

Managing Director's Report on YE20

Prepared by Ayesha Barmania for the fourth annual general meeting of the Peterborough Independent Podcasters reporting on the period of September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020.

Introduction

Needless to say, this past year has contained some major disruptions to the plans for maintaining and growing PIP. The first half of the year was extremely promising in developing our capacity and doing community and member engagement. From March onwards, we experienced some significant setbacks due to COVID-19, though the silver lining is that it forced us to develop more organizational capacity to conduct virtual operations.

This report outlines our operations for this past year with both its setbacks and successes.

Member Programs

At the start of this fiscal year, in September 2019, we maintained our partnership with Trent Radio and continued with two initiatives: the **Peterborough Independent Podcasters' Showcase** a radio program that airs on Sunday afternoons that highlights content created by PIP members; and the **Production Studio Booking Time**, a program during which time we make production studio space available to PIP members at Trent Radio on Sunday afternoons. The production space was used eight of the sixteen weeks it was open between September and February until we had to cancel both programs due to COVID-19 in March.

We have carried on with the **Podcast Accessibility Drop-In** program. This time is an opportunity for podcasters to gain assistance with their program, particularly for folks who identify a barrier due to a disability, but open to all. From September to February, this program was run in person during office hours and the program has continued to run remotely since March.

Office Hours continued to be available this year for folks to drop in, ask questions, and become members, as well as for PIP volunteers to work together. In March, we requested that any inquiries be sent by email so that we could meet virtually. Moving into 2021, office hours will be run online through a video conferencing website called Jitsi.

And lastly, our **Podcast Hosting** service is well utilized by our members. It is one of the key services that we offer through our website.

Workshops

This past year we ran a total of seven workshops for approximately 46 participants.

Public Workshops

In September 2019, we held a **Copyright for Content Creators** workshop at Sadleir House which was taught by me.

In December 2019, we ran a successful **Audio Editing in Audacity** workshop taught by PIP member Jeffrey Moore. This workshop demonstrated the basic skills for editing a podcast in the free software Audacity.

In February 2020, I hosted two drop-in workshops on **Getting The Most Out Of Your PIP Site**, which were not well attended. We provide a lot of support one-on-one when people are getting set up and have some resources online for folks to reference, but I think this was a good exercise to test whether there was interest, and the answer was, “no.”

In February 2020, I ran a very successful **Podcasting 101** workshop. Our introduction to podcasting remains our top engagement tool and bestselling workshop.

In March 2020, Devon Wilkins and I co-facilitated a very successful **Podcasting 101 for People with Disabilities** workshop. We held this workshop with the support of the Accessibility and Inclusion Network, who sponsored us with a free venue. This workshop took our Podcasting 101 workshop and adapted it for folks who may be using accessibility tools in their podcast production.

Commissioned workshops

This past fiscal year, we conducted two private **Podcasting 101** workshops for corporate clients in the Peterborough area.

Both took place in November 2019 and the first was for the Norwood Public Library, which was an informal chat with staff and library patrons about podcasting. This workshop was co-facilitated by me and Devon Wilkins.

The second took place later the month for the Peterborough Public Library as part of their “TRY IT” workshop series, which was taught by me.

COVID-19 & capacity growth

In March 2020, COVID-19 triggered a domino effect of organizations temporarily shutting down and government mandated health measures implemented to reduce the spread of the virus.

Measures for reducing the spread of the virus included (and still include) public gatherings being discouraged as well as non-essential trips outside of the home.

When these measures were enacted, I worked with the board of directors and we came to the decision that in-person operations were to be suspended and all PIP operations were to be conducted virtually as much as possible.

Shifting to virtual operations has meant a great deal of capacity development for our digital infrastructure, much of which is still ongoing. This included onboarding with Google Workspace, developing our online payment processing capacity and online bookkeeping through Wave Accounting, and exploring options for virtual podcast education programming.

Moving to virtual operations has presented some opportunities and some challenges. One of the avenues we've moved down is accepting payments online for memberships and hosting services, which is a convenient solution for many members, and we'll see in YE21 whether it improves membership renewal rates. It also tested and proved the mettle of our new accounting software Wave.

One challenge that I've encountered is in the effort to move to a virtual space for office hours is management of time put towards the program. The avenue we're experimenting with for our programming in 2021 is using an online video conferencing website called Jitsi to host a drop-in office hours space on Sunday afternoons.

Ultimately the shift has meant a greater capacity for conducting our operations, which aligns with our strategic goal to build organizational capacity. Though, unfortunately, pandemic measures also forced us to cancel many workshops for YE20, and look at developing new models for workshop delivery that is both accessible and rewarding, which are still in development.

Other developments

In this past year we have also had our volunteer webmaster Jeffrey Moore move on to exciting new career prospects and take a few steps back from administrating the PIP website. I have taken on more of the webmastering duties while Jeffrey serves in an advisory position.

Lastly, this past year I worked with volunteers and the board to begin work on a campaign for a Trent University student levy. This initiative is intended to increase our capacity for local podcasting education, particularly working with the students of Trent University, by campaigning for a \$3.20 levy paid by Trent students which would give us operating funding to grow to the next level. Due to capacity and time constraints at the time, we decided to postpone our push for the levy – and now given COVID-19 it is unclear when we'll have an opportunity to work with students more on-campus and resume the campaign. For now that initiative is on hold but ready to go when it looks like we can resume in-person programming.

Conclusion

It's been an interesting year to reflect upon, and I think ultimately 2020 represents a moment to take stock and invest in the capacity to keep operating through unprecedented times.

I'd like to thank the Board of Directors: Rob, Valentina, Devon, Stephen and LA for their incredible support this past year. It's been treasure to have you as colleagues, and for those who are moving on or stepping back, I wish you all the best!

Thanks for your interest and I'm happy to answer questions.