

**THE**

# **VOICE**

**MAGAZINE**

Volume 16 Issue 10

March 7, 2008

## **Election 2008**

AUSU members go to  
the polls

## **The Simple Life**

Less is more

## **Where's Tolstoy?**

All things Russian



*Plus:*

*Milk-Crate Bandit, From Where I Sit,  
The Mindful Bard, Around AU, and much more...*

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



Re: *The Mindful Bard*, "Bob Snider: Conscious and Mad," by Wanda Waterman St. Louis, v16 i05 (2008-02-01)

*The Voice* would like to note a correction to the *Mindful Bard*'s interview with Bob Snider that appeared in our February 1 issue.

In Bob's discussion of the song "Plum," he was erroneously quoted as saying "The more I wrote it the more adventurous it made me, which really frustrated me." The correct quotation is, "The more I wrote it the more sense it made, which really frustrated me."

## EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



### You Don't Know What You've Got

It's raining elections. Albertans just made a trip to the polls. In the U.S., the names Obama, Clinton, and McCain are being discussed with a fervour usually reserved for major sports events. On March 9, voting begins in the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) election, and discussions are vigorous and abundant. Everyone, it seems, recognizes the value of keeping our democratic system alive and healthy.

And yet for all the hype and hoopla, all the pre-game warm-ups, the numbers tell a sadly different story. It seems we're a nation that doesn't question spending mind-boggling hours in front of the tube, but can't work up the time or energy to vote. A nation that doesn't seem to know what we've got—or how long and hard many of us had to fight to get it.

Take this week's Alberta election. According to early numbers, it had the lowest voter turnout in the history of the province. A mere 41 per cent of eligible voters showed up—a drop from the equally abysmal 44.7 per cent in the 2004 campaign. Results in Canada's 2006 general election were better, at 64.7 per cent, but still discouraging.

And the 2006 AUSU elections? Only 740 votes were cast by an eligible voter pool of over 40,000 students (and since people could vote for up to nine candidates, averaging it down the middle means only an estimated 148 members bothered to participate).

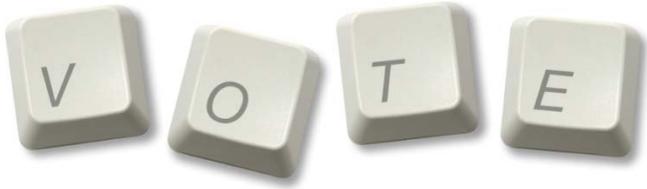
So why the fuss? After all, Canadian citizens over the age of 18 have a guaranteed right to vote. It's in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If we can't get around to voting this time, well . . . there's always next time. But as history shows, the right to vote has often been manipulated to suit whatever political climate holds sway. It's been denied to many Canadians based on gender, religion, and race. And even after long, hard battles were fought to win it, it's been taken away.

Take the right of women to vote. Ancient history, you say? Think again: in Quebec, women didn't have the right to vote provincially until 1940. That's right, 1940. In fact, they once had the right but it was taken away. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were the only women in the British Empire who had the vote, but it was revoked and took nearly 100 years to get back. And in 18<sup>th</sup> century Prince Edward Island, Protestants lost the vote when new property qualifications were brought in (no land ownership, no more vote).

Other Canadians have waited—and fought—even longer for what so many of us take for granted. If you're a Chinese- or Indo-Canadian, you wouldn't have been allowed to vote until 1947. Japanese-Canadian? You'd have been denied the vote for another year, until 1948. Aboriginal? You had the right to vote by 1867—with a catch. All you had to do was give up all your treaty rights and Indian status. That situation lasted until 1960. And if you or someone you know has ever been in a mental health facility, you might be aware that patients there weren't allowed voting rights until 1988, a mere 20 years ago.

If there's one thing in life that's guaranteed, it's that nothing is guaranteed. It may seem incomprehensible in this age of increasingly indifferent voters that the right we take for granted could be removed. But political climates change. Governments change. It's happened before and it's only our complacency that assumes it couldn't happen again. So whether it's a provincial election, an Ohio primary, or choosing your AUSU councillors, let's hope we know what we've got before (as that old song says) it's gone.

## AUSU ELECTION 2008



### AUSU Members Go To the Polls

The final countdown has begun, and with just two days until voting begins, the 2008 Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) election promises to be unique in council history.

From March 9 - 12, AUSU members will have the chance to select their representatives for the nine positions on council, and the range of candidates is nothing short of amazing.

AUSU elections are held every two years, and the field of candidates usually numbers around 20. But this year, there is a record-setting total of 78 names on the ballot. With such a wide range of candidates, it's not surprising that the dialogue surrounding this election has been lively.

On the AUSU website, each candidate has the opportunity to introduce themselves and outline their experience and ideas. Several candidates have created campaign posters, and the issues and platforms are as diverse as AU's membership: increased affordability for post-secondary education; student email addresses; dispelling distance-education myths; increased student-tutor communication; increased bursaries and scholarships; peer mentoring; and national credit-transfer standards, just to name a few.

All AUSU members are eligible to vote, so if that means you, get your mouse ready! The polls open on Sunday, March 9, and close Wednesday, March 12. The electronic ballots will be available through the [AUSU website](#) (you'll need to log in to access the ballot), and a special newsletter is on its way to members, with all the info they'll need to make sure their voices are heard in the election.

The Chief Returning Officer for this year's election is Rehan Qureshi, and results will be announced once he has completed the official count.

But the preparations don't stop with the final tally. The current council has been busy making sure that everything is in order for new members. Transition documents are being prepared to help new councillors adjust to their roles, and a special interim meeting will be held (including both current and new council members) to announce the election results and officially welcome the incoming AUSU council.

The changeover must take place within 30 days of the official election results, and council bylaws provide for a two-week period in which the results can be contested. After the new council has been working together for 30 days, internal elections are held to select the executive group: the President, VP External and Student Affairs, and VP Finance and Administration.

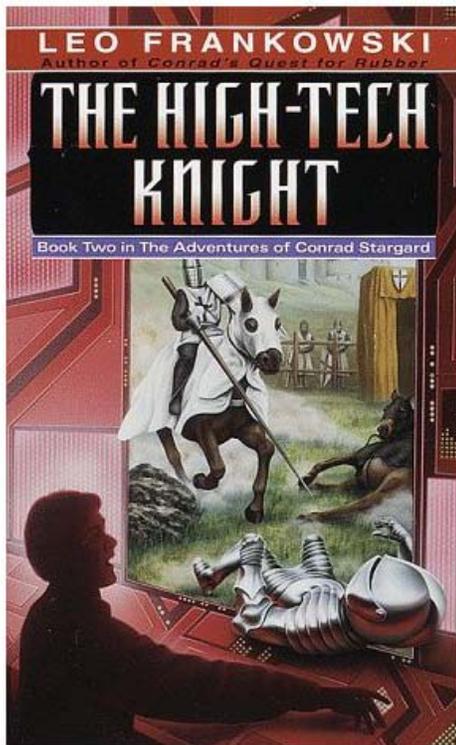
Whether you're a full-time AU program student, attending part-time, or taking occasional courses toward a program at another university, it's important to remember the vital role AUSU plays in your experience at AU. Council members advocate on students' behalf, meet with university staff to discuss new ideas and ongoing issues, and act as student representatives on AU committees, including the Budget Advisory Committee, Finance Committee, Awards Committee, and more.

So if you're eligible to vote, circle March 9 - 12 on your calendar. See you at the polls!

*"Whether you're a full-time AU program student, attending part-time, or taking occasional courses toward a program at another university, it's important to remember the vital role AUSU plays in your experience at AU."*

## MILK-CRATE BANDIT

Erik Ditz



## A Very Milk-Crate Christmas

Around this time of year, it always seems like winter's gone on too long. The groundhog has done his job, it's nearly St. Patrick's Day, and we're all pretty sick of Saint Freezing Rain and Old Man Road Slush.

One thing that always makes cold weather more bearable is a slew of gifts, and I still wake up early on Christmas morning with a glint in my eye like a cartoon weasel seeing a big pile of money. Even though I can't seem to get anything but jam and socks, I'm a simple man who enjoys toast and warm feet, so this keeps me happy.

Since presents always work for me and the cold doesn't seem to be ending, I've decided to have Christmas: Round Two featuring gifts to you, the reader. Here are some not-so-promising books, movies, and albums that you'd very likely pass right by on most occasions, but which are true gems worth digging for. Remember, it's rude not to open the cards on them first.

*Twisted Sister - A Twisted Christmas*

I'll admit, "glam rock Christmas carols" just sounds like a terrible idea from the start, but Dee Snider still rules. It's tastefully done, for one thing, and Twisted Sister sings pretty well. This is perfect if you've ever wanted to air guitar "O Tannenbaum."

*Dead-End Drive-In*

*Starring: some Australian people*

While it's pretty unlikely that the chaotic, Mad Maxian future will feature a drive-in cum prison camp, where they watch movies every night and the only thing to eat is popcorn and milkshakes, it's still fun to pretend.

*Leo Frankowski - The High-Tech Knight*

This is a book about a 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish Communist accidentally intersecting with futuristic time travel technology and being sent to 13<sup>th</sup> century Poland by mistake with a vast sum of money and a genetically engineered horse that understands words and goes to church. Sounds terrible, right? Wrong. This story is very imaginative, engrossing, and funny. There is serious and interesting discourse about politics and economics, and the author uses characters' biographies and diaries to give dimension to anecdotes and evidence throughout the tale. Definitely worth 50 cents at any reputable Value Village.

## We ♥ Katamari

You have a ball. You push the ball. It picks things up. That is the whole game and I would rather play it than breathe.

## *Space Truckers*

*Starring: Dennis Hopper, Stephen Dorff, Debi Mazar, George Wendt*

This film is about a down-on-his-luck trucker running hogs across the galaxy for a branch of the insidious Company called InterPork and headed by George Wendt, who wears his InterPork-brand hat through the entirety of his parts, including the scene where he gets sucked tush-first through a tiny hole into the vacuum of space.

The set looks like it fell out of an episode of *Animaniacs*: they have lighters and explosives that work in deep space (fire without oxygen is so cool), a microwave that can kill an evil robot without even being plugged in or whole, and Dennis Hopper saying zany things like:

“Put the pedal to the metal and play footsies with fate!”

“Some piece of garbage wrapped in human skin is trying to jack my load!”

“Look, if you’re gonna chop off my (expletive) then do it and I’ll change my name to Terry or Lee or something neutral.”

If the future has any chance of looking like this movie instead of the grim wastelands predicted by Greenpeace, PETA, and David Suzuki fans in general, there’s hope for us yet.

## *Defecation - Purity Dilution*

I realize that ultra-heavy death metal is not necessarily everyone’s cup of tea, but when I listen to this it feels like eating marshmallows soaked in hot chocolate. This is an amazingly talented band you’ve probably never heard of and likely never will again, so take this chance to listen.

## *Octopus 2: River of Fear*

*Starring: Michael Reilly Burke and Vanessa Williams’s brother*

When mysterious murders start occurring around the New York harbour, a team of police frogmen are called in to investigate—only to find the world’s largest carnivorous mutant octopus! I watched the scene of the octopus tearing down the Statue of Liberty about a hundred times in a row, and I’m sorry but I couldn’t find a link to it anywhere. However, you deserve to see it, so go rent this movie!

### **DID YOU KNOW?**



#### **The Story Behind the Picture**

Next time you visit Athabasca University’s [home page](#), check out the “I Stand Out” banner at the top of the page. The banner features photos of AU students in their home towns. But did you know the banner is interactive?

Click on the banner and you’ll enter a mini site. Along with links to courses, programs, and other AU information, the stories and photos of four AU students are featured. Just click on any of the links to discover the story behind the photo!

## SLICE OF LIFE

Christina M. Frey



## Singing the Praises of the Simple Life

If you've ever moved, you know that the worst part is, without a doubt, the unpacking. And the longer you've been established, the more boxes and boxes and unending boxes there are to unpack, sort, and somehow store.

When, a month after our last move, my family and I were still weaving around a towering box maze to get from the kitchen to the living room, we half-joked that we wished the flatbed holding our crate had

accidentally tipped it into the Pacific! But it started us thinking: how much of this stuff did we really need?

Surely all these possessions were weighing us down! If nothing else, they were too difficult to store in our small house. We scoured the house, room by room, donating or selling pounds and pounds of furniture, clothes, books, movies, and paraphernalia that we just never used. Then, last December, we finished. Satisfied, we surveyed our belongings. The house wasn't close to being empty, but nothing remained except things we needed, used often, or particularly liked. Every possession we had kept, we needed.

Or did we?

This winter, my husband and I temporarily relocated to Washington, D.C. We left our house and "necessary" belongings in Alaska, and moved into a minimally furnished apartment with very basic accessories. On arrival, my heart sank. Could my husband, our toddler daughter, and I all live for four months in this small apartment without the toys, games, books, music, kitchen equipment, supplies, and other things necessary to survive on a day-to-day basis? A simpler life might sound good on paper, but could we actually live that way?

After the initial "culture shock," I was astonished to find that not only was it possible to live that way, it was much, much easier to do so. Life with fewer possessions was so liberating! The apartment was neater than our house, because I had fewer toys, books, and papers to pick up. Fewer surfaces and less clutter on the countertop and table meant less time wasted putting things away.

Sure, cutting vegetables for soup took a few minutes longer without a food processor, but then I didn't have to take out, clean, and put away the processor, either. There was no place to store incoming mail, clean laundry, kiddie toys, or mixing bowls, but that meant I had to deal with them right away, rather than letting everything pile up and get out of hand.

In fact, having fewer things made my life more manageable. I was amazed to discover all the free time it created. I could now spend mornings sightseeing, working out, or going to social events, the grocery store, the park, or the library—and still have those two precious hours during my daughter's nap time to write or catch up on paperwork.

I have more time to have fun with my family, but paradoxically, I'm also usually caught up on the mundane little things that make a household run smoothly. That means I don't have to feel guilty about taking time to work on my personal goals that always seemed to get sidetracked before.

The difference is remarkable. It's as if all those possessions were holding me back from my real potential. Maybe there were so many things to deal with, that I could never really catch up and feel "done."

Maybe all the different options were distracting, keeping me from sticking to one task at a time. Maybe I just was too comfortable with all my things, so comfortable that I couldn't bring myself to really attack my to-do list. Whatever the reason, I'm amazed at how much more I can do without all my possessions weighing me down.

I do know that when we return to our house that's still full of "necessities," it will be another culture shock, only in reverse. But now we know that fewer possessions truly can lead to a more efficient and happier life. And hopefully by applying what we've learned here, we will be on our way to a lifestyle that's simpler—and simply better!

## AROUND AU



### AU President Elected to UNESCO Council

Dr. Frits Pannekoek has been elected president of UNESCO's International Council of Distance Education (ICDE). The appointment was announced after a weekend meeting of the ICDE's Permanent Secretariat in Oslo, Norway. Dr. Pannekoek will also chair the ICDE's Executive Committee.

The ICDE is a global network of institutions, founded in 1938, that's involved in distance, online, and other forms of flexible education. The ICDE's involvement with the United Nations Educational Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) began in the 1960s, and focuses on distance learning projects around the world.

As Dr. Pannekoek told AU's *The Insider*, "It's a great recognition of the contribution that Athabasca University has made internationally. Distance and open education is a passion of mine, and what an opportunity to share that passion on the world stage!"

"It's about access," Dr. Pannekoek added. "Our job as educational leaders is to bring education to people wherever they live, whether that's a small village in Mozambique or a large city in Europe or North America. We'll consider ourselves successful only when everyone who wants an education can get an education."

For more information on this exciting news, visit the [AU Newsroom](#).

In other AU news, Jane Arscott, associate professor of human services and co-ordinator of the Human Services Program in AU's Centre for Work and Community Studies, has won this year's President's Award for Research and Scholarly Excellence (PARSE).

Arscott is preparing her book, *Primed and Ticking: The Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, for publication. The PARSE, awarded annually, recognizes excellence in research scholarship by a full-time AU faculty or staff member. Specifically, it provides for the opportunity to complete a major research project that will result in a publishable manuscript, and Arscott's book is already under contract with the University of Toronto Press.

*With special thanks to Athabasca University's The Insider.*



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

Book: Steve Erickson, *Zeroville*

Publication date: 2007

Publisher: Europa Editions, New York, NY

*“. . . what in motion pictures can change the world more than Astaire and Rogers dancing?”*

Steve Erickson, *Zeroville*

In the beginning were the Movies. Then, in a mighty whirlwind, came a God who kills children because he hates innocence. Those who believe in the Movies hate this God and try to atone for his wrongs, laying down their lives, as soldiers of the Movies, to triumph in the quest for truth and innocence and the protection of children.

So goes the *heilsgeschichte* of Vikar Jerome, who turns his back on divinity school and a nutbar Calvinist dad to come to Hollywood. Like a classical scholar visiting the ancient ruins of Greece, he becomes an apostle of the Movies, seeking deeper knowledge while spreading the word to all who stumble across his path.

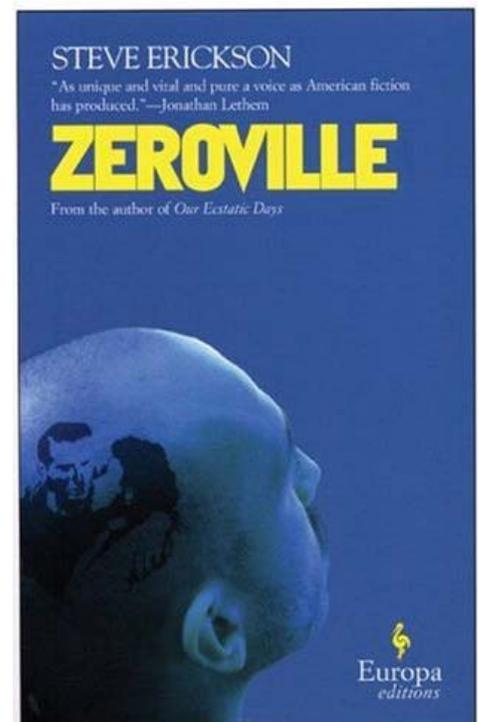
His devotion is conspicuous; tattooed on his shaved head are the almost kissing faces of Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in a scene from *A Place in the Sun*. In his quest Vikar works his way up from a video store clerk to an award-winning editor. Not far into the story Vikar reveals himself as a kind of avenging angel of the one true God (whoever that might be), hell-bent on attacking ignorance and oppression.

A mildly autistic savant, Vikar repeats certain phrases like mantras, finding any excuse to wedge them into a conversation (e.g., “I believe it is a very good movie,” “Fuck continuity,” and “All time is in the movie and the movie is in all time”).

Vikar sits soberly through comedies, believing them serious drama, and he laughs all the way through *The Exorcist* while the other audience members are writhing in their seats. He occasionally meets oddballs who have very discerning things to say about film; he later quotes their monologues verbatim, and comes across as an eccentric genius.

Vikar gets mucho fellatio but remains a virgin to the end, saying “I can’t” when his lady friends suggest the double-backed beast, even after they point out his erections. It’s hard to tell if Vikar’s dodging of physical intimacy is a facet of his autism or a sign that Vikar is some kind of vestal virgin to the unknown God mentioned earlier.

Vikar slowly works out his salvation, drawing ever nearer to his true self. In a scene in a punk bar he becomes “the general of an army leading the children in a revolt against gods and fathers.” He visits this punk bar, and many others, because this is the first music that



has grabbed him in his soul, this music for sons who hate their fathers.

Deep within the Movies and Vikar's dreams there is buried a secret movie about a girl who lies on a stone and awaits murder by her father in sacrifice to the child-hating God. On the stone is inscribed an ancient Hebrew phrase. Beneath the inscription is a chasm emitting industrial noise.

Time gets set to zero the day Vikar receives a shipment of movie reels as partial payment for agreeing to edit a film. (Starting here the brief numbered chapters hit 227 and then count down.) This is the day his quest begins in earnest. It is the day of departure from a universe presided over by a mad God.

Vikar suggests that the Movies are the new cultural canon, replacing the arts. Literature is now the Movies' handmaiden, worthy only in its film potential. Which raises the question: What about *Zeroville*?

I believe it would be a very good movie.

*Zeroville* lives up to four of the Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts and mocks existing injustices; 3) it displays an engagement with, and a compassionate response to, suffering; and 4) it tells of an attainment of the true self.

*The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to [bard@voicemagazine.org](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

## CALLING ALL GRAD STUDENTS



### Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association

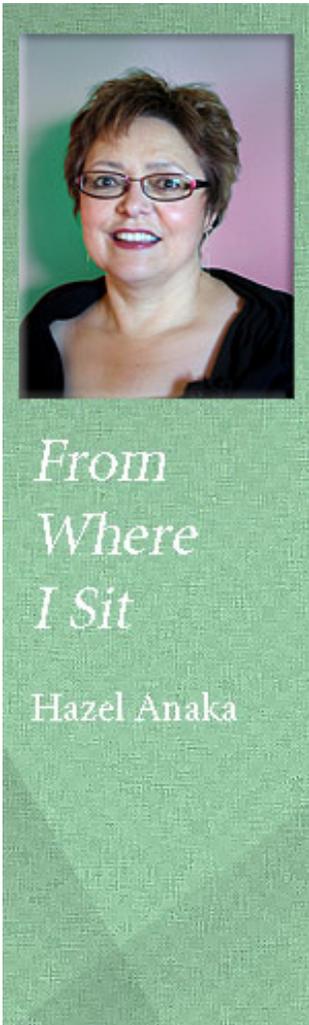
Are you an AU grad student? If you are, do you know about all the services and information available to you through the Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA)?

Created in 2007, the AUGSA is "dedicated to serving its students worldwide, by promoting a global community and acting as a liaison between students and the university."

As a grad student, you can contact the Association to find help in answering questions about programs and courses, to discover opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, and to access resources on employment, research, and funding. Their website also provides links to other graduate associations, including the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, the Graduate Students' Association of Canada, and GSAs at other Canadian universities.

The AUGSA is there to provide representation and support for the unique challenges—and opportunities—that are part of life as a graduate student.

To find out more about this dynamic and growing group, visit their [home page](#) today.



## Regardless of Age

As another International Women's Day (IWD) approaches I think about all the women I know. The impact they've had on my life has varied from huge to glancing. Each has served as a mentor or a role model, an example or a warning. Some, at times, all four. Some of these women are relatives, some are friends, and many are strangers.

I'm grateful for the example my mother has served and continues to serve as she approaches her seventy-fifth birthday. She's a hard-working person of strength who has supported every one of my endeavours. I hope I've inherited or acquired the best parts of her.

Lest you believe that only peers or elders can influence you, think again. One of the most important women in my life is my daughter. She is a marvel who continues to amaze and impress me. She's had some remarkable adventures and achieved impressive milestones already. Yet, at only 22, she has a lifetime ahead of her to do and be more.

I learn from her all the time. Sure, I see a younger me in her as well, but mostly I see a far better, more evolved me. And of course I believe that who she is, is at least in part because of the genetics, nurturing, and parenting she received from her father and me.

The fact is she's using all the gifts she has to do exciting, important work as a special events coordinator at the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation. She works with celebrity athletes, media people, rich and influential business people, volunteers, service providers, and, occasionally, devastated parents and dying children.

Those contacts plus others from university, former jobs, volunteer roles, high school, extended family, and friends make for an impressive Rolodex. Best of all, she actually maintains the relationships through phone calls, emails, dinner invitations, small gifts, and reciprocal exchange of favours. I'm trying to learn that lesson and get better at staying in touch with the people in my life.

I see Hilary taking on challenges and succeeding. I see her buying her own home and working on her degree part-time. I see her finding her own mentors and role models because she needs advice and expertise I can't provide. In the process, I continue to learn.

I admire her energy and passion, commitment and work ethic, toughness and tenderness. Not only does she arrange corporate and charity events, she works hardest to draw and keep the family together. She faces difficulty head-on with a maturity far beyond her years. She loves to shop and travel; eat, drink, and be merry. She's finding the balance between work and play that eludes so many of us.

She has dreams and aspirations and is taking the steps to get there. Hilary is not perfect. Like me, she has more life lessons to learn. This March 8, think about and be grateful for all the important women in your life, regardless of their age. Just as important is remembering those lives you're influencing, from where I sit.

# The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by  
Wanda  
Waterman  
St. Louis



## AUSU This Month



### AUSU Elections 2008

#### Nomination Period Closed

Dear AU Students:

My name is Rehan Qureshi and I am pleased to have been appointed your Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for the 2008 General Election. It is my position to accept and verify nominations for the election; field questions about election policy and procedures for nominees; and to ensure an accurate and fair vote count at the time of voting. Please feel free to contact me at [cro@ausu.org](mailto:cro@ausu.org) for any of the above.

Elections will be held from March 9 - 12 on the [AUSU website](#).

The nomination period has now closed. You may view your list of candidates [here](#). Nominees may withdraw their name from the list of nominees up until the last day of February 2008.

Good luck to all of the candidates. Hopefully we will see the rest of you at the polls!

Sincerely,

Rehan Qureshi - Chief Returning Officer (CRO)  
[cro@ausu.org](mailto:cro@ausu.org)

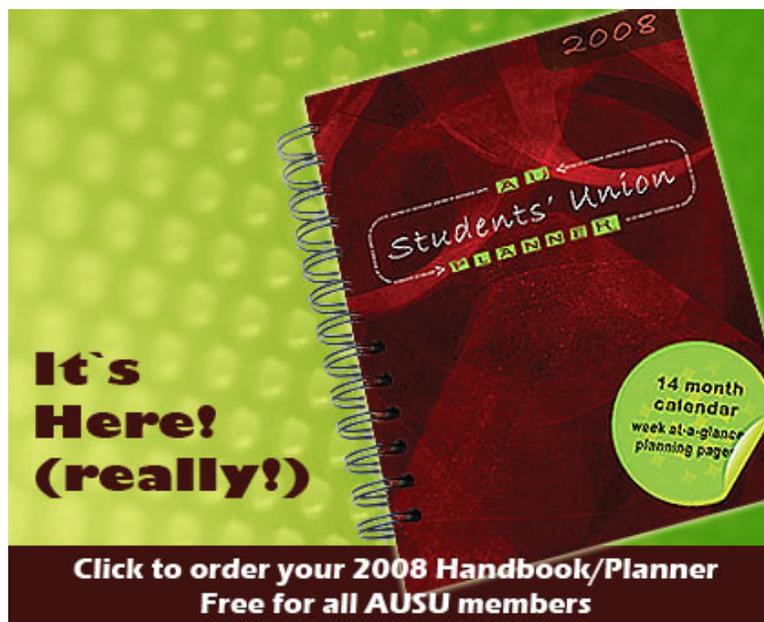
### AUSU Merchandise for Sale

Due to a high demand for AUSU merchandise, and delays in setting up our online store, we have put together a quick catalogue with a few items we have in stock now. To download it in pdf, visit our [home page](#). Shipping costs will be calculated per order and we'll let you know by phone or email.

We are only accepting credit card orders at this time, unless you are able to visit our Edmonton office. Please excuse the poor quality of the product photos. These will be improved shortly. More products will be available soon. Suggestions are welcome.

### AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 in stock now!

The wait is over! The 2008 AUSU planner is in stock and on its way to members. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat



## GO HOME EARLY.



Create professional-looking flowcharts, timelines, graphs, and more, in minutes, all by yourself. Then go spend some quality time with your family.

Free for AUSU members. Visit [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org)



 SmartDraw

sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

Last year we had about 400 pre-orders, but this year we have 1,000! Please be patient. We're working as fast as we can to fill all of the orders and everyone should have their book by the end of January when the 2007 edition calendar pages run out. As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner and welcome all feedback to [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org)

### Smart Draw – Benefit for AUSU members

AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our [website](#).

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs,

organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts. For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Ontario judge upholds helmet law in face of religious challenge

An Ontario judge has ruled against a man who claimed he should be exempt from the province's motorcycle helmet laws based on religion.

Baljinder Badesha, who is a devout Sikh, was fined \$110 in 2005 when he was stopped for failing to wear a helmet. Instead of the mandatory protective headgear, Badesha was wearing a turban, in following with his Sikh religion.

As the [CBC](#) reported, Badesha is aware of the dangers of riding a motorcycle without a helmet, but is willing to take those risks.

"I know it is for safety," he told reporters, "but people die in car accidents all the time."

Badesha claimed the helmet law is discriminatory and refused to pay the fine. During his court case, the Ontario Human Rights Commission agreed with him.

An attorney for the Commission argued that "the Human Rights code 'prevails' over the Highway Traffic Act (HTA)."

However, in a [final ruling](#), Judge James Blacklock dismissed the challenge. He said that by allowing some members of the public to disregard the law while making others follow it would cause "undue hardship" as the province tried to enforce safety standards.

Other legal decisions have set a precedent for Badesha's claims, though. In B.C., Manitoba, the U.K., India, and Hong Kong, exceptions have been made, and devout Sikhs are allowed to wear turbans while riding motorcycles.

### In Foreign News: Bomb explodes in Times Square

The FBI is investigating a bomb blast at a recruiting station in New York City's Times Square. The military recruiting centre was empty at the time of the blast, which happened in the early morning hours of Thursday, March 6.

The explosion brought Times Square to a halt for several hours. The front door of the centre was damaged in the blast and shattered a glass entranceway. No injuries have been reported.

According to the [CBC](#), the blast was strong enough that witnesses at a nearby hotel felt their building shake.

Michael Bloomberg, New York City's mayor, told reporters that the perpetrator will be found. "People will not be intimidated," he said. "Whoever the coward was that committed this disgraceful act will be found and prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

Witnesses reported spotting a suspicious man in the area shortly before the explosion. The description they provided was of a hooded man with a backpack.

Since the blast, U.S. army officials have warned other recruiting stations to be aware of any suspicious activity. Army Capt. Charlie Jaquillard is the commander of army recruiting in Manhattan, and he echoed those concerns.

"If it is something that's directed toward American troops, then it's something that's taken very seriously and is pretty unfortunate," he said.

An investigation is underway by an FBI-New York Joint Terrorism Task Force in Virginia, and evidence from the explosion site has been sent to a forensics lab there for study.

## **CLICK ON THIS – Occident Prone**

**Lonita Fraser**

Canada has always prided itself on being a cultural mosaic, on being a home for even the most diverse and disparate cultural groups. This week is a foray into the Oriental, into how it functions in its native lands, and its impressions on the rest of the world.

### Hanzi Smatter

Quite simply: dedicated to the misuse of Chinese characters in Western culture. Probably the largest single problem faced by any culture's integration into another, is mistakes and deliberate misuses of that culture. This blog seeks to bring some of those misuses to light.

### LookLex

An encyclopaedic site that provides snippets of information on all matters Oriental.

### Japanese Superstitions

"If you lie down immediately after eating, you will become a cow." Oh dear.

### Grandiose Survey of Chinese Alcoholic Drinks and Beverages

Now that's a lot of information! This site examines the cultural place, and much more, of alcoholic beverages in China well into the past.

### Thai to English

This site provides a Thai-English dictionary as well as a translation service.

### Tales of Old China

This is an interesting site that details some of the recent past of China, "mostly the era between 1840 to 1950 when China and the West were struggling to come to terms with each other."

### Immortal Geisha

Possibly one of the most mysterious and misunderstood Oriental cultural traditions, this site, while also providing information on the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*, might help to alleviate a few of the more common misperceptions popular in the West about these ladies . . . and men.

## EDUCATION NEWS

Angela Wilson



### New money for research and graduate programs welcome

WOLFVILLE (CUP) - The federal government moved to improve the state of graduate studies and research in Canada as the Minister of Finance announced his new budget on February 26.

On top of a \$25 million investment over two years to establish a new set of new graduate scholarships, the government also added \$15 million per year for the Indirect Costs of Research program, \$21 million over two years to establish up to 20 Canada Research Chairs, and some additional funding for the government's research councils.

This investment is reflective of fierce competition as other countries invest in research and attract top-level scholars. Canada, meanwhile, has been lagging in graduating Master's and PhD students.

Indeed, a recent report from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) revealed that, in 2004, the United States awarded 30 per cent more doctoral degrees per capita than Canada.

Although the focus on research and graduate programs is largely welcomed, it has been met with some criticism.

Claire Morris, president of the AUCC, said that [while] the establishment of Vanier Scholarships for graduate work was an important step, the AUCC had suggested the creation of 6,500 new scholarships for both Canadian and international students. The budget announcement will only allow for 500 this year on top of the 1,000 that were created last year.

"There still is some road to travel," Morris said.

Aside from the Vanier Scholarships, the government also announced additional funding for its three granting programs: SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR.

Mike Savage, the Liberal Human Resources Critic, said that the \$80 million slotted for the programs is "just not enough to bring the programs up to par."

Jim Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), also raised concerns with the targeted nature of the funding.

"We appreciate the new research funding, but we're extremely concerned that the federal government is increasingly targeting research funding rather than allowing the priorities to be established by the research community," he says.

The money for SSHRC, for example, has to be spent in part on research on economic development in northern resources, and money for NSERC can only be spent on the automotive, forestry, or fishing industries.

“What we know from 50 years of research is that no one is very good at predicting what research is going to be of value theoretically, or to Canadians, or commercially. And so what’s worked the best has been to let scientists fund bright, competent scientists and let them pursue the research that they think is important,” he said.

Graham Cox, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students’ Graduate Caucus, expressed similar concerns.

“The problem is it’s a bit of an unbalanced program the way they’re implementing it. The vast majority of students are in the social sciences and humanities, whereas most of these monies are going to health and science researchers.”

The additional \$15 million for the AUCC’s Indirect Costs of Research Program has also been criticized for falling short of what is needed.

The program reimburses universities for any costs that they incur from providing the necessary institutional support to carry out research.

Although Morris noted that their aim is to achieve a 40 per cent reimbursement rate, the additional \$15 million barely allows the program to maintain its current level of reimbursement, at approximately 25 per cent.

However, Morris does point to the additional money for Canada Global Excellence Research Chairs as a positive investment. The Chairs so far, Morris said, have been “very successful to keep Canadian scholars at home, and to attract international scholars.”

Overall, Morris said that, while the government appears to be heading in the right direction by making this investment into research and graduate studies, “we would like to see some more speed in that direction.”

Savage seconded that opinion, commenting that while the budget indicates a small step in the right direction, research is not something that you can start and stop investing in.

“The need is very high,” he says. “Although there is more in this budget than we’ve seen before from this government, it is important to keep the momentum going.”

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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## THE VOICE

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