

5

Chapter five

A centre for learning and development



Career Tips Thursdays

Mindful of the importance of career fulfilment to staff, this year UN Geneva launched a new series of interactive monthly sessions on career-related topics. These one-hour sessions, known as Career Tips Thursdays, are presented by experts from UN Geneva's recruitment team and its Centre for Learning and Multilingualism, and provide tips, guidance and insights for career and professional development. The topics this year included understanding a UN job announcement, writing an effective application, preparing for competency-based interviews, and networking.

More than 700 people have taken part in the sessions and provided very positive feedback on their usefulness. The series was immediately made available in other UN duty stations with the same or a similar time zone as UN Geneva, including UN offices and peacekeeping operations in Europe, Africa and Asia.

Future sessions will cover job-hunting in the UN system, awareness of personal and professional skills, strengths and competencies, and more.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Career Tips Thursdays and watch recordings of previous sessions.



conecta: a platform designed for cross-system collaboration

conecta is a platform designed to connect people with projects across the UN system. Staff members leading projects can find talented volunteers, while volunteers can find opportunities to develop their skills and widen their experience. A joint venture of UN Geneva's Centre for Learning and Multilingualism and Young UN: Agents for Change, conecta encourages collaboration and helps bring projects to fruition.

Since winning the global Reimagine the UN Together challenge – the “Dragons' Den” in 2020, conecta has continued improving the platform's functionality as well as the user interface and experience. More than 800 people are now using the platform from a range of different UN system organizations and duty stations. As a next step, the conecta team is planning to launch engagement labs to understand users' experience and to guide continuous improvement.

As further inspiration and to encourage people to engage with the platform, in 2021 the conecta team organized an online event entitled “Managing Your Career in the Next Context”, held on 23 September with executive coach Paolo Gallo.



During the “Managing Your Career in the Next Context” online event, attendees received practical tips for their careers in a changing world of work.



Collaborating virtually to share knowledge at UN Geneva

The world of work continued to change rapidly in 2021. Accordingly, colleagues from across UN Geneva collaborated to produce live virtual events dedicated to sharing knowledge on topics critical to the future of work.

Through the Knowledge and Learning Commons – a space for diplomats as well as staff and interns from across the Geneva-based international organizations to collaborate and learn – experts and practitioners shared insights and engaged participants in discussion. The topics included technology and innovation, virtual accessibility, gender equality in organizations, information literacy, well-being at work and the future of conferencing. The aim of these sessions is to deepen the knowledge of everyone taking part and strengthen their capacity to adapt to an evolving world.

The Knowledge and Learning Commons held 50 virtual sessions in 2021, with 3,355 participants from Geneva and duty stations across the world. Furthermore, the UN Library and Archives Geneva worked to enrich knowledge-sharing by means of new tools and technologies, such as online tutorials, hybrid collaborations and live events.

Virtual learning also continued via the Library's The Next Page podcast, which is designed to advance the conversation on multilateralism. Twenty-five episodes were released in 2021, with guests exploring topics ranging from diversity in youth voices, to women in technology, to the history of multilateralism, to the Sustainable Development Goals.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the activities of the Knowledge and Learning Commons in 2021.



UN Photo: Namron Deep Jain

Members of the Knowledge and Learning Commons team work to broadcast an event.



UN Photo: Zhang Ning

A Knowledge and Learning Commons virtual event is broadcast from the Library Events Room.

Peer-to-peer learning: a startup guide is here!

Peer-to-peer learning – when colleagues teach other colleagues – is a useful tool for knowledge-sharing. UN Geneva has found that it can increase staff expertise and efficiency as well as overall professional development, while helping to foster a harmonious work environment and support the organization's goals for its work programmes.

In 2021, the [UN Library and Archives Geneva](#) launched a quick and easy six-step [video guide](#) to help managers set up peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing in their teams. The video guide for managers assumes no prior experience with peer-to-peer learning programmes, but helps them to set one up and keep it running smoothly.



Scan the QR code to watch the [video guide](#).



A video guide helps managers set up peer-to-peer learning programmes.

Online language exams aligned with the United Nations Language Framework

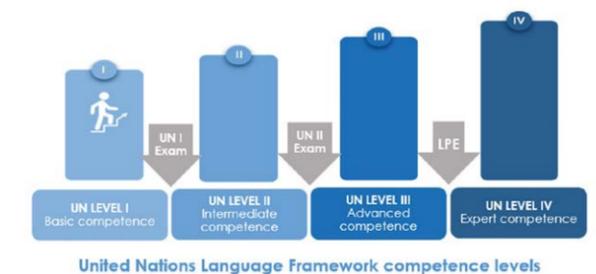
In 2021, staff from UN Geneva's language training programme worked closely with their counterparts at Headquarters to devise and pilot UN level I and UN level II examinations for the six official languages. These standardized exams, aligned to the United Nations Language Framework, test language ability. Successful candidates can be certified as having UN level I (basic) or UN level II (intermediate) competence. The new exams are intended to complement the already well-established Language Proficiency Examination, which corresponds to UN level III (advanced) and is currently the only official UN language exam that offers global certification.

The pilot exams are housed on a dedicated online platform and are designed in accordance with clear and detailed specifications. These specifications include guidelines for exam developers, so that new versions of the exam can be compared with previous versions.

Exam preparation materials were provided to candidates. Examiners received materials to help them administer the pilot exams. One hundred and seven volunteer candidates from the United Nations Secretariat, in various locations around the world, sat the pilot exams in 2021, and those who passed were presented with a certificate. The candidates also provided feedback that will be valuable for future initiatives to assess language skills.

What are the six official UN languages?

- Arabic
- French
- Chinese
- Russian
- English
- Spanish



The new level I and level II language exams are aligned with the United Nations Language Framework and complement the Language Proficiency Examination.

Using data science to transform human resources strategy

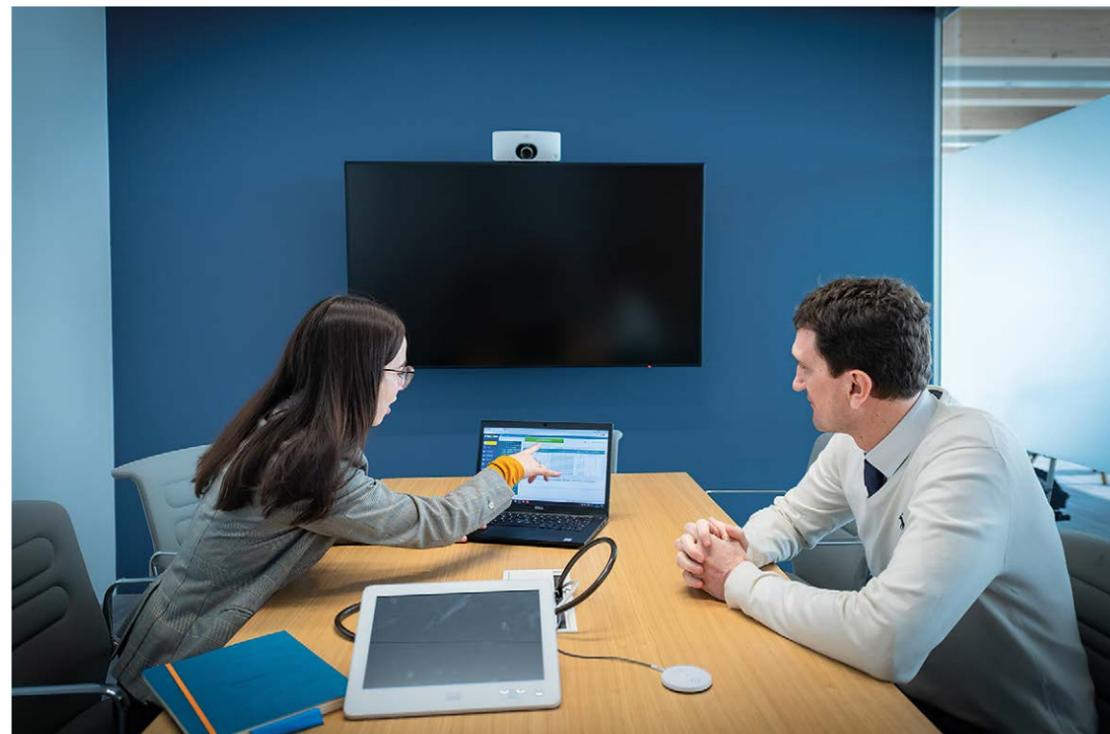
UN Geneva is committed to implementing the Secretary-General's [Data Strategy](#) and unlocking the potential for data to drive change across the Organization. One example of this is the use of data to support human resources strategy and decision-making.

This year, 30 UN Geneva personnel embarked on a learning journey to build capacity in human resources analytics and learn how to harness the power of data to improve operational efficiency, support strategy, and transform the human resources profession.

The staff members followed a one-year programme through the Academy to Innovate Human Resources. It consisted of learning about people analytics, with a different learning track for each of the four roles needed to build an analytics team: human resources analytics leader, human resources analyst, human

resources business partner and data scientist. Participants were awarded certification at the end of the programme and were given real-life projects to implement.

Going forward, UN Geneva intends to develop a human resources analytics strategy that is focused on improving the client experience. The specific areas covered will include the recruitment timeline, gender equality and diversity, workforce planning, absenteeism, well-being, entitlements monitoring, performance management, managerial effectiveness, and development of an optimal human resources client support structure.



UN Geneva staff collaborating

UN Photo: Marija Potocnik

UN Geneva co-creates training on innovation for senior UN system managers

The [Geneva Innovation Movement Association](#) is a network of change agents whose common goal is to break down silos and transform their organizations. To achieve this, the Association set up a cross-sector platform that supports innovative leaders and empowers them to share their experiences and transform knowledge into action.

In 2020, UN Geneva partnered with the Association and with the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#), the [International Labour Organization](#) and the [International Telecommunication Union](#) to co-create a training programme for senior UN system managers. The training consists of a multi-day set of workshops where participants work hands-on in cross-functional and cross-organizational teams to update their skills, behaviours and mindsets – enabling them to apply innovation methodologies in the context of humanitarian and development work.

This training and partnership with UN Geneva is now in its second year, and continues to engage senior leaders to build an empowered ecosystem around innovation. In 2021, the Geneva Innovation Movement Association migrated the training programme, offering it in a fully virtual setting, which has allowed more people to participate, including colleagues from field offices. This has both broadened and diversified the scope of the training, in line with its cross-functional and cross-organizational goals.



Photo: Geneva Innovation Movement Association

Leaders from UN Geneva, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Telecommunication Union and the International Labour Organization take part in a workshop on fostering an environment of innovation in the UN system.

Visitors' Service creates virtual tours

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the temporary closure of the Visitors' Service at UN Geneva in March 2020. In 2021, the Service was only able to reopen to the public in August. Throughout this unprecedented closure, tours for high-level visitors, officials and dignitaries continued but the bulk of the Service's activity came to a halt.

The closure provided, however, the Service with the opportunity to produce two virtual tours: one for a general audience and one specifically for youth. The virtual tours were developed by our tour guides, and in cooperation with the other UN Visitors' Services in Nairobi, New York and Vienna. The virtual tours, plus additional presentations and information, were translated into French and Spanish to maximize their reach and as part of UN Geneva's promotion of multilingualism. The virtual tours are available to the public upon request.

In 2021, the Visitors' Service also joined forces with the Strategic Heritage Plan team to develop and run special tours of the new Building H for UN Geneva staff.



UN Photo: Lang Meizhi

A UN Geneva tour guide presents *The Temple of Heaven*, a Chinese tapestry, as a part of a virtual tour of the Palais des Nations.



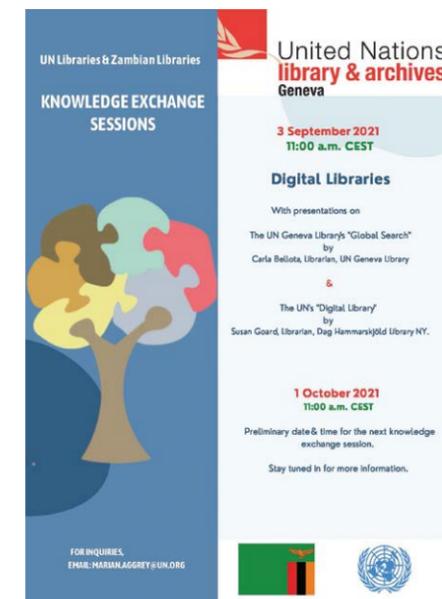
Faced with the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, the Visitors' Service launched two virtual tours - one for general audiences and one for youth audiences.

Exchanging knowledge across continents

In 2021, at the suggestion of the Permanent Representative of Zambia, the UN Library and Archives Geneva launched a new forum connecting UN system libraries and Zambian academic librarians - the Knowledge Exchange Sessions.

Following an introductory session in May between the two groups, four successful exchanges were held in the remainder of the year. Twenty-five librarians shared ideas, insights, experiences and skills in two-way online discussions enabled by the new work culture of online meetings.

The UN Geneva team that supports the Knowledge Exchange Sessions values this collaborative opportunity and appreciates learning about knowledge and research needs in Africa. The team now aspires to create further opportunities and extend the exchanges to other librarians across the continent and in other parts of the world.



Flyer for one of the Knowledge Exchange Sessions

Are you part of the #UNGenevaReads community?

#UNGenevaReads, the book club of the [UN Library and Archives Geneva](#), gathers together a community of staff, diplomats and members of the public to discuss books and learn about issues at the heart of UN Geneva's work. The title of a selected book is announced on social media, and followers are encouraged to read and reflect upon the book. Each of the quarterly readings is complemented by a set of additional resource materials and by an online event with the author and UN experts.

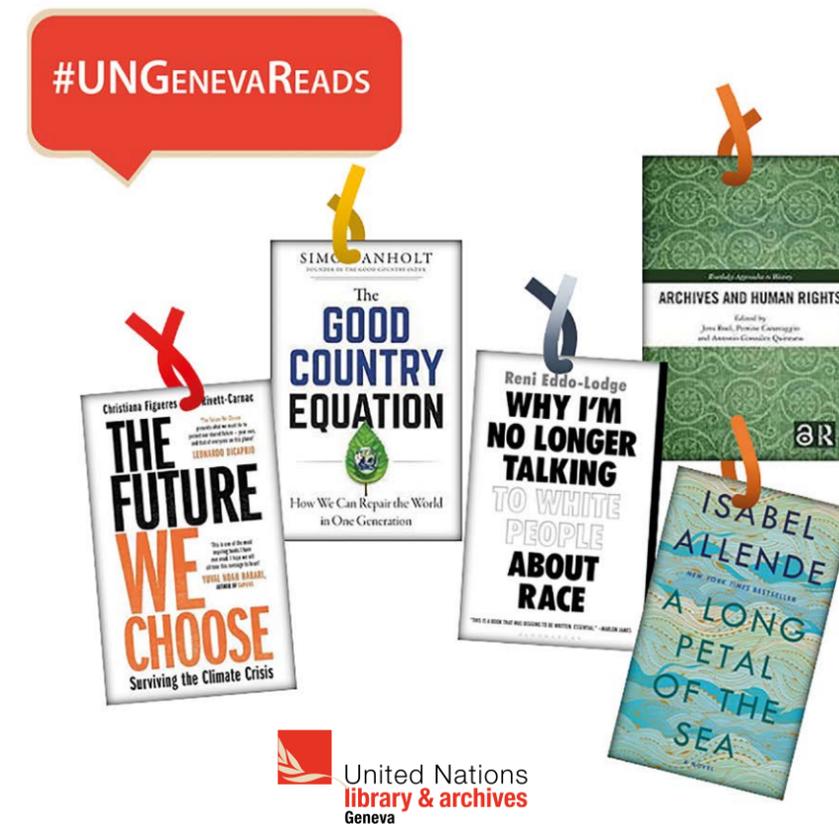
Reading selections this year focused on global cooperation, refugees, archives and human rights, and overcoming racism. Author Simon Anholt spoke online about his book on the benefits that come from cooperation between countries, and writer Isabel Allende sent a video message to discuss archives and human rights for an event with chief archivists and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. The United Nations Ombudsman, Shireen Dodson, the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mami Mizutori, held an online conversation around a book chosen to align with the work led by the Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations.



Author Isabel Allende addresses #UNGenevaReads participants in a video message for the event on archives and human rights.



Scan the QR code to find out more about [#UNGenevaReads](#).



The books read as part of #UNGenevaReads in 2021