

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 29
July 31, 2009

Brand New Spaces

Crowd control

Lunch Lessons

Bento boxes

Dear Barb

Communication
crossroads



Plus:

*From Where I Sit, The Mindful Bard,
Sister Aurora, and much more...*

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

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

Features

Eras in Education: Bento Boxes 3

Articles

In Conversation With: Michael Bernard Fitzgerald 5

Columns

Dear Barb 7

The Mindful Bard 8

From Where I Sit 10

Sister Aurora 11

AUSU This Month 12

News and Events

Click of the Wrist 6

International News Desk 15

Education News 16

From the Readers

Letters to the Editor 2

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



ERAS IN EDUCATION

Jason Sullivan

**Bento Boxes**

In all cultures and times, education systems enforce a degree of uniformity on pupils. During lunch hour, however, students are freer to express the outside culture of which they are a part. By comparing the lunchtime experience of Canadian and Japanese schoolchildren, basic cultural differences appear.

Sometimes lunch seems like only a mirage on the horizon. One of my most enduring memories of the third or fourth grade was how, at some point during the first week of class, the teacher would painstakingly describe how and where to place our names and the date on each sheet of paper we used.

Upon completion of a little sermon on the matter, he would stroll up and down the rows of desks and inspect our papers. Invariably he would pause at some hapless

student's desk, lean over, and announce in a loud and authoritative voice some miniscule mistake that had been made.

This would set off a chain reaction of several other students exaggeratedly exclaiming "Aaaaa!" They would then proceed to crumple up their own pages in mock horror that they had somehow not Followed Directions Adequately. The more athletic-minded boys would toss their papers in the direction of the wastebasket, invariably missing. The whole sequence of events tended to throw the teacher into a state of noticeable agitation. For us it just made the time until lunch pass a bit quicker.

As degrading as being taught the precise way to record the name and date was, it was often counterbalanced by an enjoyable lunch hour. Kids fortunate enough to receive a Kraft cheese-and-crackers package (mostly plastic, but exceedingly desirable) would yelp with glee and receive envious glances from all directions. Neither we nor our parents had any idea that Kraft was to be absorbed by Phillip Morris, a tobacco company.

We also never would have dreamed that on the other side of the world, in Japan, schoolchildren who had also endured an asinine beginning-of-term lecture were opening their own lunch boxes, the bento box, and being greeted with entirely different contents. The greatest prize we could imagine was a classic symbol of North American mass production. For the Japanese students, whose mother spent an average of 45 minutes preparing it, lunch consisted of minutely decorated food shaped into flowers and animals with colours contrapuntally ordered and arranged.

The bento box, product of a conformity-based society, represents an opportunity for individual expression on the part of the mother, and individual pride on the part of student. It is of great sociological interest that in our own theoretically individualistic society, the lunch box is the paradigm of uniformity and sameness. Beginning as a reused "biscuit, tobacco or candy tin" it soon became a symbol of gender

(decorated with He-Man or My Little Pony) and class (shiny new, or scratched from the previous school year). To fit in and be cool it was very important to have the right lunch box. The contents, on the other hand, were the same for everyone: a sandwich and, if we were lucky, some sort of prefabricated treat.

Yet in Japan, the wicker bamboo bento box was far less important than what was inside. As Marshall McLuhan famously stated, “the medium is the message.” Yet if this were so, why weren’t our lunchboxes more overtly individualist than those in Japan?

One possible explanation of this contradiction may be found in the work of Talcott Parsons, a structural functionalist sociologist known for explaining all social norms and values as valuable for upholding a stable whole. Japanese society has been historically isolated from other cultures. Therefore, non-consumerist traditions such as the detailed and homemade bento box have remained important in the school setting. In Canada, the key thing to teach children is that cool stuff is bought in stores, not made painstakingly (and less expensively) at home.

The idea behind creating beautiful bento box contents was to inspire the child to do well in school and peacefully accept the transition from private to public sphere.

Unlike in Europe, where until the Industrial Revolution most people returned home from the fields for lunch, Japan has a long history of lunch boxes. The bento box dates back thousands of years and has accommodated itself to the modern world. It became an important part of mothering with the introduction of compulsory education in the decades following the “opening” of Japan to the outside world by the American Commodore Matthew C. Perry. The separation of public or “outside” (*soto*) and private or “home” (*uchi*) made it important for women to remind their offspring that they were loved and that they were representing the pride of the family in these formative years of contact with society. In a culture as honour-driven as Japan’s, it was important for young people to know their place and to feel fulfilled rather than alienated by it.

As Emile Durkheim noted, anomie (or normlessness) would arise amongst people who felt detached from their surroundings. The idea behind creating beautiful bento box contents was to inspire the child to do well in school and peacefully accept the transition from private to public sphere. The bento served to “create an invisible bond between mother and child, and also between the world of the family and the world of the school.”

The fact that in Japan the best bentos are the most artistically designed and nutritionally balanced, while in North America the best lunch box predictably contains a mass-produced snack with minimal nutritional value, suggests that our culture has found it necessary to encourage consumerism at the expense of creativity.

Everyone learns their culture as a “patterned, ordered system of symbols that are object of orientation.” For young children here, the symbols are to be bought and consumed; in Japan the symbols are predominantly produced in the home. The obento can make a child part of the “in group.” In effect, to be a cool kid in Japan means one must have a cool mom. On this point Canadian and Japanese kids are perhaps not so different. The definition of cool changes, but not the goal of being accepted by one’s peers. The medium may change, but the message is the same.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Michael Bernard Fitzgerald

Michael Bernard Fitzgerald is a Calgary folk singer-songwriter with a unique, passionate vocal style and a penchant for performing with colossal numbers of people on stage. Among other honours he was voted “most promising songwriter” at the Calgary Folk Festival.

Fitzgerald recently released The MBF Love EP, a wondrous collection of songs about love lost and gained. Michael recently took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about his musical career.

That Funky Singing

I used to play live a lot and I liked the different sounds you can get from a microphone, moving in close, and then pulling away, making different sounds. I guess that’s how it came about.

Those Huge Groups of People

I love working with large groups. If it turns into chaos, then so be it. That’s the beauty of it. I like it because it’s epic and theatrical. In the most recent stage show I did there were 120 people on stage. We had only rehearsed a month before and there was a chance of it getting crazy and going off the rails but I kind of liked the fact that it just came together.

The “Brand New Spaces” video was taped in a ballroom. That was a rehearsal for the Jack Singer Show. The audio to that was actually the recorded song. The way the camera goes around and finds people smiling is great.

Songwriting

All the songs on this album are based in my experience but I sort of take the story and run with it when I write a song. Sometimes I have too many ideas to jot down and sometimes I don’t have any ideas. I haven’t yet applied a science to how that works.



Background

I don't have much musical training. I took guitar lessons when I was younger. My parents divorced when I was very young but then they both remarried so I grew up with two sets of parents. I've actually been thankful for that. Those four parents have been very supportive of my musical career.

Wells of Inspiration

There was a video on YouTube for a while of Paul Simon's "The Obvious Child." The video is live in Central Park and he had this incredibly huge band, and there were people in the audience as far as you could see. That was such a cool moment. I was at the Coldplay concert in Calgary and that was really exciting. It's hard to know what's going to inspire me. A lot of things make me strive to up the ante.

I maintain some of my own religious beliefs, but I tend not to follow politics a lot. I don't read newspapers or watch TV and I hardly ever even look at the weather forecast. That might be seen as a silly approach to life but I just kind of roll with things. I learn about what's going on in the news by hearing it from my friends, and I respond accordingly.

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Ice

Whether it's a tiny cube in a glass or an enormous berg floating across the ocean, ice comes in a surprising variety of forms for such a simple substance. Here's a look at just a few of its many faces.

The Blue Lagoon

When it comes to chunks of ice, glaciers are the granddaddies of them all—until they melt, that is. These images from Iceland reveal the progress of a melting glacier as it breaks into a lagoon and eventually flows out to sea.

Ice Sculpture Mouse Trap Game

Remember "Mouse Trap," the Milton Bradley game with ramps and traps and that kicking boot? Well, two guys in Grand Rapids, Michigan, decided to see if they could make it work on a larger scale. Oh, and this version is made entirely out of ice.

10 Most Creative Ice Cube Trays

Who says ice cubes have to be boring? And we're not talking cute little strawberry-shaped ice cubes, either. From Lego blocks to dinosaur bones to the Titanic, there's an ice mould to suit just about any kind of drink out there.

Okamoto Studio Ice Sculpture

It's one thing to see a completed ice sculpture, but this clip from *The Martha Stewart Show* gives a behind-the-scenes look at the entire process of designing and creating an intricate piece of ice art—in this case, a reindeer.

Clever Uses for Ice Cube Trays

While some people have been busy trying to make ice cubes more exciting, others have been coming up with inventive ways to use those bland old square moulds.



*Dear
Barb*

Barbara Godin

Poor Communication Strains New Relationship

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I have been dating for three months. We really care for each other and get along great for the most part; however, communication does seem to be a problem at times. We had our first argument and the communication difficulty was definitely an issue.

We went out to a social gathering and John knew a lot of people there and spent a lot of time socializing. Therefore I was left sitting alone and was not happy about it. At the end of the evening I told John how I felt and I wasn't prepared for his response. He told me that that's who he is and that he isn't going to apologize. I was so hurt that I just got up walked out. Now I don't know what to do. We are not even speaking. I thought we would be able to talk about this and work it out. Should I call him or just say goodbye?

Thanks, Emily

Hi, Emily. Thanks for the great question.

It does seem that you are at a crossroads in your relationship. If you can't resolve this issue, you will undoubtedly have a very difficult future with this person. Healthy communication is pivotal in any

relationship if it is to be successful.

I would not call him right away, but rather wait a few days. Hopefully, after a cooling down period he will realize his reaction was inappropriate. Then if he doesn't call you and you feel the relationship is worthwhile, give him a call. Tell him how he made you feel. If he still shows no understanding or empathy for your feelings, you may want to rethink this relationship and decide whether you want to continue. If he is not willing to compromise and work with you to resolve issues, this may not be the partnership you have envisioned for yourself.

On the other hand, if he is receptive when you call him and willing to discuss your feelings you probably will be able to come to a mutual understanding. This will be the first of many issues you will confront as a couple and it's important that it is handled in a healthy way. You and your boyfriend need to share both positive and negative feelings on a consistent basis. Issues that are not discussed don't go away, but frequently are left simmering below the surface until they eventually erupt at inappropriate times. Consequently things may be said that aren't meant and people get hurt and sometimes grudges are formed and carried on for years.

It is still very early in this relationship, but if you feel the relationship has a lot of positive qualities, I would suggest you both continue to work on keeping the lines of communication open. Couple counselling may be helpful in learning healthy communication skills.

Thanks again, Emily, for writing in.

Email your questions to 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. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.



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

DVD: *Séraphine*

Theatrical Release: 2008

DVD Release: June 5, 2009

Starring: Yolande Moreau, Ulrich Tukur, Anne Bennent, Genevieve Mnich

Director: Martin Provost

When the Poet's Door to Madness Gets Blown Off its Hinges

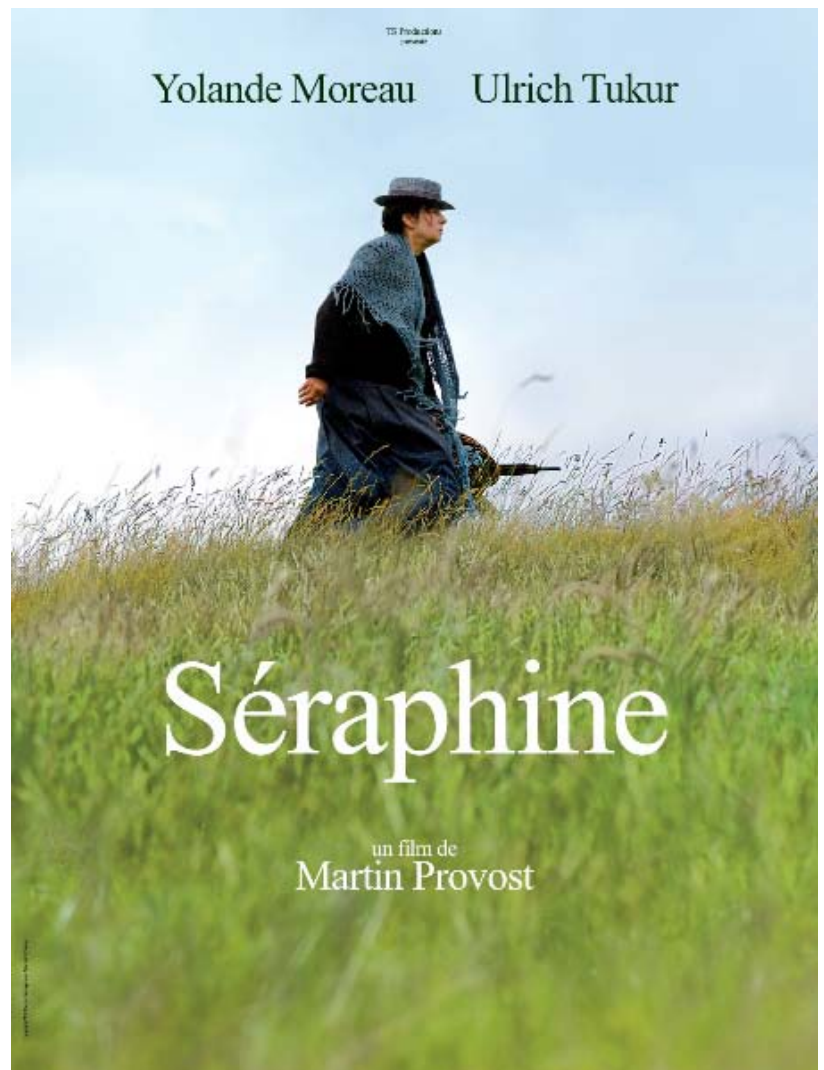
"When I feel sad I go for a walk in the country and I touch the trees. I talk to the birds, the flowers, the insects. . . and I feel better. I swear—I always feel better."

Séraphine

"The courage of the poet is to keep ajar the door that leads into madness," said Christopher Morley. It's a statement that resonates with poets even though privately we wrestle with what it *means*.

As a license to be eccentric, emancipated, and adventurous in a grey cubicle world this is an exquisitely consoling statement. But sometimes the door to madness swings open all the way. Sometimes the decline in reason is helped along by an inherited inclination toward mental illness and sometimes by addictions and traumatic events. There is no sugar-coating this particular occupational hazard and no romanticizing the hell endured by the artist who has taken leave of her or his senses.

There was a real Séraphine (Séraphine Louis of Senlis, France), whose art hangs in prestigious French galleries today, and her style was much like the paintings in this film. Provost did a remarkable job portraying not only general facts of her existence but also the sense of precariousness that dogged it.



Lately the French have seemed enamoured with peasant autodidacts—individuals from humble backgrounds who turn out to be, beneath their grimy exteriors, veritable birds of paradise, richly deserving of high honours which their bourgeois societies are not immediately willing to hand them (see my piece on *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*). Is this preoccupation with the unsung gifts of the lowly a denunciation of the oafish absurdity of the class system or an assertion that art cannot be restrained?

In order for her soul to survive Séraphine must create beauty; she slaves for hours on lush, vibrant paintings . . . of great bunches of flora that seem to be exploding inches from one's face.

The dilemma facing the socially conscious artist is the truth that stares one in the face at every turn of history—the best art is often produced by oppressed peoples within rigid class systems. To promote such a social paradigm is to further injustice. It appears that art, like grapevine roots, needs a bit of a challenge in order to produce a quality vintage, but also that some challenges (like racial segregation and bourgeois bigotry) seem more effective than others (such as slavery and totalitarian censorship).

This film is so richly steeped in French country life that you can almost smell the pig manure and truffles. Wall interiors are painted a vibrant oak-leaf green that's lovely in its natural setting but somewhat garish

indoors. Each scene is a visual feast (it's intoxicating to watch Séraphine furtively jam her hands into a pot full of pork livers to draw out blood for her homemade paints).

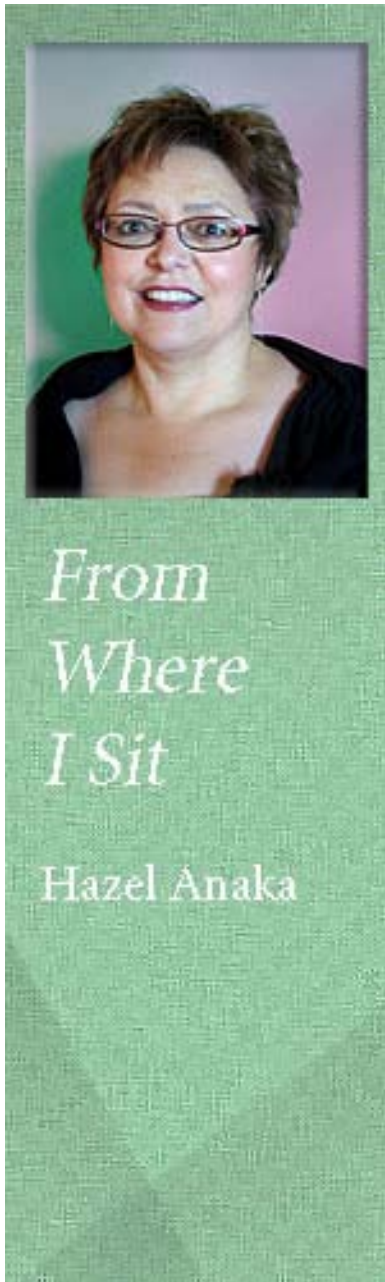
Séraphine, who has experienced a life of terrible suffering, naturally has a powerful longing for sweetness. Her spirituality suggests an awareness of the love that surrounds the natural world and a desire to be close to the things that love has made. We see her gazing beatifically at the sky as she lifts her skirts for a piss or sits in a tree or stops to admire a flower garden.

In order for her soul to survive Séraphine must create beauty; she slaves for hours on lush, vibrant paintings (she made her own paints, and the colours look obviously unique to her work) of great bunches of flora that seem to be exploding inches from one's face.

Séraphine claims to have a guardian angel that guides her hand. During the second war she meets a German art critic who recognizes her talent and convinces her that this is her vocation, a thing she hasn't heard before (except from her angel). When the critic must leave they lose touch, but Séraphine devotes herself more than ever to her work, choosing to eat one meal a day so that she won't have to take in laundry, devoting her time and strength to painting. (No doubt this contributed to her mental exhaustion.) Eventually the critic finds her again and becomes her patron. Unfortunately for all concerned, real-life fairy godmothers are not infinite wells of resource, and the transition from tenement to manor house is not always a dream come true.

Séraphine manifests eight of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts existing injustices; 3) it makes me want to be a better artist; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it is about the attainment of the true self; 7) it stimulates my mind; and 8) it poses and admirably respond to questions having 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. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



Now *That* Makes Me Mad

For years I've used this space and elsewhere to gush about the joys and benefits of reading. I've mentioned favourite writers like Julia Cameron, Joan Barfoot, Carol Shields, and others. I've recommended titles of books both fiction and non-fiction that have impacted me and may interest you. I've suggested free and affordable ways to get around the high cost of new releases. I may even have made a pest of myself.

I've talked about places to read: in the bathroom, in bed, at the dinner table, on vacation, outside, inside, pretty well anywhere you'd like. The one thing I never suggested was reading while driving. Cripes. Is this not a no-brainer?

Oh, sure I've glanced at a city address on a scrap of paper clutched in my hand that is firmly attached to the steering wheel. But I have never read a novel or a newspaper. The next time you're out doing some highway driving check to see what the oncoming driver is holding and say a prayer.

A recent study done over 18 months with video cameras mounted in semi-trailer tractor truck cabs showed that texting while driving is 23 times more likely to result in a crash. A driver's eyes can be off the road for as long as five seconds—or the time it takes to drive the length of a football field.

Can you see any self-respecting reader being content with five seconds of reading? Hell no. So for the record, reading while driving is dumb and that makes me mad.


These days there's a lot of talk in Alberta about banning cellphones while driving and the pros and cons of such legislation. The Transportation Minister contends that cellphone usage isn't the only hazard out there and a distracted driver law is more far-reaching. After what I saw in Edmonton last week I'm inclined to agree with him.

As the passenger, I looked over to my right during a red light and saw a young girl in the back seat with an animal. So what's the big deal, you're thinking: kid, obviously not driving, in the back seat with an animal? It took a few more red lights for us to figure out she was holding, caressing, and *kissing* a white rat! If I was the driver I would have bailed miles before and still be shrieking, never mind driving down one of Edmonton's busiest freeways. But hey, maybe her mother has nerves of steel. We've all seen dogs in drivers' laps and crawling around their necks.

This is incredibly dumb for another reason. This winter we will no doubt be stocking up on face masks to protect ourselves from the spread of H1N1 from other people—you know, creatures of our own species. What in God's name can you get from kissing your pet rat/cat/dog/gerbil/you name it? Now that makes me mad, from where I sit.

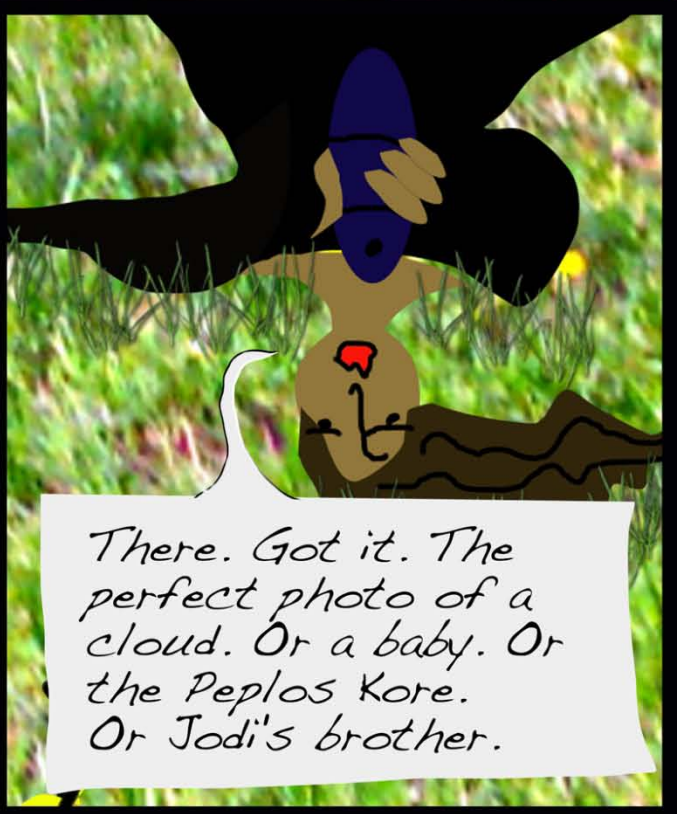
Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .




That one looks like [sigh] Jodi's brother.

Ew! Why do you even like him? He runs like a girl.




There. Got it. The perfect photo of a cloud. Or a baby. Or the Peplos Kore. Or Jodi's brother.



Runs like a GIRL? What do you run like, Jodi?

Me? Come on, Sonja, you've seen me sprint.

Like a scared rabbit on jet fuel!



So what does that make you?

It makes me a-- a superior girl!

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.

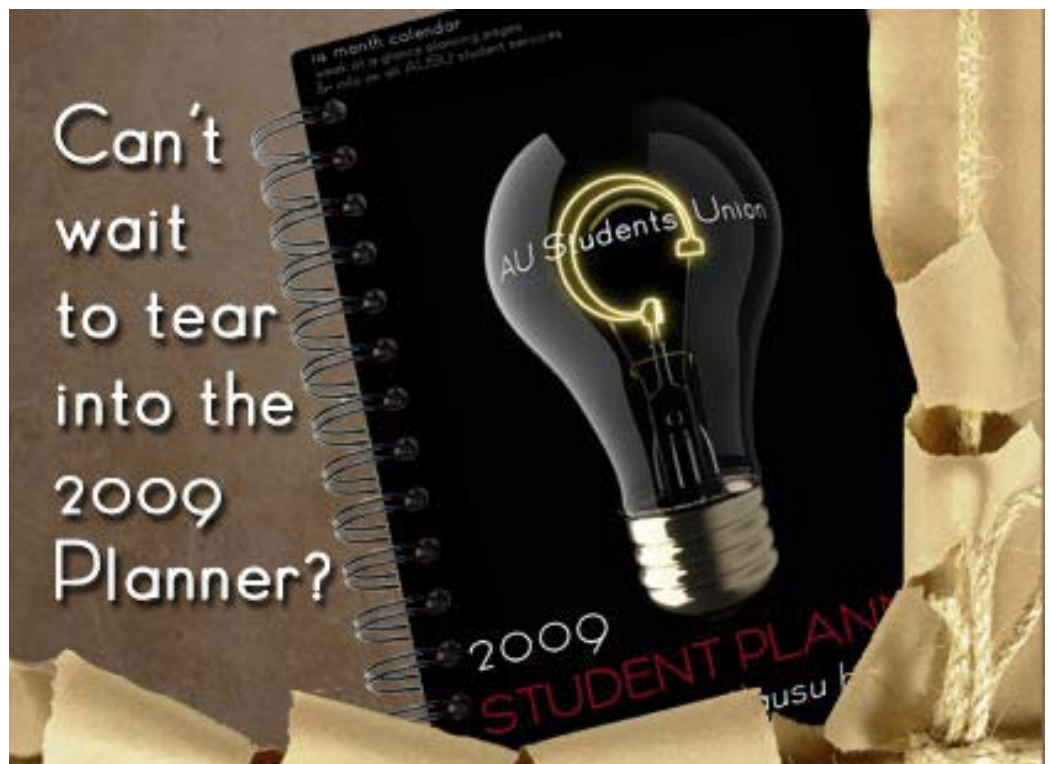
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member 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: NL eliminates student-loan interest

It's never easy juggling courses and student loan applications, and it can be even harder paying those loans back, but things just got a little easier for students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As of midnight on August 1, the provincial government will "eliminate the interest on student loans," as the [CBC](#) reports. The interest-free provincial loans apply to students at post-secondary institutions across the province.

Prior to the change, the interest on the provincial portion of student loans was 2.25 per cent, and some students are hoping that a similar change will soon follow for the federal portion of loans.

Students welcomed the announcement. Terry Randell, a member of the student union at Sir Wilfred College in Corner Brook, told CBC News, "This is going to help me pay off my student loans a couple of years earlier. This is amazing. I think we're really setting a trend here in the province for other people."

According to Darin King, the province's education minister, NL is the first province in Canada to offer this kind of debt assistance to students. Although monthly payments will stay the same, eliminating interest means that students will be able to pay their loans off faster, with individual students saving as much as \$1,800.

In Foreign News: Voluntary ban on hiring dropouts suggested in Texas

In a controversial move, Texas' education chief has suggested a voluntary ban on hiring dropouts. Robert Scott, the State Education Commissioner, made the comments after his agency was criticized for its method of reporting dropout rates.

According to the [Dallas Morning News](#), Scott "called on the state's leading business group Thursday to help launch a voluntary statewide ban on the hiring of high school dropouts by Texas employers." The logic is that if employers in Texas refuse to hire school-age dropouts, the teenagers will either remain in school or pursue alternative education, such as online learning.

"We need a commitment from businesses in this state to not hire kids who have dropped out of school," Scott told reporters. "It would send a powerful message to these kids to stay in school. It would be better for them, better for businesses and better for the state in the long run."

Others, however, disagree with the plan, including Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business. Hammond called the suggested ban unworkable, saying "There are cases where kids who drop out get back on track by first becoming employed and then later continuing their education. To condemn those kids to no employment seems pretty hard-hearted to me."

Currently, schools must achieve a graduation rate of at least 75 per cent to be rated "acceptable," and the same percentage applies to graduation rates for major ethnic groups.

EDUCATION NEWS

Kendra Wong



Project Hero scholarship to support children of fallen soldiers

BURNABY (CUP) - Over 120 Canadian soldiers have died in the war in Afghanistan since it began in 2002; these fallen soldiers often leave behind significant others and children.

Kevin Reed, a Toronto businessman, has worked with retired general Rick Hillier to develop a new scholarship program geared towards sending the children of fallen soldiers to post-secondary institutions.

These Project Hero scholarships will be offered exclusively to children who lost their parents in the line of duty. The program, effective September 1, 2009, will be available at Memorial University in Newfoundland, the University of Ottawa, the University of Windsor, and the University of Calgary.

It will offer the children four years of post-secondary education to earn their undergraduate degree; on-campus residence fees for the first year are also included.

Project Hero was inspired by Reed, who in December was made an honorary lieutenant colonel of an army reserve unit in Ontario where he became familiar with the struggles of the families the soldiers left behind.

With the help of Hillier, the former chief of defence staff who is now chancellor of Memorial University, Reed brought the idea to Allan Rock, the president of the University of Ottawa.

"At university we feel this is a very tangible way to say [to the families of the fallen soldiers] that we value their contribution and we want to do something to demonstrate that gratitude," said Rock.

Reed personally went to each school to convince them to join the program.

"It's my goal to get broad-based, national support from all Canadian universities," he told The Canadian Press. He claimed getting support from the University of Calgary is a "big step forward."

Ann Tierney, the vice-provost of students at the University of Calgary, stated on Tuesday that the program "is an expression of support for [the] Canadian Forces' soldiers and their families, and a way of honouring those who pay the ultimate price for serving their country."

Students must be under the age of 26, and must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Rock added that the program is a long-term commitment and will be evaluated every five years to see if improvements can be made.

"We hope this scholarship will help the sons and daughters of these military personnel realize their dreams and plans by making a university education possible after suffering such a loss," continued Tierney.

Project Hero is the first free tuition program in Canada.

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THE VOICE

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