

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 08 2011-02-25

Disconnected

Friends with benefits

Shards of Lebanon

The narrow window

Game On

COMP 369

*Plus: In Conversation With
Write Stuff
From Where I Sit
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



De-friendly

We've all heard about toxic friendships—relationships in which one party is always taking, always dumping, always using the other. Where that other party is underappreciated, or even scorned or mocked. Or where one party is so consistently offensive or has such a negative attitude that it actually affects the life outlook of the other person in the relationship.

We know that these relationships will drag us down rather than bearing us up. We're urged to fall out of touch, thus diminishing contact with the negativity that wreaks havoc on our emotional well-being. Instead, we're encouraged to seek out fruitful friendships, avoiding those that tear us apart.

Unfortunately, these are notions that have become increasingly difficult to reconcile with the changing nature of friendship in our online world. It's no secret that social networking has radically redefined (and is still defining) the concept of what it means to have a relationship.

That can be a good thing: in fact, in some ways increased online interaction has made it simpler to deal with relational negativity. With fewer opportunities for face-to-face or even real-time interaction, our friendship expectations have changed. Avoiding toxic individuals has never been easier.

For example, if one person's constant off-colour, sexist, or whiny remarks are disturbing, we can block their activity from our news feed. Or, if a "friend" is consistently critical or overreacts to everything we have to say, we can change our settings to limit which of our activities they can see.

But despite the blocking, we're still technically "friends"—as in, Facebook friends—thus avoiding the social (and often political) awkwardness of "de-friending."

It's a system that would seem to steer us clear of toxic relationships, at least to the extent that real-life comings, goings, and meetings allow. Yet unfortunately, it's also opened the door to a new type of toxic relationship. And this one's initiated by someone it's impossible to avoid: ourselves.

A few weeks ago, a friend and I were discussing a mutual acquaintance. Although our real-life contact with her was minimal, she regularly posted status updates and activities on Facebook. And her constant complaining-alternating-with-bragging cybertalk was so annoying to us that it caused us to feel negatively about her and about life in general every time we read what she had to say.



Because of certain social expectations, we couldn't "de-friend" her. Yet at the same time, we'd never blocked her status updates. Why not? Oddly, we couldn't come up with a valid reason. It was as though we enjoyed the fact that she made us miserable and cranky. But that didn't make any sense. Or did it?

*Why do we keep up
with the online
"friends" who just
anger or annoy us?
Maybe the problem
isn't them, it's us.*

A few days later I came across an enlightening podcast that explained a lot. *The Globe and Mail's* Ivor Tossell brings up the same phenomenon. He notes that we carefully groom our Facebook friends list and delineate who can interact with us. But at the same time, we keep following those people who, for whatever reason, cause us to feel annoyed or negative. Strangely enough, he says, we "voluntarily keep a degree of irritation around."

But why? According to Tossell, we actually enjoy complaining about the effect that person has on us. If "any stimulation is good stimulation," he theorizes, then we continue sustaining the toxic online relationship because it gives us an enjoyable "hit of emotion"—which is pleasurable

even though it's a negative one.

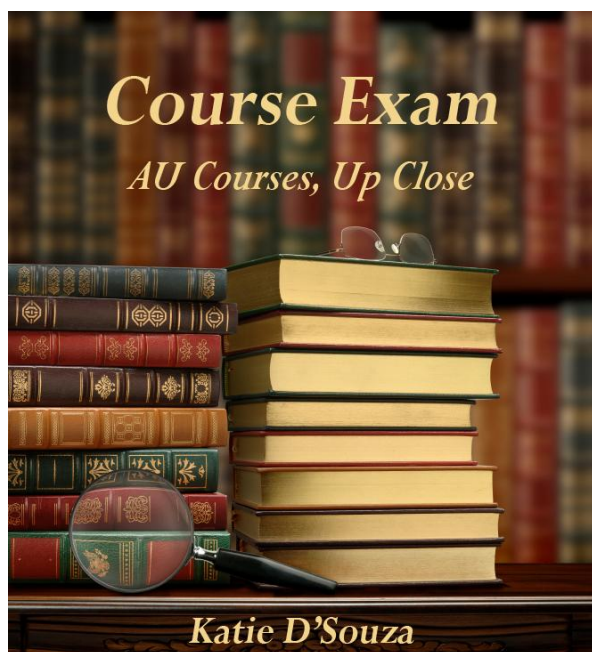
The problem with online interaction like social networking is that it lacks the depth and nuance of real-life interpersonal communication. And so, Tossell notes, we seek out any kind of "emotional stimulus," whether positive (someone whose updates intrigue us) or negative (those who annoy us).

I think that brief high or low helps us mimic the realism of human interaction. We simply miss the gently rolling waves that seem to describe interpersonal relationships. That's why we deliberately seek out similar experiences, using the jarring irritation of online negativity as a poor substitute. Whether it's a flash of jealousy, or anger, or just plain annoyance or disgust, we get a rise out of it, and that makes it worth our while to keep up with the individual.

Yet this type of relationship can be as toxic as the in-person ones that life coaches so frequently decry. Not because the other person makes us feel negative, but because we're using one of their bad qualities—or our imperfect perceptions of them—to make us feel good about ourselves. And that smacks strongly of using the other person.

In any toxic relationship, cutting out the toxic party is often the only solution to a happier existence. With that in mind, it might be time to rethink some of our own online relationships, particularly those in which our own attitudes are the source of the negativity. Like the old saying goes, if we can't respond nicely—even if the toxicity is only experienced in the privacy of our own homes—then maybe we had better not respond at all.





COMP 369

Practical Game Programming

Another brand new learning opportunity is being served up on the smorgasbord of AU courses: COMP 369, Practical Game Programming. If you're a computer programmer, have interest in computer science, or just want to know a little more about how your favourite computer games work, you're in luck! This three-credit course opened in January 2011 and is brimming with hands-on experience that will allow you to "develop platform-independent computer games" using C++ with Allegro.

Course Highlights

Practical Game Programming (COMP 369) teaches students the basic fundamentals of C++ game programming, as well as

more complex programming features and applications—including how to create programs with sound and music. Additionally, students will develop proficiency in using timers and game loops in their programs and in working with scrolling backgrounds. And the instruction goes beyond mere theory: course professor Harris Wang notes that the "game development and programming skills learned through this course are widely applicable to the projects in the real world."

The highlights of the course? According to Wang, there several. First, it's practical: programming, he indicates, is "one of the computing skills very much needed in the current IT industry." And not only does COMP 369 fulfill this need, it is also a good blend of both hands-on programming and "real-life" situations. As a result, students become proficient in C++ game programming, and gain knowledge about current industry trends. Plus, COMP 369 incorporates Allegro with C++; this library does not restrict to only one platform like Windows but can be used with others like Mac and Linux.

Practical Game Programming (COMP 369) is offered through individualized study, online. While most of the course information is provided via a physical textbook, assignments and coding practice are all done online. And the rest of the course content is, Wang notes, "open source based," meaning that all "programming tools and libraries used are freely available on the Internet."

Student Evaluation

Student evaluation in COMP 369 is derived from four assignments (worth either 15 per cent or 20 per cent of the final grade) and one final exam, worth 30 per cent of the final grade. Each assignment consists of two parts: one written and one practical. In the written report, students research "certain topics related to computer games and game industry," says Wang. The second part of each assignment gives students the opportunity to use the programming skills they've learned in the course—by developing games. The benefit to such assignments, Wang says, is that they are "projects-driven, so that students learn not only the



fundamental concepts and knowledge of computer game construction and development, they will acquire practical game programming skills as well.”

Course Author

Course author and professor, Hongxue (Harris) Wang, is an associate professor with AU’s School of Computing and Information Systems. In addition to COMP 369, Dr. Wang has authored six other AU computer science courses, and is working on another. He has also written for several publications, and is a two-time recipient of AU’s Mission Critical Fund, a grant for research projects.

For More Information

COMP 369 is worth three science credits and has COMP 306 as a prerequisite. For more information, check out the COMP 369 course syllabus [here](#).

CLICK OF THE WRIST: Look Before You Leap

In just a few days, we’ll have to flip our calendars from February to March. It’s no secret that February flies by too quickly, particularly in a non-leap year like 2011. But why is February so much shorter than the other months? And what’s the story behind leap year, anyway? This week’s links seek out the answers.

All the Rest Have 31

“February hath 28 days,” says the old quote. But why *is* the month shorter than any other on the calendar? This Slate.com article offers some historical answers and theories.

Round the Sun

We all have a loose idea of why we need to add a day to the calendar once every four-ish years—something to do with the earth, moon, and sun. This *New York Times* article sorts it all out and gives some fascinating historical background on calendar history.

Gimme a Second

Want some further confusion? Over the past few decades, scientists have realized that we can’t accurately rely on earth rotations and revolutions as a sole determinant of time. That’s because the earth’s speed is variable, depending on changing mass and even weather patterns. As a result: the more recent practice of adding or subtracting several seconds to a year, if needed. This article from Britain’s National Maritime Museum explains the science behind it.



IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Stacey Kent, Part III

Stacey Kent is a multilingual jazz chanteuse with a large and zealous worldwide following.

*Her understated phrasing and deeply sensitive renderings of standards and original tunes have won her many accolades and enthusiastic reviews. Stacey began her musical career after completing a master's degree in comparative literature. In 2010, after six bestselling albums, she released *Raconte-moi*, an all-French album distributed in more than 35*

countries. Recently she took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about working with literary writers and the importance of understanding—and of not understanding—a song's lyrics.

(Read [Parts I](#) and [II](#) of this interview.)

Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishi said, “I want to write you songs about travelling.”

They're direct messages, but they're also metaphorical. We talked about the words that you would use in travelling. What I really appreciated about this collaboration was that here I am with two people on either side of me who know me very well—Kazuo Ishiguro and Jim [Stacey's husband, Jim Tomlinson]—[and] who were starting to write for me with *my* voice and *my* persona inside their heads as they wrote. Their songs were incredibly personal. Although they were universal stories, they were about me. I can't even describe to you how heady a feeling that is to have people who know you and love you write for you.

The Ishiguro collaboration became so important and powerful because it came about by accident—it was just one casual remark made by Jim. After that lunch, I think that the period between that first conversation and the songs arriving in the mail and me picking them up from my doorstep was about two weeks. I tore the envelope open and read the lyrics to “Breakfast on the Morning Tram” and “The Ice Hotel.” There they were: my songs. I read them aloud to Jim and he started to hear the songs almost immediately.

António Ladeira

We've also started working with a Portuguese poet—António Ladeira—



because Jim and I have been studying Portuguese these last three years. He was our first-year grammar teacher, and he's a great poet. After writing with Ishiguro, this became a real interest with us. We'll work with anyone with whom we have chemistry; we just happen to be really attracted to *writers* as opposed to *songwriters*.

"[T]he words are so important, and yet when you don't understand the words, the song is still powerful."

-Stacey Kent-

Before I was a musician I was a comparative literature student, so I studied French, German, and Italian. And I grew up speaking French, thanks to my grandfather, who was Russian but immigrated to France and was very much in love with French culture. He introduced me to a ton of French poetry. It was really he who inspired me to learn languages and to go out and be part of the world.

On Brazil

If I were to choose where my musical heart really lives, it's in Brazil. The Brazilian sensibility is something we totally relate to as people, not just as musicians. It's a country made up of different groups of misplaced peoples who ended up making a whole new culture. Something fascinating happened there. You can say the same thing about the United States. We can't romanticize it because there were often horrible circumstances. But in Brazil they sing about it. There's all this pain going on, so they sing, dance, and rejoice in the pure and simple joy of living.

Coming Up

We've been touring *Raconte-moi*—the current album—but we're taking time off now and then to write the songs that will appear on the Brazil album. But the next album will be a live album. There'll be songs on it from Ishiguro and Ladeira and also songs from *The Great American Songbook*.

Through a Glass Darkly

The success of *Raconte-moi* in so many different countries really opened my eyes to something; sometimes when you don't know what the words mean, the whole listening experience becomes very abstract. I was shy about singing French music to people who didn't know French until I realized that all those years that I hadn't understood Portuguese . . . I'd been listening to Brazilian music without knowing what they were saying and yet feeling like I understood.

Two things that are both true— the words are so important, and yet when you don't understand the words, the song is still powerful.





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

App Happy

In December, Roy and I got iPhone 4s. Even with the three-year TELUS contract, we had to pony up nearly \$160 for each of the phones. Then we needed to add call display to the bundle of features. Next, we selected a car charger and protective cases to safeguard our fancy-schmancy bit of technology. Roy opted for the heavy-duty case because he's harder on things than I am.

Fast-forward a few months. The gadget's a real workhorse, and I love the ease with which everything works. I can text, check my email accounts, take photos, and make notes. Maybe someday I'll ditch my paper calendar for the one in the phone.

Previously, I had never learned how to enter contacts into my old LG flip phone. I used it simply and exclusively for making absolutely necessary calls. I was quite smug in my "pure" use of the phone for, well, phoning. I was scornful of and concerned about those who seemed to have their phones surgically attached to their bodies. Or those who disregarded the living, breathing person in front of them to text someone miles away. Or those who were so engrossed in their devices that they became hazards on the sidewalk and the road. Or those who were engaging in time theft at their workplaces.

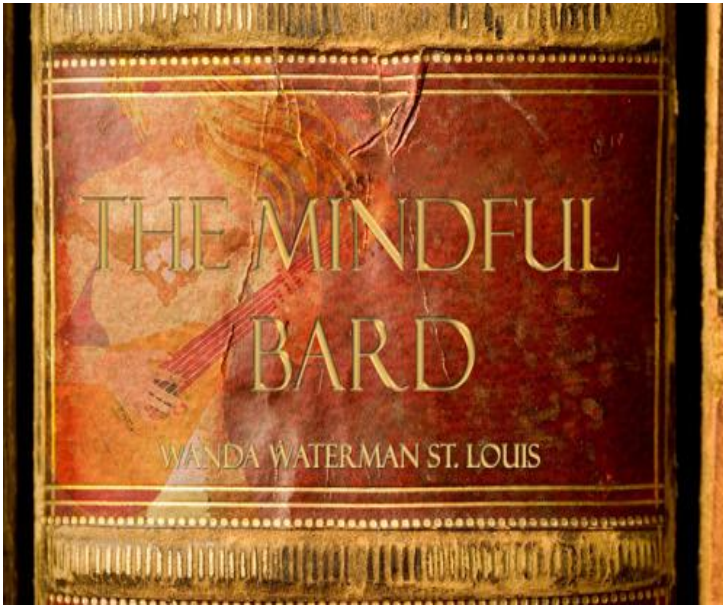
Now I understand. I get it. I have felt the pull. I've spent way too much time playing Words with Friends, a kind of Scrabble knock-off. Around Christmas, I was playing with my kids, some of their friends, and even a stranger. I was shellacking some people and being pummelled by others. I was cursing six vowels out of seven letters or game boards with no vowels at all. I saw the error of my ways. Now I have only two games on the go, and sometimes that seems like too much.

Still, by far the best part of the phone is the fun I have with it. I've used real restraint in downloading apps. Even when the price is right (free), I'm afraid of losing all sense of productivity. The spirit level app is merely a conversation piece. The dictionary app is handy, although I haven't used it yet.

Lose It is an impressive weight loss tool that tracks food intake (restaurant and brand name foods too), exercise, and progress to one's happily-ever-after goal. The simple act of recording every morsel has a deterrent effect itself. But I also know from personal experience that it is possible to not open the app for days at a time. Maybe they could make it open automatically as a guilt-inducing reminder?

Lately, I've been playing Miss Spell as a fun, frantic way to check up on my spelling. Even crazier—and hard on the nerves—is Diner Dash. Just try seating the guests, handing out menus, taking orders, delivering food, collecting checks, and cleaning tables with the incessant music playing! Maybe if I'd had some real-world experience, I wouldn't suck. It even shows the diners getting mad.

I've gotta go. I've got words to spell and tables to bus, from where I sit.



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

Film: *Lebanon* (2010)

Director/Screenwriter: Samuel Maoz

Cast: Itay Tiran, Oshri Cohen, Ashraf Barhom, Reymonde Amsellem, Michael Moshonov, Zohar Strauss, Yoav Donat, Dudu Tassa

"What is the modern? It's no longer the primordial model; it's the clash and the coexistence of two different models at the same moment. The modern says, 'I'm the master of my life, but at the same time I'm overwhelmed by the intensity of my life.'"

Francesco Casetti in an interview with Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Shards of Lebanon

In the first week of filming, writer-director Samuel Maoz felt a sharp pain in his leg. Within a day or so, what should emerge but bomb fragments, shards that had become lodged in his leg during his service for Israel in the Israel-Lebanon war in 1982.

The entire film is seen from the inside of a tank, the world outside seen only through the lens of the periscope's gun sight. But in fact the channel through which we watch these events unfold is the eye of shooter Shmulik. His brain is the filter through which we interpret the heart-rending violence, both within and without the iron shell. Shmulik's eye is at the same time a door to a soul becoming progressively damaged by the incidents it witnesses, scenes as lethal to the psyche as phosphorous to flesh.

Yes, this is the story of a specific time and place (the First Lebanon War, of 1982), but as time goes on the tank becomes the universal body and the war throbbing outside the tank becomes the human dilemma. The mission of these four boy soldiers is to make sure that a mercilessly shelled town in southern Lebanon has left no survivors, in essence to finish someone else's genocide, and they are as vulnerable and unprepared as toddlers.

Those of us who have a soft spot for one-set wonders (e.g. *Clerks*, *Friday*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), in which the action is confined to one location for most of the film, might well wonder: do such geographical restrictions enhance the drama or present an obstacle staged to show off the talents of a superlative director? I'm guessing a little of both, but for certain this kind of drama is utterly engaging. And *Lebanon* is a stunning example.

The acting is brilliant, but a standout performance by Zohar Strauss (who ironically comes across in the extras as the shallowest actor in the group) is the crown. His channelling of conscious inner conflict, like the best work of Al Pacino or Denzel Washington, expresses a full—and jarring—awareness of a deathly despair.

The cinematography is often gasp-worthy. The painfully realistic close-ups of destruction are completely devoid of action-film glamour, the banality throwing a curve ball. It really is so much worse when you leave out the bells and whistles.

A pan of sleeping soldiers draped over different parts of the tank's interior is like a classical bas-relief. A venerable old Arab sitting across from his slain companion at a café table and staring fearlessly into the tank's periscope is godlike. And hundreds of cigarette butts, smoked to the quick, floating on the tank's watery floor, become the flotsam of an absurd universe. A donkey is lying still on the ground with its stomach blown up. The gun sight zeroes in on the donkey's face and sees that the donkey's nostrils are quivering and that a great tear has rolled down its panting cheek.

"My body was relieved of all the shards of Lebanon," says director Maoz in an interview on the DVD. Is this not one of the highest things that can happen to an artist—that in response to the courage of the artist's truth-telling, the physical world rises in a miraculous embrace?



Lebanon manifests six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it integrates art with social concern, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 2) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 5) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity (Cybiont).



DID YOU KNOW? MERLOT

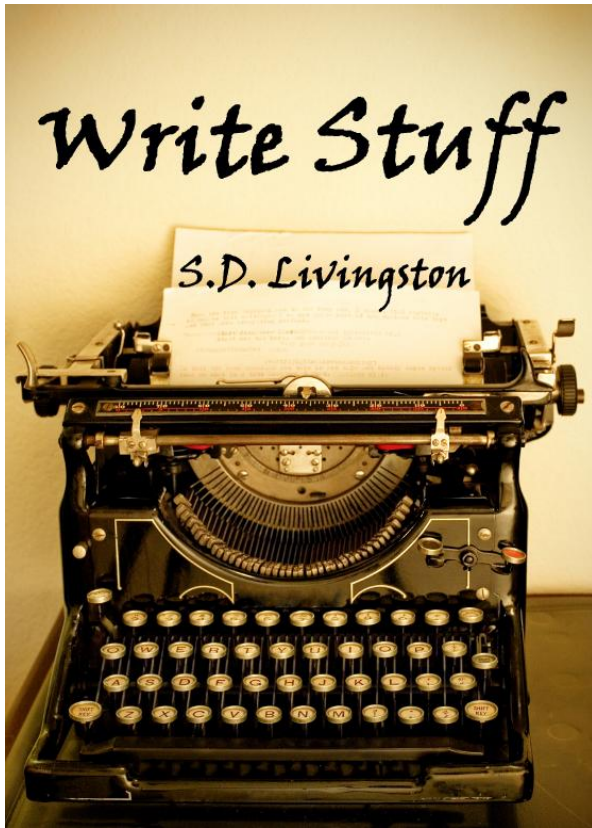
Do studying and Merlot mix? They do if we're talking about the web-based MERLOT, also known as Multimedia Educational Resource for Online Learning and Teaching, a "continually growing Open Educational Resource (OER) of online teaching tools and support resources." The free resource, a project of California State University, is a goldmine for those who want to supplement their online learning or teaching experience.

Learning materials are often linked to outside websites, and include everything from simple articles to involved presentations with audio and video components.

Students will enjoy browsing the resources in their study areas or in areas of personal interest. Best of all, they can guide themselves toward the more effective teaching tools by reading the comments and reviews made both by other users and by the Peer Reviewer Board in that discipline.

On the verge of graduating? MERLOT also provides opportunities for networking with colleagues across various disciplines as well as the chance to participate in the larger learning community as a peer reviewer or virtual speaker. It also co-sponsors a conference on online learning.

MERLOT can be a bit overwhelming due to the vast array of resources it contains. For a more detailed guide, view the tutorials on its [YouTube channel](#). Or, to get started, visit the [main page](#).



Marginalia

The literary world has many divides, and backers of a given side can be ferocious in defending their views. E-books versus paper. Science fiction and horror versus literary journals. Usually I'm content to wander somewhere in the middle of the battlefield, seeing the pros and cons of both sides. But when it comes to marginalia—those scribbles and underlines readers add to books—there's only one thing I can say: keep your hands off my margins.

In a recent *New York Times* [article](#), the writer noted that legions of book lovers are lamenting the passing of this habit (let's set the digital equivalent aside for a moment). Indeed, some books increase astronomically in value simply because someone doodled in their margins. It helps when that someone is a famous author like Mark Twain or Edgar Allan Poe, but for many marginalia lovers the scribbler's identity doesn't matter. It is, as oral historian Studs Terkel noted, part of the "raucous conversation" that reading should be, creating a dynamic exchange of opinions about a work.

To an extent, I agree. Reading has never been a passive experience. A writer's voice speaks to us through fiction and we respond, visualizing the stories they tell, reacting emotionally. Textbooks and other non-fiction books do the same. We absorb new information, and perhaps begin to think in new ways. Whether digital or on paper, the words are a dialogue between reader and writer. And marginalia is the equivalent of someone else butting, uninvited, into that conversation.

That's not to suggest that a conversation can't be enriched by other points of view. Far from it. But the difference is much like that between chatting at a party and relaxing in a quiet corner with a friend. At a public gathering or in comment threads, it's expected that people join in. Random comments, dissenting opinions—it's all part of the exchange.

But if I've chosen to engage with the ideas of a specific person—either face-to-face or on a page—someone else's scribbled margin notes interrupt that conversation. It's as though they've sidled up, plopped themselves on my lap, and said, "Yes, but here's what I think . . ." Then they disappear, only to add another unsolicited disruption a few pages further on.

Perhaps their comments add value to the conversation, but you could apply that what-if logic to every stranger browsing the same shelves in the bookstore. If someone's interested in the same title or genre, I don't necessarily want him blurting random opinions at me as I'm flipping the pages. And if it's a textbook,



an anonymous student's erroneous (but well-meaning) margin notes could easily lead me astray.

Most of us don't welcome those interruptions in private conversation, which is why it baffles me that so many hold marginalia so dear. I don't argue the historical value in preserving the margin jottings of Thomas Jefferson or Samuel Taylor Coleridge. And the marginal musings of ordinary citizens create a social record that's often painfully missing in history books, mostly because poor or uneducated people had no way to preserve their experience.

Still, marginalia strikes me as someone tugging at my sleeve to interrupt a private conversation. Perhaps the comment function of e-books will change my mind, allowing me to engage once I've had a chance to absorb the original dialogue.

But for now, I'd rather listen to Jane Austen in private.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN



Wanda Waterman St. Louis



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Shoot for the Moon

Sports and space travel: it's a bit of an odd coupling. After all, the weightlessness of space and the lack of gravity on, say, the moon, make playing extra-terrestrial sports a little difficult. But hockey and space flight may be someday intimately connected if a team of Vancouver-based entrepreneurs has its way.

As the CBC [reports](#), the group not only plans to send hockey pucks to the moon, but the round rubber discs are an important part of their spacecraft's design. The team's competing in the Google Lunar X Prize, an international competition that is offering prizes to teams that can successfully land and navigate a craft on the moon. The purpose of the contest is "to encourage commercial space development."

Entrants vary from "global heavyweights like aerospace firms" to "upstart outfits working to scrape together enough funds to compete"—like the BC team.

Still, they're hoping for a shot. But why hockey pucks? Besides the obvious symbolism, there's a practical element. According to the team's design, "three pucks would be mounted on the vehicle's motors and would help provide stability, to keep it from tipping over."

According to team leader Alex Dobrianski, deciding to include the puck was pure chance. As he told reporters, "When I looked at what weight would be suitable I just picked up my son's hockey puck . . . and found that . . . it will be absolutely perfect for this job."

Around the World: Feet of the Ancestors

Sometimes, modern medicine doesn't seem so modern after all. We're often surprised how advances we consider our own creations were actually dreamed of and even used by people in some of the more ancient civilizations. Take, for example, the use of prosthetic limbs, which experts previously believed had been around since the time of the Romans—a surprising enough idea. But recent research has led to the belief that the medical aid dates from at least several hundred years earlier.

As *Discover Magazine's* news blog [reports](#), a University of Manchester Egyptologist, Jacky Finch, has determined that "the artificial toes found on two ancient Egyptian mummies may actually be the earliest known prosthetic limbs."

Although previously they'd been viewed as "ornamentation," the artificial toes (dating from 600 BC and as early as 710 BC) are anatomically correct and show "signs of wear and tear"—indicating they may have actually been used.

Using models based on the fake toes, researchers tested out the digits on volunteers—with results that were "extremely surprising," Finch told reporters. In fact, she added, one of the toes "worked amazingly well and produced an amazing amount of movement."

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.



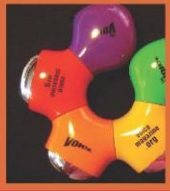



For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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.

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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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