The Czech and Slovak Crystallographic Association was bidding for the congress several times and finally won the bid in Montreal 2014, for the 25th anniversary congress. At that time, no one realized what was won. The preparation of the Congress started after the 24th congress in Hyderabad. In 2017-18, the International Program Committee (IPC) was formed with 35 members, mostly representing IUCr commissions. The IPC meeting was held from 14 to 16 May, 2019 in Prague. This meeting was related to some kind of workshop called Current Trends and Future of Crystallography, where representatives from all commissions presented current problems, trends, and highlights of their fields. During the subsequent two-day meeting, the whole programme scheme was agreed on consisting of 3 plenary lectures, 35 keynote lectures, more than 100 standard scientific microsymposia, and several special sessions. In March 2020 everything was stopped by Covid, and the congress was postponed to summer 2021. The situation was not better at the beginning of 2021 but then we saw a presentation system gCon developed by Prague group T.R.I., which is basically independent on the locations of chairpersons and speakers, and finally a hybrid congress was organized. This form brings new problems but also several benefits. In addition to costs, one problem was, for example, the timing of real and virtual poster sessions. However, the benefits of hybrid form are numerous. The presentations could be watched comfortably all over the world, especially in the form designed by the T.R.I. group. Full statistics of online accesses were available. That means, e.g. number of accesses to each individual presentation, basically each minute. Not only the number, but it can easily be found who was watching what and for how long. For each presentation, there could be a table of participants. The largest benefit is the availability of recordings in several months after the congress for online watching. The number of unique accesses (multiple accesses by single participant to the same presentation is taken as one) was the same during the congress as in the next month after the congress. All the materials were available for 7 months after the congress, and until the very end almost every day someone was watching something. The poster materials contained multiple pages, presentations, and even videos. At the beginning of 2023, we made everything available again.

There were more than 500 registered participants on site, but quite a number of them arrived for a shorter time, and more than 1100 online participants. Comprehensive statistics brought many interesting numbers. For example, transferred data in stream: 11.8 TB, total number of slides: 18 042, viewed hours in stream during the congress: 15 318, working hours of technicians: 1 400, total number of lecture views during the congress: 12 325 (and 35 054 poster views).

The final numbers were available after the closure of the gcon website. They included post-conference unique accesses to all materials, and top presentations could be identified. The top keynote lectures by visits: Dylan Jaytilaka: Quantum crystallography: Past, present and future (277 unique visits), Lukáš Palatinus: Electron crystallography of molecular crystals (246), Andrew Goodwin: Structural flexibility and disorder in functional materials. The lowest number of visits was 35. Obviously, more specific topics meant fewer visits. The lectures that were the most watched in sessions were the following: B. Brummerstedt Iversen: Pair Distribution Function Analysis in Materials Science (142), N. Ban: Structural Basis of SARS-CoV-2 Shutdown and Programmed Ribosomal Frameshifting (131), S. Rosenkranz: Recent Developments in Measuring and Analysing Large 3D Volumes of Scattering Data to Investigate the Role of Complex Disorder on Crystalline Materials Properties (129), J.A. Marquez: Online Crystallography: Automated, Remote-Controlled Protein-to-Structure Pipelines for Drug Design (128), and T. Gorelik:X-ray Powder Diffraction and Electron Single-Crystal diffraction – Two Techniques for Structure Analysis of Nanocrystals (127). The most popular sessions were: Automation in biocrystallography: tools, perspectives and applications, Crystal structures of pharmaceutical and organic compounds from electron diffraction, Total scattering, Structural biology against coronavirus/covid-1 and Machine learning in biological and structural sciences (over 190 views). The lowest number of views from regular sessions was close to 50. Popular poster sessions could be estimated by the average number of viewers: Drug design, Machine learning in biological and structural sciences, Structural bioinformatics, Automation in biocrystallography, Quantum crystallography, Powder diffraction, Cryo-EM. For both microsymposia and poster sessions, a large number of abstracts does not mean high interest for the session. All individual posters could also be ordered by number of views – from over 200 down to 11 for the least visited poster. The top number can hardly be achieved in real poster sessions, and even 11 is not so bad a number. Of course, in these numbers, the time of viewing was not included in the estimation.

Hybrid congress and on-line presentations bring additional benefits: availability of materials on-line for basically unlimited time and the comprehensive statistics giving interesting information. The tools for this were rapidly developed during a difficult Covid time when they were really necessary. However, they should not be forgotten and/or thrown away in more normal times.