

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Linking and Learning

Schools go digital

Gritty Paradise

The Scenesters

The Dare

Fiction

*Plus:
From Where I Sit
In Conversation With
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



FICTION

Max Birkner

The Dare



That summer we had started playing capture the flag in the cemetery a lot. Pat and James and I, and some other kids from school: the usual crowd. We'd sneak around and crouch behind the big tombstones late at night, talking on those little Motorola radios you can buy at Canadian Tire. Most of the time, it was awesome.

But one night in July there was nothing to do. Everyone else had gone up to the music festival in Pemberton, and the three of us had been drinking in the basement at Pat's place.

"Let's go down to the graveyard," someone said. Maybe it was Pat, I don't remember.

But we went. It was about midnight on a weekday and the back streets were quiet. It had been a wet summer, so the street glistened in the faint light. The Bacardi sloshed in the bottle as we raised it up and down and passed it on.

We got to the cemetery right there by Fraser Street. Lights were on across the street, and I wondered who in the world would buy a house beside a graveyard.

Toward the middle of the block, right where a gated road bisected the cemetery, there was an open grave and a big orange Cat sleeping soundly on its tracks. We tried the door to see if there was anything to mess with in there, but it was locked; and when I was about to say we should go somewhere else, Pat jumped down into the grave. It was six feet deep. His forehead was underground, and his blonde head looked up at us.

"Dude . . . can you imagine . . ."

"No," I said. I was drunk, but not that drunk.

Stop for a sec. I need to talk about Pat. He makes up his mind and no one can stop him. A year ago, when we were in Grade 10, Gordie from work said he'd give Pat a commission to steal his car and drive it out to an old road by the Britannia Mine and torch it for the insurance money. Only Gordie almost chickened out at the last minute, called Pat on his cell, and said, "Don't do it!"

"So what does Pat do?" James told me later, breathless on the phone. "He hot-wires the thing and takes it anyway." And Gordie got the insurance money, no one the wiser. They actually got away with it.

So that night in the cemetery, Pat didn't even hesitate when James said, "I dare you . . ."

The next day we built a coffin out of plywood stolen from the Polygon site by the China Creek skate park. Easy enough. In the right corner of one end we left a hole about two inches by two inches, then went down to the hardware store and bought seven feet of PVC piping and a noodle-shaped angle joint that we welded on with crazy glue. That was to keep rain or dirt out.

"You sure you want to do this?" James asked. Maybe the dare had been one of those rhetorical ones. The crazy ones that people tell lies about, lies that everyone loves because they know they're not true and they know no one would ever be dumb enough to take the dare, even if they got put on the spot.

Yup, Pat nodded. Hell's yeah. That'd be it. This is why junk like this is worth it. Nobody could top a story like this.

First we planned to go in the woods by UBC to do it.

"Naw," Pat said. "Go big or go home, man."

It was almost like this side of him I'd never met. Even more crazy than the first Pat, a version that had just showed up one day as we got older. Definitely not the blonde kid whom I'd ridden BMXs and set off Amish bombs with since we first tried smoking at age seven.

Still, this was a kid who had once dived down and gone inside an old boat which had rotted and sunk by its moorings in False Creek. Breathed air from a bicycle tube which was linked to six others by duct tape, while one of us up top on the old dock held onto the end. But he hadn't been down there for very long.

We drove out to the roads where we always went shooting with James' dad—the logging roads by the Britannia Mine where Pat had blown up the car. We parked the old red Subaru at a turnaround point 10 kilometres off the highway.

James had a nervous-horse look going on, breathing fast through his nose and looking around. His hands were shaking. "I don't think you should do it," he said.

Pat swore at him. "Relax, dude," he said. "This is like that trust thing we do at school. You know, fall backwards off the chair into everybody's arms."

"I never did that," James said.

"I did it once and I got dropped," I interjected, and Pat just laughed.

The hole didn't take long. The soil was wet and leafy. It always rained up here along the Sea to Sky. We had to take turns digging when we got further down, since only one guy could dig down there at a time.

I'll never forget the way Pat lay down in the coffin. He folded his arms over his chest and shut his eyes, but kept looking up at us under his lashes, as if someone had not closed his eyes quite properly after he died.

"Stop it, that's way too creepy," I said.

We closed the lid and lowered him down on two nylon ropes from the car. Then we put the PVC air pipe into place and James jumped down and sealed around the edges with duct tape so dirt wouldn't fall in.

"Are you sure you're up to this?" he asked.

"I'm good," Pat's voice echoed. Maybe there was a tremor in it now. It was hard to tell with the noise coming up through the pipe.

*"Relax, dude," Pat said.
"This is like that trust
thing we do at school.
You know, fall backwards
off the chair into
everybody's arms."*

James looked at me and I looked at him, and then we started to fill in the hole. The soft, dark earth made hollow thumps as it landed on the wooden lid.

Now there was just a low mound about six feet long. It felt weird talking down into a pipe. I had to lean way down and bend my head upward at an angle, like drinking from a water fountain. "Pat? You there?"

"Where the hell else would I be?" He sounded like he was calling on a pay phone from some distant country.

"Okay . . . We're going now . . . Have a good night . . ." And then we walked away. We left the shovels and the rope right there to wait for us.

On the drive home, we wouldn't look at each other.

The fog was rolling in from the ocean. I couldn't even see the islands anymore. The rain came again and pelted the windshield.

"Whatever," James said. "He'll be fine."

"He's got balls."

Condensation lay thick on the windows. The heater in the old car only worked once in a while—usually only on the warmest days.

***We were coming
around a sharp
bend when the
truck hit us.***

James broke the silence again. "Can you wipe it off? I can't see anything."

"Sure." There was a red rag in the glove compartment just for that.

I was wiping and James hit the button on the radio. Static. "Man . . . it's not my day." He fiddled with the knob.

We were coming around a sharp bend when the truck hit us.

Just winged us, but it was enough to send us off the edge, plummeting toward the sea through the evergreens, tumbling us around like clothes in a dryer.

My last thought was the image of a crumpled car like the one on the back of the school agenda that every kid got to keep track of homework and classes. It was an ad against drunk driving.

Four days later I woke up in a hospital bed. I was on and off drugs for over three weeks. People came by to visit. Mom and dad. James' parents, since we got moved into the same room. He was a lot worse off than I since he'd been on the driver's side when we got hit. They kept wheeling him in and out for one operation or another—a brain scan, an x-ray—every day a different menu. Both his legs were up in splints and he was in a coma. His ribs had punctured both his lungs when they broke: a double tension-pneumothorax, someone said. Doctor talk for a closed sucking chest wound.

We'd stopped rolling right side up, half-in and half-out of the ocean by the rocky shore. The waves had been coming through the shattered windows. North Shore Rescue had been first on scene, and SARTECH had come from Comox with a chopper to lift us out.

For a while I was blind. Somebody, the same somebody with a deep voice who'd told me about James' chest, said my skull was fractured, that both orbital bones around my eyes were broken. I had broken ribs and a fractured wrist. But I would be okay. It was too early to know how long I'd be in physio.

I kept wondering, in the haze, why Pat hadn't come by. We were best friends.

Then a VPD detective came to ask about him. Pat had disappeared on the day of the crash. Had he been with us?

That's when I remembered.

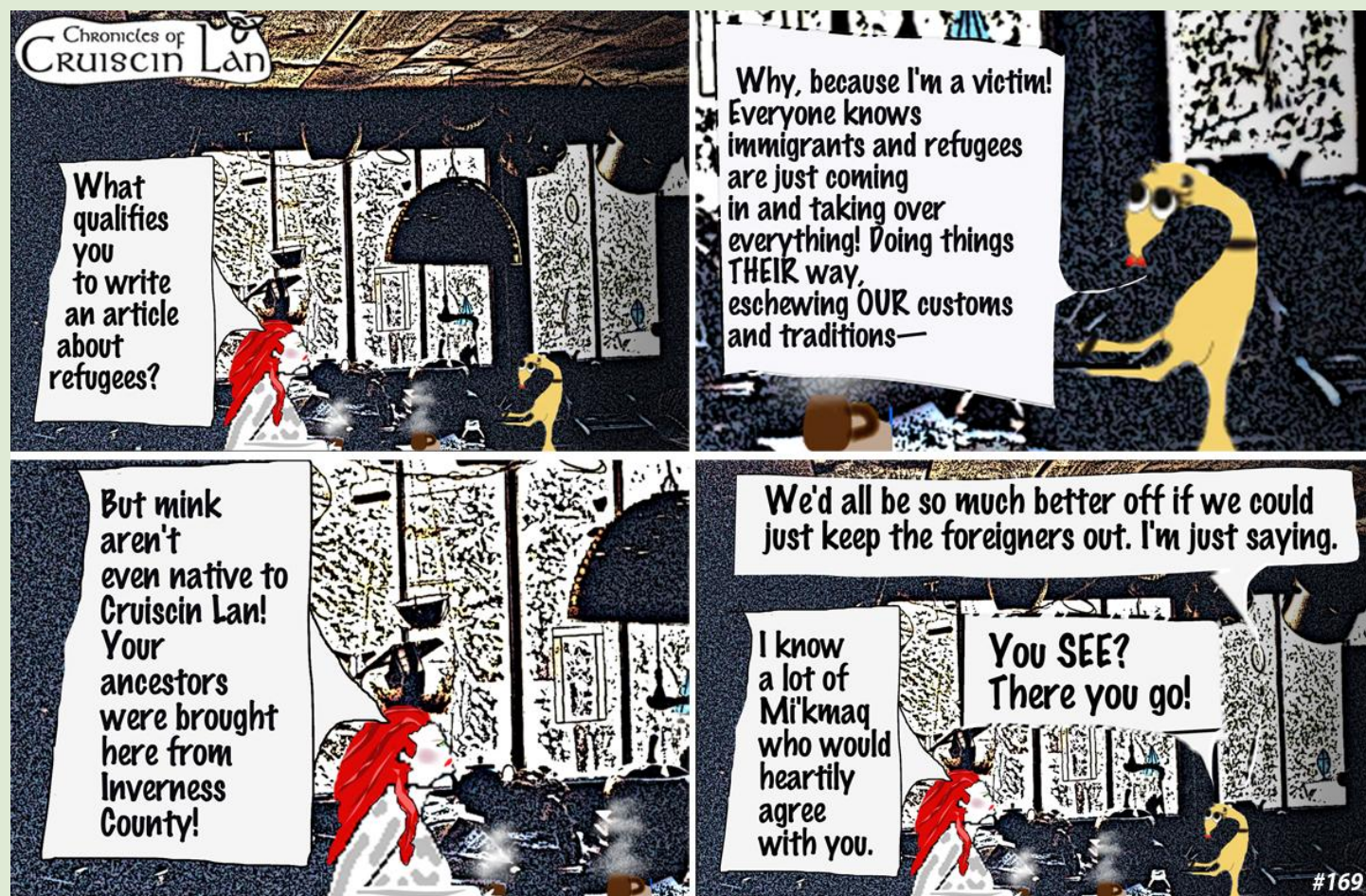
I couldn't shake my head. I couldn't even talk properly because I'd nearly bit my tongue off when we were falling.

"I don't know where he is," I mumbled. "I don't know where he was that day."



CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman



Magnetic Ear, Part II

Magnetic Ear is a New Orleans pocket brass band whose members include Martin Krusche (tenor sax), Michael Watson (trombone), Wes Anderson IV (trombone), Dan Oestreicher (baritone sax), Jason Jurzak (sousaphone), and Paul Thibodeaux (drums). Rooted in the brass band tradition (in particular the New Orleans second line tradition), the band incorporates an eclectic host of musical influences in its dynamic, danceable sound. It has recently

released its third CD, Aliens of Extraordinary Ability (see the Voice review [here](#)), and has embarked on a tour of the US and Europe.

Recently Martin Krusche—the band’s leader, tenor sax player, and composer— took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman about music writing software, eclectic musical edification, and a cat called “Maus.” (See the first part of the interview [here](#).)

Smart Tools

I’ve written music all my life by hand, but I’ve been using music writing software since being with this band. Just copying out the charts eats up a lot of time. I couldn’t do this without Sibelius; it’s too much work. I’ve handwritten so much music in my life that I can really appreciate the difference.

Feeding the Creative Mind

I listen to everything. You can tell from listening to the record that there’s barely any genre that we have not been interested in in one way or the other. I listen to a lot of different stuff: I listen to Balkan brass bands, African brass bands, New Orleans brass bands . . . I listen to rock, pop, rap . . . I guess there’s very little music that I have no interest in. House music is pretty much the only music that doesn’t do anything for me. Everything else is interesting in some way.

I guess generally as an artist you want to keep yourself as open as possible and take your inspiration from as many diverse places as you can get it from. All of this listening might come out as an influence one way or the other— it’s always hard to tell about yourself. But “exclude nothing” would be the motto.



About “Maus”

Maus was the name of a cat of mine that I had for a very long time. She was born in my storefront apartment when I was living in Brooklyn, and she was with me for 12 years. I have a little sailboat on the lake that’s named after her.

The [song] describes a sail along the south shore here on Lake Pontchartrain. The poem is about this

“[As] an artist you want to keep yourself as open as possible and take your inspiration from . . . many diverse places . . . All of this listening might come out as an influence one way or the other . . . ‘Exclude nothing’ would be the motto.”

Martin Krusche of Magnetic Ear

sailing trip, and Moose [poet Raymond “Moose” Jackson] wrote a poem about it. So if you think of it that way, maybe the poem becomes more clear and accessible. But something that can’t be completely deciphered at first remains interesting; sometimes when you can’t catch a word, a poem remains mysterious to you and so keeps a certain attraction.

On the Horizon

We made a lot of headway last year locally because you almost have to reintroduce yourself to your audience if you change your sound somewhat.

If you listen to *Live at Saturn Bar* and our last record, you can clearly hear the difference between jazz band and brass band music. So we really needed to get out there and show our new stuff and get a

larger audience and fan base, and we’ve managed to do that. We went up to Philadelphia and Baltimore in the middle of May and we would like to continue to tour nationally and hopefully again internationally and go to Europe next summer. We’ve been to Berlin and did a whole bunch of playing in Germany.

We’re trying to increase the time we’re on the road. In terms of music production this record is going to serve us well for the near future. We’re going to be touring off that record for a little while because it’s very dense and has a lot of music on it, and it’s going to be our general direction for quite a while.

Tell Your Story, Win an iPad!

What’s your story?

Everyone’s educational journey is unique, and writing about yours could win you an iPad!

Open AU is holding its “Send Us Your Story” contest until July 1, 2011. How has education changed your life? What role has AU played in your story?

Your submission could appear in *Open AU*, and you will be entered in a random drawing for an iPad. To enter the contest, or read other submissions, visit the [contest page](#).



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Courtesy monterey media inc.
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Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Film: *The Scenesters* (monterey media 2011).

Genre: Drama, comedy

Writer/director: Todd Berger

Cast: Sherilyn Fenn, Blaise Miller, Todd Berger, Jeff Grace, Kevin M. Brennan, James Jolly, Monika Jolly, and Suzanne May

"In front of you is an exciting, even dangerous life, but while watching it you feel safe. In this sense the film theatre is a harbour in which to enjoy the turmoil and the storm around you. You are living the storm, but you are in the harbour."

Francesco Casetti in an [interview](#) with Wanda Waterman

"As machines get to be more and more like men, men will come to be more like machines."

Joseph Wood Krutch

The Illusory Safety of the Hollywood Dream Machine

In *Eye of the Century*, Francesco Casetti reveals to us the role of film in everyday life: film reflects our difficulties and presents us with solutions to help us cope with our conflicts and negotiate cultural change. Understandably, film will often comment on its own role or on the role of technology.

The Scenesters is the second film in a row that I've reviewed involving a film within a film (a film about the circumstances surrounding the making of another movie), in which the debate is clearly the relationship between the story being told in the film and the reality unfolding around the film's creation. Is there a pattern here? Is postmodern culture experiencing a blurring of the line between film and reality?

Small-time film producer Wallace Cotton has had the funding pulled on his latest project, so he gets a job with the police department, filming crime scenes.

Wallace meets a crime scene clean-up man named Charlie Newton, who in spite of being a bit of a loser has an amazing ability to detect and process clues that the police miss. It's an opportunity that can't be missed: Wallace decides to make, unbelievably, a *film noir documentary* with Charlie as the star.

In its own casual and sardonic way *The Scenesters* shows up where we are in the conflict between the reality of Los Angeles life and the many film approaches to interpreting that life and life in general.

Except for the ridiculously incongruous appearance of Charlie Newton, the noir scenes are so juicy and evocative you want to forget that this is a comedy and just dive right in and take it all seriously. They are

almost the only visually and aurally engaging scenes in the film, but they're all you need, creating a lovely contrast with the jerky camera work and gritty realism of the rest of the movie.

Wallace ends up bringing along his whole film crew and eventually staging his own "reality" scenes because they fit his film's agenda. Meanwhile, the film crew happily helps itself to whatever they find in the refrigerators of the murder victims while playing their video games and listening to their CDs.

In LA everything relates back to film somehow: everyone wants to be on film, to be recognized, to participate in this medium that seems realer than real, to live their lives as if they are perpetually on camera. And those in the film industry can be so smug, narcissistic, and liberally amoral that the comedic potential is vast.

As in *Even the Rain*, modern liberals here are mocked for their bizarre ethical codes that seem to be slapped like new paint on top of rotting moral characters. While showing no compassion for the murder victims ("Look, he only kills women, all right? So let's not lose focus."), they remain sticklers about political correctness:

"Okay, what do we know about this killer?"

"Well, he's probably a white male in his 40s."

"Okay, we need to put the brakes on the whole racist thing right now."

"In LA everything relates back to film somehow: everyone wants . . . to live their lives as if they are perpetually on camera. And those in the film industry can be so smug, narcissistic, and liberally amoral that the comedic potential is vast."

The dream world from which the biggest box office successes emerge is presented in all its hazy, gravelly, sagebrushy ugliness that simply sings with the horrendous architecture and interior decor. But California is still the land where you can wish upon a star and someday your prince will come, so of course loser

Charlie is implausibly hooked up with a gorgeous newscaster who adores him.

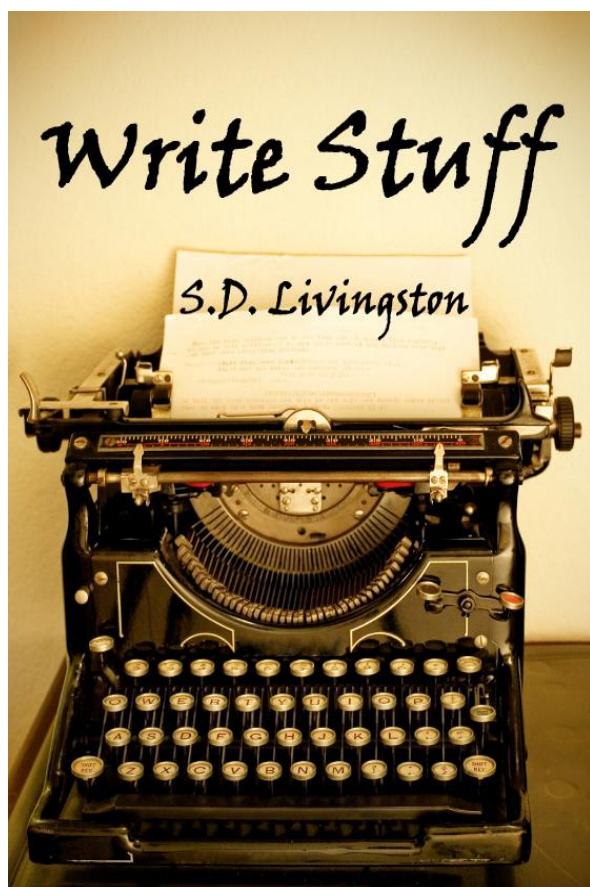
To add to the fun, the film is a showcase for some really good East LA musical acts that form the soundtrack and which are also key props in the story.

And to top it all off, you'll never guess who the killer is.

The Scenesters manifests three of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 2) it is authentic, original, and delightful; and 3) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



Blaise Miller as Charlie Newton in "The Scenesters." Courtesy monterey media inc.
©MMIX The Scenesters LLC.



E-Brains

The biggest push in education right now seems to be the joyful surge of students rushing headlong toward the exits, ready for sun and fun. But there's a larger change afoot—one that might be part of your own curriculum when class bells ring this September. From public schools to universities, paper books are rapidly making way for e-texts. The cool new option is sure to excite students, but is it really doing much for their brains?

The question wouldn't be as urgent if students were assured of a choice. Ideally, those who prefer to flip through their dog-eared copies of Hamlet could do so, while their classmates could scribble margin notes onscreen with a stylus. Unfortunately, some schools aren't offering that option. In New Jersey, the Edison Township School District will be the first in the state "to implement an entirely iPad-based Algebra 1 curriculum." Using the HMH Fuse app, students can access over 400 video tutorials, while teachers can "monitor performance via Wi-Fi, with real-time, student-specific feedback."

Still other schools are making the shift in chunks. In Berkshire, UK, Wellington College plans to replace "thousands of its books with a state-of-the-art library that uses iPads." Every student already has access to a laptop, and the library update will see half of the main collection's 20,000 books go digital.

In Florida, Governor Rick Scott has plans to "make e-readers possible in all public schools, grades kindergarten through high school, through funding earmarked specifically for digital content." Although the 2015 school year is slotted for the plan's main rollout, at least one Florida high school already issued "Kindle readers to all of its students for the 2010-2011 school year."

Clearly the rush toward e-learning is on, and there's no denying its appeal. One recent survey of 1,214 college students found that over "two-thirds of them showed overwhelming interest in tablet devices, and believed that tablets would transform higher education." Only a small percentage of those students actually owned tablets, but 73 per cent of users preferred e-texts over print.

In a different survey, elementary and high school students showed a preference for digital material as well. The Commonwealth of Virginia summarizes these findings ahead of its final report: e-books increased student engagement with the material; teachers noted a "dramatic increase in the students' independence and willingness to be responsible for learning on their own"; and students enjoyed learning at their own pace with digital texts.

Yet as every teacher knows, sometimes learning the best lessons means asking the tough questions. When it comes to digital classrooms, the question is simple: are e-books good for our brains? And, in a broader sense, does physical interaction with books, and even handwriting, provide skills the digital world can't replace?

"In a classroom where hyperlinks abound, and where students can quickly skim from text to video to audio, how will they develop the ability to focus, to read deeply? And if they can't focus, what does it matter how many slick digital tools they have if none of the information sticks in their brains?"

The first question was addressed in a *New York Times* Room for Debate column back in 2009. *The Times* asked five well-respected voices to weigh in—and their opinions should prompt school boards and educators to pause before rushing to convert to digital classrooms.

One contributor, Sandra Aamodt, is the former editor-in-chief of *Nature Neuroscience*. She noted that although "people read more slowly on screen, by as much as 20-30 percent," that gap is slowly shrinking as we become more accustomed to digital texts. As well, improved e-ink technology on many reading devices makes paper and digital reading virtually the same.

Still, deeper concerns remain—quite literally. In a classroom where hyperlinks abound, and where students can quickly skim from text to video to audio, how will they develop the ability to focus, to read deeply? And if they can't focus, what does it matter how many slick digital tools they have if none of the information sticks in their brains?

In that same Room for Debate session, Maryanne Wolf (the John DiBiaggio Professor in the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts) raised that pivotal issue. She noted this fascinating fact about the human brain: in reading, our brains learn to "access and integrate within 300 milliseconds a vast array of visual, semantic, sound (or phonological), and conceptual processes, which allows us to decode and begin to comprehend a word." And you thought your new laptop was fast.

We kick things up a notch after those 300 milliseconds, though. Apparently, that's when our brain circuits go beyond absorbing the text and we start to think about it. As Wolf writes, that's when we spend the next 100 to 200 milliseconds on "an even more sophisticated set of comprehension processes": we move from basic comprehension to "inference, analogical reasoning, critical analysis, contextual knowledge, and finally, the apex of reading: our own thoughts that go beyond the text."

And that's where the hyperlinked classroom needs a lot more research before it becomes the norm. Being engaged by tablets and e-readers is one thing, but if students are clicking to the next animation or video before that crucial reasoning phase kicks in, how much of the lesson have they truly absorbed? In other words, will a reliance on digital materials train our kids' brains



to go blank as soon as the screen does?

The benefits of analogue learning extend beyond reading to writing as well. Not typing, but the physical act of pushing a pencil across a page. A recent *LA Times* [article](#) reports that handwriting and typing affect the brain in very different ways. Researchers at Indiana University found several differences, but perhaps the most important one is that handwriting improved the brain activation of preliterate preschool children.

Two groups of preschoolers were shown letters. One group simply practiced viewing and saying the letters; the other group practiced printing them. At the end of four weeks, the preschoolers who wrote the letters “showed brain activation similar to an adult’s,” and their recognition of the letters was higher than that of the children who didn’t do any writing.

So does all this mean that the switch to digital classrooms is folly? Of course not. E-texts, tablets, and the



Internet can bring learning to exciting new levels. Videos and interactive apps can complement traditional books. Hyperlinks can lead students of all ages to serendipitous discoveries and reignite a passion for discovery and learning. The Internet can open students’ eyes to a much broader world, opening dialogue between kids halfway around the globe.

But before we rush to abandon older teaching methods, it looks like we’ve got a lot more homework to do.

DID YOU KNOW?



Career Plan: Self-Assessment

Whether you’re getting ready to take your first class or have recently graduated with a certificate or degree, chances are you’ve been giving a great deal of thought to career planning. AU Counselling Services’ Self-Assessment [page](#) offers a number of online resources to point you in the right direction.

If you’re just starting out or are seeking a career or program change, the “Mapping Your Future” [assessment quiz](#) will guide you toward fields that mesh well with your personality and values. Those who are mid-degree should also consider taking the quiz, as interests and values can change in the course of life.

New degree or certificate students will want to check out the “Am I ready for studies in . . .” [quiz](#), which flags “strengths and weaknesses in English, Math, Chemistry, and Computing Science.” At the end of the quiz, you can browse a list of remedial courses designed to bring students up to speed in several areas.

The page includes additional assessment and career planning tools, including downloadable career planning forms. It’s a good place from which to jump-start your career and educational journey.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Canmore, Here I Come

As I write this, packing is on my mind. Very soon I'll be off for a week at our timeshare condo in Canmore, Alberta. Canmore, in the Bow Valley, is nestled at the base of the Rocky Mountains about 100 kilometres west of Calgary and about 20 east of Banff. With a permanent population of 12,000, it's big enough to have everything, yet small enough to navigate easily.

There's something reassuring in an all's-right-with-the-world kind of way when places you visited in the past are still there when you return. A little pre-trip Googling has confirmed that Indochine, a Vietnamese fusion restaurant in my building, is still there. This time, I'll be sure to visit more than once during my stay. And I'm sure some of my money will find its way into the till at Second Story Books, a little gem hidden in the basement of a building on 8th Street. My Internet intelligence tells me there's another bookstore to check out: Cafe Books. Is it new or simply overlooked on previous trips? I mustn't forget to stop in at the antique shop and thrift store as well.

Because Roy will be busy spraying the crops for weeds and attending meetings, he is staying behind. That is not entirely a bad thing, and I suspect he'd agree. A week apart won't hurt this nearly 38-year marriage. He can chill or do whatever it is that he does.

And I can accomplish something. I am taking mucho work with me. There are writing projects to complete and others to begin. There are magazine markets to study and queries to write.

There is the second novel to (re)start with some intense effort. I'm reading and loving *No Plot? No Problem!*, written by the founder of National Novel Writing Month, Chris Baty. While I have no intention of writing a novel in a month, I'm sure there are some lessons to be learned from him and from

the fast novel-writing phenomenon in general.

I've loaded my e-reader with many titles for those moments when I need to take a break. The resort also lends DVDs, and last year I watched several at bedtime. How freeing it is to eat, sleep, read, work, and play when a girl wants to? Guilt-free. Not on anyone else's timetable.

Of course, one of my last duties is filling the fridge with effortless (and non-toxic) eating options for Roy, because he would surely starve to death otherwise. So between packing clothing and toiletries and filling a couple of business cases with work supplies, I've got to get the laundry done, get the flowerbeds looking a little less straggly, and plan that infernal cooking.

To ensure that my retreat is productive and restorative, I will pack some music, a scented candle, work essentials, and some focussed intentions. The goal: to do those things I wouldn't get to at home because of interruptions and distractions, plus enjoy some guilt-free rewards.

This week will be a wonderful gift and I hope, dear reader, that you too can enjoy your own version of this little bit of heaven. Canmore, are you ready? Because here I come, from where I sit.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Water Play

The long weekend is around the corner—and chances are that plans to hit the beach, relax at the cottage, or go fishing out on the lake are in the works. You've packed your swimsuit, your tackle, or a great, relaxing read. But wait: before heading for the water, take a moment to refresh yourself on water safety. Ensure that your holiday has a happy ending!

Suit Up

Even if you're a strong swimmer, you still can drown in a boating accident if you're not wearing a life jacket or personal flotation device. (PFD) According to the Canadian Red Cross, 88 per cent of boating accident deaths in Canada are a result of drowning. Click the link for a checklist of what to look for when shopping for the article of "clothing" that could save your life. More detailed information on Canadian recommendations for life jackets and PFDs can be found [here](#).

Summer Chills

The sun may be shining and the air temperature comfortable, but the water is often a different story: more than half of Canadian drowning deaths took place in water that was less than 10 degrees C. Cold water brings additional challenges to those trying to stay afloat. Click the link to watch videos and get educated about the realities of cold water immersion—and how to survive it.

How to Save a Life

No one plans for it, but accidents happen—and unfortunately, the would-be rescuer is often also at risk. Be prepared and learn how to rescue a drowning victim while staying safe yourself.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Show Me the Money

The cynics say that our financial transactions amount to nothing more than just paper changing hands. But it won't be that way for long—literally.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), the Bank of Canada is set to introduce synthetic plastic polymer banknotes, with the first set (\$100 bills) rolling out this fall.

Although people frequently use credit or debit cards to make purchases, Canada is by no means “a cashless society.” In fact, “half of all financial transactions still involve cash,” which means that a paper money makeover is long overdue.

The new, hardier banknotes “will not tear” and will include heightened security measures to reduce the chance of counterfeit activity. Moreover, they are more earth-friendly, as they will be

recyclable (unlike paper banknotes, which are destroyed once removed from circulation).

The new \$20 bills should be in circulation by late 2012, and bank officials hope to “have 70 or 80 per cent of the older notes out of circulation within 18 months of issuing the new ones.”

But if you're attached to your paper money, don't worry: “older-style bills that aren't too worn out will be accepted indefinitely.”

Around the World: Stop Whining!

For pure nerve-grating noise, there are few sounds that can top the whining of a child (or adult). But it's worse than mere annoyance. Not only is whining cringe-inducing, it can also hurt the hearer's productivity and concentration—and cause multiple errors.

As MSNBC.com [reports](#), whining can be more distracting than the sound of a “high-pitched table saw.”

The study, helmed by psychology professors, discovered that “people made more mistakes per math problems completed when listening to . . . whines than any . . . other speech patterns or noises.” Moreover, those who heard whining also completed “fewer” math problems than those who were immersed in quiet.

In fact, as study co-author Rosemarie Sokol Chang, a psychology professor at SUNY New Paltz, told reporters, “You're basically doing less work and doing it worse when you're listening to the whines.”

The findings were the same for both men and women, and, surprisingly, it “didn't matter whether someone was a parent or not.”

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.

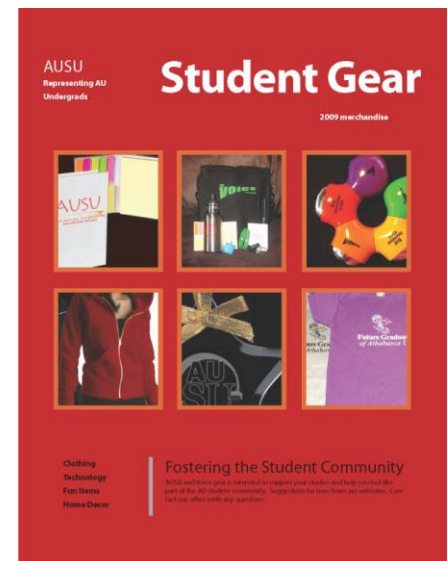
SmartDraw Program Renewal

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.



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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