Kawartha World Issues Centre
Speakers Bureau Project
Summer 2006

Candice MacAulay

Abstract

The KWIC Speakers Bureau is a database of local speakers who have volunteered to share their personal knowledge and experiences with the community – as public speakers, discussion leaders, lecturers, and in many other capacities. This year KWIC's focus is on environmental issues, and the expertise that members of the Peterborough community possess in this area is reflected in the wide variety of issues and subjects matters that can be found in the Speakers Bureau. This project includes a User's Manual of how to use the database, an article for KWIC's fall newsletter describing the project and it benefits to the community, as well as a personal reflection, which focuses on the development and implementation of the project, and offers recommendations for improvements and growth of the project in general and / or similar projects.

Table of Contents

KWIC Speakers Bureau

Newsletter Article

KWIC Speakers Bureau
Creating Links between Local Knowledge and the Community

Candice MacAulay

This summer I worked alongside KWIC, under the guidance of Barb Woolner from Trent Centre for Community-Based Education, and Susan Wurtele, professor of Geography at Trent University, in creating the Kawartha World Issues Centre Speakers Bureau.

The KWIC Speakers Bureau is a database of local speakers who have volunteered to share their personal knowledge and experiences with the community. This year KWIC's focus is on environmental issues, and the expertise that members of the Peterborough community possess in this area is reflected in the wide variety of issues and subjects matters that can be found by searching the Speakers Bureau.

Community groups, schools and individual members of the community now have a valuable resource at their fingertips. Using the information in the Speakers Bureau, KWIC will be able to find members of the community who are able to speak on a wide variety of environmental issues, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and who speak from a multitude of voices and perspectives.

> *"Direct encounter with alternative voices is a gift to classrooms and gatherings of concerned citizens in a mid-sized community like Peterborough."*

One of the best aspects of this Speakers Bureau is that it is a work in progress. KWIC will continue to add as many speakers as make themselves available. Anyone who believes their knowledge and experiences can benefit the community through the processes of dialogue and learning are encouraged to contact KWIC, and add their expertise to our Speakers Bureau. The more individuals who are available to share their knowledge, the more our community will benefit.

We are grateful to all the members in our community who agreed to take part in KWIC's Speakers Bureau. Being able to reach out to members of the community, to tap into their personal experiences and knowledge, is an invaluable resource to our community.

I am also extremely grateful to KWIC for allowing me to take part in this process, and for giving me the opportunity to play a part in such a wonderful cause.

KWIC Speakers Bureau

Personal Reflection

I had always been interested in doing a Research Project through the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education ever since I saw the option available in the course calendar in my first year. However, double majoring does not leave much room for electives. I decided this summer to devote my time and energy to a summer project for a Women's Studies credit. I consider myself lucky to have found an organization like the Kawartha World Issues Centre to work with this summer, especially considering the project in centered on the environment, one of the many issues I am passionate about.

The initial meeting with KWIC saw us laying out the project requirements. What had changed since they first submitted their proposal for a research project to TCCBE, what had stayed the same. We discussed the time frame, which was very short indeed – I only had the months of June and July to work on the project. Although I was initially overwhelmed at the original scope of the project – every single social justice, environmental justice, anti-oppression, etc., issue, from every single member of the community who might have any knowledge or experience with these issues? Luckily for me, KWIC decide to focus on the environment this year so the project was reduced to something slightly more manageable, given my time frame.

We also had to come up with an answer to "What do we mean by expertise"? During the course of this project, I have faced many challenges, not the least of which was trying to define "expertise" as KWIC understands it for the purposes of this project. Understanding the differences between quantitative data and qualitative data helped to answer that question, and shaped the way I went about this project.

Qualitative Data versus Quantitative Data

One of the topics that is frequently discussed in Women's Studies courses is the difference between qualitative and quantitative data. Doing feminist research requires you to take a step back from what you previously thought about the research process.

Early scientific research methods tended to be positivistic in nature. The researcher was considered to be an unbiased observer, using empirical data to prove universally applicable generalizations. All scientific data had to be observable and measurable. This type of data is called "quantitative" data, and usually refers to data that comes in numbers, or other variables that can be counted and calculated.

In the social sciences especially, research that relies on quantitative data alone focus on "quantifiable attributes" that are usually predetermined by the researcher. The respondent is given a limited range of possible answers, such ranking their opinion using numbers on a scale. This data is limiting, and does not allow for the full expression of a person's opinion, and is always subject to the bias of the researcher, who may not even aware of his or her own inherent bias.

Since quantitative methods give real numbers, people often assumed that they also give real facts and real data. But when looked at from a feminist point of view, we can see that there are many problems with quantitative data. It often ignores any problems that have not been specifically addressed during the research process, and does not leave much room for personal interpretation, or multiple perspectives.

Qualitative data on the other hand does not deal with hard numbers and limited answers. It can be described as, simply, any data that that is not numerical in value. When using qualitative methods, the type of research questions asked in the social sciences tends to be very open ended. The respondent may simply answer a question by talking about their own feelings or experiences with the subject matter, and that is considered the data.

This type of data tends to be discounted by many people as not "real" data, and accuse the studies which use them of not being "real" science. However, one of the main cornerstones of feminist research is that all people are affected by bias, no matter how hard they may wish to strive to be objective. Past experiences and personal knowledge all help shape a persons understanding of the world, and each person sees the world differently. To pretend that one can be objective and unbiased is to ignore one of the very real problems with quantitative data and traditional science.

Feminist research encourages the researcher to examine their own inherent biases, and to be aware of them while conducting research, to be ware of how their own experiences may be colouring their view of the data. The goal is to represent, as best as possible, the truth of each person's experience, and not "the truth" as a universal fact.

How to define "Expertise"

While asking the people I contacted about their expertise on various issues, I tried to leave the options open. I would give a few examples (Local Produce? Alternative Energy? Grassroots Activism?) and let them decide for themselves what their answer would be. Most people said

they could speak on a number of issues, and some only named one or two that they felt they had the knowledge to speak on.

I used the same methods when trying to get information about a contact's viewpoint. For example, I would ask someone if they speak from a specific viewpoint, and give them a few examples of what I mean. The types of example I gave can be found in the KWIC Speakers Bureau User's Manual, found on pages 20 and 21 of this report. I would ask it as a question, because some people may not have thought about it before, and don't think of themselves as coming from any standpoint. To automatically assume that someone must consider themselves as coming from a "feminist" standpoint, or a "conservative" standpoint, or a "grassroots" standpoint may be making a false assumption. I let the contact decide for themselves what their viewpoint is, instead of asking them to choose one from a limited range of options.

Choosing the Database Software

Although I researched many different ways to create a database that would be user friendly, especially for the type of data I was collecting, KWIC and I decided that using Microsoft Excel would be the best. They had prior knowledge of the software, and were comfortable with using it. Another good reason lent itself to using Excel. Although I was able to quickly learn how to use excel, I had no experience in creating an actual searchable data out of an Excel spreadsheet. KWIC has a contact that takes care of their computer needs and by using an Excel spreadsheet, at any point in the future, he can go in and turn the spreadsheet into an real database. This is definitely an asset, as the short time frame of the project did not allow me to take the time to learn how to create that type of database. Perhaps if the project had taken place over a school ear

I could have learned to do it myself as part of the learning process, however, that was simply not feasibly.

I was lucky enough to be able to borrow an "Excel for Dummies" book from the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education. It was full of useful tips, and came in handy when trying to input the vast amounts of data I had accumulated in a spreadsheet. I would recommend that any student who is using software they are unfamiliar try to find something similar. You may think you know how to use a certain program, but a book written specifically on the subject can be an invaluable tool.

Finding Contacts

The process of making a list of initial contacts had several steps. First, I went through all the materials KWIC gave me about their organization – a report on the history of their organization, previous newsletter articles, etc. Every time I saw a mention of an organization that had a connection with KWIC, I wrote it down, and then later looked up information about the organization, finding their contact information. The Peterborough Blue Book is a community information services handbook which provides a directory of non profit, charitable and government organizations and services. I found many of my initial contacts through the Blue Book. Another useful tool was the yellow pages. I looked for potential contacts under "Social and Human Service Organizations". And of course, I used the internet. Simply searching for terms like "Peterborough Ontario + green living" or "Peterborough Ontario + alternative energy" would provide me links to many individual people, organizations, and business in Peterborough and the surrounding areas whose areas of expertise are those issues. I spent most of my research

time searching through a variety of terms, and following long chains of links, continuously

finding more and more information.

Of course, it would be almost impossible to unearth every single possible connection simply

using the internet and community directories. The hope was that once I had an initial list of

contacts, that list would grow as I spoke to more people – that someone would know a friend

who does public speaking, or someone would know of a community group that I hadn't heard of

before.

Misunderstandings

Some of the people I contacted were available right away, loved the idea of the project, and had

no problem answering my survey questions. Most I had to call back a few times, to reach them

at a better time. Very few people had no more questions past the fist initial contact. Most

wanted me to contact them again, or to give them more information at a later time. My initial

explanation of the project and its goals sometimes had to be rephrased, depending on the person.

I had to stress certain aspects of the project differently depending on who I was speaking too.

For example, some people were tentative at first when I talked to them about public speaking.

Most were not professional public speakers, but had done it from time to time, and they

sometimes misunderstood the purpose of the database. A few mentioned that they were too busy

to always be called up by KWIC to do speaking engagements. I had to reassure them that the list

was simply to get a feeling for what types of issues the members of the Peterborough community

have experience in, so that if the need ever arose, we would be able to contact someone who

could talk about these issues. I had to explain that the database was not going to be used to call

speakers up every week, and that we would be keeping track of how often someone had been contacted, and we would be making notes of any previous participation.

Timing

One of the problems I encountered had to do with the timing of the calls. Many people were away during the day when I did the majority of my calling, because they worked during the day. I felt uncomfortable calling them at their houses at night, as I didn't want to interrupt them when they might be eating dinner, or spending time with their family. I often left messages asking them to call me when it was most convenient for them. One of my worries was that they would not call me back if they did not know who I was or what I wanted. I always stated that I was with the Kawartha World Issues Centre to let them know that I had a legitimate reason to call. If I didn't hear back from someone, I would try calling them again within a week or two.

I had a particularly unique problem when it came to contacting speakers who worked for or owned their own business that focused on solving environmental problems. Even though I found most of them through other sites that had them listed as guest speakers, most of them said they do not that sort of thing regularly, and are usually very busy running businesses. It was disappointing, because I knew these people would have been a great addition to the Speakers Bureau.

Another challenge was the project's time frame. I had a very limited time in which too completely the project, only the months of June and July. Unfortunately, this is when many people go on vacation. As I assumed would happen, I was simply unable to get in touch with many of the people I thought would be an asset to the Speakers Bureau. One of my solutions to

that problem was to create a second contact list, a directory of people who I still had not been in contact with, along with their contact information, and their specialties, as far as my own research had been able to determine. This will allow someone to come behind me and continue to work on the project and continue contacting people.

Organization and Layout

Deciding how the project would look in it's final form, which aspect of the project would come first, the fonts and font sizes, and the actual number of pages I was aiming at was a bit of a difficult decision. The most important aspect to consider is accessibly and user-friendly-ness.

As well as being burned into a CD disk, the rest of the project, not including the actual database itself, needed to be available in hardcopy. I eventually decided to use thin white 3-ring binders to hold the project. This way, the project could be available on the shelf of KWIC's library for anyone who wanted to read about the process of the project, for anyone who wanted ideas for their own project, or for the person who might eventually decide to continue on working with the database.

Originally, we had discussed the idea of me writing an article about the Speakers Bureau that would be included in KWIC's fall newsletter. However, they told me that it would have to be limited to around 200 words. Unfortunately, I was so excited about the project, and wanted everyone who got the newsletter to fully understand the project, that I ended up writing 350 words, including a quote from KWIC's original proposal for the project that I felt perfectly captured their main goal. Instead of making them worry about trying to cut the words down, or working around my article, I decided to print it off as a leaflet that could be inserted into their

newsletter. The spring newsletter they gave me as an example had a few inserts, so I knew it was possible. I was even able to find light green paper to print them on, continuing on a "green-theme" that I started when designing the Database (the headers and titles are in various shades of green).

The Concept of "Honorariums"

One of the terms I came across during this project that I had previously been unfamiliar with was "honorarium". This is when an organization, usually non-profit, gives a public speaker, or other contributor, stipend for expenses, or simply as a thank you gesture. The honorarium is often then donated back to the organization. In this way, the public speaker is given a token of appreciation by the organization, and the public speaker is able to show their appreciation for the organization's work by "donating" the money back. I consider this to somewhat the same as my situation. One of KWIC's obligations, as laid out in our Research Placement Contact, is to provide the funds for any expenses I might incur. However, in this case, I simply consider all the effort and expense I put into this project as my own way of contributing to an organization that I wish to support. This project has rekindled my passion for environmental justice, and I consider it a blessing that I was able to work with an organization that so closely matches m own beliefs. I understand university students usually do not have a lot of spare money, but I would recommend that any future student doing a project for a non-profit consider doing the same, especially if the organization is one that they believe in.

Incorporating the Academic with the Community

As university students, we sometimes forget that there is more to the world than reading and writing academic papers. This project gave me the chance to take an on an active role as a

member of our community. I was able to make connections with a wide variety of people, who have such a wide variety of experiences. It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to be able to apply the skills I learned as university student to a project such as this one, a project which will be such a valuable resource for our community. One of the most important things we must remember as student is that we aren't here to learn simply for the sake of learning. It is our duty as citizens to use our skills to give back to community, and I am grateful to KWIC for giving me the chance to do so with this project.

KWIC Speakers Bureau

User's Manual

Table of Contents

*All names and personal information have been scrambled to protect the privacy of our speakers

Definitions of Terms

Name
The first and last name of the contact person.

Affiliation
The organization/business, etc., the speaker belongs to and is available to speak on behalf of.

Expertise
Expertise in this case can mean any subject or issue that the speaker believes they have valuable knowledge about, or experience with. This does not necessarily mean the speaker must be an expert on the issue, or have the ability to speak in an official capacity on the matter. The category of Expertise is one that is left for the speakers themselves to decide. Expertise is limited only to those subjects which the speaker feels comfortable speaking about.

Region
The geographic area the contact person is familiar with, and is available to speak about. This may include local, provincial, national and/or international areas.

Viewpoint
The position or perspective of the speaker that shapes his or her thoughts about the issue. For some speakers, they may wish to identify as either coming from a liberal or conservative viewpoint. Other may wish to identify with a feminist or indigenous viewpoint. Others may say they speak more from an academic viewpoint, or from a grassroots standpoint. This category is important when trying to find a speaker – someone may wish to find a speaker who can talk from an anti-oppression standpoint, for example.

Contact Information
Information the contact person has given us so we may contact them at a later date. May include phone numbers, fax numbers, addresses, emails, etc.

Date of Last Contact
The last date we have been in contact with the speaker.

Biography
A few short sentences about the speaker's history and background; any previous experience they have in public speaking, leading discussion groups, giving talks or lectures; any experience they have as members of community groups, how they got involved in these issues, etc.

Comments
This includes information KWIC may need to know when contacting someone with regards to a speaking engagement. For example, if they have a specific presentation style that requires certain equipment; if they require a stipend for travel or other costs; if they have any accessibility needs; if they have a preferred group size they wish to speak to, etc.
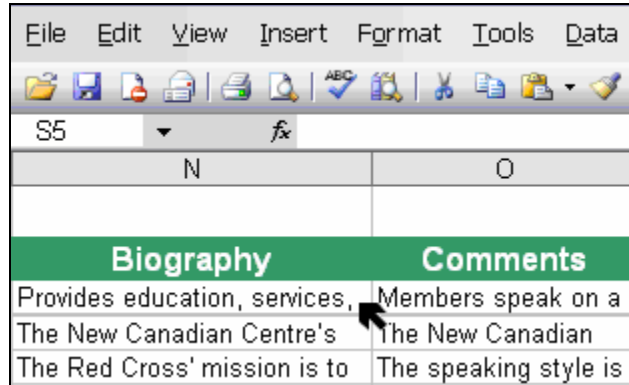
Telephone Survey

Information	Example
Last Name	---
First Name	---
Contact Info	Address Phone/fax Email Website
What is your area of expertise? What issues are you available to talk about? (up to 3)	Global Environmental Issues Sustainable development, Kyoto Accord, Climate change, Genetically modified food, Organic food, Transportation, Alternative energy sources, Urban Development, Ecosystems, Pollution, Food insecurity, Poverty, etc Local Environmental Issues Local produce, Farmer's market, Gardening, Farming, Composting, Recycling, Pesticides, Etc. Other Issues International development, Grassroots activism, Social justice, etc.
Do you identify with a specific viewpoint, and does this viewpoint shape your understanding of the issue? (up to 3)	Political - Marxist, Socialist, Conservative, Capitalist, Liberal, etc Social Justice - Feminist, Indigenous, Queer, Anti-racist, Anti-oppression, Anti-capitalist Experience viewpoint - Academic, Grassroots, Activist
Is there a specific global or local area that you focus on?	City, Province, Country, Continent etc. For example, Latin America, Brazil.
Are there any specific materials you need?	Projector, chalkboard, whiteboard, computer, laptop, podium, microphone.

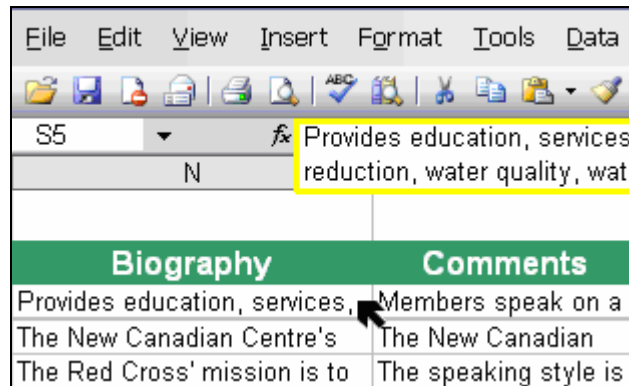|	
Do you have a target audience?	▪ Under 12 ▪ 13-18 ▪ 18+ ▪ Any
Do you have a specific presentation style?	▪ Lecture ▪ Discussion ▪ Participatory ▪ Any
What size of group can you speak to?	▪ <10 ▪ <30 ▪ <50 ▪ >100 ▪ Any
Do you require a stipend for travel, or other costs? Do you have any accessibility needs?	▪ need stipend for travel ▪ Need ride to and from ▪ Need wheelchair accessible ▪ Etc.
If you would like to include a few sentences for a small biography, please feel free.	▪ Previous experience giving lectures, leading discussion groups, etc. ▪ Membership in any community groups, etc. ▪ How you got involved in these issues, etc.

Showing Full Information

Sometimes the contact has more information than can be shown in one cell. To see the rest of the information, click on the cell.

The information will be shown in full in the **Fx box.**

Inputting New Data

Inputting your own information is easy. Simply click on the next available empty row and input your new information under each column. The last name of the contact goes under the column labeled "Last Name", etc.

| Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
⊒△⇨⇪◢	⟳↕◢	Peterborough Healthy
⇦△⇨▽⇪△	⇆↕↔⇨↙⇦	Peterborough Green-Up
⇷⇨△◀⇪△	⟲⇪△⇪↓◀↑	Otonabee Region
MacAulay	Can	

To make it easier to search for people based on their expertise, every contact is listed under each area of their expertise. For example, if you were talking to a new contact with two areas of expertise, you would list all their information twice, in both rows, as shown below:

| Expertise	Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
Air Quality Issues	⇦△⇨▽⇪△	⇆↕↔⇨↙⇦	Peterborough Green-Up
Bio-Diversity	↲↙↙↓⇨↘▽	⇆↕▶→	Trent Indigenous Studies
Cultural Sensitivity	↳⇨↙↙⇪▽	⇷⇨△↘⇪↙⇨	New Canadian Centre
Environmental Justice	MacAulay	Candice	Trent University
Social Justice	MacAulay	Candice	Trent Uni

Sorting the Data

After you are done inputting your new information, you may need to sort the Database, to put the information in alphabetical order again. You also may wish to sort the Database by something other than Expertise, such as Last Name, or Region.

To do this, click on the title of the column you wish to sort.
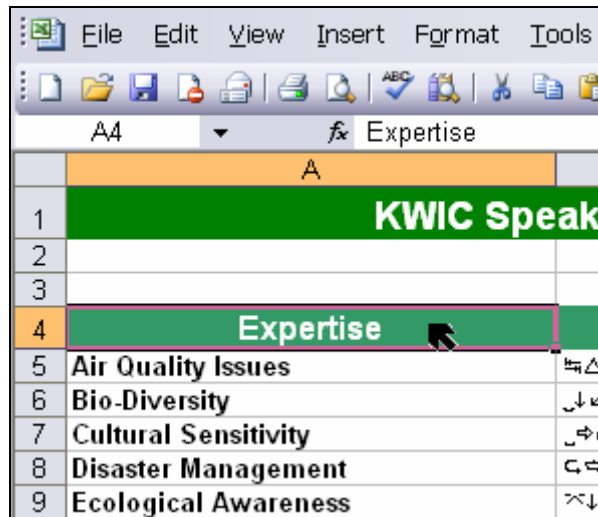
Then click on the option "Data", and click on "Sort…"
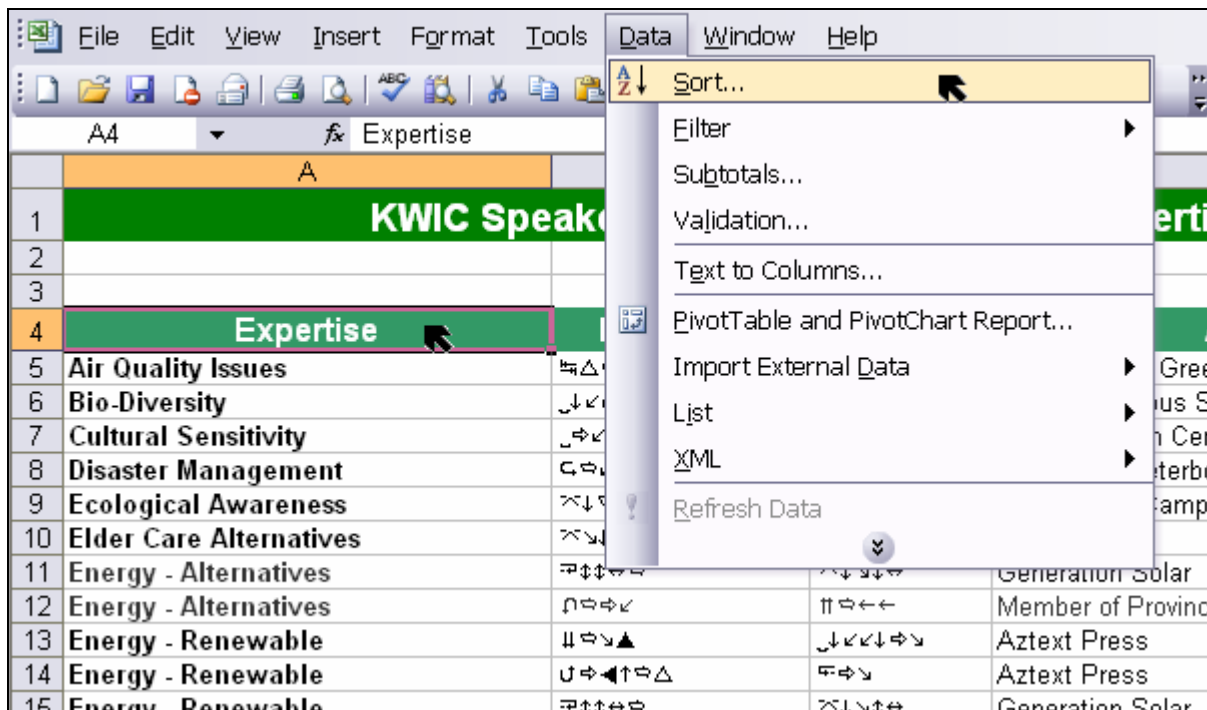
A box will pop up that looks like this:

If you click on the "Sort by" box, you can scroll down and choose how you want to sort the data. This box gives you the option to sort your data by Ascending or Descending. It also allows you to sort your data by more than one option, for example, by Region, and then within that Region, by Expertise.

When you have decided which option to sort by, click on the option, then click on the OK button. The information will now be sorted the way your want it.