

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 05

February 6, 2009

Brainify

Linking and learning

Age of Aquarius

There's a riot going on

AU Profiles

Angelica Nancekievill



Plus:

*From Where I Sit, Porkpie Hat,
The Interviewer, and much more...*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



BRAINIFY

Sandra Livingston

Linking and Learning

If you're a post-secondary student, you've probably got at least one story that goes something like this: a final essay is due, you're trying to find some online academic resources, and you're staring at the 11,854,742 search results that turned up for "19th century literature."

How do you even begin sifting through all those results to find relevant academic sources you can use?

That's a question Murray Goldberg thinks he can answer, and it can be summed up in one word: Brainify.

Brainify is a new social bookmarking site with a unique goal: to help university and college students do well in their courses by finding and collecting the best academic content on the web—then rating it, tagging it, and organizing it by academic discipline.



As Murray explains, Brainify will give students "a way to build on the efforts of one another rather than reinvent them every time."

It's a project that follows several of Murray's other initiatives in bringing technology and learning together. After 10 years as a faculty member in Computer Science at the University of British Columbia, he created WebCT, a software program designed to bring college and university courses online. He also co-founded a company called Silicon Chalk, which built software for students who use laptops in their classes.

Now, Murray hopes that Brainify will provide "a place where higher education students can come to contribute and find websites that are meaningful to their education."

With billions of web pages on millions of topics, finding information might not seem like a very big challenge. But as Murray explains, it's a matter of finding what's relevant.

"Google is great," he says, "but the problem is that there are so many resources out there, you need to spend a lot of time sorting through them to figure out which are the good ones, which are presented at the right level, which really hit the topic you are looking for, etc. And each time a new student does the same search, they have to re-do all that work to find the few best sites."

With Brainify, members can add bookmarks to a growing database of sites that are "placed in an academic topic hierarchy."

It's a hierarchy that will be built by the community (student peers and professors), and members can make it as specific as they want, adding topics and sub-topics as it grows.

Bookmarks can even be course-specific: professors can create groups based on certain courses, bookmark helpful sites, then allow students into their appropriate course group.

“Most importantly, I want Brainify to be a way for students to expand their academic network.”

Students can also create groups, so if you’ve got a passion for wave-particle duality, you can find like-minded students from around the world and see what online resources they’ve found.

But with a growing community of members adding websites, isn’t there a danger of the same information overload found on regular search engines—of non-academic bookmarks being added, or bookmarks that aren’t relevant to their topics?

As Murray explains, it’s the community aspect that separates Brainify from standard search engines, and it’s that same community that has the ability to rank the contributions of other members, helping to ensure the

relevance of the site’s contents.

And because Brainify is built on the idea of an academic community, members can do more than simply add bookmarks.

It’s a place, Murray says, “for students to learn more directly from one another—you can ask questions and they are presented to others who are taking similar courses and degree programs. Most importantly, I want Brainify to be a way for students to expand their academic network.”

Even though students often have strong social networks, “their academic network is typically limited to the people in their classes,” Murray adds.

And when it comes to students involved in distance learning, building those academic networks can be even more challenging.

Murray’s hope is that Brainify will help all students broaden their academic exchanges “and the result will be a better educational experience.”

While anyone can view Brainify’s bookmarks, a university email is required to take part in discussions and add bookmarks, another sign of the site’s focus as a post-secondary community. Murray explains that there are several reasons why people need a university email address to join.

“The most important one,” he says, “is that it clearly defines the community. It makes it more likely that the content there is going to be relevant to me as a student. For example, many websites exist on physics appealing to different kinds of users. But a physics website that is useful to a grade 3 student is not likely to be useful to a university student. Likewise, the comments of a grade 3 student, while relevant to them, may not be relevant to my education.”

One drawback to this system is that some universities (such as AU) don’t offer email addresses to students, but the Brainify team is working on possible solutions to the problem.



Murray is excited about the possibilities that Brainify and other educational technologies hold.

“The thing that I am most passionate about in terms of educational technologies and what they are enabling in education is that they are giving people a way to open up education to everyone. The reason Brainify exists is because you can learn almost anything you want online because there are the resources there to support that learning.”

As well, he says, “universities all over the world are creating open course initiatives—putting all of their course content online. What can be better than allowing education to flow beyond the walls of the institution to people who, for whatever reason, cannot enter past those walls? In addition, technology is facilitating the creation of broadly distributed academic communities—something that (in my opinion) is necessary for education. We learn best when we learn from one another.”

Brainify is just starting to grow, and Murray believes that community participation will be key to helping it become a valuable resource.

“Brainify is only as useful and successful as its members want it to be. If everyone sits back and waits for the site to build—then it won’t.

“But if people believe in the ultimate value of having a site like this—well stocked with resources and a community of people I can learn from (and who can learn from me)—then they have to join and make a contribution of knowledge.”

DID YOU KNOW?



Assess Yourself

Are you trying to choose an AU program, but having a hard time deciding? Or are you thinking of trying a course in a new subject, and aren’t sure if you’ve got the basics down?

AU’s online [assessment tools](#) can help with those decisions. The “Mapping Your Future” link offers a self-assessment quiz that “will help you explore your own interests, skills, and values as they relate to potential careers and AU programs.”

If you’re new to distance learning, you can follow the “Am I Ready for AU?” link to help decide whether distance education is a good fit for you. And if you want to make sure you’re ready to enrol in that English, math, chemistry, or computing science course, check out the “Am I Ready for Studies in . . .” assessments.

You’ll also find information on education funding, career planning, and how to contact AU Counselling Services. So whether you’re signing up for your first AU course or making a career change, be sure to check out the site.

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Angelica Nancekievill

Christina M. Frey

When health problems made traditional university no longer possible for her, Angelica Nancekievill transferred to Athabasca University's Bachelor of Arts in English program. The London, Ontario-based student, who's studying English literature, explains why she chose AU for distance education.

She also describes some of the challenges of distance study as compared with traditional university, but gives her secrets to staying motivated and on track nonetheless.

Angelica switched from the University of Western Ontario to AU in 2007, when health issues forced her to consider a change of plans. She was initially attracted to AU because of its reputation.

"I . . . did my . . . research on the internet," Angelica says. "I enrolled shortly after I had looked into it."

As she began the four-year program with AU, she was impressed by the flexibility distance education offered.

"I am able to work when I want, how I want, and where I want," she says. "I . . . really like being able to make my own hours." For example, she adds, "I have found it hard to get to class in the morning . . . this is a lot better for me!"

She also enjoys the flexibility of program planning. "You get to take other courses . . . after first year this would not have . . . been the case at the other university I was at," she explains. "I have many other interests, like history, political science, and art, so this has worked out perfectly."

Class scheduling is another area in which flexibility has been a plus, as she's able to plan her four concurrent courses in a way that works well with her study techniques.

Although she schedules her exams to coincide around the same time—"I prefer writing them all at once, and getting them over with in one sweep," she says—she doesn't start another set right away.

Instead, she enrolls in two courses, and adds the next two a little later. It keeps her from getting too burned out. "I want . . . to ease back into courses slowly . . . instead of picking up four new ones at once," she says. "This method works best for me."

Self-motivation can be a challenge, however. "I do work best independently," Angelica says, but she misses the classroom aspect of traditional university.

"I really miss the in-class discussions, especially with my English courses," she says. She's hoping that some of her classes will begin offering online discussion opportunities. Also ideal would be a substitute for the "traditional" ability to speak with a professor in person.

Angelica says she finds it difficult to stay motivated if she isn't getting enough support from tutors. "The [lack of] face to face . . . removes the accountability," she points out. "This causes me to lag a bit . . . I can really get discouraged."

To stay motivated and on track, Angelica uses several techniques. First, she's found that long-term planning is essential. "I am a very methodical, slow worker, so I need . . . a solid schedule," she says. "Otherwise, it would take me somewhere between 10 and 100 years to do one course!"

"If you just focus on one thing—one assignment, one reading, or whatever—at a time, you will eventually get there."

She also uses her long-term goals as a source of motivation: she's hoping to someday obtain a master's degree in English literature, and then a doctorate. "I would like to teach and write, both academically and otherwise," she says.

And though it may be a "long road ahead," she says, she's working at it, step by step. "I am really grateful to Athabasca," Angelica says.

Along with long-range thinking, focusing on the small stuff is equally important. "I think the best piece of advice I was ever given . . . would be [to] take baby steps and do not get stressed out by the big picture,"

Angelica says. "If you just focus on one thing—one assignment, one reading, or whatever—at a time, you will eventually get there."

And when you go off track, it's important, she feels, to stay positive, get back on target, and not dwell on past mistakes.

"Don't let a bad mark affect your future work," she advises. "If you take a bad mark and learn from it, you will keep getting better and better."

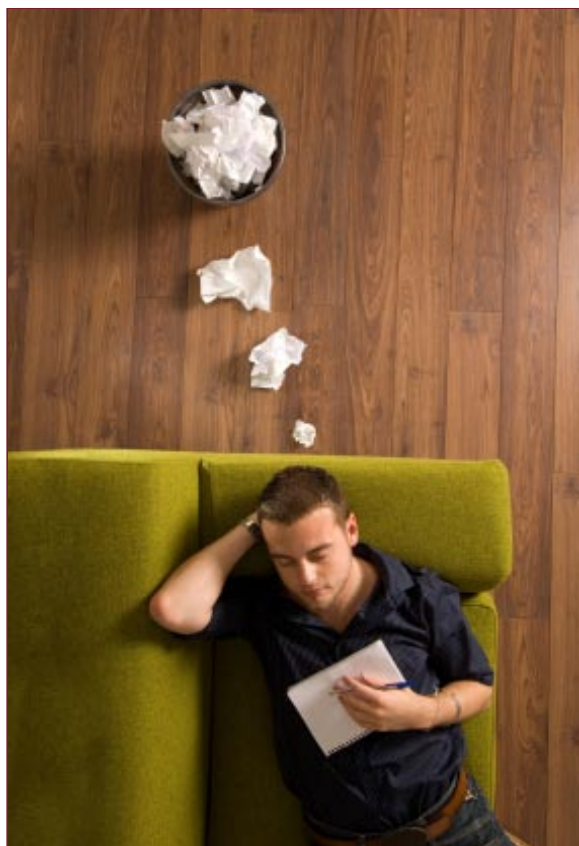
THE VOICE 2008 WRITING CONTEST

The entries are in and the judging is underway, and we'll be announcing the winners of the 2008 *Voice* writing contest soon!

Entrants were allowed to submit in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. First-place winners will each receive one AU undergraduate course.

We received some remarkable submissions this year and our judges are hard at work selecting the winning entries. A big thank-you goes out to them for all their time and energy.

Be sure to watch the next few issues of *The Voice* to find out who the winners of the 2008 writing contest are!



IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Jon Middleton of Jon and Roy

Jon and Roy is the name of a west coast duo that merges reggae and acoustic folk to create original, mesmerizing music that showcases thoughtful lyrics. See the Voice review of their latest CD, Another Noon, [here](#).

The duo comprises singer-guitarist Jon Middleton and drummer Roy Vizer, with indispensable musical aid from bassist Ryan Tonelli. The opening riff from one of their songs was recently used on a Volkswagen commercial.

Jon Middleton, who also writes the songs for the group, recently spoke with Wanda Waterman St. Louis while he was travelling from Victoria via BC Ferries to sing the national anthem at a Vancouver Canucks game.

Influences, Musical and Intellectual

Nirvana, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley—those are the three big influences for me, musically. As for books, I've been influenced by Tom Robbins and the book *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan. I like the way Sagan portrays science; instead of reducing science to numbers he brings it to a level where people can relate to it without separating it from the spiritual side of existence.

Staying on Top of Your Game

Being on tour everything all blends together into one big, weird experience. We haven't had to camp out on the side of the road in minus 20-degree weather or anything like that but touring is definitely its own thing that takes getting used to.

I'm starting to enjoy it but it's very tiring. There's a lot of waiting around, not much exercise, not great eating, and alcohol is a little too readily available. You definitely have to put the time in to look after your health. Your body feels depressed after a short time of not sleeping or eating properly, and when you perform you want to be on top of your game. The biggest thing I do for my health is walk a lot. I walk just about everywhere I go.

Songwriting: The Insignificance of Time

Generally songwriting starts with just fooling around on the guitar and coming up with a riff or some chords. Sometimes it will all come out in an hour and sometimes it will take over a year to come together as a full song. On *Another Noon* over half the songs came to me over the summer, but there are a few songs that have been lying around for between two and five years. The title track was written pretty much start to finish on a work break.

Rehearsals

Our rehearsals are pretty casual. We've got a jam space in Roy and Ron's basement. I'll bring something I've been working on downstairs and then we jam on it a bit. We like everyone to add his own improvisations without too many restrictions.

There's a lot of freedom in what Roy and Ryan and I are able to do. We'll definitely make suggestions on each other's playing, but I think the best way to make music is just to let everyone do what they want to do and then refine it afterwards. Otherwise it's just too controlled and contrived. The songs we really enjoy playing are the ones that come naturally.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - Party Time

As if a global financial meltdown isn't bad enough, it's February. That's right—that dull, cold month when the thrill of making snow angels is long gone and we're left staring at the dirty clumps of snow that the plow has just left at the end of our driveways. What better way to cheer up than with a party—or the comical results of other people's parties gone wrong?

Cake Wrecks

The description for this website says it all: "When professional cakes go horribly, hilariously wrong." And boy, did these cakes go wrong. Be sure to check out some of the fan favourites (links are on the right, halfway down).

Bad Party Dresses

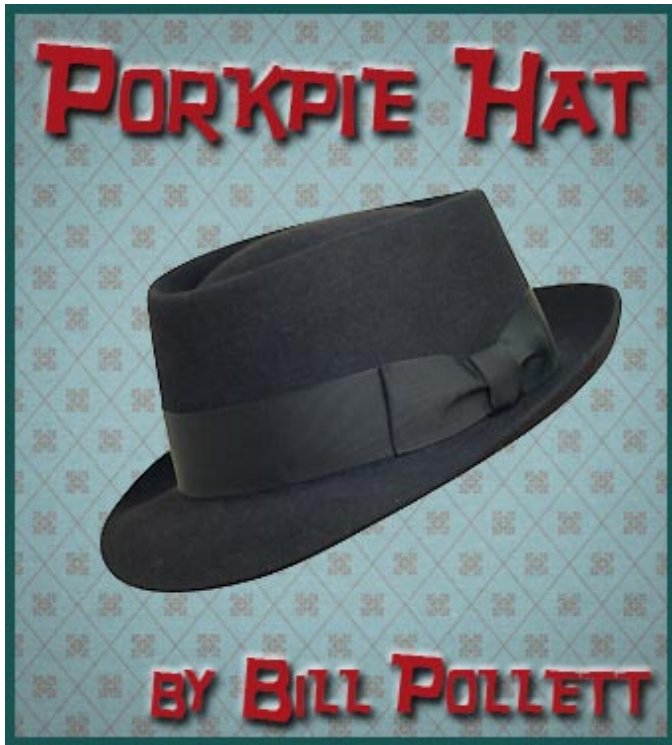
Ever wish you had enough money to wear one of those fabulous designer get-ups that the stars always glide down the red carpet in? Think again. Money is no guarantee of good taste, as these disasters show. Luckily, these stars weren't all going to the same party.

Weird Wedding-Cake Toppers

It's one thing to like snowmobiles, or cell phones, or even King Kong. But why would anyone feel the need to add them to a wedding-cake topper? Or worse, to use a cake topper to publicize the fact that the happy couple met in a strip club? Yeesh.

Worst Wedding Toasts Ever

Ah, the wedding toast—dreaded by those who have to give them and those who have to sit through the ones that actually *are* as dry as toast. The ones on this site may be inappropriate, but at least they get high marks for being interesting.



The Story

An old woman sits down at a desk with a battered typewriter, the same one she has used since she was a young girl. The desk she sits at is made from the wood of coffins and the boards of a sunken ship. She sits down in front of the typewriter, and begins to record the story of her life.

Over the years, all the keys have become worn and broken, so each of them has been mended or replaced by whatever material she has been able to gather. Some of the letters are made of diamond and gold salvaged from the melted rings of dead husbands and lovers. Some are fragments of bone and teeth. Others are covered in velvet and fur.

Glittering in the light of the antique desk lamp, there are bits and pieces of broken glass from goblets and mirrors. The serifs are fashioned from the barbed wire of her uncle's prairie farm, and tiny

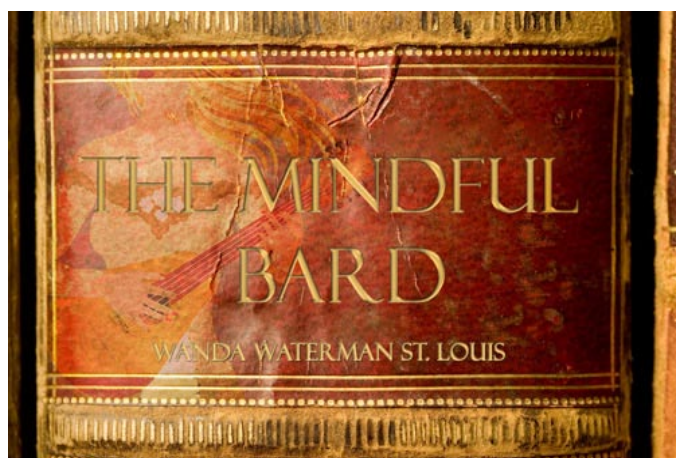
scraps of wood rescued from a stolen rowboat and a girlhood toboggan.

The ribbon is one that held back her sister's hair the night she died in childbirth. The ribbon's ink is the black blood of an albino crow killed at exactly midnight on the night of a full moon. There are sheaves of corn and wildflowers growing up between the keys.

She begins to write her life story in an alphabet she herself has invented. To a Dutchman, it looks vaguely Arabic; to a Belgian, possibly Cyrillic. There are letters fat and dark and shiny as beetle shells and blackberries. There are letters that resemble sparrow's feet and crescent moons. It is a language sulphurous and subtle, a language suitable for describing such things as the wicked wisdom of fairytale foxes, the awful thrumming of the engine that turns the tide, the wild song in a young girl's soul, the bitter lightness of an old woman's laugh.

If it were possible to read these words aloud, they would sound like the singing of angels and opera house ghosts, like a gallows-wood bow being drawn across a hanged man's fiddle, like a witch coughing up eggshells in the middle of a spell.

An old woman sits down at a desk made from the planks of a sunken ship, and types the story of her life. The words gather on the white of the page like summer bugs drawn to a lantern's light. They buzz and hum and tremble against the page. When her story is complete, she leans forward and releases a single puff of air. The page turns black as carbon. The bugs scatter into the night beyond the window, each of them pulsing with an inner light.



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

Book: Peter Doggett: *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars, and the Rise and Fall of the '60s*

Publisher: Canongate, 2007

I Shall Be Released, But First Let Me Sign This Recording Contract

Part 1

"Over and over again, musicians believed that they were striking blows for liberation (sexual, political, conceptual) and the revolution. Over and over again, their every move had already been softened and contained by the contaminating presence of the same industry that they were using to announce their dissent—the music business."

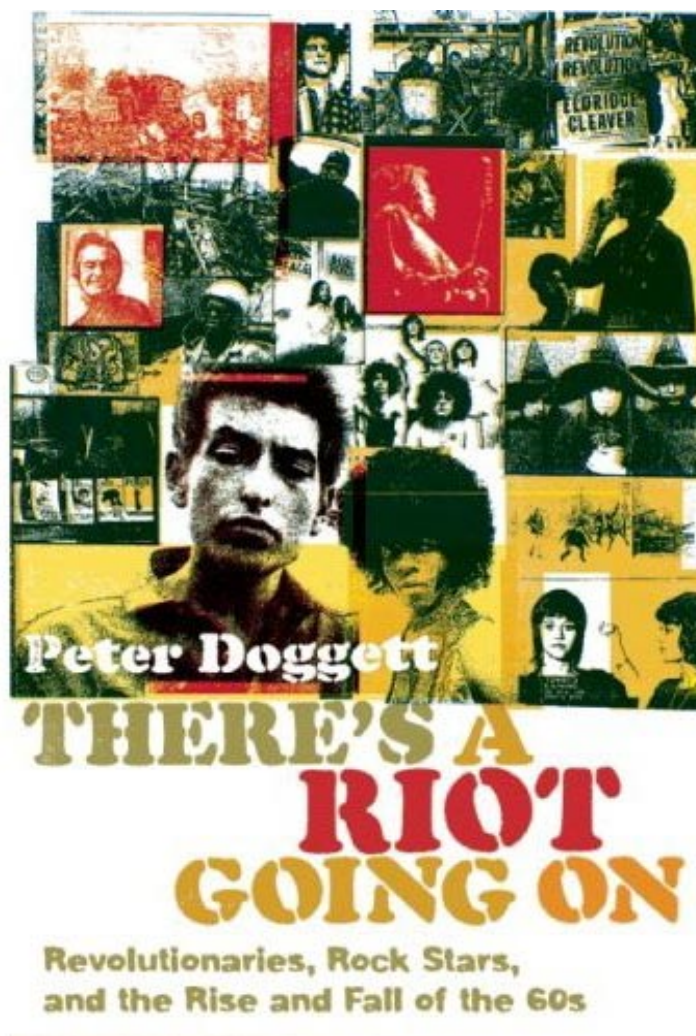
Peter Doggett, from *There's a Riot Going On*

Doggett recalls being 15 years old in England in 1972 and responding with enthusiasm to *Some Time in New York City*, a protest album just released by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Doggett, like many of his era, began to see revolution as something good in itself and urgently needed in his own time and place. In a sense his entire tome is devoted to mapping the events that led up to and produced this album.

There's a Riot Going On is a necessary book. It's certainly full of information useful to those of us living at the crossroads of a new era which we somehow feel responsible to define and initiate, but for the purposes of this column *There's a Riot Going On* is required reading for artists, social activists, and, especially, social activist artists.

An exploration of the relationship between art and social activism within a specific cultural period, the book reveals some of the pitfalls that form when activists attempt to harness art in the service of social change and when artists sacrifice their freedom of expression in the name of a political cause.

The book also deals with the danger of attempting to steer bandwagons; if you represent and lead some fashionable new movement, however well meaning, there is money to be made from you, and big business—



the same big business that finances land mines and nukes and military dictatorships—will want a piece of you. Saying “no” will be harder than you think.

Complicating matters, those musicians who threw themselves into the rebel persona often turned out to be paradigms of hypocrisy: witness Pete Townshend literally kicking Abby Hoffman off the Woodstock stage for making a speech about an imprisoned comrade, or the wealthy Paul Kantner of Jefferson Airplane railing against technicians who were required to turn off his sound equipment due to a strict curfew (“Wait ‘til we burn down your society,” he yelled at the hired workers, as if they represented the establishment and he did not), or The Rolling Stones’ gradual slide into a lifestyle straight out of the pages of *Vogue*.

Political leaders like Abby Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, and Michael X proved themselves anything but sage saviours in the Age of Aquarius. But if you were a ‘60s radical it wasn’t even necessary to be a leader to become corrupted—any underground organization you joined was likely to be splintered, rifted, and infiltrated in half no time. And for every subversive tactic you adopted, Big Brother had 10 to match it, and *his* boys weren’t starving, dope-smoking dropouts. When it came to using violent tactics, well, for every bullet you used . . . etc.

**There’s a Riot Going On is
the story of the failure of
‘60s pop artists and
political heroes to create
the changes in our society
which they themselves
demanded**

There was another ‘60s, one much more pedestrian, less spectacular; the ‘60s that galvanized women, ethnic minorities, and pacifists and laid the foundation for years of slow, gradual, but ultimately enduring, social change. But *that* ‘60s is not what this book is about; *There’s a Riot Going On* is the story of the failure of ‘60s pop artists and political heroes to create the changes in our society which they themselves demanded, and of that measure of natural depravity that ended in undermining their social agenda.

I had always assumed the Manson Family were anomalies in that world of love beads and peace signs, but Doggett shows how Manson’s emergence and actions did not result solely from his own psyche but were in a sense one logical outcome of ‘60s radicalism, really no different in the end than any other radicalism. The end really does not justify the means, but try telling that to a hot-headed young brigand certain that the end will come sooner with a few well-timed bomb blasts and blood baths.

For followers and leaders at the vanguard of this “revolution,” good intentions devolved into short-sighted, quick-fix politics which devolved into violence, which devolved into hedonism (drugs, promiscuity, and psychedelic music sold to youth as instruments of revolution), which devolved into the beginnings of the self-help movements of the ‘70s.

Next week, in Part II of this review, we will have a look at Doggett’s portrayal of the ongoing relationship between Bob Dylan and A.J. Weberman, a beautiful (and often hilarious) instance of the conflict between art and activism.

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.



Seeing is Believing

One of the premises explored in the bestseller *The Secret* was the idea of visualization. Visualization is touted as one of the steps to manifesting reality.

Like everything else in the book, this is not news. Athletes have used this strategy for years to rehearse and pre-play award-winning performances. Visualization largely occurs in one's head, imagining anything from PacMan-like cells chomping and destroying cancer cells to seeing yourself deliver a flawless speech. Or maybe it's picturing financial abundance, you in the corner office, a desired life mate.

Vision boards take visualization to the next level. At its simplest, this involves cutting out words and images from magazines and attaching them to poster board or a scrapbook. As always there are a number of ways to make this a more creative and personalized process. There are countless websites devoted to this phenomenon. It's possible to subscribe to a vision board service that will provide online graphics, music, and images to add another dimension to keeping this front of mind.

On one hand you've got a handmade paper version at home in your office or on the fridge. The high-tech version is available all day long at the click of the mouse. These images can be downloaded onto handhelds to further increase the availability and portability of these reminders.

According to *The Vision Board: The Secret to an Extraordinary Life*, you must first become clear on your intention for what you intend to manifest in your life.

Vision boards can be thematic (finding a mate, getting fit, making more money, et cetera) or more generic. They can be mini works of art using watercolours or collage-like techniques. Attaching fabric, ticket stubs, drawings, ribbon, photos, or anything else of significance makes the board special and in my opinion reinforces the message to the subconscious.

A vision board is a goals list made visible and a signal to the universe. Believers know that those simple acts (writing down goals, creating a vision board) combined with action marshal the unseen forces of the universe.

My first vision board included magazine images of palm trees, a diamond ring, a motorcycle, a baby, holiday trailer, and a stock certificate, among many, many others. In days I'm off to Mexico; we now have two motorcycles, a gorgeous diamond ring for our thirty-fifth anniversary, a small stock portfolio, and a pregnant daughter-in-law. Coincidence? Or a vision board made real?

Incidentally, the dream home, Eiffel Tower, and others have yet to appear. My current vision board is devoted to health and fitness. Much as I like pictures I seem to like words more. Some key words or phrases include "small steps, great strides; no ifs, ands or buts; your body is talking, are you listening; celebration; it's better to have a body in shape than to obsess about the shape of your body."

Seeing is believing, from where I sit.

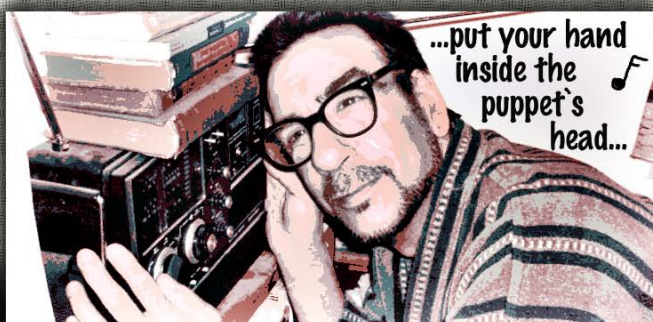
The Interviewer

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

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead #9: French Roast

That night Reuben drowns his anger in French Roast and listens to Nightlines and tries to console himself.

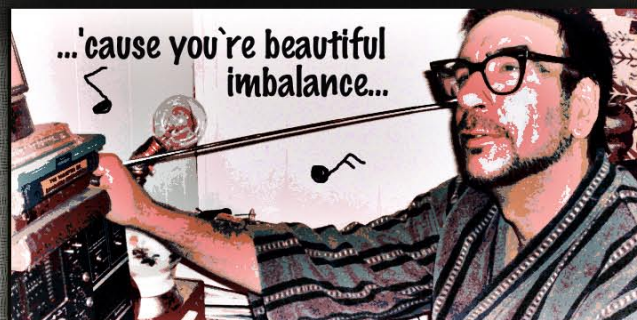


...put your hand inside the puppet's head...

Hey, even if the world is stuck in a big moral vacuum...



...at least he's living through one of the most creatively fertile periods in rock history...



... 'cause you're beautiful imbalance...



It's a beautiful world--for you, not for me!

...and he owes it all to disco and corporate greed.



...I had me a wife, I had me some daughters...

...those two calamitous forces which somehow pruned the branches of youth's free-flowing genius and forced growth back underground where it belonged.



Grab a dust mop and make your home sparkle!!



In the epoch of his wretchedly depressed teen years Reuben had been a dying explorer looking for some solace in the desert of seventies pop music.



next: underground station

AUSU THIS MONTH



2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#).

Anyone who ordered early will have had their planner included in the first batch mailed out. If you did 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.

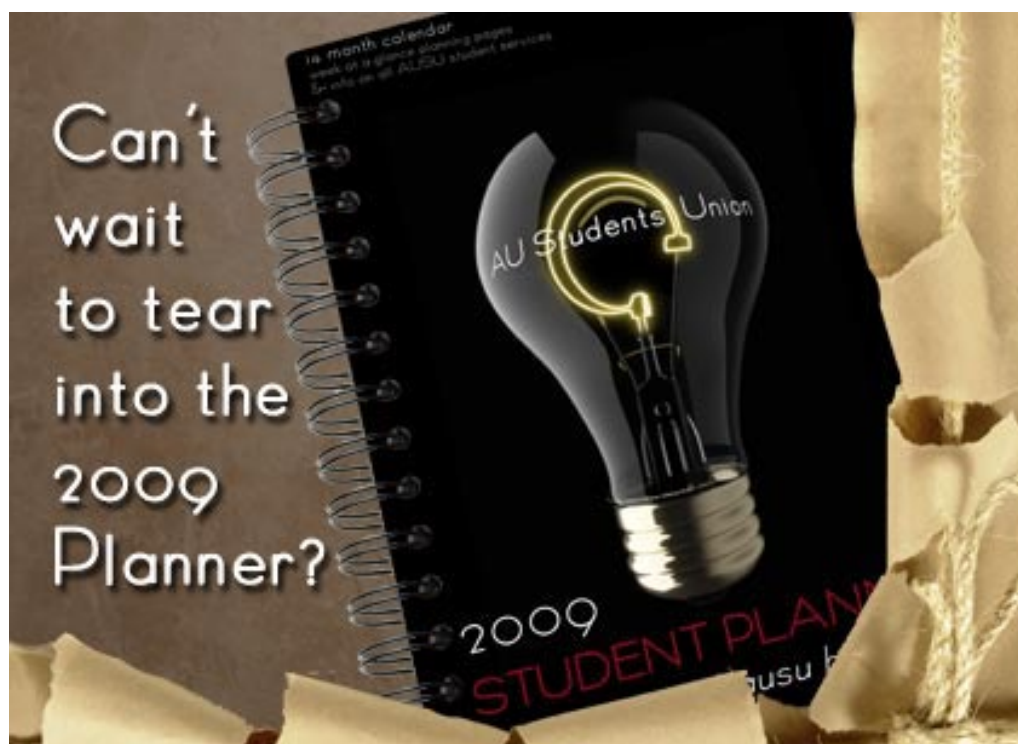
Merchandise Still for Sale

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.

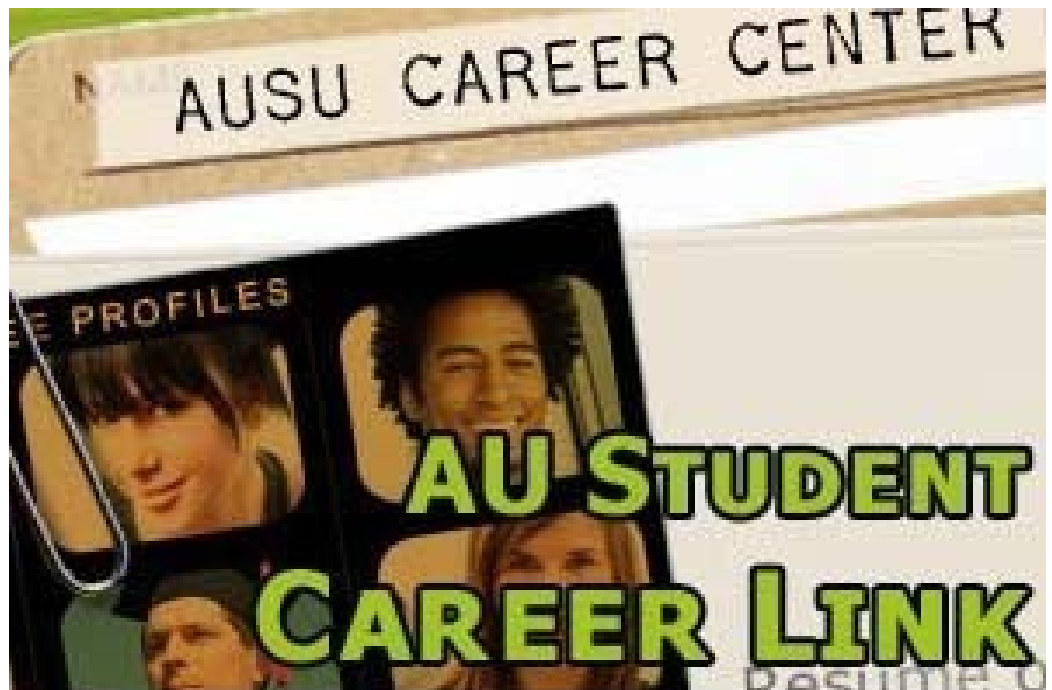
For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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!

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Air travellers could get bill of rights

If a Winnipeg MP gets his way, Canadian air passengers could see an end to such travel frustrations as overbooking—or at least get paid for them.

Jim Maloway, an MP with the NDP, will introduce the passenger bill of rights on February 10. One proposal in the bill would see customers collect \$500 an hour if airlines leave them stranded on the runway. The fees would kick in if passengers are kept waiting on planes “for more than 60 minutes after the doors close.”

The bill would also require airlines to advertise “all-in” ticket prices, meaning that the upfront price consumers see would include taxes and surcharges.

Other proposed measures include forcing airlines to make timely announcements about delays and cancellations, and offering meal and hotel vouchers for flights that are postponed until the next day. The bill would also strengthen the requirements for airlines to provide clear updates on the status of lost baggage.

As Maloway told the *Globe and Mail*, “Happy customers are what we all want here. We’re making this bill friendly for consumers.”

The National Airlines Council of Canada declined the *Globe’s* request for comments.

In Foreign News: Leeds University student to sue over excrement error

David Bennett, a Leeds University student, spent seven years collecting lizard excrement for his PhD thesis—and is now taking legal action after Leeds staff accidentally threw the samples away.

Bennett was studying the Butaan lizard, a rare relative of the Komodo dragon and a creature thought to be extinct for over 100 years. As *The Telegraph* reports, Bennett spent five years “investigating their diet, population size and behaviour by sifting through excrement found on the jungle floor,” and his research had taken him into remote areas of the Philippines.

He was then invited to complete his PhD on a scholarship at Leeds, but when he returned from completing more fieldwork he discovered that his carefully collected samples had been destroyed by technicians cleaning up a lab.

Bennett told reporters that the university took 18 months to issue an apology for the mistake, and after being offered £500 as compensation (which he refused) he is now suing.

The university has called the loss an “unfortunate mistake” and said that “lessons had been learnt.”

According to a Leeds spokesperson, “The issue is being dealt with under the university’s student complaints procedure, though the completion of Mr Bennett’s PhD thesis has been unaffected.”

EDUCATION NEWS

Olivia Bertrand



Students turn to credit

VICTORIA (CUP) - Think the recent announcement that student debt has reached an all-time high of \$13 billion is bad? Well, personal debt, such as credit cards, bank loans, or student lines of credit, which many students are burdened with in addition to their student loan debt, is not even included in that staggering figure.

After a year or two of studies, the money pool can run dry and many students find themselves coming up short when it comes to their monthly expenses.

Student loans often give just enough to cover tuition, and when this happens, daily and monthly expenses are left unaccounted for.

It's at these times that credit cards or lines of credit become a saving grace for some students.

For someone who is working and has a good credit history, getting the first credit card shouldn't be a problem. All banks have their own qualifications, and rates may vary, but they tend not to vary too drastically.

"A first-time credit card holder can expect an interest rate of 19.75 per cent," said Heather Meiklejohn, financial advisor for TD Canada Trust. "If they qualify for a \$1,000 limit, they may choose our lower rate card at prime 6.9 per cent for an annual fee of \$25."

Most students find a way to rack up their cards fairly quickly, no matter their specific limit, until all of a sudden they're suffocating under a mountain of debt.

How about a student line of credit, then? This is a feasible option for those whose studies make it difficult to work more than a few hours a week, if at all.

Of course, in that case you'll need a co-signer. Meiklejohn says the minimum credit limit at TD Canada Trust is \$5,000.

"A student line of credit is a mix between a chequing account and a Visa," she said. "[They] have a minimum payment of just the monthly interest amount while the student is attending school, and then larger payments 12 months after leaving school."

Students can chip away at the balance of their debt faster by putting a little more than the minimum payment down each month.

Also, don't be afraid to ask your bank for a lower interest rate at any time, and write down all of your purchases so they don't get out of hand.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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