2024 KT Online Conference

Our Voices. Expanding the Reach and Deepening Conversations through Podcasting

Presenters:
Alfiya Battalova and Anu Pala

Transcript for audio/video file on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/7XCmZG0ldQ8

Alfiya Battalova: Hello there, I'm a white woman with shoulder length brown hair, I'm wearing glasses and a black shirt. And I'm joined today by Anu, who I'll let Anu introduce herself.

Anu Pala: Thank you so much, Alfiya. Hello everyone, my name is Anu Pala. I'm an accessibility consultant, and I am a South Asian woman with brown skin with dark brown, wavy hair. And today I'm wearing a pink blazer with a white tank top and a sparkly silver necklace.

Alfiya Battalova: Thank you, Anu. Next slide, please. Yeah, so I just want to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for providing some funding for this work. Next slide, please. So today we will continue the topic of the podcast and provide an overview of the research study that this project is based on. We'll talk about why we decided to do a podcast and we'll discuss aspects related to the process of creating it, some of the technical considerations and the promotion. Next slide, please. So, a podcast is a great way to share a story.

I think about podcast as a storytelling, and stories are a powerful medium for conveying knowledge, understanding, and it can also focus on aspects of culture, ideology, history, relationship roles and rules that a traditional academic article cannot. And it can really tell stories that resist some of the traditional narratives and underline the voices that haven't been heard before. It's about sharing, so the idea of sharing the knowledge broadly, it's about making knowledge more accessible, and it's also about representation. So amplifying the voices of people with disabilities and having, again, the opportunity to expand the traditional ways of sharing knowledge. It's also about this fancy idea of epistemic justice, so bringing out the voices that are underrepresented in both academic and non-academic spaces.

Yeah, so that's kind of the reason why we wanted to take this work, the original research project further. Next slide, please. So just to give you a bit of an idea of what this podcast is based on. The research was aimed at exploring the experiences of people serving on the municipal advisory committees. And the goal was to understand whether, how a lived experience matters in shaping a municipal accessibility policy, how the city staff members engage with the members of the committee, and what can be done to improve the value of such committees. So the research demonstrated that

accessibility advisory committees are an important component of the municipal councils, despite the challenges that they face. And they play an important role in shaping accessibility policies on the municipal level. The research also uncovered the challenges of being heard on such committees. Oftentimes, there's a lot of tokenism when it comes to the role of people with disabilities on the committees. For example, the committee members were not sure whether the feedback they provide is actually incorporated into the project plans. They weren't sure how to convey the idea that policies need to go above and beyond building codes and some of the formal very minimum standards out there. Next slide, please.

And so, in a way, the podcast, an idea, was a way for us to continue the conversation, not to leave it at the level of a plan or a report, but to deepen the conversation, reimagine the study to include new perspectives, new questions, because some of the questions that were raised in the research were not even questions I have thought of before. And so this podcast allowed us to include a variety of voices who reflected on some of this continuous, continuous work in the area of public engagement. Next slide, please. And so that's where Anu comes in and as someone who had no experience in creating a podcast, I wanted to bring someone with that experience on the team. So I let Anu talk a little bit about her role.

Anu Pala: So, I was very excited to meet Alfiya through her research study and with my own past background in radio and television and more recently, over the past four years in podcast production. It was proposed that we use the medium of podcast to continue the conversation, deepen the conversation about her research. And so it was then that we began the conversation about the podcast. And because of the fact that I do have a strong understanding and what goes into producing a podcast, I was able to bring that to the table. So for example, things like what type of equipment is required, and there's so many things on the market. If you ever began to do any research on podcasting, it can be quite overwhelming. But I had done a fair bit of research over the past several years, and so I was able to provide some solid recommendations on equipment, the whole production of the podcast in general marketing and communications, and also moving forward, having my finger on the pulse in terms of emerging trends in the podcast arena. Next slide, please. So part of the podcast production was about identifying who the guests would be and then identifying questions. And we had a broad list of questions that we selected for the guests, but then based on the particular episodes, we had tailored the questions according to those guests. And I'll let Alfiya speak to that a bit more.

Alfiya Battalova: Yeah. So at this point, we have a contained number of episodes, but hopefully we will build on that. We're still finalizing the podcast, and then hopefully it'll be live very soon. But we wanted each episode to bring a different lens. So our series starts with me and Anu talking about the research project. We then have the, next slide, next episode that focuses on the conversation between a city counselor and one of the research participant. And then we have an episode with a city staff. And so again, like Anu mentioned, we had tailored the questions, wanted to make sure that the questions are very strength-based, not necessarily trying to poke at the weaknesses or at some of the weaknesses of the committees, but really understand how it can be improved and

understand the policy context a little bit better. And so I'll let Anu talk a little bit about maybe the technical aspects of the work.

Anu Pala: Yes, absolutely. And I really appreciated Sharon's experience that she shared with her podcast because yes, there's so much that goes into it. Ideally, in a perfect world, it would be wonderful to be able to record each episode in person because that is ultimately the best quality that will come out for each episode. However, with time, we have seen a lot of platforms, online platforms come up that also provide very good quality, sound quality. For our case, we decided to go with Zoom for ease of the use for our guests and for myself as well. I did not mention in my introduction, but I live with complete vision loss. And so it was important for me to be able to use platforms for recording as well as audio editing that were going to be accessible for me at the use of a screen reader. And so we decided to go with Zoom for that.

We also needed to make sure that our guests had equipment that would contribute to the ultimate sound quality. So making sure that our guests had at least a headset with a microphone or a microphone. So we had to ensure that everyone had that in place. We also made sure that our Zoom was set up to record individual channels so that each person on the podcast or the recording would have their own channels. So that also contributed to the overall quality of the episode. There was only one episode that we were not successful in doing that. And so of course like with any project, there are always lessons to be learned. And so I think that was one of the things I would say that we learned from this initiative was to make sure that those things are in place in advance and we check and we double check so that we can plan for the best outcome.

But that's okay. It's still not, it wasn't terrible, but as a person who, a bit of a perfectionist, of course, we would hope for something even better. In terms of audio editing, we used Gold Wave as an audio editor. I know Audacity is another great one, but we use Gold Wave in this case. And so there's so much more we could share, but this is just a taste of our experience in producing this mini series for this initiative. And we'll ask for the next slide, but we can talk a little bit about the marketing plan for this podcast.

Alfiya Battalova: So, like I mentioned, it's in the final stages of development, and so we are hoping to use several strategies to reach our target audience. And we also have our contact information in case you want to keep updated about when it's live. But yeah, we definitely want to engage the my university's internal communication, our social media platforms, and hope to promote it on other podcasts and among the community groups. My goal is for sure, for the participants of the research study to have access to it and for people for different municipalities and the city staff because there's definitely lots of lots of great information in there. And I think there's just the next slide with our contact info. Yep. So yeah, I think we will end it there. Thank you.

Anu Pala: Thank you.