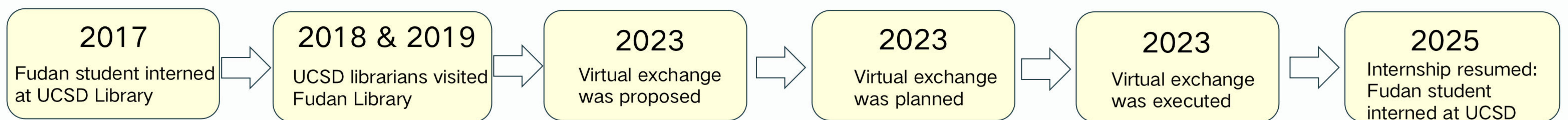# From Pivot to Innovate: Librarians Virtual Exchange Program between UC San Diego and Fudan University

Xi Chen, UC San Diego Library; Heather Briston, UC San Diego Library; Xiaoyuan Chen, Fudan University Library

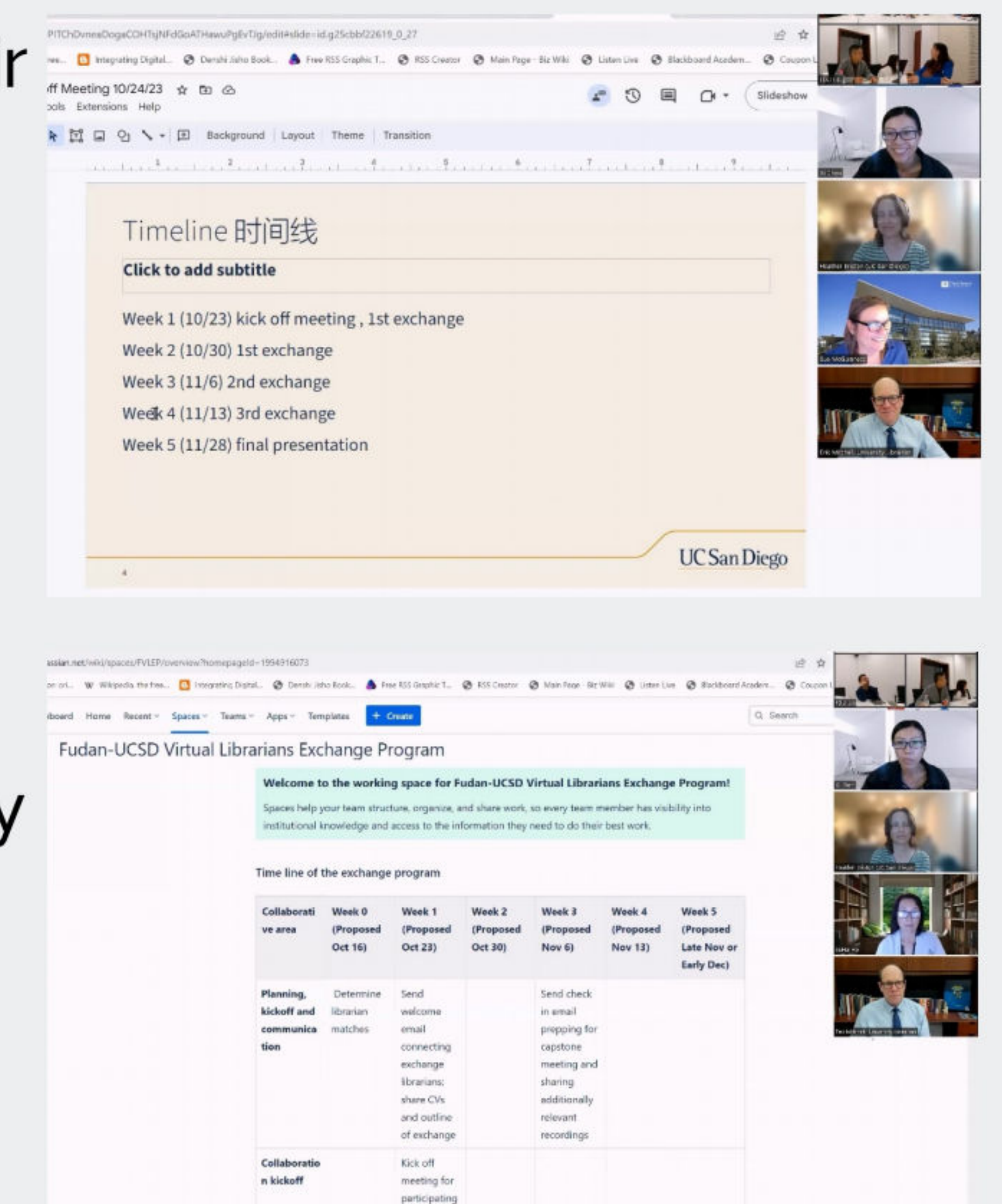| 2017	2018 & 2019	2023	2023	2023	2025
Fudan student interned at UCSD Library	UCSD librarians visited Fudan Library	Virtual exchange was proposed	Virtual exchange was planned	Virtual exchange was executed	Internship resumed: Fudan student interned at UCSD

1. Background and Motivation

UCSD and Fudan began collaborating in 2017 through internships, librarian visits, and research support. Activities paused during COVID-19 resumed in 2023 as a virtual exchange due to budget cuts.

Xi Chen (UCSD), Heather Briston (UCSD), and Weihua Shi (Fudan) led the successful transition, with approval from both libraries' leadership.

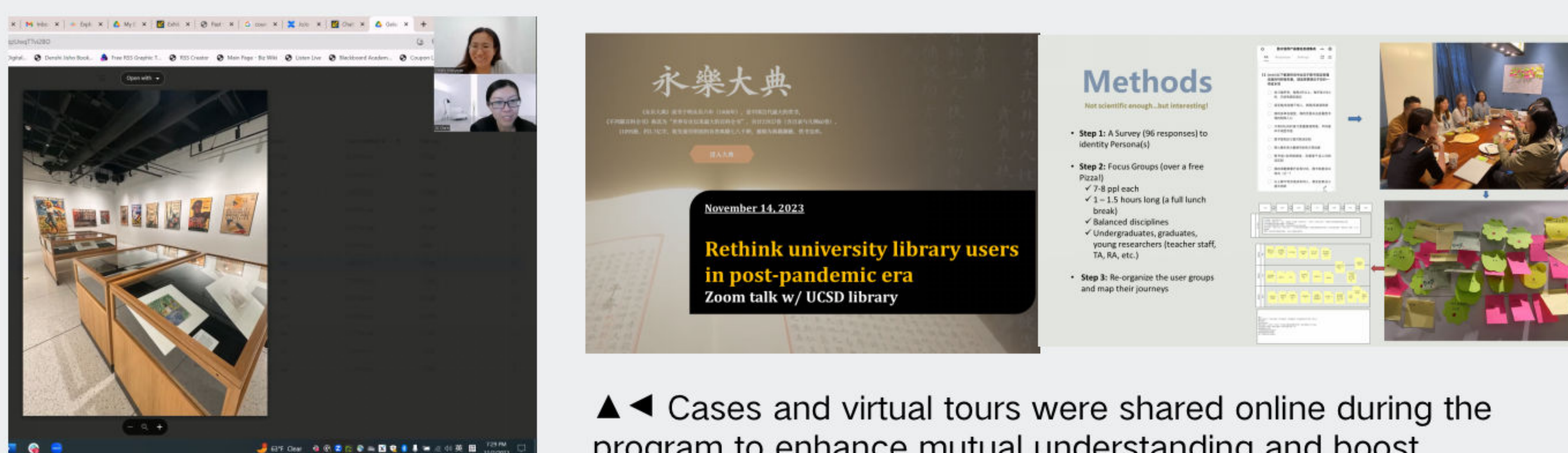## 2. Program Design and Execution

- Fudan selected three librarians and submitted their CVs and proposals.
- Xi and Heather (UCSD) recruited 11 UCSD librarians through an info session.
- The exchange ran from October 16 to November 20, 2023, supported by an intranet page.
- Participants were matched by expertise and met via Zoom, email, and Padlet.
- A kickoff Zoom meeting introduced the program, and participants were encouraged to meet virtually at least three times.
- 100% engagement from participants of both libraries.
- A final Zoom presentation featured reflections on topics like exhibits, AI, and user experience, comparing academic libraries in the US and China.

▲Zoom final presentation attend by librarians and staff from UCSD and Fudan.

3. Participants Insights and Takeaways

"*This experience has provided a valuable solution for budget-friendly, digitally-driven academic exchanges and highlighted the resilience of libraries in adapting to global challenges.*"
Xiaoyuan Chen (Fudan)

▲◄ Cases and virtual tours were shared online during the program to enhance mutual understanding and boost inspirations from each party.

Xiaoyuan (Fudan) believes that while traditional on-site exchanges would have required field studies, interviews, and workshops, the online format simplified the process. Virtual tools like Zoom, VooV Meeting, and Confluence supported effective communication and knowledge sharing.

For example, UCSD librarians conducted live virtual tours of their special collections and collaborative spaces, allowing for real-time Q&A and follow-ups via Confluence. Time zone differences were managed effectively, ensuring full participation despite the condensed one-month schedule.

▲The program provided first-hand research materials to foster a co-authored case study paper and was voted to be the most popular poster during the forum.

4. Program Impact and Future Directions

- A program highlight was Xiaoyuan Chen (Fudan)'s workshop on Fudan Library user behavior using Customer Journey Mapping, revealing similarities with UCSD.
- The exchange fostered shared understanding, sparked discussion on common challenges, and inspired plans for future collaboration, including a co-authored paper on AI ethics in libraries.
- Feedback survey showed that 92% (all but one) would participate again and would recommend to others.

5. Conclusion

- To overcome budget and travel limits, we launched a virtual exchange between UCSD and Fudan, supported by strong collaboration and technology.
- One-on-one engagement, combined with synchronous and asynchronous communication, proved effective despite the 15-hour time difference.
- The month-long format enabled deeper collaboration. While virtual exchanges can't fully replace in-person interaction, careful design made this program successful, highlighting the potential for sustainable and impactful global partnerships.
- In the survey, most participants said that they definitely learned things and would share them with their colleagues and/or apply to their work.

Information on the presenters:
- Xi Chen, Chinese Studies Librarian and East Asia Collection Strategist, UC San Diego Library, xic031@ucsd.edu
- Heather Briston, Director of Research Impact Program, UC San Diego Library, hbriston@ucsd.edu
- Xiaoyuan Chen, Librarian, Fudan University Library, xy_chen@fudan.edu.cn