

# THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 27 2011-07-22

## Mary and Max

Friendship transcends

## Wordplay

(Un)grammatical humour

## No Legacy?

No problem!

*Plus:  
From Where I Sit  
Gregor's Bed  
and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

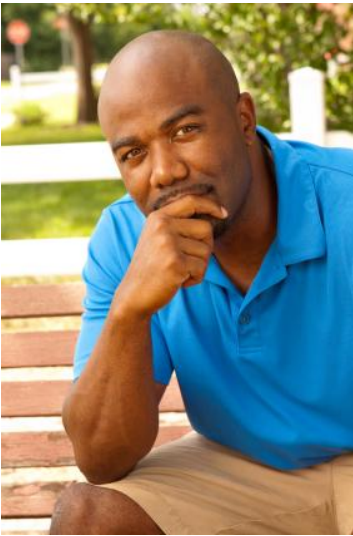
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indicate if we may publish your letter.





## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

**No Legacy, No Problem**

Tired of being a nobody? Looking for recognition, a sense of importance, and a legacy that's out of this world? You might take a cue from a wealthy Arab sheik.

Then again, you might not.

Hamad Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, "a member of the ruling family of Abu Dhabi," recently made his mark on the world—literally. He commissioned giant letters to be carved into the desert: his name, Hamad, written in characters one kilometre high. His name can be seen from space.

For now, let's put aside arguments of the propriety of spending such large amounts on frivolous objectives. After all, we purchase smaller, but often equally frivolous experiences ourselves, even if the total cash we fork over is much less than the millions Hamad spent. And it's hard not to be impressed: from a purely humanistic point of view, making your name visible from space is pretty cool.

What a legacy! Or is it?

Talking about legacy can be an interesting subject; it often reveals a lot of inner conflict. We don't want to leave a legacy of selfishness. Yet in spite of ourselves we want to be recognized, to be remembered for something amazing.

That doesn't mean we desire fame or fortune. We've heard enough self-help gurus to know without thinking that pursuing such goals can lead to a lot of personal emptiness. But even if our ideals are more esoteric, we still similarly desire to make our mark. Whether it's art that awakens thousands—or just one—to higher levels of self-awareness, or literature that touches the souls of readers everywhere, we want to be the one who makes a difference in someone's life. We want to be that touchstone of change, of transformation.

Surely that's a goal worth striving for— isn't it? Yet even when our desired legacy appears philanthropic and simple, we stumble.

The problem is that by focusing on making a *legacy*, even a beneficial one, we're selling ourselves short. Sometimes, trying to create a legacy can be the wrong approach altogether.

*"[S]etting out to . . . transform another is in reality just another way of looking inward . . . we want to transform another's life because it makes us feel good to think about positive change being all because of us."*

Because setting out to make a difference, to transform another, is in reality just another way of looking inward. We're thinking about *our* legacy, *our* effect, the good we can do. Instead of just doing it for no other reason than to do good. In our own small but selfish way, we want to transform another's life because it makes us feel good to think about positive change being all because of us. We hate to even acknowledge that small ego boost, but it's festering there at the back of our minds.

In the meantime, we're increasing the flow of negative, selfish thought around us, and we can never really move forward. Nor can we truly give to others if we're not giving freely, with no strings attached.



Maybe the only way to leave a life-affirming legacy is to *not*. To live not for the future, to do not for our own sake. To give of our time, talent, and treasure not for the sake of giving, but for the sake of the recipient. Not to transform others, but to share. Not to make a difference, but to make. Not to build bonds of friendship or humanity, but to be human.

## DID YOU KNOW?



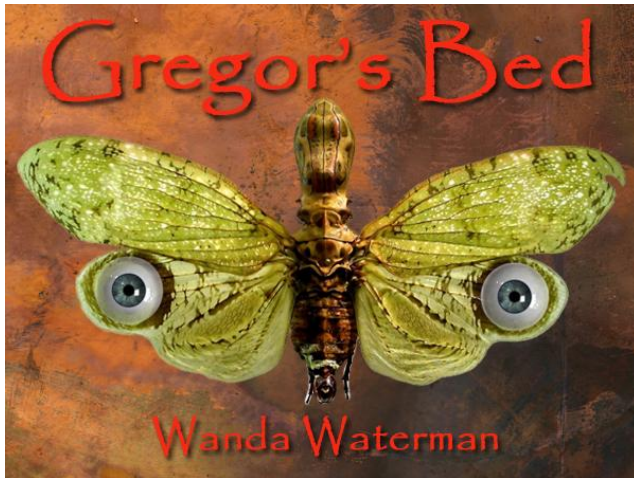
### Just Ask TED

Bored? Stuck in a rut? Maybe you just need an influx of something fresh and new. Look no further than [TED.com](http://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.



## Intriguing New Trends in Music

**Album:** Jack Djeyim, *Show Me the Way* (2010)

**Acoustic and Electric Guitars:** Jack Djeyim

**Bass:** Etienne Mbappé, Guy Sangué, Raymond Noël Ekwabi

**Drums:** Brice Wouassi, Valerie Lobé, Dennis Tchangou

**Keyboards:** Mario Canongue, Don Dieu Divin, Patrick Bebey

**Guests:** Idrissa Diop, Manu Dibango

Isn't it a treat to find an album that gets you out of bed in the morning, throws a dose of enthusiasm into your exercise routine, and smoothes your day's rough patches? I'm talking about one that is just *there* for you, one that understands all your angst and pain and yet still says, "Let's dance!"

These are the albums you play to death, adrenalin pumping through your veins, until the music finally loses its magic and needs to be incubated for a few years. Then one day you revive it and it brings back in full force all the memories and sensations you had when you first heard it.

*Show Me the Way* is one of those albums for me. I can't get enough of it. While it has a few tracks that are just a little too commercial and urban for my tastes, even with these I can't help remarking on the brilliant musicianship they manifest.

From the first burst of exquisite guitar motif on "Shame" (the first track), this album is a bowl of cherries. The joyful, genre-rich, delightfully complex arrangements and performances are couched in an intense natural spirituality and social consciousness that render the listening experience as meaningful as it is pleasing.

Djeyim is a Cameroon guitarist who, as can be expected, was influenced by the culture, stories, rhythms, and traditional musical modes of Cameroon. But he was also influenced by Asian music as well as by Western rock, funk, reggae, and jazz. He has had an incredible spectrum of experience working with a multitude of artists who've obviously rubbed off on him in a good way. His career was launched in 1977, and he put out three inspired albums during the '80s and '90s before disappearing into film scores for a while. After a long hiatus he brought out *Show Me the Way*.





Kudos to the producer for putting together this amazing group and enabling its members to not only fulfill their individual potential but also somehow create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The album hosts many incomparable musicians and singers, some of whom have worked with Youssou N'Dour, Cesária Évora, Papa Wemba, John McLaughlin, Ray Charles, and Jean-Luc Ponty, among other stellar talents.

Assembling a group of superlative musicians does not make a masterpiece; sometimes the magic just doesn't happen, even in a room full of geniuses. There have to be certain conditions in place: high levels of artistry, commitment, and spiritual connectedness among the lead players, for example. Another necessary precondition for creative excellence is that musicians be granted enough space and time to allow them to feel centred in their own creativity and to become fully conscious of the musical modus operandi of the other musicians. I'm guessing, based on this amazing group of songs, that during the recording of *Show Me the Way* there was a whole lot of space.

## CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

## Wanda Waterman





## *From Where I Sit*

*Hazel Anaka*

### **Richer Already**

In the past couple of weeks I've undertaken a significant financial commitment. There was the initial fee of several hundred dollars, which will be followed by ongoing weekly costs. For now, that's all I'm prepared to say. I'm not trying to be coy. Be assured that when I'm ready to talk about the undertaking, you, dear reader, will be the first to know. It's not earth-shattering. In fact, when I spill the beans, you may think it's boring or irrelevant.

The point I'm trying to make is that when we need to find the money for something, we can and do. Your something may be a pair of Jimmy Choos or a Mercedes convertible. For others, perhaps the need is for out-of-country medical care or prescription drugs not covered by a health plan. Sometimes families need to raise funds for legal expenses or to post bail. Everyone's something need only be important to them.

What I'm finding is that if the need or reason is compelling enough, the way will be found. Mindless or impulse purchases come screeching to a halt. The old habit of easily spending a few bucks on something now receives sober second thought. Do I really need that bestseller, even if I can buy it at Costco for half the cover price? No. Sometimes even the \$10 is too much if you know the library will eventually get a copy. Or if you do the math and know you'd have to live to age 114 to read what you already have.

That's why I walked empty-handed out of Costco last week. Much to my surprise, there weren't any alarms sounding to warn the staff of a "no sale." Nor was there confetti falling from above to celebrate my self-control. It's as though it had happened before.

While there I bumped into an older couple I know. The wife was eying a set of kitchen knives. The husband and I concluded that a six- or seven-piece set for around \$20 couldn't be very good stuff. He also reminded his wife that they were at the downsizing and clearing out stage of their lives, not in acquisition mode. They pushed their empty cart along and I walked out the door.

Apparently it's not only possible but permissible to go into a retail establishment and look around without buying anything. It's also possible to repeat the process in the next store and the one after that.

Even better is staying away from temptation. Or questioning whether there is a genuine need for that thingamajig. Or thinking about alternatives like borrowing, renting, or—heaven forbid—doing without.

I doubt this insight is any sort of breakthrough, or even newsworthy. (Maybe you knew all along and I'm the last to put two and two together!) But it is important because it reminds me that I control my destiny—or at the very least my purse strings—and that reallocation of money is often easier than getting more. I get to set my spending priorities. I get to practice mindfulness. I feel richer already, 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:** *Mary and Max* (IFC Films 2010)

**Writer/Director:** Adam Elliot

**Cast:** Toni Collette, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Barry Humphries, Eric Bana, Bethany Whitmore, Reneé Geyer

*"God gave us our relatives; thank God we can choose our friends."*

Ethel Watts Mumford

*"Her mother had told her that she was an 'accident.' How could someone be an accident? Grandpoppy Ralph had told her that babies were deliberate, and found by dads at the bottom of their beer."*

From *Mary and Max*

Eight-year-old Mary Daisy Dinkle likes to shrink potato chip bags in the oven to make trinkets. She has a pet rooster named Ethel. Her father works in a tea bag factory, attaching the strings to the bags. Mary's mom, Vera Dinkle, is a frowzy, kleptomaniac drunk whose great scarlet lips are among the few oases of colour in this faded taupe Claymation world.

Mary loves Earl Grey tea and her dream is to marry a man named Earl Grey and live in a Scottish castle. Her favourite cartoon is *The Noblets*, and she collects figurines of the characters. Her life is one great yearning ballad of loneliness and despair. Mary has a lot of questions, and she needs a friend. She decides to write to a name she finds in the New York City phone directory.

Max Horowitz is a an elderly New Yorker whose shape starts out wide at the bottom and comes to a point at the top of his head, where he sports a yarmulke even though he's an atheist. He has two television sets: the small one (which has no sound) sits on top of the large one (which has no picture). Max also loves *The Noblets*; he loves the orderliness of their lives and their sense of togetherness.

Max has an imaginary friend named Mr. Ravioli, who sits in the corner and reads self-help books. Max has spent time in mental institutions and is now in therapy. He also farts a lot and can't understand why people seem so uncomfortable with him, and he with them.

Max invented "chocolate hot dogs," a chocolate bar in a hot dog bun, but he's not supposed to eat them. Or so he's told by the leader at Overeaters Anonymous, who also assures the group that God hates fat people.

Max is plagued by bouts of extreme anxiety in response to circumstances he can't process or which seem absurd to him. This is because Max has Asperger's Syndrome, which appears to be the syndrome du jour judging from its frequent appearance in recent movies and television shows. But based on my own experience with Asperger's in my family, the portrait of Max is accurate as well as lovingly accepting.

When Mary and Max become pen pals, a remarkable thing happens. They have chosen to initiate and develop friendship in spite of having had lives that brutally deny them the human connectedness essential to their survival. They have embarked on a perilous journey.

*Relationships mean risk, especially if you've got baggage to begin with. But true friendship has the power to transform . . .*

This story is about what can happen when we risk relationship. Mary's tender heart is frequently crushed, and Max just doesn't get it: "He felt love, but he couldn't articulate it. Its logic was as foreign to him as a salad sandwich."

But because Mary and Max have had the courage to be real friends, they are transformed and returned to their true selves.

This film is a moving feast of texture, shape, and meaningful detail. But the crowning glory is the writing—sensitive, insightful, deep, and utterly poetic.

*Mary and Max* fulfills eight of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions having a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind; 4) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 8) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

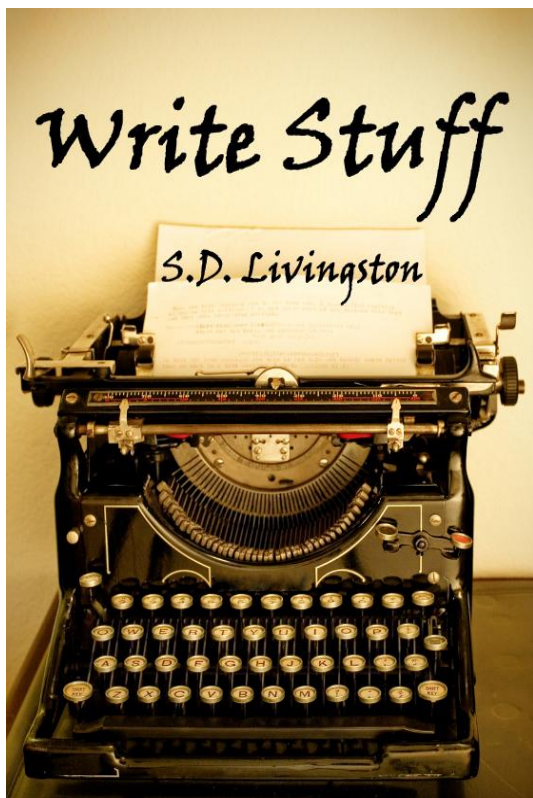
## How Do You Like Your Voice?

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!





## Wordplay

There's no denying it. Whether English is your mother tongue or second language, the rules are tough to learn. Not as difficult as Latin, which has enough tenses to actually make you tense. But if you've ever struggled with pronouns and the choice between *her* and *she*, you know that most grammar books make CPAC look like a laugh fest. This week, we take a lighthearted look at language, grammar, and the confusion that reigns when rules are abandoned.

While it's true that we learn from our mistakes, it's much more fun to learn from other people's linguistic mishaps. And those lessons usually stick best when they come with a healthy dose of humour. Look no further than *The Telegraph's* [Sign Language](#) feature, a weekly collection of "strange signs and bizarre translations from around the world." Like the sign warning drivers to drive slowly because of a "Free Range Child" in the area. Or a restaurant in Luxembourg offering "Second-Hand Food and Drinks" (I'd prefer to chew my own dinner, thanks).

Then there's the sign maker in Beijing who offered this helpful advice to tourists: "Thunderstorms do not call cell phones."

If you prefer to mix your grammar lessons with celebrity gossip, check out [Grammar Guard](#). The site exposes "the sloppy speech of high-profile people," and does a decent job of explaining exactly where celebs and politicians went wrong. A grammar [bloopers](#) by Meghan McCain includes some interesting background on why Mercer Mayer changed the titles of her popular kids' books. If you're ever confused about whether to say "me and my friend" or "my friend and me," a mental image of cartoon hedgehogs should sort things out.

Still in the mental sticky-note category, [this entry](#) on Lindsay Lohan's eating habits will clear up any confusion about singular pronouns—and probably turn you off energy drinks forever.

Spelling seems to be a mystifying black hole as well, with *to*, *too*, and *two* interchanged with abandon. [The Oatmeal](#) has a weird yet handy guide to commonly misspelled words, as well as advice on semicolons and why you should handle the word *literally* with care.

Another common error is the dreaded *alot*. If you want to free yourself of this bugaboo once and for all, visit Allie's brilliant post at [Hyperbole and a Half](#). For the record, *alot* is never, ever a real word unless you're talking about the town in India (in which case you need to capitalize it), or allotting yourself the biggest slice of cake (which means you'll need an extra "l" and some generous friends).

On a serious note, if you need a deeper understanding of sentence structure for things like essays or business reports, the Reed-Kellogg Diagrammer is an indispensable resource. The [main page](#) gives a good



intro, and the tool itself offers much more than static diagrams. Hover your cursor over any part of a diagram and a pop-up window provides clear explanations for each part of the sentence.

And finally, what would a collection of Internet resources be without at least one video? Thanks to Open University, you can now enjoy the complete history of the English language in 10 minutes. This witty, animated series of shorts covers American English, Internet English, Shakespeare and more. It's time well spent, or at least well wasted, and you'll never again wonder where the word *werewolf* comes from.

If you haven't played with words in a while, why not check out some of these sites? You might like them a lot. Or, at the very least, be tempted to hug an alot.

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Silly Old Bear

**Who couldn't love A.A. Milne's endearing creation, that "bear-of-little-brain" Winnie-the-Pooh? It might come as a surprise to long-time fans of the silly old bear that his origins were actually Canadian. Intrigued? Click through the links discover Winnie-the-Pooh's real story.**

### Canadian Cub

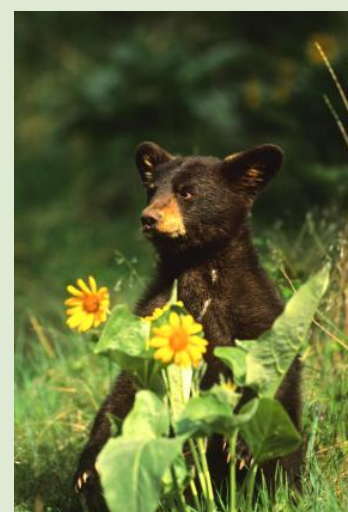
In 1914, a Canadian soldier purchased an orphaned bear cub from a trapper in the small town of White River, in northern Ontario. He named the bear Winnie in honour of his hometown of Winnipeg, and Winnie accompanied him across Canada and eventually to England. When he learned he was about to be sent to France, the soldier brought Winnie to the London Zoo—where he captured the imagination of the real-life Christopher Robin! The White River tourism site has the full story.

### What a Doll

Christopher Robin was so enthralled by his meeting with Winnie that he returned home and named his own teddy bear after the real one. Eventually the name became Winnie-the-Pooh, and his adventures with Christopher Robin's other dolls inspired A.A. Milne's classic tales. *The Daily Mail* has the story of the stuffed bear—and photos!

### Novel Idea

Milne's most famous for his children's stories, but they were by no means his favourite works. For example, he was a dedicated pacifist and devoted much writing to the non-fiction genre. He also dabbled in fiction for grown-ups: this review is of his murder mystery *The Red House Mystery*.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Something Fishy

“Fish are friends, not food,” the shark says in *Finding Nemo*. But some fish have moved beyond the role of friend *or* food, playing a part in health care—and British Columbia officials aren’t happy about it.

As *The Vancouver Sun* [reports](#), a spa in Duncan, B.C., has been ordered to cease its fish pedicure treatment. The treatment involved allowing garra rufa fish to “nibble” customers’ feet and “consume their dead skin.”

The fish, which are not native to Canada, are small, “toothless . . . [and] known in their home region as ‘doctor fish.’” They’ve become popular at spas and some alternative health care clinics.

Spa customers have found the treatment therapeutic, but the Vancouver Island Health Authority isn’t buying it. There’s concern that “the fish could spread disease,” and Dr. Murray Fyfe, medical health officer for the VIHA, told reporters that “fish can carry . . . bacteria that themselves are hazardous to humans that have skin infections.”

The spa owner is disappointed, but will not attempt a legal challenge.

### Around the World: Roman Remains

Got a medical problem? There’s a good chance your health care provider will ask you to provide a sample of your waste. It might sound icky, but human waste products offer some of the best clues to a person’s health status. And now, they’re giving insights into history.

As *National Geographic’s* Daily News site [reports](#), researchers are “sifting through hundreds of sacks of human excrement,” and in the process learning much about “everyday life in the ancient Roman Empire.”

The 2,000-year-old feces no longer smell, and aren’t “remotely unpleasant,” one historian told reporters. And the knowledge historians are gleaming from the waste is like gold.

The waste, which was “excavated from a cesspit beneath the ancient town of Herculaneum, near Naples,” also includes ancient Roman garbage. Herculaneum was buried by Mount Vesuvius, and historians believe the cesspit dates from around A.D. 79.

Historians have discovered that the everyday fare of the ancient Roman world was much different than the delicacies about which we’ve read: for example, fish, chicken, fennel, olives, and molluscs were dietary staples.

Researchers hope to further study the material to determine “evidence of disease, such as bacterial or parasitic infections.”

## 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.

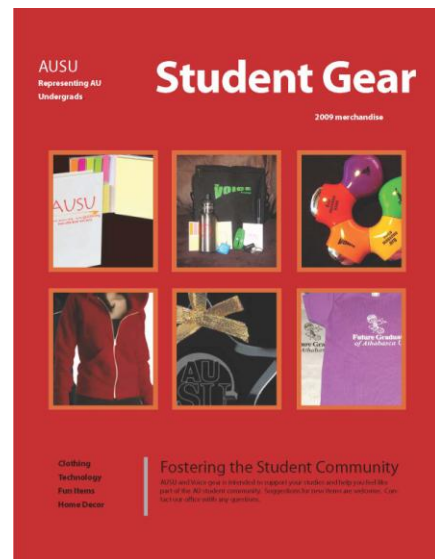
## SmartDraw Program Renewal

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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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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