

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 18 Iss 36 2010-09-10

Thousands of Voices

Baring a singer's soul

Behind the Screen

Virtual role-play

Collect Call

Hoarding intervention

Plus:

*The Mindful Bard, Sister Aurora,
Click of the Wrist, 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, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Virtual Schizophrenia

Hand someone a sales contract, and she'll probably give it a quick scan to make sure there's nothing amiss. But let that same person make an online transaction with a similar set of terms and conditions, and chances are good she'll click "accept" without giving the contract a further thought.

Case in point: an April Fool's Day prank pulled by British gaming store GameStation. As *The Huffington Post* [reported](#), last April the store's online sales department included in its standard buyer agreement a clause in which buyers agreed to transfer the rights of their souls to GameStation, promising delivery upon request by the gaming store or its "duly authorized minions." Although the clause included an opt-out link, 88 per cent of buyers failed to click it—and apparently lost their souls.

A little April Fool's fun? Perhaps, but although GameStation subsequently relinquished its rights to the imprudent buyers' souls, the whole situation illustrates a somewhat disconcerting truth: people's conduct online is drastically different than what they'd consider standard behaviour in the real world.

It's no secret that Internet users frequently project different personas than their real-life selves, and not just by overinflating their dating "resumés" or Facebook profiles. Encouraged by the anonymity and lack of physical barriers, a user might converse more comfortably and confidently—or argue with more vitriol and less sense.

But it's a little more surprising that people's online actions outside message boards, chat rooms, and social media are equally estranged from what they'd consider normal in everyday life. And shockingly, this disparity is becoming more and more acceptable in society.

An example is online shopping. A recent British study showed that the peak time for the relaxing pastime is 4 p.m. on Wednesday—when most would-be shoppers are still at work. But as *The Toronto Star* [reported](#), top management not only acknowledges the practice, it even pooh-poohs the idea of banning online shopping during the workday. Would those same bosses respond kindly to employees taking a mid-afternoon break to hit up the bookstore or jewellery shop? Unlikely.

Why the double standard?

Dr. John Suler, a psychology professor at Rider University, has some interesting thoughts on the matter. In his book *The Psychology of Cyberspace* ([available](#) in hypertext format), he suggests that a number of factors may be involved in lowering the inhibitions of web users. But the two that struck me were what he refers to as solipsistic introjection (the online interactions are "all in my head") and dissociative imagination (the whole online world is "all a game").

According to Dr. Suler, the impersonal nature of online dealings and the fact that online interactions are divorced from the physical cues to which we've become accustomed in real life can cause us to behave differently once we log on. Rather than bringing our real-life selves and society-created inhibitions with us,

we often leave those outside the doors of the online world and create new, imaginary selves—like characters in a role-playing game.

In essence, as Dr. Suler wrote, when a user gets online, he may begin acting as though his “online persona along with the online others live in an make-believe dimension, a dream world, separate and apart from the demands and responsibilities of the real world.”

It makes sense. Without the boundaries that person-to-person interaction creates in live society, it’s easy to slip into the mentality that no-one’s watching, that it doesn’t matter what we say or do online. We get careless—it’s virtual, so how real can it be?

Hence the cavalier attitude toward sales contracts and shopping while still on the clock—and the proliferation of online bullying.

Because if it’s all a game, why should we care what happens? We can’t experience it with our senses, so it doesn’t seem real. And because we usually act alone, with no-one watching, consequences are rare. Contracts won’t be enforced, we think, and we can get away with saying things we’d consider inappropriate if we were engaged in a face-to-face debate. So does it matter how we behave online?

It does. Regardless of the possibility—or not—of consequences, the more careless we are about our online personas and their dealings, the more we trap ourselves in a *Matrix*-style web of virtual life.

Sci-fi literature and film often contain a reiterated theme: someday, if we’re not careful, computers may overtake the world. But it doesn’t have to be that way. If we maintain control of our dealings online, keep hold of our true identity, and carry with us our social and personal codes of conduct while we navigate what might seem like an alternate reality, we remain in charge of our electronic destiny.



DID YOU KNOW? The Literature Network

Looking for the text of an elusive Edna St. Vincent Millay poem? Can’t quite recall the source of that Shakespearean quote?

Consider visiting [The Literature Network](#), an online “tool for reading, searching, and discussing works of classic literature.” With close to 3,000 full-length books and nearly 4,000 shorter works (including poetry and short stories), it’s a fantastic resource for both students and lovers of the written word.

In addition to reading the classics online, visitors can use the site’s search feature to locate a particular word or phrase in an author’s works.

And there’s more: besides searchable access to the full texts of classics from Plato’s *The Republic* to Beatrix Potter’s *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, The Literature Network includes author bios, literature forums, and a database of quotations.

Although The Literature Network is free to use, users can also choose to subscribe to the site for an ad-free browsing experience.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

William MacGillivray

William MacGillivray is a notable Canadian filmmaker and director of The Man of a Thousand Songs, a new documentary on Newfoundland singer-songwriter Ron Hynes (check out the [Voice review](#) of Hynes's self-titled CD). The film will be opening at the Toronto Film Festival on September 13 and will be shown at the Parklane Mall in Halifax at the Atlantic Film Festival on September 19 and 20. MacGillivray recently took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about Ron Hynes as a film subject.



Why a Film About Ron Hynes?

First of all, I'm a Newfoundlander, and there's a kind of elemental appreciation of Ron's language and his musicality, which although Ron has made it his own is still part of that 500-year history of storytelling. So it's that, but it's also the fact that anybody who has sat in a room with Ron and listened to him perform his music is moved beyond mere entertainment.

I'm a few years older than Ron and I had left Newfoundland before Ron came on the scene. But of course my family is there and I go back all the time . . . [A]lthough obviously I knew about Ron, it wasn't until about four years ago that I actually sat in a bar and listened to him play. I was really struck because it was a noisy bar and Ron just commanded the space.

Open Film

I'm hoping that the film is as much a dialogue as a statement and that people will find in it things that mean something to them. That's what we try to do with all our films; we try to make them open and not closed. I had hoped that people would walk away from this film having experienced as much as possible a three-dimensional character on a two-dimensional screen, that they'd sense who Ron is, what he has struggled through to get to where he's going, and hopefully realize that to a large extent he is where he wanted to be.

The other side of it is that my partner, Terry Greenlaw, and I wanted to help put Ron's name out. Within the industry and within a certain demographic Ron has a very large and faithful following, but there's a huge world out there that should know about Ron. We were hoping that this film would address that.



*William MacGillivray.
Photo: Kent Nason.*

Filming Ron Hynes

Ron was easier to work with than I would be. He was amazing. In that black box section of the film where he was basically being interrogated, he gave himself over to that . . . we shot it over an intensive three-day period of long days, hard questions, and lots of moments of leaning back and reconsidering what had been said and how far and deep we wanted to go. Ron gave fully of himself and I think one thing I came away from this project with was a sense that this is a very brave soul—he’s doing what most of us would never dare to.

He does that also when he performs his songs. His songs are soul-baring. And I think he has that ability, maybe even need, to express himself fully and in a raw, open way, as he does in the film.

Developing a Portrait

When we set out to make the film, we had sort of an idea of what we wanted the film to be. But at one point we were doing what we called a pre-interview with Ron, sitting in a friend’s office with a little tape recorder going, just asking him questions. Ron was relaxed at the beginning, but as the day wore on he started to get edgy and fidgety, and he stood up and started walking back and forth and directing his answers to the tape recorder.

It suddenly dawned on us that this was the way the film should be; in order to be effective it had to be almost like an interrogation—he had to confront the camera—and not like your standard talking heads documentary.

That was a great day, the day when it all broke wide open. Terry and I looked at each other and said, *Okay, here’s the film, here’s the core of the film, the thing that will make it more than just “The Life and Times of Ron Hynes.”*

About “The Man”

“The Man” [in the movie, Ron’s alter ego] is more about the performance aspect of Ron than about the real Ron. For most of the filming, Ron was an incredibly open, giving, friendly person that anybody would love to be around. He was funny, he was engaging, and tempers never flared. “The Man” is kind of an inner creature. Maybe it’s different now than it was during his problem era, but “The Man” now is pretty much in another little box.



Ron Hynes at Fat Cat. Photo: Kent Nason.

The Tussle Between the Living of Life and the Living of Art

As Ron says himself, it is in a way a constant battle. I think anybody who’s married their life with their life’s work goes through this process. If you can go to your nine-to-five job and then leave your job behind when you come home and do other things, I think you may stand a better chance of sitting comfortably within your own skin, as Joel [in the film, Ron’s novelist

nephew Joel Thomas Hynes] would put it. But if your life and your life's work are one and the same, you never really get to escape yourself.

You can't always be on. And because you're so involved with the work that you're doing, it's very easy to lose sight of, as Joel puts it, "the loved ones who surround you." And sometimes it doesn't go the way one would like it to go.

One of the things we tried to do with the film was to weave the music in throughout his life so that hopefully the audience can see what Ron lived through, made different, improved upon, and questioned through his music. And once again it keeps going back to the same thing: he never really does escape himself.

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Inspire Me!

Writer's block: it's the curse of all writers, whether you're a student tackling an essay, a blogger searching for a topic, a novelist seeking inspiration for the next scene, or a journalist hunting for a new angle. Fortunately, the web is full of inspiration if you know where to look. If staring at the blank page isn't getting you very far, check out one of these links for a boost—and let your imagination go!

StumbleUpon

The online equivalent of people-watching or browsing the flea market, StumbleUpon allows users to set up a free account and log their topic preferences. Then it guides their browsing experience, helping them to "stumble" across websites, articles, videos, and photo galleries in areas that might interest them. Users can flag suggestions with a thumbs-up or thumbs-down to help the site narrow their preferences for the future. Sometimes just five "stumbles" can help you beat writer's block in several different writing projects.

Mental Floss

Magazine *mental_floss*'s blogs are an "I didn't know that!" goldmine and a good go-to source for topics you might not have come up with on your own. One caution: they're addicting, so limit your browsing time so you don't stray too far off track.

Language is a Virus

If you can get past the somewhat bizarre layout of this site, you'll find fantastic resources for overcoming writer's block. From writing prompts to phrase generators to forums to articles on improving your creativity, the site contains a wealth of possibilities for the writer who's stuck. Although it's geared toward participants in NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month, which is every November), the resources are equally useful for other writers.





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Hoarding

One day while channel surfing, I stumbled across a TV show about hoarding. Just as many gravitate toward gawking at fires and traffic accidents despite the tragedy and gruesome images, I found it impossible not to continue watching. It felt voyeuristic and invasive, but captivating nonetheless, to see inside the homes of people who were clearly suffering.

As repugnant as the visuals were (and one could only imagine the smells), it was fascinating to me to see what people collect. But then again, collect isn't the right word. I collect books. I collect vases. The people profiled hoard things of little or no value, have an abnormal attachment to objects, and feel acute pain at the thought of letting things go.

Quite often there is some emotional, psychological, or physiological event that triggers the behaviour. It may be the birth of a stillborn baby, a divorce, the death of a significant person, a stroke or brain injury, or even the trauma of September 11. Hoarding may also be a symptom of dementia, Alzheimer's, and mental or addiction disorders.

According to TLC, which runs the series *Hoarding: Buried Alive*, about 30 per cent of people with obsessive-compulsive disorder are hoarders, and twice as many men are afflicted as women. It is not a small problem. There are an estimated 3 to 6 million Americans whose lives are impacted by this behaviour. Eighty-four per cent of compulsive hoarders report similar behaviour in at least one close relative. And while the average age of hoarders taking part in studies is 50, the onset of the behaviour can begin in people as young as 12.

The costs of this problem are astronomical if you count the human suffering, health consequences, structural damage to and condemning of property, cleanup, and treatment modalities. There are cases where people haven't used their kitchen or stove for years. Or where there is no functioning toilet.

I remember an episode in which an old man slept on the floor near the door because there was no other space clear enough, and he wanted to be able to get out if fire hit.

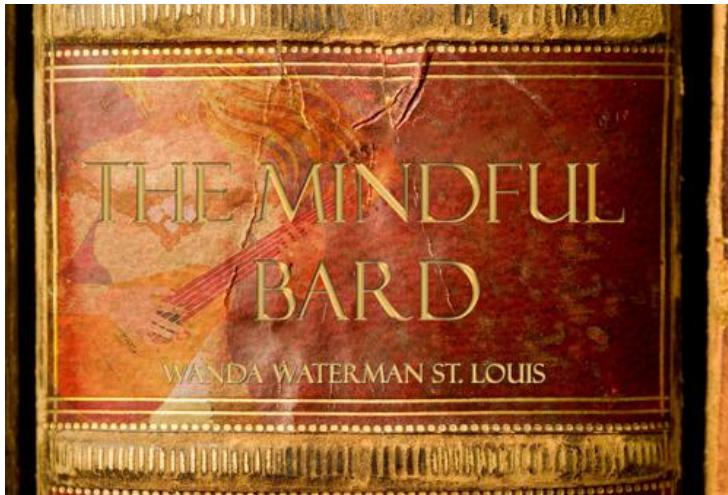
Some cases include animal hoarding with as many as 250,000 animals affected in a single year. And that's not counting the raccoons, rats, and other vermin who take up residence.

The shame, concern, embarrassment, and damaged relationships exact their own huge toll on spouses and children.

Quite often it is some "hitting bottom" scenario that drives people to seek help. It may be the threat of losing custody of their children or being evicted, or a marital breakup. A&E's *Hoarders* and TLC's *Hoarding: Buried Alive* each feature two stories per episode. There are "before" scenes of the mess, an explanation of the background or triggering event, intervention or concern by family members, arrival of counsellors and

professional organizers, and hopefully some great “after” shots. The work of cleanup and treatment is emotional, mind-boggling to observe and understand, painstakingly slow, and not always successful.

I hope this TV exposure is leading to greater awareness, more treatment options, and less stigma, from where I sit.



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

Film: *The Man of a Thousand Songs*

Theatrical Release: September 2010

Director: William MacGillivray

Picture Plant Ltd.

The Dark Man, the Light Man, and the Man of a Thousand Songs

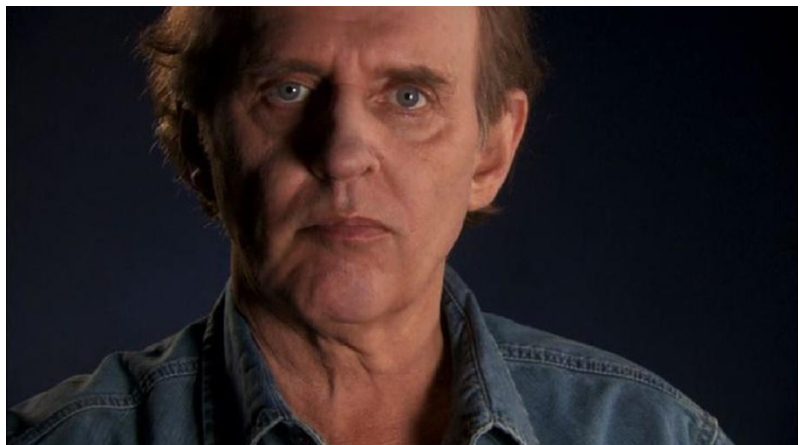
“I think this film is about Ron’s light side and his dark side. I think the light side is Ron, and the dark side is that guy he’s gotta go out and be every time he shows up on a stage somewhere, or the guy that kind of took over his life. I think Ron invented this guy and he kind of came to life. Do you think this is what it’s about? What do you think it’s about?”

Ron Hynes, in *The Man of a Thousand Songs*

What is it about seaports? From Portuguese fado to Greek rebetika to Argentinian Tango, the songs generated there are swollen with nostalgia, sadness, remorse, and regret, manifesting an agonizing rehashing of the personal tragedies of the past and a longing for lost sweetness.

The music that has emerged from St. John’s, Newfoundland, is a case in point, and the Ron Hynes songbook represents one of the finest moments in the town’s musical history. Ron is no stranger to angst and despair; in his still close-up shots you can detect the same kind of tortured facial asymmetry seen in photographs of Edgar Allan Poe, a kind of twistedness symptomatic of unfathomable emotional distress.

In addition to charting the rough waters of Ron’s life story, director MacGillivray has created an enchanting cinematographic portrayal of Newfoundland. Bays; inlets; bleak, mountainous islands couched in a



Ron Hynes. Photo: Kent Nason.

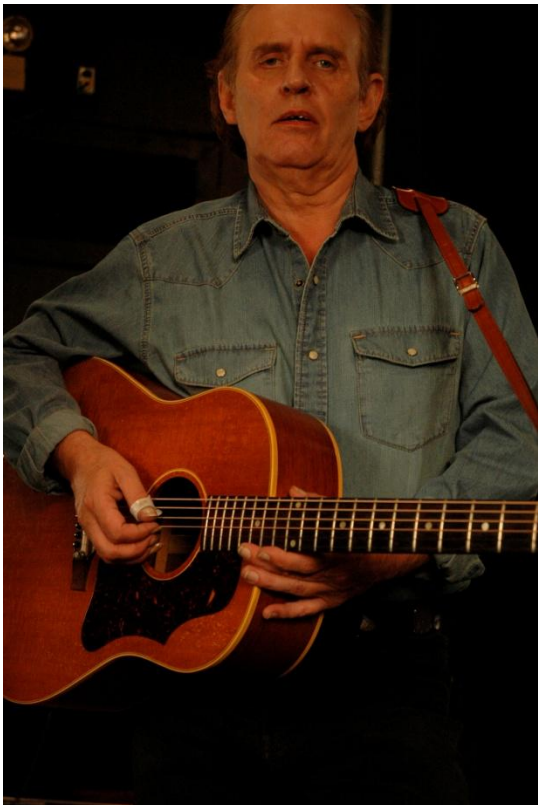
sapphire sea; that strange thing that happens to the light as it sifts through morning mist to land on the rocky cliffs and shorelines; the shuffled spectrum of bright folk art hues on the houses of St. John's; and the range of speaking accents from refined to quaint to incomprehensible—the film is an aural-visual feast with an intellectual depth and artfulness that bear up beautifully under repeated viewings.

Many little gems are scattered about. In one “black box” scene, for example, Ron is rubbing his hands together like sandpaper, symbolizing the friction in his soul as he asks, half-joking, “Shall we dig deeper?” Ron's ubiquitous companion is an incongruous little miniature terrier who follows Ron's every move and is often seen sending questioning glances around the room to punctuate Ron's soul-searching.

The contradictions of Ron Hynes's psyche are salient; in one part of film, he decries the presence he refers to as “The Man” for trying to take over his life in order to kill him. In a later scene, though, Ron says that he refuses to apologize for his big ego, seeing it as necessary to the task of the performing artist.

Some remarkable insights are granted by Ron's novelist nephew Joel Thomas Hynes, who lived with Ron when he was younger. Today Joel has a complex relationship with Ron based on a combination of pride, common suffering, and a resentment stemming from a sense of having been emotionally abandoned while Ron pursued his career. At times, when Joel is talking about Ron's dark side (his take differs somewhat from Ron's), you get the feeling that he's actually talking about himself.

*This film is
indispensable to an
understanding . . . of
the artistic mind.*



Ron Hynes. Photo: Justin Hall.

The film includes some telling explorations of the intoxicating experience of creative expression. There is a segment in which Ron describes what it's like to write a song that is so real and present and universal that you feel like you've heard it before and plagiarized it.

This reminded me of a radio interview I heard with Ron several years ago, in which he disclosed that in rehab he had not been allowed to write; it had been surmised that songwriting, or perhaps the intoxicating effect of songwriting, was part of his addictive cycle. He wrote anyway.

This film is indispensable to an understanding of the peculiar strengths and vulnerabilities of the artistic mind.

The Man of a Thousand Songs manifests five of *The Mindful Bard's* criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions having a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it is about attainment of the true self; 3) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 5) it makes me want to be a better artist.

Sister Aurora

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

#57

Don't ever
forget me?

Never.



And let's all keep coming
back here, okay?

Sure.

No
matter
what
happens?



No matter
what happens.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: North to Mars

Scientists researching the harsh conditions found on the moon and the planet Mars have found a study subject a little closer to home: a research station on an uninhabited island in Canada's Far North.

As the [CBC reports](#), for the past 15 years, NASA researchers and others have been using Devon Island, Nunavut, "as a stand-in for Mars." With a surface area of 66,800 square kilometres, Devon is the "the largest uninhabited island on Earth," and it's certainly remote: at more than 75 degrees of north latitude, the location appears barren and desolate, a "polar desert with scant vegetation." Summer snowfalls are not unusual.

Rocky and dry, "the extreme environment bears a practical resemblance to Mars or the moon." In particular, the nearby 20-kilometre Haughton crater, believed to have been created by a meteorite, is unique to the geography of the area.

But it's the isolation and harsh conditions that make Devon Island the perfect place to test space technology—from robots to space suits to wireless communications.

And although the plant and animal life is scarce, scientists are keen to explore how the few hardy species have managed to "[cope] with such a harsh environment." As part of the research, the Canadian Space Agency has maintained a greenhouse at the station. However, now that summer's come to a close, researchers have returned home and the greenhouse will be "operated remotely" until next summer.

Around the World: Love is a Highway

Online dating sites linking you with love partners halfway across the world? They might be taking things a little too far—literally.

As [Good Morning America reported](#), a new trend in online-assisted dating suggests that your soulmate may be right around the corner. And all you have to do is "follow your heart—and your GPS."

GPS dating, which has gained popularity in large cities, is expected to soon spread to other locations as well. And no wonder: it's all about convenience. Singles can log where they're headed—whether a coffee shop, lunch café, or bar—and "find out who else in their immediate vicinity is looking for a love match." If a profile seems interesting, users can use the app to send a text, and possibly initiate a meeting if both parties are interested.

Because it's location-based, GPS dating has an advantage over "traditional" online dating: meetings can be arranged "within just minutes" of viewing a profile, so the process moves much faster.

But security experts are concerned about the inherent risks of broadcasting your location to people you've never met. Users are urged to exercise caution and "use common sense." For safety's sake, meeting in public places—and/or bringing along a friend—is recommended.

AUSU UPDATE



Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors – specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

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.

AUSU
Representing AU
Undergrads

Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing
Technology
Fun Items
Home Decor

Fostering the Student Community

AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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