environments. Many of us may see this as an opportunity to reinvent our working community and fully embrace the new changes. However, some of us may consider it a rather stressful challenge. For those in the latter category, perhaps the following resources will help you through the transition:

- [9 Tips for a Smooth Transition Back to the Office After Pandemic WFH](#) from *The Muse*
- [Hybrid Working After Covid: 5 Tips to Maximize Your In-Office Productivity \(and Sanity\)](#) from *Findcourses.com*.

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