

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 07 2012-02-17

Addicted to Your Smart Phone?

Who's really to blame

Times Out

Inside the media giant

All is Calm

Too much peace & quiet

Plus:
Maghreb Voices
Cruscin Lan
and much more!



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www.voicemagazine.org

1213, 10011 109th St. NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3S8

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email

voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Tamra Ross

Managing Editor

Christina M. Frey

Regular Contributors

Hazel Anaka
Katie D'Souza
S.D. Livingston
Wanda Waterman

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

**Addicted and I Just Can't Get Enough**

Are you “addicted” to technology?

According to a new [study](#), you may be—and it may not be your fault. After all, the study found, social media like Twitter is “as addictive as cigarettes.” How can we fight that kind of power?

We’re glued to our “CrackBerrys.” Married to our iPhones. Obsessed with Angry Birds, Twitter, RSS feeds, blogging, 24-7 information. We joke about it, but at the same time we’re serious. We know we have a problem.

But what exactly is it?

Addiction is a pretty strong word. There’s often an element of chemical dependency involved in something like drug or cigarette addictions, and it seems rather far-fetched to claim definitively that social networking itself chemically alters our brains. And though the compulsive use of Facebook could suggest emotional dependence—in the sense that we’re driven to it, unhappy without it—it doesn’t follow that the media itself is to blame for the “addictive” behaviour.

And yet there’s something there that just can’t be dismissed. We impulsively check and re-check. Are we addicted to *technology*? Or is it a stand-in for something else?

Recently I came to a realization. I was stuck in a long line at the mall. My phone battery had died. As I stood waiting, waiting, waiting, I realized something alarming: I don’t know how to just do one thing anymore. Technology makes frenzied multi-multi-multi-tasking more *possible*, but it’s not responsible for it.

I’m addicted to multi-tasking.

It’s time to stop blaming our devices. In fact, a fascinating [article](#) in *The Atlantic* argues that blaming our devices for our frenzied pace and our inability to connect with each other and the world around us actually makes things worse.

Lately, the author points out, there’s been a trend toward a digital Sabbath, a regular time when we unplug ourselves. It’s supposed to be freeing, a break from the constant connectedness of our daily lives. A backlash against some of our culture’s social problems. Such a time of restoration sounds ideal. How can it be damaging?

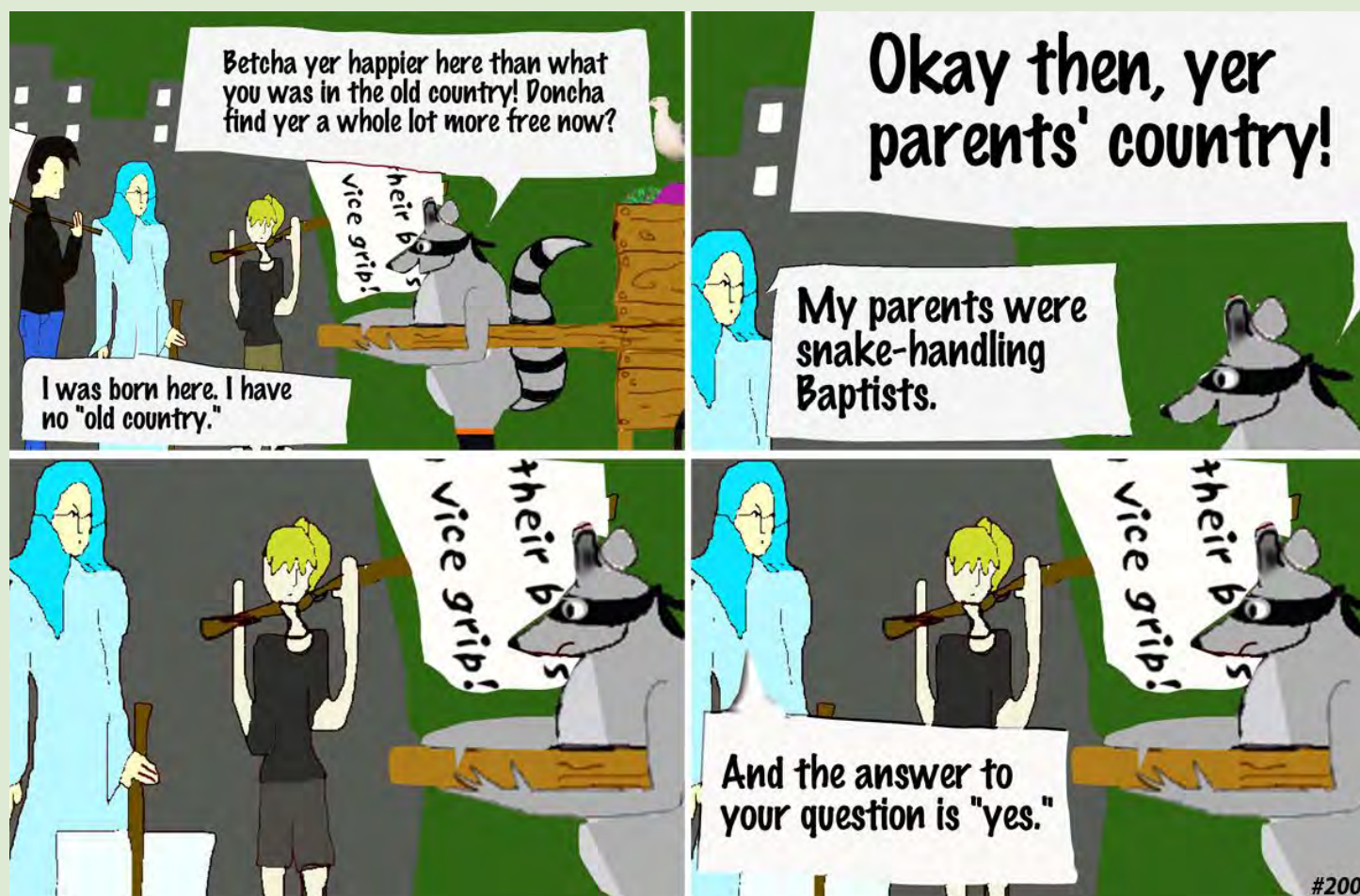
It creates a fake solution, the author argues—a band-aid on the problem—instead of addressing real issues. By making technology the scapegoat for our inattentiveness, she says, “[we] absolve ourselves of the need to create social, political, and, sure, technological structures that allow us to have the kinds of relationships we want with the people around us.” What we need, she continues, is to evaluate our obligations, relationships, and priorities—and go on from there.

Multi-tasking is good, to a point. The line is crossed when we can't focus on just one priority, even if it's a crucial, human thing like family relationships. Our smart phones make multi-tasking easy, but we can text *or* talk *or* chat *or* read our Twitter feed. Or have a real-life conversation. We don't need to do it all at once. We can choose to carve out exclusive time for the highest priorities in our lives, whether we're pursuing them face to face or online.

Technology is a great tool for interpersonal communication; it is a means of connecting like never before. We don't necessarily need *less* technology. We just need to learn to manage it better.

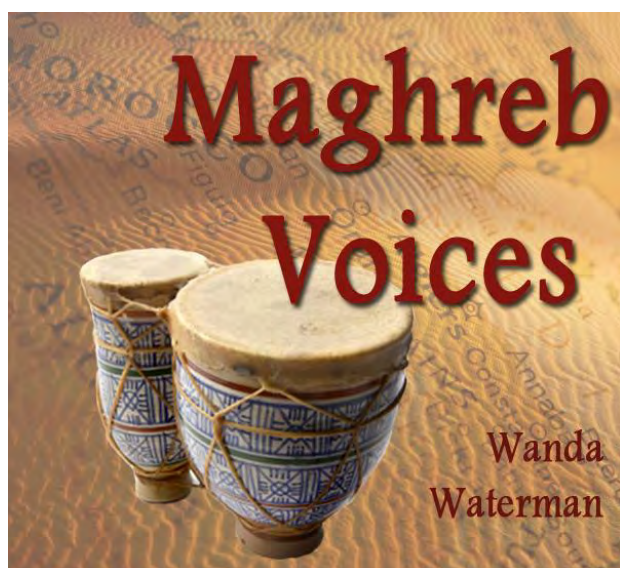
CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



20 YEARS OF NEWS AND VIEWS

More milestones in 2012: our comic strip "Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan" hits its own landmark this week, its 200th strip. "Cruiscin Lan" has been published in *The Voice* since 2005. Check back next week for an interview with artist Wanda Waterman!



Album: Djamel Aissa, *Algérie Algeria* (*Musiques traditionnelles de Kabylie*) (2012)

In my series “Power, Poetry, and Popular Dissent in Algeria,” I talked about the 1980 popular uprising sparked by the Algerian government’s refusal to allow a conference on Berber poetry in the city of Tizi Ouzou. This event is now seen as the seed that planted the Berber Spring, a revolt so volatile and robust that it took the government years of brutality to put it down. Like the Algerian Civil War, the Berber Spring was watched intently in the Middle Eastern world, and to some extent it inspired the revolutions and popular uprisings we’ve witnessed there in the last year and a half.

The Berbers are one of the more fascinating surviving indigenous cultures on this planet. They have inhabited North Africa since before the arrival of the Muslim Arab tribes, yet they’ve held to their own customs and traditions with a fierce pride. Even today, they carefully maintain their language and heritage while living in relative harmony with the Arabs, intermarrying with them to the degree that their DNA is now virtually identical. The Berbers are a prime example of a people who survived assimilation by a dominant culture without having abandoned the richness of their own, seeking no justification for keeping the old ways besides the simple *This is who we are*.

The Kabyle of Algeria are a significant Berber group for a number of reasons: they are the largest purely Berber ethnic group in North Africa, they comprise around 40 per cent of Algeria’s population, and they have a history of Herculean resistance to attempts by the Algerian government to repress their culture. Also to their credit, they’ve consistently demonstrated a fierce attachment to things that were of much greater value in the ancient world than they are today—poetry, for example.

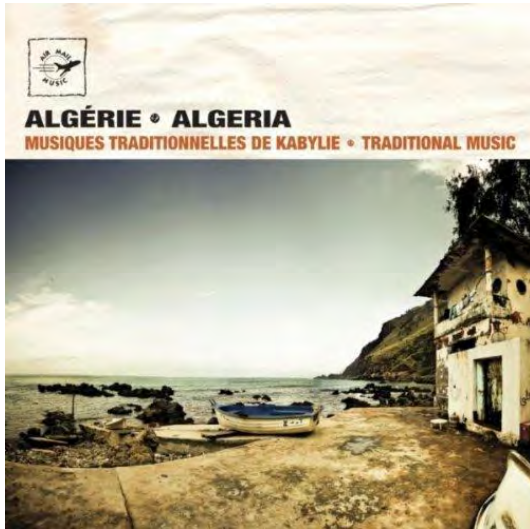
The Berbers hold fast to their culture without claiming for it any natural superiority. And yet it’s one of those folk cultures that in its simple beauty has the power to inspire high culture (remember Beethoven’s listening for the songs of shepherds) in such a way as to revitalize high culture and keep it from floating off into elitist irrelevance.

The song themes in *Algérie Algeria* navigate daily and celebratory village experiences; the album contains love songs, lullabies, dances, wedding songs, homages to parents, and feast songs, always expressing a deep attachment to family, love, beauty, and the folk arts.

I haven’t yet been able to find detailed liner notes for this album, but the instrumentation sounds like *mizwad* (a bagpipe-like instrument), *darbouka* (drums), *sintir* (a guitar-like stringed instrument), flutes,

“Because of the ancient roots of these songs they can be tapped by composers and musicians for musical raw material, but they remain complete, time-tested musical gems in their own right.”

human voices including ululations, and hand clapping. In contrast to the arrangements of much Arab music today, there are rarely more than three instruments on each track, lending an air of rustic minimalism to the songs. The singers have deep, passionate voices (it's hard to tell whether male or female) that are intensely expressive. There's no harmonization, but the melody lines are elaborate and sometimes intriguingly dissonant.



One track—"Festival de flûte"—sounds like medieval plainsong, an indication of the Maghreb influence on early European music. Within the various songs you can also hear traces of Andalusian music and *chaabi*; these show how Kabyle music influenced those genres as well.

The recording quality and repertoire make this an album of great historical value. Because of the ancient roots of these songs they can be tapped by composers and musicians for musical raw material, but they remain complete, time-tested musical gems in their own right.

Algérie Algeria represents an integral part of the multibranching and globally significant root system of Maghreb music.

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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Project Gutenberg Canada



You're probably aware of Project Gutenberg, an online resource which provides free access to literary works that have passed into the public domain.

But did you know that there's a Canadian equivalent, [Project Gutenberg Canada](#)?

The mission of Project Gutenberg Canada is to make freely available Canadian-specific content that is in the public domain. In addition to fiction works by Canadian writers and "non-fiction books on Canadian history, politics, and culture," the online resource offers international material that is considered public domain in Canada. And it won't be limited to Canada's official languages; you'll find works "in any language, as is appropriate for a country with Canada's multicultural makeup."

In the future, Project Gutenberg plans to "launch a series of original translations" to add accessibility to its collections.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

That's What I See

Have you ever wished you had the house all to yourself? That those people making demands on your time, energy, and patience would take a long walk on a short dock?

Those people might be kids, teenagers, spouses, or parents. All the annoying stuff they do is one huge pain in the butt. The toilet seat left up, the battle for the remote, the mess in the kitchen, the book bags littering the entrance, and the second-hand newspaper all irk.

You wish for silence, because you don't really appreciate their choice in music or the yelling some families do. With little kids, you wish for some uninterrupted time to eat, sleep, bathe, or just pee.

You hate yourself for wanting to smother your snoring husband, but sleep deprivation brings murderous thoughts. And does he think you're a short order cook? A laundress? A concierge?

Do those damn kids need a nutritious lunch *every* day? How about three out of five?

I'm here to tell you that if you've had any of those thoughts (or worse), you're normal. As someone living in silence right now, let me also tell you: watch what you pray for.

Roy is away trucking about an hour and half from home. Closer than the years he went to Houston, but too far to be home every night. With him gone I'm responsible for everything. Now I have to feed the five farm cats and keep the three bird feeders topped up. I have to remember to fuel the car and plug it in during the -30 degree cold snap.

It's up to me to pick up the mail and pay the bills. I had to meet with the crop insurance adjuster who came to check the granaries to see if we have a claim for a poor canola crop.

I can handle all that and more. What's most difficult is the toll taken on one's psychological well-being. I try not to dwell on the spooky noises or the strange vehicles driving down our country road. I keep the doors locked and have on occasion not answered when I didn't know who was knocking. I think about who I would call if the car wouldn't start or if it slid into the ditch. I am aware of which lights I have on at night and how much of my interior is visible to someone looking in.

I try hard not to think about the 77-year-old retired farmer who was abducted a couple of weeks ago from his farmhouse near Vulcan, Alberta, and later found dismembered. I try hard not to think of myself as a sitting duck.

Anyone who's lost a spouse to death—or even work away from home—would welcome the snoring, the noise, the mess. That's what I see, from where I sit.

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

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



A scene from **PAGE ONE: INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES**, a Magnolia Pictures release. Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

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

Film: *Page One: Inside the New York Times* (Magnolia Films 2011)

Director: Andrew Rossi

Screenwriters: Kate Novack, Andrew Rossi

When Dinosaurs Roamed the Earth and Were Suddenly Forced to Compete with Bloggers for Food

Print media is expensive to put together.

Newspapers have traditionally paid for themselves with advertising, allowing them to charge their readers less than the cost of production. But advertising revenue depends on circulation, and now that most people are getting their news free on the Internet, advertising funds have shifted in that direction.

Another disadvantage to print media is that despite touting itself as an impregnable bastion of legitimacy in a swirling online sea of amateur citizen journalism, it has at times most certainly messed up. Some publications have even come to be seen as chronically messed up, to the point where the claim to legitimacy doesn't always hold water.

Even the hallowed *New York Times* has had its reputation plummet. The most notable fiasco was the Judith Miller articles from the '90s, written in support of the decision to head into the Iraq War. The intelligence received was faulty, and while the paper took the hit (as did the career of Ms. Miller), the event called the merit of all print media into question.

In this decade, social media has proven to be instrumental in spreading news about what's going on in the heat of revolt around the world, with citizen journalists able to quickly circulate photos and videos taken in the fray. While there are no ethical constraints or professional standards, the influence of the footage is there nonetheless (Facebook's role in the Arab Spring is just one example). Twitter can give you a headline within seconds of an event. It's now possible find out just about anything from a blogger. Anyone with a cell phone can be a journalist, and anyone with Internet access can be a news distributor.

"We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles."

Jimmy Carter

One colourful character in the film, a news reporter for the *Times* and also an advocate for the paper in the face of mounting criticism, is David Carr—a former drug addict and single dad on welfare, a man who somehow managed to make it to the top of the *Times*. Carr, who speaks with the strained intensity of someone with a speech impediment or neurological challenge, addresses the difficulty of having to compete with potentially every ordinary citizen in the production and sale of

news. He says that the medium is no longer, as McLuhan stated, the message; rather, the message is now the medium.

So what makes us still want to go out and buy a paper or to pay for an online subscription, when so much news is freely available online? Quite frankly, not much. There are those who will continue to support newspapers, but more from a sense of loyalty than from necessity or a desire to find out what's going on the world.

Yet despite Ariana Huffington's suggestion that print media is now in danger of becoming extinct, citizen journalists still can't interview heads of state, sit in on certain government proceedings, or talk to film idols on the red carpet. To do that you need a newspaper or communications network behind you. There are those politicians and entertainers who believe that any press is good press, but without a media bastion ID card a journalist will be limited in what she can be permitted to investigate and report on.

Still, though, the mainstream media no longer controls what we know about the world. From an economic perspective this state of affairs echoes what's happening across the industrialized world: the old business models can longer compete with the many small players now springing up thanks to the ubiquitous availability of computer technology.

Another important cultural advantage of print media is that it strives to maintain high standards of grammar and style. This is something amateurs rarely seem willing to master in the anything-goes world of the web, and because of this the dissemination of information becomes a cloudy affair, like listening to a radio with reception so bad you miss every third word. Clarity of writing is a significant vehicle of truth, and without it society falls prey to predators of deceit who use language as a tool of oppression instead of an avenue of freedom.

If not for these remaining vestiges of respectability Julian Assange might not have chosen to blow his whistle in the direction of *The New York Times*, wisely granting his WikiLeaks the legit news status they deserved. And if *The New York Times* had not chosen to embrace and even hire citizen journalists to

gather news quickly, it might not still be standing today.

The print world's current woes might not be a bad thing. Now print media *has* to be good, if only to justify its continued existence, and only the fittest will survive. The tricky part will be making it pay. Only a few journals will endure, and they will not necessarily be the giants; they may simply be those who've found ways to stick it out in the brave new world.



David Carr and Bruce Headlam in PAGE ONE: INSIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES, a Magnolia Pictures release. Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

For its part *The New York Times* is developing new ways of taking advantage of citizen journalism to glean information, while retaining the standards of investigation and quality writing found in the best print journalism.

Page One fulfills six of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it stimulates my mind; 3) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 4) it makes me want to be a better artist; 5) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

21-2-12

You're probably aware that Tuesday is Mardi Gras—a fabulous festival. But you may not have realized that the 21st marks a lesser-known, but equally fascinating event: 21-2-12 is a palindrome date. For English lovers, word nerds, and anyone else fascinated by the world of palindromes, these links are for you. Let the good times roll!

Sentence Structure

Most of us have heard of “A man, a plan, a canal—Panama.” But there are plenty more palindrome sentences out there. Click here for some of the best human-generated gems, courtesy of *Palindromist* magazine. Another list is here.

DIY

Curious to try your hand at palindrome writing? This simple online tool will help you locate words and phrases with the combinations you need to get your sentence going right. There's also a palindrome tester to confirm what you've written.

Sing Out

Leave it to Weird Al Yankovic to come up with a ridiculous and hilarious song whose lyrics use all-palindrome words, phrases, and sentences.

A Draw

If you're more of a visual person, you'll want to check out Dutch artist Hans Kuiper's mesmerizing graphic representations of popular palindrome sentences and phrases. You'll never look at palindromes the same way again.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Ray Vision

Checking information on your smart phone is so 2011. As technology moves ever smaller, devices seen mostly in futuristic film and television may become the norm. One Vancouver-based company has developed a new eye display that could change the way we look at data—literally.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), Recon Instruments is refining and revising its “display that [fits] inside a pair of alpine goggles.” The device would [give] skiers and snowboarders a way to see a readout of their speed, altitude and the like right in their goggles,” freeing up their hands for better concentration on their sport.

Although the LCD on the device is tiny—less than half an inch across—it projects its display “on what appears to be a 14-inch screen at a distance of about five feet.” Users can look up, rather than down, for readouts on “data like jump height, temperature and GPS location.”

Recon sees other applications outside the ski slope; increased miniaturization means that someday “this technology could soon be as simple as slipping on a pair of shades – or even contact lenses.” In the future, the company plans to investigate similar “sunglass displays . . . for running and other endurance sports.”

Around the World: Breaking, Entering, and Housekeeping

A break-in is usually a violent event. Windows are smashed, rooms are ransacked, and items of value are taken. For one housebreaker, however, entering another’s home illegally provided quite a different opportunity.

As *MSNBC.com* [reports](#), a 46-year-old Indiana man allegedly broke into “a neighbor’s apartment and [proceeded] to cook a meal, fold laundry and do some vacuuming.”

The resident, Ashley Murray, returned home to discover the lights on in her apartment. She assumed the guest was her brother, whom she had expected and for whom she had left a set of keys.

The unexpected houseguest appeared to have obtained the keys instead.

When the police arrived, he insisted that “he was in his own home,” but was arrested on charges of breaking and entering. Murray is “concerned Davis might return,” but she’s not angry at him over the affair, telling reporters that “He drunk up my orange juice, but it’s cool because he swept up my floor and folded my clothes.”

The prosecution has asked that the housebreaker be given a psychological evaluation.

AUSU UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2012**Bethany Tynes, President****ELECTIONS ARE HERE!**

Want to get involved with your fellow AU students? Gain valuable experience while still serving others? Then AUSU Council might be the place for you! AUSU holds elections every two years to fill nine positions on Council. These nine councillors later select from among themselves an executive group of three (President, VP External, and VP Finance), and this executive is elected annually. This year, nominations will be accepted February 6th-20th, followed by which campaigning will occur February 21st-March 2nd, and voting March 3rd-6th. Elections (including campaigning and voting) take place entirely online, so you can participate from virtually anywhere in the world.

What is Council and what's required?

AUSU exists to serve the undergraduate students of Athabasca University. Some services are directly tangible to students (such as our handbook/planners, mailed free to students on request), while others are important, but more behind-the-scenes (such as meeting with the University to voice student concerns). Council is the body which directs and oversees these efforts, often by creating policies which are then carried out by the executive group and staff. Councillors help generate ideas and policies, and shouldn't be confused with counsellors—councillors do not provide counselling.

Councillors work by phone and email, and need to be able to devote about 2-5 hours per week to Council work. Council meetings occur by teleconference about once a month, and these meetings are scheduled at the best possible time for the majority of the group. So while all councillors have input into our meeting times, they must also be able to be flexible in the event that not everyone's wishes can be accommodated. Similarly, we welcome councillors from all over the world (we've recently had councillors in the Netherlands and Korea, as well as across Canada, participate!) but all councillors should be aware of time zone differences, and how this could affect meeting times in their location.

Councillors need access to reliable Internet and phone connections. We encourage councillors to use land lines while on teleconference, as this can help reduce background noise, but cell phones may be used if the sound quality is very clear. If you try to use a cell phone and we can't hear you, though, you'll need to make other arrangements. We also urge councillors not to drive during meetings, and to be at their computer if possible so that they can easily refer to meeting documents.

Councillors should also have a secure, reliable computer, and be willing to install some necessary software, including genuine Microsoft Office and Excel (if you don't have these, we can help you get them, but Open Office alternatives do not provide adequate functionality for Council work). Councillors must also maintain the confidentiality of their computer and files, so if the computer is shared, councillors should be prepared to create their own password-protected account.

What do current Councillors have to say?

"I truly enjoyed the sense of community on AUSU. I feel as though I was part of something bigger from interacting with other students, and other members of the AU community. I always got the sense that the work I was doing with AUSU was positively contributing to other students' experiences within the University. While students might not always be able to see the results immediately, AUSU is involved in many of the positive changes at AU. Sometimes it is something as simple as suggesting changes to the wording of service standards on the AU . . . website, while other times it can be something more complex, such as opposing the raising of tuition."

"It is a lot of work; it is challenging to work with different personalities and cultures through mostly email (and never face to face). It is also fun and a really great experience."

"I'd like to emphasize the importance of having passion behind what you do. Passion and determination to dream and accomplish what you set out for yourselves to achieve . . . Being on council is not nearly as easy as it may seem. It's tremendously important to have enough time in your schedule to devote to what is required of you. So before you put your name forward make sure that you take a good look [at] what's going on in your life, as two years is a big commitment. "

"I hope that the next Council will continue to foster positive relationships with AU, as well as continue to improve the services it offers to its student members. Taking the next step in a major website overhaul, as well as continuing to mail regular newsletters, and the newly implemented e-newsletter would all be services that would add benefit to AUSU members."

"I have enjoyed meeting the other councillors, getting to know them, and developing relationships with them all. I also . . . love the democratic process we use for working with the other councillors through a problem or issue. While the conversations we have are varied and sometimes involve disagreement, I enjoy the mix of opinions and viewpoints. I especially look forward to the occasional comment or suggestion made by a councillor that brings up a side of an issue that I hadn't considered, opening up my eyes and broadening my experience overall."

"Being on council is a great experience. Not only is it fun and interesting, it offers a personal experience, an opportunity to communicate with fellow students . . . For those who make it onto the next Council, remember to be patient and avoid feeling overwhelmed. While there is a learning curve, it doesn't take too long to feel welcome and a part of an interesting and important process."

Want to know more?

For all the latest information on elections, and how you can self-nominate for our elections, visit our [website](#)!

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

1213, 10011 109th St. NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8 - Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Christina M. Frey

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Katie D'Souza, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

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