

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 11  
March 14, 2008

## Election 2008

The envelope,  
please . . .

## Cyber Study

Or cyber cheat?

## NOFX

Worse than ever

*Plus:*

*From Where I Sit,  
Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan,  
AUSU This Month, and much more...*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



## EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston

**Cyber Study—Or Cyber Cheat?**

Study group or organized cheating forum? That's the question facing the engineering faculty appeals committee at Ryerson University after a student there was charged with academic misconduct for running an online study group.

As the *Toronto Star* reported, the first-year student administered a Facebook group that was ostensibly a place where chemistry students "swapped tips on homework questions that counted for 10 per cent of their mark." (Although 146 fellow students were participating, only the student acting as administrator was charged with misconduct; one count each for himself and every other student.)

Admittedly, Ryerson's academic policy is vague, defining misconduct as "any deliberate activity to gain academic advantage, including actions that have a negative effect on the integrity of the learning environment." (The policy is being updated.)

As Kim Neale, the student union's advocacy co-ordinator, said, ". . . it's no different than any study group working together on homework in a library."

In one way, she has a point. After all, the phrase "deliberate attempt to gain academic advantage" covers a lot of territory. Does sitting down with a tutor in an attempt to raise your grades count as an academic advantage? What about hanging out in the library and prepping for an exam with a classmate? Or how about using a Moodle forum to exchange ideas on how to tackle an assignment?

But in this case, it *is* different—and not because of the technology being used. The debate around online study groups simply obscures the central fact: there's a clear line between academic discussion and cheating, and that's where this particular student seems to have gone wrong. It's one thing to talk about methods—but quite another to ask for specific answers, especially when they're part of your grade. It doesn't matter if the request comes in an online format or is stapled to a hallway bulletin board.

And according to the *Star* article, Neale admits the group's Facebook invitation offered more than just a place to swap tips: it was a call to provide answers to specific questions that formed part of the students' grades.

The invitation read: "If you request to join, please use the forms to discuss/post solutions to the chemistry assignments. Please input your solutions if they are not already posted." This was in spite of the fact that the professor had clearly stated the homework questions should be done independently.

Whether students posted the answers or not (and Neale claims no one actually did), the student charged with misconduct became responsible for the open call to cheating when he took over administration of the site (a responsibility the other students should share if they joined after that invitation was posted). It's hard to claim any uncertainty over the phrase "post solutions to the chemistry assignments."

Cheating? Yes. Should it be taken seriously by all students? Definitely, because new technologies don't alter the fundamental principles behind intellectual integrity. And if open requests for assignment answers become acceptable—in any forum—it undermines the value of the education we all work so hard for.

## AUSU ELECTION 2008



### AUSU Members Elect New Council

The votes have been cast, the ballots have been counted, and the results are in! The 2008 AUSU elections were held March 9 to 12, and results were announced March 13.

The new AUSU council will be a dynamic mix of experience and fresh perspectives, with five returning councillors and four other councillors ready to step into their new roles.

With 78 candidates on the ballot, the voting was close—and in some cases, tied. None of the draws would have resulted in a runoff for position on council, however, and the CRO has completed the official count and the results have been posted on the [AUSU website](#). As well, a special meeting was held March 13 via AUSU's teleconference lines to announce the successful candidates.

AUSU members cast a total of 1,139 votes. (Since members could vote for up to nine council positions, this figure doesn't reflect the number of voters.)

The incoming council members (in order of total votes received) are: Karl Low, Barb Rielly, Bethany Porter, Heather Fraser, Sarah Kertcher, Lonita Fraser (tied), Zil-E-Huma Lodhi (tied), Shaun Driscoll, and Emily Dukeshire. Congratulations!

The changeover from the current to the incoming council will take place by April 14.

After the new council has been working together for 30 days, an internal election will take place. Only councillors are eligible to vote, and they'll select the new AUSU executive representatives: the President, VP External and Student Affairs, and VP Finance and Administration.

Another result of this year's election has little to do with votes but everything to do with community: the unusually high number of candidates, and the resulting dialogue around the election, helped bring the efforts of council to the fore. The spirited discussions helped some AUSU members discover their students' union, while others became more aware of the services available to them, and still others found new ways to get more involved in the AU community.

The new council is sure to bring a unique set of ideas and initiatives to AUSU members, as well as working on key projects already underway, such as complaint tracking, lobbying, and the online store. *The Voice* will be there to bring you all the highlights From the Gallery, but don't forget that all members are welcome, and encouraged, to attend council meetings.

*The Voice* wishes all the best to outgoing councillors, with appreciation for their efforts on behalf of AUSU members. And to all returning and incoming councillors—congratulations!

*"Another result of this year's election has little to do with votes but everything to do with community: the unusually high number of candidates, and the resulting dialogue around the election, helped bring the efforts of council to the fore."*

## HEALTH MATTERS

Barbara Godin

**Cholesterol: What You Need to Know**

*"Cholesterol is a group of lipids known as sterols: a soft waxy substance made in the body for a variety of purposes and also found in animal-derived foods."*

from *Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies: 9<sup>th</sup> edition* by FrancesSizer and Eleanor Whitney

The body needs cholesterol for building cell membranes and in the production of vitamin D and some hormones. Cholesterol is a problem when it becomes too high, as it can

deposit on the walls of the arteries and cause them to narrow or block with plaque. High cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease.

According to The Heart and Stroke Foundation, if you are a male over the age of 40 or a female over the age of 50 and/or post-menopausal you should have your cholesterol checked. As well, if you have heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or have suffered a stroke, you should monitor your cholesterol, as these conditions could be further complicated by high cholesterol.

If you do have high cholesterol there are things you can do to lower it. Reducing your fat intake to 20 - 35 per cent of your daily calories will help you lose weight, which will help to bring your cholesterol level down. A good way to reduce your fat intake is to eat less red meat and high-fat dairy products.

Read labels and avoid foods containing trans fats, such as shortening, hard margarines, and many processed foods. Many food manufactures are reducing or eliminating trans fats from their products, as they raise bad cholesterol and lower good cholesterol. Also become aware of what foods contain cholesterol and limit these items.

Pay special attention to how your food is prepared. Frying food is less healthy than baking or broiling. Keeping physically active can help lower your LDL levels and raise your HDL levels. A simple task like walking briskly for 30 minutes a day can significantly impact your cholesterol level as well as improving your general health and sense of well-being.

Strive to follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating when planning your family's meals. A good choice is foods high in fibre, as these help to flush cholesterol from the blood. High-fibre foods include whole-grain cereals as well as fruits and vegetables. Try to consume several servings daily.

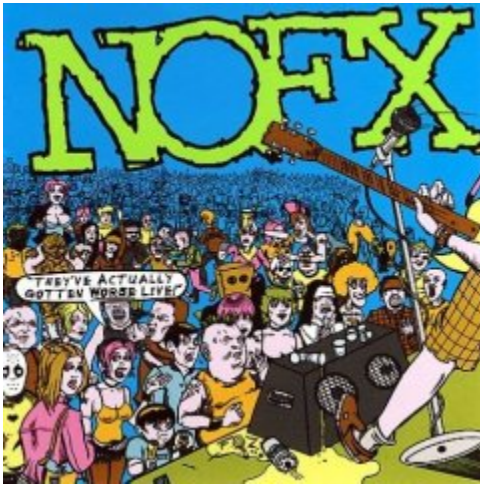
There are some things you cannot control. For example, you cannot do anything if you have inherited a gene that determines how your body handles cholesterol. Also, you can't stop yourself from aging. As we age, our cholesterol levels rise; particularly LDL, which is the bad cholesterol.

It is possible that after trying everything your cholesterol will remain high, and at this point you may need to go on medication. Drugs to lower cholesterol are called statins. Statins lower the amount of cholesterol manufactured by your liver. Your doctor will be able to advise you on which is best for your particular situation.



## MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mandy Gardner

NOFX – *They've Actually Gotten Worse Live*

Release date: November 2007

Label: Fat Wreck Chords

Tracks: 24

Rating: 10

"Hi my name's Mike . . . and I'm an alcoholic."

"Hi Mike!"

Enter NOFX with the latest live recording: *They've Actually Gotten Worse Live*, and you've got all the usual Fat Mike, El Hefe, and Eric Melvin dialogue mixed with musical improvisation, audience participation and, best of all, none of the songs from *I Heard They Suck Live*!

The band's own description of the record, posted on Fat Mike's own Fat Wreck Chords website, is "in January 2007, NOFX booked three nights of talking mixed with the occasional song at Slim's in San Francisco and recorded a live record." Ever so humble.

Despite the fact that NOFX is admittedly a little shitty live—and I use the term 'shitty' in the most loving and adoring of ways—it's this live ambience that draws in the crowds and makes NOFX live records some of the best out there. The band members are always drunk, always making references to each other's drug abuse and to the fact that they keep messing up their own songs and will have to "play it again tomorrow." The crowd really gets involved, never afraid to cheer, boo, or just be generally disruptive to the whole recording process.

NOFX is one of those bands that has really been able to capitalize on its live performances to the extent that, not only do fans flock into the shows, but they look forward to live albums almost as much as the regular studio albums. *They've Actually Gotten Worse Live* is a perfect, if long overdue, follow-up to 1995's *I Heard They Suck Live*; both records are perfect encapsulations of a NOFX show, and given the California club recordings they also represent those great cozy local shows that most of us can never see.

This three-day recording covers some of the best-loved NOFX fan favourites as well as the newer hits from *The War on Errorism* and *Wolves in Wolves' Clothing*. "Green Corn," "The Longest Line," and "What's the Matter with Parents Today?" mesh perfectly with "Franco Un-American" and "We March to the Beat of Indifferent Drum," bringing together the past and present of NOFX's music in terms of punk-rock anarchy and modern political commentary.

For NOFX fans, this is going to be an irreplaceable part of the CD collection. And non-NOFX fans—you're just missing out, and it's a shame. Get in on the chaos!



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

**Book:** Rick Mercer, *The Book*

**Publication date:** 2007

**Publisher:** Doubleday Canada, Random House of Canada Limited

*"Raven, who had concealed himself among them and heard the council's plans . . . went to the old woman and told her that the girl wanted her to return the beak to him. Suspecting nothing, the old woman gave him his beak. He put it on and flew away, cawing with pleasure at his success."*

Athapascan legend—"The Raven," *American Indian myths and legends* by R. Erdoes and A. Ortiz

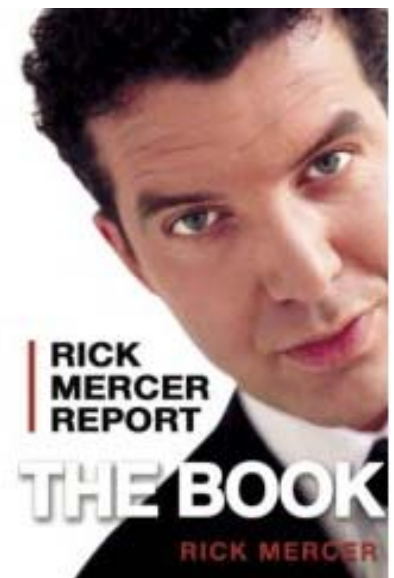
The title of Canada's Trickster Laureate should be established, if only for Rick Mercer, even though the man clearly despises titles. He is Raven, Loki, Inktomi, Wenebojo, Coyote, and Hermes all rolled into one gutsy Newf. Just when you think you're buds for life he catches you doing something stupid, underhanded, or just plain evil and there he is cawing away about it on public television or tripping you up and making you look dotty. This guy has the gall to meet with any high mucky muck you can name, make nice, have some laughs, then publicly rip the poor bugger apart branch from twig.

Of all the tricksters of world mythology Raven is probably the most apt comparison, and not just because Raven emerged in what is now Canadian territory. You can often find Mercer circling, circling, circling in search of tokens of Canadian identity so he can steal them and add them to his trove. Much of his ranting includes some speculation on what Canada, or a Canadian, is or is not. And whatever you believe about generalizations, you have to admit they're fun. And fun is good, as the trickster Dr. Seuss assures us.

*The Book* is a thoroughly fun selection of Rick's *Mercer Report* rants and various of his other scribblings from the last four years. To judge this book is to judge Mercer's career as a political satirist in a country where political satire is the comedy of choice.

We can't give Mercer all the credit for the success of said career. There is something phenomenal about a country that embraces this kind of humour. Not even the world's most sanctimonious democracy can compete on this level. Can you imagine Jon Stewart having a sleepover at the White House? Stephen Colbert skinny-dipping with a governor? Howard Stern riding around on the lap of a senator in a wheelchair? This kind of thing reminds me why I'm American by birth but Canadian by choice.

Canadian celebrities not only put up with Rick Mercer, they appear to love him, to fear him even, to court his favour, and to be proud to have their pictures taken with him. This is actually a pretty good barometer of Canada's tolerance level; on the day when Mercer is successfully sued, charged with insurrection, or fired for insubordination, we all need to run for the hills.





He is such a good watchdog that it's almost unnerving when Mercer writes about his forays into good works—the charitable foundation he formed with Belinda Stronach, for example, to provide mosquito nets to countries where malaria is both rampant and easily preventable. He also throws his support behind the troops in Afghanistan. It's like he's stepping out of character. Do compassion and social activism disqualify him from trickstering? Far from it. It's part of the job description. Just ask Raven.

Take note, people: activism, not political action. A recurring theme of *The Book* is the stupidity of all three parties, and no one is spared. So, okay, smart guy, if you had your own party, what would its ideology be? Stand firm? Curb the natural tendencies of greed and powerlust? Maintain a well-financed army? Don't be stupid? Don't be mean? No unnecessary legislation? Fund health care? Laugh at yourself, but take beer seriously?

Forget about it. A coherent ideology will not emerge from Mercer's mouth or pen. This is a good thing, because an ideology is only a bright and luscious fruit waiting for parasites and bacteria.

*The Book* lives up to four of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it confronts and mocks existing injustices; 2) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 3) it displays an engagement with and a compassionate response to suffering; and 4) it gives me tools enabling me to respond effectively to the suffering around me.

*The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to [bard@voicemagazine.org](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

## CALLING ALL GRAD STUDENTS



### Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association

Are you an AU grad student? If you are, do you know about all the services and information available to you through the Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA)?

Created in 2007, the AUGSA is "dedicated to serving its students worldwide, by promoting a global community and acting as a liaison between students and the university."

As a grad student, you can contact the Association to find help in answering questions about programs and courses, to discover opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, and to access resources on employment, research, and funding. Their website also provides links to other graduate associations, including the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, the Graduate Students' Association of Canada, and GSAs at other Canadian universities.

The AUGSA is there to provide representation and support for the unique challenges—and opportunities—that are part of life as a graduate student.

To find out more about this dynamic and growing group, visit their [home page](#) today.



## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### Mini Breaks

I'm a little choked another winter has come and (almost) gone without us having had a sun-soaked getaway. We'd been kicking around the idea of returning to a different part of Mexico or perhaps checking out the Dominican Republic, Cuba, or Jamaica. We looked over the *Journal's* Saturday travel section, checked online sites, and talked to friends.

We weighed the cost and considered the fact Roy was off work for a few months. We studied our schedules and our bank balance. We didn't want a holiday we couldn't afford. We dragged our heels until we found to our surprise that another winter was nearly over; the worst was behind us.

Today we attended the Sunday brunch at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre, a gift from our daughter that became part of my birthday celebration this year. "Kitchen Witches" was a fine diversion and a nice treat.

As the time-honoured queen of rationalization, I have a plan. Rather than spending four or five thousand dollars for a week at an all-inclusive resort, why not have mini-getaways scattered through the year? Luckily, this isn't just wishful thinking. We've got tickets.

In May, June, and July we have weddings of family and friends to attend. In May we'll spend a week at a Canadian resort, with hopefully a day trip into the States to spend some of our strong greenbacks on things we can't live without—an early celebration for our 35th anniversary. In June we're off to the Winspear to see my honey Craig Ferguson perform stand-up. On TV he walks a fine line between clever social commentary and adolescent fart noises and sound effects. I expect

the live content will be more risqué.

In July we're off to the Body Worlds show at the Telus World of Science. It's part of the world tour of real human bodies. Apparently it was tastefully done, preserving human dignity. I can't wait to see parts and muscle groups that have alternately served me well and given me grief.

In October I've got a date with Celine Dion. Don't roll your eyes! She's a mega star revered around the world and scorned at home. Roy is among the mockers, but hey, anything can happen by October. If he really can't abide the thought of her chest-thumping through some classics, I guess Hilary will be happy to accompany me. We'll see. I seldom indulge in regrets but I do regret never having seen Roy Orbison when I had the chance. Far too soon he died and a treasure was lost. I'm not taking any chances with Celine.

At some point Roy wants to make a quick business trip into North Dakota so I'll tag along for that too. Do you see how all these mini breaks can add up? Rest and relaxation scattered through the year, perhaps when we need it the most. That's not to say a week in the sun won't be great next winter. For now, looking forward to these treats will get me through to spring, from where I sit.

# The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by  
Wanda  
Waterman  
St. Louis





## AUSU This Month



### AUSU Elections 2008

#### New Council Elected

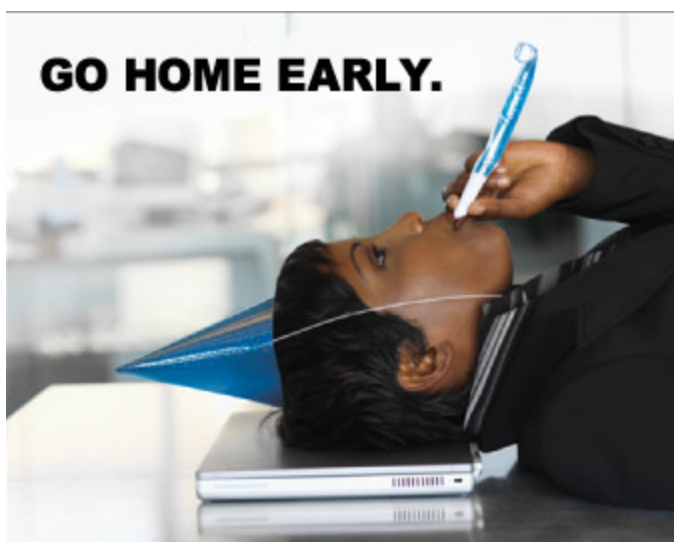
On March 13 2008, Rehan Qureshi, AUSU's Chief Returning Officer for 2008, announced the results of our election. Your new council, who will take office by April 14, 2008, are:

Karl Low  
Lonita Fraser  
Zil-E-Huma Lodhi  
Barb Rielly  
Sarah Kertcher

Bethany Porter  
Sean Driscoll  
Emily Dukeshire  
Heather Fraser

The new executive will be elected at the time of changeover. Until then, the new councillors-elect will shadow the current council to learn about our programs and services and to begin taking part in council's discussions.

Voter turnout for this year's election was about 80% higher than our last election, but this increase is less impressive when the low turnout overall for both years is taken into account. However, the very large ballot this year may have contributed to this issue. We realize that making selections from this large ballot was difficult and thank everyone who took the time to cast a ballot this year.



The incumbents look forward to working with the new group to continue providing services to AU students and to develop new programs for our members.

Election materials will remain in the forum for a while so that students can learn more about their new councillors.

An announcement of the executive election will appear on the AUSU front page, including a full list of your new council, on April 14th.

Create professional-looking flowcharts, timelines, graphs, and more, in minutes, all by yourself. Then go spend some quality time with your family.

Free for AUSU members. Visit [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org)



 **SmartDraw**

### AUSU Merchandise for Sale

Due to a high demand for AUSU merchandise, and delays in setting up our online store, we have put together a quick catalogue with a few items we have

in stock now. To download it in pdf, visit our [home page](#). Shipping costs will be calculated per order and we'll let you know by phone or email.

We are only accepting credit card orders at this time, unless you are able to visit our Edmonton office. Please excuse the poor quality of the product photos. These will be improved shortly. More products will be available soon. Suggestions are welcome.

### AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 in stock now!

The wait is over! The 2008 AUSU planner is in stock and on its way to members. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

Last year we had about 400 pre-orders, but this year we have 1,000! Please be patient. We're working as fast as we can to fill all of the orders and everyone should have their book by the end of January when the 2007 edition calendar pages run out. As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner and welcome all feedback to [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org)

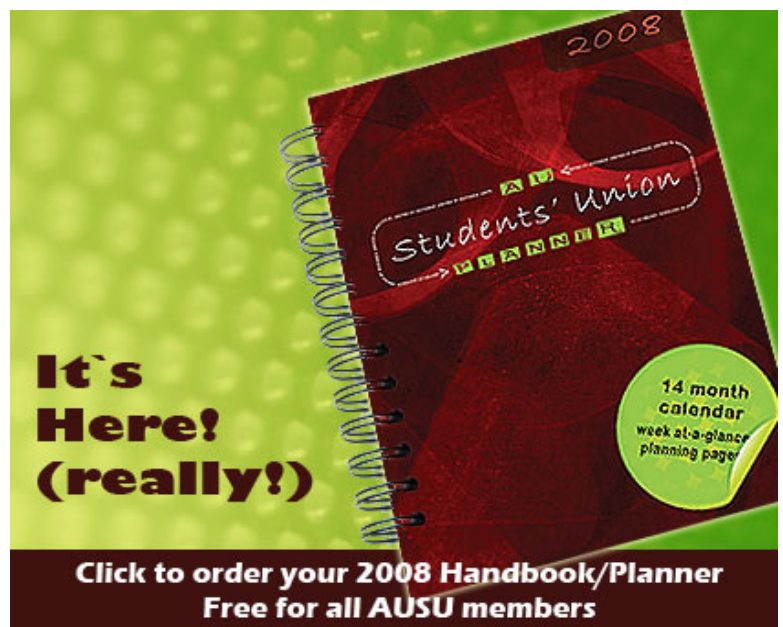
### Smart Draw – Benefit for AUSU members

AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our [website](#).

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.







## At Home: P.E.I. pop can bust

A man in Prince Edward Island lost close to 10,000 cans of pop to a seizure by the provincial environmental agency in charge of upholding the pop can laws there. To date, this is the largest pop can bust in the history of P.E.I.

In 1984 Prince Edward Island outlawed the sale of flavoured canned beverages that were carbonated. The ban had a dual purpose. Firstly, it was meant to save the province from litter, and secondly, it was meant to protect jobs at two bottling plants in P.E.I.

Don Jardine is the director of pollution prevention in the province and he has stated that pressure from other Maritime provinces to adopt a recycling system like theirs has been one of the reasons for a proposed elimination of the canned pop law.

Errol Waugh decided to take a trip off P.E.I. to stock up on canned pop for his business when he heard that others were already selling it at a festival in Charlottetown. He brought 800 cases of Pepsi products back to the Island to sell from his business there. Unfortunately for Waugh, the ban is still in effect and one of his customers was actually an undercover agent for the P.E.I. Environment Department.

Waugh does admit that he has previously sold canned pop whenever he could bring small amounts back from the mainland for resale to interested customers and that he made a small profit from the activity.

Those retailers that Waugh heard about in Charlottetown who prompted his early foray into the large-scale sale of canned pop were also dealt with by the Environment Department. They were issued warnings that they had until March 6 to remove all canned pop from their stores. However, the Charlottetown retailers did not have any pop confiscated and were not fined even though Waugh has been fined \$1,000 as well as losing his canned pop.

## In Foreign News: *Fitna* inspires heightened Dutch terrorism fears

A film to be released in the Netherlands this month is being blamed for the country's increased terrorism alert. The Netherlands raised their national terror risk alert to its second highest level and officials admit it is completely due to the possibility of fallout from this film.

The film *Fitna*, a 15-minute piece, was put out by Geert Wilders, a Dutch member of parliament, and is generally thought to be from an anti-Koran standpoint. Mr. Wilders is considered to be a right-wing politician and is currently the leader of the Freedom Party.

While the Dutch government warned that the release of Mr. Wilders's film could damage the nation's interests elsewhere in the world, the MP insisted that he was determined to release the film anyway. The government has released a statement that the film and Mr. Wilders's opinions in no way speak for that of the nation. Dutch television stations are saying they will not be airing the film but Wilders says he will

present it via a news conference at a press centre if necessary. Mr. Wilders's film will also be available over the Internet.

The filmmaker and legislator believes that the Koran should be banned because it incites violence and is "an inspiration for intolerance, murder and terror."

Wilders further believes that the culture of the Netherlands is far "superior" to Islamic cultures. He stands firm that immigrants to the Netherlands should become assimilated into Dutch culture and should eliminate what he refers to as the "intolerant and fascist parts of the Koran."

Police in the Netherlands have been protecting Mr. Wilders ever since 2004, when Theo Van Gogh was murdered in Amsterdam in response to his controversial 10-minute film *Submission*, which dealt with violence against women in the Islamic culture.

## CLICK ON THIS – Mixmaster

Lonita Fraser

In honour of a new mix of people on the students' union, this week it's a mixed bag of links. Hopefully they'll be equally useful; and, if not, at least entertaining!

The Do-It-Yourself Giallo Generator - "A Glass Eye on the Velvet Tapestry: Directed by Stefano Giacomonte: An American priest finds a human torso which has been hacked up in the style of a killer who terrorized the neighbourhood many years ago. An elderly journalist is unsatisfied with the official explanation of the murder; and after running afoul of the police investigation, he is on the verge of solving the mystery when he is killed by the real culprits: a secret society made up of the people he most trusted."

Get A First Life - Like the tagline says: A one-page satire of Second Life . . . and it's giggleable.

Alternate History Travel Guides - Dedicated to all those places we've dreamt might be, had things been just that little bit different.

The Map As History - This "multimedia atlas of world history" allows you to pick and choose the pieces of information you want access to, and thereby create a customized collection of world history.

Famous Dreams - "Throughout history, artists, inventors, writers, and scientists have solved problems in their dreams," and here are but a few.

Date From Hell - Oh . . . lord. Just hope you aren't on there somewhere yourself.

Cultural Tattoos and Body Modification - After a look at this you might stop worrying quite so much about that nose ring your teen just got.

Gallery of Monster Toys - Suddenly I'm reminded of something called either Goofy Grime or Slime; it was green, slooshy, sticky, and looked not entirely unlike, well, you know. But boy was it fun!

The 80s Tarot - The sad thing is, it doesn't actually exist . . . and I want it!

## AROUND AU



### AU Editor Rides to Aid Poverty Relief

In June, AU's Florene Ypma (a course materials editor at AU Central) will join over 200 other cyclists as they cycle across country to battle poverty.

The goal is to raise \$1.5 million to help aid the world's poor. The group's nine-week tour will begin June 28 in Seattle, Washington, and end in Jersey City, N.J. on August 30.

In all, the Sea to Sea 2008 Bike Tour will cover more than 2,500 kilometres, and Ypma will be taking part in the first leg of the route.

"I would love to ride the entire distance," she told AU's *The Insider*. "For several years, it has been a dream of mine to ride across the continent. Even this shorter distance is a tremendous opportunity to ride for a very good cause with a great group of people."

Along with raising funds, the group's goal is to raise awareness of poverty-related issues and to show others that there are countless ways to make a difference.

"There are many ways to get involved in fighting poverty worldwide," Ypma added. "Locally, we have people involved in Canadian Foodgrains Bank projects, and many people who sponsor disadvantaged children through organizations such as Compassion Canada. This tour is another outlet for poverty relief efforts."

To find out more about the tour, visit the Sea to Sea website [here](#).



## DID YOU KNOW?



### The Story Behind the Picture

Next time you visit Athabasca University's [home page](#), check out the "I Stand Out" banner at the top of the page. The banner features photos of AU students in their home towns. But did you know the banner is interactive?

Click on the banner and you'll enter a mini site. Along with links to courses, programs, and other AU information, the stories and photos of four AU students are featured. Just click on any of the links to discover the story behind the photo!

## FROM THE GALLERY

Sandra Livingston



## AUSU AGM 2008

On Saturday, March 8, the lines lit up for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual AUSU Annual General Meeting!

Including council, a total of 22 AUSU members dialled in, and the topics ranged from budget issues to online course evaluations.

After the agenda and 2007 AGM minutes were approved, the floor was opened for members to discuss the financial reports (you can check out all the details [here](#), in the 2008 Annual Report).

This was a hot topic, and members inquired about several items on the report, including surpluses in the awards (a lack of applications for some bursaries, such as travel), newsletter (high staff turnover meant extra newsletter editions weren't produced), and representation sections (after considering membership in various student groups, council determined that strategic alliances would see better results than full membership).

Another highlight followed the finance discussion: although it won't affect the 2008 AUSU election, item 7.0 on the agenda saw a motion put forward to amend Article 9 of the bylaws; specifically, a clarification of the criteria outlining who can run for council in future elections.

Currently, the bylaws state that "any active member in good standing, who has completed a minimum of 3 AU undergraduate credits, and does not fall into any of the exceptions noted under the rights of Active Members may submit to Council a self-nomination . . ."

There was a lively discussion of the pros and cons of keeping the criteria in place for prospective councillors to have completed at least one undergraduate course. A vote was held, and the motion to remove that condition was defeated by a margin of 15 to seven.

As well, a second motion clarifying councillor eligibility was approved, this time 20 to two. The second motion saw a change to Article 4.2, Rights of Members. For consistency, item c) in section 4.2.1 will be amended to read "run for a position on council, pursuant to the conditions in 9.2 . . ."

Just a reminder: the clarification on eligibility for council doesn't affect this year's election, but it's worth remembering for those who decide to throw their hats into the ring in 2010!

With the main items on the agenda wrapped up, the meeting was adjourned and the floor opened up for general discussion. It was easy to see the enthusiasm and sense of community that AU students have for our school.

Everyone was willing to listen, to share ideas, and to express their commitment to staying (or getting) involved in order to make the AU experience the best it can be, whether that meant a position on council, helping fellow students on the AUSU discussion boards, or filling out the online course evaluations.

With some great proposals out there (including Olympic-hopeful funding, working with the Graduate Student Society, and an AUSU podcast), the next two years promise to be busy ones for council. See you next time, From the Gallery.

## EDUCATION NEWS

Natalie Climenhaga

**Women increasingly turn away from computer science programs**

EDMONTON (CUP) -- A national shortage of computer science graduates has the industry scrambling to find employees, but fewer and fewer women are taking part in those programs.

Today, only half as many women as in the 1970s are completing computer science degrees, and academics are trying to figure out why.

"Twenty years ago, more like 30 to 40 per cent [of students] were women," said Gail Powley, vice-chair of the University of Alberta Women in Scholarship Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST).

Today, she said, those numbers have been cut in half, noting that nationally, computer science programs reflect the starkest contrasts in gender parity.

According to the University of Alberta's Department of Computing Science, during the 2007-2008 academic year, only 37 out of 247 undergraduate students were female.

According to Eleni Stroulia, a professor of computer science, two correlated phenomena are currently happening in North America.

"So in a gender-neutral discussion, the numbers are dropping," Stroulia said. "[But, secondly,] the numbers of females are dropping even faster. So we have fewer students, and the gender gap is widening."

The growing gender disparity is unfortunate, according to Stroulia, because "you need a multi-perspective team to make good decisions," adding that as women leave the IT industry, the field becomes "more and more uniform."

Nobody knows exactly why computer science programs are failing to attract more women, she said, but ability isn't an issue.

"So it's not that they can't do it—[and] we don't see a similar phenomenon in math—so it's not that math phobia is a problem."

One of the possible reasons being put forth, Stroulia said, is that IT is perceived as a geeky subject with little social interaction.

The problem, she explained, is that women are thought to want to have an impact in society, and are deterred from the idea of sitting in front of a computer all day.

Stroulia stressed that, despite that perception, there are "plenty of opportunities" to combine other interests with computing science.





"We do meet with people, and work in teams, and talk with people. We're not sitting in front of a computer all the time, hiding from the world," Stroulia said.

Meanwhile, some organizations are trying more active outreach projects.

Programs such as the Canadian Information Processing Society have sponsored Women in IT Day, which aims to engaging young female students in IT-related activities to communicate what a career in the industry might look like.

Indeed, Stroulia said that "in some cases it seems that this does not even enter the choices of women, so they haven't seen anybody that would emulate or illustrate this career for us."

Stroulia also said that having more women involved in technology featured in media could also help to promote women's involvement.

She noted that criminology programs saw great boosts when the *CSI* series became popular and the same tactic could be explored in this situation.

Powley agreed.

"Media has been recognized as one of the key problematic issues, where people who join IT aren't thought of as being fashionable or friendly or anything," Powley said.

Powley explained that the idea of having scientists-in-residence has been floating around as another way to allow students to come into contact with role models in the industry.

"These individuals would be young, dynamic professionals working in local companies so that young people can see that these people are cool, they're fun, and there are jobs," Powley said.

That jobs are being outsourced to India and Asian countries is another concern that discourages potential students, she said. She stressed, however, that while some jobs are leaving Canada, there is a large domestic shortage of IT graduates.

Powley, a chemical engineer, said that there are immense career benefits to focusing on computers, no matter what field a student enters.

"I focused on an area of chemical engineering that was very computer-intensive and it did me extremely well throughout my career. In fact, I got one of the highest-paying roles in chemical engineering. So for people who have an interest in biology, there's a computer side to biology they can look at."

"Really it's a wonderful profession," Powley said. "It's high-tech, it's current, you have the latest and greatest in toys, if you will, [and] there's a very dynamic environment."

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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