

MASTERMINDS 2024

Final Report and Review

**For Consideration by the Board of the
University of Victoria Retirees Association**

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As promised in the earlier Interim Report on Masterminds (MM) '24 (see April 8th Board Minutes), there was much for our committee to consider after the lecture series was completed.

UVRA board members June Whitmore, Juliana Saxton, Peter Liddell, met with Leah Potter (UVRA board ex-officio) and Ashleigh Enright (our IALH partners) on May 31, 2024 to review what had taken place in the immediate past, to reflect on the past history of MasterMinds and examine future implications for its retention. It is our intention to present this detailed review for the Board's consideration in September but, in the meantime, our discussions may be of interest to UVRA members. (Note: There may be further information that was not available in May 2024). All UVRA members are invited to expand on these ideas by offering their responses to the email address on the Title page .

In order to better understand the history, the committee read four Masterminds reports from 2012-2015. The areas for discussion (below) were partially based on these reports and guided our discussions:

1. SPEAKERS:

Unlike other years, and because of the shortness of time, the four lectures were offered under a thematic title: *This is NOW: University, Community and Change*.

Stewart Arneil (*Digging for data: Researching the Digital Humanities in the 21st century*) spoke about the digital changes to research, especially in terms of the implications of artificial intelligence and the roles of the professoriate and students.

Deborah Walker and **Barb Roberts** (*Developing Development: How UVic Fundraising has evolved*) brought us up-to-date on the new trends emerging in funding issues and how giving has responded to these changes.

Bruce Kilpatrick (*Finding a Road to ReconciliACTION*) spoke, as an activist, on the issues of truth and reconciliation as they are affecting the governance of Oak Bay; and

Dr. **Stephen Tax** (*Journey to a Meaningful Second Act*) concluded the series with a very useful tour, from his own perspective, of how to prepare and effect our "second acts" in ways that are consistent with this new century.

Of the four speakers, three were past staff members and one was a retired faculty member.

Discussion: MMs are seen as opportunities for the university to promote and demonstrate the university retirees' continuing contributions to the wider community. The shortness of time limited publicity opportunities, and the present financial situation has resulted in marketing cut-backs, which may have affected the numbers of those present on-line and in person.

Suggestions:

- *that* the target audiences remains UVic Retirees and the community that lies outside the university. Since COVID, it was remarked that the number of evening lectures had increased at UVic, providing a plethora of choices;

- *that* there needs to be a Standing Committee on MasterMinds (SC of MMs) that goes to work at the beginning of September in order to find speakers, settle venue requirements, and get publicity in place;
- *that*, in order to generate Retiree speakers, it was important for the SC of MMs to have access to the list of UVRA members so that they might have information about members' research and vocational interests as guidance for choices (see Geri van Gyn's 2015 report);
- *that*, in a meeting with Ember Millot, Privacy and Access Officer (VPFO), it is clear that if members of the UVRA sign off on a Membership document listing the types of information that they agree to have made public, there would be no difficulties with issues of privacy. In order for this information to be acquired, such a document needs to be designed,
- *that* the UVRA Membership committee design such a document, distribute it to all members, and manage the results. The Membership list could be released to the organization members as outlined in the document, with consent of members.
- *that* the SC of MMs keep the UVRA membership in mind as working partners and reach out for their help in suggesting topics for the lectures and in identifying potential speakers—first person experience is an excellent guide to being sure that speakers are engaging and can be heard (with a microphone). It was also noted that some retirees had spoken to MMs more than once and that that offer should continue;
- *that* the speakers should be lined up by the end of November;
- *that* the content of the lectures should return to the concept of an 'open plan' with speakers being invited or themselves suggesting areas of interest; Gray Matters could be a means of asking members to offer their ideas to the SC of MMs;
- *that* gender balance in the speakers' list be always a consideration.

2. AUDIENCE REGISTRATION NUMBERS:

APRIL 3	On-line	<u> 31 </u>	In person	<u> 8 </u>
APRIL 10	On-line	<u> 20 </u>	In person	<u> 11 </u>
APRIL 17	On-line	<u> 22 </u>	In person	<u> 13 </u>
APRIL 24	On-line	<u> 53 </u>	In person	<u> 23 </u>
TOTAL:			On-line	<u> 126 </u>
			In person	<u> 55 </u>
TOTAL OVERALL: <u> 181 </u>				

Discussion: The numbers were extremely disappointing and do not reflect past years; the ad hoc committee of Whitmore and Saxton did not start until January and the cutbacks to the UVic Communications & Marketing dept. maybe seen as possible reasons, but there was conversation at this point as to whether MMs had served its purpose.

Suggestions: In light of the dismissal of the UVic Speaker's Bureau and the UVRA's ongoing discussions of if and how to replace the Elder Academy, it was agreed:

****that* the UVRA would present the MMs series at least for one more year in order to have a clearer picture about MMs value.

3. VENUE:

This year, we were able to access the Roger Bishop Theatre in the Phoenix Building for the series. It seats about 200 people in a comfortable theatre space that is used as a classroom. A large screen was available for PowerPoint as well as a speaker's podium

with microphone. Two theatre students were available to act as ushers—both equipped with First Aid qualifications (a requirement to use the theatres). The assistant Front of House manager was present and the Concession (operated by a student) was open for drinks and light food.

Parking was easily available and IALH made two of their students available to assist with the payment procedures. (Parking continues as a “grumble”—see earlier reports—but it was agreed that, due to the present financial situation) this was not the time to discuss the matter with the university.

Discussion: It was agreed that a smaller venue, available at no cost should be found.

Suggestions: It was suggested :

- *that* the new conference building (Sngequ House) auditoriums have a good atmosphere, great acoustics and access, and easy, available parking;
- *that*, although the theatre concession was not really used, with a larger audience perhaps coffee or tea (wine?) might be available before the lecture, providing an opportunity for guests to meet and chat socially. An offer of this sort can be an added attraction.
- **that* that May would be a better month to consider as April has many competing events and spaces are limited due to final exam schedules.
- **that* we need to find out when the UVic booking office opens for dates in May and make the booking early.

4. PUBLICITY:

We have noted above the problems with publicity for Masterminds. It is significant that the Report of 2013 suggest that “it is apparent that a wide variety of communication tools be used to inform the public “ about MMs.

Suggestions: We agreed:

- *that* an early start was essential; that we needed to consider the radio—CBC1, CFX and CFUW should all be contacted for possible interviews and/or PSAs;
- *that* we should ask speakers if they would agree to being interviewed on radio;
- *that* we should try and reconnect with UVic Communications and Marketing to see what they might offer us.

5. RECEPTION DESK:

We saw this as an important site that, due to the small numbers this year, we had only Ashleigh Enright from IALH greeting people and handing out programs.

Suggestions: It was agreed:

- *that* the desk should be staffed by two UVRA volunteers;
- *that*, for statistics purposes, there should be a copy of the list of those who had indicated that they would attend so that we know how many attended
- *that* a paper program should be available, including the speakers’ bio and proposal, and any books or material of interest in terms of the lecture be cited; a brief welcome from the President, list of future speakers and any UVRA events of interest;
- *that* the speaker’s latest books or publication/s should be on display.

6. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN IALH AND THE UVRA:

The smooth running of each lecture presentation is dependent—and has been for many years—on the capable technical and social knowledge of Leah Potter, IALH Institute Administrator, and IALH administrative assistant, Ashleigh Enright. In addition, they look after all the publicity, bookings and any special requests that the speakers may have. Both attend each of the lectures and Leah conducts the follow-up question period as she negotiates between on-line listeners and those present. Great thanks were expressed to Leah for all her work and attention, especially as she was doing two jobs for IALH and PHSP during the first months of the year!

Discussion: These IALH responsibilities are wide-ranging and demand a number of skills (particularly technological) that UVRA members are lacking. We agreed:

- *that* a Masterminds Procedures document needed to be put in the UVRA Office in the event that Leah or Ashleigh were unable to undertake the usual responsibilities (it was noted in the 2014 Report that Lois Holizki of the then COAG, was developing “a very detailed plan for the organization of the series and will ensure that members of the Masterminds Series committee have access to this plan” and this was again mentioned as ongoing in the 2015 Report); Leah is updating the action plan developed in 2018 to accurately reflect the current roles and responsibilities of producing Masterminds.
- *that* the UVRA President should acknowledge the value of this partnership to the IALH Director (presently acting);
- *that* the UVRA could relieve some of the burden of the evening by setting up through the SC of MMs, the agenda of the evening and who does what jobs and how they are shared: welcome; introduction of speaker, question facilitation, thank you to speaker, and goodnight to audience;
- *that* IALH students be invited when necessary, as ushers, parking supervision, and that this be a budgeted item.

7. GIFTS and THANKS

Past reports describe different responses to the issues of speakers’ gifts and from whom do the Thank You notes come? We note that there was an attempt (2014 Report) to thank the speakers with a lunch but that did not happen as not enough could attend.

Discussion: There needs to be a consistent approach to the matter of how we thank the speakers. This year, for example, \$100.00 was sent to each speaker (\$50.00 each to the speakers on Development) along with a thank you note. How that sum was arrived at is unclear. Who should be writing the Thank You notes needs also to be defined—should both the president of the UVRA and the Director of the IALH do so, as suggested in the 2015 Report?).

8. BUDGET

(to be supplied by Leah Potter)

In reviewing the MMs Reports, it was noted Geri van Gyn (2015) wrote that “as in previous years, the Office of the VP External Relations was instrumental in the support of this annual event”

Suggestions:

- *that* this office (VPER) should be approached again to discover its interest.
- It was also noted that items charged to the UVRA (90000) account would cost more than if that item was charged to the (at that time) COAG (10000) account, because the UVRA was considered an external UVic entity. Again, perhaps an issue for the new MOU?
- *that* the Board pursue a closer relationship with the university
- *that* if this relationship obtains, it includes a description of those areas of financial support agreed upon.

Respectfully submitted,

June Whitmore, Juliana Saxton, Peter Liddell, Leah Potter, Ashleigh Enright