

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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Deus Ex Machina

Faith in science

AU Profiles

Debbie Hamilton

In Conversation With . . .

Rennie Sparks



*Plus: From Where I Sit, The Mindful Bard,
Porkpie Hat, and much more...*

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www.voicemagazine.org

1213, 10011 109th
Street NW
Edmonton, AB
T5J 3S8

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Tamra Ross

Managing Editor

Sandra Livingston

Regular Contributors

Hazel Anaka
Christina M. Frey
Barbara Godin
Bill Pollett
Wanda Waterman St.
Louis

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



FICTION

Adam Thackeray

*Deus ex Machina*

The doctor opens his file and reads the sperm count aloud with resounding indifference.

Across the room, the stunned non-father staggers into a void; the first scattered thoughts he is able to gather involve his rather rudimentary understanding of science and mathematics. He does not hold a medical degree, but he is quite certain that the number disclosed in the sperm count should consist of many more millions.

The doctor discreetly stifles a yawn and taps a syncopated rhythm with his pen. In reaction, the non-father feels the void replaced by a far more liberating sense of rage. He envisions punching the practitioner in the nose, imagines his superior stasis of nonchalance jolted suddenly into a stupefied bloody mess.

But the void soon returns to the non-father, sapping his vitality. He can manage only the most basic of gross motor skills. So while the doctor makes a perfunctory effort to address fertility options, the non-father pulls on his jacket and leaves the room.

Prior to this humbling experience, the non-father had cheerfully assumed the unquestionable virility of his loins. In his naiveté, he had the utmost confidence in his abilities to procreate, to spread his seed across the known free world (if fate willed it). Indeed, he took it for granted that he and his wife would effortlessly fill their home with children.

As it was, though, they had been married for a year, with only an old cat and a dying houseplant to share their living space. What had begun as blissfully enthusiastic sexual abandon had now become a progressively hopeless and pressured routine.

And so shortly after the non-father's bare minimum sperm tally, there begins a long procession of equally unpleasant fertility treatments.

To start with, the non-father is treated to a varicocelelectomy, an outpatient surgery involving the tying off of swollen veins surrounding the testicles—a procedure about as enjoyable as one might expect. Some weeks later, the non-parents begin artificial insemination, a process of which the only enjoyable aspect is evidenced in step one: the self-gratification of the non-father.

However, in order to increase the sperm count for the insemination, the urologist recommends that the non-father abstain from ejaculation for at least two to three days prior to the procedure—no easy task for the anxious young man.

Within three days, though, he is pleased to find himself pleasing himself on the cold, hard tiles of the bathroom floor. He kneels as if in some deviant form of prayer, aided visually by a one-dimensional,

unfolded starlet with staples in her flat stomach. The crucial moment of release involves a complex mental calculation of ballistic trajectory; he aims the precious, potentially life-giving fluid from the attentive phallus into the ridiculously small diameter of the sample cup.

For the most part, he is successful in his targeting. Afterwards, the non-mother puts the sample in her bra, against the warmth of her breast, and they leave for the clinic.

Once there, the non-father shamefully passes his sample to the nurse at reception. She accepts it unreservedly, being one who is in the habit of holding warm cups of semen. The nurse leads them into the examination room, and before long the non-mother has her legs up in the stirrups, exposed and vulnerable. The doctor injects the “washed” sample using a needle-less syringe (utilized in much the same fashion as a turkey baster), and then, finally, the procedure is over.

Two heartbeats are amplified from the speakers of the machine, filling the room with a divine, synchronized rhythm.

Within a few weeks, though, the non-mother menstruates, and the process begins all over again. In fact, this process continues for the better part of a year with the same results each time.

It is a miserable and uneventful year: the non-father begins to wonder if his wife would not be better off with someone in possession of far more efficient sperm; friends, family, and co-workers tease and pry, blissfully unaware of the non-parents’ dilemma; and, worse yet, there is the constant barrage of happy and complete families that surround them.

The non-father watches these happy and complete families with their soft, pink, new babies, and he hates them for their happiness.

And even though he does manage to retain some semblance of faith in God, this precarious faith comes only out of desperation and self-interest. The act of prayer itself feels hollow, and most times he feels he is praying only to the bare walls.

Yet, in time, regardless of spiritual uncertainties, hope is rekindled in the hearts of the non-parents. Initially, they consider adoption, and begin to imagine themselves perfectly happy with a perfectly happy Chinese baby. But with one last-ditch attempt to assuage the narcissistic desire for their own biological offspring, they opt for in vitro fertilization—a very expensive long-shot, but one that must be taken if they do not want to spend the rest of their lives asking, “What if?”

So, once again, the non-mother is brave and committed in her task. For 10 days, fertility medications are injected into her thigh (administered by the non-father, whose only other duty in the entire process is to masturbate yet again).

When the medication has stimulated an adequate amount of ovarian follicles, the non-mother is then subjected to the excruciating process of egg retrieval. Afterward, the sperm is injected into the egg, and the resulting zygote is passed to a special growth medium in a petri dish. Once the zygote reaches a desired cell stage, it is then transferred to the uterus in hopes of a successful pregnancy.

There are many prayers that follow. And somehow, with this unlikely marriage of faith and science, the non-parents become new parents at last.

Weeks later, they arrive for their first ultrasound. The new mother is reclined amongst the machinery, her slight belly shiny with gel. The technician slides her wand across the recently occupied abdomen, and then smiles to herself; she turns the monitor toward the new parents and reveals a grainy black and white image of two little people dancing in the shadows of the new mother's womb.

Two heartbeats are amplified from the speakers of the machine, filling the room with a divine, synchronized rhythm. For the rest of the day, the new parents can only beam at each other with an odd, wonderful combination of panic and joy. "Oh my God!" they exclaim over and over again.

"Oh my God . . ."

AUSU AGM 2009

If you didn't make it to the AUSU AGM 2009, you missed a great chance to catch up on all the work your council's been doing—as well as the opportunity to chat with councillors and ask questions about anything that might be on your mind.

The Voice was there to bring you the highlights, and you can find the 2009 Annual Report on the AUSU [homepage](#), along with a link to a detailed explanation of all the [motions](#) presented.

One motion involved a change to the definition of an AUSU associate member. As policy 4.1(b) stood, these were defined as members who pay less than the full AUSU membership fees. The policy amendment (approved at the meeting) now defines associate members as "AUSU Councillors or Members not currently in an active AUSU course." Because elected councillors may be between courses at the time of an AGM, and therefore unable to vote on any motions, the amendment ensures that they will remain within the membership definition and be able to fulfil their duties as councillors.

There were other key amendments to membership definition (clearly explained in the links above), but another important change to note involves AUSU membership fees. First, article 4.4.2 was added to the Bylaws, stating that "Membership Fees are \$3 per credit for any AU course" (membership fees were not previously defined in the Bylaws).

Second, the change reflects an increase in AUSU membership fees to \$3 per credit, or \$9 for a 3-credit course (fees have remained at \$8 for a 3- or 4-credit course since 2001). Along with clearly defining the fees, the change will equalize the overall fees paid by each member over the duration of any AU program, unlike the previous structure, which lumped 3- and 4-credit courses into the same fee category.

Students attending the AGM asked council several questions about the fee change, after which the Special Resolution was unanimously approved. If you're curious about the rationale behind it, council has done a thorough job of explaining it and you can find all the details beginning on page two [here](#).

And finally, one of the highlights was council's report on Priority Activities and Planning. From a Tutor of the Year contest to improved complaint tracking to new awards, your council has completed several important projects to benefit members. And they're hard at work on developing more, including an AUSU radio/podcast, a points program, and an orientation booklet for new students.

To find out more about the AGM or any other council activities, just follow the [links](#) to contact them!

ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



Lest We Forget

As the *Globe and Mail* pointed out this week, Canadian taxpayers “shelled out nearly \$270,000” last July for the change-of-command ceremony that bid farewell to General Rick Hillier, the country’s former chief of defence.

Details of the expenses include \$4,035 for a 21-gun salute, \$23,101 for an aerial display by the Canadian Snowbirds, and \$3,137 for a military parachutist team, as well as “\$6,597 for shipping a tank to the Ottawa Uplands Reception Centre so Gen. Hillier could ride

away from the ceremony on it.”

Detractors were quick to cry foul, including New Democratic Party defence critic Dawn Black, who labelled the spending extravagant. “The word excessive doesn’t seem to cover it, especially when we learn this during a time of restraint, when more and more Canadians are out of work,” she told reporters.

It’s a great sound bite, but doesn’t even come close to telling the whole story.

First, when it comes to being careless with our tax dollars, a quarter of a million dollars pales in comparison to the wasteful track records of far too many of our elected leaders—especially when it comes to honouring the men and women who are out there fighting real battles instead of trading insults with each other across the Commons floor (not only an embarrassing spectacle, but one that translates into a lot of wasted time and taxpayers’ money).

Second, more than a third of the total bill was used to pay the travel expenses for the families and spouses of wounded and dead soldiers. As General Hillier told reporters, the ceremony not only marked a change of command and acted as a recruiting opportunity, it also served to reaffirm the military’s “commitment to support families in their toughest days, [to support] wounded soldiers and [to] recognize valour.”

So should we begrudge a quarter of a million dollars out of a total \$18.2 billion annual budget to mark such a major event?

No. Because whether you agree with Canada’s presence in Afghanistan or not, the truth is that the men and women in our armed forces have stepped up time and again to do the hard work in the ugly situations that international relations create. Regardless of the politics of the day, they sacrifice families, lives, and mental and physical health to keep the peace and defend this country.

From Vimy Ridge to Korea to the hellish fields of Passchendaele (and other battlefields too numerous to mention), Canada’s soldiers and sailors and pilots have paid the price—and are still paying it today, whether as veterans or on active duty far from home.

Is there wasteful spending in Canada’s military? Undoubtedly. Is every member of the armed forces a saint? Hardly. But when it comes to loosening the purse strings to honour their sacrifices, boost morale, and bid farewell to a respected commander, we must never, ever forget how dearly our soldiers have already paid.

Government
of CanadaGouvernement
du Canada

Important Notice for Students with Canada Student Loans

Are you graduating or taking more than six months off from school?

If you are **not** returning to full-time studies this fall, you will need to contact us to discuss repayment options:

- **For your Canada Student Loan**, contact the National Student Loans Service Centre at 1-888-815-4514 (TTY for the hearing impaired: 1-888-815-4556).
- **For your provincial student loan**, contact EDULINX, Alberta's student loan service provider, at 1-866-827-0310.

If you think you might have trouble paying back your student loans, there are federal and provincial programs available to help you stay on track.

Ask about the repayment options available to you. For example, the new Repayment Assistance Plan will ensure your Canada Student Loan payments will never be higher than what you can reasonably afford.

Visit the **Spotlight On** section of CanLearn.ca for details.

Avis important aux étudiants qui ont un prêt d'études canadien

Tu termines tes études ou tu les interromps pendant plus de six mois?

Si tu **ne** retournes **pas** aux études à temps plein l'automne prochain, tu dois communiquer avec nous afin de discuter des options de remboursement.

- **En ce qui concerne ton prêt d'études canadien**, communique avec le Centre de services national de prêts aux étudiants, au 1-888-815-4514 (téléimprimeur pour malentendants : 1-888-815-4556).
- **En ce qui concerne ton prêt d'études provincial**, communique avec EDULINX, fournisseur des services de prêts aux étudiants de l'Alberta, au 1-866-827-0310.

Si tu crois que tu pourrais avoir de la difficulté à rembourser tes prêts d'études, des programmes fédéraux et provinciaux s'offrent à toi afin de t'aider à maintenir le cap.

Renseigne-toi au sujet des possibilités de remboursement qui te sont proposées. Dans le cadre du nouveau Programme d'aide au remboursement, par exemple, tu seras assuré que les versements sur ton prêt d'études canadien ne dépasseront jamais un montant raisonnablement abordable pour toi.

Pour plus de détails, visite la section **En vedette** du site cibletudes.ca.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Rennie Sparks of The Handsome Family

The Handsome Family is the singer-songwriter husband-and-wife team comprising Rennie and Brett Sparks.

Often referred to as "the Gomez and Morticia Adams of country music," their remarkable, highly original songs have been called alternative country, alternative folk, and Americana, among other things, but sound like a genre unto themselves.

Their recently released ninth album, Honey Moon, was recently reviewed by The Voice. The following

are notes from a conversation between Rennie Sparks and Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

Magic Knives and Precious Blood

It's always hard for me to talk about music. Sort of like trying to describe a dream that seems to take only one second yet when you start trying to tell the story of it you end up talking for hours and never really getting to the heart of things. Still, I do love murder ballads and I feel like they are so misunderstood that I was compelled to write about them for the University of Minnesota lecture ("Old Weird America").

Murder ballads are so much more about life and love than death and dust. Women, especially, are prone to seeing them as simply misogynistic, but I honestly think they are remnants of pre-Christian nature worship or mother goddess worship. Women in murder ballads are fearful creatures, without ever lifting a finger, and must be killed with magic knives and every drop of their precious blood collected.

I think murder ballads are a key element in the folk tradition that American folk came from: British Isles folk music (Irish, English, Scottish). Again, I really think these songs are the memories of very old nature worship or blood rituals. They are powerful blood magic still.

From the British Isles to Appalachia

When you start hearing so many songs with so many repeated lines you start to see the patterns backwards. Ruby-red lips and lily-white hands abound as well as golden daggers, rushing rivers, Sweet Williams and Pretty Pollys. It was very exciting to me to realize that we have such a vibrant path of song leading back all the way to the seventeenth century (and in some cases earlier).

A Fascination with Bizarre Americana

It all started when we first heard the Louvin Brothers doing "Knoxville Girl." It was so brutal and so beautiful, so terrifying and so romantic. So many things. I wanted more. We found Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* after that and were completely hooked forever. Hard to go back to listening to the Ramones with the same satisfaction as before.

Life with Brett

I hope it works well. Doesn't always feel that way. We struggle with every song we write. None come quickly and some never get finished. Mostly I begin with lyrics and a rhythm and then Brett finds a melody and then we try to lay down some tracks. It's always surprising to me what he ends up doing with my words and very exciting for that reason.



On Being in *Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus*

We had mixed emotions. I'm not from the South nor am I Christian so I was slightly annoyed at their insistence that my writing comes out of a Southern tradition. I did think it was gorgeous to film the South in the winter so that all the swamp and bramble looked so stark. I also felt like some of my very favourite musicians were in the film. It was slightly dangerous to be standing on a raft in the water holding electric instruments while cameramen in motorboats circled closer and closer.

Inspiration

I always credit Vic Chesnutt's album *Little* with inspiring me to write lyrics. It just made me think of lyrics as this incredible storytelling tool for the first time.

Musical Backgrounds

Brett has a master's in music history and played in a lot of bands as well as sung in church choirs, medieval ensembles, and played lots of instruments (including harpsichord and prepared piano). I played bassoon as a kid, but never really thought of myself as a musician. I was always trying to be a writer. It was a revelation to find I could become a writer by becoming a musician.

Childhood

I grew up on Long Island in a very rural area. Very wooded and isolated and I was always terrified at night. Brett grew up in the desert and was very religious and self-assured until he got to college, lost his faith, and started drinking.

How did you come up with your name?

Sort of halfway between the Manson Family and the Carter Family.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - Man as Machine

It seems like just yesterday (well, okay, 81 years ago) that Buck Rogers first blasted off with a jetpack, but even that sci-fi adventurer would be amazed at how far we've integrated the roles of human and machine. So strap on your rocket belts and imagine how outdated *these* ideas will seem one day.

USB Finger - When this software developer from Helsinki lost a finger in a motorcycle accident, he didn't waste much time worrying about how to pick up all those tiny USB sticks—he simply built one in to his prosthetic finger.

Lady with Bionic Arm - This bionic arm doesn't give its user superhuman strength, but it comes remarkably close to duplicating the functions of a real human arm. The amazing thing is that the user simply has to *think* about performing an action, and her nerve endings trigger the arm to react.

Bionic Eye - These tiny cameras, "no bigger than a pea," are linked to an artificial retina, allowing visually impaired patients to see. Amazing.

Jules - Meet Jules, the "the first humanoid robot who can realistically mimic a real person's expressions merely by watching their face." The possibilities for this technology are intriguing—and somehow just a little creepy.

Geminoid - Yet another remarkably human-looking robot, and the close-ups of his facial expressions are awe inspiring. Still, if Jules rates a six for being oddly unsettling, Geminoid definitely gets a 10.

Robot Model Hits the Runway - Tokyo Fashion Week kicked off with the latest model—not clothing, a robot. Fembot, actually, although one of her creators admitted that it will be a few more years before the android model can "move elegantly like the real models that are here today."

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Debbie Hamilton

Christina M. Frey



Debbie Hamilton's life changed when she was widowed at the age of 39. The horticulturist-turned-sociology-major explains what led her to change career fields and return to school after her husband's death.

She also describes why planning is so crucial to her success, and what keeps her going when motivation is hard to come by.

Debbie, her husband, and son, then six years old, moved from British Columbia to central Ontario four years ago to pursue a job opportunity.

Shortly after they arrived, however, her husband was diagnosed with cancer, and died just eight months later.

Debbie's initial plan had been to open her own horticulture business, but her husband's illness and death forced her to reconsider.

"I was [his] primary caregiver for the entire time we were out here, so [there was no] opportunity to get anything started," she explains. Afterwards, she says, it wasn't possible: "With a child it is too hard to go out on your own."

When she tried to find work in her field, however, she ran up against a wall; her diploma in ornamental horticulture wasn't sufficient.

"When they asked what degree I had . . . all of a sudden, there was no interest," she says. "Doors were . . . being slammed in my face." She realized she needed a bachelor's degree to become competitive in the job market, particularly in her small town. "That degree will open more doors for me," she explains.

Emotionally, it was also time for a fresh start. "That was my life with my husband," she says. "I can't go back, so I'm trying to etch out a new life for me and my son."

Another decision she had to make was a new field of study. Although she still enjoys horticulture, "it's very seasonal," she says. "I could not get consistent work."

She began studying sociology, and this past summer began working part-time for a non-profit agency “that helps people with mental illness and addictions re-integrate back into society,” she says. “It is very interesting and rewarding work.” Eventually, she hopes to go to teacher’s college, or make a career in social work. A master’s degree is also possible.

Doing it all on her own is no easy task, since her family and friends aren’t local. “I just do what I can and hope that it is enough,” she says. She also prioritizes. A vital step? “You learn how to say ‘no,’” she says. “The key is to say it with conviction—that way I can stay on track.”

Planning also helps; in fact, for her, it’s a necessity. “I really have to keep on top of stuff or I lose my motivation,” she says. “I’d be lost without my *Mom’s Ultimate Family Fridge Calendar!*”

Besides having a day-to-day routine that she generally follows, Debbie also uses longer-range planning to keep herself on track. Taking the course study guides as outlines, she writes down her goals for the week, and tries to stay focussed. But she’s a realist, and is the first to acknowledge how easily one can fall behind.

“Some days there is no balance,” Debbie admits. “I just throw my hands up in the air and go to bed and start fresh the next day.” Perseverance is paying off, though: “I am almost back on track,” she says.

Although she’s moderately active on AUSU’s discussion boards, Debbie does miss the interpersonal aspect found at traditional schools. “I am a very social person,” she says. “I haven’t found anyone out in my neck of the woods who goes to AU.”

For Debbie, though, the bigger challenge is the difficulty of professor-student interaction. “I miss [that] most,” she says. “I miss . . . having real discussions, face to face, about topics covered in the readings.”

She also misses lectures: “Some teachers bring more information to the table than just what is in the text,” she points out. In addition to providing feedback on the material, it would also give her an outlet for “intelligent conversation,” something she feels is especially important as a mature student studying on her own.

To help with the isolation, she makes a point of communicating with her tutors, a resource that many students don’t fully use. “They have good tips and sometimes tell you what needs to be focused on,” Debbie says. “So far . . . I have had really good tutors . . . they have been very supportive.”

The goal of completing her degree motivates Debbie when it gets difficult.

“It is my door of opportunity,” she says. “I’m not going to let go, that is for sure.”

Her most important motivator, though, is her son. “It is not just for me [that] I’m doing this,” she says. “I want to be able to really provide for him.”

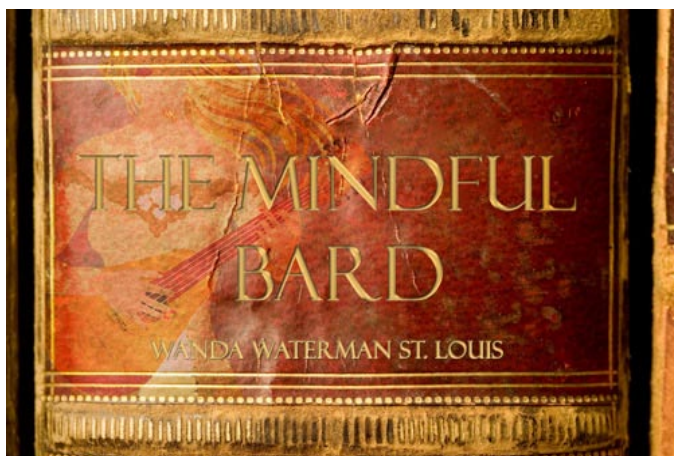
Plus, there’s another aspect: accountability. “He lets me know if I’m slacking off!” she jokes.

Currently, she’s in her third year of the degree, and hopes to finish within two or three years. And regardless of the difficulties daily studies may bring her, Debbie’s convinced she made the right decision.

“You can go back to school at any age,” she says. “I know this is the place I should be!”

The goal of completing her degree motivates Debbie when it gets difficult.

“It is my door of opportunity,” she says.



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

Book: Joseph Gould, *An Oral History of Our Time*

Publisher: Long Island Duck and Chicken Farm Press, 2009

“In the Winter I Am a Buddhist, and in the Summer I Am a Nudist”

“... he smelled sulfur, and looked up, and saw the devil walk past. But later that night, on Pier 26, he

saw two mermaids.

“They weren’t exactly half women, half fish; they were more like half women, half snakes,” he said. “And when they saw me sitting on the pier looking at them they held out their arms and wriggled and made certain other motions trying to tempt me to come with them. And if I had done so they would have wrapped themselves around me and dragged me to the very bottom of the river.”

Joseph Gould, “Good Men Are Dying Like Flies,” from *An Oral History of Our Time*

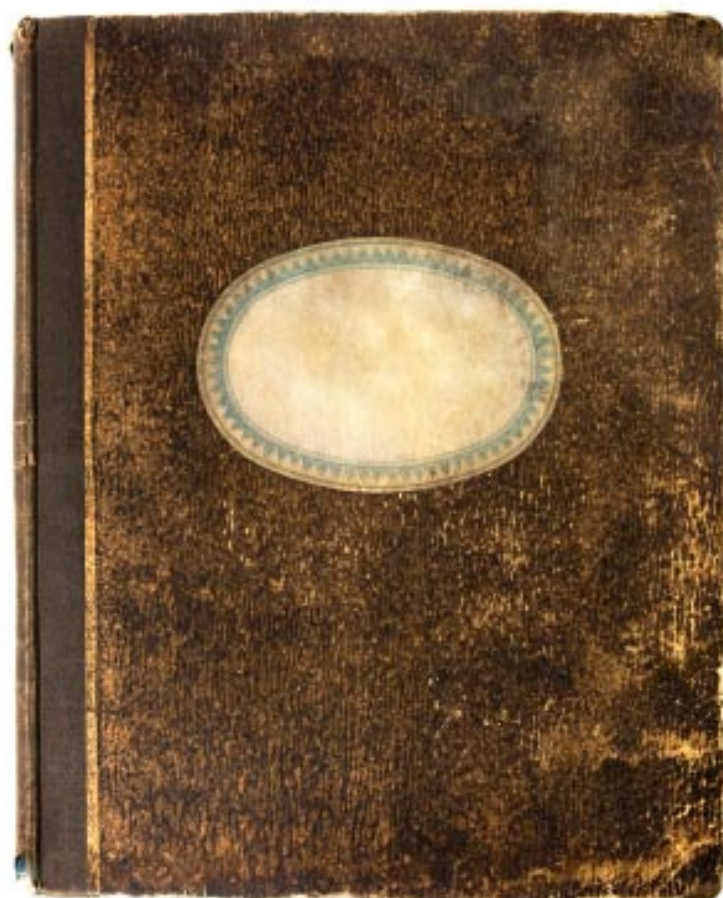
New Yorker writer Joseph Mitchell has been writing a series of profiles of Greenwich Village eccentric Joseph Gould. Mitchell asks to read the manuscript of Gould’s magnum opus, *An Oral History of Our Time*, which Gould has been hiding at a Long Island farm.

Gould being a penniless vagrant, Mitchell gives him the money to take a train to the farm to fetch his manuscript.

Gould returns from Long Island in a fury; the farm’s owner has moved to Florida with the key to the cellar where his manuscript is stored, and her daughter has turned him rudely away. Gould is hopeless of ever retrieving his manuscript.

He gives Mitchell the box of chocolates he had bought, with Mitchell’s money, for the farm’s owner, and offers to recite the history for him.

“The history of a nation is not in parliaments and battlefields, but in what people say to each other on fair-days and high days, and how they farm, and



quarrel, and go on pilgrimage.” So wrote W. B. Yeats in an introduction to a book by Irish historian William Carleton, and it is what turned Joseph Gould’s life around and set him to writing his famed book, completed in 1953 and now finally available in hard cover.

Joseph Gould was a familiar figure on the streets of New York City in the 1930s and 1940s. He was friends with e. e. cummings and Ezra Pound, among other notables.

***You can’t help but
come away from An
Oral History of Our
Time believing that
history is the flotsam
born on the words we
exchange.***

A Harvard graduate, he chose a life of vagabondage on the streets of New York City in order to be near the voices that to his mind represented the very fabric of time and to record their conversations in reams of dime-store notebooks.

You can’t help but come away from *An Oral History of Our Time* believing that history is the flotsam born on the words we exchange. It’s as if Dostoevsky’s better dialogues had been all gathered into one book, those passages where you say to yourself, *These are people I know! And yes, they are marvellous and amazing!*

This book should be on every culture maker’s shelf. Not just a sparkling window into the reality of modern life, it embodies a rich source of material for acting monologues, screenplays, poems, plays, and novels.

The interspersed essays offer a privileged view of one of the most fertile, insightful brains of the twentieth century.

It’s no surprise that once Joseph Mitchell stopped writing about Gould he developed years of writer’s block. It was a tough act to follow, although he could easily have drawn years of inspiration from *An Oral History of Our Time*, had it been published back then. More’s the pity.

An Oral History of Our Time manifests nine of The Mindful Bard’s criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts, rebukes, and mocks existing injustices; 3) it makes me want to be a better artist; 4) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 6) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else’s political agenda; 8) it stimulates my mind; and 9) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

Note: Excerpts of Gould’s notebooks were published in a number of periodicals and inspired many writers, but *An Oral History of Our Time* has never existed except in the mind of Gould himself, who actually willed sections of the nonexistent work to Harvard and the Smithsonian. The title of this article is a poem that Gould often recited at parties. The quote at the beginning of the article came from the film *The Secret of Joe Gould*, which tells the story, and which I highly recommend.

Happy April Fool’s Day.

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.



My 100

For the longest time I believed adherence to the latest fashion dictum was just plain crazy. How could designer creations from the world's big fashion houses, and modeled by size zero waif-like creatures, have anything to do with my real life in rural Alberta?

I objected to an industry with a vested interest in telling me that ruffles are back, chocolate is the new neutral, and chunky bangles are the "it" accessory—at least for today. I objected to the condescension from the experts and trendsetters. I wondered at the sensitivity (or just plain sense) of manufacturers who were overlooking the untapped market of real women with real, imperfect bodies.

I believed that women slavishly buying fashion and celebrity magazines were wasting their money. I believed that women rushing out to shop with the latest fashion prescription clutched in their hands were simply vain. And gullible.

Whatever happened to the notion of dressing for body type, buying classics that last season after season, and marching to our own style drummer? Could we ditch the stilettos, say no to the Hermès bag and studded bustier?

The answer is no. I was wrong, wrong, wrong. Yes, fashion is a multi-billion dollar industry with no shortage of fashionistas, prima donnas, and wackos. Yes, there are more size 14's and up than zeros and twos. Yes, plus-size garment styles are a design travesty. But as always there are ways to cherry-pick which part of the hype and insanity you fall for.

Television programs like *What Not to Wear*, *Style by Jury*, and *10 Years Younger* have helped alleviate blissful ignorance and expose fashion crimes. *Project Runway* has given us a behind-the-scenes look at the design process.

I've decided not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. I'm getting with the program. Goodwill has gotten clothing that reflects buying mistakes and the old me. I'm investing in accessories like scarves, jewellery, and handbags. I will be looking for a new pair of heels this spring, though they won't be stilettos. I'm also working on this body through daily walks.

When in doubt I always reach for a book. Nina Garcia's *The One Hundred* is my how-to guide for assembling classics. Garcia, 43, spent 13 years at *Elle* magazine and is now fashion director at *Marie Claire*. She was also a judge on *Project Runway*.

In 278 pages she takes us from 'A' (A-line dress) to 'Z' (zippered hoodie). As I read the text and enjoyed the illustrations of Ruben Toledo, I was pleased to see that I already have many of these items. Will I ever get number 55, Minnetonka Moccasin? No. Would I consider number 17—Cape? Yes.

This book also includes fun facts, fashion 101 tidbits, quotations, and brand names. It's fun and user-friendly. It doesn't preach. I'll be working on my 100 knowing that this fashion biz is a moving target and you're never really done.

For now, putting on a 68, 42, and 11 accessorized with a 13, 6, and 3 is the best I can do, from where I sit.

The Interviewer

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

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead #16: Vendetta



Naw. Think about it. You expose the group home or community services, whaddya think'll happen?



They'll probably put Gord in a room somewhere on some stupid pretext...



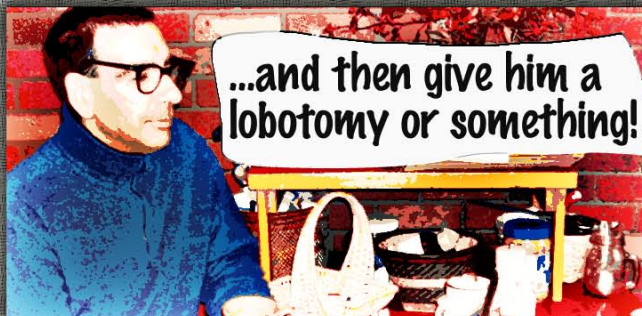
...and then tell him we all hate him and don't want to be his friends any more...



....or that he's a bad person for even having friends like us. And won't let him work at the radio station any more...



...and then give him a lobotomy or something!

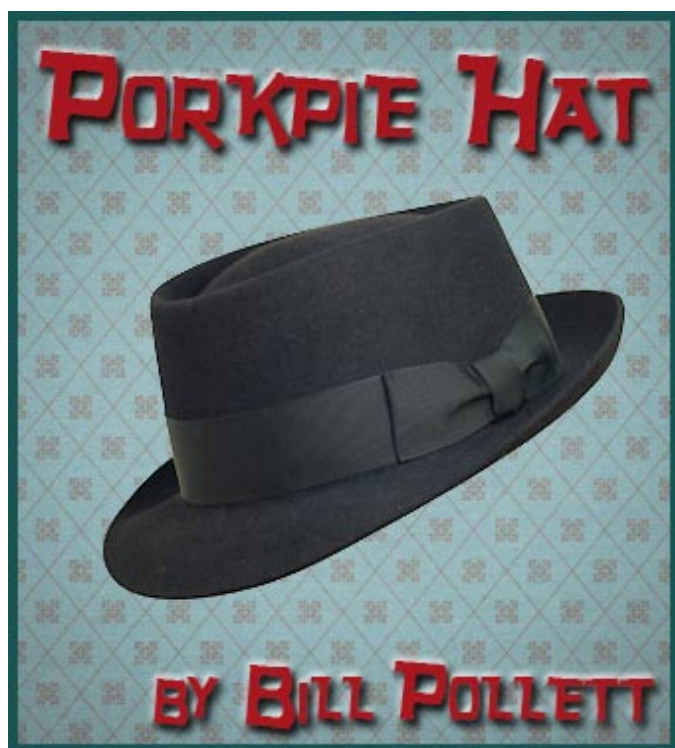


(Kush has seen *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* thirty-three times.)



Vanity, vanity, all is vanity...

next: Fifteen Minutes of Fame



A Plague of Angels

So there's this man who finds himself middle-aged, middle class, middle-of-the-road, living in the middle of Middle America. He knows his place, his way, his precise location, because he has GPS and satellite signals, and echolocation.

He has route maps and instructions. He has a glowing box of dreams he keeps in the corner of his room. In the evening, the dreams swim around in there, like neon fish in an aquarium.

He's not sure, anymore, whose dreams these are he keeps seeing. He thinks maybe they're his. Maybe they're his.

At night, though, when he falls asleep (as he inevitably must) the other dreams keep coming. Most often, he dreams of angels, both weird and terrible. They are freakish angels, angel freaks.

There is the one, whose head is blinding light, erupting in sparks like a birthday party sparkler. She follows him through the house, and he is terrified she will set the kitchen curtains on fire. There is the one whose skin is a mirror, and the one whose body is inside out, her flesh decorated with veins and organs.

There are angels with three mouths, and angels hanging from the ceiling. There are angels clear as glass, and one who is the night sky, jewelled with emptiness and constellations.

All of them are singing their weird and terrible song, and no matter how hard his dreaming self clamps his hands over his ears, the music finds its way inside his head and his blood.

He desperately wants them to stop visiting him, so he spends his spare hours searching the Internet for a cure. He sits in clinic waiting rooms and on church pews. He wanders, tired and confused, through the self-help aisles of Indigo and Chapters. He falls asleep with his iPod on, and the box of acceptable dreams turned way up loud. He drinks endless cups of coffee to buy himself more time in the real, waking world.

Still, the angels keep coming, night after night. They sit on the edge of his bed; get tangled in his drapes and in his sheets. They have burning hair and the heads of beasts. They have folded black wings and dresses made of honeybees. They hum and they sing and they call to him to join them. They are beautiful and deadly, radioactive, translucent.

And he thinks, there is only so much madness a middle-aged, middle-class man can handle. And he spends his days cursing his fate, and searching for a cure.

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 already!

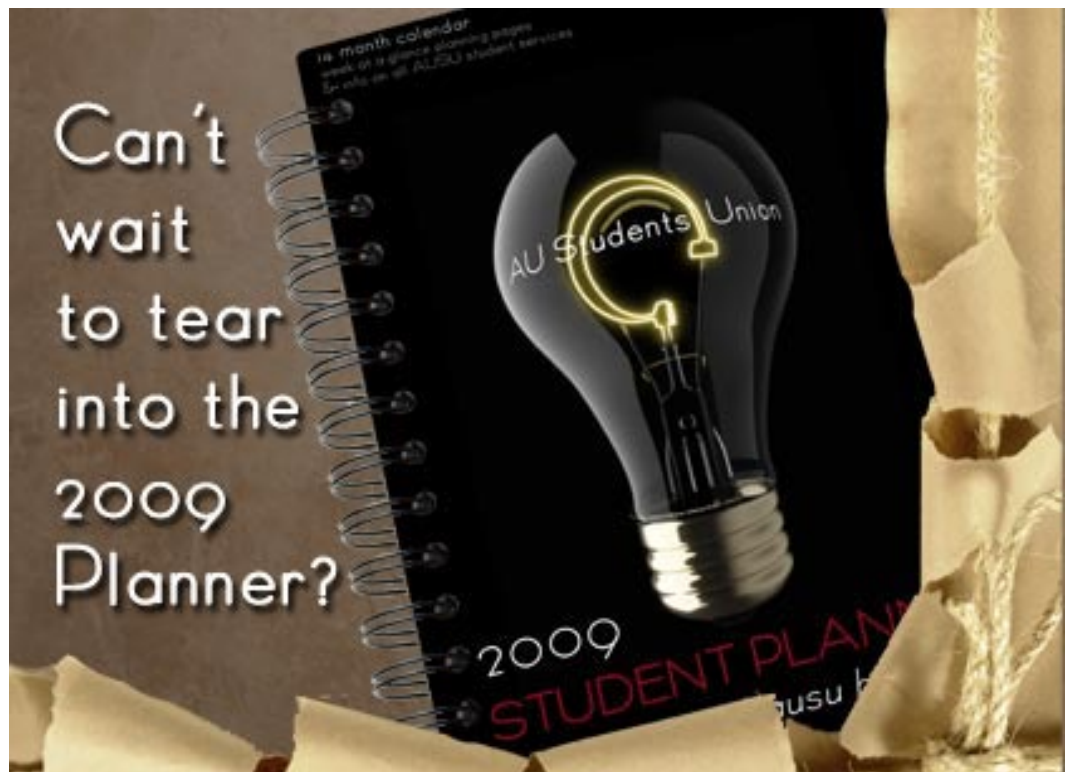
As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

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.

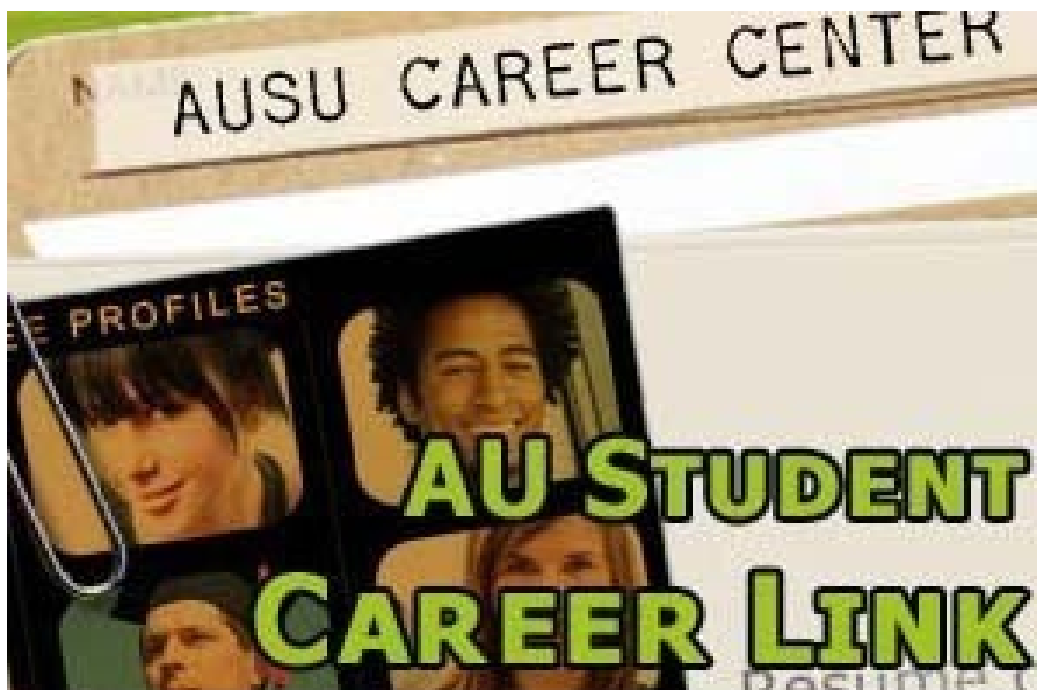
For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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: Bay Street and Aboriginal merger creates largest Canadian farming operation

The launch of a vast one-million-acre farming operation was announced in Saskatoon on March 26 by a partnership once seen as unlikely: Bay Street investors and Aboriginal leaders.

As the *Globe and Mail* [reports](#), a group of chiefs from Alberta and Saskatchewan announced the deal, one that will make the partners “the most influential farmers in all of Canada, with a super-sized one-million-acre operation that could rival the largest corporate farms in the world.”

The plan will see 17 native bands lease their land to the One Earth Farms Corporation. One Earth is a new organization whose focus will be to farm in an environmentally responsible way, to hire and train Aboriginal employees, and to provide an equity stake in the company for First Nations.

Part of the project’s funding (\$27.5 million) is being provided by the Toronto-based Sprott Resources Corp. As well, Sprott Resources’ founder will “donate \$1-million to the University of Saskatchewan to create a scholarship fund for aboriginal students to study agriculture.”

The project’s farm operations will be spread out in separate pods of around 20,000 acres each, and will include grain and oilseed cultivation as well as cattle ranching. Although the entire one million acres won’t be signed over during the first year, One Earth “will instantly be among the biggest players” in Canada’s multi-billion dollar farming sector.

In Foreign News: US House of Representatives expands wilderness protection

Many Americans can breathe a little easier this week as the House of Representatives voted to grant wilderness status to two million acres of public land. The newly protected wilderness areas are in nine states, including California and West Virginia, and the move represents the “largest expansion of protected national wild lands in 15 years,” according to The *New York Times*.

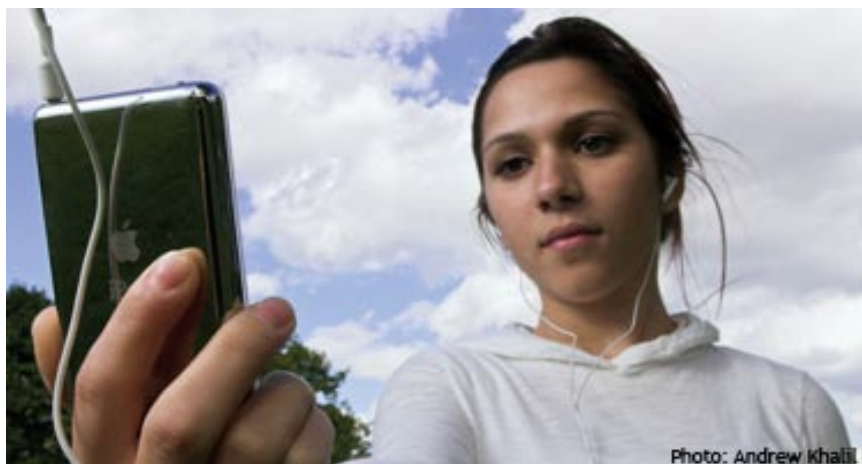
The House approved the Omnibus Public Land Management Act by a vote of 285 to 140. The Act has already been passed by the Senate and President Obama is expected to sign it.

California is the state with the largest area of newly protected land, 700,000 acres. Representative Mary Bono Mack, Republican, told reporters that the legislation is “incredibly important,” and that it “gives higher protection to environmentally sensitive, outright beautiful lands that deserve protection.”

Along with California and West Virginia, states that will see expanded protection for wilderness are Wyoming, Idaho, Michigan, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, and Utah.

EDUCATION NEWS

Sarah Petz

**Profs split on iTunes U**

U of M professors say podcasts are one-way, lack conversation

WINNIPEG (CUP) – Podcasts featuring university lectures are becoming increasingly popular through Apple's iTunes U, but some University of Manitoba professors aren't sold.

Available at the iTunes store, prominent universities such as Stanford and MIT, museums, and other cultural

organizations provide video and audio podcasts for free to the public.

"It's a great way of showcasing or highlighting what's going on on campus, highlighting our innovations and highlighting our faculty," said Brett Izutsu, project manager for Stanford on iTunes U.

"iTunes itself has many users and it's pretty low cost. It's an easy way to engage various populations in the general public, or even potential students."

The project began with a core group of pilot schools, with Duke University being the first. In 2002, Duke offered their incoming freshman class iPods to use with their courses. Stanford was offered this opportunity as well, but challenged Apple to develop concrete academic uses for iPods and iTunes.

According to Izutsu, iTunes U has many advantages, including content that is easily available to those with access to computers, not just iPod owners. The lectures are distributed publicly and monitored for academic quality.

Recently, a study published at the State University of New York-Fredonia measured the performance of 64 students, half of whom listened to a lecture via podcast, and half whom attended the live lecture. Students who listened to the podcast averaged 71 per cent on the follow-up test, while those who attended the lecture averaged 62 per cent.

However, Dennis Hlynka, professor of curriculum teaching and learning at the University of Manitoba, is skeptical about the accuracy of the study and the academic value of the podcasts in general.

"A C grade is so low . . . and there were so many variables in that study. It didn't really make any sense. So when you look at it that way . . . whether or not anyone learns anything, who knows?" said Hlynka.

So far, the U of M is distributing a weekly news podcast, but no academic podcasts. For teaching English, U of M professor Shelly Mahoney says a podcast lacks the necessary personal interaction.

"I think what I do, it suits it better to have a live person there, because what you're doing is you're having a conversation," she said.

"Even if it's live, even if you're seeing a live feed of a lecture, you still miss something simply because you can't [interact]. You don't have them right there. You can't talk back to them. You can't ask them a question.

"The whole lecture stays what it was in the beginning; there's no chance of it being taken down in any other path because of what someone says. That's what you get in a lecture that sometimes technology takes away."

Hlynka also points out that podcasts have to try to apply to any number of viewers.

"A podcast has to assume that they know the age of their audience, that they know what their audience wants, that they know what their audience already knows about their subject. The university podcast, I guess, is aimed at a particular class, but then what about outsiders? Can they get it? There's a lot of assumptions."

Others are excited at the new progress in technology and what it means for education. Karen Smith, U of M professor of curriculum teaching and learning, gave an example of when she has integrated new technology into her class.

"If I teach something that has a global perspectives . . . I want the students to get a real sense of that in the world. And they may be hearing a podcast and then on the right-hand side of the screen in our class, they'll hear other people . . . even in other languages, commenting on the speaker or asking questions while the speaker is speaking," said Smith.

"I've found that those kind of things add to [our world] and add to our sense of being in touch with a broader range of research."

At Stanford, Izutsu says podcasting is not aimed at replacing traditional lectures. "Professors in the future will have to stay ahead of technology and integrate technology more in their classes, but I don't think that traditional methods of teaching are going to change constructively so much that students don't attend class," said Izutsu.

"I think part of what you pay for in college is that interaction with your professors. I think that's a very important part of education."

DID YOU KNOW?



AU Library 2.0

If you still think libraries are dusty places with stern librarians, you might be surprised when you check out AU's [Library 2.0](#).

Along with all the regular features of the library, they've added some great new tools to help you find exactly what you're looking for.

One popular feature is the LibX Toolbar—just follow the links to the tutorial and FAQs.

The Library 2.0 page also has information on using Delicious links; the AU library Facebook group; Shelfari (a virtual bookshelf highlighting new and notable books); Tag Cloud; and more.

If you want to get more out of the AU library than ever before, see what's new at Library 2.0 today.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

1213, 10011 109th Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8 -- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

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Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Sandra Livingston

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Christina M. Frey, Barbara Godin, Bill Pollett,
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