

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 25 2011-07-08

Agents of Change

Publishing's new face

User Profile

Lies that tell the truth

Court TV

Trials go celeb

*Plus:
From Where I Sit
Click of the Wrist
and much more!*



CONTENTS

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

Features

Editorial: Trial by Fury 3

Columns

Write Stuff: Pottermore 5

From Where I Sit: Five Simple Mistakes 8

The Mindful Bard: *Catfish* 9

Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan 11

AUSU Update 13

News and Events

How Do You Like Your *Voice*? 4

Click of the Wrist..... 6

Did You Know? 7

International News Desk 12

From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor 2

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Trial by Fury

It was a story made for television.

Literally.

Unless you've been on a media break for the past few years, you've probably heard of the Casey Anthony trial, which wrapped this week with what many consider to be a shocking verdict: the Florida mom was found not guilty of murdering her young daughter.

Social media, blogs, and news stations exploded at the news. "Travesty of justice!" people shouted, and Facebookers organized vigils and castigated Casey, the judge and jurors, and the justice system in general. Comments ranged from "May that pathetic excuse for a human being rot in hell" to "I've lost all faith in humanity."

How did it come to this? How does one trial—one alleged murder out of the countless suspicious deaths each year—take hold of the hearts, minds, and, some would argue, the logic of so many?

It's interesting to ponder how one particular case manages to go viral and catch and hold the attention of the public. (It's also reminiscent of a few "celebrities" who've become famous for being famous—for no reason other than that somehow they possessed the right qualities at the right time, catapulting them to overnight stardom despite little to no artistic credit to their names.)

The whole situation begs for a Malcolm Gladwell-style analysis. Why did the Anthony case rock the nation when other equally tragic cases have paraded through courts in the three years since Caylee Anthony died? The right environment and particular characteristics allowed the media to create, and perpetuate, an overnight sensation.

Because make no mistake about it: the media created this story, much in the same way it manufactures overnight celebrities. Montages of cute photos of Caylee, emotional talk show hosts, lists of "evidence," and a long line of "expert" guests who weren't actually involved in the case were overlaid with emotional rhetoric to create a drama that rivalled daytime soaps. Of course the ending, like any good story's close, was foreshadowed: there would be "justice for Caylee."

Then the public caught on, and the drama gripped viewers, listeners, and readers, spreading, as Gladwell might have put it, like a virus.

It's no surprise that news media has moved away from its perhaps esoteric beginnings as the guardian of democracy, instead becoming enmeshed with the entertainment industry. Like Neil Postman argued years ago, news has become entertainment. But if you think this is the part where we blame the media for the sensationalism of news stories, we're in for a nasty shock.

Fact is, news entertainment is a business, regardless of its origins. And a business depends upon pleasing its clients. The problem is that we, the public, are desperate to be entertained. Are we surprised that the industry evolved to meet our needs?

In a way, we're responsible for this. No one wants tragedy, but we're always looking ahead to the new thing, the next big drama to sit back, chatter about, and give our thoroughly inexperienced opinions about. We want our news to become water cooler talk.

But wait a minute. At heart, aren't we still looking for, as the buzz phrase goes, "Justice for Caylee?"

Not really. We're up in arms about Caylee Anthony's unexplained death because the story requires it. The cute white girl from the middle-class background, with a mom who could have moved among any of us unsuspected. Our emotions were manipulated—but we let it happen, because it worked just like our favourite TV shows. Let's be honest. The public's angry about the Anthony case verdict because, as one *Washington Post* contributor put it, "It's a show, and we didn't like the ending."

Are we truly interested in "Justice for Caylee," or are we just annoyed because our favourite soap just gave us an unsatisfactory ending?

Tens of thousands of murders are committed in the United States each year—and countless more across the globe. How many children are among the victims? How many children from other, less attractive backgrounds are neglected, sexually abused, mutilated, or brutally murdered?

The human life lost has the same value, but few remark it. How many protests, candlelight vigils, and billboards are created in memory of the African American kid who lives below the poverty line?

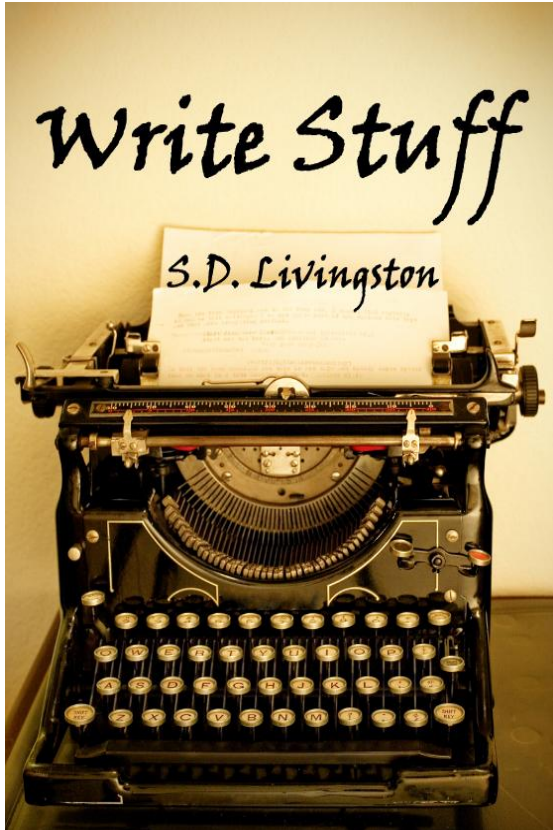
By supporting the media sensationalizing of certain cases at the exclusion of others, we devalue ourselves, our neighbours, and desensitize ourselves to those who truly need our help. And that's a tragedy we should all be up in arms about.

How Do You Like Your Voice?

It's no secret that the patterns of media consumption have changed drastically over the past couple of years—and that they're going to keep evolving with new technological breakthroughs. We at *The Voice* want to ensure that we're continuing to meet your needs, and we need your help.

How would you prefer to read *The Voice Magazine*? Do you like downloading the PDF, or does reading articles online suit your browsing needs better? Do you prefer flipping through articles on a smart phone, e-reader, or other mobile device?

Let us know; we're listening!



Pottermore

If you're a *Harry Potter* fan, you've probably been busy waiting for the premiere of the final film in the series—or checking J.K. Rowling's new [Pottermore](#) site for updates. So you might be forgiven for missing some other big news in the world of Hogwarts: Rowling's ditched her long-time agent and gone indie. Much like the first appearance of a certain boy wizard, it's a move that could change your reading landscape forever.

There will, no doubt, be critics who call Rowling out as ungrateful. After all, Christopher Little is the literary agent who got the unknown Rowling started. He not only took a chance on the first-time author, but he also shepherded her career through a minefield of international rights agreements, and—in a presciently wise move—retained the author's digital rights for her. If Rowling had signed them away, she might only be getting a 15 or 20 per cent slice of the e-book and audiobook pie. Now she's in charge of the whole thing, and will even bypass retailers like Amazon to sell directly and

exclusively through her new site.

So is she hurting a publishing world that's already in flux, with agents and legacy publishers scrambling to stay afloat? No. She's simply making a smart business move that will benefit not only herself but her readers and, potentially, literary agents.

For starters, Christopher Little has already earned something in the ballpark of \$200 million in commissions. Nothing close to Rowling's billions, but not a bad payday for a 15-year period. And Rowling has, perhaps inadvertently, just given a huge boost to the thriving new market set to hire agents: indie authors.

But not in the traditional sense, where agents sorted through the slush pile, signed a promising writer, then tried to earn a commission by selling a book to a publisher. These days, with the traditional market shrinking and e-book sales growing, agents' roles are shifting. They're taking on more of the marketing and promotion that publishers used to do (and I do mean *used to*, since much of that heavy lifting has become the writer's job).

Agents still work on commission, but a growing number now get paid directly by the indie authors they promote, not by the publishers. When a big name like Rowling starts selling directly to readers, it adds credence to the do-it-yourself model—a burgeoning market that may soon be keeping agents in business.

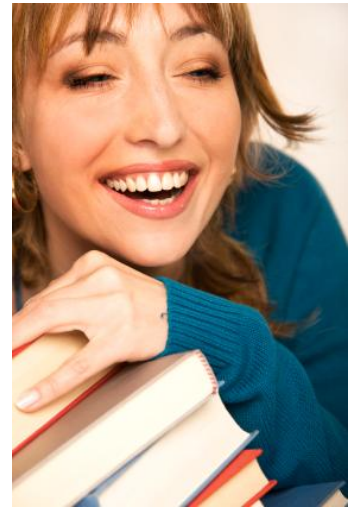
The other factor at play here is the role of publishers. Far from being the romanticized curators of culture, publishers are businesses. Their focus is on finding bestsellers, those literary home runs that make up for all the mid-list titles and failures they've lost money on.

Yes, acquisitions editors recognize good writing. And yes, publishers have brought thousands of classic titles to readers. But they also have a track record of unabashedly putting profits over quality (the esteemed imprint William Morrow, which published *Mystic River*, also brought you *The Rules According To JWOWW*). If an author hasn't earned out an advance, or doesn't look like a profitable new risk, publishers won't hesitate to cut him loose. Rowling is simply playing by the rules that legacy publishing set and striking the best deal for herself.

And last but definitely not least, we come to the readers, the people who keep the whole thing in motion. Does Rowling's move mean fewer choices for readers, as an enormous slice of the publishers' pie crumbles and they hesitate to take risks? Not at all. In fact, now that final decisions aren't made by a publisher, Rowling has more options. She can take more chances, perhaps spin her imaginary world in a direction that an editing committee would never have approved.

By adding her voice to the self-published market, Rowling will also guide readers off the beaten path of traditional book buying and help them discover alternatives to the Amazons and Walmarts. She's not the only major author doing so but she's the biggest, and her voice lends a certain authority to the notion of buying a book straight from the author's web site. And that may just help people discover other Rowlings-in-waiting, the ones who take literary chances that publishers won't bet on but that readers may come to love.

So rather than looking at it as a big-time author turning her back on the establishment that got her started, I see it as an author connecting directly with her audience. And isn't that really good for everyone who loves books?



CLICK OF THE WRIST

Want Fries with That?

For years, hometown festivals—and urban gatherings—have featured speed eating contests. Whether you participate or watch (camera phones in hand), it's all in good fun. But for some, eating professionally is a serious business—with records to be made and prize titles to defend. Monday marked the annual Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest, often referred to as the "Olympics" of competitive eating. In the spirit of the "sport," this week's links investigate just what's cookin'.

First Prize

Love good old PB&J sandwiches? Could you eat 42 of them—in just 10 minutes? That's the current record, held by professional eating champ Patrick Bertoletti. Check out more competitive eating records, officially

maintained by regulatory group Major League Eating (“the undisputed authority on competitive eating worldwide”).

Just Eat It

If you’ve never seen a professional eating contest, *ABC News* has coverage of the 2011 Nathan’s Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest. Prepare to be amazed—and perhaps mildly disturbed.

Fitting It In

Sure, it’s possible to work up a hearty appetite, but 40 to 60 hot dogs is pretty hard to imagine for even the hungriest reader. How do competitive eaters fit it all in without getting sick? And are they hurting their bodies? This WebMD feature sheds light on the sometimes surprising answers.

A Look Inside

This *Wall Street Journal* article offers a further explanation of the science behind competitive eating, plus some stomach x-rays comparing regular and competitive eaters.



DID YOU KNOW?

Just Ask TED



Bored? Stuck in a rut? Maybe you just need an influx of something fresh and new. Look no further than TED.com, a “global community” created by non-profit organization TED, whose singular mission is to propagate “Ideas Worth Spreading.”

The organization sponsors conferences and prizes, but its website is accessible to all. It hosts nearly 1,000 (and counting!) interesting, entertaining, inspiring, and/or informative talks by experts and thinkers in all fields and from all corners of the globe. Some talks were given at TED conferences, while others were created for expressly for the organization. All the talks are published under a Creative Commons license, which means that they may be downloaded and shared freely (with certain limitations as to use).

The site can be searched by category, but viewers can also browse the most popular talks, as well as those rated by other viewers as high-ranking in certain descriptive categories (most inspiring, most ingenious, etc.).

A sampling of what’s awaiting you: a talk profiling someone who treats cancer through dance, an education and creativity expert’s thoughts on why traditional education stifles creativity, and a Harvard political philosophy professor’s discussion of the “lost art of democratic debate.” From AIDS research to artificial intelligence to Google to sustainability, you’re sure to find something to intrigue or inspire you.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Five Simple Mistakes

Having even a left arm in a cast is both frustrating and annoying. Anxious to leave the emergency department after six hours, I didn't ask about cast care, nor did anyone offer any. Mistake number one.

Because I had been icing my wrist during the hours I waited at the ER, the pain was manageable. I didn't ask for pain meds and none were offered. If you're counting, this would be mistake *deux*.

That became painfully apparent—literally—when I returned to the condo and went to bed. Despite the pillow-propping and a bed all to myself, I couldn't get comfortable enough to sleep. I hadn't packed painkillers and had no way to buy any.

By 4:30 am I was up. I knew that two of my peeps were en route to save me, and to minimize the inconvenience and time wasted I decided to pre-pack as much as I could. By 5:30 I was done. I had my three (!) rolling cases of papers, files, books, and supplies all packed. I had emptied the cupboards and fridge and repacked my cooler. My clothing was waiting in its suitcase.

A pain pill and exhaustion led to a sound and refreshing sleep back in my own bed. But guilt got me up and at 'em. Note to self: don't do all that unpacking and then six loads of laundry. (Mistake number three.) Ditto for the couple of hours of weeding I did the next day. My left arm didn't do a thing but hang at my side, and pain was the result. Mistake number four.

By now I had started to get the picture. My body had suffered a trauma and needed rest, not catch-up work around the house. Typing was not easy or quick, but last week's "From Where I Sit" needed to be done. A couple of emails to friends had to be finished too, but everything else had to wait.

Except personal hygiene. A plastic veterinary glove for preg checking cows (don't ask) that reaches my shoulder kept my cast dry during shampooing. Using a hair dryer and brush or hooking up a bra was impossible.

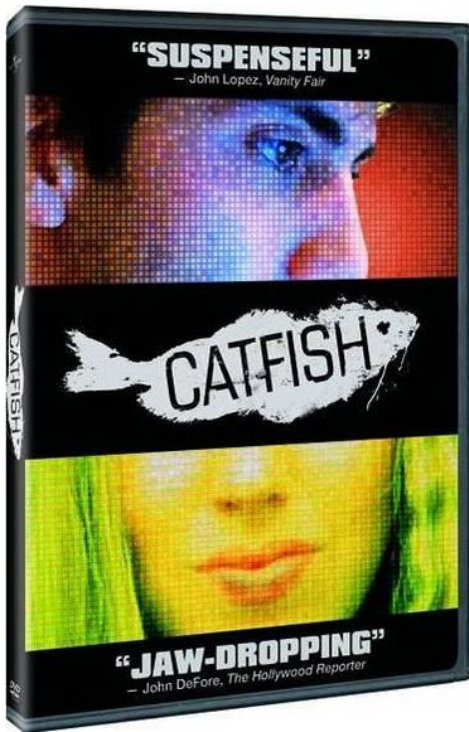
I don't know how someone living alone would manage in the long term. Attempts at everyday activities like washing hands, opening jars, applying deodorant, handwashing dishes, driving, and officiating at a wedding either needed to be modified or abandoned altogether.

Internet research into cast care and scaphoid fractures answered most of my questions. With only 10 days in the cast, mine didn't have time to get stinky or make my arm itchy. For the record, Roy, sliding a metal ruler under the cast to scratch is a no-no. Several years ago he broke his thumb and managed to continue long haul trucking and farming! He must be a better man than me.

My wrist is now in a tensor awaiting a radiologist's reading of the new x-rays. Naive little me expected pain-free movement and a return to normal. That would be mistake number five, from where I sit.

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Catfish*

Director: Henry Joost, Ariel Schulman

Genre: Documentary

A Dreamy Guy, a Wandering Eye, a Beautiful Lie

“... the more a human creature has tasted of bitter things the more it hungers after the sweet things of life. And we, wrapped round in the rags of our virtues, and regarding others through the mist of our self-sufficiency, and persuaded of our universal impeccability, do not understand this.”

Maxim Gorky

In Gorky's short story, “Her Lover,” an ungainly woman demands of a student in her boarding house that he draft letters for her to send to her lover. Eventually she asks him to write letters *to* her *from* her lover, who turns out to have been her own invention. This little game of pretend, much as it annoys and inconveniences the student, is a little bit of sunshine coming through a chink in her existential dungeon.

In *Catfish* we find another, similarly motivated game of pretend. Angela Wesselman is the mom everyone wants: gracious, soft-spoken, motherly, and kind. She decided early in life to be a helper to others, without knowing the full extent of the personal cost of that decision. Like many women, she really hadn't been prepared for how simply being a wonderful person would suck all the joy out of her life, robbing her of the romance, beauty, and human connection her artistic disposition required.

And so with the help of Facebook and three different phones, Angela develops an elaborate means of coping.

Yaniv Schulman (Nev for short) is the attractive 20-something brother of New York filmmaker Ariel Schulman. When Nev engages in an online friendship with a gifted eight-year-old artist named Abby (whose mother happens to be Angela Wesselman), Ariel decides to document their relationship and watch where it leads.

Courtesy of Facebook, Nev gets to know Abby's family and friends. Nev's online relationship with Abby's gorgeous 19-year-old sister Megan becomes more and more intimate as time goes on. The friendship is apparently bringing a great deal of happiness to both of them, and Nev even starts dreaming of joining her in an idyllic life on her horse farm.

But then things turn strange, and Ariel eventually convinces the reluctant Nev to head out on a road trip to get to the bottom of it.

Personal fabrications take on a special meaning for us creative types. It's normal, even advisable, to always present one's good side to others in order to facilitate the commencement of new relationships.

"Artistic types often have . . . [the] desire to reinvent themselves in the image of an idealized reality. The difficulty is that in order to create art we must be faithful to the truth in order to interpret it in an original way, as opposed to escaping from the truth."

Hiding the unseemly bits might be considered deception, but it can also be seen as a withholding of information which might sabotage the germination of a mutually rewarding friendship. Another dimension is added in the case of the artist who seeks to become known and who thus must develop a persona, like Eleanor Rigby's face in the jar by the door, a self-image manipulated to enhance reality.

Now consider the embellishments we make to our personas to present ourselves as favourably as possible in cyberspace. Even if our photos aren't airbrushed, they're carefully chosen to be not entirely representative of our lives as we live them but rather of the lives we would like to think we have. This process takes on a whole additional dimension in the hands of an artist.

Artistic types often have an inherent dissatisfaction with the way things are and a related desire to reinvent themselves in the image of an idealized reality. The difficulty is that in order to create art we must be faithful to the truth in order to interpret it in an original way, as opposed to escaping from the truth.

In the cyber-world we're pelted with distractions from this goal, temptations to be ever less truthful. Angela Wesselman caved in to that temptation and in the process sabotaged her art, making it less authentic than it could have been.

When we encounter someone who takes but a few threads from her own life and weaves them into a spectacular tapestry, in spite of the degree of deliberate deception involved we can't help being impressed. But what kind of person would take full advantage of the deceptive capabilities of Facebook?

In *Catfish*, Angela's husband Vince makes a cogent observation at the end of the film. He uses a story about cod being shipped to China: by the time the fish got to China they were mushy and tasteless, so the idea was to put catfish in the tanks to keep the cod in fight-or-flight mode. It worked; on arrival in China, the cod were fat and sassy and loaded with flavour. The suggestion is that Angela is one of those people who keep the rest of us on their toes, someone who introduces twists in reality that turn out to actually illuminate that reality and help us to navigate it a little better.



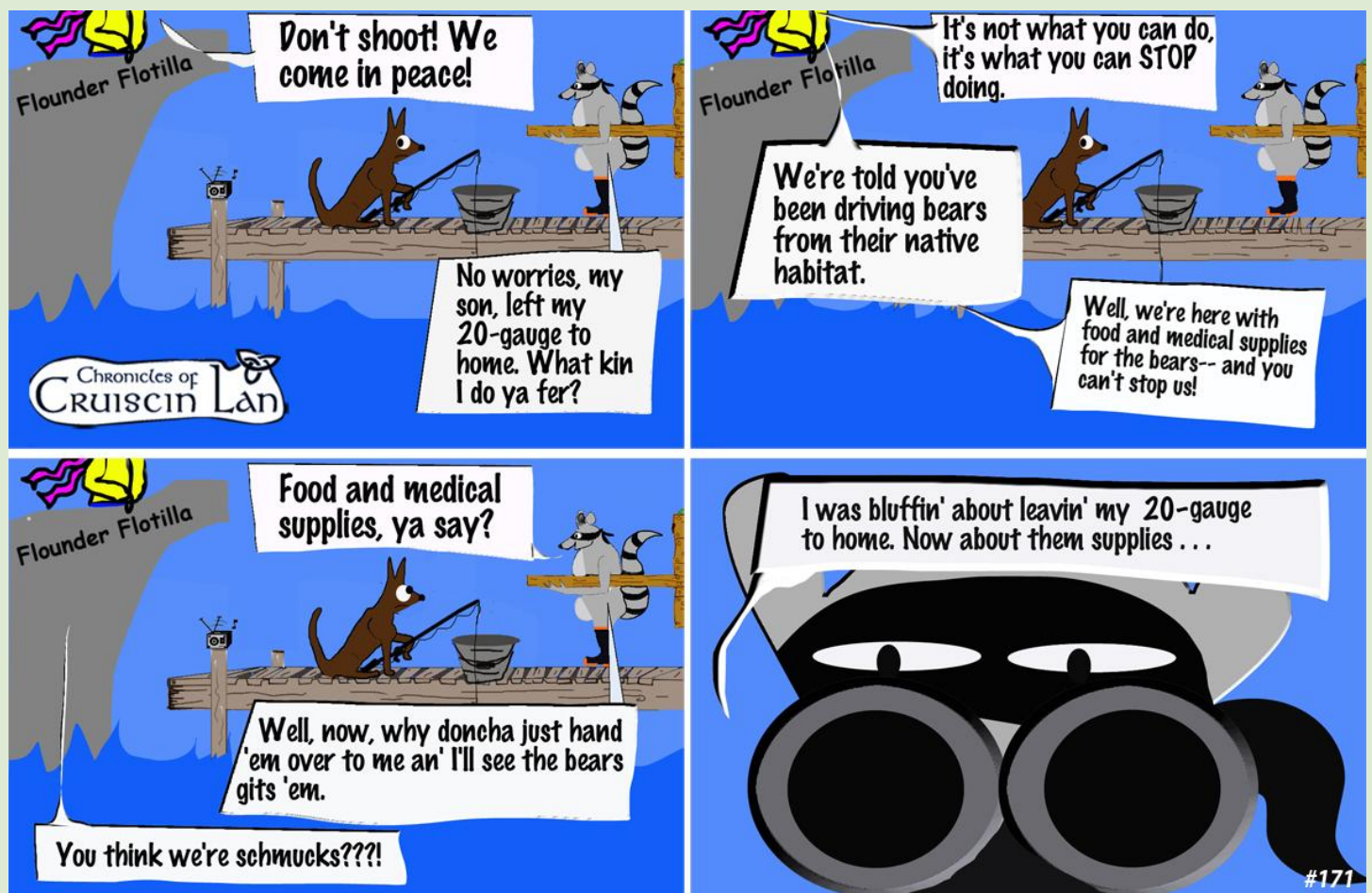
Nev is forced to face his own deep need for attachment, seen in sharpest relief when it seemed to have been met. At first Nev is understandably annoyed at the ruse, but after hearing the truth, he just can't be upset about it.

As for Angela, it could be worse. She gets to stay friends with Nev after all. I'm pretty sure this documentary hasn't hurt her career as an artist. And as is clear from paintings she did after coming clean with Nev, honesty really can make you a better artist.

Catfish manifests six 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 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; 5) it is authentic, original, and delightful; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Turkey Trot

It may be the middle of summer, but as far as Barrie, Ontario residents are concerned, it's looking a little like Thanksgiving. This time, though, the turkeys aren't resting on roasting platters: they're taking to the streets and apparently attacking cars and pedestrians.

As *The Barrie Examiner* [reports](#), wild turkeys have been "behaving aggressively," including "going after vehicles."

Residents are becoming more and more concerned; in fact, as one city councillor told reporters, "People are getting out of their cars and the turkeys are chasing them back." He added that while it was "cute in the beginning," it's "not funny anymore."

There are an estimated "40 or 50" of the birds in the area, but because they are a protected species and subject to hunting restrictions, dealing with them poses difficulties. Additionally, "wild turkeys are very territorial and it would be difficult to relocate them."

Around the World: Go the Distance

If you're experiencing a heat wave this week, you'll find it hard to believe that the sun's not moving a little closer to Earth in some strange apocalyptic manner. But don't worry: as unlikely as it sounds, Earth is actually at its furthest point from the sun in its yearly cycle.

As *National Geographic's* Daily News site [reports](#), Earth's elliptical orbit around the sun means that the "sun [is] offset from the center," Adler Planetarium astronomer Mark Hammergren told reporters.

The point at which our planet is furthest from the sun is called aphelion, and the fact that this year it falls during the northern hemisphere's hottest time of year is purely coincidental.

The difference between aphelion and perihelion, which is the point at which Earth is closest to the sun, is about 2.5 million kilometres, but the only noticeable difference is that "the apparent size of the sun in the sky will be about 3 percent smaller."

But what about the summer temperatures? They're not affected by perihelion and aphelion, but are caused by the "tilt of the Earth and not our distance from the sun."

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.

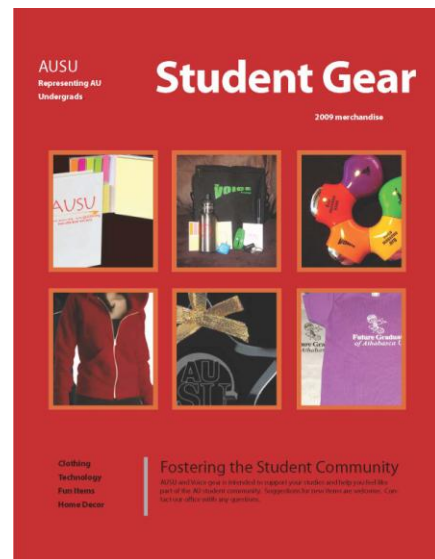
SmartDraw Program Renewal

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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