

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 04 2012-01-27

2012, Take Two

Resolutions revisited

Roadblock

Open surfing

Life, Lived

Just one day

*Plus:
Health Matters
Voix du Maghreb
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.



STUDY SKILLS

Christina M. Frey

**Happy New New Year**

It's the end of January. Do you know where your New Year's Resolutions are?

In fact, do you even know *what* your New Year's Resolutions are? We started out with the best of intentions. But unfortunately, for most of us the busyness of our lives means that we haven't been doing so well at following our wonderful plans to change our lives for the good.

Who loves a New Year's Resolution by January 31? If we're keeping up, we're loud and proud about our success. For those of us whose grand plans have kind of fallen by the wayside, we're a little reluctant to bring up the subject. The resolutions which excited us just a few weeks ago are now reduced to that nagging feeling that we should be doing something . . . if only we had the time. Or the motivation. Or the courage to make the changes that need to happen.

But there's hope.

The problem isn't that we made our resolutions too big. The problem isn't that we're lazy or unmotivated or scared. The problem isn't even that we didn't make the right resolutions—or the resolutions right.

We just needed to make more.

Today I stumbled across a [blog post](#) that I think holds the key. The author, citing psychologist Peter Gollwitzer, suggested that the reason we fail to keep up with our resolutions is that we don't make any concrete plans to carry them out. It's not enough, he argues, to make plans for change. Rather, we need to lay out specific details of how, when, and where we'll carry these plans out.

He calls them "implementation intentions."

An implementation intention tells the details of a resolution. It's like a lesson plan for completing a small skill module. Without that lesson plan, we don't really know what direction we're headed. Things go off schedule, and once we're off track it's much harder to get back on course.

If your resolutions just aren't working out this year, consider broadening them to include these implementation intentions. The author recommends "[reframing] . . . goals as 'if-then' statements." *If this happens, then I will respond this way.*

For example, one of my more sadly neglected resolutions was to go to bed on time. Toward the end of 2011, 2 am bedtimes had

Fallen off the resolution wagon? Try expanding your goals with implementation intentions, specific instructions showing just how you'll make your goals reality.

become a very bad habit. Yet despite my deep desire to make changes, my midnight-bedtime resolution had failed in the first week of 2012. Why? Because I had no strategy to *make sure* I wasn't still working into the wee hours.

Revising my resolution might take this form: if it's a Tuesday or Friday evening, I can stay up working, reading, or relaxing as late as I like. Any other day of the week, the laptop lid will be shut at 10 pm. I will relax until 11 pm, and be in bed by 11:20 pm. Then I can read in bed until I fall asleep.

Regimented? Maybe a little; but sometimes that structure is what's needed to make a wish reality. I'm hoping that as 2012 progresses I can use implementation intentions to give my resolutions a life outside the list.

It's not January 1 anymore, but it's never too late for a fresh start. We still have another 11 months of 2012: another 335 days filled with opportunities to make it our best year yet!

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Dragons Today

This past week we celebrated the Lunar New Year, also known as Chinese New Year. 2012 is the Year of the Dragon, but there's no cause for excessive alarm. In Chinese tradition, dragons are not the terrifying enemies from Western literature, but rather are symbolic of good fortune. This week we look at a few "dragons" we can find outside of legend:

Eat

The scale-covered dragonfruit, actually a member of the cactus family, is most commonly thought of as an Asian fruit—but it's also grown in Mexico, South America, and Israel. Click to find out more about this unusual fruit, which is said to taste like "like a cross between kiwi and pear."

Fly

The dragonfly's eating habits can be a bit scary—if you're a bug. The carnivorous insect can eat up to its own weight in just half an hour!

Crawl

They may not breathe fire, but you wouldn't want to meet the Komodo dragon, which grows up to 10 feet long and whose bite carries "over 50 strains" of deadly bacteria. Check out *National Geographic's* page for more facts and pictures.

Blood

The dragon's blood tree, a rare variety, has long been prized for the healing and alchemical properties of its bright red sap.





Groupe Tadalat, 2^e Partie

« Héritiers de la 'révolution des guitares' initiée par Tinariwen au début des années 80, les musiciens de Tadalat côtoient au quotidien ceux de Terakaft, Tamikrest ou encore Amanar, tous issus de la florissante pépinière de l'Adrar des Ifoghas. Toutefois, ils se démarquent de leurs grands frères et amis par des arrangements, des rythmes et des styles qui leurs sont propres. La musique de Tadalat s'inscrit dans la mouvance actuelle du métissage et s'enrichit ouvertement d'influences occidentales. »

Groupe Tadalat

Membres: Oumar Badi (Guitare, solo et voix), Aboubacre Ag Mohamed (guitare accompagnement et voix), Zeidi Ag Baba (basse et voix), Mohamed Ag Ibrahim (djembe), Fatimata Walet Hadé (chœurs), Abdallah Ag Amano (ingénieur son et manager)

Ce qui suit est une interview avec Abdallah Agamo, ingénieur son et manager de Tadalat. Vous pouvez trouver la première partie [ici](#).

Fils d'un Griot Touareg

Je suis fils d'un griot touareg (Amano Ag Issa) de Tombouctou et cette situation a joué un grand rôle dans ce que je fais aujourd'hui. En effet, j'ai grandi en écoutant la musique de mon papa qui est une figure historique et un gardien de la tradition orale touarègue; mais j'ai choisi un autre domaine lié à la musique.

Depuis tout petit, j'étais passionné par les machines et me mettais à bricoler chaque fois que je trouvais un appareil, à l'écart de la vue des personnes.

Des années plus tard, je me suis rendu compte que j'avais en moi l'amour d'un métier qu'il fallait apprendre : ingénieur du son.

Suite à plusieurs formations et stages par-ci par-là, j'ai acquis un minimum de connaissances pour me permettre de travailler. Suite à ces formations et ayant remarqué le manque de structures liées à l'industrie musicale dans les régions du Nord-Mali, j'ai créé une association culturelle (Sahara Sounds Production) en 2010, qui a fini par donner naissance à un projet : Sahara Sounds. Ce projet a trois buts essentiels.

À court terme :

- 1- Faire la promotion des jeunes musiciens talentueux des régions du Nord-Mali à travers la production, le management.
- 2- Faire revivre la musique traditionnelle touareg en voie de disparition, en la ramenant sous d'autres formes, plus abordables pour le public.

À long terme :

- 1- Former des techniciens dans les régions du nord et partout au Mali, pour améliorer le domaine de la musique.

C'est dans ce cadre que j'ai créé un studio d'enregistrement mobile avec lequel j'ai enregistré deux jeunes groupes: Tadalat (de Kidal) pour la musique moderne et Tadiast (de Tombouctou) pour la musique traditionnelle.



À travers ce vaste projet culturel, je compte promouvoir la culture, développer l'industrie musicale et l'esprit de créativité chez les jeunes artistes, afin de leur permettre de vivre de leur art. Pour ce, je cherche des partenaires techniques et financiers pour atteindre mon objectif.

Le nom « Afrique » ?

L'Afrique est un continent plein de ressources qui a besoin d'être développé. Ceci nécessite une prise de conscience de ses leaders et de la nouvelle génération, qui porte en elle l'espoir de ce continent. En tant que jeunes, nous devons réfléchir et agir pour trouver des solutions pour son avenir.

(Tadalat a été recommandé à Voix du Maghreb par Celia Maria de Sao Paulo, Brésil.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Ethical Expeditions Field School



Interested in ethno-cultural studies or biodiversity? Appreciate humanitarian efforts? Enjoy travelling? How about experiencing all three—and earning university credit?

The Ethical Expeditions Borneo Field School is a travel-study program “designed for undergraduate students to gain practical research experience in Ecology and Conservation in one of the world's environmental hotspots.”

The month-long 2012 program will travel to a remote community in the Wehea Forest in Indonesian Borneo. Students will have the unique opportunity to do hands-on research, learning “directly from scientists, local leaders, rangers and NGO's who are working to solve the complex challenge of protecting the remaining biological and cultural diversity on our planet.”

The 2012 Field School will run from approximately June 10, 2012 to July 14, 2012. The cost of the program is \$4950 USD (including university credit, educational materials, meals, and accommodations). Airfare to Balikpapan, Indonesian Borneo, is the student's responsibility, as are other travel-related expenses. Participants can earn four university credits (a non-credit option is also available).

The program is limited to six students, so apply today. For further information, visit the Ethical Expeditions [website](#) or contact Sheryl Gruber at ethicalexpeditions@gmail.com.

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Glow Your Skin!**

We've all heard of picture-perfect skin, something that for many of us seems an unattainable dream. However, it may not have to be—and the solution isn't "Fotoshop by Adobe." Whether you're contending with skin blemishes, irritation, or just the harshness of winter weather, there are some natural ways to help bring that healthy glow back into your face!

Are you eating skin-healthy?

"You are what you eat" definitely plays a role in skin appearance. What does your diet look like? Is it full of processed foods and junk food? A well-known strategy to help teenagers control acne flare-ups and duration is reducing consumption of refined sugars and greasy foods.

But it's not enough to just remove the bad players. A diet high in fruits and vegetables (are you achieving your recommended five to ten servings per day?) is linked with optimal skin health. Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants, chemicals that neutralize cellular damage. This damage reduces skin radiance and contributes to aging skin. In addition to their antioxidant potential, certain fruits and vegetables specifically contain skin-boosting vitamins like vitamin A (increases the turnover of skin cells) and vitamin C (improves and maintains collagen). Carrots are a good source of beta-carotene, which converts to vitamin A, and vitamin C can be found in fruits like oranges, grapefruit, and apples.

You can also choose to supplement your vitamin intake if you're not getting sufficient vitamins from your diet or if your skin problem is particularly severe. Supplementation with vitamin C will have the added benefit of immune support. But note: if you supplement your vitamin A levels, be sure to choose beta-carotene to reduce the chance of toxicity from overdose (daily intake is 10,000 IU of beta-carotene).

Are you eliminating?

It might come as a surprise to discover that the skin is the largest organ of elimination in the body. If your body's other eliminatory routes aren't functioning as they should (kidneys and intestines, for example), your skin often picks up the slack—with resultant blemishes.

One of the most commonly "blocked" elimination pathways is the intestines. If you experience constipation several times a week, or don't have at least one bowel movement daily, there's a greater chance your skin will have to help eliminate toxins. The result: breakouts and skin irritation. For mild to moderate constipation, add bulk fibre (like psyllium husk or flax seeds) to your daily diet. One to three tablespoons, taken in the morning, can help pave the way for optimal bowel function. Try sprinkling psyllium or flax on your breakfast cereal or yogurt, or mix it with juice.

Additionally, check your fluid intake. Are you drinking at least eight cups of water daily? Finally, make sure your stress levels aren't through the roof. If you're always on the run, you may not be giving your body enough opportunities to "let go."

Are you exercising?

We often think of exercise as correlated with weight loss, but it's worth far more! Getting moving increases body metabolism, which means that, on a cellular level, your body is working faster. A more smoothly functioning eliminatory system means fewer chances for blockage (and hence fewer breakouts).

What are you using?

Many of us use topical skin products, from moisturizers to night creams to exfoliants. However, did you know that some skin product ingredients can actually negatively affect us? The skin is a porous system, and we can absorb substances through it. Ingredients to watch for include the highly common parabens (a group of preservatives, including methylparaben and propylparaben). Parabens are known carcinogens and may create excess estrogen in the body. There are many paraben-free skin products available; check your local health food or beauty store to find one suited to your needs.

Glowing skin is possible—even in the dead of winter. Check your daily habits and make changes for beautiful, healthy skin!

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.

20 YEARS OF NEWS AND VIEWS

Did you know that you can read through old *Voice* issues online? Issues dating back to January 1999 are accessible through our main site, and as the year progresses we'll be uploading material from earlier in our history.

Check out our list of archived web-format issues [here](#) (beginning with issue 1001, in January 2002), and our list of PDF-format issues [here](#) (beginning with issue 901, in January 2001). As you scroll through the PDF archives, you'll notice how drastically *The Voice* has changed in appearance (and content)—and that's just over the past decade!

There will be new changes coming later this year, too. We need *your* input! How would you prefer to read *The Voice Magazine*? Web-based? PDF? Email? On a computer, via smart phone, or on your e-reader? What kind of content do you want to see more of?

[Tell us your thoughts!](#) Who knows—someday your ideas could form part of *Voice* history.

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Life in a Day* (2011)

Genre: Documentary

Director: Kevin MacDonald

Producer: Ridley Scott

"I can't believe that God put us on this earth to be ordinary."

Lou Holtz

"The grand essentials of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for."

Allan K. Chalmers

The Unbearable Triteness (and Beauty and Bliss and Horror) of Being

A small boy in an Asian country carries his shoeshine bench to a busy street and sets up shop. Later he packs up his bench and toddles home, holding it awkwardly over his shoulder. When asked whom he loves best, he says it's his dad, who does all the cooking and who protects him. When asked about his favourite possession, he enters his shanty and emerges with a child's laptop computer, proudly showing it off.

In another scene, a widowed father wakes up his small son in an untidy, cramped apartment and helps him to commence his day by lighting incense at the shrine of the boy's dead mother. The father, in long hair, head scarf, and beard, patiently encourages his son to enact the rituals at the shrine, but the boy is reluctant and can't get away fast enough.

Kevin MacDonald and his cohorts developed the idea of making a movie from YouTube videos. They asked Youbers to film and upload the events of their lives on July 24, 2010, so that they could make a movie from the results. After about 80,000 clips and 4,500 film footage hours, a film emerged from the chaos, complete with seamless segues and a subtly elegant plot.

MacDonald told reporters that one goal was to raise the YouTube video to an art form. His idea was spawned by the 1930s' British Mass Observation Movement, which encouraged ordinary people to keep and submit diaries and to answer a few questions on a specific day. These were made into articles and

books intended to reveal the transcendently beautiful quality of daily life minus the celebrity, politics, and commercial barrage dominating the media.

Life in a Day does have a plot, but it might be a little difficult to pin down what that plot is. The film starts out with scenes that seem so normal and mundane yet at the same time so packed with meaning and wonder and beauty. Slowly it becomes more intense, juxtaposing scenes of young love and bliss with scenes that contain blood, sweat, and tears.

Later the film resolves with some poignant statements about the human condition, concepts that you could never recognize as such from the onset. The credits roll as we watch a snail perched on a glass globe, slowly eating the names of people (listed as co-directors) who contributed footage to the movie.

There seems to be a continuity of film style which you'd think would be hard to achieve under the circumstances. But perhaps this is because YouTube cinematographers have, en masse, developed a peculiar form of documenting their lives—one from which a commonality of style emerges quite naturally and only requires the deft hands of a good editor to refine it.

The film is just as sensational as it is blissfully mundane. Of course you would expect that whatever day you pick to do this sort of thing would have to include some historic event somewhere in the world. This one had the stampede at the Love Parade in Duisburg, Germany, where 19 people were tragically killed. The event provides a jolt within the placidity of all the normalcy—but that's life.

This film is not just entertainment. It is a wonderful resource for bardlings, providing hours of inspiration for poetry, drama, and music, raising people-watching to a symphonic level and making all things one. You emerge from viewing it with a renewed love of life.

Life in a Day fulfills 10 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 harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 5) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 6) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 8) it gives me artistic tools; 9) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 10) 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.

***"Wars and elections
are both too big and
too small to matter in
the long run. The daily
work—that goes on, it
adds up."***

Barbara Kingsolver



The Element of Surprise

When's the last time a piece of writing surprised you? I mean really opened your eyes to a new idea, or startled you out of complacency, or introduced you to a pastime you never knew existed. If it's been a while, there are easy ways to change that—and it might surprise you to know they're the same tools we use to limit what we read.

In spite of (or maybe because of) the endless hum of the information highway, we're remarkably good at tuning out things we don't want to hear. Instead of letting the flood of newspapers, magazines, and websites swamp us, we tweak endless options to selectively pull in small streams of info. RSS feeds deliver content from favourite sites, while news aggregators like Yahoo offer customized settings right down to local TV listings.

And now, with e-readers and tablets gathering massive piles of data on our reading habits, it's easier than ever for authors and publishers to update books, customizing them to even more closely match people's preferences. As Nicholas Carr notes in this *Wall Street Journal* [article](#), the ease of updating digital texts "will make it hard to resist tinkering with a book in response to such signals, adding a few choice words here, trimming a chapter there, maybe giving a key character a quick makeover." If most readers skip the chapters where the hero isn't chasing someone or blowing something up, why not simply get rid of those parts altogether?

But by customizing nearly every type of media we read, we also run the risk of closing our window on the world, of narrowing our interests so much that we narrow our minds. Tweak your settings closely enough and, except for the occasional headline that gets through, it's possible to fill your RSS feeds, home pages, and Twitter stream with nothing but news about fashion or finance.

Even those helpful suggestions on Amazon and other retail sites can perpetuate the cycle. How does it offer me fresh ideas to know that customers who bought the same spy novel as I did also purchased similar books in the same genre?

This behaviour's nothing new. An introductory journalism course I took many years ago devoted particular attention to this bias. Whether it was print newspapers in the 1950s or a website today, people have always tended to seek out media that already agree with their opinions—media that offer an authoritative, reassuring voice that it's the rest of the world that's wrong.

"... by customizing nearly every type of media we read, we also run the risk of closing our window on the world, of narrowing our interests so much that we narrow our minds."

So how can we turn those filters into tools to selectively expand our world, not limit it? Choose a topic or person you know nothing about and add it to your settings. Subscribe to a blog on lacrosse or bonsai trees

or wedding planners, and commit to scanning the titles and reading occasional articles for a month. Bored witless? Unsubscribe and choose another topic.

If you only ever visit the corporate media sites, bookmark [Mother Jones](#) or [The Dominion](#). Subscribe to the lifestyle feed of a foreign newspaper to get a first-hand take on the small, daily interests of people who might seem to have nothing in common with you (most of the major dailies offer versions in several languages). The Arts & Letters Daily [site](#) offers dozens of links to newspapers, magazines, columnists, and blogs of all stripes.

With all the choices available, it's easy to understand why we filter so many voices out. But those same filters can also be remarkably useful in letting a few new voices in—voices that speak of unknown possibilities. Try it. You just might be surprised.

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





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Life's Balance Sheet

I just emailed a friend and unburdened three months' worth of frustration on her. It was sent under the guise of an update, but really it was a litany of complaints and bitching about the state of my life and some of the challenges I'm facing. I guess that's what happens when you trust someone to listen and understand without judging. If I know her, she'll write some calming words of encouragement aimed at helping me get things back into perspective.

Every so often I need to remind myself that life's not feast or famine, storm clouds or rainbows. It's a daily concoction of blessings and problems mixed together. In most cases, we did nothing specific to deserve either. It's simply the ebb and flow of life. What keeps us off-kilter is not being in charge of the ratio—and knowing it's subject to change without warning.

But this, too, shall pass.

Success experts tell us it's impossible to keep two thoughts in our minds simultaneously; that no matter the crap happening out there, we have control of our minds and how we choose to deal with what's going on. Lately I've needed to remind myself of that truism so that I can keep functioning day-to-day.

I've resorted to making a list of reasons to hang in there. I've written out a prayer asking for help, for insight, for patience. I've considered that those making life harder are not malicious, but perhaps misguided. I cling to the hope, for myself and others, that Maya Angelou voiced: when we know better, we do better. I thank God for the allies I have who allow me to vent, talk me in off the ledge, give me hope, and tell me to go slow and chill. Chilling is not something I do well. I'm intense. I have high expectations of myself and others. I want results yesterday, even when the wiser side of me knows the problems are years old.

So instead of doing Chicken Little's the-sky-is-falling routine, I will count my blessings. I will tally up those who love and support me unconditionally despite my shortcomings. I will be grateful for the warmth and security of my home despite the fierce, bone-chilling winds outside my door. I will tell my husband, working away from home, how much he still means to me after 38 years of marriage.

When I'm done with that, I'll pick myself up and carry on. When I inventory my health status, I am blessed. When I look at my family, I am rich.

On the balance sheet of life, I am truly in the black.

In fact, I feel better just having written these words, knowing that you, dear reader, have likely walked in the same shoes and understand. Having this platform is a blessing, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Ring, Ring

Classified ad site Kijiji can help you find what you're looking for—even if it's simply the chance to do good.

As the *Toronto Sun* [reports](#), a London, Ontario woman noticed a National Orange Bowl Florida State championship football ring posted for sale.

The idea of selling such a precious keepsake intrigued the woman and encouraged her to investigate further. Examining the ring's photo, she discovered an engraving, did her research, and "learned the ring belonged to Jeff Womble," who played for Florida State University between 1999 and 2003. This past November, the

Atlanta-based athlete had reported the ring stolen.

She contacted Womble, who instructed her to get in touch with the police. The Good Samaritan, who wouldn't identify herself to reporters, had been willing to buy the ring and send it to its rightful owner, but police were able to recover it.

Around the World: Good Deeds

Good intentions get a bad rap, but maybe not for long. New research is suggesting that good intentions have the power to increase pleasure in the recipient—no matter how small, insignificant, or otherwise meaningless the action.

As Psych Central [reports](#), "good intentions can soothe pain, increase pleasure, and even make cookies and candies taste sweeter." In fact, as researcher and University of Maryland Assistant Professor Kurt Gray told reporters, "[the] way we read another person's intentions changes our physical experience of the world."

The study found that when subjects "received identical electric shocks at the hand of a partner," they experienced "significantly less pain" when they thought the shocker's intentions were good (to help them win money) as opposed to malicious or careless.

The study has "clear applications in the real world," including pain management. In the everyday, we're encouraged to double the effect of good deeds by letting the recipient know we're motivated by caring.

Additionally, researchers urge us to enhance our own experience by thinking the best of people, even when we're unhappy about their actions. As Gray told reporters, "Stolen parking places cut less deep . . . when we think well of others."

AUSU UPDATE: JANUARY 2012

Bethany Tynes, President



Happy Holidays from AUSU!

As the holiday season draws to a close, we hope you've had a chance to rest and relax with those who are important to you—and maybe even squeeze in a little bit of homework time!

Election Timelines Finalized

As we move into the new year, Council is also very pleased to announce that our 2012 election timelines have been finalized! We'll be hiring a Chief Returning Officer (CRO) in January, and on February 6, a Call for Nominations will be released, giving you all the information you'll need to run for AUSU Council, 2012-2014. Nominations will remain open until February 20, and campaigning will occur between Feb. 21 and March 2. All current students

will be able to vote online March 3-6. Joining AUSU Council is a great way to serve your fellow students, as well as gain valuable leadership experience, so I encourage you to consider running in our upcoming elections. If you don't have time to commit to being on Council yourself, though, you can at least get involved by reading about the candidates and casting an educated ballot.

Awards Policy Changes and Updates

Council has recently reviewed and revised many of our standing policies, and some exciting changes have taken place, particularly in our policy on Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries. While previously, many of our awards were offered twice yearly, in November and May, we're now going to be offering our awards more often—some will still be offered year-round, while the remainder will be available on a quarterly basis. We hope that this will make sure that more students are eligible, and don't miss out on awards just because of the way their course start and end dates line up with our awards dates. And we've also increased the number of some awards given, as well! You can find all the details on our [website](#).

AGM Dates Coming Soon

Each year, AUSU ensures that an independent third-party auditor is hired to check over the organization's financial records and governance. The auditor's findings are then compiled and submitted to the members—you, our AU undergraduate students—at an annual general meeting. This meeting takes place by teleconference, so you can participate from almost anywhere, and is open to all current members. Members of the AUSU Executive will present updates on the year in review, in addition to the financial

documents. There will also be motions to update a few outdated bylaw and policy points. A date for this year's AGM has not yet been finalized, as we await the final documents from our auditors, but as soon as a date is set, an agenda will be drawn up and posted on our website. Keep your eyes open! We'd love to have you join us!

Have you heard . . .

. . . that our brand new 2012 Student Handbook/Planners are now mailing!? Yes, that's right—they're hot off the press! 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!

. . . 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.

. . . that 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! Email us your thoughts on student textbooks and learning resources, and we'll make sure that they're voiced in the appropriate committee!

. . . about our SmartDraw program? After much discussion, we've decided that this is a valuable service to students, so we've renewed our licenses for 2012! SmartDraw is a software package that allows students to create high-quality charts and graphics, and to insert these into a file type of their choice. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

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!

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THE VOICE

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