

CFRU Operations Department - 2020-21 Highlights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiVYIP6NOAO>

Where 2019-2020 was a year of unexpected technical and operational adaptation to the unique circumstances surrounding the pandemic, 2020-21 has seen our station celebrating our history, developing new organizational structures and initiatives, and updating our facility toward a future that combines on-site and remote engagement. As we approach reopening the studios while maintaining the newer remote volunteering opportunities, CFRU's offerings as a comprehensive media centre will soon be more accessible than ever. The Board of Directors and Staff have worked together to examine and improve station operations and organizational roles in ways that offer more financial adaptability, reduce hierarchical power structures, increase experiential learning opportunities for students, and level-up our value and visibility on campus and in the wider community. Below are some of the specific highlights from the last year in your Operations Department.

CFRU: 40+ Years on The FM Dial

Interactive Exhibit at Guelph Civic Museum and Online

<https://www.cfru.ca/exhibit/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRmeVkR1I7A>

With the extensive help of Curation Assistant Halley Roback, Audio Archivist Curtis Walker, and friends working in the archives of the University Library, we built an in-depth multimedia exhibit showcasing the 40+ years of CFRU's value in the Guelph community. The exhibit ran from March to October 2021 at the Civic Museum, but lives on through the interactive online components hosted on our site at the address above. Hundreds of hours of analogue recordings, donated photos, merch and posters, retrospective interviews with staff and alumni and more all contributed to this immense project. We were even able to digitize original instructional videos from 1979 featuring Ian MacDiarmid and put them up on our youtube channel, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xnh07I455A>

The challenges of collecting and coordinating this material during the pandemic were substantial. Our sincere thanks goes out to all who contributed and helped make this happen. We were able to keep the display materials from the physical exhibit, and we're discussing setting up a more permanent display in the UofG Library.

Instructional Videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_ip-tNryxo

<https://www.cfru.ca/how-to-cfru/>

Whereas in the past CFRU's trainings and workshops have been mainly in-person events, the pandemic has provided an opportunity to create instructional videos, virtual trainings and workshop recordings that can be accessed by anyone at any time via our Youtube page or the "How-To" page on our website, as linked above. These videos have offered accessible technical support to our valued CFRU volunteers, and, in several cases, have also been used by stations and individuals across the country as they adapt to remote production possibilities through the

COVID-19 era. At last count, one of our recording from home tutorials (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb0b34CQfAI&t>) had been viewed 844 times. Our tutorials have also been used in local classrooms to get students involved in media production as part of Jenny's collaborative (and revenue generating) projects with the UGDSB. We'll continue to create and post new instructional content and document our workshops, ongoing.

Station Upgrades

After celebrating CFRU's storied history with the exhibit, your Operations Department and Tech Committee set an eye on the future, working with staff and board to plan and execute many substantial upgrades to our facility through the remainder of the last year. Here's a list of some of the notable new things:

New Carpet & Other Decor Improvements – We have finally replaced the ancient brown carpeting in the hallways and offices, giving the station a fresh new look! We've also painted offices, added new shelving, framed and hung dozens of pieces of archival material from the exhibit, put up new acoustic foam in two studios, resurfaced the on-air studio desk, and purchased two snazzy wingback chairs for the entrance lounge. Looking good!

Trident 68 Production Console – a massive upgrade to the Production Studio, this 24-channel state of the art console replaces the old Allen&Heath firewire mixer and will act as the centrepiece for all future in-studio performances and production work. It will give volunteers, students, musicians and producers access to recording and mixing technology comparable to many high-end recording studios. In addition, a new 32-channel analogue to digital interface has been installed in the same studio.

High-definition Cameras and Switcher – Our camcorder, webcam and gopro setup for in-studio performance events has been replaced with technology that will both improve the quality and ease-of-use for future productions. These devices will also be used to create more video content by staff and volunteers.

New Pioneer DDJ Controller - Some volunteers may recall that our original DDJ controller was stolen from the on-air studio a few years ago. We've replaced that with an excellent new controller, which is secured to the on-air desk.

Backup Transmitter – Though not as visible as some of the other new items on this list, the substantial purchase of a second, backup transmitter will enable us to quickly resolve any broadcast issues or risk of down-time caused by our main transmitter failing. A major relief for your tech department in planning for issues that could arise.

New Mics, Mic Covers & Loaner Headphones – We have replaced older mics in the station so that all studios feature reliable, high-quality, industry standard Shure SM-7B microphones for consistency and ease of use. We've also purchased many sets of headphones as we will be requiring folks to use their own to reduce germ transfer and realise some volunteers may not be able to afford to purchase. Programmers using the studios will also be given their own mic cover for further protection. We have also purchased more USB mics to be made available to folks who prefer to produce from home.

New Computers – The old PCs in the Volunteer Room and Vinyl Library have been upgraded to new, more powerful machines. We have also replaced the mac in the Production studio with a new m4 mac mini to do the heavy lifting of any recording project.

New Monitors – We have upgraded the old computer monitors in the on-air studio with higher definition, larger monitors for greater ease-of-use. In addition, we've replaced the monitors in both the Training and Production Studios with large 32" monitors, which will enhance our trainings and improve visibility in audio production sessions.

Backup Archive Server – Currently being built as redundant storage to prevent loss of archives due to any future failure of the current server

Social Media Lab – Currently a work in progress, we are repurposing the Station Manager's office as a social media production facility featuring moveable green screen, lavalier mics compatible with mobile-devices, ring light and other amenities. Students and other volunteers will be able to sign out the room to create content as needed.

Studio Consoles Refurbished – In addition to the new purchases mentioned above, we sent our On-Air and Training Studio consoles out for refurbishment, and they're sounding better than ever.

Staff Restructuring Proposal

As hinted at in the introduction to this document, staff and board have worked together to test out a new organizational structure that is less hierarchical than what has been in place over the last decade. As part of this, your Operations Coordinator has taken on most of the administrative duties previously assigned to the Station Manager, while your Volunteer Coordinator has taken some of the studio event & workshop coordinating duties, and the Programming Coordinator is handling Production Trainings in addition to their usual duties. The staff, as a group, has worked in more direct collaboration with the Board of Directors than in years past, which we feel is more in line with the values put forward by this organization. Though this arrangement is not yet permanent, we are hopeful that it will carry forward and create more financial adaptability, a necessity demonstrated during the Student Choice Initiative debacle that we faced a few years ago. Creating this new structure has enabled us to increase our promotions, volunteer support and tech purchasing budget lines, and also create five temporary student positions intended as mentorships within each of the station's departments.

Marketing and Promotions Collaborations

As part of the above arrangement, the Operations Department has had an increased role in helping to facilitate some of the incredible initiatives put forward by our wonderful new staff addition, Odesia Howlett. Odesia has been doing an incredible job, and it has been a joy to assist in the realization of these new marketing and outreach projects: City Bus Advertisements, postcards in UofG Residence packages, custom CFRU engraved Bluetooth radios, Podcasting & Programmer Workshops, virtual volunteer hangouts, GRCA pass giveaways, and the Free Local Ad Initiative. These were all mainly Odesia's work, but I was happy to play a supporting role. I'm looking forward to collaborating on our Snowsuit Optional Dance Party in January.

Music Department Collaborations

I worked with Alex on several projects related to the Music Department, including redesigning the Music Dept page on our website (<https://www.cfru.ca/music/>), continuing to develop our online logsheet system with volunteers Griffin Baird and LongFei Chen, and recently meeting

with Helen (CJSW Music Director) to look into developing a more elaborate and user-friendly digital music library system, similar to what they use at their Calgary station. I've also been discussing building the logsheet system into our website with the site developers, and have recently received an estimate for that project. I will be coordinating a meeting with Alex, Christopher and the developers to discuss the feasibility/value of this.

Programming Collaborations

In addition to offering programmers ongoing technical support and configuring various aspects of our remote connections to the station, we had a welcome return to live performance broadcasts as part of this year's incredible Guelph Jazz Festival. We were stationed at the York Rd Park stage this September, and broadcasted/recorded three days of wonderful performances with great results. The organizers were thrilled with the quality of the recordings.

Pandemic-Related Cleanliness and Safety Protocols

In preparation towards Phase 1 of our reopening process, your Operations department has worked closely with staff, Board and University oversight to develop new systems dedicated to the safety, health and well-being of all involved at CFRU. Below are some of the new measures we've been working on:

- Proof of Vaccination will be required of all who access CFRU's on-site spaces – accommodations and support will be made for those who are unable to be vaccinated to engage with our resources remotely
- Plexiglass cover installed over on-air and training consoles, allowing for hand access, but protecting against airborne germs
- Hosts required to bring own headphones (individual loaner HPs available if needed)
- Mic covers will be replaced after each program, and disinfected after use
- Face masks required at all times while in the station
- High-end "Surgically Clean Air" air purifier now runs 24/7 in the on-air studio
- Volunteers required to wipe down all areas accessed during on-site visits
- Phase 1 will allow by-appointment access to one volunteer at a time, focusing on those programmers who are not able to produce programming without on-site access
- Staff will go over all protocols with volunteers upon first visit to the station
- Sign-in sheet will be posted at entrance for tracking purposes (as required by UofG)
- If a surge in COVID-19 cases is perceived and considered an increased risk, we will have to revert to earlier limits to access, including closing station to all but staff once again

In Summary

All in all, it has been a blur of a year, and one filled with planning and building. I'm thrilled to have resumed my role as Operations Coordinator, and I'm optimistic about the future of CFRU. Taking on the administrative duties, including yearly audit preparation, systems access, generating the CRTC Annual Return, and handling regular financial and payroll processes has been a dynamic learning experience, and I'm hopeful we can carry this new arrangement through to a more formal agreement. I'd also like to send another hearty congrats and thanks to Ian MacDiarmid, who won this year's NCRA nationwide Volunteer of the Year Award, and

Nicholas Cooper, who won Best Syndicated Program for the Sentinel's Marvellous Kaleidoscope.

I'm excited for everyone to see the upgraded station in all its glory!

Bryan Webb
CFRU Operations Coordinator