

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 45 2011-11-25

Cash Diet

Slimming spending

Dream a Dream

Inception

Word Games

The book app question

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



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

**Wallet on a Diet, Part I**

Found any great deals lately?

It's strangely ironic that one of the biggest shopping weekends in North America—beginning Black Friday—coincides with the final weekend of Financial Literacy Month, a push for greater awareness of where our money goes and how to manage it.

It's no secret that an increasing number of North Americans have no idea how to handle their finances. And while many of us are clueless about investing, it's even more crucial to long-term financial solvency to figure out how to deal with money on a day-to-day basis.

One much-touted strategy is deal seeking. With unemployment, recession, and the rising cost of goods, there's been a huge media focus on finding savings at the register—or the online checkout. We've all heard of extreme couponing. Stores are offering freebies and rock-bottom loss leaders to lure us in. Group-buying sites have exploded in popularity and are trying to make serious inroads on the online Christmas shopping market this year.

But in a way, this increased focus on “frugal” money-saving tactics is a blow rather than a boon to our wallets. After all, no one can deny that \$25 for a \$200 item is a too-good-to-pass-up deal. So we buy it—we'd be foolish not to, right?—and then we've got \$25 less than we would have had if the item had stayed out of our financial reach.

In the end, we've “saved” hundreds—but spent hundreds that could have been saved (or used toward reducing our debt).

It's common sense that in order to become financially solvent we need to pay out less money than we're bringing in. And although for some the true necessities of life cost more than they can earn, many of us fritter away a few bucks here, a few bucks there, until we find we're limping from paycheck to paycheck.

It's most evident around Christmastime. We feel like we're barely making ends meet—and yet we plunk down hundreds, even thousands, on the latest toys, electronics, treats, and designer accessories when the frenzy of shopping hits us.

It's about manufactured need. We see something, and the idea plants itself in our brains: *I need this. My kid needs this. And it's such a good bargain!* Throw limited time into the works—hour-long sales, 24-hour bargains, online auctions—and the pressure's ramped up so high that we can't take the time to even think over our purchases before making them.

Wallet woes? Consider a diet-style approach to spending. It's the unconscious little nibbles that add up—whether we're talking calories or dollars.

How to cope?

In her Economy Lab series at CBC, Frances Woolley, a professor of economics at Carleton University, says we should approach financial management with the same attitude we'd use when embarking on a serious diet. In fact, she says, "[the] logic behind budgeting and dieting is exactly the same: if you can monitor and control what's coming in and what's going out, you will be able to achieve your savings (or weight loss) goals."

Even a good budget isn't the answer. After all, Professor Woolley says, a budget is only as good as the person using it. "Household finance is like a diet," she points out. "Resist temptation."

She makes a good point. Budgets and diet plans both have big goals, short-term pain, and long-term payoff. That piece of pie looks delicious, but you'll forget about that alluring sight and smell in two hours. You'll also avoid 400-some calories. Similarly, the spa treatment is truly a steal at 50 per cent off its regular price, but in a few days will you regret *not* buying the \$99 seaweed wrap?

This time of year, the news media is full of helpful tips to rein in overconsumption of Christmas goodies. Next week we'll examine some of these strategies and see how they might play out in the mad frenzy of shopping, spending, and saving that's become December. Who knows? Applying some holiday diet strategies to the world of personal finance might give us an even better gift than a buff bod come January 1.



DID YOU KNOW?

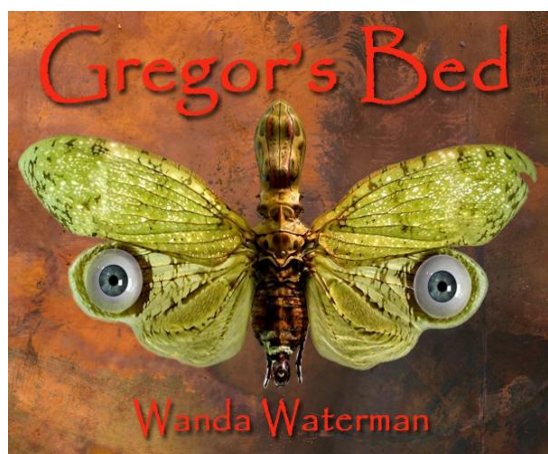
LibriVox



A picture may be worth a thousand words, but what about the spoken word? Sometimes, it can be of priceless value—especially when experiencing literary works. If you love audiobooks, have vision issues, or just want to experience literature from a different perspective, be sure to check out the fantastic resources offered by LibriVox, an "acoustical liberation of books in the public domain."

LibriVox is a non-profit, volunteer-staffed project with an ambitious goal: its founders desire "[to] make all books in the public domain available, for free, in audio format on the internet." Their ever-expanding catalogue includes literary works from *Beowulf* to Sinclair Lewis, and it's not limited to English-language works; Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is available in its original German, for example.

To listen to a work, you can freely download the files onto your computer or subscribe through iTunes. On the go? Audio files can also be downloaded to your smart phone, and there are unaffiliated iPhone and Android apps which streamline the process. LibriVox's podcasts are currently highlighting some of the options available.



Recent Discoveries From the Realm of the Experimental and Avant-Garde

Album: Amir ElSaffar, *Inana* (2011)

Miles Davis on a Camel

Inana is Amir ElSaffar's fourth solo album and just one small part of an extremely productive and exciting—even film-worthy—artistic career. His childhood in a suburb of Chicago exposed him to an eclectic mix of American genres. He listened to rock, folk, blues, and jazz; his mom taught him folk

songs on the guitar and ukulele; and he sang in his church choir. Later, as part of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, he had the opportunity to work under Mstislav Rostropovich, Pierre Boulez, and Daniel Barenboim.

In his undergrad years, ElSaffar studied with international artists who helped him develop a taste for international jazz, learning to incorporate Eastern elements into a jazz context. Later he searched out his Eastern cultural roots by traveling through the Middle East seeking out any music masters who might be willing to teach him, discovering *maqams* (Middle Eastern note sequences with complex rules of interaction), learning to play the santour (an Iraqi hammered dulcimer), and singing.

ElSaffar absorbed a lot from both his academic career and his self-education, and it shows: his trumpet is as at home with swing, free jazz, bebop, and avant-garde jazz as it is with *maqams*. This combination of genres generates some wonderful new sounds. There are quarter-tones and eighth tones in addition to the usual Western whole tones and halftones, lending a mystical quality to these jazz passages.

It's nice to see the goddess theme to this album. The title track, "Inana," is named for the Sumerian love goddess, and subsequent tracks are named for Venus and the "Lady of Heaven."

The combination of trumpet and santour is more pleasant than you might think. ElSaffar adds derbouka and other sounds for a way-to-the-casbah flavour. There's a Spanish feel to some of these passages, Russian in others, but then the elements are similar.

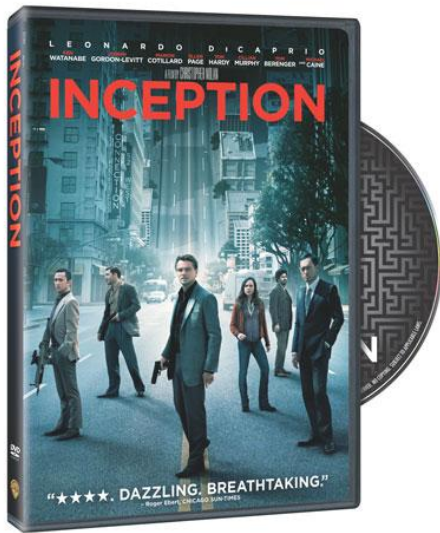
Even before you're impressed with the innovative nature of this album you'll be struck by the seamlessness with which ElSaffar combines two separate musical traditions while remaining true to the highest aesthetic dictates of each. These pieces are elegant, meditative, refined, and musically adventurous.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book *They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good*, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

An Interdisciplinary Study of the Psyche

Film: *Inception* (2011)

Writer/Director: Christopher Nolan

Cast: Leonardo DiCaprio, Ken Watanabe, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Marion Cotillard, Ellen Page, Tom Hardy, Cillian Murphy, Tom Berenger, Michael Caine

As Art

Dob visits his wife, Moll. In the high-rise where she committed suicide. They have a conversation. In a dream. Within a dream. So it isn't really the high-rise, and this isn't really his wife. But she really has killed herself, and Dob, in his grief, has created a mental projection of her that he can go and have a chat with whenever he gets lonely.

This is a conjectured future wherein a small group of elites have learned how to enter the unconscious, somnolent minds of whomever they please and steal their secrets. Dob has even figured out how to plant ideas in people's heads. This gives them tremendous power over others—but it makes them vulnerable to a host of hidden dangers.

The dream warriors must be asleep themselves in order to enter the dreams of others or to draw others into their dreams. Time can pass very quickly in these dreams, and the dream warriors themselves can come under the control of malevolent psychic forces. As a technique to facilitate waking from one of these dream missions, Edith Piaf sings, “Non, je regrette rien,” a kind of bravado theme song for foolhardy risk takers.

The idea of telekinetic dream manipulation is an absurd premise; even now I imagine people cogitating on the scientific possibility of this actually happening, just as they did for the equally absurd premise of *The Matrix*, another deeply significant science fiction masterpiece. But a premise should never be mistaken for the message of a film. Rather, the “what if” is simply a catalyst that launches the viewer into a world of delicious speculation, opening doors into imaginative realms of possibility.

As Psychology

What these people do is like lucid dreaming except that they control someone else's dream, not just their own. They actually participate in the dream, in the same identities they hold in waking life. As such they are not only manipulating the thoughts (and hence words and actions) of individuals but also contributing quite deliberately to the collective unconscious.

When an individual discovers that she's dreaming, her unconscious, in the form of the characters populating her dream world, attacks her. These characters are projections of the dream world and can be used as weapons; they sense if you will a foreign substance among them and strive to obliterate it, in much the same way that our reasoning minds reject ideas that don't jibe with our current outlooks.

The question is posed: what if it's the dream that's real? Carl Jung might have posited that relatively speaking, the dream is real as long as the dreamer believes it's real, but that as soon as the dreamer is aware she's dreaming, it becomes unreal and its influence over her becomes less direct.

The reverse can also be true; if the dreamer becomes convinced that reality is in fact a dream, this becomes her truth. It governs her beliefs, attitudes, desires, and choices.

As Comparative Religion

An insatiable longing for the Real had been planted in the unconscious mind of Moll. The thought was plugged into her head that her waking world was not in fact real and that she could only enter the real world by means of death. After she's gone Dob loves her so much he practically deifies her, building his life around her memory.

Dob's young sidekick, Ariadne (incidentally the name of the goddess who helped Theseus escape from the labyrinth by giving him a ball of red thread to unwind as he went in), addresses Dob's remorse with this: "Your guilt defines her. It's what powers her. But you are not responsible for the idea that destroyed her."

Individuals can plant ideas, but they don't create them. Ideas are shaped and quickened in a realm deeper than the individual, a realm that the individual is tapped into but can't really manipulate. Whether or not you believe in this realm is a matter of faith, but clearly if it exists it exists as real and unreal, as being and non-being—in other words, as a source of both good and evil. It's the fountainhead of religious exploration, and whether you call it God or the collective unconscious, you can't deny the reality of its power.

Inception 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 that have 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 renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 8) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Inception was recommended to The Mindful Bard by Tarif Kanafani of Cairo, Egypt.

"Yet if hope has flown away

In a night, or in a day,

In a vision, or in none,

Is it therefore the less gone?

All that we see or seem

Is but a dream within a dream."

Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream Within a Dream"



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

10-10-10

Because my mind and soul are promised to National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) for several more days, my ability to generate my own column topic this week was kaput. So when someone suggested I discuss the concept in Suzy Welch's book *10-10-10*, I jumped on it. My task became to read the book and hope that through the miracle of osmosis the underlying message would become an integral part of my life—and a great column, too.

Many how-to or self-improvement books take forever to get to the promised “secret” to success. The hype *eventually* builds to a crescendo, but even so there's a 50/50 chance it isn't as promised.

In Welch's book you get the gist of the three-step process right up-front—on ages 10 and 11. Further refinements are discussed on page 63, but the remaining 200-some pages are filled with real-life stories of men and women using this decision-making tool in all aspects of their lives.

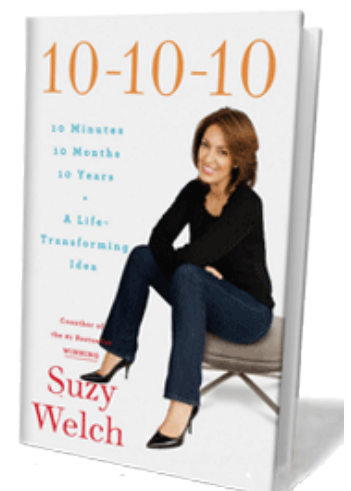
So what is 10-10-10? First, some background. Suzy Welch, a career-driven mother of four in an unhappy marriage, had a meltdown and needed a solution. Through trying to resolve problems in her own life she developed a deceptively simple process, one which can be applied to love, career, parenting, and other decisions.

In a nutshell:

- Pose your problem in the form of a question. For example: *Should I change jobs? Should I marry so-and-so? Should I work late or attend the school recital?*
- Collect data—in your head, on paper, on the computer, or in dialogue with someone. Here you are considering the consequences of your options in the context of 10 minutes, 10 months, and 10 years. There is nothing literal or magical about the 10s; if you prefer, think of them as right now, the foreseeable future, and the distant future.
- Analyze your answers in conjunction with your values (or beliefs, goals, dreams, and needs) and decide which option best serves you in creating the life you want.

Let's pretend I had used 10-10-10 in late October to decide: *Should I take part in National Novel Writing Month?*

Ten minutes: *No.* Easier not to, save the required planning time, don't risk failure, save the financial donation, don't mess with my routine. *Yes.* Get



caught up in the madness of the challenge, spend a few bucks, risk success, kick-start a new routine, join the club. On the other hand, definitely harder.

Ten months: *No.* Means I walked away from a potential game-changer because I didn't test myself, didn't inconvenience myself. *Yes.* Mucho bragging rights, potential for a new work ethic, proof positive that I can do what I set my mind to, great time saver in creating honking big first draft, possible saleable product after revisions.

Ten years: *No.* Lost opportunity, maybe still wondering if I coulda/shoulda. *Yes:* Anywhere from zero to nine more NaNoWriMo novels to my credit, pride of accomplishment, enduring e-book sales of backlist titles.

Three weeks in, I'm thrilled I said yes. But doing 10-10-10 *before* the decision would have been preferable, from where I sit.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles

Hate travelling this time of year? It could be worse: in '80s classic *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, Steve Martin goes through hell while attempting to get home for the holidays. Alternatively, you could avoid the pain of airline travel, train timetables, and traffic by relying on yourself to get you where you need to be. Check out these adventurers, who have done—or are doing!—some serious personal travel.

Muscle Power

Upbeat British adventurer Sarah Outen has an ambitious goal: to go around the world “on her own muscle power,” Discovery News [reports](#). Her blog chronicles her ongoing adventures and experiences.

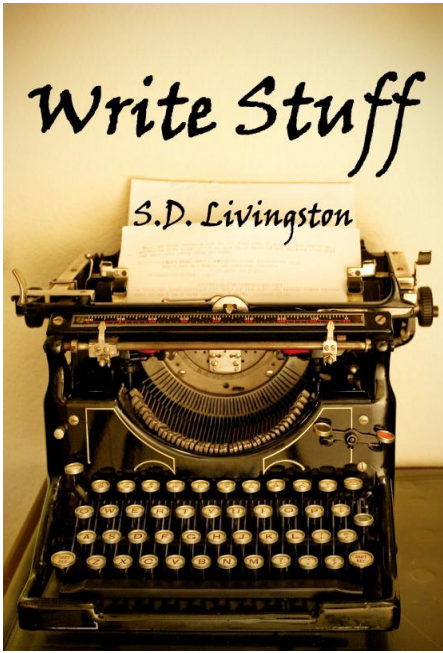
Walk Away

As relaxing as vacations might be, most of us would agree with Dorothy: there's no place like home. How long would you be willing to stay away? One Canadian spent eleven years away from home and family as he walked around the globe, returning to his Montreal-area home just last summer. CBC has the story.

Just Keep Swimming

In 2010 Dominican swimmer Marcos Días completed an innovative project: to “unite the continents” by swimming around the world, attempting to raise awareness of global solidarity and eradicate world poverty. Read about the project—and the Millennium Development Goals—here.





There's an App for That

Are you reading these words? According to *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, you are. As the second edition of *CanOx* says, to read is to “look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols.” These days, though, that definition might not be enough. With the separate worlds of books and apps merging in new and unpredictable ways, it’s time to redefine just what reading is—and isn’t.

Traditionally, reading isn’t simply any act of deciphering words. Scanning billboards or checking bus schedules doesn’t usually count when compared to the sustained, immersive experience found with books or magazines. But plenty of texts fit the bill: books, newspapers, magazines, and poems, to name a few. Those forms can differ by hundreds of pages (think a Harry Potter book versus a slim volume of poetry), but they all conform to what we think of as engaging us in “reading.”

Now suppose we add some pictures. Photographs, line drawings, full-colour illustrations—they fill the pages of everything from Sunday newspapers to kids’ picture books, but the text that accompanies them still falls within the standard notion of reading material. When it comes to the burgeoning world of book apps, though, there’s a debate brewing over whether this new digital form truly counts as reading, or whether it’s undermining our ability to read at all.

So what is it about a book app’s combination of words and images that has so many people worried it doesn’t qualify as true reading? It can’t be the form’s reliance on graphics. After all, comic books have drawn millions of people, young and old, into the world of words. And graphic novels have earned a well-respected place in the literary canon—Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992.

We also celebrate the role of picture books in helping our children learn to read. Often, those books emphasize bright, colourful images while including only a word or two on each page. They even can incorporate basic interactive tools, such as finger-puppet caterpillars or various fabrics to represent fur and feathers.

True, that’s a far cry from the whirling, swirling interactivity of most book apps. In a recent *Globe and Mail* [article](#), successful children’s author Marie-Louise Gay notes that such a high level of digital immersion makes apps more like games than books.

And when it comes to the youngest “readers,” Gay observes that it’s even possible to “put an iPad in a baby’s crib, and the pages will turn by themselves,” a development she says is “dangerous, because it’s like putting a child in front of a TV.”

But focusing on those who are old enough to decipher words, in the issue of book apps versus traditional books (or even e-books) it's hard to find an aspect of apps that hasn't, in a more static form, been incorporated in traditional texts for centuries.

Perhaps the biggest argument against book apps is the social interaction that might be lost; for instance, a parent reading aloud to a child. Yet even that stance fails to consider that, for the most part, reading *is* a solitary pastime. Once we've learned to navigate the words and pages on our own, it's rare that reading remains a communal activity. Other than author events, adults rarely read aloud to each other. And although the tradition of bedtime stories may continue at home (even on an iPad), the classroom setting usually encourages kids to engage in silent reading.

For now, there's no way to know just how popular book apps will become or remain. Nor can we make an accurate prediction about the long-term effects they'll have on literacy. Who knows, though—maybe one day, there'll be an app for that.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Cookie Monster

It's dinnertime, and the doorbell rings. Chances are it's a kid with cookies, magazines, or treats for sale; scouting troops, ballet companies, hockey teams, and schools all depend on kid- (or parent-) driven fundraising for travelling expenses or just for reaching their budgetary goals. One Ontario man thought he'd do a little similar fundraising of his own—and brought his daughter along for the ride.

As the CBC [reports](#), the man is now “[facing] charges in what police call a case of cookie dough fraud.”

Allegedly, the accused took his daughter door-to-door, showing unsuspecting customers the fundraising forms from her school. People made cookie dough orders, but they “were never placed,” police say. Neither the forms nor the money went to the school.

When concerned customers contacted the school directly, a school representative went to local law enforcement—since all legitimate orders had been “processed and delivered to customers” back in October.

Investigators don't think that the daughter knew “her father was potentially committing a crime,” and are only charging her father in the matter. So far five “victims have been identified, but it is unknown how many residences the man allegedly attended.”

Around the World: Chew and Swallow

And now for some good news! After spending the past 20 years of her life with her jaw clamped shut, a 43-year-old UK woman has had a special operation that allows her chew solid food for the first time in two decades.

As the *Daily Telegraph* [reports](#), Sandra Pearce “suffers from an extreme form of juvenile arthritis.” Over the years, her jaw was “progressively fused . . . shut, forcing her to live on liquids or soft foods pushed through small gaps in her teeth.”

Although the lost ability to chew was discouraging, doctors were more concerned about another effect: “dentists were unable to reach her back teeth, leaving her with abscesses which could have caused lethal infections at any time.”

The 13-hour operation “involved breaking her jaw and inserting a computer-fashioned ‘bespoke’ joint.” Although her “bent-double posture” made the surgery a risky one, the abscesses “could have killed her any day,” the doctors felt.

Pearce still suffers from her condition, but she's thrilled that she can once more enjoy solid food. “The one thing I've been wanting to do is chew a beef burger properly,” she told reporters.

AUSU UPDATE: October 21, 2011**Bethany Tynes, President****AUSU congratulates new party leaders!**

AU students are spread all over Canada and the world, but AU's funding comes from the Government of Alberta, so it's important for us, as AU students, to remain aware of political issues in Alberta. Alberta's political parties have recently undergone some transitions, as both the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties recently elected new leaders: Dr. Raj Sherman will now head up the Liberal party, while Alison Redford has been selected to lead the Progressive Conservatives. Redford was sworn in as Premier of Alberta on Friday, October 7. AUSU would like to thank all those who participated in the leadership races, and congratulate Sherman and Redford on their wins.

Councillors training to serve you better

All eight current AUSU councillors, as well as our two full-time student service staff, are currently involved in a Certified Student Leader training program through the National Centre for Student Leadership. This training covers critical issues such as successful communication, strategic planning, and conflict resolution, which we hope will better equip us to work productively together to serve the needs of our student members.

Increased student representation at AU

At most Alberta universities, two of the highest decision-making bodies are the Board of Governors, which provides strategic direction, and the General Faculties Council, which deals with academic matters. At AU, meanwhile, there has always been a Governing Council and an Academic Council—until recently! The Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has amended the Athabasca University regulations, moving AU closer into line with other Alberta universities. AU's Governing Council has now been replaced by a Board of Governors, and while this is mostly a change in nomenclature, the transformation as AU moves from an Academic Council (AUAC) to a General Faculties Council (AUGFC) will be more noticeable. AUSU is particularly pleased that undergraduate students at AU will now have two seats on AUGFC, as opposed to only one on AUAC. There will also be a reserved space on the GFC Executive Committee for an undergraduate student representative. This is great news, and will allow us, as undergraduate students, to ensure that our voice is heard within this important decision-making body at AU!

What are your course materials preferences?

AU is currently re-examining their course materials model. Currently, the cost of all undergraduate courses includes access to the necessary textbooks, and these are usually mailed directly to your door. This is convenient for many students, but many others have asked for the opportunity to look for bargains elsewhere, or to buy and sell used textbooks. What about you? How do you feel about the course materials system at AU? AU is asking students for their opinion! The question currently being posed to students is as follows:

In response to student feedback, AU is considering changing the way in which students access or receive their learning resources. Currently, all the learning resources costs are covered through tuition fees and the learning resources fee. These costs include textbooks, printed materials, access to the LMS and other digital resources, copyright fees for third party materials, and the administrative costs associated with the production of such

materials. For items that a student could purchase directly from a source other than AU (e.g., books, e-books), which of the following options would you prefer?

- To purchase materials directly from a non-Athabasca University source such as Amazon
- To have the choice to purchase course materials from either AU or a different source such as Amazon
- To purchase course materials from AU but have the learning resources fee reflect the actual cost of the materials for the particular course (for example, if the learning resources in Course A cost \$100, then the learning resources fee would be \$100)
- The status quo (a fixed learning services fee per course –currently about \$170)

Email us your thoughts and we'll make sure that they're voiced in the appropriate committee!

AU honorary doctorates

Did you know that AU bestows honorary doctorates each year at Convocation? Do you have an idea for someone you'd like to see honoured by the university? Candidates should "have distinguished themselves in education, science, the arts, public service, or other areas, and have made significant life-long contributions to endeavours consistent with the mandate and purpose of Athabasca University." AUSU has a seat on the committee that nominates and selects the recipients of honorary doctorates, so to have your voice heard, drop us an email with your thoughts!

Have you heard . . .

. . . that we still have some of our awesome 2011 AUSU Handbook/Planners available? Some of the information in these little books is priceless when it comes to helping AU students navigate the university and our services—but they're free for you, just for being an AUSU member! We even mail them right to your door. All you have to do is ask!

. . . about our SmartDraw program? We've been arranging for a licence for our students to use this software for the last few years. It lets you create detailed charts and insert them into your assignments (even ones you submit as Word or PDF documents). The company has warned us, though, that there will be a massive price increase next year, so we want to know if our students feel that the software is a help to them, or if they'd rather have us look into other options. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

. . . there's a new AUSU website on the way? We want our site to provide dynamic content and updates so that it's a place that you, as an AU student, WANT to visit regularly! If you have suggestions on content you'd like to see on our website, please get in touch with us to share your ideas.

. . . AUSU has scholarships, awards, and bursaries for our student members? The next major awards deadline is November 1, but some bursaries are also available year-round. Make sure you check our site for more information!

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also email our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1.800.788.9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

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THE VOICE

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