

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 31  
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## Medieval Missives

Heloise and Abelard

## AU Options

Double majors

## Stompin' Tom

Ordinary folks

*Plus:*

*Dear Barb, In Conversation With,  
Sister Aurora, and much more...*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



## ERAS IN EDUCATION

Jason Sullivan



## Heloise and Abelard

An exchanged glance, a hand brushing a hand, a slip of paper exchanged deftly and discreetly . . . Up until a decade or so ago the paper note was state-of-the-art technology for expressing secret longings and desires. Imagine if a teacher in today's text-messaging world intercepted one such note, and found it to contain the following lines:

*"I have your picture in my room; I never pass it without stopping to look at it . . . If a picture, which is but a mute representation of an object, can give such pleasure, what cannot letters inspire? They have souls; they can speak; they have in them all that force which expresses the transports of the heart; they have all the fire of our passions, they can raise them as much as if the persons themselves were present; they have all the tenderness and the delicacy of speech, and sometimes even a boldness of expression beyond it."*

The teacher would probably want the offending students to read the note out in front of the class, not as punishment, but as an example of good writing that captures something

ineffably embedded in interpersonal relations. Perhaps she would then proceed to critique the blurbish nature of instant messaging.

Almost one thousand years ago, at the Notre Dame Cathedral school in Paris, students would have written secret messages to one another in much the same way as in modern times. Perhaps the most famous school love affair was between a prideful teacher named Peter Abelard and a much younger pupil named Heloise. Abelard was a "master," one of many who competed for prestige and gathered a cadre of loyal followers. Petty disputes were common but Abelard usually had his way. Heloise, though 19 years younger than Abelard, would be considered "one of the most literate women of her time." Some of their love letters have survived until today, including one containing the quotation above.

In a calculated manoeuvre, Abelard had himself hired as Heloise's tutor, which meant that he would move into the same home as her. They soon became involved in more than just studying the Classics and, upon her becoming pregnant out of wedlock, were pressured into marriage. In an effort to keep their betrothal a secret, Abelard sent her away to a monastery. This angered Heloise's uncle, who hired hit men to break into Abelard's room and castrate him in the dead of night. They each spent the remainder of their lives in separate monasteries.

But why so much difficulty? Why couldn't the happy couple simply marry and live happily ever after? The answer lies in the nature of education during the Middle Ages. Schooling was completely controlled by the Church and all learning was in relation to religion. "Literacy was virtually coterminous with the clergy," to such an extent that monarchs were often illiterate despite their earthly power. The power of knowledge was thus synonymous with the power of God. Abelard, as an educator, was also a clergyman and therefore was required to be celibate. Public knowledge of his marriage would have ruined his career.



Abelard had already angered the Church on several occasions. One of his central philosophical ideas was that “it is not the physical action itself, nor any imaginary *injury* to God, that constitutes sin, but rather the psychological element in the action, the intention of sinning, which is formal contempt of God.” The Church saw this position as too relativistic, in that it opened the way for a person to potentially question authority “with the best of intentions” and get away with it. In the Middle Ages people were expected to do as they were told and consider it the word of God. (Interestingly, six hundred years later Immanuel Kant would seem to echo Abelard’s position.)

*In the context of education during the Middle Ages, an educator’s first love was to be God, personified partly by Church teachings. Earthly love was not to get in the way.*

The fact that Abelard’s relationship with Heloise was in contradiction to Church teachings may have played a role in his entire philosophical outlook. Or, perhaps, his philosophy of life led him to feel entitled to enter into an illicit relationship.

As Sigmund Freud suggested, “the primary tie between group members is that they replace their ego-ideal with the group leader. They then share something as part of themselves.” In the context of education during the Middle Ages, an educator’s first love was to be God, personified partly by Church teachings. Earthly love was not to get in the way. It was inappropriate to become involved with a person; one’s passions were to be reserved for the divine realm.

In his book *Eros and Civilization*, the social theorist Herbert Marcuse stated that people’s pursuit of pleasure is repressed so that society can function. Without limits, our selfish desires would make society impossible. Sometimes “surplus repression” exists. Surplus repression consists of repression that does not meet the basic needs of society’s members. In other words, people are prevented from fulfilling their innermost desires and end up miserable. For Abelard and Heloise it might be said that surplus repression prevented them from fulfilling their love for one another in conjunction with their love of God.



The end result of Heloise and Abelard’s indiscretion was Abelard’s castration and their separation. Yet their letters back and forth are testament to the fact that social regulation cannot restrict love or, in sociological terms, strong “affective solidarity.” Unfortunately for the smitten couple, religion in the 1100s had a monopoly on happily ever after. Marcuse named this belief in a final static state of fulfillment the “nirvana principle.” Perhaps Abelard and Heloise’s love letters are testament to the fact that the strongest love is that which is just out of reach. By restricting some of our desires society serves to make clear to us what we really want, within or without prevailing social norms. Perhaps without an educational system to restrict us and make us want what is taboo, some people might never fall in love!

## AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



### Bachelor of Arts with a Double Major

For students looking to pursue two major areas of interest, as well as to keep their choices beyond graduation wide open, completing a bachelor of arts with a double major may be a perfect solution.

Serita Smith, a student advisor and the coordinator of advising services for Athabasca University in Calgary, explains that “a student might choose to complete a double major if they wish to specialize in two different areas within one degree . . . in the same amount of time” that it takes to complete a

regular bachelor’s degree with just one major. And while “double majors can be added or dropped at any time,” students must meet all the requirements for both majors, so students changing or adding majors should always be careful to check the requirements of their program, especially if changing majors later on in their program.

Because students must ensure that they meet the minimum requirements of both majors, including the number of 400-level courses required for each major, choosing to double major can sometimes result in challenges when selecting courses. Space for option courses is greatly limited when students double major, and Smith advises that “students looking for flexibility in course selection and the ability to explore a variety of subject areas should not elect to do a double major.”

Graduating with a double major can also provide distinct benefits, though, particularly if a student has not yet decided what they wish to do with their degree after graduation. Double major students have the option to pursue graduate studies or a career in either area of specialization.

Heather Fraser is an AU student and AUSU councillor who is currently completing a bachelor of arts with a double major. Fraser chose her current program after having initially enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems. “Information systems is my career,” she says, but after taking a psychology course as an elective, she discovered that psychology is her “real interest, especially educational psychology (special needs students having their lives enhanced by technology).”

Changing programs to a bachelor of arts with double major in Information Systems and Psychology gave Fraser the chance to design a program that contained courses that focus on both her career and her passion. And courses like Psychology 476: Assistive Technology for Students with Special Needs, in which she’s currently enrolled, give her the chance to combine both of her major fields of interest within a single course.

While Fraser loves her program, it also has its drawbacks. She will have to complete more than the regular 120 credits in order to meet all her requirements, as many of the courses she had planned to put toward her original BScCIS cannot be applied to her BA program. In fact, her “entire first term at AU is now counted as ‘additional to program.’” Course selections can be complicated, especially when the prerequisites for core courses in each major are considered.

Fraser also hates that although she was “dying to take a few science courses for fun,” there is simply “no spare room” in her program to take science electives, such as the chemistry and astrophysics courses that interest her.

There are definite benefits to the double major program, however. “I could continue on with a masters in Computer Science, or a Master of Counselling, or a Master of Arts in Integrated Studies,” Fraser explains. “I keep sticking with the double major because I don’t want to be stuck deciding now what I want to do when I grow up!”

Completing a bachelor of arts program with a double major is certainly one way to ensure that the doors remain wide open for continued studies or a career in either area of specialization.

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST – Funny Face**

Whether we’re mugging for the camera or tattooing stars on our foreheads, our faces are perhaps the most important way we present ourselves to the world. From strange expressions to unusual implants, here’s a look at some interesting faces.

### **Dive Into It**

These world-class athletes at the FINA Swimming World Championships in Rome have more important things to think about than smiling for the camera—but the result is unintentionally funny.

### **Gurning**

Gurning is “the art of pulling a face” and in this video Tommy Mattinson, the world gurning champion, demonstrates just what it took to win the title. Gurning may not be pretty, but it’s come a long way from its beginnings back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century—all the way to *The Tonight Show*.

### **Seeing Stars**

You’ve probably already heard the tale of Kimberley Vlaminck, the 18-year-old who claimed to have fallen asleep in a tattoo parlour and ended up with 53 more stars on her face than she wanted (a claim the tattoo artist denies). Either way, her father’s expression at the end of this video is priceless.

### **Skull Implants**

If you think facial tattoos are extreme, you’ve probably never seen skull implants. The man in this video also displays something called transdermals (be warned, this clip is definitely not for the squeamish).

### **Baby Face**

There are only four photos here from Babble Playground’s funny face contest, but each one is classic. With the eternal nature of Internet archives, here’s hoping that the photos don’t surface to haunt these poor kids’ junior high days.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

## Wanda Waterman St. Louis



## Gurf Morlix

*Gurf Morlix is an Austin-based musician, songwriter, and producer. He's worked with Lucinda Williams, Jim Lauderdale, Jimmy LaFave, Sam Baker, and BettySoo, among many other notables, and has put out a number of solo albums including the recently released Last Exit to Happyland (soon to be recommended in The Mindful Bard). Gurf recently took the time to answer some questions from Wanda Waterman St. Louis.*

## Describe your musical education

I took three guitar lessons then quit because they weren't teaching me what I wanted to learn. I learned on my own. I was obsessed with the guitar.

## What other instruments do you play?

Just about anything I can get my hands on, with the exception of horns and violin. If it's lying around, it's fair game.

BettySoo describes you as a man who has long friendships. Can you explain why you tend to hold onto friends longer than most people?

Why would anyone not hold on to friends? Unless there's a good reason for letting go, which is rare.

What conditions do you need in your life in order to be creative?

Just some time and a quiet place to sit. I write most of my songs late at night in my cabin in Ontario.

If you had to choose, which performer would you most like recording with again?

I couldn't possibly choose. I love all the artists I work with. I've been extremely lucky to work with some of the best songwriters in the world!

Are there any books, albums, or films that have been landmarks in your creative development; i.e., have inspired your own development and work?

Well, first of all there's Hank Williams, Muddy Waters, Bob Dylan, and the Beatles. It doesn't get any better than those artists. I'm influenced by everything I see and hear. I just reread *The Magus*, by John Fowles, and it blew my mind all over again. I can't think of a more compelling film than *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf*.





**How, if at all, did your childhood prepare you for the musical work you're doing now?**

I knew from the time I was very young that it was gonna be music for me. I just knew I could do it.

**Do you hold to any political ideology or religious belief?**

Good triumphs over evil. Intelligence should help carry us through.

**Why are you still based in Austin?**

Austin is a really great community! I can't imagine living anywhere else. Great music, of course, and great weather, great food, great geography, and a lot of forward-thinking people.



**And what are you doing in Canada right now?**

Hanging at the cabin for the summer—fishing, swimming, chopping wood, and writing. Always writing. I'm playing some of the great festivals as well. The Canadian folk festivals can't be beat.

**What does the music of the American south mean to you?**

It's different in the South. It's hotter. The food is hotter. The pace is slower cuz of the heat. The blues came from the South. Jazz came from the South. There is something about the Texas songwriting tradition that separates it from that of the rest of the country. I think this is a good thing. There are an inordinately high number of great songwriters from Texas.



# Sister Aurora

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

5

Sure, you  
can be  
superior  
at being  
a singer  
or  
a dancer  
or--

--a model or an  
"administrative assistant"...

Jodi! Where's  
my comb?

Wondered when you'd  
notice.

...if you try to be GOOD  
at something that's  
considered MALE territory  
you're NOT seen as a  
superior girl. You're  
seen as a freak.



*Dear  
Barb*

*Barbara Godin*

## Sister Must Speak Up to Protect Children

*Dear Barb:*

*My sister is divorced with two small daughters age four and six. She has recently began dating a man who I learned through friends had sexually abused the daughter of his previous girlfriend. I am afraid he may do this to my nieces. When I see him with the girls he seems attentive and caring, but because of what I know I don't trust him. I believe the people who told me about this are reliable.*

*I haven't mentioned this to my sister because she seems to be so much in love with this man that I don't think she will respond well to this information. I don't know what to do. Should I tell her or just keep it to myself and hope nothing happens?*

*Angela*

Angela, you can't do nothing. This is too important. You have been entrusted with some very important information. If it's ignored and something happened, these two girls would be affected for life.

You have said that you trust the source of this information. Is there any way you could speak to the mother of the child that this happened to?

That way you will be 100 per cent sure this is true. Perhaps you could explain to this mother that your sister is involved with this man and that you are concerned for your nieces. Ask her if she would mind if you gave your sister her name. If she is okay with this then I would tell your sister the information that you have and provide her with this woman's name and number. Therefore, if your sister doesn't believe what you are saying she will be able to confirm this information.

I think you already realize you need to be prepared when you tell your sister as she may be angry with you. If she is so in love with this fellow, she is not going to want to believe that he would be capable of something so horrible and perverse.

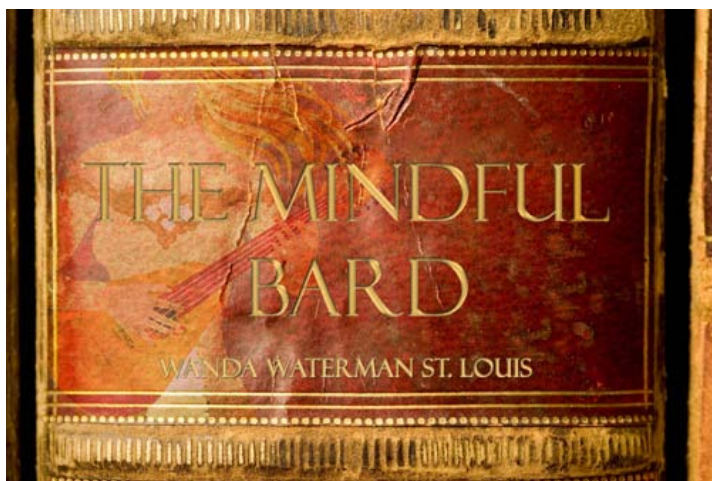
If your sister chooses not to believe this you can't just ignore it. In that case I would suggest you discuss your concerns with a social worker to find out the best approach.

Childhood sexual abuse has grave consequences that follow its victims throughout their lives. Even one incident of childhood sexual abuse can change who that child will become. Therefore you and your sister have to find a way to prevent this from occurring.

Thanks, Angela, for writing in about such an important topic and I hope I was helpful.

*Email your questions to [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. 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

CD: Stompin' Tom Connors, *The Ballad of Stompin' Tom*

Label: EMI

Release date: 2009

Still Putting a Boot Through the Floors of Those Who Will Not Hear

*"Then came Sudbury Saturday night, at the Gumboot Cloggeroo*

*They made me the Chairman of the Board, 'til I stomped a hole right thru  
And like ol' Luke with his old guitar, my 'Song wasn't over yet'  
Till I sang the Ode that I wrote for The Road and the Mom I can't forget."*

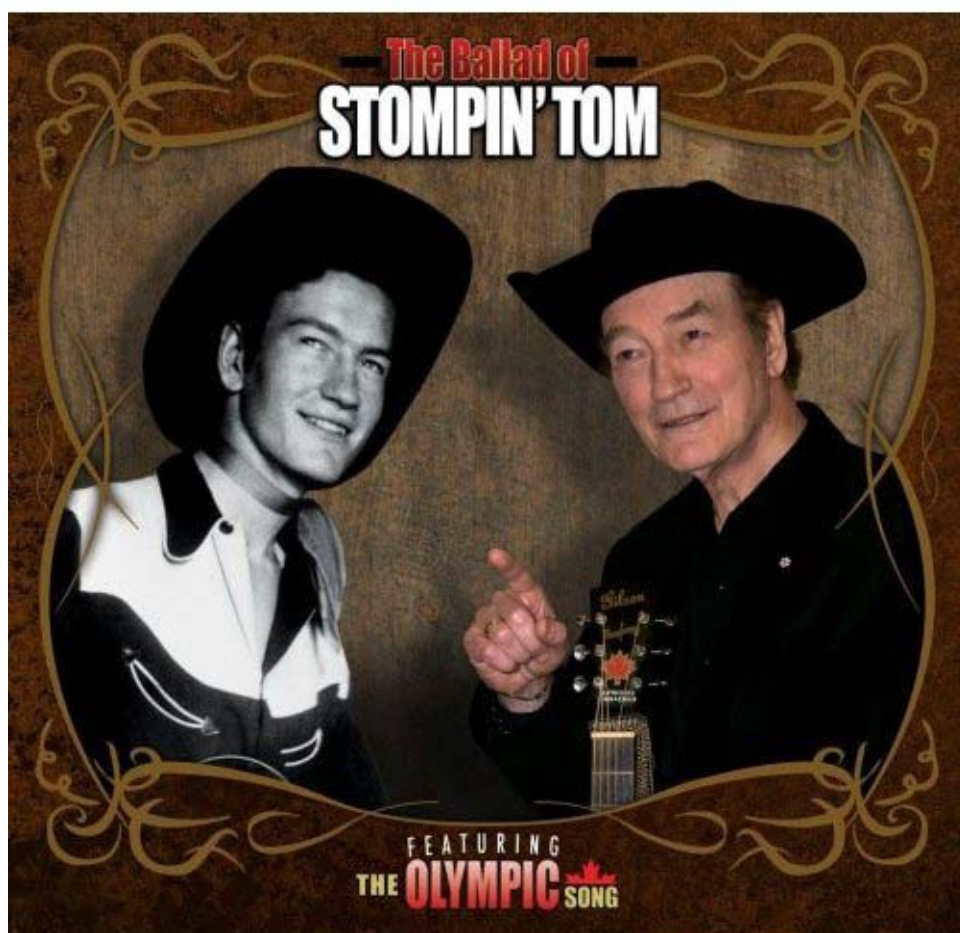
Stompin' Tom Connors, from "Ballad of Stompin' Tom"

When Tom Connors was a little boy growing up in St. John, New Brunswick, he had to wait outside while his friends were called in to supper. He had no supper to go to, and it never occurred to any of these parents that this lone child could use a meal.

A few years later Tom accompanied his destitute young mother as she hitchhiked through Nova Scotia to try to get help from relatives. The relatives in question punctuated the long ordeal with a slammed door.

Soon the authorities were called, and instead of helping the poor woman house and feed herself and her child they incarcerated her and sent Tom to an orphanage.

The wonder is that in spite of all that (and much more) Tom became such a loving person. In fact, he dedicated his life to singing tributes to the places and people he visited, heard about, or just plain admired. If





anyone could be expected to produce music that's dark, moody, and rails against society, it's this guy, who suffered unimaginable privations at the hands of neighbours, family, strangers, and the system.

It seems that Tom met enough decent, caring, generous human beings in his travels to turn his rig around. If it hadn't been for these people there would be no Stompin' Tom.

Once, while hitchhiking across country as a young man, not long after telling off an evangelical Christian who Tom felt was trying to shove religion down his throat, Tom had a spiritual experience. He made a kind of covenant with his maker: if God wanted him to give his life to music and was willing to make it happen, then, by Ned, Tom was ready to surrender. This experience granted him not only a firmness of resolve but also a sense of peace about the miseries to which his fellow humans had subjected him.

After he became famous Tom not only treated his enemies with kindness, he defended the underdog and stood by his principles, often at his own personal expense. He advocated tirelessly for Canadian musicians even when this meant earning the ire of several national organizations.

Tom Connors is the product of an era that wasn't exactly searching for a Canadian identity. But his music is as close as any to a typically Canadian musical genre, the music of all sorts of ordinary folks in kitchens, on farms, on fishing boats, on mountains and plains, in mines and fields and forests, in hockey rinks, in prisons, taverns, churches, and living on the streets.

If Tom had one lesson to teach this big sprawling land, what would it be? Being Canadian is about calling greed and injustice when you see 'em. It's also about forgiveness. And about folks. Lots and lots of different folks.

If you look long and hard enough, you'll always find some good ones.

*The Ballad of Stompin' Tom* manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts, rebukes, and mocks existing injustices; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; and 5) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda.

## DID YOU KNOW?



### AU Starter Kit

If you're a new AU student (or are thinking of becoming one), a great resource to get you on the right track is the AU Starter Kit.

The kit includes links to information on how to enrol in undergraduate courses, ways to access financial aid, and how to apply for graduate courses.

Studying at an AU partner institution, or just want to take courses but not register in a program? You'll find links to that info too, as well as help on changing from inactive to active status. And if you can't find the answers

you're looking for, just head to the Counselling Services link for all the tools you'll need to build your educational future.

## 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.

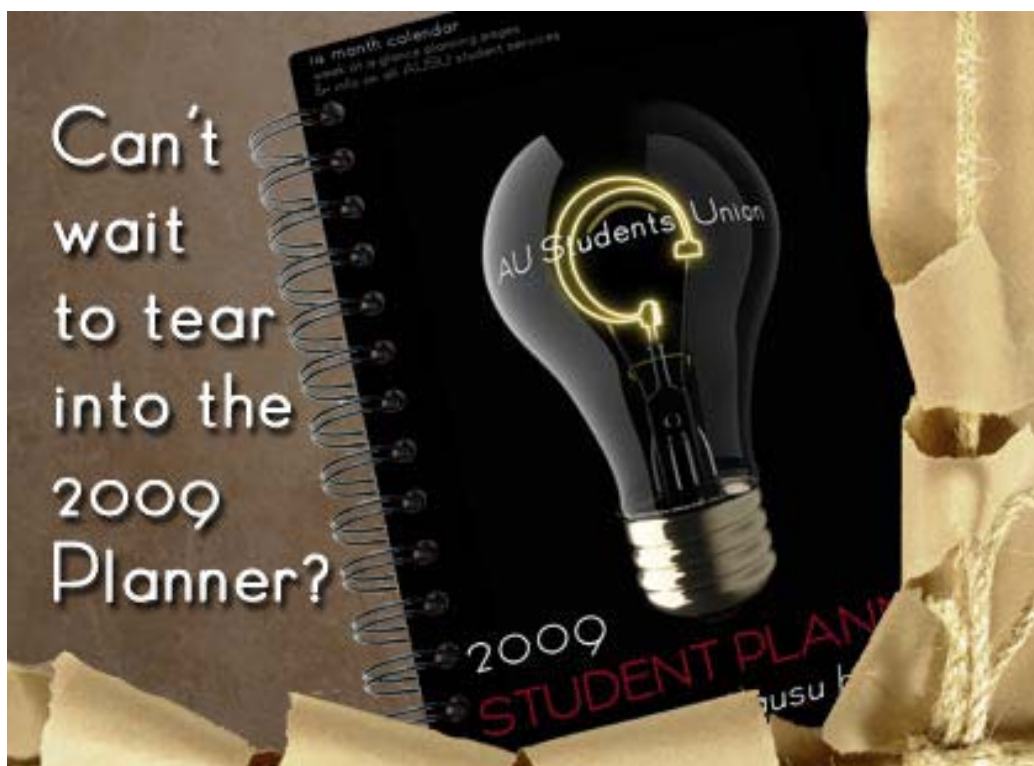
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member 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: School bus driver wins battle to keep data Canadian

When it comes to employee background checks, the aim is usually to protect an employer and its customers. But a Saskatoon bus driver has scored a victory when it comes to protecting the privacy of Canadian workers.

Stephanie Sydiaha, a driver for First Student Canada, refused to let her employer run a background check “because it was using a U.S.-based security firm,” as the [CBC](#) reports.

Sydiaha was concerned about where her personal data would end up—and how it might be used—once it crossed into the US. Not only are privacy laws more lax there, the Patriot Act is another consideration when handing personal data over to US companies.

Sydiaha was also worried that refusing a background check might cost her the job.

However, First Student announced this week that it will now be using a Canadian company to do background checks.

As company spokesman B.J. Langdon told reporters, “It’s something that we’ve been looking at doing, but also because of concerns, some of the ones that have been raised.”

For her part, Sydiaha welcomed the news. She’d like to see background checks “done by a police agency rather than another third party company,” but she’s glad that employee data won’t be made available to American authorities.

### In Foreign News: Economic downturn hurts wage parity

In Australia, women are faring better than men when it comes to landing jobs. The bad news is that female earnings are “at their lowest point relative to men’s in two decades,” reports [The Age](#).

Figures for May show the average female earning \$54,907, just 82 per cent of the average male’s income of \$66,581. Those figures put female earnings at their lowest proportion in 21 years.

Part of the problem is that economic woes have hit the retail and service industries especially hard—industries with a high proportion of female workers. In contrast, the mining and construction industries have shown “big jumps in earnings.” Earnings in those sectors rose 3.3 and 3.2 per cent in the three months to May. In the hospitality sector, earnings fell 0.2 per cent, and retail earnings rose 1.2 per cent.

Job losses for men were 44,900, while women gained 45,100 jobs. However, the downward trend in female wages could be seen even before the recent economic upheaval. “Women’s earnings have been falling relative to men’s for five years,” said CommSec economist Craig James, noting that it’s the trend that should be of concern, not specific wage levels.

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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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