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# CONTENTS

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## WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

*The Voice* 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

Have Tickets, Won't Travel ..... 3

## Articles

Eras in Education: Love is a Battlefield ..... 6

In Conversation With: Marco Benevento ..... 8

AU Options: BScCIS ..... 10

## Columns

From Where I Sit ..... 12

Sister Aurora ..... 13

Dear Barb ..... 14

The Mindful Bard ..... 15

AUSU This Month ..... 17

## News and Events

Click of the Wrist ..... 11

Did You Know?: Science Labs ..... 16

International News Desk ..... 20

Education News ..... 21

## From the Readers

Letters to the Editor ..... 2

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



## HAVE TICKETS, WON'T TRAVEL

Christina M. Frey



What has two legs and flies?

If I can possibly help it, the answer is “Not me.” As far as I’m concerned, the age of air travel is officially over. It’s just not fun anymore.

It starts when you walk in the airport and see the line stretching across the terminal. You notice that the *one* ticketing agent is processing one passenger every five minutes. At this rate, the plane will have arrived at its final destination before you even get to security. That’s when the agent goes on coffee break, leaving no replacement.

Even when the line starts moving, it’s a hassle. For every step, you pick up your suitcases, your kid’s bags, and all your carry-ons, move up two feet, and then put everything back down. Again. And again. And *again*.

That’s one of the biggest problems with flying: the bags. Stringent airline baggage restrictions and fees cause immense stress while packing (will this extra sweater put the suitcase over the limit?) and, especially, at the ticket counter, where you devoutly hope and pray the agent won’t notice that the sweater (and the hair dryer and the book) in fact *did* put the suitcase several pounds over. (She doesn’t.)

Then, because you’re being charged for every bag you check, you decide to max out your allowable carry-on bags because it’s free, and you still haven’t learned that free is not always best. Both you and your child, age three, are allowed one carry-on and one personal item. Since a three-year-old can’t (or won’t, I’m not sure which) drag her own bags through the airport, it falls on you, of course. So you head to security, carrying umpteen bags which weigh more than you do.

Do you need all those bags? My husband always challenges this. And the answer is always, “Are you crazy? Of course I do!” For example, one bag is usually crammed with meals and snacks. And I *do* need it. One day, tired of arguing with my husband over the food question, I capitulated. I was flying alone with my then two-year-old from Washington, DC, to Alaska, and I had a two-and-a-half hour layover in a sizeable airport. I brought our lunch but not our supper; we’d “live a little” this time and get dinner out.

Uh-uh. Our plane was delayed for over two hours on the tarmac due to a tornado-spawning storm that rolled through just before takeoff. Our plane in our layover airport was almost finished boarding by the time we rushed up to the gate, bags and strollers flying. I dug a forgotten energy bar out of my purse as sustenance for the six-and-a-half hour flight north. My daughter got Cheerios. From then on, bags of food were a must!

Another bag has activities and books for the plane. As a rule, kids mostly enjoy climbing on the seats and annoying the passengers around them, but what if you end up needing those books and crayons and don’t have them? The longer the flight, the larger the books, the heavier the bag . . . and the bigger the chiropractor’s bill.

And that's not all. There's always your purse, and a coat if it's cold, and the carry-on filled with whatever you had to bring but couldn't squeeze into your already overstuffed and overweight suitcase. And then there's usually a tote bag filled with travel necessities, like the multiple changes of clothes to be used in the event that your potty-trained preschooler stands in the restroom stall and deliberately wets herself because she's too afraid of the automatic flushers to use the toilets.

I can't forget my pharmacy-in-a-bag. Because of my daughter's allergies and asthma, I can't travel anywhere without a duffle bag full of her regular meds, emergency breathing treatments, and a seven-pound nebulizer. The weight's bad enough, but the bag is also a security nightmare: it's full of liquid medications and a nebulizer that looks like a bomb. They have to set it up and run it before they'll let me through, which means a long holdup.



*Next up: a mad dash to your gate, bags happily bruising your back and arms, brain in a million places as you alternate between threats and bribes to get your child to run because the plane started boarding five minutes ago.*

Speaking of security, the only thing worse than being at the back of a long line at the checkpoint is feeling the evil stares behind you while you hold up a long line at the front. This happened frequently when my daughter was a baby. But what did people expect me to do? I couldn't collapse the stroller with one hand, regardless of what the directions claimed. And I flat-out wouldn't put my nine-month-old on the conveyer belt while I removed my shoes with one hand, put our bags in the bins with the other, held our travel documents in my teeth, and somehow collapsed the stroller using my knees.

You finally pass security. Next up: a mad dash to your gate, bags happily bruising your back and arms, brain in a million places as you alternate between threats and bribes to get your child to *run* because the plane started boarding five minutes ago. Not that being late for boarding matters, since "special needs passengers" apparently no longer covers parents with young, unruly charges bumping Santa Claus sacks of stuff down narrow airplane aisles.

Once you're on the plane and ready for takeoff, forget about relaxing. Do you get bored while sitting for hours in a cramped space, where your only burst of freedom is a marathon between gates at layovers? I do, but I can deal. My daughter can't.

I'm glad she's finally old enough to do some quiet activities, though. When she was nine months old, we flew from Alaska to Toronto. Twelve glorious hours of travelling, in which nothing held her interest for more than two minutes. Nothing, that is, except the opportunity to crawl up and down the filthy aisle for hours. My reputation as a good mom was destroyed beyond repair. So, by the way, was her outfit.



That reminds me of the best piece of advice I ever heard for flying with kids: dress them cute. That way, when they inevitably crack, people will see the sweet outfit and the twisted, screaming face and think that, on the average, your kid is normal.

At last, your child is engrossed in a book, and you decide to close your eyes for those precious five minutes you have before she starts whining to get off the plane. That's when the beverage service starts. Everyone traditionally complains about airline food, but I fondly recall the days when you actually got served reheated leftovers. Nowadays, you're lucky to get a beverage. The amount depends on the airline: some are

*Reflecting on how you really, really need to fix the broken wheel on that one bag, you drag your burdens like an exhausted pack horse toward the main terminal.*

required to measure it out by teaspoonfuls into a cup crammed with ice. Don't think you can fool me with your high-flying application of the Archimedes' principle! I *know* that ice leaves less room in the cup for my drink. Then there are some who are quite free with the beverage service, giving you the whole can (and slipping me an extra one because they realize how badly mom needs caffeine). So I'm not sure what to think.

I do wish they wouldn't start the beverages so early, though. On a four-hour flight, you get thirsty midway through, not in the first 15 minutes. By three-and-a-half hours, you're dying. And serving drinks early on a long flight means the longer you need to, well, you know, unless you want to use the tiny closet at the back of the airplane. Adults can be

reasoned with. But try explaining to a preschooler that she can't drink her entire apple juice in one gulp because you only brought two changes of clothes for her and she already ruined one two hours ago.

As for the airline snacks, I usually decline them since I already pack my own food. Even if I liked mouldy peanuts, I'd refuse them so that I didn't have to spill peanut dust into the air, to be breathed in by my peanut-allergic daughter sitting next to me. This is something I really don't understand. Kids can't bring peanut butter—sticky peanut butter that doesn't fall off the bread and roll around under the seats as an attraction to bored kids—to a huge school, but peanuts are freely served on a closed-in, tiny aircraft, where passengers pay \$500 for the pleasure of breathing peanut pollution for a four-hour flight. Oh, and first class isn't much better: instead of mouldy peanuts, you get mouldy almonds. And my daughter's allergic to those, too.

When the flight is finally over, and you've spent 20 minutes standing in line waiting to get off the plane, bags in hand and child on the aisle floor wound around your shoes trying to drag you down, you plod toward baggage claim. There, you watch in vain as the roundabout delivers 50 black suitcases identical to yours. Naturally, your bags aren't among them.

If you're very unlucky, you're flying into an airport where baggage claim is inside the secure part of the terminal. When you finally do get your suitcases, which were in a different spot because they were rerouted through Utah for some reason, you add two 50-pound suitcases to your already ridiculously heavy load.

Reflecting on how you *really, really* need to fix the broken wheel on that one bag, you drag your burdens like an exhausted pack horse toward the main terminal. There, the party meeting you greets you with happy smiles: "So, did you have a good flight?"

## ERAS IN EDUCATION

Jason Sullivan

**Love is a Battlefield: Less So in Sweden**

September 1 marks the 70th anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Poland and thus the start of World War II. Looking back at the tragedy and horror of this time it is easy to forget that the people in the involved countries still lived their lives throughout the ordeal.

Life goes on, though bullets scream past. Women in particular, though deeply embedded in the war efforts of their respective nations, dealt with everyday issues such as work, mothering, domestic labour, and relationship maintenance. Young

couples still fell in love, even as bombs shattered their homes.

Speaking sociologically, love is produced within the cultural context within which individuals live. As is common knowledge, the baby boomer generation sprouted from unions between North American soldiers and their "sweethearts," who remained at home waiting for them, or their war brides whom they brought back from the lands of battle.

In post-WW II North America the public morals of love stated that sex was to occur only after marriage and even then without the use of birth control, which was illegal. In neutral Sweden, meanwhile, a poll taken in 1945 at the conclusion of the war found that a scant 18 per cent of citizens believed that couples should postpone intercourse until after marriage.

For young people in Sweden, marriage and reproduction were not as irrevocably tied to guilt-free sex. The singsong "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage" was less stringently enforced. Swedish society's progressive approach to sexuality would soon become ensconced in the Swedish educational system; sex ed became a mandatory course in 1955, even as in North America the stereotypical nuclear family (Mommy, Daddy, two and a half children, a golden retriever) was at its zenith.

Swedish women today live in a society that places a high value on learning. Extensive sex education translates, for instance, into fewer unexpected pregnancies. In the US the rate of teen pregnancy between the ages of 15 and 19 is pegged at 49 pregnancies per 1,000 women; this number is five times higher than in Sweden. Just as the baby boomers were beginning to, pardon the pun, make boom boom, women in Sweden were also enjoying sex—yet without the consequences of limitless pregnancies. Ironically, postwar Sweden developed one of the most generous welfare states in the world, providing plenty of daycare and long paid-maternity leave periods.

Sweden's egalitarian leanings date at least as far back as a 13th century king named Birger Jarl who was the first monarch in Europe to outlaw rape and kidnapping. Today, "gender equality is a cornerstone of Swedish society." In the education system, women are taught to fulfill themselves in whatever areas they are gifted; the Swedish state has never assumed that the only gift a woman can give her country is a brood of youngsters. She might prefer to be an airplane mechanic, an author, or an architect.

A sense of openness, and not dry biology delivered in liturgical style, pervades the Swedish approach to sex education. Sex is treated as something alive, something embodied in the hearts and minds of the pupils. Students interviewed "suggest that the most valued part of sex ed is not the facts, but the chance to discuss

those facts and relate them to their own lives." This relation of meaning to "intention and context" is what the 19th century sociologist Max Weber might have referred to as "verstehen," or "understanding." Swedish women may have gained greater self-confidence and independence as a result of this liberating environment of discussion and expression.

Understanding that sexual pleasure is a natural part of life may lead women to evaluate themselves and their bodies in healthier and more empowering ways. The feminist social theorist Kathleen Barry suggests that under patriarchy "girls learn that the locus of sexual power is male." In other words, arousal is seen as a masculine phenomenon that the woman must learn to deftly and adeptly handle, curtail, or contain. Barry states that "as a young girl becomes aware of her own increasing sexual feelings, she learns to understand them primarily in the context of the boys sex drive."

***The Swedish example suggests an alternative to this rather stark state of perpetual gender warfare leading to gender apartness. Education and institutionalized equality allow men and women to live side by side in relative harmony.***

From this perspective, arousal tends to be equated with masculinity. Or, as many a mother taught her daughter in North America during the 1950s, "good girls don't *do* that." Implied in this statement is that good girls don't *feel* that and, if they do, such a feeling should make them feel displaced from their abstemious virtuous "real" selves.

This desexualization of femininity places women in a weakened social position. Young women are expected to conform to what Barry calls "compulsory heterosexuality" (this can be taken in the social or sexual sense) which leads them to diminish "heretofore primary relationships with girl friends." As a girl drifts apart from the solidarity of her female friends, leaving behind the patty cake circles of elementary school or lunchtime hallway gatherings of high school, "her own identity also assumes a secondary role and she grows into male identification." She doesn't just stand by her man; she comes to embody his aspirations and desires.

For another feminist theorist, Simone de Beauvoir, women become what she calls the Object by seeing themselves through the subjective Subject-position of man. To become Object is to occupy an identity devoid of one's own feelings be they sensory, emotional, or intellectual. This status limits women's autonomy and control both of their lives and their bodies. Patriarchy only permits women to take pleasure by being the object of man's desire, thus feeling themselves as items graded and sought after just as items on a store shelf are pawed over and selected or bypassed.

What is inexcusable under patriarchy is for women to embody desire-for-itself. It is demanded of women that they embody a masochistic altruism; to live a life not their own and in forever in regard to others. Women are shepherded into the position of Other. De Beauvoir writes that "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought." From this premise it follows naturally that "liberation will come for women and humankind, when women develop a consciousness and culture that is uniquely theirs."

The Swedish example suggests an alternative to this rather stark state of perpetual gender warfare leading to gender apartness. Education and institutionalized equality allow men and women to live side by side in relative harmony. Women have succeeded at careering and parenting simultaneously. What social conservatives might term "permissiveness" has given women greater control over their life outcomes.

Here in North America the derogatory epithet "slut" can be seen as an effort to deprive women of their sexuality. After all, in Sweden 70 years ago a woman engaging in premarital sex was simply claiming her prerogative.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



## Marco Benevento

*Marco Benevento is a Brooklyn-based experimental composer and performer known for his innovative compositions and arrangements, brilliant keyboard playing, and energetic performances. He just released his second CD, Me Not Me, and on September 26 he'll be playing at Le Divan Orange in Montreal.*

*Recently, while en route to Fall River, Massachusetts to perform, Marco spoke with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about soundtracks, open-endedness, and circuit-bending toys.*

## Evolution

I grew up in Wyckoff, northern New Jersey. After my piano and organ lessons as a youngster I eventually got into rock and roll. I was in bands in high school that would play at sweet 16 parties.

It was kind of a natural evolution for me, coming from a rock background and then going to Berkeley and studying a whole bunch about jazz and then sort of getting into a combination of both. I guess being in Manhattan was the biggest influence. I played in a band from Manhattan when I was 18.

## On Soundtracks

On an amateur level, when I was about 16 I did a soundtrack for my friend's movie, *Apples of Eden*. It was a made-up story about creatures and goblins in the Jersey forest. I made sort of a *Dukes of Hazard* soundtrack about it.

I'm not doing anything with TV or movies right now. My feats are out there in the world, and I wish that somebody would pick up on them one of these days. I did this gig at Carnegie Hall with this really great piano player from the UK named Jamie Collins. He was involved in the soundtrack from the Clint Eastwood movie *Gran Torino*. He's been really into my music, which is why he asked me to open for him at Carnegie Hall, which was very flattering to me. He hangs around with Clint Eastwood quite a bit, and I am kind of hoping that he will give him some of my work.

## Musical Mastery

I play percussion and guitar as well as the keyboards. I remember being so interested in synthesizers as a kid. I took college music synthesis programs in high school. I studied about what music means, or what makes a sound a sound. I remember that would sort of lure me into my room where I would put on my headphones and play my keyboard.

There is so much you can learn as a kid, and then when you actually hear someone do what you are learning something clicks, and you think, *Oh, it's that easy*, or, *it's more conceptual than technical*. I had a great conducting teacher in school say that it's *all* concept. He said that you can have all the technique you want, but without concept, you're screwed.

A big influence to me was Kenny Werner. I've studied with him on and off through the years. He wrote the book *Effortless Mastery*. I read it when I was 18. It was very easy to read and made a lot of sense.



I maintain a high level of energy on my tours with lots of water, lack of sleep, and having a two-year-old, just to name a few. Music is something I've studied my whole life, and I'm still learning the depths of it. It's like a quest. *Me Not Me*, my new CD, is the most interesting one to talk about. I spent many sleepless nights on it.

### Circuit-Bending Toys?

Circuit bending is a new art; it's no more than five years old. It came into my life when I was touring around with Joe Russo. The Russo duo was a big part of my musical life. We had a show in Chicago and somebody we didn't even know came to the show and said a friend of his told him that we were into this sort of thing, and he hauled out a duffle bag full of circuit bending toys. I just sort of lost it. I thought, *this is it—I love this stuff!*

He's been sending me stuff for the past five or six years, and every time I tour I always go to Chicago so I get to see new things that he's made. Acoustic music is brilliant because of the beautiful emotional quality happening, then when you get into this sort of a glitchy underworld, it becomes like a David Lynch movie, which is a whole other colour of emotions.

It's sort of intertwined or sewn together, so one instrument, for example the piano, can have historic and has emotional acoustic qualities that date back as far as three hundred years. Then you have this brand new toy with batteries in it that has sound you can use to make music with and edit.

I had my circuit-bending toy plugged into my loop router, which is something you plug an instrument into; it records a sound and then you just sort of play it back over and over, and then you can record another part over it, making what is known as a loop. I was using a loop station and a circuit-bent toy to record tracks and tracks on each other, and I came up with three tracks to start the song, which are the melody and harmony.

I let that play while I was walking around the house, or doing dishes, or whatever. It was sort of like translating the notes from what I was hearing onto the piano.

### On Spirit

My one strongest religious belief is that there are higher powers and a god or gods, and there is a universal relationship with them and everybody in this world. There are certain things for all of us that help us connect with them. I use music to recognize that.

## AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



### Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems

Neil Loknath is an AU student currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems, whose computer skills also recently gave him the opportunity to take part in Google's Summer of Code program.

Loknath originally completed a college diploma program elsewhere, but says that he had regretted his "decision to go to college instead of university," saying "I felt that I had more

potential, and my college education didn't provide me with the foundation I felt I needed. AU gave me the opportunity to do something about it," he says.

"Since I was working full-time, the fact that I could study in the evenings was a huge plus, as I could continue working full-time and easily finance my education. In addition, the transfer assessment of my college diploma granted me almost half of the credits required for the degree."

Like all AU students, Loknath appreciates the ability to set his own study schedule. "If I feel like I'm understanding a topic and I want to move forward, I don't need to wait for a lecture to end; I can just move on. In the same way, if I need to slow down, I can do that too."

In the Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems program (BScCIS), Loknath says that "there are some courses that really focus on specific technologies," and this makes the learning very practical and applicable. He would like to see more theory-oriented classes, however, explaining that "in the field of IT, where technologies change very rapidly, if courses are not kept very up-to-date, students will be studying what is already obsolete," but while specific technologies may come and go, "for the most part, the theory doesn't change."

For this reason, "if you're looking for a focus on more of the theoretical aspects of Computer Science, this degree may not be the best fit." Loknath also cautions that according to his personal research, this lack of theory could hinder students seeking to pursue graduate degrees in computer science. "Before I registered in the program, I looked into how competitive the BScCIS would be for admission to graduate programs. What I found was that most universities I had contacted indicated that it would not be very competitive . . . since the program is not a pure Computer Science one."

If, however, "you're looking for a practical, business-oriented approach to learning about computer science and programming, this program is very good . . . So, in my opinion, the strengths and weaknesses of the program really vary depending on a student's goals."

Loknath's computer skills also recently landed him a position in Google's Summer of Code program. To participate in this program, students must choose "a participating mentor organization and write them a proposal for an interesting project they would like to code on during the summer." Each mentoring organization is then allowed to accept a certain number of the best proposals. This year, of 5,900 student proposals received, only 1,000 were accepted, making admittance to the program very competitive.

Loknath's mentor organization was Gnome, and he spent his summer working on the Linux media player Banshee. His work "allows users to share their music collections with their instant messaging friends," and throughout the summer he chronicled his progress in his blog.

The biggest benefit to students for participating in the Summer of Code program "is the real world experience gained by working with a software development team. As a student, you get a chance to apply what you've been studying to a real project that you build yourself. You also get to experience things you don't really get taught too much about, such as team communication, bug tracking, etc.

"It was very satisfying seeing something grow from nothing to an actual, working, useful piece of software," he says.

When asked how his AU studies had helped with his Summer of Code project, Loknath says that "obviously, since I am studying computers, my studies at AU have helped me in one way or another. Specifically, I think studies on data structures, algorithms, concurrency, threading, networking, and OOP (object oriented programming) were the most valuable.

"Learning things on your own takes a lot of determination to stay motivated and continue working towards your goals," says Loknath. "Overcoming these challenges really demonstrates a person's willingness to learn and work hard . . . [but] being in front of the computer, hacking away, is definitely where I like to be."

Obviously a good fit for both Google's Summer of Code and AU's Bachelor of Science in Computing and Information Systems.

### **CLICK OF THE WRIST – Odd Attractions**

Most people are familiar with the standard fare at amusement parks: roller coasters, Ferris wheels, and hotdogs. But the realm of possibilities is much, much bigger than that, as this week's look at unique amusement parks shows.

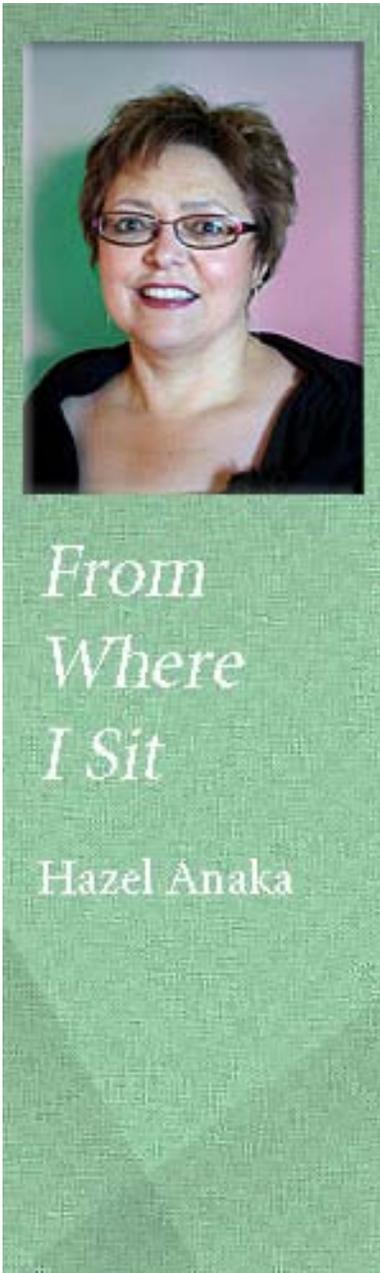
**Wizarding World of Harry Potter** - It was only a matter of time before the popular Harry Potter franchise was turned into a theme park. It's scheduled to open in 2010, and visitors will be able to wander through Hogsmeade, stop at the Three Broomsticks, and even "be fitted for a magical wand in Ollivander's Wand Shop."

**BonBon Land** - An amusement park based on candy. That might seem like a tough idea to pitch in North America, but it's proven to be a hit in Denmark.

**Sesame Place** - Can you tell me how to get to Sesame Street? Actually, make that Sesame Place, the theme park devoted to all things Sesame. Kids can visit the Big Bird Theatre, ride the Sunny Day Carousel and Grover's World Twirl—and even walk down a replica of the famous street.

**Love Land** - This amusement park was bulldozed before it even had a chance to open. But that's what you get for trying to open a sex-themed amusement park in China. Authorities destroyed the site when they discovered the park planned to feature "a photo gallery on the history of sex [and] naked human sculptures."

**Diggerland** - That's right—you can now spend the day at Diggerland, an amusement park that lets visitors dig for buried treasure, ride the Diggerland Dodgems, and try their hand at the earth movers. Don't believe it? Check out the Diggerland video.



## Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

Regular readers of FWIS know I'm a voracious reader. Regular patrons of any retail bookstore know reading is an expensive pastime. That's why I'm thrilled to get books at more affordable prices.

Costco is great for new books at reduced prices. The selection is limited to Oprah titles, popular fiction, and some non-fiction. I've gotten some great travel guides, decorating books, art and anatomy books. Will they have Craig Ferguson's memoir, *American on Purpose*? Probably not, yet it's one I want to own.

The best deals on used books are found at thrift stores. And some of those are better than others. The Salvation Army has the best prices but the poorest selection. There is little attempt at organization so it's a challenge to find the coveted title. Goodwill does a good job sorting books by genre. Within the fiction section they sort the books alphabetically by author! Amen. I always thank the shelf stocker to let her know her efforts are appreciated. Value Village has a good selection but higher prices. While I'm not impressed by their prices, four bucks for a book (if you can't get it elsewhere for less) is still a deal.

Recently, Liquidation World was clearing out new hardcover and paperback books—for 50 cents a title! Granted there weren't any big-name authors or bestsellers in the bunch but for readers of women's fiction or mysteries it was cause for celebration. Let's just say I didn't leave empty-handed.

Independent used-book stores tend to sell at half of retail and can be a great source for obscure titles.

Buying second-hand means you're bringing home the provenance of the item. Some believe the aura of the previous owner remains, particularly with jewellery. With books some are in better condition than others. How badly I want a certain title determines how picky I become. Some books are simply too shabby or dirty to buy. Others are so pristine you wonder if they have been opened.

Lately I've begun collecting the items I find in these used books. The most unusual was a \$180.95 income tax refund cheque from 2003 for a woman in Whitehorse. It was tucked into a copy of *The Writer's Mentor*. The scariest thing was a Visa receipt dated September 28, 1995, with the full credit card number, expiry date, and signature of the owner! This was obviously from a more trusting time before identity theft and credit card fraud became the national pastime.

A recent article in the *Edmonton Journal* detailed some of the items found by Edmonton's independent used-book store owners. The most intriguing was a book of poetry with its interior cut out to accommodate a whiskey bottle. Others included plane tickets, a Polaroid of a nude, a Do Not Resuscitate order, photos, love letters, hemp leaves, and pressed flowers. The saddest was money squirreled away by an Alzheimer's patient.

All proof positive that you can't judge a book by its cover, from where I sit.

# Sister Aurora

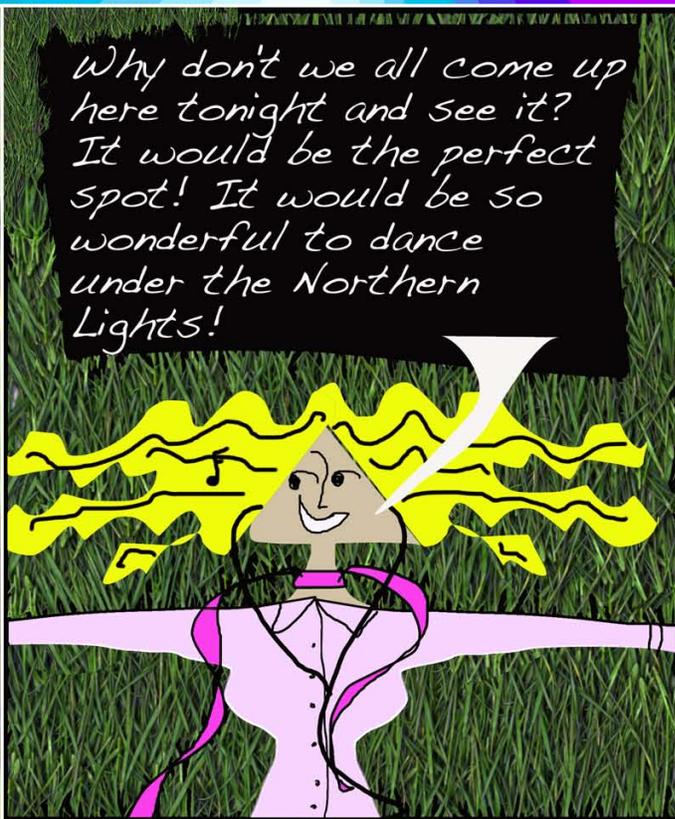
There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .



#9

Aurora Borealis!

The glorious goddess Aurora, leading the sun into morning . . .



Why don't we all come up here tonight and see it? It would be the perfect spot! It would be so wonderful to dance under the Northern Lights!

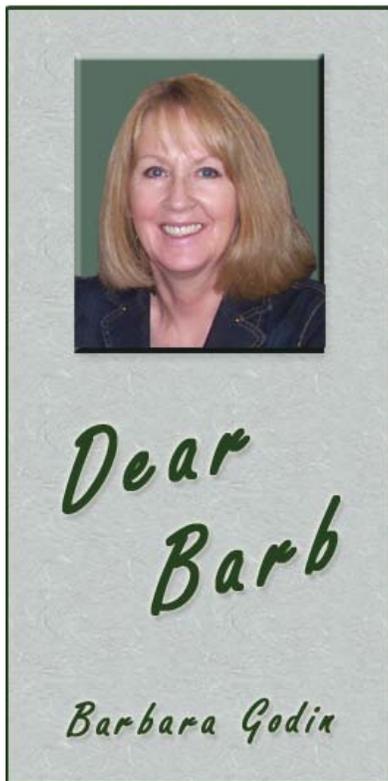


I scheduled four hours to work on my English paper tonight. I can see the lights from my bedroom window.



Home-work on a Friday night?!!

You can practice your dancing anywhere. I need a computer and a stack of books.



## Wedding Guest Can Show She's Moved On

*Dear Barb:*

*I am in my early twenties and until last year I had been involved in a serious relationship. I was in love with this man and thought he would be my life partner. Therefore I was completely devastated when I received an email from him telling me that the relationship was over.*

*The worst part is that he began dating my best friend shortly after we broke up. I really had no clue there was anything between them. In fact I didn't even think they liked each other. Although it has been very uncomfortable I have tried to be civil about this and maintain contact with both of them. Needless to say the relationship has changed and Sue and I are definitely not confidantes anymore.*

*Still, I was totally unprepared when I received an invitation to their upcoming wedding. I don't know what to do; I really don't want to go but I don't want them to know that I am upset. What do you suggest I do?*

*Carrie*

Hi, Carrie. Breaking up with you via email is really not cool! The least he could have done was talk to you face to face. You have definitely risen above a very difficult situation with grace and dignity and you should be commended for that.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Often people are so close to a situation that they lack the ability to see the reality of what's really going on. Besides, be happy this happened before you were married and possibly had a family, as it would have been much more complicated under those conditions.

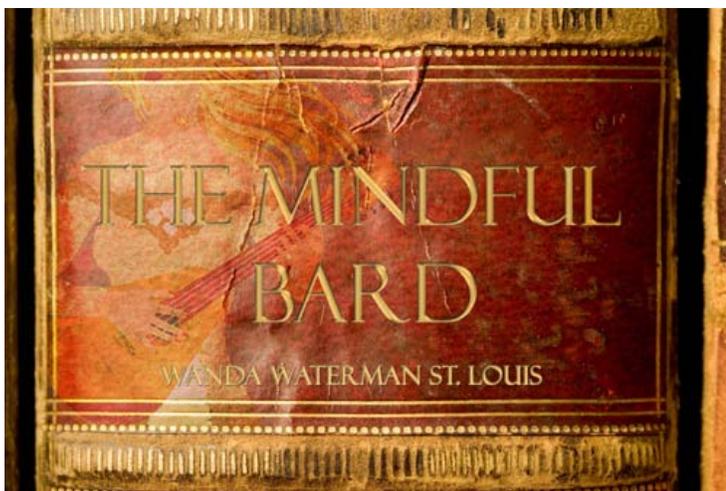
As far as attending the wedding I think you could either attend or not. Depending on how it's handled no one really has to know your true feelings.

You said you don't want to attend the wedding, but have you thought about finding a really hot date to accompany you? That would definitely indicate you are okay and have moved on. On the other hand, I'm sure you could plan a weekend away that just happens to be the same weekend as the wedding. Either way is acceptable.

Perhaps the wedding couple have also been struggling with whether or not to invite you. If that is the case they would probably be okay with whatever you decide.

Basically I would suggest you do what feels most comfortable to you. Best of luck, Carrie.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org). Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.*



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

CD: Marco Benevento, *Me Not Me*

Label: The Royal Potato Family

Release date: 2009

Genre: Jazz

The Rapturous Handiwork of an Insouciant Audio Wizard

*"Circuit bending is a new art; it's no more than five years old . . . We had a show in Chicago and somebody we didn't even know came to the show and said a friend of his told him that we were into this sort of thing, and hauled out a duffle bag full of circuit bending toys. I just sort of lost it. I thought this is it—I love this stuff!"*

Marco Benevento

The sounds! The multi-levelled palette of mind-blowing *sounds!*

When I heard sample tracks from *Me Not Me* on AccuJazz I was immediately impressed with how such masterful keyboard playing and startling innovations could come off sounding so jolly and playful. And the range of mood in each song was so complex, the changes from one colour to the next so smooth and effortless, I wondered what kind of a mind could have come up with it all.

My recent interview with Benevento (this issue) revealed an incredibly easygoing guy who in spite of a hectic bout of touring was so happy with his life he couldn't help radiating bliss rays, even over the phone. An incredibly accomplished musician, he still seems as excited about music as a child on Christmas morning trying out (or taking apart) his new toys.

Speaking of toys, remember those battery-operated toys you (or your kids) were given to help speed the learning process? These have now been rewired by electronics enthusiasts to become one-of-a-kind musical



instruments capable of randomly generating novel sounds in a way that would have delighted John Cage. (There's an excellent series of articles on this practice at [Anti-theory](#).)

To briefly explain the technology, circuits are rerouted and the circuits tested until interesting new sounds are discovered. Then the circuits are "bent" to recreate those sounds at the touch of a switch.

The devices can even be altered to create or alter sounds in response to light and shadow, human touch, movement, and even breath. They can also be hooked up to amps and mixers and computers, of course.

Yes, it's one glorious experiment.

Circuit-bent toys are so up Benevento's alley it's surprising he didn't invent them himself. But his exuberant use of the toys may have been the catalyst that has recently brought the devices into concert halls and studios across North America.

"Now They're Writing Music," one of three original compositions on this album, is an amazing soundscape assembled in the afterglow of Benevento's initial encounter with circuit-bent toys.

Enhancing Benevento's music is the irrepressible joy the man exhibits. His photos and interviews all paint a picture of someone whose ego shell has clearly fallen away to allow for the burgeoning of an ecstatic soul.

But *Me Not Me* isn't simple-minded hijinks. These are tracks you can explore again and again for the new ways they'll resonate with your own listening experience.

The future starts here.

*Me Not Me* manifests five of The Mindful Bard's [criteria](#) for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it makes me want to be a better artist; 3) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 4) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 5) it stimulates my mind.

*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). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*

## DID YOU KNOW?



### Science Labs

Most AU students are familiar with the university's excellent library services, but unless you're a Science student you may not be aware of another great resource that's available: the [science labs](#).

AU "provides facilities in which to complete all compulsory labs in-person in Athabasca," and some lab sessions can be organized so students can complete all their lab course components at the same time. Other [lab locations](#) are available too, so be sure to check out the website for all the

info you'll need to start your experiment!

## AUSU THIS MONTH



### Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

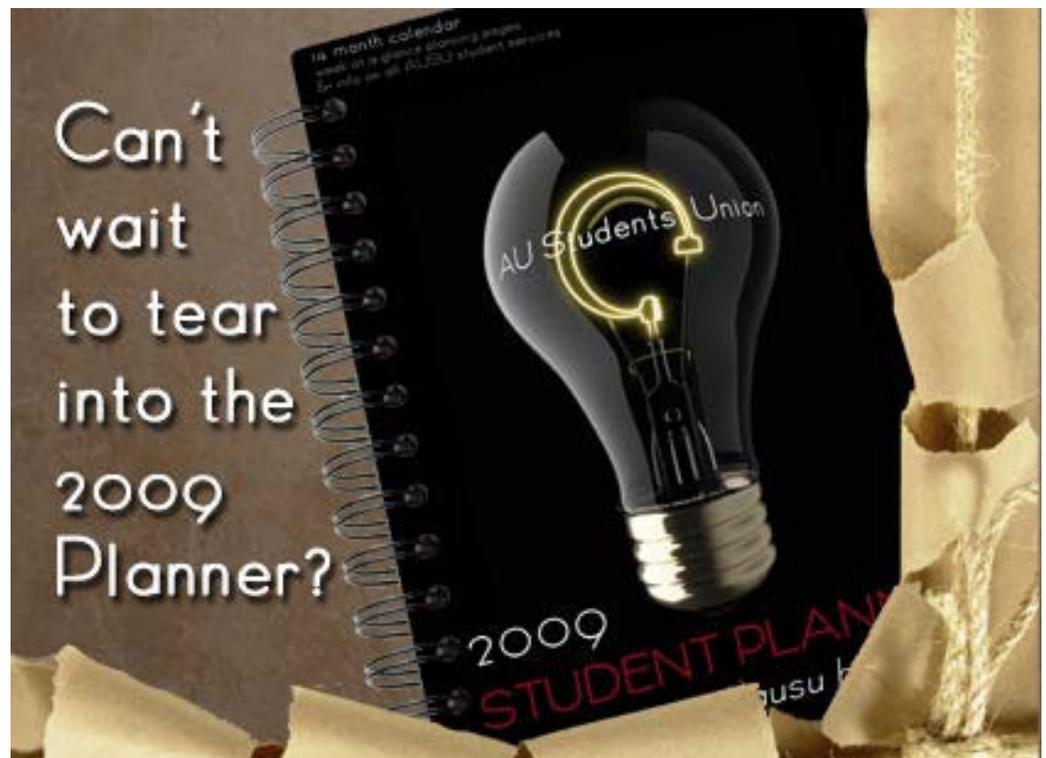
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

### Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



### AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted

concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

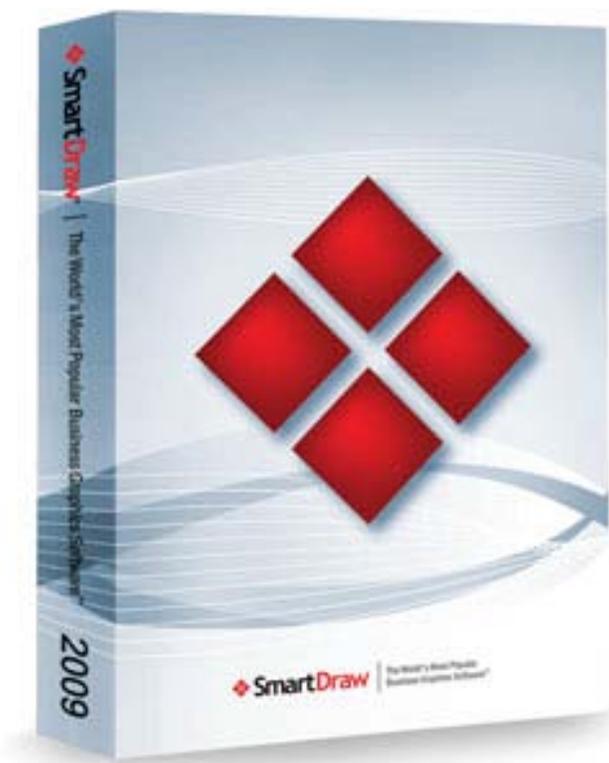
More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

### au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

### 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



### SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. 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.

## Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.

The *Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

## AUSU Lock Loan Program

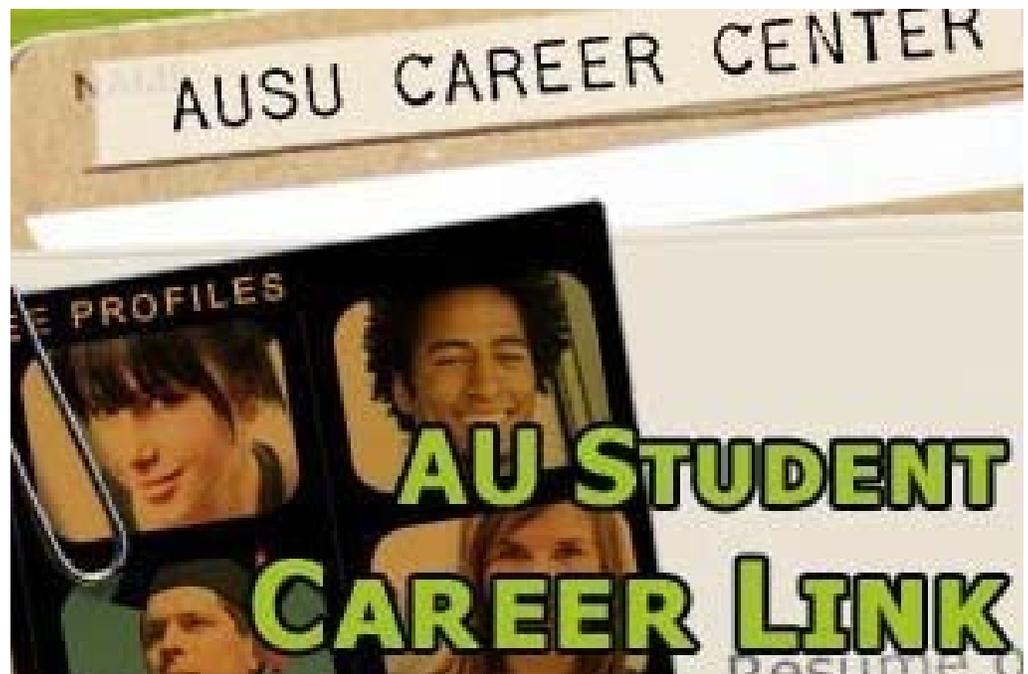
Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

## Employment Site is Here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.

Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Homophobia still rampant in Canada's high schools

Gay and lesbian rights may be gaining ground in the mainstream, but Canada's high schools are still rampant with homophobic attacks.

That's the word from Catherine Taylor, a professor of education and communications at the University of Winnipeg. Professor Taylor is part of a team conducting a "national survey of homophobia in schools."

As the *National Post* reports, the initial results of the two-phase survey are not surprising. According to Taylor, homophobic attacks (both verbal and physical) were reported by "the vast majority of gay and lesbian students who responded to the survey."

Students reported being frightened and pinpointed specific areas of their schools where they're most vulnerable, including hallways and washrooms. Insults such as "queer" and "fag" are common in many school environments, and are even aimed at heterosexual students.

Few students reported feeling safe enough to report the harassment.

Similar surveys have been conducted in the UK and US. The results of the survey's second phase are expected to be made public in December, and Taylor's research group hopes to conduct a third phase focused on interviewing Canadian teachers.

### In Foreign News: US tax would target sugary drinks

High taxes have long been seen as a way to offset the health costs of alcohol and cigarettes. Now there's a new target on the tax horizon: soft drinks. The US debate on a soft-drink tax is heating up, and policy makers, doctors, and scientists say it could be "a powerful weapon in efforts to reduce obesity."

*The New York Times* reports that the proposed tax would apply to sports beverages, energy drinks, and soft drinks, but "sugar-free diet drinks" would be excluded.

President Obama is said to be considering the idea, but the beverage industry is already voicing strong opposition, with one executive calling it "outrageous." The industry has created a group called Americans Against Food Taxes; as well as having a website, the organization is opposing the tax through a campaign of newspaper and television ads.

Some in favour of the bill have estimated that a tax of one cent per ounce on sugary drinks would raise as much \$14.9 billion in the first year. The money would be used for education on obesity and diabetes, and could also offset the related Medicaid and Medicare costs.

The tax is also expected to act as a deterrent at the consumer level. One recent study cited research that shows consumer consumption on soft drinks declines 8 to 10 percent "for every 10 percent rise in price."

## EDUCATION NEWS

Sarah Ratchford

### International student enrolment up in Atlantic provinces



FREDERICTON (CUP) - Atlantic Canada is steadily becoming more culturally diverse as international enrolment numbers are on their way up at universities in the region.

Despite high supplemental fees and the cost of travel, many international students are still choosing to come and study in Canada, largely due to the efforts of recruiters.

That's how Danielle Bodie, a student from Nassau in the Bahamas, made it to St. Thomas University in Fredericton, N.B.

"I was at a school college fair, and at that time I was like, 'OK, I want to do journalism, but where do I go?'" Bodie recalls. "The recruiter had a lot of information. I saw the campus and it was gorgeous. I was like, 'This is for me.'"

Jerry Wang recruits international students for the University of Prince Edward Island. Final numbers of international students enrolled this year have not yet been released; an increase, however, is expected. Wang is setting out on a recruitment effort at the end of the month to the Middle East and China.

"Our percentage of international students is close to 10 per cent," he says. "Some students are still getting visas, so they might be late."

Peter Halpin, Executive Director of the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU), says bringing more international students into the Atlantic Canadian landscape has a variety of benefits.

"First of all, international students really enhance the overall educational experience of all students, because of the ethnic and cultural diversity they bring to the campus," he says. "That really enhances the entire experience, not just for them, but for domestic students as well."

He says the aging population of the region is also an important reason to focus on international students.

"Atlantic Canada is suffering a real demographic challenge. Our universities in the region are slightly under capacity as there are fewer high school graduates in the region to attend our universities."

If recruitment efforts are extended into the international community, Atlantic universities will operate closer to capacity, says Halpin. He says that the region is currently home to approximately 6,500 international students between the four provinces.

"That number is expected to grow when official numbers are released on Oct. 1," he says.

Universities across the region are doing their best to enhance that number. Asa Kachan, assistant vice president of enrolment management and registrar at Dalhousie University in Halifax, N.S. says the school had 1,334 international students as of September 4, up from last year's 1,184.

"We have a lot of students from Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean," she says, with students from a total of 110 different countries.

"That has an interesting and diverse impact on the academic experience here," she says. "The traditional local market is certainly changing due to the decrease in high school graduates."

That gap is being partially filled with international students.

***" . . . our international numbers are up modestly over last year. For us that's a positive sign. Overall international enrolment is up this year from last."***

"Last year our total percentage of international students was just under eight per cent. It looks like both the true number and the percentage are increasing this year to about eight and a half per cent, and that fits in very nicely with our overall goal . . . to maintain our enrolment."

Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. is also seeing an increase in the number of students from other countries.

Director of Communications Scott Roberts is hesitant to cite numbers since they are not yet official.

"What I can tell you," he says, "is our international numbers are up modestly over last year. For us that's a positive sign. Overall international enrolment is up this year from last."

New Brunswick, too, has been seeing a climb in the number of international students due to extensive recruitment efforts.

Kemal Pinar is in charge of international recruitment for both the Fredericton and Saint John campuses of the University of New Brunswick (UNB). She just returned from a 16-day trip to India. This was the first time for UNB to attend the tour, which is put on by the Council of International Schools (CIS).

"The target group was undergraduate students," Pinar explains. "We visited around 20 high schools who usually send students abroad."

Pinar says India usually yields graduate recruitments, but what UNB is looking for is a "smaller but very strong undergraduate sector."

Currently, about 40 students from India study at UNB's two campuses, according to Pinar.

St. Thomas student Danielle Bodie has been studying in Canada for three years now, and she has enjoyed the experience.

"I've met a lot of nice people and made everlasting friendships with Canadians. Someone took me home for Thanksgiving my first year—we don't celebrate it because we didn't have any pilgrims," she laughs.

"I think Canadians are the sweetest people."

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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