

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 49 2011-12-23

Peace & Goodwill

Where it all begins

Meal Misery

Banish indigestion

Sweetness

Secrets from bees

*Plus:
Write Stuff
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



Re: "Sound Off: AU's Coat of Arms and Crest" by Maxie van Roye, v19 i42 (2011-11-04)

Although I concur that the coat of arms incorporates a lot of localized symbols into the design, let's take a look at this from the other side of the coin: maybe it's an attempt to finally begin to generate "a sense of place."

Like the article in *The Voice*, I too have long felt that I'm not taking a degree at AU, I'm taking it from AU. Maybe this can change?

A coat of arms such as this also gives an impression (or is that an illusion) of age, suggesting perhaps that AU has matured as an entity, and now fits in on equal footing with traditional Bricks and Mortar institutions . . .

John Palmer

I love that we finally HAVE a crest, and I love that it's going to go on parchments in the near future . . . I have, however, seen the university using just the shield with the "Learning for Life" banner underneath, and THAT looks very sharp. It gives a sense of history akin to that of a "traditional" university, but the motto sets it apart and still embraces mature learners through lifelong learning. I look forward to seeing how the university is able to use it in [the] future.

Bethany Tynes

EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Peace on Earth

“Let there be peace on earth,” country crooner Vince Gill sings, “and let it begin with me!”

It’s a song from my childhood, lyrics that come back to me every time I hear the phrase “peace on earth.” This Christmas season, I’m finding myself humming it much more frequently than “Jingle Bells,” “We Three Kings,” or other holiday classics.

And that’s a good thing: whether the song was intended seasonally or not, Gill has a point. War, hatred, division, and poverty take an enormous toll on many of our brothers and sisters, both at home and around the world. We all want peace on earth, but it’s difficult to know where to start.

Sometimes it’s tempting to point the finger. The bad guys—the perpetrators—are often easy to single out. *They* need to stop, *they* need to change, *they* need to tune in to their better human nature and shed the selfishness, bitterness, and greed. *They* need to see the light. And while maybe that’s true, assuming that peace can never be achieved until *someone else* becomes as “enlightened” as we are is a truly limiting point of view.

Because let’s face it; we all think we’re in the right, or at least we don’t like to admit when we’re in the wrong. Yet the small hurts we give in the microcosm of our personal universe may even be comparable in scale to bigger injustices that happen worldwide. How do we treat the small number of people we interact with in our own lives?

One of my favourite holiday stories is that of the Christmas Day truce that occurred in the trenches in Europe in 1914. British and German troops suspended warfare for a day to share a common humanity, a common hope, a common desire for peace. In today’s fractured society, we all have differing values, ideas, and beliefs; there’s frequently an undercurrent of anger during exchanges of ideas, even among like-minded people. We simply don’t understand why others don’t agree with us—but do we need to act mean-spiritedly about it?

Like the soldiers in World War I, we can make the holiday one of peace and harmony despite our differences. But the guns don’t need to recommence firing when the last eggnog has been drunk. Perhaps a more peaceful attitude toward others near and far—especially toward those who disagree with us or annoy us—would be a genuine way to carry the spirit of the season into the new year.

Like always, during the holidays I’ll join in the hopes and prayers for peace on earth. But this Christmas, I’ll give it a real chance—and let it begin with me.

HOPE IS NEVER TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Greg Ryan



Christmas is lurking just beyond my emotional horizon. It's an ambiguous day for me. Sometimes I'm in a festive spirit and look forward to the eggnog, but other years crass commercialization overwhelms my sensibilities, and I'm not so merry.

Christmas is ideally a festive, family-oriented season. However, this year the holiday brings with it mixed emotions. Last December I was enthusiastic. The upper balcony and windows were lined with sparkling lights. A fir wreath decorated the front door. The Christmas trees were covered in tinsel.

Two trees last year was a first, and now my spouse is angling for three. I'm not fond of clichés, but really, too much of a good thing is too much, or so my Grinch side asserts. I've also been informed that my two adult daughters are coming home for the holidays. And while I love my children unreservedly, there are times when they don't lavish that emotion upon each other.

My younger daughter travels with a theatrical group. She's creative, driven, and harbours grand dreams. She's an energetic, fun-loving individual who is ready to embrace all that society has to offer.

My older daughter possesses numerous creative traits too, but they're gifts that she's struggling to define. She lives in a foreign land and from her perspective, Western civilization is woefully uncivilized.

I know that my children love their family, each other, and life, but get them together and an explosion is imminent.

The chasm between them is wide. I want to be a bridge builder and facilitate the healing of their damaged relationship. I worry that I'm inadequate for the task. However, what I can do is continue to hope in the future. The future may be unknown and uncertain and yet to be experienced in the present, but nonetheless it's a tangible reality.

I'm realizing that Christmas this year isn't only about my dilemma as a parent; it's also about the preservation of hope. Regardless of any religious affiliation or belief, hope remains. In a global community that's being despoiled by war, famine, and pestilence, hope is the eternal gift.

My girls' fractured relationship is a metaphor for the state of our world and its inhabitants. Peace and reconciliation among peoples, families, and nations is the gift I request this year. Not just for me, but for every human being.

Perhaps three trees truly isn't too much of a good thing.

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

No More Indigestion



Christmas cookies. Fruitcake. Eggnog. Festive cocktails. Filling dinners with family and friends. For many of us, the Christmas season can take a toll on our digestive system (harming us in both the short *and* longer term). The holiday aftermath doesn't need to be about discomfort, though. In this article, we'll look at some easy, practical ways to help combat indigestion—and have a happier, healthier season.

The Basics

First, what exactly *is* indigestion? The condition usually refers to a collection of one or more symptoms that result after you eat a meal: bloating, gas, cramping, upset stomach, and that “sluggish” feeling. Although some suffer indigestion after each meal, most experience the symptoms only after large meals or after eating foods that aren't part of their usual food regimen (Christmas goodies, for instance).

What causes it? While it's easy to use a blanket statement to describe the cause (“you ate too much”), the causes of digestive upset are often multi-factorial. Frequently it's several elements working together at once.

Most commonly, basic indigestion stems from the following: eating too quickly, eating in a non-relaxed state, consuming too large a portion size, enjoying too many fat-laden foods in a short time period, or eating just prior to bedtime. Unfortunately, all factors seem to collide during the holiday season.

What Can I Do?

There are several ways to help prevent indigestion from ruining your holidays:

- *Moderation.* Although the tray of Christmas goodies looks tempting enough to devour the whole thing, hold back. Try a tasting just a few of your favourites; it will be easier on your stomach (as well as your waistline!).
- *Timing.* If you know you're heading to bed in less than two hours, take more careful note of what you eat—particularly your portion size. Consuming higher-fat foods or too much of any food just prior to bedtime can trigger indigestion. Eating right before bed also means restless sleep, which will make you feel exhausted in the morning.
- *Drink water.* Ensuring you're well hydrated (you should be drinking at least eight glasses of water daily) often correlates with better bowel transit time, meaning constipation woes are kept at bay. Adequate water also helps with cell hydration, headache prevention, and an overall feel-good sensation.

- *Eat fibre.* Typical holiday fare is low in fibre, so make a deliberate effort to include more whole vegetable and fruit choices with your meals. Fibre helps counteract constipation, and it can help you feel fuller quicker—meaning you’re less likely to overconsume other foods.
- *Digestive enzymes.* Our digestive systems naturally produce digestive enzymes, proteins that help with food breakdown. However, stress causes our bodies to produce fewer digestive enzymes than normal. So does eating too quickly. Additionally, suddenly eating a much-larger-than-normal portion size (Christmas dinner, for instance) means our body’s usual levels of digestive enzymes are no longer adequate. The result: indigestion. To counteract this, you can safely supplement with digestive enzymes in moderation. These can be found in encapsulated form at most health food stores. Choose a multi-enzyme blend, which contains a mix of each type of enzyme your body produces. Take one to two capsules at the beginning of your large meal, and enjoy a worry-free dinner experience!



This year, indigestion doesn’t have to be the unwelcome guest at the family gathering. Enjoy a healthy holiday season!

Katie D’Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

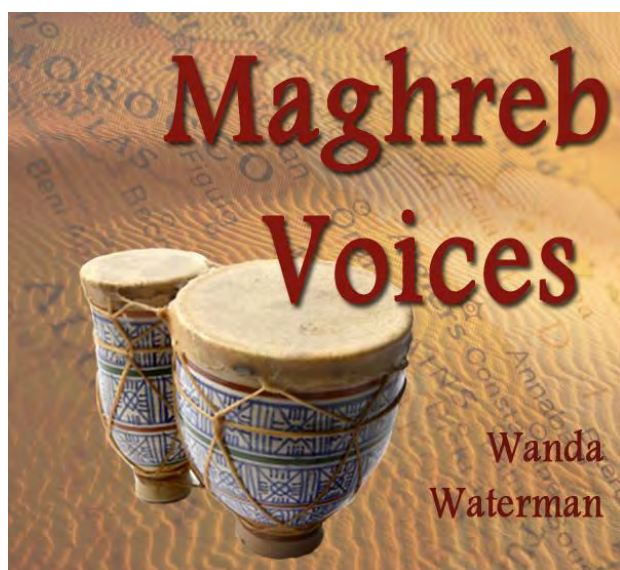
HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE VOICE MAGAZINE



It’s hard to believe that the year is drawing to a close. As our final issue of 2011 goes live, we’d like to express our gratitude to our extended *Voice* family: the wonderful writers, contributors, and readers who make doing what we do worthwhile.

The Voice Magazine will be on break for the holidays as of December 23, 5 pm MST. We’ll be back in 2012 with our annual “Best of *The Voice*” issue, which will showcase some of our top writing from 2011. This special issue will be published January 6, 2012, and our first regular issue of the year will appear on January 13, 2012.

Wishing you and your family and friends peace, joy, and happiness during the holiday season and success in the new year. See you in 2012!



3Ma

Album: 3Ma (Sterns Music 2008)

Musicians: Rajery (*valiha*), Ballaké Sissoko (*kora*), and Driss El Maloumi (*oud*)

"Beauty: the adjustment of all parts proportionately so that one cannot add or subtract or change without impairing the harmony of the whole."

Leon Battista Alberti

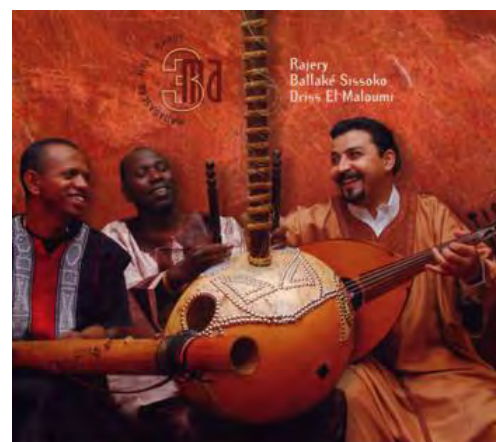
Madagascar, Mali, Morocco

The whole thing was Rajery's idea. At home in Madagascar he'd long been incubating a plan to join his *valiha* with other stringed instruments, but he didn't find the right combo until he met Toumani Diabaté at the 2006 Timitar festival in Agadir, Morocco. That's when he realized that the *kora* would be a perfect complement. Later, when Rajery performed with Moroccan *oud* maestro El Maloumi, he decided that the *oud* would be the ideal third leg. Diabaté was unable to join the project because of his schedule, so they brought in his compatriot Sissoko to play the *kora* in his stead.

Not only could an exquisite musical tapestry be woven, but the collaboration would also constitute an intercultural exchange that was totally new yet which at the same time reflected the long history of interaction among the peoples represented. "3Ma" refers to these musicians' three countries, whose names begin with "Ma": Madagascar, Mali, and Morocco (the latter begins with "Ma" in its French spelling, *Maroc*).

Putting it all together was a little more complicated. The *oud* shares a common ancestor with the lute, as well as an etymology (Europeans got the name "lute" from the French *l'oud*). The *valiha* is a kind of tubelike zither, and the *kora* (my latest obsession) looks like a crude lute with a longer neck and a larger, rounder body. The strings, rather than lying flat as on most stringed instruments, are suspended in consecutive order over the body to make what looks like a harp that's played with only the thumb and forefinger of one hand. When you hear it played, though, you'll swear there are at least a dozen fingers involved.

Yet despite the instruments' similarity, there are some significant differences. The *valiha* plays a chromatic scale (12 tones, each a half-tone apart), while the *oud* and the *kora* are diatonic (the eight-note scale of tones and half-tones familiar to Europeans and North Americans). The three musicians had to spend practically eons together working out how to harmonize their instruments. I do believe they did it.



While it does sound like the groundbreaking musical event that it is, there's nary a trace of an "experimental" quality; it's like these guys have played together in past lives. *3Ma* sounds refined, inventive, and wholly delightful, and as sweet, rich, and classic as attar of roses.

A dab of political commentary makes it even more interesting. In the aptly named final track, "Discours de président d'Afrique," manic fast runs are followed by some scat singing meant to imitate mindless dialogue.

Like so much of the music from Africa's northwest, there is something transcendent about *3Ma*; it's the kind of music that whispers in your ear that in spite of all the horrors that may take place, it's still a beautiful world.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Peace and Goodwill

Holiday blues got you saying, "Bah humbug"? Sometimes the commercialism, the crowds, and the stress of family expectations can put us in a less than festive mood. To get back in the spirit of the season, seek out heartwarming reminders of the good humanity is capable of doing. Get out the Kleenex, and start clicking!

Paying the Bills

For some families, department store layaway programs are a godsend—items can be bought at sale prices, then held by the store until the purchasers come up with enough money to pay the tab. Or until an anonymous stranger comes along and plays "Secret Santa," paying off the account and leaving behind only smiles. *Time* magazine reports on the trend.

Cleaning House

Sure, we may decry the gotta-have-it mentality that's drives many of us during the holiday season. But Christmas is also a great way to evaluate our relationship with what we do have already. Lifhack contributor Dustin Wax talks about cleaning house as a way of bringing "charity and clarity" to the home. It's geared to families, but there are some good lessons for grown-ups here, too.

Peace on Earth

It's legendary, but it's no urban legend: on Christmas Day, 1914, British and German soldiers in the trenches developed an informal truce to suspend the guns for the day and let peace and goodwill reign. NPR interviews the author of *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*. Another good description of the event is this [article](#).





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Do This, Not That

Here's the situation in a nutshell. Roy is away working until Christmas. Because we are having our children over Christmas Eve, all the preparation falls on me. Here's what you should know: our house is small, I'm working two days a week, and I only cook and clean because *someone* has to. I'm not one who reads cookbooks like novels or scrubs until her hands bleed. It's way down on my list of preferred activities. Consequently, hosting a big do is a big deal.

So with me in charge of all the cleaning, decorating, menu selection, shopping, and cooking, being organized and starting early was my only hope.

I worked like a demon yesterday doing the last loads of laundry before the holidays, "picking up" in every room, and list making. Because the kids will be sleeping in the two basement bedrooms, my usual trick of stashing stuff out of sight down there is now lost to me. That's why my car is stuffed with bags of bedding and clothing for Goodwill—and the old coffee table and four-inch slab of foam that will become Hilary's upholstered ottoman. The burning barrel was hot yesterday as I got rid of things that had overstayed their welcome.

In the basement are boxes of stuff for a spring garage sale, the public library's cases of book lights, supplies for an annual event I coordinate, decor items for

Hilary's event business, a treadmill, a sewing machine, art supplies, two chairs awaiting upholstery, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Last night I watched one Christmas movie after another as I sorted through a banker's box of papers. Most of it was chucked. I did keep a box of mementoes for the kids to look at on the weekend (ha!). There's the school project with Greg's tiny handprints; ticket stubs from concerts, Oilers games, and the 1978 Edmonton Commonwealth Games; and newspapers clippings in which we're pictured. But most precious are the July 1994 goal lists I must have forced the kids to make. Greg was seventeen, Hilary nine. His list included, among other things, the following: getting good marks and graduating, owning three vehicles, including a Viper; getting a good job; having lots of money, clothes, CDs, TVs, gold, or stocks; and retiring early. Hers included getting a McDonald's Stacie, meeting Candace Cameron, going to Disneyland, attending art school in Halifax, having a cottage at Dartmouth, NS, and having a big-screen TV.

Like all written goals, many of them have been met. Or exceeded.

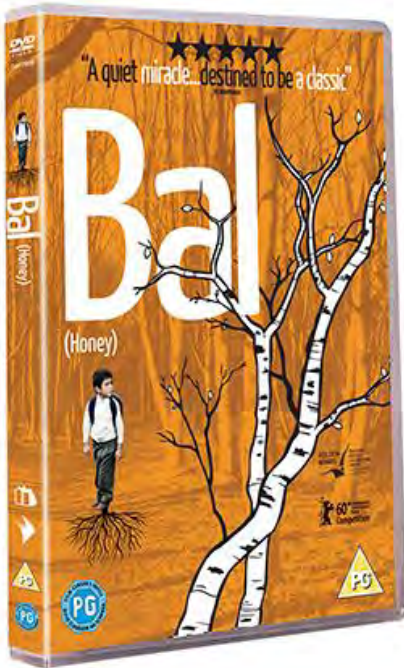
So on the eve of another year, don't make any resolutions. Follow the lululemon manifesto: "Write down your short and long-term GOALS four times a year. Two personal, two business and two health goals for the next 1, 5 and 10 years. Goal setting triggers your subconscious computer."

If they manifest, celebrate. If they don't, revel in the authentic desire you were brave enough to articulate. Either way you win, from where I sit.

Heartfelt wishes to all of you for a joyous Christmas and a New Year overflowing with blessings.

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Bal (Honey)* (Kaplan Films 2010)

Director: Semih Kaplanoğlu

Cast: Bora Altaş, Erdal Beşikçioğlu, Tülin Özen

"All men are by nature equal, made all of the same earth by one Workman; and however we deceive ourselves, as dear unto God is the poor peasant as the mighty prince."

Plato

There's a Beekeeper Up in That Tree (and I Think He Cares about Me)

Yakup makes wooden beehives and places them in the treetops in the forested mountains of Turkey. This is how he supports himself, his wife, and his young son, Yusuf.

It is a serene and beautiful life. The mountains are grand and the views spectacular, full of winding streams, great trees that dance and whisper in the wind, and lush greenery you can almost smell. In his spare time, Yakup carves toys for his son. He gets his rope from a neighbour who makes it by hand. The region appears to enjoy political stability. It's an idyllic life by any standards.

But Yakup's vocation is a dangerous; he has to climb great heights to place the hives and later to extract the honey. Sometimes Yakup must travel on foot for several days at a stretch to set up his hives. He goes alone, which means there's no one to get help if he has an accident. This is troubling to his family, but he must earn a livelihood, so off he goes.

To complicate matters, the bees are inexplicably dying—which means that he must travel ever further from home to place the hives.

It's fairly common knowledge that pesticides and other modern airborne pollutants kill bees, or at least weaken their resistance to viruses and parasites. It's not stated explicitly in the film, but that's what goes through your head as you watch Yakup reach into the hive and draw out handfuls of dead bees.

The other thought that might cross your mind is the indifference of nature: whatever our illusions as to its beneficence, nature is under no compunction (and is far too uninterested) to consistently reward our labours by serving up our daily needs. This is the reality with which Yusuf is faced, and his desperate need to come to terms with it forms the dramatic tension in the story.

In the context of this incredibly beautiful but indifferent world is a father whose unconditional love, patience, and understanding are the highest things in Yusuf's narrow experience.

The family—and the community—is Muslim, and the twin axes around which their lives swirl are Islam and natural cycles. As is usual in such cases this leads to a syncretism of the traditional religion with local ancestral spirituality and custom.

Much to the chagrin of Marxists, peasants are among the most spiritual of all the human rankings; there's something about that intimacy with nature and time that expands God-consciousness.

Little Yusuf adores his father and strives to please and emulate him. The taciturn Yakup is tender in his silent way, always thinking of his son and taking his role as Dad very seriously. Yet he is cold and distant toward his young, pretty wife, who obviously adores him.

Bal is the third instalment in the Yusuf trilogy, three films that run backward chronologically through the life of Yusuf, the son. In the first film, *Egg*, Yusuf is a grown man, a poet, returning to his mountain village after receiving news of his mother's death. In the second, *Milk*, he's experiencing the bittersweet joy and disappointment of young adult life. He's been declined entrance to university, yet some of his poems are being published.

“. . . whatever our illusions as to its beneficence, nature is under no compunction . . . to consistently reward our labours by serving up our daily needs. This is the reality with which Yusuf is faced, and his desperate need to come to terms with it forms the dramatic tension in the story.”

In *Bal*, the final part of the trilogy, you see the existential quandary written large: the innocent boy rooted in peasant life, but gifted in such a way that he is able to see it all as no one has seen it before.

Words, written and spoken, bear a burden of angst in *Bal*. Yusuf suffers from a speech impediment and in school he must rehearse a passage before he's able to read it to the class without stuttering. He avoids the other children, staying inside while they play outdoors. He loves stories and poetry. But most of the time he's silent and can only stop stuttering when whispering to his dad, who gently indulges him.

Bal 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 provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 7) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 8) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

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.



Spread the Word

If you love words, you're probably revelling in the current climate of e-books, audiobooks, and more blogs than even Matilda Wormwood could devour. One of the driving forces behind this word resurgence has been generosity—an open-source, communal attitude that's given readers access to more content than ever before. So as we approach the traditional season of giving, what better time to look at a few ways we fortunate readers can give back?

One easy way you can share some bookish awesomeness is to spread the word—literally. For up-and-coming authors, bloggers, and podcasters, it can be tough to build momentum, even if they're putting out quality content. Genuine reader reviews (sorry, grandma's glowing praise doesn't count) do more than help other readers. They're also gold to folks whose advertising budgets exist in the same realm as unicorns. So if you've enjoyed a new author or

read something useful in a blog, take five or ten minutes to post a review or comment and give some literary goodness back.

And it's not just wordsmiths who've brought you this access to content. It's also the thousands of programmers, many of them volunteers, who devote their time to things like content management and themes. [WordPress](#) software powers over 60 million sites, everything from *The New York Times* to Martha Stewart's page to small blogs like my own. All free and open-source. [Joomla](#) is another free, open-source content management system.

Throw in all the free templates, add-ins, and themes created by individual programmers, and you have a remarkably generous community that helps writers and podcasters bring their content straight to you, the audience.

If you want to return some of that generosity, many theme and template creators gladly accept small donations via PayPal. Haven't used a theme yourself? Go to your favourite blogger's site and scroll to the bottom of the homepage. Most sites include a small credit with the name of their theme and a link to the designer's homepage. Post a comment saying you find the theme easy to navigate, or mention something else you like about it. Better yet, give a little shout-out on Facebook or Twitter and send some new visitors to the designer's site.

One thing many e-book fans find confusing is which books to use on which reader. Since 2006, Kovid Goyal has been making things easier with [Calibre](#), his e-book converter and organizer. Calibre has become wildly popular, but remains free and open-source. As Kovid writes on

"One of the driving forces behind this word resurgence has been generosity—an open-source, communal attitude that's given readers access to more content than ever before."

his site, one of his main goals “has always been to prevent either the fragmentation or the monopolization of the e-book market by entities that care solely for short-term goals.”

As a reader, you can't put a price on that sort of check to the system of corporate monopolies. But you can support Calibre (or like-minded developers) in plenty of ways, from making a donation to writing code to helping out with translations.

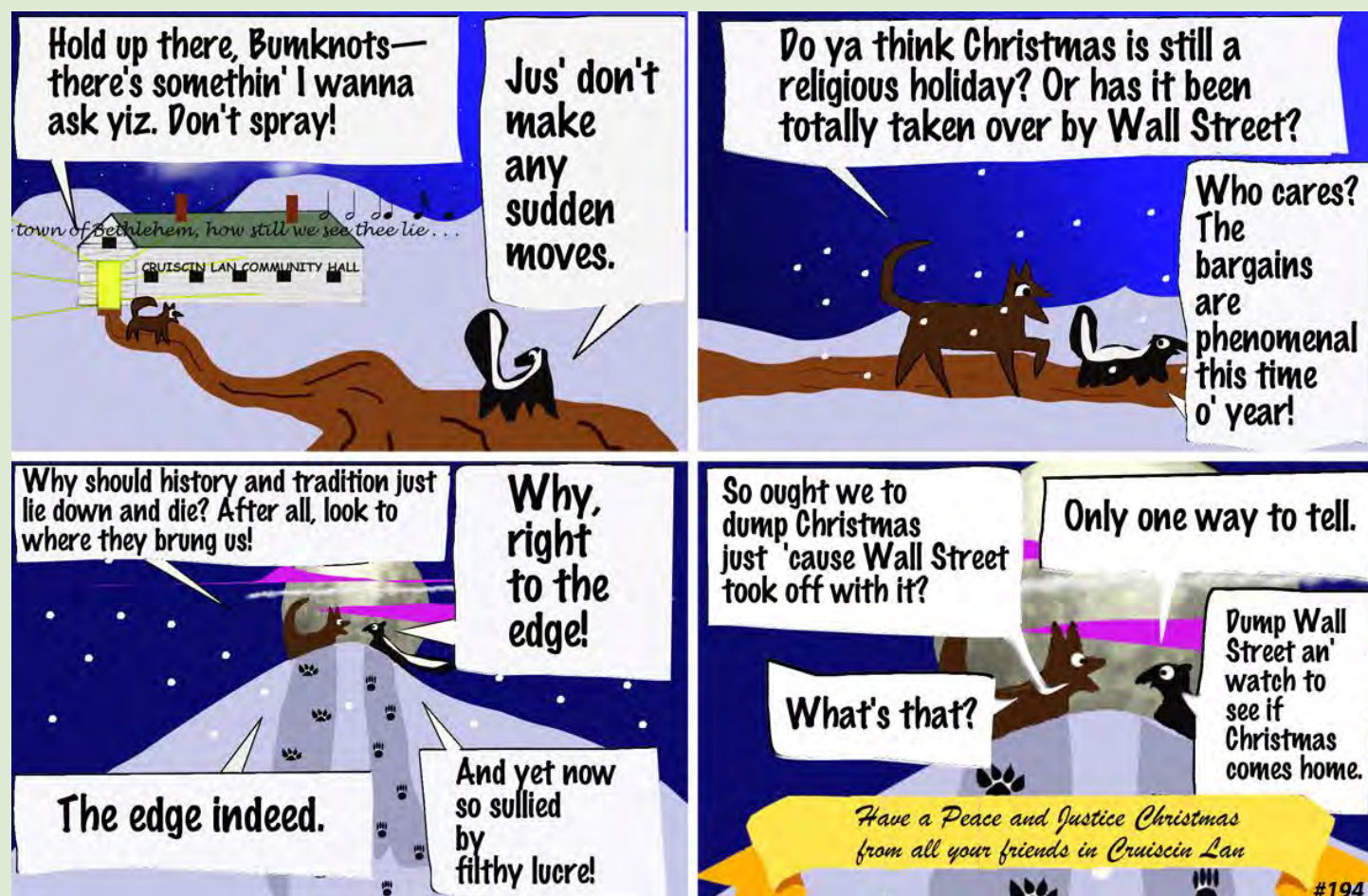
Last but not least, Project Gutenberg welcomes all kinds of talent on its [volunteering page](#). You can help put books on DVD for people without access to high-speed Internet; flip through your paper books to find pages that are missing from Project Gutenberg's copies; help edit the Gutenberg Wiki pages; and proofread new titles in the Gutenberg library.

May these few suggestions help you carry the spirit of giving into the new year, and may your holidays be merry!

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: Dreaming of a White Christmas

In the classic Christmas film, Bing Crosby's "dreaming of a white Christmas." Regardless of whether the movie created the expectation, countless revellers now wish for a white blanket of snow to get them in a seasonal mood. What are the chances that your region will have snow in time for the holidays?

As The Weather Network [reports](#), Environment Canada "has analyzed more than five decades' worth of weather data from major centres and calculated the average chance that snow will be present on Christmas Day." Only a "snow cover of 2 cm or more on Christmas morning" counted as a white Christmas.

While some cities—Winnipeg, Quebec City, and Whitehorse, for example—are all but guaranteed a winter wonderland, others, particularly in British Columbia, have little chance of snow on December 25. In fact, in Vancouver there's just a 21 per cent chance of seeing the white stuff, and in Victoria the probability's even lower, just 17 per cent.

Data analysis has also shown a climate shift: "children growing up between 1964 and 1982 were more likely to see white Christmases than their own children are now."

Around the World: Meteor Tracker

Over the past decade, citizen journalism has become more and more prevalent—especially with the rise of smart phones and social networking. Why not harness this power for scientific advances? That thought led NASA to develop its new Meteor Counter iPhone app.

As NASA [reports](#), each day "more than 40 tons of meteoroids strike our planet." Whether they're the so-called shooting stars that disintegrate midway through the atmosphere or the bigger "fireballs" that end up on the ground, NASA wants to "[keep] track of it all."

The Meteor Counter app, which is freely downloadable from the Apple store, is "designed to harness the power of citizen scientists." Users can take their smart phone or tablet stargazing with them, and tap a key on the app's "piano-style interface" to indicate the brightness (astronomical magnitude) of any meteors they spot. The app automatically transmits the data, including the time and location of sighting. Users can also record verbal impressions of the event.

Bill Cooke, of NASA's Meteoroid Environment Office, points out that non-scientists can contribute to real scientific need. "Using our app, people from all walks of life can contribute to authentic NASA research," he told reporters.

AUSU UPDATE

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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