

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 15  
April 17, 2009

## **Green and Clean**

From trash to treasure

## **Stones and Time**

Building wonder

## **Brushing Up**

A Better Check-Up



*Plus:*

*The Mindful Bard, From Where I Sit,  
In Conversation With, and much more...*

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and  
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indicate if we may publish your letter.



## THIS WORLD

Christina M. Frey



### Greening Spring Cleaning

Spring is here, and the sun is shining! That's a good thing, until it starts illuminating the piles of old junk standing in the previously darkened, cobwebby corners of the garage.

We know the therapeutic benefits of getting rid of all that useless stuff we no longer need. But there's a twinge of guilt as the black garbage bags pile up and we think about the legacy we're leaving the earth.

Good news: not everything needs to go to the landfill! Recycling is still going strong, and there are new options available for previously hard-to-place items. Better still, reusing has

become hotter than ever as businesses and organizations begin tapping into the "green" market.

In this two-part series, I've compiled some resources to help you figure out what to do with those boxes of stuff you no longer want—other than setting them out by the curb. You'll declutter your space, help the environment, and maybe even make a few dollars!

#### Part I: Reuse!

They say one person's trash is another's treasure, and now it's truer than ever. More and more new venues are popping up to allow you to donate, share, trade, or sell items you have no use for. The following suggestions may help you get started:

#### Household items

What do furniture, mismatched dinnerware, poster paints, towels, a skein of yarn left over from a project, and stationery have in common? Someone, somewhere, probably wants them—and may even be willing to pay.

**Garage sales** - These are the old standby, but don't discount them too quickly. Last fall, my family made \$90 on several boxes of clutter we were sure wouldn't sell. The effort required is minimal: if you price items as you sort them, the biggest time investment is a few hours on a Saturday morning. Don't have enough stuff for your own garage sale? Join with a friend, or look into a neighbourhood or community-wide event.

**eBay** - The international-scale garage sale is another option. Monitor currently listed auctions for a few weeks to see if there might be a market for your goods. In my experience, collectibles, designer or licensed character bedroom décor, gift certificates, and popular but hard-to-find items tend to sell well. Do your research carefully, though. Seller fees can add up quickly, and the auctions are so saturated with certain items that you might even end up losing money.

**Consignment and bargain shops** - Once solely the province of clothing and jewellery, some resale shops now deal in part or exclusively with household and miscellaneous items. Check store policy ahead of time, as some stores will purchase your items outright, and others will only take them on consignment.

**Local papers** - If you have bigger ticket items, like furniture, appliances, or electronics, consider putting an ad in a local paper. Many publications charge a small fee, but some allow free ads under a certain word count or item price.

**Craigslist it** - [Craigslist](#), an online classified ad website with pages tailored to your local area, will allow you to post free “for sale” ads. It’s particularly effective for big, unique, or collectible things, but since there’s no cost, it’s worth trying no matter what you have to offer.

**Swap it** - Small online communities are springing up to allow people with specific interests to exchange items. For example, the forums at [The Fwoosh](#) allow action figure collectors to swap figures and more. Check online to see if your hobby’s represented—or start your own group!

**Freecycle it!** - Online community [Freecycle.com](#) facilitates free exchanges of those items you no longer need, but someone else desperately wants. Visit the [Freecycle](#) website to see if your community has a local group, and if so, start listing those items. Don’t hold back: we’ve successfully “freecycled” half-finished paints and scratched Elton John records—and gotten a few items ourselves!

**Consider a junk collection service** - If you have a lot of larger items that you can’t or don’t want to deal with on your own, look into a junk collection service. For a fee, they’ll come out to your house and remove the items. You can feel confident that you’re not trashing the planet: many, like [www.1800gotjunk.com](#), promise to “make every effort to recycle or donate the items [they] take away.”

## **Books**

Books may be hard to move at garage sales and on eBay, but there are several other venues available.

**Used bookstores** - Many will buy your used books and give you store credit, which you can use to buy new reading material. Then, of course, once you’re finished with the books, you can bring them in for additional credit. Sounds like a good deal!

**Book swaps** - It’s a great way to declutter books you’ve finished with, get fresh reading material for free, and enjoy a little socialization! Check [Craigslist](#) or [Book-swap Meetup](#) to see if there are any upcoming book swaps in your area. Or organize your own: it can be as small-scale as two friends exchanging books.

**Online swap** - These swap sites, many of which operate on a points-based system, are especially effective if you are looking to receive a particular book in return. Good starting points are [Bookswap](#) and [Paperback Swap](#), but there are many others available.





**Amazon.com** - It gained fame as an online bookstore, but did you know that Amazon also provides a venue for selling used books? There are no auction-style listings as on eBay, but your listings are active for 60 days, and there are no seller fees unless your item actually sells.

### **Textbooks**

What about old textbooks you don't plan to use again? Outdated texts might not interest anyone, but current books and literary classics are usually marketable.

**Look into buyback programs** - Although AU doesn't have a book buyback program, many local university bookstores might (although some might not purchase texts from non-students).

**Go online** - Check eBay and Amazon.com to see if your edition is a good seller, or look into an online

textbook buyer. My personal favourite is Books Into Cash; you can obtain a quote online and download postage-paid labels right from the website. Other online textbook buyers include Campus Book Swap.

**Donate them** - Check within your local community; many libraries and other organizations sponsor used book sales as fundraisers. They operate almost entirely on book donations.

### **Magazines**

Magazines are nearly impossible to move in the traditional venues, but don't get out

your trash bag yet. There are dozens of options for reusing magazines, and they can always be recycled.

**Donate them** - Hospitals, airport lounges, waiting rooms, gyms, and laundromats are all places where your used magazines could be enjoyed again. Or look into shipping them to relief organizations overseas.

**Go online** - The Magazine Literacy website facilitates organizations that provide used magazines to promote literacy among at-risk groups. Check to see how you can become involved!

**Swap them with friends** - Chances are you have quite a few friends with similar interests. Set up a magazine swap and give the mags another life (or three, or four).

**Reuse them** - Although they'll eventually end up in the recycle bin, they'll get another use—and give a great time—if you give them to the kids to cut up or use for projects. Check out websites like Disney's Family Fun for ideas on what to do with old magazines.

**Recycle** - Magazines are now generally recyclable with paper. Check out Earth 911 for facilities in your area.

### **Clothing**

While there probably isn't much hope for those '80s-style jumpers at the back of your closet, you might have better luck with some of your more current stuff or with kids' clothing that's in good condition.



**Garage sale it—in person or online** - While adult clothing might be difficult to move at a garage sale, kids' clothing and Halloween costumes are good sellers. Don't forget about eBay for both adults' and kids' clothing, particularly if it's designer, brand name, or unique.

**Consign it** - Designer or brand-name clothing—both adults' and kids'—might be welcome at a local consignment shop. Although most pay when the item sells, some, like Plato's Closet (check their [website](#) for store locations) pay cash on the spot.

**Swap it** - As interest in saving money and the environment grows, in-person clothing swaps are becoming more popular. Check [Clothing Swap](#) or [Clothing Swap Meetup](#) to find one in your local area. Or host your own swap party for a fun (and fruitful!) event.

**Look on the web** - A new website, [Zwaggle](#), is essentially an online swap for kids' clothes and baby items. Similar to many book swap sites, Zwaggle works on a points-based system. There are other general swap websites out there, as well as some designed for specific brands of kids' clothing; for example, this online group at [CafeMom](#) is a source for those who want to sell, swap, or shop for Gymboree.

It's not just for kiddie stuff, either; for adults' clothes, check out [Rehash](#) for online clothes trades (and local swapping groups!) and [Swapstyle](#) to swap your designer duds online.

**Donate it** - Thrift stores and charity-run consignment shops are always looking for donations of items in decent condition. Check your local listings and ask around; some organizations will come to your house to do a pickup, and you can get a tax receipt for your donation.

Next week, I'll discuss what you can and can't recycle—and the answers might surprise you. I'll also make suggestions on how to keep the environmental impact from used electronics, "non-recyclable" plastics, and other hard-to-place items at a minimum.

In the meantime, there's a garage full of stuff to start sorting! What are you waiting for?

## CONVOCATION 2009



### Calling All Soon-to-Be AU Grads!

Are you one of the proud AU students who will be graduating this June? If so, *Voice* readers want to hear from you!

One of the most popular features of our convocation coverage is the grad interviews—a chance for brand-new grads to share their thoughts on what it took (and how great it feels!) to reach their goal. You can read some of last year's interviews [here](#).

If you'd like to have your photo and a brief interview included in one of our special convocation issues, just email [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) and we'll send you the details.

And if you're going to be graduating in person, here's your chance to be part of AUSU's exciting new video coverage of events! AUSU staff will be on hand with their video camera to capture the excitement of a grad's day. To get in on the action, just email [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org)

## HEALTH MATTERS

Sandra Livingston



## Brushing Up on Oral Health

They appear on the newsstands each year as surely as spring follows winter: magazines bursting with articles on how to get that vibrant, healthy look in time for the beach.

Healthy recipes, fat-burning workouts, and skincare regimes abound, but the one subject you probably *won't* see covered is one that can affect every other aspect of your wellbeing—your oral health.

And with only half of Canadians visiting the dentist regularly, it's a bigger issue than you may think.

If you need to brush up on the facts (and dispel some of the myths) about oral care, now's the perfect time.

April is National Oral Health Month, and Walmart, Crest, and Oral-B have teamed up to bring Canadians "A Better Check-Up," a program that will be travelling to Walmart stores across the country.

To find out more about "A Better Check-Up," we spoke with Leanne Rodine, a Registered Dental Hygienist.

"Oral health is an important piece in our overall health," Leanne said, and you may be surprised at how closely it's linked to many serious conditions.

As Leanne explains, "Research has shown that there may be some links between dental diseases and other health problems. Keeping your teeth and gums healthy may lessen risks of heart disease and stroke, respiratory disease, diabetes, and premature and low birth-weight in babies."

Most of us probably think that brushing once or twice a day is good enough, but as Leanne points out, "even when we are practicing a good oral hygiene routine at home, it is important to visit your dental office regularly."

"Regular dental visits can help you prevent problems as dental health professionals can see areas and conditions in your mouth that you are not able to see or may not feel is a problem and help you address the issue," she adds. As well, "dental health professionals can . . . help alert you to other medical conditions that you may be exhibiting signs of through oral manifestations."

And a quick look in the bathroom mirror definitely won't tell you the whole story. In fact, one of the biggest misconceptions, Leanne says, "is that people often believe their mouth is healthy if nothing hurts, but many dental diseases occur without pain as an initial symptom. Often a patient experiences pain only when the problem reaches a severe stage, which is then often more complicated to treat. Even in severe stages, some dental diseases do not cause pain. That is why it is important to get regular check-ups and not just wait until it hurts."

Some other common myths surrounding oral health?



"A second big misconception," explains Leanne, "is that if their gums are bleeding they should stop brushing and flossing—the opposite is true in fact. If your gums bleed when you brush or floss it's a sign that there has been an accumulation of plaque irritating the gums. We need to get rid of this plaque to stop the irritation and to do that you need to brush and floss the plaque away."

Another mistaken belief many people have "is that their mouths and the rest of their bodies do not affect each other."

Along with the dos, there are some important don'ts to keep in mind—and help make that visit to the dentist a breeze.

For instance, if you're planning to get oral piercings (or already have them), it's important to know they "can cause damage to teeth and gums," Leanne says, "and we often encourage people to think twice before getting a piercing."

She also explains that "if they decide to proceed, it is very important that they have the procedure done by a qualified person and that they take extra care of their teeth and gums afterward. Tobacco products can also have a negative effect on our mouths—anywhere from bad taste and stained teeth to altered smell and taste, to an increased risk of gum disease."

And while most of us already know that the things we eat and drink have an impact on our oral health, we may not give much thought to anything beyond the obvious, like candy.

"Many people," says Leanne, "are not aware of the amount of liquid sugars they consume in a day. Drinks high in sugar and/or acid can contribute to poor oral health and overall health. Even foods that do not taste sweet can cause an acid attack in our mouths—so it is not just limited to 'sugary' foods. Foods such as bread, crackers, pasta, potato chips, pretzels, and French fries are starchy foods that can cause acid attacks in our mouths."

To help spread the word about the importance of taking care of our oral health, Leanne notes that "A Better Check-Up" will be visiting Walmart stores across the country during two weekends in April—between April 17-19 and April 24-26.

The program, she explains, "is a joint venture between Walmart, Oral-B, and Crest to educate Canadians on the value of preventive oral care during this April's Oral Health Month. The program will be visiting 100 Walmart locations across Canada and approximately 45 registered dental hygienists and 35 dental hygiene students will be in stores in teams of two, answering questions and providing advice to consumers about what they can do to improve their oral health."

Along with the goal of ensuring that Canadians are aware of the link between their oral health and their overall health, "the program also seeks to raise \$20,000 for the Dentistry Canada Fund for the ongoing advancement of oral health education in Canada. Throughout April, a portion of the proceeds from participating Crest and Oral-B products purchased at Walmart locations will go toward making the \$20,000 donation," Leanne says.



And that \$20,000 donation “is part of Crest, Oral-B and Walmart’s commitment to providing the Dentistry Canada Fund a total donation of \$270,000 over a five-year period,” she adds.

You can find the [complete tour schedule](#) including dates, times, and locations online.

If you won’t be able to make it to one of the “Better Check-Up” events, there are still plenty of ways to find good information on keeping your smile healthy.

“One of the best places to start,” Leanne says, “is your own dental office. If you don’t have a ‘dental home’ ask a friend or family member for an office they attend and that they recommend.

“Some great websites for information are: [The Canadian Dental Association](#), [The Canadian Dental Hygienists’ Association](#), [Health Canada](#), [Alberta Dental Association & College](#), and [Alberta Health Services - Calgary Region](#).

Also [www.crest.com/prohealth](http://www.crest.com/prohealth) is a site which will provide more information about Crest ProHealth products.”

So as you pack away that winter wardrobe and get ready to put your best forward for spring, don’t forget to take care of the best accessory of all—a healthy smile.

### Quick Facts

- *Gum disease can lead to a greater risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes—making the “floss, brush, and rinse” rule an important one to follow*
- *Without flossing, your teeth are only 70 per cent clean*
- *Dentists recommend brushing your teeth for at least two minutes*
- *Sore, red, and puffy gums that bleed when brushing or flossing can be symptoms of gingivitis*
- *People who consume less than 60 mg of vitamin C a day are one and a half times more likely to get gum disease than those who consume at least 180 mg*

## DEAR BARB



### Popular Voice Column Returns!

Is something troubling you or getting you down? Need some advice on handling an awkward social situation? Wondering how to deal with friends, family, or co-workers?

If you’ve got questions, Dear Barb has answers—and her entertaining and informative advice column is returning to *The Voice*.

To ask Dear Barb a question, simply email [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org).

Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. (This column is for entertainment only and is not intended to take the place of professional advice.)

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



## Fred Turner

*Fred Turner is the author of the recent book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (see Voice review this issue).*

*He is currently teaching at Stanford University. The following are notes from a conversation between Turner and Wanda Waterman St. Louis.*

**How did the idea for *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* begin to germinate?**

I had just written a book on the Vietnam War (published in 1996) when I moved to California and saw that former hippies like Stewart Brand were promoting computers as countercultural.

This surprised me, since I remembered computers as anti-countercultural during Vietnam. I wanted to see how the change had come about.

**Do you have a personal connection with any of the events or developments outlined in your book?**

Nope. I was born in 1961—a little too late to participate in any of it. One summer, though, I did work briefly as a Pinkerton security guard at Apple Computer.

**Is it possible that networking vehicles like Google, Facebook, and MySpace might not exist today if Stewart Brand hadn't been born?**

No, I don't think so. They would still have been made. Brand helped explain what emerging technologies meant and how they could be used, but the technologies themselves have been developed within engineering worlds that very much have their own independent momentum.

**In your opinion is there any danger of the Internet becoming the kind of repressive monoculture Brand attributed to bureaucracy and the former Soviet Union?**

No. It's too big and too diverse. There are ways though that power concentrated in some offline places also tends to concentrate power online. Many bloggers, for instance, simply echo or comment on work done by big industrial-era media organizations.

**At the end of the book you suggest that the failures of both the counterculture and cyberculture stemmed in part from an avoidance of direct political involvement. Do you think that online forums like *ChangeCamp* offer any hope of correcting that?**

Yes I do.

## Are there any books, music albums, or films that have influenced or inspired you?

Many, many, many. On books, I've loved Frances Fitzgerald's *Cities on a Hill*, the histories of Jackson Lears, and most everything Michael Schudson has written. On music, well, Janis Joplin, the Young Marble Giants, and Super Mazembe all come to mind.

## What's your next project?

A prequel to the last one—a book on the politics of participatory multimedia in the 1940s and 1950s.

### CLICK OF THE WRIST – Traffic

Just a few more weeks and the travel season begins in earnest. Weekend drives to the cottage, taxicabs to the airport, lineups to get on the ferry. Whether it's planes, trains, or automobiles, there's one unavoidable fact of life: traffic. Next time you're inching along the highway, just be glad you're not stuck in one of *these* traffic jams.

#### Top Gear Worst Traffic

The popular TV program offers these astonishing shots of some of the worst traffic snarl-ups around the globe. Russia may have vehicles jammed 10 lanes wide, but the solid wall of mopeds and scooters in Vietnam takes top prize.

#### Sao Paulo

With more than 20 million people living in the greater metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil, residents actually have time to study another language, make dates with strangers, and watch DVDs while they're sitting in their cars. Now *that's* gridlock.

#### Worst Traffic in the US

This *Forbes* list of the worst traffic spots in America is a couple of years old, which means the congestion in these cities is probably even worse today. The I-15/State Road-92 Interchange in Salt Lake City is a prime example: with traffic levels expected to increase by 200 per cent in the next 10 years, "either the lake or the forest may have to move."

#### Moscow Traffic Jam

This video might have been shot in Russia, but you'll be able to understand the soundtrack: the honking horns of drivers stuck in the chaotic ballet at an intersection.

#### Britain from Above

And finally, if you think manoeuvring the roads can be tough, try juggling the traffic at an airport. This BBC clip shows a remarkable image of all the GPS traces of every aircraft entering British airspace over 24 hours, "more than 7,500 aircraft . . . carrying more than half a million passengers from every corner of this little green planet."



## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### To Be a City Girl Again

The other day Roy and I were in Edmonton. We made the big loop starting with a visit to a farm near Vilna. Roy was scoping out a John Deere 7720 combine to be sold during a farm auction.

The yard was a terrible mess after a six-inch dump of wet snow the previous day. We can only imagine how that guy would feel. Auction dates fill up quickly and are typically booked a year in advance. To have the weather not co-operate because of rain, snow, or extreme cold really hurts. At any rate, the combine looks pretty good so Roy will return on sale day and see how the prices go.

From there we stepped into Smoky Lake so I could drop off my marriage commissioner business cards at the new registry office. The community has been without registry services for nearly a year and I gather there's a steep learning curve for the new agent.

We then headed into Edmonton via Highway 28. I missed most of the scenery and landmarks because I was reading. Is it any wonder I'm confused by all but my most regular routes? I've got to look up occasionally or maybe even offer to drive now and then!

The road seemed especially long and we got into the city just in time for a late lunch. Because we've fallen into a food rut lately I suggested Swiss Chalet for a change. Roy was reluctant and tried to change my mind but I held firm. We hadn't been there for years and the menu has changed significantly—though of course chicken still rules.

The hot chicken sandwich we ordered was huge and has turned Roy into a believer. Next time we'll share one order.

The rest of the afternoon was spent picking up parts for the tandem grain truck end gate at four different locations and returning other parts that don't work (picked up on a previous trip). Through it all I continued to read and tuck new receipts into my carryall as Roy made purchase after purchase.

The day took a turn for the better when Roy suggested we check out the huge Ashley furniture store in the west end of town. I especially liked all the accessories and wall decor pieces. We did look half-heartedly at night tables because we need a couple, but like many consumers are keeping a check on non-essential spending and walked out empty-handed.

Next stop: Windermere North, the site of this year's Full House Lottery grand prize dream homes. Aaahhh! I could happily live in any one of these million-dollar homes. The cash, car, and trip thrown into each prize package simply sweeten the pot. At this point in my life I would happily swap chasing down another used combine and repairing an old grain truck for a gorgeous new large move-in-ready dream home, one close to all the amenities we do without in the country.

Please Lord, give me a chance to be a city girl again. That would be a dream come true, from where I sit.



## The Interviewer

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

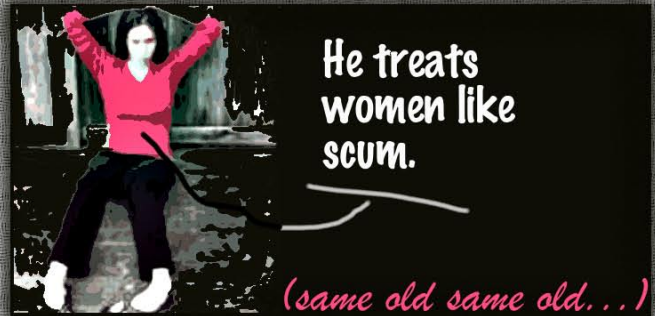
written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

## Rockhead #19: Looking for Mr. Dirtbag

## What dirt can we dig up on Brad?

**Where do  
ya want  
us to  
start?**

**Personally?  
I'd like to  
see him  
hung by  
his  
pubes.**



(same old same old...)

Reuben  
finally contacts  
someone in  
the student union.

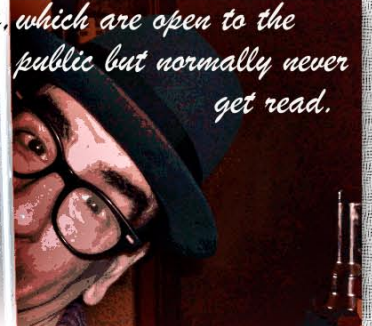


--there was this student union board meeting last October. If you could look at the minutes...



*Reuben visits the student union office while Brad's out...*

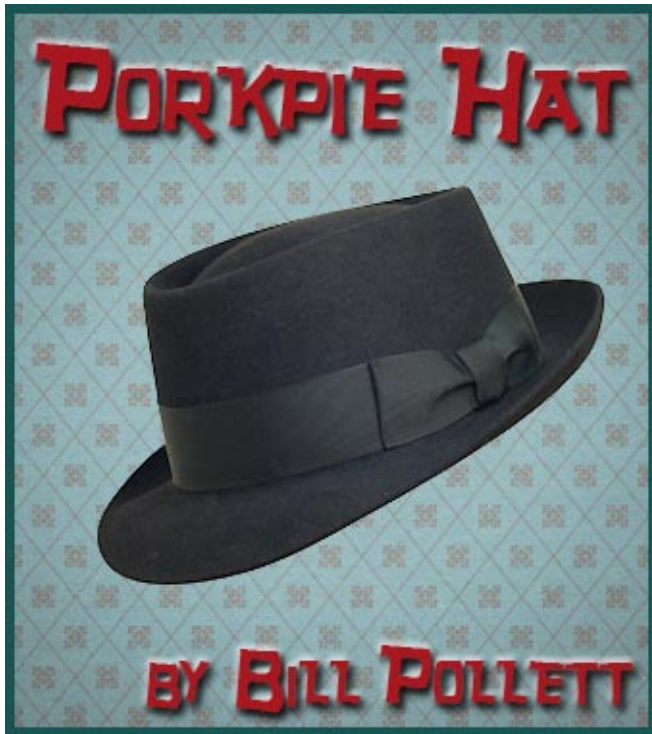
and gets the minutes, which are open to the public but normally never get read.



*He notes that back in October Brad convinced the board to reject a monthly student union newsletter that was being offered to them free of charge.*

Proceedings:  
 • Meeting called to  
 • (Last month's) meeting  
 Executive's Report:  
 that if we not able to  
 Jackson Browne, and Swanson





## Building Tips

When you build your house, be sure to build it well. As with all important undertakings, begin with a sense of purpose, and with hope in your heart. Draw the designs on your lover's back with a feather pen. Collect the best tools you can find, and sharpen them all with a sense of wonder.

Gather your peers together to help. Feed them wild honey and craftsman's cheese. Slake their thirst with pink lemonade and cups of freshly fallen rain.

If some of them play harp or clarinet or drum, let them form an orchestra to lend a soundtrack of shanties and dirges, madrigals and hymns to your long days of toil and joy.

Don't worry about the distance to malls or schools. Choose a spot near a body of water, deep and wide,

and with a decent view of the seasons passing by. Keep in mind you will want a garden with a pear tree for reading poems under, and a shady grove that owls and foxes will be drawn to.

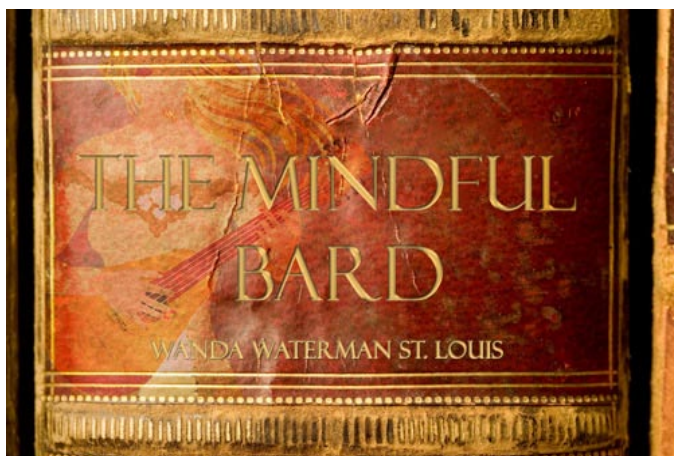
When you dig that first hole for the foundation, pay attention to the dirt your spade bites into. Notice the complex perfume of promise and decay. Notice the tenacious weeds and the fragile imprint of extinct creatures. Listen to the whispered conversation of stones and time, and join in when you have something important to add.

When the time comes to put up walls, don't make them too thick. Plan to have the sound of laughter leak from room to room. Make sure there are lots of windows so that the moon and wind can come and go as they please.

Remember that no two houses should ever be exactly alike. Think eggplant and crimson, gargoyles and flamingos, kiwi green and bubblegum pink. Think weather vanes shaped like angels and whales. If possible, add a unique architectural flourish or two—a moon garden or a labyrinth or a tower of stone.

When the job is close to finished, let your mind wander from room to room, lighting lamps and candles along the way. Imagine the surfaces of avocado and cream, the ceiling stars, the comforts of kettle and claw-foot tub, the curtains alive with breeze. Climb the stairs and sit on the roof, feeling the summer sun melting into your bones.

Imagine what it will be like when everything is done. But always take time to idle and dream. Never work too long or too late. After all, it's just a house.



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

**Book:** Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*

**Publisher:** The University of Chicago Press

**Publication date:** Paperback edition, 2008

**How You Gonna Keep ‘em Down on Maggie’s Farm After They’ve Seen Cyberspace?**

*“Between the late 1960s and the late 1990s, Brand assembled a network of people and publications that together brokered a series of encounters between bohemian San Francisco and the emerging technology hub of Silicon Valley to the south. In 1968 Brand brought members of the two worlds together in the pages of one of the defining documents of the era, the Whole Earth Catalog.”*

Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*

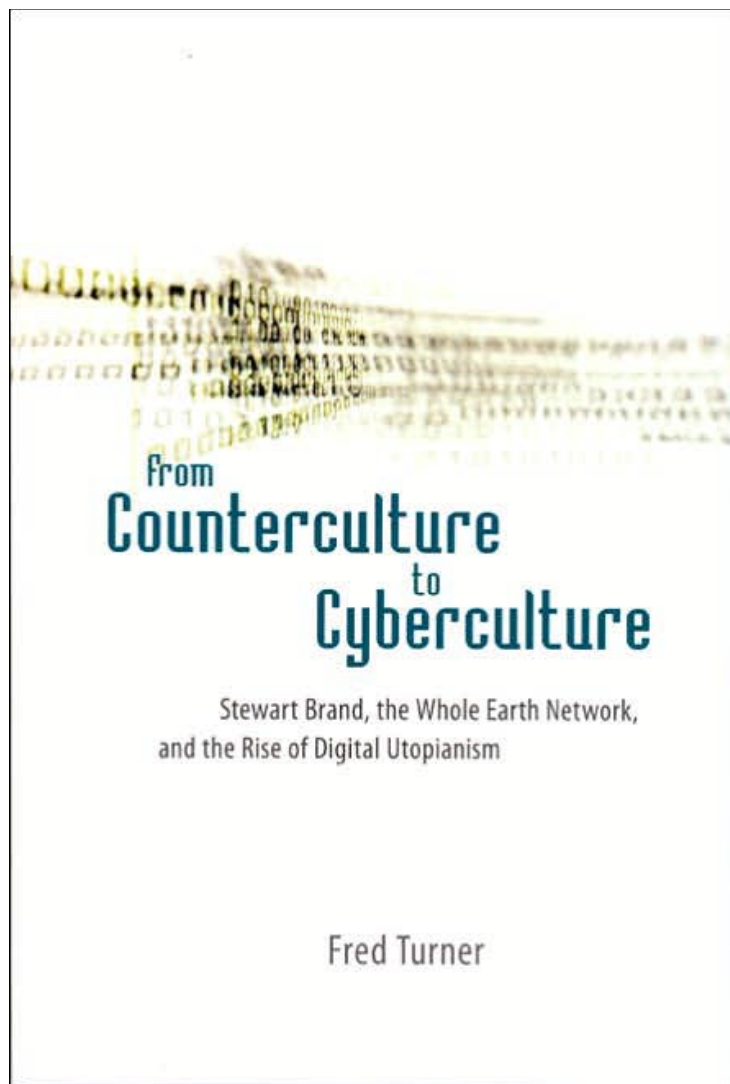
I remember an issue of the *Whole Earth Catalog* lying around the house when I was a teenager back in the 1970s.

It had been given to my parents by friends, former Californian communards who’d lugged it all the way to Nova Scotia where they were homesteading in an effort to climb, as so many were doing at the time, their own back-to-the-land rainbow.

The *Catalog* seemed huge, its paper tactile, and it had a striking cover photo of the earth from space. And it was chock full of the most incredibly useful information. I remember the fluttering excitement with which it was read, discussed, and passed around.

I have no recollection whatsoever of personal computers appearing in its pages. But the rise of the personal computer and its potential to create interpersonal networks turned out to be the most consequential topic written up in the *Catalog*.

Turner shows how thinker and entrepreneur Stewart Brand, founder of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, used the counterculture emphasis on equality and freedom to promote the personal



computer as a tool for progress, thus instigating the process by which the 1960s New Left slowly morphed into the 1990s New Right.

Stewart Brand was largely responsible for both shaping this movement and bringing it to public awareness. One impetus for Brand's deliberate reshaping of our ideas about computers was that horror he'd felt as a young man at the thought that he might eventually become just another industrial drone, a fear common to many children growing up during the Cold War (that and the fear of getting nuked) and in the light of which counterculture ideals now look suspiciously reactionary.

Brand foresaw an alternative society, one in which business and technology could make things better, in which there were no more hierarchies, and in which creative solutions were continuously being generated. Brand was one of the first visionaries to see the potential of the personal computer to make all this possible.

***... the digital utopians, like the flower children, seemed to be under the illusion that they were creating a new world, cut off from an old world which had become outdated and superfluous.***

In July of 1997 the cover of *Wired* bore the following claim: "We're facing 25 years of prosperity, freedom, and a better environment for the whole world." Looking back, do we laugh or cry?

Turner believes that in large part the failure of both 1960s counterculture and 1990s cyberculture to create sustained peace and prosperity for all God's children was rooted in the deliberate abdication of political activity.

Turner provides some clues as to how political involvement had become *verboden*, first within the counterculture and then within cyberculture, but another cause springs to mind: the digital utopians, like the flower children, seemed to be under the illusion that they were creating a new world, cut off from an old world which had become outdated and superfluous.

The error of this mindset becomes clear after reading *Cultural Amnesia* by Clive James. Too many important lessons of the 20th century alone have been forgotten already, and as for the tradition of Western thought going back to ancient Greece—did it ever really happen?

Anyone who's read Plato will have a hard time arguing in favour of turning on and tuning out, and anyone who's read *Candide* or taken a serious look at Thoreau will have absorbed the notion that sooner or later you have to take the knowledge you've earned in the backcountry and bring it back into some form of civic activity. It's part of being a grown-up.

A society in which the best young minds spurn ancient wisdom and political activity is a society that quickly abandons itself to greed and imperialism. We know this; we've seen it happen.

*From Counterculture to Cyberculture* manifests four of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it confronts existing injustices; 2) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 3) it stimulates my mind; and 4) 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](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*



## AUSU THIS MONTH



### Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

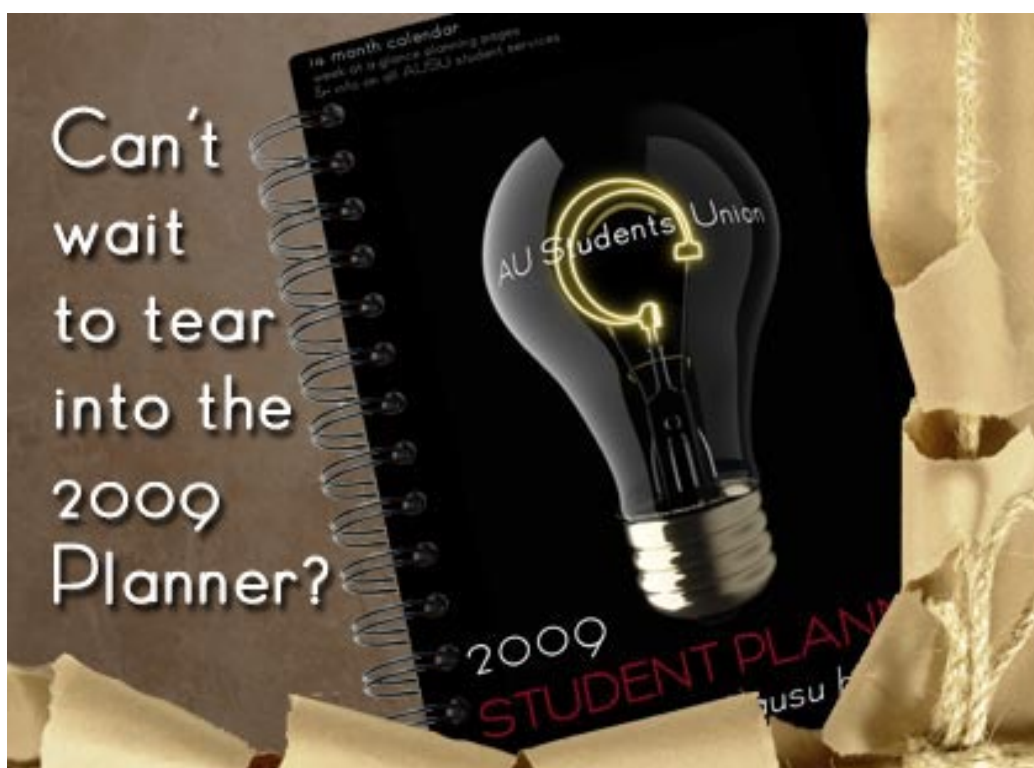
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

### Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



### AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted



concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

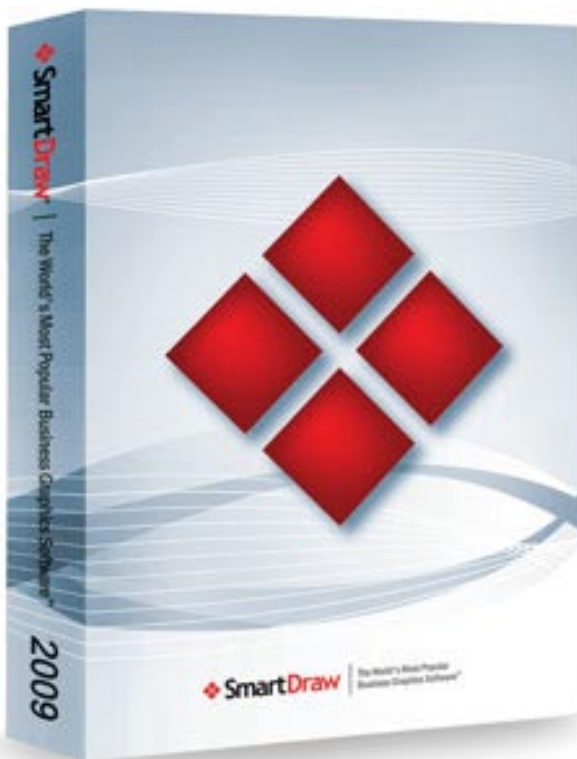
More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

## au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

## 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



## 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.

## 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.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

## AUSU Lock Loan Program

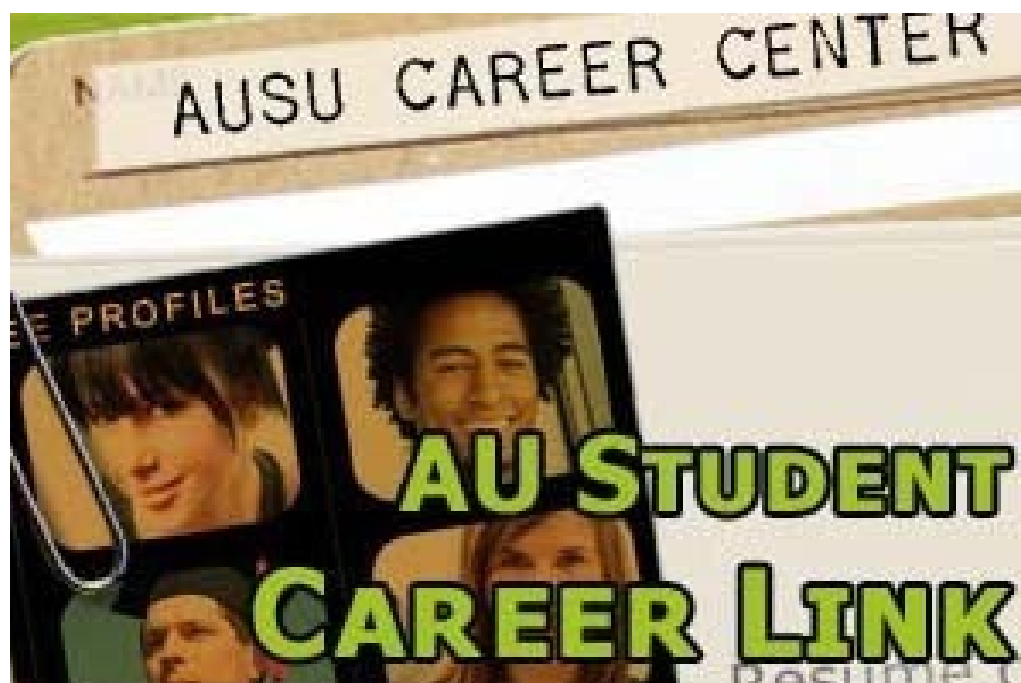
Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to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

## 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: Human-rights complaints filed by transgendered Albertans

In reaction to the province's recent decision to drop funding for sex-change operations, at least 23 Albertans filed human-rights complaints on April 15.

Prior to last week's budget cuts, Alberta funded up to 20 gender reassignment surgeries (GRS) each year. As the [CBC](#) reports, the decision will save the government around \$700,000 annually.

Alberta's coverage has been the most comprehensive in the country. Some provinces, including Saskatchewan, Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, provide partial coverage for the cost of the surgery.

In Ontario, GRS has not been covered for the past decade, but the province lost a human-rights challenge in 2008 and will begin paying for the surgeries there.

However, Lindsay Blackett, Alberta's minister of Culture and Community Spirit who oversees the human rights commission, isn't convinced that the Ontario challenge will affect the outcome of the recent filings in Alberta.

As he told reporters, "We have a slightly different process, and we have slightly different value systems and a way of thinking in Alberta, and since most of the people on our commission are from Alberta, they may look at it a little differently than Ontarians do."

The decision is a major blow to Alberta's transgendered community. With the cost of GRS as high as \$80,000, few can afford it, but they argue that the surgery is a life-saving procedure. At least one psychologist agrees.

"These people have felt from nearly day one that they are in the wrong body and that they're very unhappy and distressed," Dr. Kevin Alderson told reporters, adding that the risk of depression and suicide is very high.

The government will cover the GRS costs for 26 Albertans whose funding has already been approved, as well as another 20 patients who have started taking hormonal drug therapy.

### In Foreign News: Egypt lifts ban on GPS

Citing security concerns, Egypt has been resolute in its ban on GPS—but a recent reversal means consumers will now be free to shop for popular brands of cell phones and cars that use the technology.

The [Egypt Daily News](#) reports that the ban has been lifted by the country's National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA). North Korea and Syria are now the only two countries in the world that ban the use of GPS.

Now that consumers will be free to purchase GPS-equipped goods, a boom is expected in the auto and telecom sectors, two areas where the technology is commonly used. Not only will import companies be allowed to trade in previously banned models of cars and cell phones, but manufacturers in Egypt will be able to make and export such products as well.

Certain restrictions will still apply, however. The NTRA will retain the right to “monitor and control” the manufacture of GPS-equipped devices, as well as to set criteria for exporting them.

In spite of the previous ban, Egyptians had found ways to acquire the technology, from using Google Earth to buying GPS items on the black market.

Along with the economic boost the decision is expected to have, it’s been speculated that the NTRA ruling was simply a way to better regulate the already existing use of GPS.

## EDUCATION NEWS

**Aleysha Haniff**

### 20 per cent of grads struggle with literacy: study

TORONTO (CUP) - It’s not that Kyle Friedman can’t read and write.

The first-year new-media student at Toronto’s Ryerson University did a Hooked-on-Phonics-type program growing up. He had a tutor until he was in high school.

But there’s no getting around the fact that Friedman’s literacy skills remain at what he dubs “below average” for a university student.

“I never really got to a strong point where I would read . . . like leisure reading,” he said.

According to a report published in February by the Canadian Council on Learning, 20 per cent of university graduates fell below Level 3 on the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

Level 3 indicates the minimum standard of reading and writing skills needed to deal with everyday life and hold down a job.

That number is expected to increase to 24 per cent by 2031.

Friedman’s lucky enough to have already learned strategies to get around any literacy issues. For example, if he’s reading large passages of text for a class, he’ll break it up over a few days to make it easier to manage.

“If it’s a lot, it’s a little overwhelming,” he said.



He graduated from high school with an 81 per cent average and never doubted he would make it to university. But seemingly few Ryerson students who still need help take advantage of the resources provided by the university. Lucie Moussu, director of the Writing Centre, has not seen anyone with serious literacy issues use the Centre's services.

"Maybe students who struggle the most have a hard time coming here because they feel a little bit more like they are perceived as the losers or something," she said. "I don't know. I hope not."

It's also difficult to evaluate whether a student needs more intensive help over a 50-minute tutoring session, especially when many only use the Centre once.

But some students don't even realize they could be writing better. A study released last Monday from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty revealed that university professors feel like their first-year students "expect success without the requisite effort." These results came from an online survey of about 2,000 professors and librarians.

Sometimes, says Moussu, students ask tutors to check their grammar but ignore other suggestions to improve their work to A-grade level.

"Often they lack the self-reflective skills, in the sense that they write and they think it's OK," said Moussu.

The few students who seek help are often multilingual, trying to find ways to express their thoughts in another language, Moussu adds.

Marju Toomsalu, English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs director at Ryerson, points out that multilingual students are already very literate in their native tongues.

"Some of them are very good writers," she said.

But since the Canadian Council on Learning report used tests only conducted in English or French, the results can't distinguish between newcomers with truly low levels of literacy or those who just need more training.

David Olson, literacy expert and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, has trouble believing that people are becoming less literate. "There is the indication that literacy is higher than it was a century ago because there are more graduates from high school and university," said Olson.

While more people are graduating than before, education still has to adapt to suit the needs of a broader population. It's not just the whiz kids getting degrees anymore, says Olson.

However, students read and write a lot less than they used to, he said. Instead, they're using computers and logging online.

"You might say what educators believe to be important is students should write a lot more and they should talk a lot more in schools and in colleges than they do at present," said Olson. He suggests that every student write a little more, even poetry.

"Any kind of writing . . . because it's through writing that you really improve your literacy skills," said Olson.



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

## THE VOICE

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