

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 47
December 5, 2008

Love's Labours

Elephant on a train

AU Profiles

Robb Corbett

The Iguanas

Post-Katrina



Plus:

*From Where I Sit, The Mindful Bard,
Music To Eat Lunch To, and much more...*

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

The Voice interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom-right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Features

On the Hill	3
AU Profiles: Robb Corbett	4

Articles

Elephant on the Train	6
In Conversation With: Rod Hodges of the Iguanas	8
Some Confusing Buzzwords Interpreted	10
<i>The Voice</i> Writing Contest is Here!	11

Columns

The Mindful Bard.....	14
From Where I Sit	16
The Interviewer	17
Porkpie Hat	18
Music to Eat Lunch To.....	19
AUSU This Month.....	20

News and Events

Click of the Wrist	7
Did You Know?: PLAR Program Highlighted in New Book.....	13
International News Desk	22
Education News	23

From the Readers

Letters to the Editor	2
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



O, Canada

It's been a week of incredible developments on Parliament Hill, and every federal politician in sight has been clamouring to be heard over the other side's cries. It would be easy to become confused by all the posturing, but one clear message stands out above the fray, and it exposes the *real* crisis at hand.

The problem isn't that we have a prime minister whose word means nothing. First, Harper proclaimed that Bill C-16 (setting fixed federal election dates) would "prevent

governments from calling snap elections for short-term political advantage." He then called an early election. A confidence vote was set for December 1. When the government's fiscal update fell short, Harper delayed the vote until December 8. When it became clear he would lose power, he moved to suspend Parliament.

Political advantage indeed. His single-mindedness evokes images of an intoxicated young lady at a party, her bra strap dangling down one arm. If someone sidled up to him and said, "Pardon me, Stephen, but your arrogance is showing," it's doubtful he'd have the presence of mind to care.

Nor is the problem that there is no viable alternative to Harper's controlling, vengeful style of governance. Is a coalition a sound idea? With its inherent expectations of consensus and cooperation, it could well bring refreshing change to Ottawa. But not the coalition that's been proposed, one whose leadership would depend on a rudderless party with deep organizational issues of its own, never mind trying to herd the collective cats of other disparate party agendas.

No, the real crisis is this: Canadians are without a functioning government. In a time of worldwide economic frailty, terrorism threats, and serious environmental concerns, Canada is without leadership.

A strong statement, and pardon my cynicism, but let's take a look at the situation. According to the good folks at the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, to govern is to "conduct the policy and affairs of" an organization or country. Government, then, is the "system by which a state or community is governed."

And by our prime minister's own admission, Parliament Hill has not been in a position to govern for some time now. In fact, that was the whole point behind the Federal election in October. As Harper told reporters in August, "In the past few months, and particularly over the summer, we have seen increasing signs that this Parliament . . . is becoming increasingly dysfunctional." In short, it wouldn't be able to cooperate long enough to tie its own shoes.

Today, just seven weeks after the election, we don't even have a sitting Parliament, and the "policy and affairs" of this country will not be addressed until January 26 at the earliest. After that, it looks likely that we'll be thrown into another election—a period that prevents the government from passing major legislation. Even with an election, the party leaders are locked in such fierce brinksmanship that it may be months before they dust themselves off, look around, and say, "Oh, right, we're supposed to be looking after *your* interests."

Good governance or, by definition, governance at all? Not on your royal prerogative.

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Robb Corbett

Christina M. Frey

In this week's profile, we meet computer science student Robb Corbett. Robb, a stay-at-home dad to two children, aged two and five years, explains why he switched careers from chemical technology to computer science. He also mulls over the socialization difficulty with distance education—and how he thinks it could be helped—and explains his strategies for dealing with burnout, including his “gotta-have-it” study aid.

Robb, who already had a college diploma in chemical technology, decided to go back to school to increase his career prospects. “I think that I went as far as I could in chemistry with only my diploma,” he says. “I saw the . . . ceiling approaching fast.”

To break out of the rut, he decided to obtain a degree. Since Robb has always had a strong interest in computing, computer science was an easy choice. And because AU's computer science degree is broad enough to cover most of the specialties available, he feels he has many options for the future. “My personal preference is . . . programming,” Robb says. “I would love to land a programming job on completion . . . but I also like UNIX/Linux work and web applications.”

Distance education was a perfect fit for his situation. “AU lets me go somewhat at my own pace . . . something I need, seeing as my family life dictates a lot of the pace for me!” Robb says. “As a mature student with a wife and one kid at the time, going back to a ‘brick and mortar’ school wasn't really an option financially or time-wise.”

He was already familiar with AU from his uncle, a graduate of AU's Master of Distance Education program. When a co-worker mentioned she was working on her degree one course at a time, “that was the catalyst,” Robb says. He was able to transfer 39 of his diploma credits into AU's Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems post-diploma program, beginning his first course in 2005. Then he put his studies on hold.

“I . . . took a bit of a hiatus because I thought I could get an education grant through my employer,” Robb notes. “[It] didn't pan out, so I took a break.”

However, in the spring of 2007 he began studying for his degree in earnest. He explains: “My wife took a great job opportunity out here in Sydney [Nova Scotia],” which meant the family moved from Alberta to the east coast. Since Robb already had to leave his Calgary-based job, he realized that this was his opportunity to work on his degree full-time.

“I decided to . . . pursue the life of a stay-at-home dad by day and student by night,” he says. He's been working steadily since then, hoping to finish the degree within a few years.

For Robb, studying with AU is all about freedom. "I'm in Nova Scotia attending a school based in northern Alberta!" he says. "I can take my coursework with me wherever I travel . . . and if . . . we have to move again in the future, it won't interrupt my degree." Furthermore, he notes that "AU does offer the speed to complete a program that I think you don't always get from 'traditional' schools."

This flexibility will allow him to implement a new study routine next semester. "I have found . . . that working on only one subject for six weeks straight works well," Robb says. "I manage my pace better."

For one thing, there are fewer distractions. Additionally, it leaves room for unexpected delays. "There's not as much contract date stress," Robb says. He plans to approach his courses using this sole-focus method, which he finds works better for him.

How does he keep burnout at bay? "I do get burned out!" Robb says. "It's learning how to manage the burnouts that counts." He says his wife helps by reminding him to go to bed or to take some time off from the computer periodically. A sense of priority also keeps him grounded. "My going back to school was a family decision, not just mine . . . because I knew it would affect everybody," Robb says. "The wife, kids, and family do come first."

Being organized and self-accountable also helps, and Robb implements those concepts from the start.

Being organized and self-accountable also helps, and Robb implements those concepts from the start. "You have to set goals for yourself," he says. "Within the first week of a course I try to lay out a set of milestones and unit completion dates."

Robb says he finds it helpful to use a computer-based calendar application "like iCal or Google Calendar." And although he will adjust the schedule periodically, he also recommends keeping a progress log in conjunction with the schedule. "It helps to know where you are and where you need to be," he says.

As for coping with the day-to-day business of studying, Robb has found an easy solution. His number one studying aid: earplugs! "You really do have to block out distractions from around the house," he says. "I also sometimes turn on some white noise in iTunes to help me focus."

While distance education works well for Robb, it does have its disadvantages. For Robb, the lack of personal interaction is something he misses. Although he's had no difficulty communicating with tutors and classmates using email and chat programs, he thinks some classroom-style experience would enhance learning. "It would be nice to have a 'live' session with a prof to discuss the topic," he says.

Second Life, a virtual community, could be useful. "The platform is prime for that," Robb says. But he's also aware of the difficulties. "Not even all of the computer students have high speed internet access . . . and then there are time zone issues," he points out. Another issue is differing schedules: "[At] AU," he says, "people can, and do, go at their own pace."

If nothing else, though, students should not be afraid to ask for help when they need it. "Search the forums, email your tutor . . . search the web, email your fellow students," Robb suggests. "Even [those who] have completed the course . . . may still be able to help you."

One resource is AUSU's study buddy boards. "They're great for student interaction," says Robb. He's optimistic about the future of technology in classroom-style interaction at AU. "I think if more people were to populate a group chat room or something we could get those kind of dialogues happening," he says.

ELEPHANT ON THE TRAIN

Adam Thackeray



The sliding doors of the westbound train close tight, and three lovers settle themselves uncomfortably on cold, vinyl seats. From the overhead speakers, a tinny voice garbles what may or may not be the next station stop. Then, with a jolt, the train moves forward, gathers speed, and draws them into the darkness.

The trio is seated together in an empty section of the last car. They make polite conversation, but our young protagonist does not hear a word that is said. He can feel his jaw working, he makes note of the spittle sprayed from his top lip, and, indeed, the happy couple who sit across from him seem to nod in the appropriate places. But he himself has no idea what he is saying.

Earlier, at dinner, he had eaten little and drank much. In theory, he had hoped that the drink would make him brave—brave enough to reveal everything to her. In effect, though, he has surpassed any facade of courage, and is edging ever closer to flat-out drunkenness. As it was, he could barely make himself coherent to her when he was sober; now the words he needs to say have become indefinitely mired in the thick fog that surrounds his skull.

Nevertheless, he attempts to grasp a few scattered portions of the dialogue. He nods his head in answer to something she has said, hoping he has made the proper response, always willing to acquiesce to her, at any rate. He is hanging on the sounds of the consonants and vowels that emanate from her small, pretty mouth. He wants to hear her words, but is distracted by the blood pounding warmly in his ears, and tormented by the sudden, hot, loosening of his bowels (a less-than-romantic sensation, but a biological inevitability when in her presence).

He steals occasional glances in her direction, observing that even under the harsh glare of fluorescent lights she is beautiful. He tries hard not to stare at her, tries hard not to gaze too long at the part of her hair, or the slope of her breast. He decides, instead, to worship the dark pane of glass where night races past her reflected apparition. Even with this second-hand reverence he is content.

This contentment, though, is short-lived. For he cannot help but envision what the happy couple will be doing under the covers, in the darkness, within a few short hours. The clarity of this foresight makes him wish the train would crash and burn. Compounding this agony is the simple fact that the fiancé appears entirely deserving of her affection. Our hero wants to hate the fiancé, demonize him, but, instead, he seems a god.

Another distorted announcement comes over the speakers. The train slows and her destination approaches, all too soon, and not soon enough. They exchange email addresses and make wholehearted vows to stay in touch, but he knows that this will be the last time he will ever see her again. She rises from her seat, her

footing uncertain as she is jostled back and forth by the movement of the train; still, the fiancé is there to hold her steady.

“It was good to see you again,” she says, touching our hero’s arm lightly. In her eyes, he thinks he sees what he has thought he has seen many nights before.

But the train comes to a full stop, she nods goodbye, and he notes only the briefest moment of hesitation on her part before she turns away. The fiancé takes her hand, leads her off the car, and out onto the platform. The last our hero sees of her is a slight profile, her breath a small cloud before her; he shuts his eyes tight to burn this image into memory. He listens as the doors slide closed. There is a muted discord of steel against steel from beneath him as the train pulls away, slowly accumulating ever more distance from the goddess of his creation.

The fluid motion of the empty car lulls him into a near catatonic state. In his left breast pocket he can still feel the weight of the gift he had planned on giving her. It sits hard against his chest, a small, dead burden. He draws a laboured breath and swallows with some difficulty, feeling as though he has been kicked in the throat. He feels suffocated with regret, wishing that he had known her at some other point in time, wishing that he had never known her at all.

But he is grateful for this misery all the same.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - I, Robot

As the Iraq and Afghanistan wars drag on, the US Army and Navy have reportedly hired UK experts to create “soldier bots”—robots that can be sent into battle but will be programmed not to violate the Geneva Conventions. If you think robots are just the stuff of science fiction, think again.

History of Robotics

It doesn’t claim to be complete, but this history of robotics, complete with pictures, offers some interesting facts—including da Vinci’s humanoid robot built in 1495.

Hubo

This CNN report on the robot Hubo brings the fascinating age of *I, Robot* one step closer. The technology is impressive, but the robotic psychologist claiming that robots will be our best friends is a little worrisome.

ASIMO

Honda’s ASIMO is amazing: an advanced humanoid robot able to act autonomously. It’s hard to imagine the amount of programming needed to create these levels of balance and agility.

50 Best Robot Movies

And here I didn’t know there even *were* 50 robot movies. This *Times Online* compilation of the best of the genre proves that someone has a lot of time on their hands. Maybe because they have a robot?

How to Build Your First Robot

This tutorial isn’t flashy, but if you ever wanted to know how to build a robot for under 50 dollars, this is the place to go.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Rod Hodges of the Iguanas

*The Iguanas are a New Orleans band whose music is a delicious brew of styles, influences, and song subjects. The band weathered 2005's Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in exile in Austin, Texas, eventually returning to New Orleans to rebuild their homes and work on their newest album, the recently released *If You Should Ever Fall On Hard Times* (see Voice review [here](#)).*

The following are notes from a conversation with Rod Hodges, the band's lyricist and lead singer, who spoke to us from New Orleans.

The Rhythm and Blues Connection

One of my earliest memories is hearing my mother singing Fats Domino songs as she was washing the dishes. That was her era, and Fats was popular worldwide. I loved the old songs: 'Blueberry Hill,' 'Walkin' to New Orleans' . . . And then I was also a blues singer from the time I was a teenager and started playing guitar. Then in my early twenties I got turned on to Professor Longhair and that style of New Orleans R&B from the '50s.

Joe Cabral, the saxophone player in the group, is also a big lover of '50s R&B. That's what I knew about New Orleans music. I didn't know that much about traditional New Orleans jazz, although I love that stuff now. I would come to New Orleans jazz festivals in the early '80s and just love it. I told myself that even if I had to live on the street it would be worth it just to be around these guys. I didn't even care if I made a living doing it as long as I could just be around that music.

I think they took to our music because it's very rhythmic and danceable and different from anything else in New Orleans at that time. There was rock, R&B, jazz, and Latin but nobody who mixed it like we did. We sang our songs half in Spanish and half in English, and we did some blues. It was just a mixture no one around here had heard before.

The Latin Connection

My grandparents were from Mexico. Although my mother was of Mexican descent she didn't speak Spanish to us when we were little, but my grandparents did. I didn't really learn it but I heard it spoken. People would come up to me speaking Spanish and I would feel bad that I didn't know what they were saying. When I got into my teens I began asking my grandmother how to say this or that. But I wasn't very fluent, like a lot of Chicano people are in the United States. It took effort on my part to learn it.

Then I learned a lot from travelling to Mexico and from hanging out with people and speaking with people, especially when I started going to dances and learning to play the accordion. Joe Cabral's father is Mexican and has a mariachi band, so Joe grew up speaking Spanish and playing that music.

Most people just want to play the blues or play Latin music but we had this thing we mixed together. It's very New Orleans in a way; a lot of people will tell us that our music isn't really New Orleans music but I say you shouldn't just play some form of New Orleans music that you might have heard before.

Tapping Creativity

I need peace and quiet to be creative. I love being in a sunny room with no distractions, with a cup of coffee, and sitting in a chair with my guitar. That's my ideal for making music. I need to have my little space. While I was in Austin I tried to create that little space for myself. I collected a lot of books and CDs, some of which I already had but they were back in New Orleans. I kind of had to surround myself again with some of the stuff I had back in New Orleans.

When I was in Austin I really got into Shakespeare. He was just calling out to me. I read a lot and read a lot about his work. It's got to be deep stuff, obviously, if it's lasted this long. It was deep enough to keep me going. I also read a lot of Nabokov, one of my favourites.

Writing a Song

I find it very hard to sit down and try to write a song. Willie Nelson is one of my all-time favourites. I don't recommend this method, but sometimes he won't write a song for a year. That always made me feel good. If Willie says it's okay, then maybe it *is* okay. There are people in Nashville who will go to work every day, sit down, and write songs. Granted, a lot of their songs are crap, but I kind of admire that. For myself, unless the song seems really good, I don't have the work ethic to keep at it.

Writing a song happens different ways. Sometimes I'll get an idea. I remember one time I was sick and we were on the road. I felt like crap, and before we were supposed to play I was outside lying in the van because I didn't feel good. This song just started running through my head so I wrote down the words, and that was basically it.

Another example is "Her Red Fishnets." I was watching TV and I saw them taking Fats Domino out of his house. They thought he'd perished in the storm but he was still alive and they went down there and rescued him. And there he was climbing into the boat. So I started thinking about him and all those people down there in that part of New Orleans. I started strumming on the guitar and came up with that song.

Post-Katrina New Orleans

The fact is, New Orleans will never be the same. Huge neighbourhoods were completely destroyed, vibrant neighbourhoods where people lived, where musicians lived, for hundreds of years. They'll never come back. There's nothing there but empty lots. We now have a population of about 300,000 whereas before it was at least 500,000. Some of those neighbourhoods were the breeding grounds of a lot of the music.

A lot of people are gone that used to live here, but a lot of people did come back. Every time somebody comes back it feels great. Our complete band is back in town, and everybody who came back is trying to make a go of it and everybody feels pretty good now. Whenever hurricane season comes along everyone gets real nervous; it's hopeful with a bit of trepidation.

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Some Confusing Buzzwords Interpreted

Busby Leclair



Recession: Years of grasping and unbridled, gravy-sucking greed are finally making a slight dent in our unconscionable profits. On the plus side, it's another good excuse to gut education, health care, and the arts.

Human Capital: The talents, abilities, and (of course, above all) work potential of the grimy, unruly masses. It is this intrinsic value which makes them slightly more useful to us than if we were to systematically club them to death, and reduce their remains to tradable chemical compounds.

Globalization: The carefully orchestrated flaying of other countries' cultural, spiritual, and economic values in order that we can continue to load our Voyagers and Hummers with cheap, worthless plastic and electronic crap, and year-round bananas and pineapples. (*see Imperialism*)

e-Commerce: The mall never closes. You can run, but you cannot hide.

Facebook: See "Electronic Signature."

Sustainable Development: Nobody really knows what this means, but it'll give us a brief distraction—something to talk about while our air and water are filling up with poisons. In environmental terms, it's probably analogous to someone saying, "Here's an idea! Let's make a start on putting out that kitchen fire by turning down the thermostat a couple of degrees."

National Security: Fall afoul of the machinery of status quo in any way, and we'll pepper spray you, bring our shiny boots down on your ugly face, lock you up in a deep dark hole, incinerate your sorry ass, then think up a good rationalization for it afterwards.

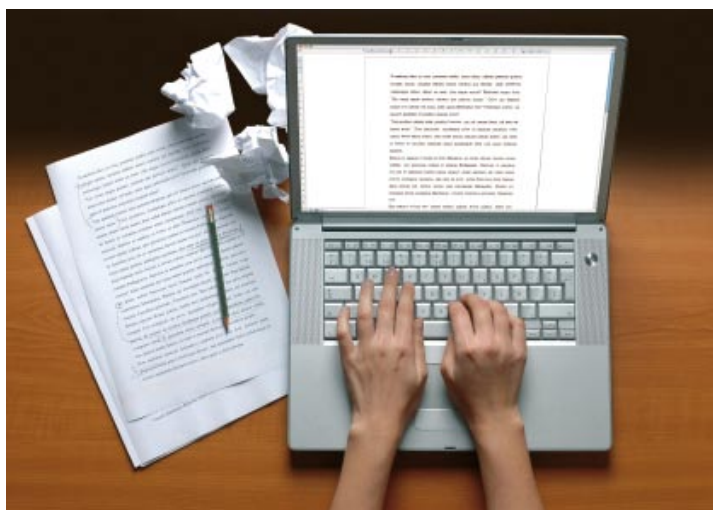
Green Economy: Here's another idea! Let's sell them cheap, pointless crap with some kind of new-agey, socially conscious angle.

Information Society: A Brave New World in which the potentially destabilizing forces of literacy and social contact are cleverly undermined, the self-congratulatory "educated middle class" are conned into working longer and longer hours without realizing it, and the concentration of news sources in the hands of the power elite continues unabated. And, as a delicious side benefit, we get to sell unprecedented amounts of cheap electronic crap.

Electronic Signature: So you, who always thought you were so "clever and classless and free," how long do you think it's gonna be before we stick a silicon chip up your rear end and implant it firmly in your brain, the better to record and document every passing of wind, every stray thought that flickers across your dangerously unruly synapses?

Imperialism: Globalization. Imperialism. I say "to-may-to," you say "to-mah-to." The important thing is someone's always picking the cotton.

THE 2008 VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!



Write for *The Voice* and win money for your education!

The Voice is launching its 2008 writing contest, with categories for both fiction and non-fiction.

We've got over \$1,000 in prizes to give away: one winner in each category will receive a scholarship of one Athabasca University undergraduate course.

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines carefully to ensure you are not disqualified.

It's free to enter, but the length limits are firm and all entries that go beyond these limits will be disqualified. Good luck!

Categories

Non-Fiction:

In 1,500 words or less, write about any issue affecting freedom of speech. You may write about issues in the press, in politics, or on a personal scale. You may focus on current issues of free speech, or take a historical approach. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article (with proper citations), or write a creative opinion piece.

Fiction:

This category is open to your imagination! Write a 1,500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

Rules and Regulations

- The *Voice* writing contest is open to anyone 16 years of age or older, with the following exceptions: AU, AUSU, and *Voice* staff and AUSU councillors are not eligible to enter the contest.
- Winning entries will be published in *The Voice*. *The Voice* reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current *Voice* freelance submission rates. *The Voice* may use portions of non-winning non-fiction entries in a composite about perspectives on free speech. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the *Voice* editors, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU councillors. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- *The Voice* editors will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be judges.

- Entries must be original works that have not been printed or published elsewhere (including online), and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To ensure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information. *The Voice* editors will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. *The Voice* editors will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although *The Voice* editors may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel as is, with the exception that all entries will be converted to use the same file format, margins, font size, and font style to ensure that all entries are equally readable.
- The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. *The Voice* reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the *Voice* scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a certificate for one free Athabasca University undergraduate course. Prize certificates have no cash value.
- *The Voice* reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.
- *The Voice* is not responsible for lost emails. *The Voice* editors will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Please follow up if you do not receive a reply in two business days.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city of residence to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration—beyond the contest prize—will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Winners will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if *The Voice* editors determine, at their sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- No preference will be given to regular *Voice* writers. Entries will not identify the writer as a regular *Voice* contributor when sent to the judging panel.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial, and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited.

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in both categories will be
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Submission Guidelines

- Your submission must be an electronic file attached to an email and submitted to voice@ausu.org. Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact voice@ausu.org if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc or .docx], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt].

- If you use footnotes or endnotes, type them in at the end of the document, rather than using the endnote feature of your word processor.
- If you use a word processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact *The Voice* editors if you require assistance in formatting your submission. Users of older Macs may have to send entries in HTML format.
- Each entrant may submit one entry in each of the two categories.
- All entries must be under 1,500 words due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the word count feature in Microsoft Word. Your references and citations section will not be included in the word count.
- References should be formatted consistently according to a standardized publishing style guide, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the MLA press style.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics (unless the graphic is integral to the work), or unusual fonts. Entries must be text; scans of handwritten or typed documents will not be accepted.
- The email should include the following information: Your full name, AU student ID number (if applicable), email address, telephone number, mailing address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting to the fiction or non-fiction category.
- Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article but be sure to include a title.

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Non-Fiction entries will be judged on originality, creativity, accuracy, and how well your support your assertions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability. You may write in journalistic style or essay format.
- Fiction entries will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality of your writing style.
- Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece and your technical writing skills.

Contact voice@ausu.org if you have any questions.

DID YOU KNOW?

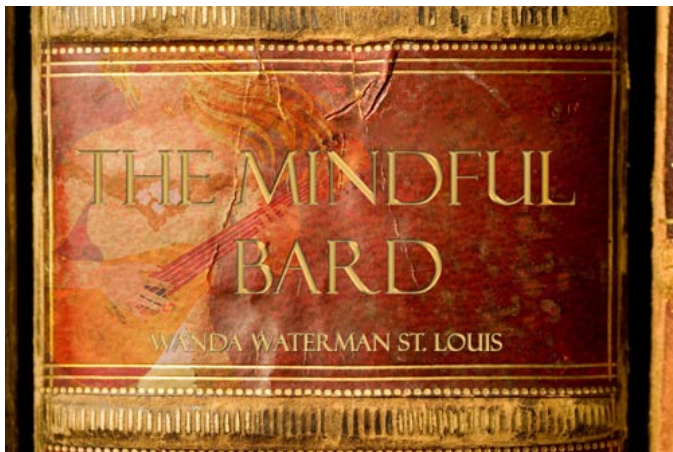


PLAR Program Highlighted in New Book

AU's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process has been highlighted in a new book titled *Prior Learning Portfolios: A Representative Collection*, making AU the only Canadian institution to be included.

The book, published by CAEL/Kendall Hunt Publishing, includes a CD-Rom with "copies of relevant models, processes, templates, and samples from each contributing university as well as historical material outlining the development of prior learning activities over the years," as the AU website explains.

If you want to learn more about how to use PLAR to gain credit for past academic and work experience, visit AU's Centre for Learning Accreditation [here](#).



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

CD: Jeanne (Doucet) Currie, *Serrons-nous la main*

Release date: 2008

Label: Deep Sound Productions

Danceable Franco-Country Songs Honour Legends and Friends of Acadie

In the nineteenth century, when the first boatload of displaced Acadians returned to Nova Scotia, it was to a rocky beach hemmed in by a wild forest. After years of petitioning the British government the displaced Acadians, whose former territories had included the fertile Annapolis Valley, had at last been grudgingly granted several tracts of the least arable land in Nova Scotia.

When the men got off the boat and saw the desolate landscape without a dwelling in sight, they sat down and cried. The young Madeleine LeBlanc is said to have pluckily remarked, "This isn't a time to cry, it's a time to work!" and immediately set herself to cutting down the first tree for their overnight shelter.

What does Jeanne Doucet Currie do with a story like this? She writes a tribute song.

Serrons-nous la main is at heart a joyful tribute to the strength of the Acadian spirit. The title, which means something like "Let's Clasp Hands," is a line from Jeanne's song "Chère Évangéline!" a nod to the legendary heroine on whom Longfellow based his famous poem.

In the photo on the back of the CD Jeanne, in traditional dress, is posing with a famous series of sculptures of an Acadian family; she is holding the little girl's hand and passing the Acadian flag to the mother.

It is a moving salutation to her ancestors and their determination to return to the land they loved. There are other accolades here as well.

"The Children of the Land" is a rousing thank you to the Aboriginal peoples of the New World who sided with the French against the English and even harboured many Acadians who refused to be deported.

The history of the Acadian deportation and its aftermath is a huge mine of creative material from which poets and songwriters have drawn for years and which is still far from being exhausted. But mining it well isn't easy. Jeanne Doucet Currie is one of those songwriters who manage to be witty, funny, and poignant,



sometimes all at once. She is true to her roots without being exclusive, regional while keeping one eye on the world at large.

I've seen her perform on several occasions; the woman is friendly, gracious, and utterly free of snobbery, just as ready to get up and sing "The French Song" with a bunch of local amateurs as she is to deliver a studio-quality rendition of "Les p'tits Coups de Rhum."

Everybody is having such a grand time on this album. Jeanne is a wonderful singer, sounding like the precocious love child of Edith Piaf and Hank Snow. And what great background musicians! There is a tender sweetness in the fiddle, banjo, mandolin, and guitar that brings out the latent sadness in some songs and enriches the joyful quality in others.

Much has been made of Cajun music, created by Acadia's Louisiana diaspora, and for good cause; it is among the liveliest of musical syncretisms, the resounding voice of a people bouncing back from the precipice to a merry fiddle tune.

But while Cajun music was brewing blues, Hispanic, and country music into a big salty gumbo those Acadians who returned to Acadie were baking up Celtic, country, bluegrass, Mi'kmaq chants, and Appalachian influences into a great big fragrant r p ure.

There is an important thematic difference as well—the distinction between those who accepted the loss of their homeland and those who did not—and it shows in the songs.

In the Maritime provinces French songwriters and performers have long been keeping the tradition of return and rebuilding alive and well. Jeanne Doucet Currie is a shining paragon of the genre.

Serrons-nous la main manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts past injustices; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 7) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

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. For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

"J'ai vu Johnny Cash

Au club du P'tit Ruisseau

J'ai vu Johnny Cash

Et j'l'ai trouv   bien beau.

J'ai vu Johnny Cash

Au club du P'tit Ruisseau

Apr  s un whiskey et de l'eau,

***Apr  s deux bouteilles de
bi  re."***

from "J'ai Vu Elvis Presley,"

Serrons-nous la main



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Here's Looking At You

My usual contribution to this space was missing last week because I was recovering from cataract surgery. I'll pause here for a second to allow readers to gasp, "Oh, no, how could it be in someone so young?" It's our old friend and fallback explanation for almost anything: heredity.

As I write this on December 3, I've now had both eyes done—one week apart. The surgeon did my left, weakest, most nearsighted eye first. For one hellishly long week my poor brain tried to cope with two different-sized images coming into command central for interpretation.

Last week, depending on the circumstances, you could have seen me wearing my old glasses with progressive lenses (with the left lens removed) *or* a 2.50 strength (for reading) drugstore reader on a cheesy dollar-store cord around my neck *or* a 1.50 strength (for computer work) drugstore reader on a second cheesy dollar-store cord around my neck *or* nothing at all.

Saddest of all was that none of the above worked very well. It was also month end, a very reading- and computer/paper-intensive process. By the end of the day my poor eyes were so tired from the strain of the effort that it was all I could do to drive the 50 kilometres home (with my perfect 20/20 distance vision).

This was followed by a pathetic attempt at making supper and a couple of hours spent vegging out watching TV, which surprisingly didn't hurt my eyes. To protect my eye from accidental bumping or inadvertent rubbing I needed to wear an eye shield to bed.

For two days before surgery and for three weeks after I have been and will be instilling up to three different eye drops four times a day. With consecutive surgeries I'm following this regime for two eyes. Oh, and don't forget to keep the bottles from each eye separate while you're at it. How a 75-year-old patient could possibly keep this straight is beyond me because I found it a challenge.

I had a phacoemulsification surgery that removes the affected lens through a small tube after sonic waves have softened it. An artificial intraocular lens is then inserted into the lens capsule inside the eye. This procedure is remarkably quick (ten to 15 minutes), and gruesome when you think about it. Only in horror movies does one contemplate a needle into the eye (to freeze it) and someone cutting into an eyeball.

The success rate is 95 per cent and makes a huge quality of life improvement for countless people. In fact, if you live long enough you will get cataracts. It is truly a miraculous procedure and I'm very grateful for a skilled surgeon with steady hands.

It seems my second eye, done two days ago, has a scratched cornea and is adding a new wrinkle to the process. It seems this sometimes happens when an eye opens and the patch scratches a frozen eye surface. In the meantime, we watch it.

It will be seven weeks until my eyes settle down enough to gauge the correct prescription needed for my new glasses. Only then will I be able to chuck my el cheapo readers and resume my 45-year-old tradition of wearing corrective lenses. The progressives will allow me to read and do mid-distance stuff without looking like a crazy lady or straining my eyes. When the healing is complete I expect to have fewer problems with glare and night driving. Counting down the days will be a good distraction, from where I sit.

The Interviewer

It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...

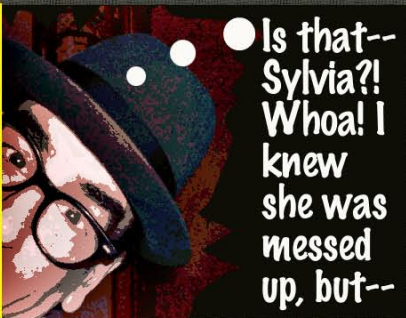
written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead #3: *The Hall That Separates*

The hall that separates the studio area from the office area leads to the campus counselling center...



...so Reuben can see who's headed for counselling. Sometimes it's old girlfriends and he tries to not to be a schmo and blurt out something.



Is that-- Sylvia?! Whoa! I knew she was messed up, but--

A few of the volunteers at the radio station really are communists but most are just freaks, which does not endear them to other sectors of the Student Union Building...



...like the campus newspaper and the student union exec, accounting and computer science majors to a man and that's not sexist because there are no women executives in the student union, surprise surprise.



Okay, wise guy, where's the love?

He's had to use the counselling center himself and so he just pretends not to see them, which is easy because they always look so pistol-whipped, slinking by pretending to be fascinated by all the cracks in the walls.



Hey, pretty lady! Did you know I can touch my forehead with my tongue?



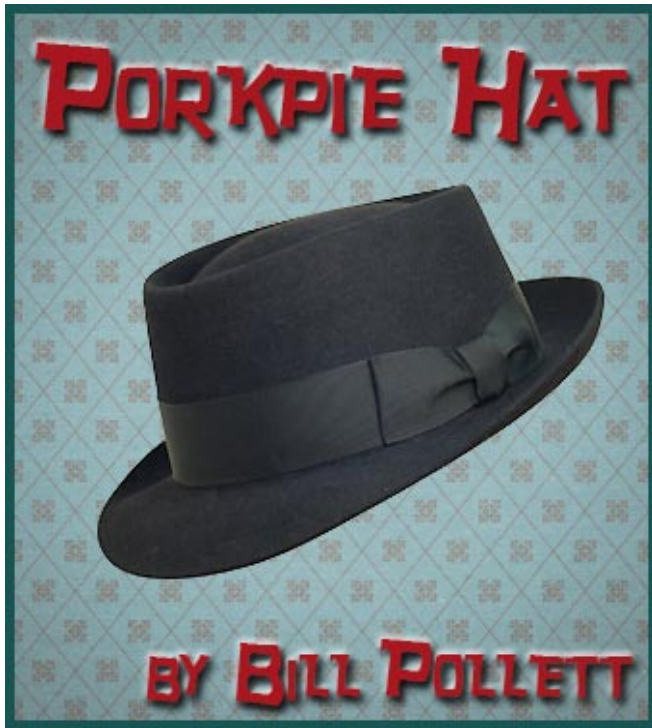
Reuben thinks this is because of Brad sexually harassing them but that's just speculation.

The cleaning staff drops in by times to loan Reuben smokes and drink his coffee...



...and ask why they should clean a place with so much crap on the floor.

next: how seeds and taffy stream



Surface of Things

"When it comes to the possible / I'm a passable machine."

But just barely. Many days, I move around so awkwardly, bumping into tables and chairs. I lurch from mistake to mistake.

And my voice. My voice is scratchy, out of tune, a punctured accordion hidden in the middle of an orchestra, mostly just suitable for singing dirty shanties and reciting limericks.

When I was young, I had imagined a much different voice. I had imagined singing madrigals that would coax the moon out from behind the clouds, bring mermaids to the shore.

When I was young, I imagined I would have hands so steady and strong, able to pluck the strings of a harp,

bend a bar of steel, and perform surgery on a hummingbird's brain.

Sometimes when I look at them now, they are shaking, those hands; the trembling hands of a child in the attic of a haunted house. I'm spilling black coffee on wall-to-wall carpets. I'm fumbling for my car keys, dropping money in the snow.

When I was young, I hoped that my vision would clear a bit more with each passing year. I imagined crystal eyes, able to see through shadows, through walls. As I look out through them now, on a bad day, my eyes are tired and blurred. All shapes are indistinct, barely defined. I don't know where one thing ends, and another begins.

But there are days, when I am around you, you teach me to move a bit more easily. Inspired by your grace, I can sometimes find the rhythm in the song, spin you around and around in my arms.

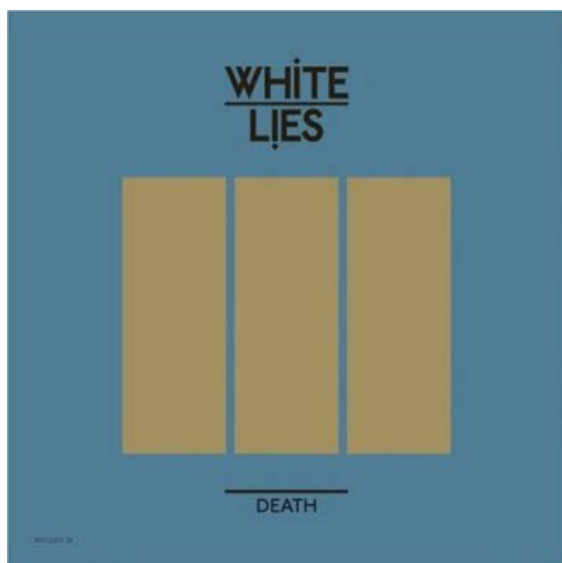
When I match my voice to yours, I can sometimes find the right notes. We can stand together outside a strange house on a December night, and bring smiling faces to the empty windows. We can read poetry together after midnight, letting the mermaids sing between the lines, the moon pass across the sky, the candles burn down to stubs.

When I am near you, there are moments when my hands grow still. When you sit at the kitchen table and tell me about your day, they chop onions paper thin, turn flour into bread. They trace the curve of your back, and catch you when you fall.

When I am with you, we look up at the sky, our eyes following the path of satellites. Keeping watch together, we avoid dangers on the highway. Sometimes I think we have a special kind of vision, every now and then, that sees just a bit beyond the surface of things.

MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mandy Gardner

White Lies – *Death EP***Released:** October 27, 2008**Label:** Fiction Records**Tracks:** 4**Rating:** 9

Formed in Chiswick (London, England), this band formerly known as Fear of Flying has crossed the Atlantic with *Death*, a music-packed single EP that is sure to grip its listeners and either completely change their perspective on music or bring them back to a musical appreciation that feels long forgotten.

The band has released two other singles this year and intends to publish a full-length album entitled *To Lose My Life* with Fiction Records in 2009. Harry McVeigh, Charles Cave, and Jack

Lawrence-Brown form White Lies, an incredible post-punk revival band that stimulates the senses and ushers in instant memories of early punk like the Ramones and the Pointed Sticks as well as '80s new wave bands like Blondie.

There are three different interpretations of "Death," the single, plus an extra track called "Black Song." What makes this collection of songs so amazing is the use of one composition ("Death") artistically produced three separate times with an original and two remixes.

To me, "Black Song" was simply an extra, something entirely separate from the package of three and therefore completely unnecessary to the release. This track was not disappointing in itself, mind you; "Black Song" is melodic, moving, and a credit to White Lies for its composition and recording. However, I feel very strongly that this EP would have had more artistic integrity if only the three versions of the actual single were included.

As for these three interpretations ("Death" versions one, two, and three), each stands alone as a facet of one piece of work; like a contemporary painter who uses one basic full image as his base and then compiles a set of related images that are deconstructions of the original, White Lies has brought dimension to the song.

Essentially, each recording is multipurpose; every track stands alone, works in conjunction with the others, and also represents a different interpretation of the direction this musical genre can take. *I love it.* "Death" is the post-punk, new wave revival, absolutely brilliant recording. "Death (Crystal Castles Remix)" is the embodiment of early punk and new wave music's effect on musicians in the '80s and '90s who crafted techno, house, and made further changes to new wave.

"Death (Haunts Remix)" is the final track and shows how these earlier musical genres were also taken to inspire modern rock, dance, and ultimately pop music. As far as I am concerned, the original recording is superior, even a musical triumph. The set of three, however, is a work of art worthy of a museum—if only such interpretations of music were so easy to display. If you only listen to one EP the rest of this year, please make it "Death."

AUSU This Month



2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner pre-order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#), but please note, the planner will only be sent out when it arrives in our office in December.

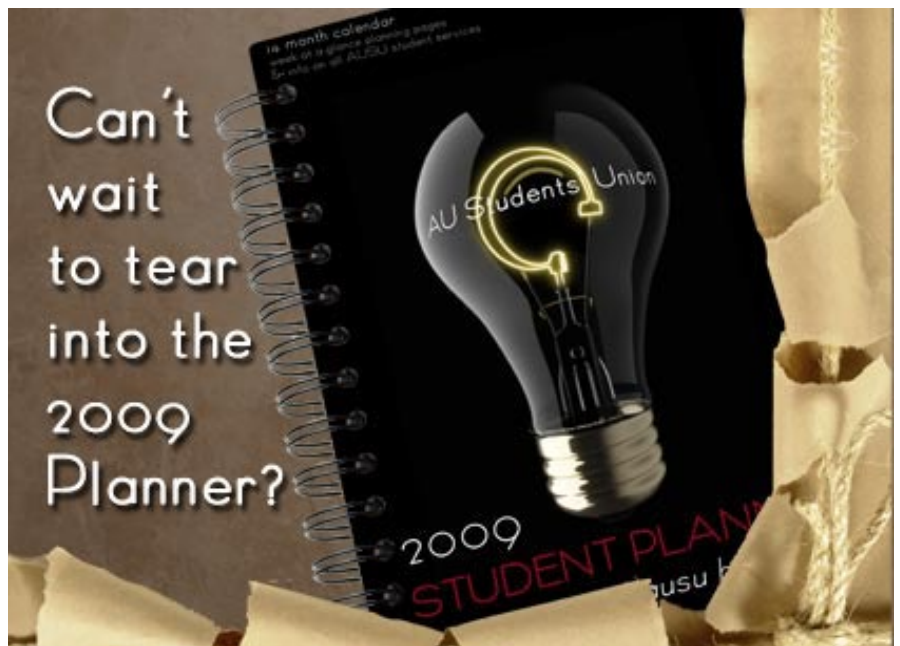
Anyone who pre-orders will be in the first batch of planners mailed out. If you order early, you should have your new planner by the time the January pages run out in the old one—and hopefully well before that!

As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go. With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it. *The Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.



AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. 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.

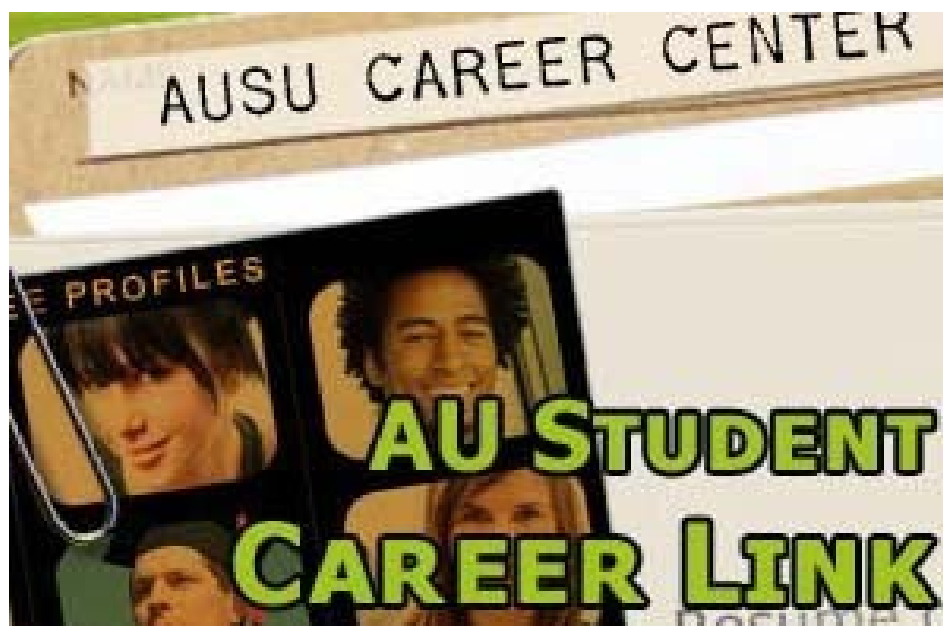
SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can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

Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student. Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



Appointments

AUSU VP External, Barb Rielly, has stepped down from her position as chair of the AUSU Awards Committee, and new Councillor Bethany Porter has taken on the role. Council wishes Bethany good luck in this position, which can involve making some hard decisions.

Increasing AUSU's representation within AU, VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, has been appointed to AU's integrated learning centre steering committee. This committee will examine the possibility of integrating all AU sites in the Edmonton Area into one building. Sarah will ensure that the committee keeps concerns of our members with respect to ease of access and exam conditions as well as AUSU's own special needs for storage and physical office space well in mind.

The MyAU steering committee sees two new AUSU representatives, President Karl Low, and VP External Barb Rielly, joining to provide their input on how MyAU could be better structured to meet your needs. If there's something that's been bugging you about the MyAU system, now is a great time to call or email our office and let them know. We'll be sure to bring your concerns forward.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Ottawa couple warns about plan to get the lead out

As if the debacle playing out on Parliament Hill isn't enough, more signs of government incompetence have shown up in Ottawa's lead pipe replacement plan.

As the [CBC](#) reports, the city's program will "replace lead pipes under the street and sidewalk in front of a home" on the condition that the homeowner hires city contractors to replace the pipes on the inside of the home (as opposed to hiring a private company to do the work).

Ottawa residents Susan Hoy and Twan Huynh decided to opt in to the program even though the city contractor's estimate was \$1,000 more than others—a substantial amount for most households, and especially so since Hoy is expecting a child.

The only problem is, the city never told Hoy and Huynh that the lead pipes under the street had already been replaced with copper, information that would have freed them to choose a less expensive

contractor. As Hoy told reporters, "It was actually more costly for us. And it took us longer."

Now Hoy and Huynh are warning others that the extra expense may not be necessary, and are also requesting the extra \$1,000 they paid back from the city, money that Hoy feels "has gone down the pipe."

"The city should know whether the pipes have been replaced," she reasoned. "And if they have, they should disclose that to people."

In Foreign News: Pakistan students vow to defend against aggression

Following the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai, the [Antara News](#) reports that over 2,000 students in Pakistan have vowed to defend their country "against any aggression amid growing tensions with India."

Students from Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba (IJT) staged a "Defence of Pakistan" rally in front of the country's parliament building. The protest included denunciations against India, the United States, and Israel, including shouted slogans such as "Those who befriend America are traitors."

One of IJT's leaders, Zubair Safdar, is reported by Antara to claim that the attacks in Mumbai were actually orchestrated by India as a means to initiate war against Pakistan. Safdar asserted that Pakistan's youths were prepared to defend their country against such aggression.

"India wants to occupy Pakistan on the pretext of the Mumbai attacks. Our students will defeat this conspiracy by India, America and Israel," he said.

For its part, India claims that stateless "elements" in Pakistan were behind the attacks in Mumbai, and is demanding that Pakistan hand over 20 suspected terrorists. The attacks targeted civilians in public places including hotels and a train station, and left 188 people dead.

EDUCATION NEWS

Lily Panamsky



A game of chance: Students' gambling addictions

HAMILTON (CUP) - It's Friday, and some students are thinking of taking a risk tonight. They're grabbing their money, heading to the nearest casino, and letting their chips fall where they may.

Gambling opportunities and venues are close to home. Lotteries, scratch cards, and online poker are all easily accessible to everyone, including students. And of course, the traditional dim-lit casinos, the havens for gamblers, are scattered throughout cities.

With so many different forms of gambling, the total profit from gambling operations in Canada is high. CTV News estimated the net revenue from government-run lotteries, video lottery terminals, and casinos at \$13.3 billion in 2006.

Although millions of Canadians dabble in risky gambling, and the Responsible Gambling Council reported that 332,000 people in Canada experience gambling problems, it is university-aged students (18-24) that are most likely to actually develop problems.

In fact, the rate at which students find themselves playing toss-up with their money is double that of people over 24.

Montreal's McGill University did a review of 23 post-secondary gambling studies in 1999 and found that gambling problems were prevalent in seven per cent of post-secondary students, compared to 3.4 per cent of adults.

The Responsible Gambling Council states that in 2005, 6.7 per cent of students had a moderate or severe gambling problem.

When asked why students are at the highest risk for developing an addiction, Nathan Cooper, a psychologist for the Centre for Student Development at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario says the historical context of gambling played an important role in its current status.

"If we look historically at when gambling was introduced, when it's become legalized, and how that's emerged culturally, students in particular within the past 10 and 20 years are the first generation that have grown up in a culture that has accepted and legalized gambling activity. So that is a particular susceptibility in terms of overall general attitudes toward it."

He nonetheless claims that a university environment does not necessarily increase the frequency of gambling. It is usually the market outside of a post-secondary setting that targets students through online pop-ups and good deals on casino nights.

Third-year McMaster engineering student Jonathen S. gambles recreationally with friends once or twice a week and attends casinos every few months.

Jonathen gambles “for the money and the feeling you get when you win.”

“It’s like a rush of adrenaline,” he said. “It’s like giving a little kid sugar.”

Jonathen confesses to having steadily increased his allotted spending amount.

“[I] started going to the casino in February only willing to spend \$100, now I am willing to go as much as \$600 and lose it without thinking of it.”

Cooper says increasing your spending limit or breaking your set amount is a sign of a potential gambling problem.

After a little beginner’s luck, people may find themselves quickly losing their money, causing them to panic and continue playing to regain their losses.

Jonathen explains that his interest in casinos and gambling lies in the promptness of it all.

“It’s like a quick investment. You put down a certain amount of money and you can double-up or even get more [than] what you invested. There is the obvious risk of losing it, but I’ve gambled enough to be pretty confident that I will win, hence making it, in the end, not a waste of money.”

An overconfident attitude, especially after a few wins, is common among students unfamiliar with the probabilities of gambling. Cooper says gambling has particular psychological aspects.

“Basically it’s a series of superstitious behaviours: the ability to recall wins versus the ability to recall losses,” he said.

“People are making judgments they actually feel that they can beat the odds, when in reality, the house always wins.”

After a little beginner’s luck, people may find themselves quickly losing their money, causing them to panic and continue playing to regain their losses.

Chasing one’s losses, Cooper says, is the most common way to get stuck in the gambling whirlpool.

“I get into the hole [of] \$2,000-3,000, there’s really no other way I can think of to generate that amount of income within a short amount of time,” he explains the gambler’s thought process.

Getting caught in the gambling spiral can have devastating financial results.

“Cash flow issues; credit problems—maybe that’s not an early sign but it [can lead to] a lot of white collar crimes; preoccupation with it; starting to interfere with personal and social functioning. That’s how a lot of things are diagnosed about pathological gambling,” said Cooper.

“This is interfering with ability to do your schoolwork successfully and it’s also starting to negatively affect your relationships. People really don’t want you around a poker table anymore. Other close friends may be noticing a change in your behaviour if you seem a little more agitated, or they simply haven’t seen if you’re sitting behind a computer screen the whole time, playing blackjack or poker.”

The direct risks involved with gambling are fairly evident, including losses in cash and other assets; and feelings of restlessness, anxiety, and depression. But there are also many indirect risks.

People may adopt risky attitudes in the daily sectors of their lives, including their jobs. They may find themselves riding emotional rollercoasters and feeling isolated from their peers, their friends, and their families.

Jonathen knows a few friends whose lives have been affected by their parents' gambling problems, leading to social and familial complications.

"It's disturbing to hear about somebody who's wearing a Depends diaper so that they can sit at a slot machine [or] sit at a computer."

"One resulted in a divorce, another [in the parents not speaking] to each other anymore, [and the] last one resulted in a separation, but the father worked out his gambling problems and hasn't gambled ever since."

Like any addiction, recognizing and admitting the problem is the first step to recovery. Unfortunately, most people deny any problem until it is too late to turn the tables back around.

"Most people that are drinking, doing drugs, or gambling are pretty happy with themselves. They really have to scrape the bottom of the barrel—they have to be out cash, out a job, lose a house—before they say: 'You

know what, everybody told me, but I finally get it. This is a problem and I want to do something about it,'" said Cooper.

Some biological traits particularly increase the likelihood of an addiction, like impaired impulse control or hypersensitivity to endorphin-based stimulation.

Although Cooper declares bingo and lotteries to be the most addictive gambling activities, they yield smaller losses than other engagements, like games played in casinos or betting.

Addictions associated with online gambling, or gaming, are also making headway.

Online gambling is currently the fastest rising sector in the gambling industry. Unlike its real-life counterparts, it involves no communication besides networking. The games are very private, and if played excessively, begin to hinder social stimulation.

While most forms of gambling have more cons than pros, card games can at least help develop rational skills and provide a forum for social engagement.

Online gaming takes away that forum; people can spend hours upon hours huddled behind a computer screen without any physical interaction with others.

Overindulging in any type of gambling, however, can be seriously detrimental and should be addressed.

"It's disturbing to hear about somebody who's wearing a Depends diaper so that they can sit at a slot machine [or] sit at a computer," said Cooper. "[When] they don't want to miss a round of poker [that badly], it's problematic."

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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