

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 10 2012-03-09

Literary Tourist

Have book, will travel

Crystal Ball

The future is now. Really.

A Vist to *Portlandia*

Sprouts and cultural amnesia

*Plus:
Health Matters
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



CONTENTS

The Voice's interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Features

Editorial: The Future of Us	3
Health Matters: On Vacation	5

Columns

Write Stuff: Through the Looking Glass.....	7
Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan	8
From Where I Sit: You Can Do It Too	9
The Mindful Bard: <i>Portlandia</i>	11
AUSU Update	15

News and Events

AU News Writer Wanted.....	4
Notice: <i>Voice</i> Holiday	6
Click of the Wrist.....	10
Did You Know?	13
International News Desk	14

From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor.....	2
----------------------------	---

***The Voice
Magazine***

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

The Voice is published
every Friday in HTML and
PDF format.

For weekly email
reminders as each issue is
posted, fill out the
subscription form [here](#).

The Voice does not share
its subscriber list with
anyone.

© 2012 by *The Voice*

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.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



The Future of Us

Spring is on its way, which means change is on the horizon. From graduation plans to college applications to standardized tests to the US elections, everyone's putting a ton of time and effort into the big decisions that will affect the course of their futures.

In the meantime, the little actions, the day-to-day interactions, lie forgotten. But they're no less important—as a recent “beach read” taught me.

The Future of Us, by Jay Asher and Carolyn Mackler, is a YA book with an unusual twist. Set in the long-ago (for youth, anyways) time of 1995, it follows two teens who experiment with the newness of the Internet and find themselves on modern-day Facebook. To their shock they realize that their grown-up profiles—essentially a snapshot of their futures—can change based on the actions or inactions taking place in the normalcy of high school life.

Even the ones that seem insignificant.

While the book itself is far from a favourite of mine—the weak interactions and dialogue and abundance of cringe-worthy '90s references make it difficult to really enjoy—it does make its point. What we do in the short term affects the larger picture, even though we may not see the connection right now.

It's a message that comes at an important decision-making point in my own life. Set to make a major geographic move, we're currently exploring schools, neighbourhoods, and other communities and opportunities important to our family personally and professionally.

At times the pressure seems enormous, the fear of failure high. What if we leave one stone unturned, one path uninvestigated, and miss opportunity by a hair? What if we make a mistake and change the course of our lives for the worse?

It's mind-blowing work, maddening responsibility. And the idea of having so much, and yet so little, control over our own lives is downright terrifying.

Major decisions are important, but equally crucial are the minutiae, the millions of tiny choices that make up our everyday lives.

But in *The Future of Us*, and in our own lives, it's not necessarily the fork in the road that sets us down a particular path. It's the alighting of a bird that gives rise to the avalanche, the careless tossing of a match that creates a disastrous fire, and the tiny spark that, fanned this way and that, blazes into something glorious.

Or the opposite.

The scary thing is that while we over-focus on the big, obviously life-changing events and choices, we neglect the meetings, interactions, comings and goings, and minor decisions that are equally important in determining which way we'll go.

Not to mention what kind of people we'll become.

I've not yet finished the book. I don't know how the characters' fates will pan out, whether in 1995 or in their glimpsed future.

Nor do I know where I, or my family, will be in the next 20 years, 10 years, 5 years, even 1 year. Our lives could be completely transformed in a week, for better or for worse.

We don't know the future. And, as much as our best-laid plans are carefully created, there's a myriad of interactions and events that can cause those plans to veer off course, the cycle of perpetuating collisions unleashing a far different future than what we'd planned.

So faced with the uncertainty, what can we do? Well, we can plan for major life changes. But we can also focus on the present instead of exclusively obsessing over the future. We can stay mindful of the daily interactions and decisions that can bring joy or sorrow not just to ourselves but to those around us.

We can live for now, transforming the reality of today into the very best future of us.

AU NEWS WRITER WANTED!

In order to meet the needs of our student readers, we're ready to expand our coverage of Athabasca University-specific news, events, and resources. We're seeking a regular writer who will research and cover these and other, similar topics on a freelance basis. Columns will be paid at the regular freelance rate.

Interested applicants can send a writing sample to the Managing Editor, Christina Frey, at voice@voicemagazine.org.

To all aspiring writers: remember that *The Voice* is always happy to consider articles on any topic of interest to our readers!



HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

On Vacation



The long-awaited spring break is just around the corner, and vacation plans are at the top of many students' minds. Whether you're taking advantage of travel specials or recharging with a staycation, here are some tips to keep you healthy and happy during your well-deserved break.

No one wants to get sick right before a holiday. Unfortunately, you're often especially vulnerable when you finally allow yourself to relax. Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*) is a popular preventative, but these immune-boosters are also worth checking out:

- **Astragalus.** The roots of the astragalus plant (*Astragalus membranaceus*) are prized in botanical medicine, especially traditional Chinese medicine, for their immune-strengthening properties. Astragalus differs from the well-known Echinacea in that it doesn't boost white blood cell activity; rather, it regulates immunity by strengthening a deficient or weak immune system. The result: the chances of getting sick are significantly reduced. Because botanical medicine works over the longer term, you need to start taking this botanical in advance (dose is approximately 500 mg/day orally).
- **Vitamins C and D.** Vitamins C and D are necessary for immune function; they both boost immunity and act as important "catalysts" for several immune system reactions to occur. Each day take 1000 mg vitamin C and up to 5,000 IU Vitamin D.
- **Oil of oregano.** If you feel you're on the verge of becoming ill, you can look to oil of oregano for its preventive properties. This potent antibacterial/antiviral extract tastes as powerful as it smells. Recommended dosage is up to nine drops per day, starting at three drops to ensure you have no reaction. A word of caution: don't overdose, and don't continue supplementation of oil of oregano for more than six weeks continuously, since it can disrupt normal bowel microflora (the "good" bacteria in your intestines).
- **Eat right.** As always, don't forget that good nutrition is key to good health. Recent research shows that eating the recommended five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables per day helps prevent infection from colds, flu, and other illnesses.

If you're trying to stay well, consider boosting your immunity with astragalus, vitamins C and D, and oil of oregano.

Travelling during spring break? Consider the following when packing your suitcase:

- **Travellers' diarrhea:** If you're headed somewhere warm, you might run the risk of contracting travellers' diarrhea or a similarly unpleasant stomach bug. There are several ways to help prevent this. First, watch your water consumption; water should either be boiled or from a reputable

To avoid contracting travellers' diarrhea, be wary of the water you consume—and that doesn't just mean your drinking water, either. You can also supplement with probiotics, beneficial bacteria that help prevent the condition.

source. This not only applies to the water you drink, but also to water that you may consume in other ways (like the water you use to rinse your toothbrush or the water used to wash the apple you snack on at the hotel). However, mistakes can happen, and in some situations—like eating out—you have little or no control. The probiotic *Saccharomyces boulardii* is a specific probiotic strain that actively helps prevent travellers' diarrhea. It's a transient strain, meaning that it doesn't colonize in the intestines on its own. Therefore supplementation with the probiotic is necessary several days prior to, and every day during, your trip. The usual dose is 250 mg per day.

- **Got sun?** Chances are that you've already packed your swimsuit, flip flops, and sunscreen. Protection from harmful UV rays is important, but not all sunscreens are good for you. Be wary of some typical sunscreen ingredients, like the hormone disrupter oxybenzone, and try to avoid the phthalates (which can cause birth defects in males if quantities accumulate in pregnant women). Instead check out more natural sunscreen products. Active ingredients like zinc and titanium dioxide can help block UV rays while being easy on your body.
- **Bruising and swelling:** If you're planning an active vacation, you'll want to be prepared in case you suffer a minor injury. Bring along the homeopathic remedy arnica (*Arnica montana*), which will help counter the symptoms and pain of a bruise or minor injury. Use a 200CH potency, and dose three pellets, three times per day (total of nine pellets daily). Don't just swallow the pellets; allow them to melt under your tongue.

Enjoy your break, and stay well!

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.

NOTICE: VOICE HOLIDAY

Here at *The Voice* we're taking a holiday, too! *The Voice Magazine* will be on hiatus from Monday, March 26 to Sunday, April 1. There will be no issue published on March 30, but we'll be back with more of your favourite columns and topics with the April 6 issue!



Through the Looking Glass

When you step into your favourite literary world, where do you go? Maybe it's to a shire full of hobbits and wizards, or to the ominous shores of *Shutter Island*. But if you like to be carried away by flights of imagination, how far would you go to step through the looking glass—to experience a literary world in real life? This week we take a look at some interesting ways to blend fantasy with reality.

Perhaps the most obvious literary tourist attraction is The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, a theme park that lets Potter fans immerse themselves in a life-sized Hogsmeade. Visitors can tour the Hogwarts castle, with stops ranging from the Gryffindor common room to Dumbledore's office. Hogsmeade streets feature real-life shops such as Ollivanders, Honeydukes, and the Three Broomsticks.

That's all very Hollywood, but if you're looking for something a bit more realistic, step back in time to Dickens World. Located in Kent, this "multi-sensory, interactive experience" promises to truly bring Dickensian times to life, letting you "immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and smells of nineteenth-century England."

And when they say smells, they mean it. Not that you'll get to throw raw sewage into the streets, a common practice in real Victorian times. However, the park features chemical "smell pots," as this *New York Times* article explains. When heated, the pots "emit odors of offal and rotting cabbage."

Fair warning, though. As the bittersweet tone of the article reveals, Dickens World might come closer than planned to conjuring Dickens's tales, leaving visitors with a sense of disappointment to rival Miss Havisham's.

If you prefer literary escapades of the outdoors type, try your hand at being Huck Finn for a day. Huck Finn's Jubilee lets you climb greased poles, build a river raft, join in a frog jumping contest, and try your hand at whitewashing a fence—just like Mark Twain's famous young adventurers did. For those who really want to get into character, the annual festival even includes a Huck Finn look-alike contest. All you need are overalls, a fishing pole, a general knowledge of Huck's adventures, and "well-traveled bare feet." Oh, and to be a boy, of course.

Prefer to strike out on your own? You won't be the first to follow the trail of *The Da Vinci Code*, a feat many fans have attempted since the novel became a bestseller. In fact, the book's success gave rise to countless da Vinci-themed guided tours, an unexpected boon for tourism boards.

Want to follow the trail of The Da Vinci Code, pretend you're Huck Finn, stay overnight in a hobbit house, or visit Shakespeare's home town? Literary tourism is a fascinating way to connect with your favourite authors and characters.

Today, this Fodor's [blog](#) will guide you from France to Scotland, with stops at the Ritz, the Louvre, and the Rosslyn Chapel. The blog post dates from 2005, so you should verify addresses and schedules before putting on your symbologist's hat. One bit of advice that hasn't changed: run if you spot an albino monk-assassin.

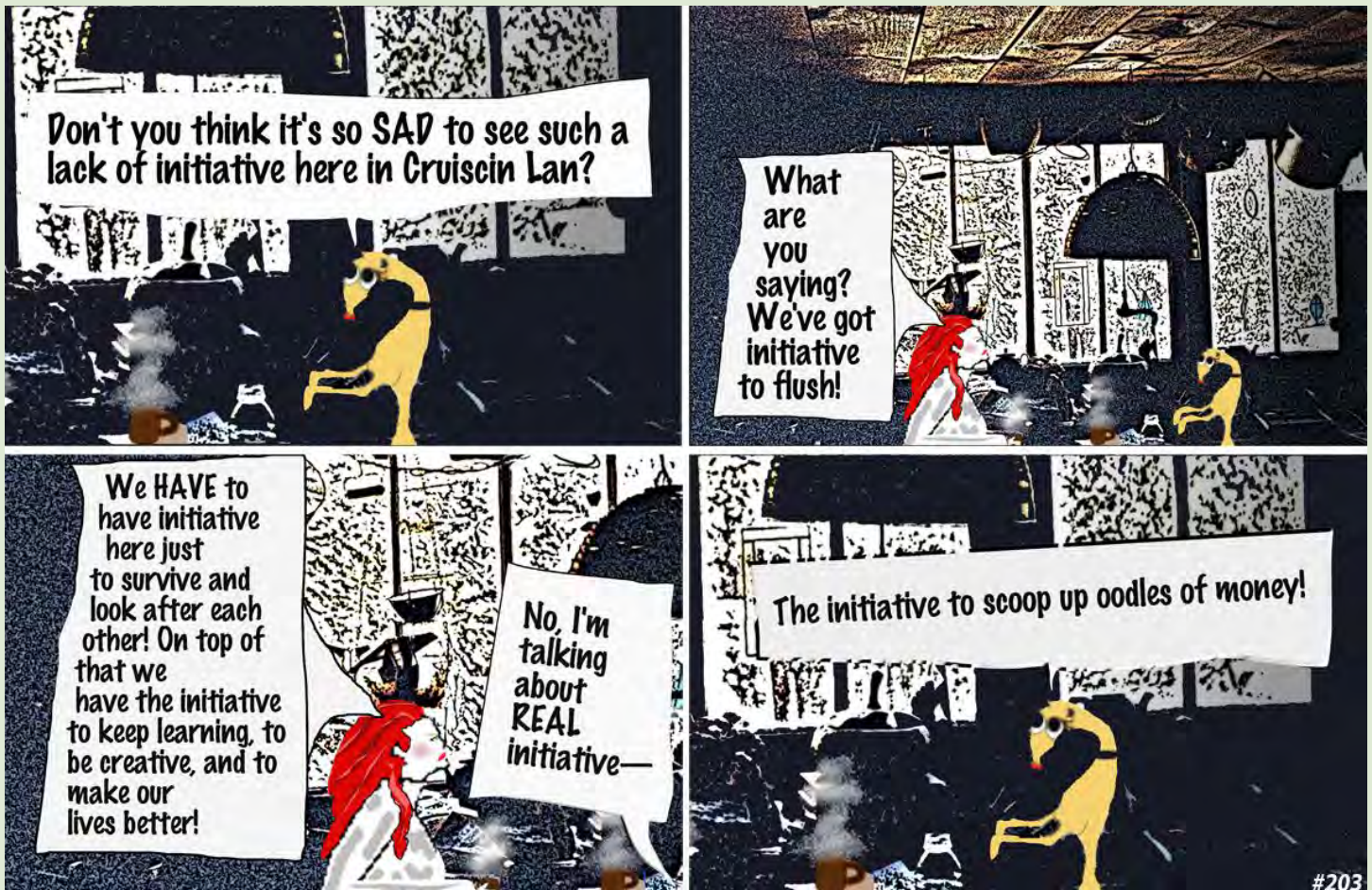
Of course, there's no end to the literary tours you can create for yourself. Nearly every major writer has a cottage industry devoted to places that he (or his characters) has inhabited—from William Shakespeare's haunts in Stratford-upon-Avon to a tour of Stockholm that includes the real-life building where the fictional Lisbeth Salander lived. You can even visit one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's [childhood homes](#) or stay in a real-life [hobbit house](#).

With a little imagination, there's no telling what you'll discover when you step through the looking glass.

*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





You Can Do It Too

The shopping marathon our family enjoyed during a recent trip to Palm Springs has me thinking about strategy and preparation and dumb luck. Let me explain.

Because I've lost 42 pounds over the last six months, Goodwill has been the recipient of many pieces of clothing that no longer fit. And that's a good thing. It's also afforded me the golden chance to begin replacing wardrobe items. That's not quite as thrilling as it sounds, because I'm not yet at my goal weight and new purchases are at best transitional pieces. That in itself is a challenge.

Because of that I haven't wanted to break the bank. I've also been buying pieces that are forgiving. They are wearable now but will be better as more pounds drop off. Or they are alterable, either by me or by a more talented tailor.

Clothing myself as this new, healthier, slimmer body is vital to keeping the motivation going. Swimming in comfy old oversized stuff may save a few bucks, but does nothing for self-image. Makeover shows are filled with people wearing clothes that are either too big or too small; neither scenario is flattering.

At Christmas, when the trip was still just a bright, shiny desire on the horizon, my girls and I discussed every entry in Nina Garcia's *The One Hundred: A Guide to the Pieces Every Stylish Woman Must Own*. That book became the template for rebuilding my wardrobe. I took the list to Palm Springs, where it guided many of the purchases.

Pre-trip strategy and preparation included researching the outlet mall at Cabazon. If I wasn't familiar with a particular designer name or store offering, I researched that, too. When we arrived there I got a mall map

and marked my must-sees. I wish I had known earlier about the \$5 coupon book of extra discounts available from the mall administration office. Despite the usual qualifying conditions like minimum purchases, I was able to use it. Apparently there are even more online coupons and perks to be had by joining the VIP Shopper Club. Maybe next time.

Another pleasant surprise was finding that most stores in the mall offered an extra 10 per cent off on Tuesdays to customers over the age of 50. Doubling up on discounts on clearance or sale items was okay and even encouraged. If in doubt, ask.

In department stores like Macy's and JC Penney, applying for a credit card netted an extra 20 per cent off. I have to admit I caved at Macy's, but paid it off with cash then and there. I witnessed the loosey-goosey way Americans extend credit when someone in our group didn't have a speck of ID on her yet was able to open an account on the spot. Yikes.

Doing my homework, having a list, happening upon some sales, and layering coupons and discounts made this a very successful shopping trip. You can do it too, from where I sit.

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

CLICK OF THE WRIST

March Winds

Last week we started exploring those March winds that will hopefully turn into May flowers later this year. But what else do winds bring? Click through these links and you may find some surprises.

Good Health

Although windy days are often blamed for aggravating asthma and lowering our immunity, some winds may be beneficial to those suffering chronic pain. In fact, a recent study suggested that during Chinook winds, which occur only in southern Alberta and one area of Turkey, pain levels drop significantly.

Bad Air Day

Not everything brought by the winds is something to smile about. This 2011 *Discover Magazine* article discusses how environmental toxins which are illegal in North America but used in countries like China are brought by world wind patterns to this continent.

From the Sun

It may not be wind in the traditional sense, but solar wind is a powerful force in the universe and can impact the earth significantly. Aurora borealis are one pleasant effect, but mass power outages and disruption of communications are also caused by solar wind. This simple but informative video explains how and why solar wind can be so dangerous.



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Credit: Chris Hornbecker/IFC.

Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World**TV series:** *Portlandia* (Independent Film Channel)**Director:** Jonathan Krisel**Producer:** Lorne Michaels**Cast:** Carrie Brownstein, Fred Armisen*"Portlandia is the city where young people go to retire!"**Portlandia***We Built This City on Bean Sprouts and Cultural Amnesia**

Peter and Nance are at their favourite organic restaurant. They want the chicken, but they're *aware*, so they need to ensure that the bird they ingest is not only free of chemical nasties but also happy and fulfilled.

After interrogating the waitress they end up driving out to the chicken farm to scope out the conditions in person. They immediately become infatuated with the enigmatic polygamous chicken farmer, Alik. Then they wake up five years later and realize that they're both wearing prairie princess dresses and that their brains have morphed into tofu. They return to the restaurant and decide to order the salmon. But they want to eat only contented, *serene* salmon . . .

Yeah, it's a television show—the first television show I've ever recommended in this column—but it pulls off the singular feat of looking and sounding too good for television while taking advantage of the few simple benefits the medium offers artists. With television, limited time and the short attention span of viewers demand great timing and a verbal frugality that can only improve the quality of a production.

Portlandia represents America at the current weird postmodern crossroads—the ghastly consumerism of the past reinterpreted in the light of the fads and phases of the last half-century. You'll meet strippers, sales clerks, musicians, a guy who makes handcrafted light bulbs (that cost a fortune and only last a couple of days), dumpster diggers, euphoric cyclists, a mad mayor, a couple of snooty lesbians who run a feminist bookstore, and an aging biker who's been hiding out at the library for years unseen (he's even set up a little cubicle for himself complete with

"Portlandia represents America at the current weird postmodern crossroads—the ghastly consumerism of the past reinterpreted in the light of the fads and phases of the last half-century."



**Ep. 8. Guest star Penny Marshall with Fred Armisen as "Toni" in *Portlandia*.
Credit: Danielle Mathias/IFC.**

bed, books, music, and bottles of urine). And there's the delight of seeing cameo appearances by some great cult figures, including Sarah McLachlan, Amee Mann, and Steve Buscemi.

Among other things the show spoofs "being creative," artistic pretensions, trend slavery, and the absurdities of the counterculture moral code which in rigour alone rivals the ethical constructs of felons.

Portlandia is all about post-grunge 1990s alternative culture, but it's also about bohemian societies of any age or locale. I grew up in a counterculture community wherein I was able to observe the Woodstock generation through a child's eyes. The

hypersensitive health food hipsters I remember came from the same mold as the *Portlandia* crew, and indeed the whole peanut gallery is there: the airy fairy girls who croon, in baby voices, *Why don't you come visit?* and then run and hide if someone knocks at their door; the designer who freaks when she finds that her house sitter has left a can of Spam in her fridge ("I always wondered what kind of people ate that, and now I know!"); and the New Age neurotic who divorces her stunned husband but continues living with him after bringing home her young European husband to move in with them and then emotionally bullies her daughter into accepting this as normal.

If only I'd had *Portlandia* back then! It might have rendered this Kafka-esque reality a little easier to digest.

The critics who just don't get this series amaze me. One reaction is similar to one of the early criticisms of the ingenious *Seinfeld*: *the characters are just too annoying to be funny*. One critic even remarked on how *Portlandia* must be low-budget—since Brownstein and Armisen are in every sketch—totally missing the genius of actors playing multiple characters. No creative work ever lost an ounce of artistic merit as a result of budget restrictions. Scope, maybe, time, definitely, but merit, no.

Portlandia is actually sketch comedy in sitcom clothing. You have a setting, a premise, and a bunch of characters, but no story arc—just a bunch of subplots, each with characters you may never see again. It works.

Why should mindful bards watch *Portlandia*? For one thing, so that we can wake up and say, "There



Ep. 7: Guest star Joanna Newsom with Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein as "Jaoquin & Raven" in *Portlandia*. Credit: Danielle Mathias/IFC.

but for the grace of God go I.” The dangers to artistic pursuit are clearly spelled out: insularity, conformism, trend addiction, narcissism, egotism, and a slavish worship of that fickle god, creativity.

When you get into this space, just say to yourself, with Walt Kelly, “Don’t take life so serious. It ain’t nohow permanent.” All the belly laughs on this show make this an easy directive to follow.



Ep. 9. Fred Armisen in "Canoe Dance" in Portlandia. Credit: Danielle Mathias/IFC.

Portlandia fulfills five of the Mindful Bard’s criteria for shows well worth watching: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 5) 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

DegreeWorks



It takes a lot of planning to map out an academic career. But when you’re working with information in several different media, the process can be time-consuming and frustrating. However, the future is promising: AU will soon be launching DegreeWorks, “a comprehensive academic advising and degree audit solution” that will communicate directly with AU’s internal student information system and streamline program planning.

DegreeWorks helps students plan their educational futures by “automatically [retrieving] a student’s academic record . . . and [organizing] it into an educational plan on the web, identifying program requirements, courses completed and courses still needed to complete a degree.”

Students will also be able to “explore ‘What if’ scenarios to measure the effects of changing programs or adding majors or minors” and check GPAs based on projected future course grades.

It will be user friendly, and AU plans to make advisors available for students who need help navigating the system. DegreeWorks will be launched later this year.

For more information on the DegreeWorks project, visit the [information site](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Across the Universe

Possession is nine tenths of the law, the old saying goes. The other tenth part may be litigation, but it's not always going to be successful. So discovered one man who was barred from filing further lawsuits after his recent, ridiculous demands.

As the *London Free Press* [reports](#), Quebec resident Sylvio Langevin filed a suit “[demanding] sole ownership of the Earth, the other planets and several moons.” He also claimed “the space between the heavenly bodies.”

This request is just the latest in a long line of frivolous lawsuits from Langevin; in the past decade, he's filed nearly 45 of them, even though he was restricted from filing after a 2009 suit requesting \$1 billion from the federal government.

Even Langevin admits the lawsuit was frivolous, telling reporters that his goal was to collect planets “like others collect hockey cards” and that only God could reasonably be the respondent in such a case.

The judge, pointing out the high taxpayer cost of Langevin's frequent and foolish litigation, declared him to be a “quarrelsome litigant, meaning he can't file any more lawsuits without written permission from a judge.”

Around the World: What's in a Flame?

Ever had a scientific question and been dissatisfied with the answer? You're not alone. Now one man is seeking the ideal answer to a question he asked 65 years ago—and he's created a contest to determine the best response.

As *The New York Times* [reports](#), actor Alan Alda once asked a teacher what a flame was. Her response, “It's oxidation,” bothered him for years. “It's like saying, ‘Well, a flame is Fred,’” he told reporters.

Although “oxidation” may have been scientifically correct, “the word did not capture why a flame burns orange or why it produces heat, or anything else that the young Mr. Alda really wanted to know about it.”

Now, at age 76, Alda is collaborating with Stony Brook University's Center for Communicating Science to create [The Flame Challenge](#), which seeks the best “explanation of a flame.” The responses will be judged by a panel of 11-year-olds.

The contest deadline is April 2.

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

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

www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, subscribe [here](#). *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.