

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Outdoor Cathedral

The land was ours

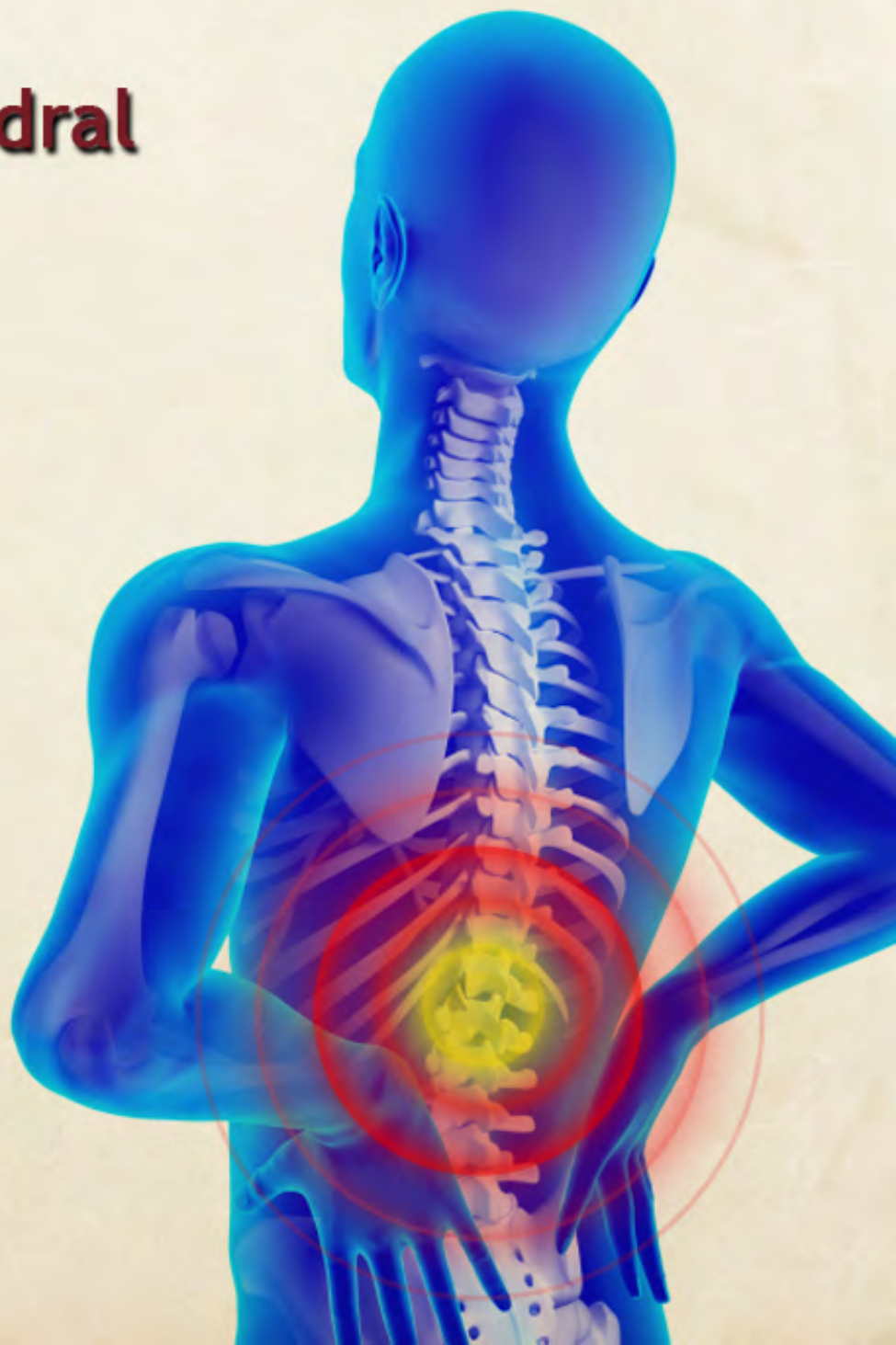
Back and Blue

Chiropractic

In to Win

Creative sporting

*Plus:
Write Stuff
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 Winning Side	3
Backyard Cathedral	5
Health Matters: Chiropractic.....	7

Columns

From Where I Sit: Not Spend a Dime.....	9
Write Stuff: Book Demons	11
AUSU Update	14

News and Events

Did You Know?	4
We've Moved!	6
Click of the Wrist.....	10
AUSU Press Release: AUCC/Access Copyright	12
International News Desk	13

From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor.....	2
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



The Winning Side

Failure. Losing. Taking second place. However you want to style it, not measuring up to the competition, whether real or imagined, is never a pleasant experience. Whether it's a youth hockey game or the summer Olympics, the honour roll in elementary school or the coveted promotion at work, it hurts when you don't make the cut.

And that's not a bad thing—though you'd think otherwise, given a recent and controversial decision

by Sport Canada. Sport Canada, which sets policy for all of the national youth sporting leagues, is setting out to drastically change the face and focus of youth sports.

The plan, which affects regional sports organizations across the country, proposes to ban all competition from sports for younger ages. Instead of competitions or tournaments, there will be sports “festivals” in which team lines will be blurred and scoring will be banned.

The thought behind it is good: reduce pressure on kids to allow them to become more creative and have more fun. Creativity and fun are good things. But while hyper-competitive soccer parents and coaches don't help anyone, removing competition as a whole isn't the answer, either. In fact, learning to deal with competition—particularly its pressures and the inevitable failure that often accompanies it—is central to human development. And it's good for both fun *and* creativity.

First, healthy competition is crucial if we want a future full of strong, decision-making adults who can roll with the ups and downs of life rather than falling apart when something doesn't go their way. Sure, it can be painful. Sure, losing sucks and talking about it makes it worse sometimes. But that doesn't mean it's not a valuable life experience. Learning to cope with the pain now makes a lot more sense than trying to figure it all out during adulthood, where the stakes are a lot higher than the regional soccer title.

Second, the structure of competition aids rather than hurts our chances at creative thought. Operating on a whim is scattered at best, and without the discipline of some kind of rules creativity can quickly become chaos. On the other hand, competition creates the structure in which creativity can best flourish. All the fluid thought in the world will never deepen past the superficial or theoretical unless it's gently nudged, corralled, and channelled within some form of structure.

Third, the implication that creativity is a good enough substitute for skill just seems foolish. After all, all the clever strategies in the world won't negate the necessity of practice, practice, practice. While it's good to have fun, attitudes that value fun far above hard work make true innovation impossible. This is a worrisome trend.

Surprisingly, for some kids—and adults—competition can actually be part of the fun. There's a certain thrill that comes with being forced to pull out all the stops. While it might be stressful, it's important to have the opportunity to experience the burst of adrenaline, the one that unleashes the creative spark which can often lie hidden behind fear or even mediocrity.

Yes, I did say competition begets creativity, and that's the fourth reason competition shouldn't be phased out of youth sports, or any activities or academics.

Competition forces us out of our comfort zone. Why bother earning the A if the C will get you just as far in life? Why perfect your shot or your dance technique if everyone's is equally valued? It's when we're required to up our game to pass the rest of the pack that we reach into our most innovative and creative side.

Sport Canada is trying to encourage creativity by diminishing or rejecting competition, but it's creating an artificial divide between two concepts that are deeply linked. Certainly, some kind of reform of kids' sports may be in order. Rather than throwing out the whole system though, the link between healthy competition and creativity might be explored a bit more closely, with different reforms introduced.

That way, kids can have a chance at fun—and yet still learn the ability to unleash creative genius within the competitive world that will someday be theirs.

"Operating on a whim is scattered at best . . . On the other hand, competition creates the structure in which creativity can best flourish."

DID YOU KNOW?

Khan Academy



Searching for artistic inspiration—or the chance to relax while examining works of art? Need a brush-up in your math skills before heading back to university after a long break? Want some extra tutoring in basic finance or accounting to help cope with the demands of your new job? Lost in your university calculus course? Confused about copyright legislation and SOPA/PIPA?

Check out [Khan Academy](http://KhanAcademy.org), a free web resource that's becoming increasingly popular. Khan Academy has the "goal of changing education for the better by providing a free world-class education to anyone anywhere."

Its educational videos and "interactive challenges . . . and assessments" are freely available online and cover everything from addition to calculus to organic chemistry to test prep. Videos range from general to in-depth, and in addition to more typical academic subjects like math, science, and history, they include current topics like how bailouts work, extensive SAT and GMAT prep materials, and even brain teasers.

Although much of the recent media buzz has focussed on Khan Academy's K-12 resources, it offers a wealth of material for students of all ages and learning levels, including university studies.

BACKYARD CATHEDRAL

E.L. Farris



"Mom!" My eight-year-old daughter's dulcet tones ring out and she gallops down the hill toward the stream that flows behind our home. I nod, murmuring something that sounds like a question. My back is to the water as I shovel pollen-covered mouldy leaves into a trash bag. "I need to grab an airplane-shaped rock for Ben."

I grunt and climb over a tree stump. My three children are painting rocks in the driveway. A blur of motion, Madeline sprints past me, clutching a handful of rocks for her two brothers. She doesn't

see me smile but she probably hears it in my voice as I reply, "That's a good thought."

Several years ago, my husband and I went house hunting in early April, and as I took in the view of the backyard from the home we live in now, I knew we belonged here. It is not an unusual house. My husband calls our Dutch Colonial a "five, four, and a door." This phrase describes the view of the house from the road that runs by it. There are five windows on the second floor, and below that stand four more windows and the front door. Since we moved here, the green shutters have faded, two more children have been born, and time has written more lines upon my face.

The backyard, however, looks unchanged. Our "five, four, and a door" sits at the top of a steep hill that forms a thrilling sled run in winter. Riding this hill on snow or ice requires nerve and skill. Take a wrong turn and you will slam into one of the many pen-oaks or maple trees that turn the sled run into more of a slalom course. One year, my husband broke his finger after he lost control of his blue plastic "hill-runner" and bashed into one of the smaller trees. We still laugh about it.

The first time I raked in the back, I gazed up at the mass of bright yellow leaves still clinging to the trees in October and I gushed to my neighbour, Cheryl, "Is it crazy that I love to rake my leaves?"

She shook her head and sighed, arms akimbo. "You won't feel like that after you've done it a few times," she warned me. "It takes dozens of bags to clear the back." She went on, a voice of yardwork doom, complaining about her sore back and the uncontrollable weeds. I tuned her out and grinned at the blanket of leaves that covered the ground. When I think of that yellow blanket, I think of my middle child, a November baby. When we left for the hospital, the leaves still sat on tree branches, but by the time we returned home with our blue-eyed boy, all the leaves had fallen. Whenever I see a yellow leaf, I think of little Jim and the year I missed watching the leaves fall.

Seven years later, Jim sidles up to me and watches me work. First I rake a small pile. Then I shake the bag open in the quick, jerking motion that I learned flipping burgers many years ago. Ignoring the sore back that Cheryl warned me about, I kneel my 40-year-old runner's body down and shovel the mushy old

leaves from the bottom of the pile. I stand up and grab a massive handful of dry leaves from the top like an elf filling Santa's toy sack.

Each spring, we fill 75 bags full of leaves, and this year has been no different. It is a cool April day and light green pollen wormlets create a lace-like effect when they mix with the russet and brown leaves and tree branches. These will be the last bags I fill until October. My husband argues each year that we live in the woods and that we should let the leaves lie where they fall. Maybe he is right. I honour and value this good earth, but I somehow feel that whoever laid the foundation for our house altered the land in a permanent way 40 years ago.

"All landowners alter their environment in some way," I think as I wipe my brow with my wrist. I love our property. Through it I feel connected to generations of my American immigrant relatives, brave pioneers who claimed a small slice of their own and tended it for the good of their families. With a rake in hand, I am changing my land just like my Irish, German, and Polish forebears tilled their own soil so many decades ago.

"Our third of an acre with its steep, sloping hill is nothing special in the grand scheme of things. But it is ours, and I have made it my sacred duty to care for it."

I suspect that a deeper, inchoate need fuels me when I rake and bag leaves: a sense that by tending to and "improving" my land, I am nourishing it. Our third of an acre with its steep, sloping hill is nothing special in the grand scheme of things. But it is ours, and I have made it my sacred duty to care for it.

After he finishes painting rocks, my youngest son skids in next to me. "Mama, can I eat some cake?" He shouts when he should have whispered.

I shake my head. "No." He whines and tugs at me, and the rake falls toward my face. He jumps in front of it and knocks it aside, then darts off as quickly as he came. As I turn back to my work, I marvel at the gentle way in which he nurtures me, too.

Writer E.L. Farris blogs at [*Running from Hell with El*](#).

WE'VE MOVED!

The Voice Magazine has settled into its new location in Edmonton. While our [email](#) and [website](#) remain the same, you can direct all written correspondence to our new address:

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HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Chiropractic**

“Have you ever had your back cracked?” someone recently asked me. It took me a moment to realize that this startling description was referring to a chiropractic adjustment. Although comedians may frequently joke about chiropractors and their techniques, there’s often little knowledge of how it works and whom it’s intended for. Read on to explore the concept of chiropractic, determine whether it could help you, and discover what safety precautions you should be taking.

The Spine

To best understand the concept of chiropractic, a quick refresher of the anatomy and physiology of the spine is in order. What exactly is a spine? Our spines are bony cases (vertebrae) for a bundle of nerves (the spinal cord) to pass through. The spinal cord extends from the brain to the tip of our sacrum (tailbone). At regular, usually paired, intervals along the way, nerves from the cord branch out and spread to different parts of our body, like our liver or our lungs. This so-called innervation enables the brain to communicate with all parts of our body effectively.

Sometimes, however, vertebrae can tilt or turn slightly and become subluxated, or “out of place.” This means that the nerve branches passing through those vertebrae have reduced nerve input and output or, in severe cases, have been compressed (this is not the same as a “slipped disk”).

How does this happen? Although “subluxation” sounds serious, it can occur relatively easily. Basic injuries like a slip and fall can be culprits, as can more serious injuries like car accidents. Subluxations can even be caused by unilateral (one-sided) muscle tightness or tension, which can pull the vertebrae on the tightened side out of place.

Chiropractic

Chiropractic is the technique that puts these tilted vertebrae back where they belong. A trained therapist, called a chiropractor or Doctor of Chiropractic, most commonly uses a low-amplitude thrust with pressure in an exact spot on the subluxated vertebra, moving it quickly back into place. It’s done with the hands, but some chiropractors use a small device called an activator in place of doing it hands-on. There’s even a form of energetic chiropractic that uses manipulations in the energy field surrounding the subluxated vertebra to coax it back into place. Research on energetic chiropractic is inconclusive, however.

Chiropractic is effective for a wide variety of conditions, most especially back and neck pain. It's also useful for health concerns that arise from such conditions, including headaches and jaw tension. Additionally, because the nerves passing through a subluxated vertebra do reduce nerve input and output to organs in the body, an adjustment that solves this problem also can have significant impact on health concerns related to the affected organs. For example, subluxations in the upper back can aggravate lung conditions like asthma, and mid-back subluxations can increase the incidence of colic in babies. Chiropractic can also be useful for specifically nerve-related conditions like sciatica and frozen shoulder.

It's not just for back pain; because tilted vertebrae affect nerve output to our organs, getting an adjustment can mean better functioning of those organs afterward.

For Whom?

Although chiropractic technique appears to have health benefits for all ages, adjustments from a chiropractor are usually only recommended for older children and adults, and adjustments should never be done without prior X-rays to determine that no contraindications are present. In fact, chiropractors are trained to do X-rays and often have this capability in their offices. Any adjustments on babies and young children should *only* be done by a chiropractor who has had additional pediatric qualifications.

Safety

The concept of "back cracking" can be a little disconcerting, especially when chiropractic mishaps get on the news. However, most safety incidents over the past decade have been almost all related to improper adjustments to the neck. While this sounds scary, it is important to note that before attempting neck

adjustments, chiropractors are supposed to check the integrity of the cerebral artery to rule out the possibility of mishaps occurring. This two-minute test is done by maintaining a neck position for 60 seconds. The safety issues occurred when the practitioners in question skipped this vital step.

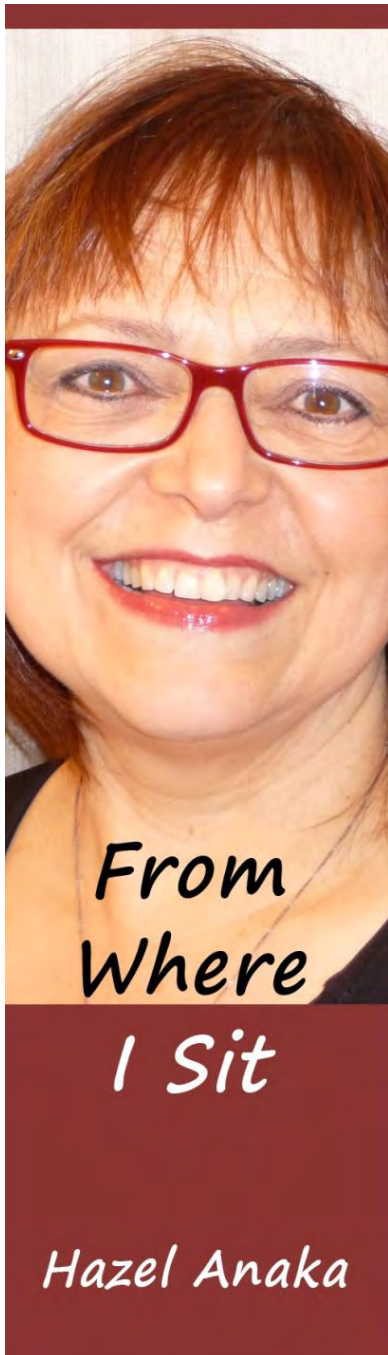


For More Information

If you'd like additional information on chiropractic technique or you're seeking a qualified practitioner, visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association's [website](#).

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.



Not Spend a Dime

We're about a month away from the launch of season three of TV's *Storage Wars* on A&E. If you don't know what I'm talking about, you are in the minority. This original series is top-rated on the network in the 25-54 demographic. It even has a spinoff, *Storage Wars Texas*.

The premise is simple. When the rent on storage units falls into arrears, the contents are auctioned off so that the owners of the complex can recoup their money. The rules allow potential bidders only a cursory look from the doorway of the unit—no stepping inside, no touching anything. In the TV show bidders must pay cash on the spot. Some quick research into the Canadian scene reveals that debit and credit card payments are acceptable here.

Part of the appeal of the show is the cast of regular buyers. My personal favourite is Barry Weiss, aka the "Collector," because of his laid-back attitude and self-deprecating one-liners. The first time I Googled him, I didn't doubt the Wikipedia entry that claimed he was a music producer. It was believable because of his knowledge and famous friends. The truth is less glamorous: he and his brother made their fortune through 25 years in the produce business.

More abrasive and less likeable are the "Mogul," Dave Hester; the "Gambler," Darrell Sheets; and the "Rookie," Jarrod Schulz (and wife Brandi Passante). Yet the push-pull among the players is vital to the success of the show.

Perhaps the real reason the show is so popular is that we all love the idea of getting something for nothing. We like to see what treasures are hidden beneath the junk and throwaway furniture. We want to see who comes on top each week as the total values are tallied.

We love the one-in-a-million odds. Darrell Sheets is holding onto four pencil sketch Picassos he found about 20 years ago. He still regrets the comic book collection he sold for only \$130,000.

A March 2012 *Edmonton Journal* story tells of a woman who found a stash of individually wrapped comic books right here in Edmonton. She bought a total of three units for \$1400 and seems to have scored many resaleable items, including a flat screen TV, washer and dryer, fishing gear, and more. However, the story also mentions many trips to the dump to get rid of soiled clothing and other junk.

And therein lies the rub: disposing of the contents, either for cash or to simply get rid of the worthless. One storage locker site I researched states that buyers have between 24 and 48 hours to empty the

contents. No wonder most of the TV bidders have trucks and trailers, staff, and second-hand stores or websites or a Rolodex full of dealers that they can rely on when they need to unload their purchases.

It's tempting, but maybe it's simpler (and cheaper) to get our kicks vicariously in the comfort of our own homes. We can enjoy the thrill of success through our favourite characters and still not spend a dime, 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

I Need a Hero

***The Avengers* is out this weekend, which means a renewed interest in comic book-style superheroes. What do you know about Canadian superheroes? Free comics? Real-life super powers and caped crusaders? Click through the links to discover the fact and the fiction.**

Heroes of the North

Heroes of the North is breaking new ground in the comic industry. Set in Canada, the "unique transmedia experience" involves not just traditional art forms like comic books, but also live-action webisodes, photos, websites, blogs, and even social media and (eventually) video gaming.

Real Superheroes

Ever wish you could don a cape and save the world? Okay, maybe not. But a number of real-life people have indeed taken on superhero personas to help the homeless or needy. This photo series shows the uniqueness of the real-life superhero culture.

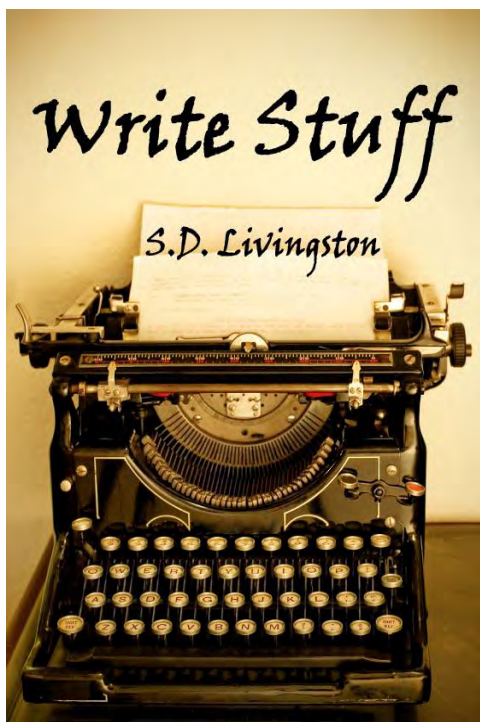
The Powers That Be

If you watch the History Channel, you're probably aware that some individuals have unusual physical abilities that seem to mirror super powers possessed by various action heroes. This Cracked.com article introduces a few (and suggests their comic book world parallel).

Free Comics

Whether you're a long-time comic book fan or newly curious about the genre, be sure to nab your free comic books during Free Comic Book Day this weekend. It's held the first Saturday in May every year at participating comic book shops across North America.





Book Demons

Databases aren't the most poetic things. Their discrete pieces of information, often broken down to minimal parts, are a bit like the individual letters of the alphabet: building blocks waiting to be shaped into useful forms. Now, an entrepreneur is building a database of every person, place, and thing ever mentioned in a novel. But will it really encourage people to read?

The Internet start-up is called Small Demons, and *The Globe and Mail* explains the concept as “a growing electronic index that aims to tag and cross-reference the occurrence of almost every person, place and thing mentioned in almost every ‘narrative’ book ever written.”

On the one hand, I get it. Valla Vakili, the start-up's founder, has announced that he wants “to do something that caters to pathological obsession.” Whatever floats your boat, and heaven knows I've found myself caught up in that compulsive, 2 am YouTube loop (the one that makes your brain want to click on just one more silly pet trick).

But on the other hand, Small Demons is being pitched as a way to aid discoverability and encourage reading—and that doesn't make much sense.

Vakili has said that he likes to be thought of as the publishing industry's “partner in promoting the discoverability of books.” And I suppose that if you're talking about forming tenuous links between books, based on details stripped of all context, then that counts as discoverability.

Suppose, for example, that you've just finished reading *The Lost World* by Michael Crichton. You really liked the triceratops. So you go to the Small Demons database and search for all the narrative books ever written that mention a triceratops. What you might find is the children's title *Dinosaur Cove #2: Charge of the Triceratops*. Or perhaps *The Alien Life of Wayne Barlow*, a retrospective of the artist's work.

But will this method replicate the serendipity of browsing in a bookstore, of finding new sci-fi or adventure authors because their titles happen to be shelved next to Crichton's? No. It will give readers a list of new books and authors, but odds are that very, very few of those out-of-context results will be of any interest. In fact, using such a random system could very well *increase* the amount of time it takes to find something you're actually interested in reading.

“There are countless articles and studies pointing to the fractured attention spans that the Internet is helping create . . . Literary database or not, a concept like Small Demons seems tailor-made to encourage that same type of shallow, rapid browsing.”

And while Small Demons might have a YouTube-like quality that will see users spending hours following fascinating (and endless) trails, it seems that this creates the very antithesis of the focused, long-form attention span needed for reading—especially narrative works.

There are countless articles and studies pointing to the fractured attention spans that the Internet is helping create. Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows*, put it well in this 2010 *Telegraph* [piece](#): “Even when I was away from my computer, my mind seemed hungry for constant stimulation, for quick hits of information. I felt perpetually distracted.” Literary database or not, a concept like Small Demons seems tailor-made to encourage that same type of shallow, rapid browsing.

The concept may be intriguing. But when it comes to mixing books and sprites, I think I’ll stick to Dan Brown’s *Angels and Demons*—and do some actual reading.

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!).

AUSU PRESS RELEASE

AU Students Denounce AUCC/Access Copyright Model License Agreement

May 2, 2012 - Athabasca University Students' Union – The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) does not believe that the recent model license agreement between Access Copyright and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) is in the best interest of students – or the future of post-secondary education in Canada.

“The agreement between Access Copyright and the AUCC is problematic, to say the least,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “It would mean a huge increase in the fees levied on universities, and these fees would then have to be paid by either students or taxpayers.”

“The model license purports to regulate normal, legal activities such as the sharing of links via email,” Tynes continues. “It would also require very invasive monitoring of electronic communications transmitted among faculty, staff, and students, thereby curtailing academic freedom.”

AUSU urges Athabasca University, and all Canadian universities and colleges, to reject the current Access Copyright agreement and to conduct a meaningful consultation process with postsecondary stakeholders (including students and faculty) to determine a fair, equitable course of action for the future.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

For further information, contact:

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Video Medicine

If you hate spending hours in the ER waiting room, you're not alone. But one clinic is testing an innovative new program that could help solve this problem, shortening the lengthy waiting periods for certain patients. There's one catch, though: your doctor is on a screen.

As the CBC [reports](#), the Ottawa-based program uses online video conferencing "to connect patients with doctors in Toronto for more timely treatment."

Patients with "visible symptoms . . . [like] a rash or burn" can be diagnosed and treated from a distance if the physicians can see them via two-way video. Patients with internal symptoms, however, "would have to be treated by a doctor in person."

Despite the lack of "human contact," patients seem excited about the "quick service." So far over 2,000 patients at the clinic have opted for the video diagnosis and treatment.

The so-called telemedicine program is funded by the Ontario government. It is seen as valuable not only for streamlining overcrowded ER waiting rooms but also for providing medical services in remote locations and in areas that are experiencing a shortage of physicians.

Around the World: The Ears Have It

Departing thieves leave behind all kinds of evidence. Clothing. DNA. Fingerprints. For one German burglar, his downfall came through a little more unusual means: his earprints.

As MSNBC.com [reports](#), police nabbed the thief by matching his earprints as well as his DNA and fingerprints. Allegedly, the suspect "put his ears to doors and windows in order to find out whether anyone was home before raiding the properties." The earprints were analyzed and compared with similar evidence in other crimes.

It's not well-known, but "[earprints] are almost as unique as fingerprints," a police spokesperson told reporters. They can be used as evidence, and in this case they linked the same culprit to a series of thefts totalling \$650,000.

The burglar is believed to be responsible for "at least 96 break-ins between July 2009 and July 2011 in northern Germany."

AUSU UPDATE



AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

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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.

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