



It's All About the Benjamins

AUSU Exec Increases their Wage Budget

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Gonzo!

The Editors

An Interview with Voice History

Plus:
The Writer's Toolbox
Make Sure Your Voice is Heard!
and much more!



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

EDITORIAL**The Last Word?****Karl Low**

It may be that this is the last issue of *The Voice Magazine* that will be published. If AUSU Council gets its way, there will be nothing to grant the Voice Magazine any funding or any autonomy, with that being replaced by a single "Writer In Residence" which will replace all the different perspectives brought by the diverse members of AUSU who write for *The Voice Magazine*.

That said, if this is the last issue, it's one that I'm happy to go out on.

It's a big issue, as I'm trying to cram in as much in as possible just in case, but there's only so much I can do. I included a great interview with a student who goes by Gonzo. I couldn't let that name just slip by, but there are still other interviews on deck. Hopefully, depending on your votes, we'll be able to see them in the coming weeks. We also have a beautiful edition of The Writer's Toolbox, one that any aspiring writer absolutely needs to read from a master of the craft.

And speaking of the masters of the craft, we have a massive, three part interview with the previous editors of *The Voice Magazine* so that if this is the last issue that gets posted, future members may still be able to see what's been lost.

More importantly, we also have an exposé of how the current AUSU Executives wages will likely have more than doubled over the past four years. I say likely because information about how exactly the latest increases will be applied hasn't been announced anywhere. While the AUSU Executive claims that The Voice Magazine is not an effective use of members money, their own wages already exceed the budget of the Voice, and they look to be increasing (or perhaps already have) by another 30%. Check out "It's All About The Benjamins" on page 7 for more details. Does anybody think a Writer In Residence would be able to find this information, or willing to report it?

Finally, I'd like to thank first, all of the writers, the students, who have made *The Voice Magazine* what it is. Without all their contributions, the only thing here would be my rants, and while that can entertain me endlessly, I doubt the rest of you feel the same. If this is where we end, you've done yourselves proud.

I also need to thank all of you, my readers. While it's been said that there may be as few as 80 of you, I simply can't believe that, as that doesn't match with any information I was ever given previously. So for you silent ones, thank you. I hope we've brought a little joy, a little anger, a little knowledge, and a lot of things to think about into your life.

So, if you want to see more of *The Voice Magazine*, or maybe if you want to be part of it in future, now's the time to register for the AGM by contacting ausu@ausu.org and asking to attend.

And if I don't see you again, well, I hope you enjoyed the read.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl".

MINDS WE MEET



Gonzo Moreno is an AU student living in Ottawa, Ontario. He's a Manager of Business Development for LightSquared, a satellite communications company, and has worked there for the past 13 years. Gonzo is in the Business Administration program at AU and began his final course in March.

Gonzo was recently interviewed by The Voice Magazine about school, saxophones, and satellites.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

After I graduated from Algonquin College in Ottawa with a 3-year Business degree, I started working. Then I found out that Algonquin has a relationship with Athabasca University, and I could get credit for the equivalent of 2 years at AU.

What do you do like to do when you're not studying or working?

Well, I've got two kids, ages six and eight, so that's about it!

What happens after you finish your education?

I don't know. I've been in my job for 13 years and I'll probably continue. I really just wanted to get a university degree. I'm proud of my college degree, but these days the business world is fixated on university degrees. Having that extra education might give me a leg up somewhere down the road.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

That would probably be my dad, and his dad—my grandfather—too. My grandfather was very intelligent—he was a university math professor—and he won a scholarship to Columbia University [an ivy league university located in New York State] around 1935. My dad is quite intelligent, as well; he is an electrical engineer and is still working in that profession. Years ago he came to Canada from Chile—in February—with no English or French skills; he got a job and made a life. From them I learned that learning is an ongoing process. My mom, as well, was an influence. She was a university professor of social work in Chile but that wasn't recognized when they came to Canada. Both my parents had to work hard to get their professional titles/designations recognized in Canada by the respective institutions. All of this was made more difficult as they were learning English and French. They both enjoyed very successful professional careers. My mother was the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Social workers and my father is the General Manager of the FCSA, the highest position in the organization.

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

How about Charlie Parker, the jazz saxophonist. I've played saxophone since high school. I play in a swing/jazz/dance band right now, if you can believe it. Charlie Parker was a fantastic musician. He had a great work ethic and a great deal to advance jazz music. I think it would be cool to have a chat with him.

Describe your experience with online learning so far. What do you like? Dislike?

I love the flexibility. With young kids, it's great to be able to do courses at home on my schedule. I think that's the best part of AU: it lets parents continue their education with minimal disruption in family life. And the resources and support you get from AU are fantastic. It's great that you can make a phone call and get help with your program. One of the drawbacks is that there's no face-to-face contact. We used to have a coffee group here in Ottawa but that seems to have fizzled out. There's also lack of face-to-face with tutors, and the policy of 2-day turnaround on inquiries means sometimes you're waiting a long time for the answer to a quick question.

Another drawback is on the technical side: For some reason I was unable to log into the Athabasca site from my home computer. And when I was able to log in it was infuriatingly slow and some pages would not even load. While my pc was a few years old and running Windows 95, many people still have and use Windows 95 and it can be quite frustrating when things don't work.

Was there ever a point when you wavered about your education?

Not really. To be honest, I've been doing this for about 9 years, so I'm a bit of an eternal student. I'm a bit like the turtle with my education: slow and steady. I'm fortunate that my employer pays for my courses, as long as I pass, so I don't have any financial worries surrounding my education.

What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?

I guess it would be the Spanish courses I took. I was four when my family moved to Canada from Chile, so as an adult I couldn't speak Spanish very well. The course coordinator was really good and we had some great conversations. In addition to language, the courses covered different cultures from Spanish-speaking countries around the world. The courses allowed me to improve my written Spanish, which has really helped out at work. I'm now the go-to guy when we need to communicate with our customers in Mexico.

Describe the proudest moment of your life.

That would be a tie between when I got married, and when my kids were born.

If you were the new president of AU, what would be your first project?

It would be to make sure that online students, who are the majority of AU's students, are well taken care of and feel like they're part of the AU family. Just like a bricks and mortar university, students want to feel a sense of community.

If you could wake up tomorrow with a "superpower," which one would you choose?

I'd like to be able to fly. I live in the west end of Ottawa, and I work in the east end, so flying would save me a lot of time.

If you were trapped on an island, what 3 things would you bring?

A satellite phone, obviously, and water purifying tablets. And I'd bring some bottles to send messages out in. These bottles could be full coming in, of course.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

Well, my name is Gonzalo, but I've been Gonzo since grade 7. It's just a name that stuck and now hardly anybody knows my real name. Unlike the muppet Gonzo, though, who plays the trumpet, I play the saxophone.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

It's just to never give up. Even if you get frustrated, just keep going. Like Dory, the fish in the movie *Finding Nemo*, "just keep swimming."

What do you think about e-texts?

This is the second time I've used an e-text. It's okay, although I prefer a book I can hold. There are some drawbacks to e-text, but I like that it's easily portable. I can take my tablet along to work with me, and I can access the e-text from any computer.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

In general, it's good. The two-day turnaround for questions is a bit frustrating, but understandable. Even with a regular university you sometimes wait that long.

Where has life taken you so far?

Chile, where I was born, and Guatemala, where my wife is from. My brother lives in Mexico and I've visited him and his wife there. And a previous job I had took me to the Philippines and South Korea, and also to California for five months.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I'm reading "If on a winter's night a traveler" by Italo Calvino. It was originally written in Italian, and it's been translated into dozens of languages. I first attempted to read it in Spanish, but I found it challenging so I'm reading the English translation.

DID YOU KNOW?**YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE VOICE!**

If you're currently taking an under-graduate course from AU and you're not in a graduate program, you can attend, speak, and vote on the [motions](#) at AUSU's AGM on April 21st, 2015 at 5:30 pm.

The meeting is held by teleconference on a toll free number, or through your computer headset and microphone. Contact ausu@ausu.org to register yourself to attend the meeting. If you want to make sure The Voice Magazine keeps publishing and stays independent, you need to make that heard at the AGM!

It's All About the Benjamins

Karl Low



Students and AUSU Members may not be aware that in addition to the Annual General Meeting, there is also a regular AUSU Council Meeting being held next Tuesday.

Usually, AUSU Council announces public meetings to the members, at least on their website, so that students have the opportunity to attend. They're not allowed or asked to speak, but they can listen in, and we do that here at The Voice Magazine, and then report to you on what council is doing.

This month, however, no council meeting was posted on the website, so I enquired at the office if there would be one. It turns out that there definitely is a council meeting, open to student attendance, and it is to be held immediately following the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday at 5:30 pm MST (all current undergrads should contact ausu@ausu.org to ask for the call in information to attend for free).

Of course, I requested the agenda and was surprised to see that there was an email vote ratification. Ratification means that Council has already approved the motion through email, and now are simply confirming the result in a public meeting so that it has official legal standing.

"3.0 Email Vote Ratification: BIRT AUSU approves a transfer of \$16,912.59 from the surplus in budget account 5210 Office Wages to budget account 5215 Executive Wages to accommodate adjustments to executive wages for the remainder of the 2014/2015 fiscal year. C.Villeneuve moved, M.Daigneault seconded. Carried 5/0 (3 abstain)"

The three abstentions of the vote were by the three executive members of Council.

Apparently, it was a transfer to the honorarium of the executive. Apparently, there is some immediate need for the AUSU Executive to receive \$16,912.59 more than they already are, for the rest of the fiscal year.

But wait, the fiscal year of AUSU only goes to the end of September. That's only five months. Which means that these adjustments will have an annual cost to AUSU members of just over \$40,500. Let's assume they split this evenly, and that would mean each executive gets a pay increase of over \$13,500, or over 33%. When was the last time you got a 33% raise? What's really odd is that they are approving the funds to cover executive wages, but where is the motion to approve those "adjustments" in the first place?

To put this into perspective, the current wage of the AUSU President is \$36,400/yr, and is topped up with benefits totalling up to \$3,562 (health, plus two international courses per year). With what looks to be the additional wage increase, this would bring the total to just over \$53,460. And that's just the President, and it doesn't count the laptop and smartphone that each exec gets to use as well.

These numbers assume the "adjustment" will take place right away. The other possibilities are that it took place before now (in which case, where is the motion recorded and the public announcement that is required by policy), or it's pending for later (in which case the percentage increase may be even higher than I've calculated). I have to guess at what the real wages will be since council has already allocated the funds but hasn't announced the adjustments yet.

For comparison:

Student Executives at Macewan University (MS-Word file, it's safe) get a total of about \$38,835, benefits included.

At the University of Alberta, the total compensation for the President is \$39,804, including benefits.

At the University of Lethbridge, the compensation was set in bylaws last year, and at that time was only 29,172 for the full year. It's since had one year's worth of inflation applied. Interesting to note, the University of Lethbridge prohibits student executives from raising their own wages, they can only raise the wages for the next term.

NAITSA also puts their Executive wages in their bylaws (meaning that they need student approval to increase them), and those total approximately \$37,000 with benefits.

And the University of Calgary? Well they're harder to find information for, but this article a couple of years ago indicates that their wages at that time were just over \$37,400.

This means that President Jason Nixon will be (or maybe already is?) the highest paid Student Executive in Alberta. And not by a few dollars, but by more than 30%.

President Nixon has said he is concerned that the Voice is taking 12.5% of the budget of AUSU members (about \$75,000/yr) and delivering only to very few students, even though the bulk of that money goes directly back to students and writers who are contributing to The Voice Magazine, and providing entertainment, advice, and other coverage for the rest of AUSU. And a significant amount gets put into a reserve each year to save for much needed improvements to The Voice Magazine's website and systems. However, it seems his only concern about his own pay, which now totals close to 9% of AUSU's incoming budget, is that it's budgeted for as quickly as possible.

All of this would be bad enough, except that this change prompted me to go back through my old files on AUSU's wages, and I noticed that as recently as 2012, the president's wages were just under \$22,000 each year. Personally, I don't remember ever seeing an announcement when they increased to what they are now.

So between 2012 and 2015, all during the time Jason Nixon was on the executive of AUSU, the wages of president will have more than doubled, based on the information we have.

But he thinks members should be concerned that *The Voice Magazine* is taking up too much of the AUSU budget. Perhaps he's worried that there won't be room for further raises to himself if the Voice is still paying students' money back to students and writers.

If you think that your Students' Union fees should go toward programs for you rather than pay-raises for the AUSU Executive, you need to contact ausu@ausu.org immediately and ask to come to the AGM and also ask to come to the unannounced public meeting afterward.

[Note: This article has been edited according to the demands of AUSU's legal counsel after an unknown party threatened AUSU and *The Voice Magazine* with some sort of "legal complaint". Details of this complaint have, as yet, never been disclosed to *The Voice Magazine*, despite multiple requests. It should be noted that none of the edits have changed the article in any substantive fashion.]

The Editors**An Interview with the History of The Voice****Marie Well**

A Students' Union general meeting for April 21st has entered the consciousness of much of The Voice Magazine staff and readership. In this meeting, the Students' Union will propose the replacement of The Voice Magazine with the ever-nebulous Writer In Residence.

To the dismay of many, Tamra Ross, former Editor in Chief of The Voice Magazine, says Athabasca University may be the only major university nationwide without a school newspaper.

To commemorate the value of The Voice Magazine on student culture, student writers, and the SU (as its own internal check and balance), I conducted interviews with three former editors of The Voice Magazine: Tamra Ross, Sandra Livingston, and Christina M. Frey.

**Part 1: Tamra Ross**

Marie Well: Tamra, you noted that Athabasca University may be the only major university nationwide without a school newspaper.

Tamra Ross: It would be pretty rare to find a school that doesn't have a school newspaper. What is unique, though, is that most school newspapers are independent. The SU has no control over it. We are one of very few, if not the only one, that's controlled by the Students' Union. Usually, what happens when students pay their fees is there are separate fees for the Students' Union and the students' newspaper. The two are not linked because the paper typically reports on the Students' Union. But all of The Voice's funds must go through AUSU first.

Marie Well: What about starting an independent paper?

Tamra: Unfortunately, if the paper is not going to be here, then it is kind of hard for anyone to plan anything because there is no paper to begin with. This is something that would have to be done with the assistance of AUSU Council setting aside staff time to help draw up plans to do it right. At this point, it depends on how people vote. If the paper remains, then maybe people want to see it move in that direction, in which case it is a matter of somebody drawing up a project plan, defining what the board would look like, and getting some students to work for it.

Marie Well: What role did you play with The Voice Magazine?

Tamra: Well, I was the Editor in Chief, so for the first five or six years, I was the sole editor of the paper. I did all of the editing tasks and the management tasks. It was just too much with my Executive Director role, so we hired a managing editor, the first of whom was Sandra Livingston, who has gone on to become a well-published author. Then we had Christina Frey, who has also moved on to become very successful as an editor, and Karl is the third managing editor. Once we got the managing editors in, they do the day-to-day tasks, but I would help

with planning, direction, budget setting, advertising the Voice to student members, and any of the website updates. I had hoped to write a new website for it soon. Things like that.

Marie Well: Were you at the inception of The Voice Magazine?

Tamra: No, in fact, the very first issue of the magazine started in the same year that the Students' Union started. There has always been a Voice. I think AUSU and The Voice are about 24 years old. For the first issue, they didn't know what to call it, so they published it as The Paper. Then they did a survey in the first issue. That issue is still online. It is interesting how it changed. It used to be a print magazine, but as AU grew, it just became too expensive. They were only sending it out three times a year, and mailing it to everyone, so they finally went online. Anyway, they had a contest, and by the second edition, they picked their name. It became The Voice. Spring 1993 was the very first issue, so by the time I became involved as a writer first, it would have been '99 or 2000.

Marie Well: How did you react to the proposed the ending of The Voice Magazine?

Tamra: I was very surprised because I never heard anything of that nature—just sad that might be the case because I think that student university newspapers are going strong. Every school seems to have one, and they seem to be doing very well. It is certainly not a thing of the past. I would be very surprised that someone would feel that way. It's also a loss of opportunity for all of the students who are trying to learn how to become writers. That would be a huge issue. I have no idea why they would do that. And, of course, it is such an important accountability tool. It is accountability to the students because the newspaper is one of the few places that actually reports on what the Students' Union is doing, and even when I was working there, sometimes something might get reported in The Voice that I didn't necessarily like, because they were reporting on me, but we always knew that was really important; they had to be able to do that. Just as when you are with the Students' Union, students have to be able to question you because you are working for the students. And you need a forum to do that.

Marie Well: What significance has The Voice Magazine had on student life at Athabasca?

Tamra: I think quite a bit. I think there were important issues that got raised in there, and sometimes just information. For example, I remember quite a few years ago when the grading scheme had changed across the university for undergraduates, one of The Voice writers wrote a comprehensive article describing how to figure out the new grading system, and a lot of students referred back to it, and it was posted on the AUSU website, with even the University said "This coverage is better than what we put out, and it is really useful to students," so they reprinted it in some of their publications. I know in the last year the University has reprinted at least one article from *The Voice* about good courses to for students just starting to consider. And sometimes it gets requests from other newspapers or magazines to reprint items, so that is fantastic when it happens.

It just informs students, to let them know what is going on. Usually every year, *The Voice* provides some convocation coverage. I think that's of great value for students deciding whether to make the trip all the way to Athabasca. Mostly, it's been providing a lot of great opportunity for new writers, and I know I worked with quite a few personally, and I won't mention people's names unless they post, but I know some people who had started out who had very little writing experience or were maybe even new to English. Most magazines will just reject their articles if they are not up to snuff. Because we are a student newspaper, we tried to pick a few people every year and work with them and really try to help them become better writers. There are people I see now who are really, really good writers. We really helped give them that opportunity to learn.

Marie Well: Why is the Voice meaningful to maintain for the students'union?

Tamra: Well, I think it is meaningful to maintain for the students. The Students' Union doesn't specifically need it, but it is meaningful for the students because they have to have that independent source that is going to be reporting to them, and they need to have more than a single writer, but a group of writers who work together and try to create great content, support each other, and get that experience. I think that's very important. A lot of people come to *The Voice* and ask questions about the articles, there are people from all over, students, but also people from other schools and other media who get information. As I said, we have had reporters from other papers inquire about stories we've printed, and they've contacted us to ask about them and get more information. It is a pretty well-read paper.

The readership has ups and downs, and had been slowing down in 2013 because it went through a period where there weren't a lot of writers. That happens; content drops off and the readers follow, of course, but I know our readership was generally at a couple thousand unique readers every month. So, while readership had been going down prior to 2014, I know under the time I was there with Karl, that had reversed course. There had been a substantial increase and I was excited to see that. Partly because we added social media and started promoting it through the AUSU newsletters as well. If you received any of the AUSU newsletters last year, there was always an ad for *The Voice* in there. Every time one of those newsletters went out, it seemed like two or three people wanted to write. Maybe that's where you found it, I don't know.

Marie Well: That is where I found The Voice, for sure!

Tamra: Exactly, so we had just some new strategies, and it had really been picking up. There was a lot of new interest being generated. It was exciting. And last I checked, there were double *The Voice* Writers than what we had a couple of years ago.

Marie Well: How has The Voice impacted you personally?

Tamra Ross: It has been great because I met people through *The Voice* that I worked with as writers. Some actually ended up becoming managing editors that I developed long-term friendships with and am still in touch with, every now-and-then, and I know how their careers are going. That is incredibly exciting. The previous two editors didn't leave *The Voice* because we asked them to leave or anything like that; they left because their careers in writing were going so well, they just didn't have time anymore, which I think is the absolute best reason to lose an editor. We were sad to see them go, but they are working in the field. I definitely miss the interaction with the writers. You never kind of knew what they were going to have because, unlike magazines where they might assign topics, with *The Voice*, we didn't know what someone might bring. Sometimes they would really surprise you with something very interesting.

Marie Well: What outcome would discontinuing The Voice have on student life?

Tamra Ross: I guess you'd really have to ask the students who like to read it, but I think that every time they lose an information source, that's unfortunate. Mostly though, it is that loss of an opportunity to write. Again, we don't even know what's happening right now. We are speculating on this. It sounds to me that a lot of opportunities are going to be lost. When they say, Writer in Residence, it sounds like one person to me. It doesn't sound like a team of writers. There are a lot of people who write for *The Voice* over the course of the year, or who are interested in writing for *The Voice*, and there are a lot of people who submit articles or intend to, but they don't have the time, but they are very interested. I think that's a loss, but it is so difficult discussing this, and I don't understand why we don't have any more information than we do.

Marie Well: What is the role of advertising in The Voice Magazine?

Tamra Ross: Well, up until a few years ago, we didn't have many ads. We had a few for a while and then it really petered out because some of the sources for ads are specific to print papers, so in the past it was difficult,

but that's been getting a lot better over recent years. I know that that was one thing highlighted a couple of years ago—that there hadn't been any advertising in The Voice—but The Voice was able to exist on the funding it had because it is virtual, so we don't have costs for printing or distribution. For that reason, advertising wasn't too important, but over the last year or two, I know there have been definitely more ads than there had been in the years before. It had been improving. That provides extra income so we can do something else, such as expand the Website or whatever.

Marie Well: What do you think are the steps from here?

Tamra: At the end of the day, the Students' Union works for the students, so if students want the newspaper, they just simply have to vote that way. It is as simple as that. This is a democratic organization, and presumably, this wouldn't be on the table unless students were asking for it, but I am not seeing anything to indicate that. That's really what it comes down to for anything related with the Students' Union. Because it is student funds; it is their organization as it is supposed to represent them. So, the students have to facilitate that by always speaking out and saying what they want. A lot of times people don't speak out very much about what it is that is important to them.

Marie Well: Do you have anything else you wanted to add?

Tamra Ross: I think there are a lot of other questions too. I mean what would happen with the 20 years of The Voice archives that are all online? I am very curious about that. That's a lot of good work people did. Is that going anywhere? I am curious as to how it is impacting the regular writers because some of the writers have been with us for years. They really rely on some income from The Voice. Some are newer like you, but that's the other thing too. It was a way to help out students. I mean, they give out scholarships at the Students' Union all the time, a thousand dollars a person, and nobody has to do anything for them. The Voice writing is at least where somebody is working for their support, and they are working and contributing to other students and they are getting some funding for it. I think that works out very nicely.

I'm also really glad that people are taking an interest in it and that you are talking about it.



Part 2: Sandra Livingston

Marie Well: Your Voice Magazine experience led to you publishing some books, is that right?

Sandra: Well, I sold my first novel to Avalon back in 2008. I learned a lot about the publishing industry very quickly, and I soon realized the benefits of self-publishing. Even though they had an option for a second book, I chose not to go that route. I self-published, and I have a middle grade mystery series. It is the Madeline M. Mystery Series. The first one is the Secret of the Mummy's Tomb, and the third one, which I've finished now, is Mystery of the Viking Ship. You can buy them on Amazon. My Website is sdlivingston.ca.

Marie Well: What role did you play with The Voice Magazine?

Sandra: I was the managing editor from 2007 to 2010.

Marie Well: What was your reaction to the news that the Students' Union proposed the ending of The Voice Magazine?

Sandra: Well, I was initially very surprised. But I would say confused described my reaction the best. To me, it sort of came out of the blue, and I was very confused as to why the Council had made the decision to put forth that motion. I was very confused with how they were defining a Writer in Residence, and how that role might differ from The Voice Magazine. I was very confused as to what possible benefit they were projecting from making this move, and why the students hadn't heard anything about it.

Marie Well: So you think the students weren't notified appropriately.

Sandra: No, and I think it would have been immensely helpful both to the students and to the Council to maybe put something in the AUSU page or in The Voice and say here is what we are thinking about doing. We are looking for student feedback. Maybe gather feedback from the students to see what they wanted and to see what suggestions they have to sort of solidify the Writer in Residence plan and give them some sort of feedback that would really polish that idea if the Council chose to go ahead with it.

Marie Well: In the bylaws, it says they have 21 days to notify students through a means such as a newsletter.

They sent out the newsletter April 14th, seven days before the meeting. So they weren't following the bylaws?

Sandra: The AUSU has their own page that is completely autonomous. They can put in whatever they choose. I was just confused as a student, more so than as a Voice writer. I just had no idea what Writer in Residence meant or what the perceived benefits were.

Marie Well: What significance has The Voice had on student life at Athabasca?

Sandra: I would have to say that a student magazine at a distance university is even more important than it is at a brick and mortar school, simply because Athabasca University's student demographic is so different. If you are walking around on campus, you can run into the editor, and you can ask questions or it is easier to find out what is happening with your student council if you are actually on the same physical location as they are. When you are at a distance, and they also have a different student demographic in the sense that most AU students are working, they have families, they have probably different schedule needs than say a student going to university full-time. They don't necessarily have the time in their schedules to phone into every single SU meeting.

To me, The Voice is very pivotal to the central location where AU's student demographic can go to that one-stop shop for the information about what is happening on our virtual campus.

Marie Well: Sandra, how has The Voice impacted you personally?

Sandra: That is a tougher one. I would have to say that it was a pivotal step in letting me take my writing career to the next level. I had had things published in local newspapers. I had had a few things published in *The Voice*. I had done the copy-editing course at Ryerson. When I got hired by The Voice, I would have to say that it really helped hone my writing and editing skills through editing other people's work and dialoguing with the writers. It was just after I started working for The Voice that, well, I started in 2007, and it was a few months later that I got the phone call from Avalon books that I sold my manuscript to. It was very exciting.

Marie Well: So, the Voice was instrumental in getting you to that stage where you were published?

Sandra: Yes! I would say so.

Marie Well: Sandra, what outcome would discontinuing The Voice have on student life?

Sandra: I think it would put even more distance between the students and Athabasca U.

Marie Well: Yes, it is difficult to get even student-to-student interaction.

Sandra: Students may not actively pursue getting involved. They may not contact the Students' Union. They may not attend meetings, simply because of schedule constraints. I think not having that information accessible to them to go in and catch up when they can, that makes distance university seem even further away for students.



Part 3: Christina Frey

Marie Well: Would you start off my disclosing a little bit about your editing services?

Christina: I work with mostly self-published and independent authors as well as some small independent presses. I do a full range of editing, depending on what a manuscript needs or what an author is looking for. I help them develop the story, I critique their books, and I also get into the nitty gritty—is a line sounding good, what are the slow points, is the rhythm off, and, of course, is the punctuation right or are there typos. I pretty much do the gamut.

Marie Well: What role did you play with The Voice Magazine?

Christina: I was the managing editor from the summer of 2010 until the autumn of 2013.

Marie Well: What was your reaction to the proposed the ending of The Voice Magazine?

Christina: I was actually pretty shocked, especially when I heard they were going to replace it with a Writer in Residence. In 2012 we had the 20th anniversary publication, and we did an introspective on *The Voice*'s history. I did some research for that—I was managing editor at the time—and it was very interesting to see how it was established to be the voice of the students. It was a way for students to be communicating with the Students' Union as opposed to a top-down publication. It was to give students a voice. So changing the nature of the magazine kind of eliminates the original purpose of *The Voice*.

Marie: What significance has The Voice Magazine had on student life at Athabasca?

Christina: Well, at the risk of sounding pretty trite, it has given them a voice. Not just a voice to air their grievances, although it has provided a safe place where they can talk about things like "I'm not okay with how this is going" either at Athabasca or in terms of the larger political situation—how it affects their studies, their ability to obtain loans, to obtain resources. And they are able to comment safely on the Students' Union.

But also, they have been able to flex their own writing muscles. It provides a place where students have an opportunity to publish, to learn to improve their writing skills. One of the things we actually did as editors, although of course we didn't accept everything that was given to us, was that we didn't just send a rejection, but we helped them try to improve. Sometimes an article went back and forth a few times; after that, they might eventually get published with us.

We had a little bit of an extra role that way that you don't often see in a regular magazine.

Marie: Students' Union posed the idea that a lot of the articles in The Voice have "absolutely nothing" to do with student life, Athabasca, or the Students' Union.

Christina: No, we don't specifically focus on studies because Athabasca students are not typical university students. They are from all walks of life. Many of them are professionals. Many of them are travellers. Many of them are working, studying at night, studying on the side. They have a very wide range of interests and experiences as opposed to a typical student at a typical brick and mortar university. Here you have a very wide net. I think *The Voice* reflects the diversity of the Students' Union membership.

Marie: How has The Voice impacted you personally?

Christina: Well, it definitely gave me a lot of good experience working with a wide variety of genres and writers. I got used to turning around professional queries fast. I actually wrote for *The Voice* a couple of years before I became the editor, and I am still writing for them.

Marie: What outcome would discontinuing The Voice have on student life?

Christina: I don't think they'd have that venue or location where they could safely talk about issues that affect them and also safely publish—or at least get their feet wet in the publishing world, which is also important.

Marie: Christina, do you have any last words you'd like to say about The Voice?

Christina: I would be really sad to see it go. It has been going for over 20 years and it is a little bit of a legacy at this point. It is a nice opportunity for students to have a place to give voice to their words. I do know a lot of people enjoy reading the articles. It'll be something people miss looking forward to on Friday afternoons.

Marie Well: How can we contact you for some of your editing services?

Christina: People can look at my website for more information: [Page Two Editing](http://www.pagetwoediting.com), www.pagetwoediting.com.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AUSU Student Forums

In the [General Student Chat](#) forum, user "ileibel" seeks help understanding the discussion forum assignment for ENGL 255.

AthaU Facebook Group

Karl (The Voice Editor) posts that *The Voice Magazine* may soon be disappearing.

JoAnne challenges group members to post one concern in 20 words or fewer. A different Karl wonders why AU is still using paper exams. Carrie wants to know if she can write an exam before submitting all the course assignments.

Other postings include renting grad gowns, course companion study guides, BsArch, and courses EDUC 406, ENGL 255, LGST 553, NUTR 331, PSYC 375, and SOCI 305.

Twitter

@AthabascaUSU tweets: "We want to know what you think! Please get in touch with us to share your thoughts on The Voice and anything you feel is important!"



The Writer's Toolbox

Write On



Christina M. Frey

There's a chance this may be the final issue of *The Voice Magazine*—the final in a run that's lasted more than two decades and that has given readers a wonderful glimpse into the lives and interests of their fellow students. A run, too, that's helped launch the careers of several former *Voice* writers, and has allowed countless other writers to hone their writing skills, tackle different genres and topics, and get the confidence they need to move forward and onward with their writing.

During my time as managing editor of the *Voice* and now here in this column, I've offered advice to both new and experienced writers on improving tone, style, grammar, and punctuation—and on finding and strengthening their own unique voice. I'll continue doing this through my editorial business, and I hope the *Voice* will be preserved and I'll be able to continue to do it here.

But if this is the last time we break out the Toolbox—at least in this medium—it's time to bring in the one tool that surpasses all others.

What bit of advice is more important than anything else an English professor, editor, or fellow writer will tell you?

Write.

It really is that simple.

Write every day. Write different things. Write responses, descriptions, snippets of dialogue you hear. Write impressions—whether external or internal. Write down your thoughts. Write down your fears. When inspiration hits, grab your pen or your laptop or your phone's notes app and get it written down.

But don't limit yourself to the good times. Part of what will most help you improve as a writer is learning to stretch your muscles and move outside your comfort zone. In fact, it's when inspiration is the furthest thing in the world that writing is most important.

When you're feeling uninspired, write your way through it. There is another side, and you can bridge the gap.

When you're trying something new and you don't think you're very good at it, write your way through it. Next time it won't be so new. By the tenth time, you might even feel comfortable.

When you know what you've written is terrible, clunky, and boring, write your way through it. Revise it later, or not. Consider it a workout, not a competition.

When you get disappointing feedback on your writing, write your way through that too, even though you want to give up. Making mistakes and learning from them is part of the writing process.

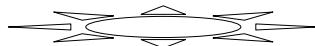
Write, and learn. Seek feedback. Study books, writing, style. But remember: it's only through writing, and evaluating that writing, that you'll move toward becoming the writer you truly can be.

Write early. Write often.

Write on.

If you'd like to get in touch with me in the future, email me at editor@pagetwoediting.com or visit my website, www.pagetwoediting.com. I'm also on Twitter @turntopage2.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).



In Conversation ..with Tumbleweed Wanderers



Wanda Waterman

*Tumbleweed Wanderers deliver an original incarnation of soulful folk rock from the San Francisco Bay area. Starting out as buskers, their career was accelerated by their own creativity and artistic discipline, and they soon found themselves a popular stage presence at clubs and festivals. Their soon-to-be-released album, *Realize*, is a rich, multilayered tapestry of the same kind of rootsy themes, masterful strings, and the beautifully blended vocal harmonies for which the band is known, with a delightful psychedelic dimension. Recently band members Jeremy and Rob Fidel took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about childhood, busking, and the creative ambience of San Francisco.*

Describe your early years.

JEREMY: I had a happy childhood. I liked school, and played guitar and soccer. My parents split up when I was seven; my mom remarried, and pretty soon I had two step-siblings and a half-brother, while I stayed an only child on my dad's side. It was nice to have both the only child experience and the experience of being a middle child in a big family.

I was lucky to go to a good high school where I had a tightknit group of friends and meaningful relationships. But then I got to college and it was the first time I didn't like school and found it difficult to navigate socially. I got into the open-mic scene and really wanted to see the world through playing music, so I left and started Tumbleweed Wanderers.

Was there anything in your childhood that pointed you toward the kind of music you create today?

ROB: Musically speaking, my parents' tastes had a huge influence on me. They introduced me to music like Pink Floyd and Paul Simon and turned me on to all kinds of classic rock. I didn't really listen to anything contemporary until high school and college.

Does being in the San Francisco Bay Area make you better musicians and songwriters?

JEREMY: I don't think so. We're lucky to live in an area that has a rich musical history, a lot of touring acts coming through town, and a lot of great musicians and bands making interesting music, so there's always source for inspiration, but I don't think that makes me a better musician or songwriter.

San Francisco isn't a music city like Los Angeles, New York, Nashville, New Orleans, or Austin. It's not as cutthroat, which I think is helpful for building a local following and not feeling the need to fit into a scene, but not as helpful in challenging you to step your game up as a musician or songwriter, or for finding regular local gigs.

Do you see your music fitting neatly into any musical subgenres like "alt country?"

ROB: People often think we are a country band before they listen to the music just because of our name. Our music does have some Americana qualities to it, but I don't think we fit into the alt country genre.

What role did busking play in your creative development?

JEREMY: We started out as much more of a folk band, where most of our songs worked in an acoustic arrangement so we could play them when we busked. In fact, many of our songs were arranged primarily with acoustic instruments.

When you're busking unamplified you have a high noise floor to compete with in the city, so you end up strumming the shit out of your instrument and singing constantly in three-part harmony at the top of your lungs. That influenced our writing and arranging a lot in our early days.

We played mostly upbeat songs with melodies high in our register. Once we started busking less, we slowed things down a little and played more dynamically. We relaxed our verses and left more room to choose our moments with our melodies.

If you had an artistic mission statement, what would it be?

JEREMY: Be a positive force, create a world for the self and the listener, and make the best music you can.

(to be continued?)

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

Athabasca E-Book Pilot Project

Philip Kirkbride



PDF was if the text was searchable and highlight-able. Having used the Athabasca online library I was annoyed with some of the PDF files which are simply photos of pages with no text data. As it turns out all the text within the e-book is both searchable and highlight-able.

For the first two months I found myself most often using the physical text-book. It's not because I think physical text-books are better, but simply out of habit. Though the physical text-book certainly had its advantages. One of those advantages being the simplicity of opening the book to your book-mark with no need for technical issues.

About two months into the course I ended up replacing my tablet for a new improved Samsung tablet. Like any techie with a new toy, I proceeded to use it as much as possible. Being in Australia at the time, I often found myself reading while sitting in a hammock with my tablet. The slim tablet was much more comfortable in the hammock, as well as several other situations, so I found the amount of time I spent reading was increasing.

While a large textbook is nice for diagrams and pictures, it ends up being impractical to carry around at all times. An 8-inch tablet, on the other hand, is easy to carry around and can be used for multiple purposes. If I found myself with some time to kill I could just take out the tablet and read a chapter.

As mentioned previously, all the text within the e-book is both highlight-able and searchable. In the past I often found myself searching page after page for something I'd read. On the tablet I could just do a search for a phrase and find the page in seconds. Then, once I found the reference, I could then easily copy and paste if I wanted to quote it. I used Dropbox to sync my essays between my tablet and computer so any changes would update across both.

Within a few weeks of starting to use my tablet my physical text-book was beginning to gather dust. Being in Australia at the time, I found myself making the tough decision of donating my bulky text-book to a hostel bookshelf in Cairns, Australia.

So should Athabsaca University embrace e-books? I love receiving my physical books in the mail with each new AU class. So if making e-books available isn't introduced as just a way for the university to cut costs on physical books I'm all for it. There are so many things you can do with e-books that aren't possible with traditional text.

Philip Kirkbride is an AU Student with a penchant for travelling the globe while doing his AU courses.

The Travelling Student Landing In Sydney

Philip Kirkbride



My name is Philip Kirkbride. I'm a college graduate from Ontario studying at AU. I've always wanted to do an exchange program or study abroad but never found the right time to do so. This is the story of how Athabasca University has allowed me to create my own study abroad program. In the last issue Matt and I enjoyed our last days in Hawaii biking e-cycling around Oahu.

The flight from Honolulu to Sydney was about ten hours. I had a good meal before the flight and took a few sleeping pills when we took off. After a ten-hour sleep interrupted only for a quick snack, we landed fully recharged. Well, at least I was recharged. Matt was extremely exhausted and jet lagged. But going through immigration was a breeze—it turns out it's easier for a

Canadian to go to Australia for a year than it is to go to Honolulu for a week.

After a \$17 subway ride from the airport we arrived in King's Cross, part of Sydney. I'd chosen a hostel in the King's Cross area called the Blue Parrot because of the good ratings on TripAdvisor. And, as it turns out, I wasn't the only backpacker who chose to start in King's Cross. Walking out of the subway station you're immediately approached by travel guides trying to 'help' you (aka sell you accommodation, tours, and travel).

As is often the case when landing in a new country, the first thing we needed was a Wifi connection. Following in the steps of many travelers before us we immediately saw McDonalds (or "Maccas" as the Australians call it) and headed there, mobile phones in hand. In another completely original decision we both bought the Australian themed McMate Meal.

After loading Google Maps, the hostel was only a few minutes away. The owners of the hostel were very friendly and soon had us checked in. In the living room about a dozen British travellers were watching a movie. It seemed at first that most of the house was British but, as it turns out, all the French guests were, stereotypically, in the backyard smoking cigarettes.

While there was lots of stuff I wanted to do in Sydney, we had a plan for our trip. We needed to purchase a vehicle and drive to the cherry farm Matt had worked at four years earlier. There we'd be able to start earning some money and lower our living expenses. The first step was figuring out the laws and process of buying a used car in Australia.

King's Cross is packed with bars, cafes, and nightclubs. So it wasn't hard to find a café where I could use my laptop. Yet when I ordered a coffee I got a bit of a funny look.

"What kind of coffee do you want?" the barista responded.

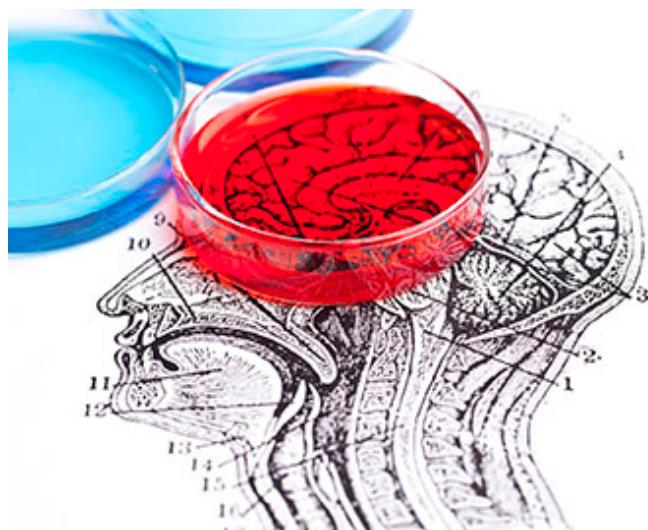
"Just a regular coffee," I insisted.

As it turns out what we consider 'regular coffee' here in North America doesn't really exist in Australia (though you can get it at an Australian Starbucks). In Australia coffee refers to espresso-based drinks, and the closest thing you can get to an American coffee is a long black (espresso with hot water).

Now comfortable and with coffee in hand I started reading through the process of registering a vehicle. Matt back at the hostel was searching through used cars online. With a little luck we'd have a car bought, registered, and on the road in no time. Half way across the world, looking for work and a car, concentrating on my AU course wasn't a big priority.



Primal Numbers Human Satnav



S.D. Livingston

Forget about self-driving cars. How about satnav-guided people? In the latest melding of human and machine, German scientists have developed a way to use electrodes on people's legs to guide them to their destination. The idea might have some practical uses, but it could also steer things in the wrong direction.

The technology itself is fairly simple. As *The Telegraph* [explains](#), electrodes strapped to a user's leg would use a small electrical pulse "to stimulate the sartorius muscle, which runs from the inside of the knee to the top of the outer thigh." The pulse is faint enough that a user can choose to ignore it, but strong enough to act as a

guide that directs a leg in the desired direction.

When the electrodes are paired with an app, they could direct the user to a specific route or destination. Say, guiding a tourist around certain parts of a city or steering "long distance runners via different jogging trails on different days for increased variety and enjoyment."

It's easy to see how that could be useful. Instead of constantly looking down to check a map or directions on their smartphone, tourists or runners could simply follow the gentle pulse that guides them along their route.

But what about some of the other suggested uses for the human satnav system—things like crowd control or guiding firefighters through burning buildings? That's where the idea strays from the path of common sense.

Take the scenario of guiding firefighters through buildings. It's impossible to map the interior of every private home and load it into a database, so let's assume the technology would be used for public buildings. Perhaps a museum or government office. An alarm goes out, firefighters put on their electrodes, and off they race to a burning, smoke-filled building.

In a dangerous environment where seconds count, a lot of factors can affect the result. Using human satnav would bring another factor into that mix: the database that holds a map of the building. If it's not current, updated every time a room or section is closed for repair or renovation, those pulses could be guiding firefighters

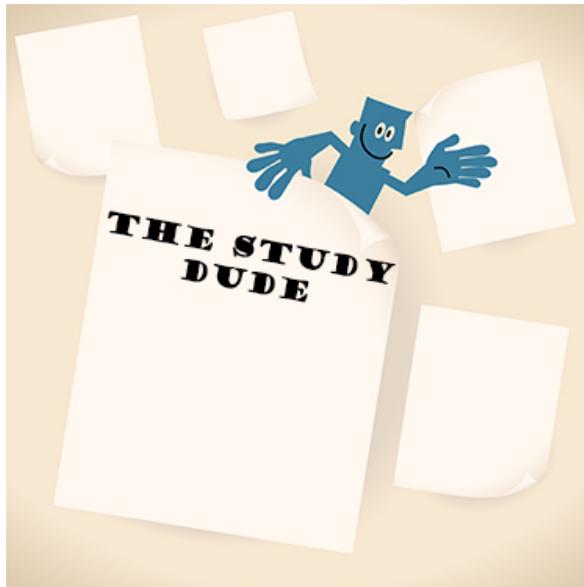
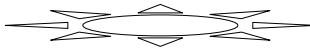
down a blind alley. It's the kind of thing where one small administrative error could put lives at even greater risk.

Then there's the idea of using human satnav for crowd control. For starters, it would only work if every single person (or the vast majority) at the stadium or outdoor venue was wearing their electrodes. And a lot would depend on compliance, too. When things get out of control in a crowd, whether it's a hockey riot or natural disaster, it can be sheer bedlam.

For the satnav system to work, everyone would have to stay calm enough among the pushing, shoving, and general mayhem to focus on following the gentle pulse that's guiding them to the exit. Assuming, of course, that the exits are still functional and the crowd isn't scrambling to find an alternative route from the one their electrodes are steering them toward.

Like every other invention, human satnav has its pros and cons. Out for a leisurely run or marvelling at the sights in Rome? Those friendly electrodes could be handy. Controlling large crowds or navigating a burning building? If I told you human satnav was a good idea I'd just be pulling your leg.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to publish in Scientific America--gain endorsements, appear on Oprah, and write for NASA.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

This week's focus is on a book surely to transform you from a science nerd to a published science author: [Writing Science](#) by Joshua Schimel.

Select From a Myriad of Story Structures for Your Paper's Purpose

Do you love movies? Well, I suffer through many. The violence, the sarcasm, the immorality of most flicks drains me, and the tension leaves me unsettled. I would rather read a non-fiction book—hands down—than watch a film any day. Anything from books on programming to books on writing fascinate me ten times more than any flick. In fact, the only things I love more than reading, in terms of activities, are Muay Thai, cycling, weightlifting—and writing for The Voice.

Funnily, even books, magazines—and academic articles—follow story structures when done well. Yet, how can a publishable article follow a story structure when hard-core science is the foundation? Joshua Schimel not only outlines a variety of story structures for science writing, but also explains when and where to use them:

- One story structure for your science writing pertains to the OCAR model, which stands for opening, challenge, action, followed by resolution. The OCAR model dominates the structures for science writing. In the opening (where "O" stands for "opening"), the characters and scene are introduced in relation to the large problem. These characters can be anything from a cell to a math theorem. The challenge (where "C" stands for "challenge") involves the research question that needs to be answered. With respect to the movie, it is like the challenge to the central character's goal. Then the action (where "A" stands for "action") includes the steps taken to address the challenge. The resolution (where "R" stands for "resolution", finally, provides a conclusion that demonstrates how the key character changed or how the question posed in the challenge was answered. Journals often use the OCAR structure.
- The ABDCE story structure commonly appears in scientific proposals and fiction. ABDCE begins with "A" (action)—the first big action that changes the course of the story. In the movies, this parallels the first event that throws the character out of his or her routine. The "B" stands for background, which develops some of the back-story behind the character and his or her (or its) dilemma. The "D" stands for development, which includes all of the events and obstacles that surmount toward the climax. The "C" stands for climax—the point when all the sub-stories combine into one big dramatic challenge. Finally, the "E" stands for ending, which is where the conclusion—or post climax scenario—is posed. The character here, like in the OCAR model, undergoes a significant change, and the introductory challenge or question is answered in the resolution.
- The LD structure is commonly used by newspaper reporters. The "L" is the lead which encapsulates the gist of the story in a single sentence. The story development ("D" for development) ensues thereafter. Usually, readers peruse only the lead. LD typically does not appear in academic writing of any sort.
- The last story structure is LDR—similar to LD, but with a resolution or a concluding sentence. LDR is used in magazines or generalist journal—and often proposals—where the readership is enticed to read more than just the lead so as to gain exposure to many of the paid advertisements.

What Funders and Reviewers Watch For in Your Opening Sentences

When I took a scriptwriting course, I learned that the three-act structure required an introduction that showed the character in his or her normal environment suddenly shaken up by some major obstacle or challenge to his or her goal. After the opening, the character rides a rollercoaster of obstacle followed by obstacle, each gaining in potency and momentum—swallowing the character until some climactic stage when everything the character hopes for threatens to crumble.

Does that sound like a science abstract to you? Can you fathom reading about the roller coaster that microbial organisms undergo when their itty bitty DNAs are restructured for more fruitful respiration? What about the crisis of identity that the tomato experiences when converted into a healthier, but purple, mass?

So, how exactly does character and character crisis structure tie into science writing? Is character development in hard-core science even realistic? Joshua Schimel shows how story elements, such as character and the challenge, are essential to opening sentences in science writing:

- The opening engrosses when it "foreshadow[s] the challenge and even the conclusion" (p. 35).
- The opening consists of anything from a sentence to entire paragraphs.

- The first sentence needs to introduce the main character, provide context and direction on what the story is about, and lead to the problem by framing it. .
- Don't start with some basic piece of common knowledge. Introduce your character and frame the problem that poses as a gap to common knowledge.
- Start your opening with a widely held issue that a great number of people can relate with, and then narrow it down to your specific issue. This wide opening should counterbalance with the wideness of the conclusion. So, if you start talking about climate change's impact on microbes in the oil sands, and then narrow down to a certain type of microbe, be sure your conclusion encapsulates the wider issue of climate change's impact on overall microbes. Be sure that the problem encapsulates all microbes if going to that level of generality. Credibility is essential, and the more people that identify with your topic, the more citations—and the more credibility—you gain.

Every Paper, Every Thesis—Like Every Violent Cartoon—Needs a Challenge

Everyone has a problem. Me included. The greater our problems, the more interesting we become. Just look at Yahoo! News for how people's personal problems reap readership. The same goes for the movies: the main characters problems create tension, and everyone but me loves tension. Even the Bible is filled with tension. Once I read a neophyte author's writings that focused on exclusively spiritual matters—a book that went against the grain—and I swooned over the material. In fact, as kid, I loathed cartoons for their violence, and only delighted in the purely positive, consistently smiling, always loving—albeit rare—characters that emerged from the upbeat cartoon abyss.

Yet, this world is the Earth, and it is riddled with issues from crime to starvation to injustice. While I'd like to shroud my eyes from the realities of the world and of what sells, science writing, too, needs challenges.

Joshua Shimel shows the essentials of forging your science writing with a challenge:

- After the opening, in the OCAR model, you typically follow with the challenge. The challenge can include either the question you wish to pose only or the question, the hypothesis, and the objectives altogether.
- Sometimes science needs not contain a hypothesis if the question is poignant enough—one with clearly defines the knowledge gap. Whether you should present a question or change it up into a hypothesis depends on your particular field of science.
- Don't present the objectives without defining the question. The challenge is what drives the story structure and is what makes the story compelling, so make sure it is present. You can always couch the challenge in a statement rather than a question through careful rewording.
- When listing your research objectives, ensure that the most important objective is listed first. This provides clarity and direction for the reader wanting to know the paper's key goal.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Schimel, Joshua. (2012). *Writing Science*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Make Sure Your Voice is Heard!

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Time is running out! AUSU's Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, at 5:30 MST. Have you registered yet? If not, drop everything—yes, even this magazine—and e-mail ausu@ausu.org to register. Make sure your voice is heard.

AUSU's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is your opportunity to hear what student council has been doing on your behalf for the past year. The AUSU 2015 Annual Report will be formally presented at the meeting. This report includes highlights of student union activity over the past year, as well as the audited financial statements. Since AUSU is

funded with your money, this is your chance to learn how it's being spent.

The AGM is also your opportunity to make your voice heard. Unlike the monthly regular council meetings, in which student members may listen but not speak, all members have the right to make their voice heard at the AGM. Members also have the right to vote on any motion presented at the AGM.

This year, there are two motions on the meeting notice which are of special interest—they're even *called* special. One "Special Resolution Motion" proposes replacing "Section 7.5 with Writer in Residence." Although AUSU council has not provided any information on this motion, it appears to propose that *The Voice Magazine* get permanently silenced. The second "Special Resolution Motion" proposes a clarification on "Membership Standing." Again, council is holding its cards close to its chest on this one. (**Update:** since time of writing, AUSU council agreed to send out information on these two special resolutions, but only to students who have registered to attend the AGM.)

In past years, few students have bothered to attend the AGM, which creates a troubling situation. Having only a few students in attendance effectively gives AUSU councillors the majority vote on any resolution. No elected body should have the ability to rubber-stamp their own decisions. As an AU undergraduate student, your presence is required to provide necessary oversight to council's actions.

Attending the AGM is important. It's also easy and convenient. If you're an AU student registered in at least one undergraduate course, you qualify as a member of AUSU. Registering for the meeting is simple: send an e-mail to ausu@ausu.org to let them know you'd like to attend; include your full name and AU student number in the e-mail. AUSU will e-mail you instructions on how to connect to the meeting. The meeting is held by teleconference: you simply phone in using the toll-free number and passcode provided by AUSU. (You can also connect online if you have speakers and a microphone on your computer.) Don't forget to factor in any time-zone difference.

Attending the AUSU AGM won't take up much of your time: the 2013 and 2014 AGMs were 45 and 30 minutes, respectively. That's not much time to invest to make sure AUSU council is indeed looking after your interests.

If you won't speak for yourself at the AGM, who will? Don't let your voice be silenced.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario,

Music Review**Child of Fire****Samantha Stevens****Album:** *Child of Fire***Band:** Sky White Tiger

I grew up with the sounds of Moby, Love Inc., and Radiohead. The one thing that I loved about these artists was the surreal combination between the moody electronic effects and unearthly singing. Even to this day, when I need music to spark a creative idea, listen to while exercising, or soothe my anxious mind, I will listen to this type of music.

Created by Louis Schwadron, formerly of Polyphonic Spree, Sky White Tiger is the musician's Psych-Pop alter ego. Sky White Tiger has written, recorded, and performed with well-known artists like David Bowie, Elton John, The National, and even Radiohead. *Child of Fire* is Sky White Tiger's second EP, released this past February, and is available on iTunes.

When I saw Sky White Tiger's impressive musical history and his association with some of my favourites I was overjoyed to listen to such a prestigious performer. With tones and melodies that remind me of Imagine Dragons, Coldplay, Porter Robinson, and Moby, the songs on *Child of Fire* rise above the Electro-Pop of today to create something that is celestial, transcendental, and leading the genre into a bright and melodious future.

In truth I have a hard time picking a favourite song on this album. Each track has something to offer, whether it is soulful vocals, pulsating rhythms, or pacifying bass. If listened to loudly or through headphones (which is something that I love to do with music this complex) the exploration of the layers upon layers of sounds in each track gives me the same feeling that I have when I marvel at the night sky on a perfectly clear night; when you can make out the intricacies of the Milky Way and each star joyfully revels in its own existence. It is hard to explain what is it about Sky White Tiger's melodies that make me feel this way, but some performers seem to have an ability to capture and create overwhelming emotions and sensations in their music.

The title track "Child of Fire" has superb 80s inspired tones that are sure to stir some hearts. On the other hand, "Common" showcases modern Pop genre elements that many are familiar with and enhances the elements with a unique flair.

"Don't Matter Much" uses the melodramatic sound of the piano to enhance the feelings of sorrow and deep reflection, which is why Sky White Tiger reminds me so much of Coldplay. The piano in "Heartbeat" is at the other end of the spectrum, using higher notes and a faster pace to create an exhilarating atmosphere that draws the listener in and leaving them surprised with the melancholy vocals.

"I Might Be Wrong" uses digitized vocals, something that I sometimes feel can be overdone. However, Sky White Tiger combines them with regular singing and a couple of unexpected instruments to create a song that is unique

and without compare. This track is a wonderful example of Sky White Tiger's diversity and willingness to experiment with various musical aspects.

The final track, "4eva", reminds me of Radiohead's song "Just"—but with a fantastical twist. The harmonies are very much inspired by Radiohead, but the inclusion of a dominant electronic track lends that song a robustness that is all its own.

At the conclusion of the EP, I found myself longing for more and wishing that the EP was much longer than current the seven tracks. With music this diverse I will definitely be listening to the album at any time, whether I am studying or relaxing.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.

The Mindful Bard Coming Forth By Day



Wanda Waterman

"**Forever Rising, Forever Breaking My Heart**"

Album: *Coming Forth by Day*

Artist: Cassandra Wilson

"They would not let me sing,

But now we're all alone, facing the west."

- Cassandra Wilson, from "Last Song (for Lester)"

On April 7, the hundredth anniversary of Billie Holiday's birth, the husky-throated Cassandra Wilson released an album that pays Billie a singular honour: it manifests as authentic and original a delivery of Billie's songbook as did Billie herself. This means, of course, that it sounds nothing like Billie Holiday.

The original interpretations are only one side of the story.

Wilson has also distilled her finest gifts in her reimagining of the backstories of these songs. Her intellectual sophistication laid the groundwork, but we must not make the mistake of thinking that this artistic excellence just happens; a scan of Wilson's biography shows that it took many years of vocal training and experimentation to achieve the vocal mastery enabling her to achieve such interpretative power.

Cassandra's microphone has been informed by decades of solidarity, emancipation, self-examination, and relational awareness. Billie's pain was purer because of the innocence of the women of her era, who were every bit as strong as women today, but who had inherited a totally different set of rules. For Wilson to address these songs from this bygone state of affairs today would have been artistically dishonest, and the result would have been as artificial as the many failed attempts to recapture Billie's blues.

For example, in "Don't Explain" a woman warns her returning lover not to bother making excuses for his lateness and the lipstick on his collar. In Wilson's version it's the woman who's decided to return to her lover and to forgive and forget whatever he may have done in her absence (*You know that I love you, and what love endures*).

In Wilson's version the focus is on an empowered refusal to accept lies rather than on the woman's helplessness in the face of her consuming love. She's not forgiving him; she's excusing him for now, refusing to engage in pointless conflict. Such relationships are, of course, doomed, and all that remains of them is moments of authenticity like this one, the infidelity framing the beauty of the love it betrays. She shows the beauty and purity of the love that exists within even dysfunctional relationships, revealing that there's nothing so hard the heart can't survive it and grow stronger and wiser, eventually leaving the dysfunction in the dust.

The legendary "Strange Fruit," a song that describes in chillingly vivid poetry one of many lynchings that took place in the mid-century south, is all the more heart wrenching in this album that pays tribute to the hearts of black lovers, their tenderness couched in centuries of deep hurt.

"Billie's Blues" sings the bravado of a girl destined to get the dirty end of the stick but who responds with a defiant blues yell, proclaiming her supremacy in a world that despises her. In this version we hear nightmare sounds and psychedelic backwards recordings that create a surreal dreamscape. The same musical ambience continues in "Crazy," a song usually presented as a lighthearted ditty, but, here, can be seen as a covert protest against mental abuse.

When Wilson found her groove she began releasing masterfully created albums, and we grew to expect this of her. This kind of album loses when you take it apart and regard all the songs separately, but together they make a phenomenal statement. Wilson's stroke of genius with this one was to tie it all together by writing a song from the point of view of Billie, grieving the loss of her lover, friend, and musical collaborator, the tenor sax player Lester Young.

Jazz pal Jack Malmstrom once showed me a Youtube video (just type "Fine and Mellow Billie Holiday" into a Youtube search) in which Billie sings with a group of jazz greats, including Lester Young. He drew my attention to the rapport Bille has with Lester, evident not only in how they feed off each other's sounds but also in her loving gazes in his direction when his sax answers her song's call (check her out around 2:20).

Billie was heartbroken when Lester's family refused to allow her to sing at his funeral, and after remarking that she'd be next, she died four months later. Wilson's "Last Song (for Lester)" manifests a transcendent dimension in which Lester and Billie are both together and at peace at last:

"You are my morning star
Forever rising, forever breaking my heart
But I'd do it — I'd do it all again
If they would let me sing the last song for you."

Coming Forth by Day manifests seven of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It makes me want to be a better artist.
- It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

A Writer's Education

Deanna Roney



Going to school to write, if you believe what is readily available on social media, is a complete and utter waste of time and resources. As I have been working through my courses I have found it comforting to find that a majority of the authors I am studying went to school to write, or became a writer after school. Nevertheless school seemed to be an important step in the writing process.

It is true you are not required to have a degree to write, and you could simply pick up all the classics and read them at your leisure. But no matter what some authors, or other students, say, education for writing is invaluable. Going to school to write can make the

difference between submitting works to contests and winning or not getting anywhere, or just daydreaming about *one day* writing a book, and making that *one day* a reality.

Actively working toward your dream will make that day much closer. Working with professors and other students will improve your writing drastically. It can make all the difference between wishing to get paid for your writing and actually getting paid for your writing. For myself, I have found that going to school with the dream of writing was not a waste of my time or resources. I still have a long way to go before completing my degree, but what I have learned has shaped who I want to be, and what I want to write.

I recently read an interview of writer Elizabeth Gilbert author of *Eat, Pray, Love*, where she discusses that "a degree in writing is not what makes you a writer. And writing every day is absolutely free." (Berthelette, 2015) Gilbert also advises never to go into debt for your craft; that you should never hope to make a living at writing. It seems as though it has become a trend to criticize people who want to go to school to become a writer. Education for the sake of education is no longer an accepted ideology. And education for the sake of art? That's even less accepted.

I find it irksome that people feel it is their responsibility to tell aspiring writers to not risk student loans or hope to make a living doing what you love. It is condescending to those that go to school when you suggest that, "if you can afford schooling and feel like you need it, go ahead." (ibid) Gilbert seems to be suggesting that a true artist, a true writer, does not need school.

A writer who goes to school is no less an artist than a writer who does not. They are simply artists who have taken different paths. Gilbert cites a young woman who has enrolled into a University at the cost of \$200,000. Granted, this is a significant amount of money. However, I do not think it accurately reflects the entire story. There are graduate schools that are a fraction of the cost, and this number leads me to believe that she is misquoting or leaving some information out.

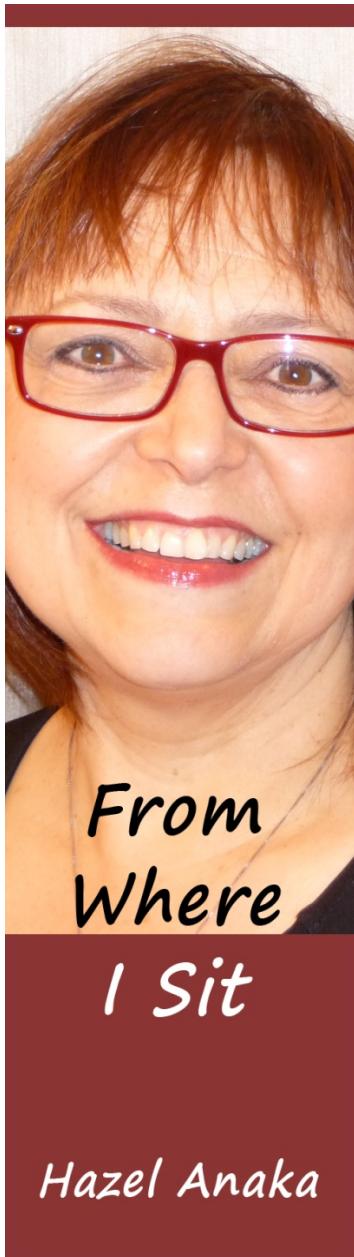
Education for the sake of education. Education for the sake of bettering yourself, and working towards your dreams. To me, this is *the* reason to go to university, there is no better motivation to complete your schooling than because it will lead you closer to the realization of your dream. I am just over half way through my undergrad degree, and already doors have opened for me, what will I see when I am finished my degree? While education does not come cheap, why would you not want to invest in yourself?

References

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Retrieved from Writers Relief: www.lucberthelette.com

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature.



Can't Let It Happen

As I write this I've just returned from dinner at my mom's. It was Easter Sunday as celebrated by Orthodox Ukrainians. My day began very early. I was up at 5:30 to get to church by 6:30 for the culmination of the Easter services and the annual blessing of the baskets. It has been a long time since I attended this church service so it was both exciting and a bit intimidating. I had to search my memory to recall what was required of this tradition. I couldn't find my larger, sturdier basket so had to improvise with an inferior one.

I spent part of Friday at my mom's making a batch of special Easter bread called *paska*. This bread is braided, has a cross design on the top, and is the centerpiece of the basket. Alongside it is another sweet dough bread with raisins called *babka* that is cylindrical in shape.

Also included in the basket are boiled eggs and decorated Easter eggs called *pysanky*. As I chose a couple of the decorative ones I realized it was time to buy some new ones. Over time the dye colours fade and the varnish yellows. I picked the best of what I had.

A chunk of ham, some sausage, some cheese, a few stalks of green onions, and butter are also part of the feast. A fancy linen or embroidered cloth lines the basket with another cross-stitched one to cover the contents. Strawberries, chocolate, and other goodies are a sweet treat. The priest advised that anyone lucky enough to have a chocolate bunny in their basket should eat the ears first so he can't hear you coming for the rest of him! I was not the only one to add a pussy willow branch as a decorative element. A lit candle is inserted into the *paska* before the priest comes by to sprinkle us and our baskets with holy water.

The church service involves the congregation walking around the church three times following a cross bearer and priest. The priest then performs part of the service at the exterior of the church doors. The symbolism to the tomb is clear. It is only through Christ's death that the doors of heaven are open to the faithful.

For those who have been fasting getting home to eat this blessed food with your loved ones is a huge treat.

Today was another opportunity to gather as a family to share good food and to build traditions and memories. The three great grandchildren had a ball playing. The cousins who could attend swapped parenting stories. Kade cried and didn't sleep. The men watched the Masters Golf Tournament.

As I work coordinating a Ukrainian festival I encounter some people who are zealous in their mission to preserve our culture. Better late than never, I am aiming to do the same for my benefit as well as my kids and grandkids. If I don't, some of our culture and customs will leach away because of apathy and neglect. I can't let that happen, from where I sit.

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



*Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin*

Defeating the Drama

Dear Barb:

I can't believe my sister did it again! She ruins every special occasion and she just ruined Easter! She is so self centered that if all the attention is not on her she makes a big fuss. I feel sorry for my parents as they try to accommodate everyone. I have two other siblings and we all have children, except this sister. She is even jealous of the attention my parent's show to their grandchildren. On Easter Sunday my brother-in-law began playing the piano and singing, so we all attempted to join in and sing along, at this point Carol begins singing out of tune and mocking my brother-in-law's singing. Of course the kids all start laughing, because that's what kids do. We try to point out to them that it is not right to make fun of people. Then Carol has a meltdown and says we are ruining the kid's fun, and the kid's side with her and it ends up becoming a big issue. My parents try to calm everybody, but Carol ends up leaving or sitting in another room and refuses to come to dinner. I have told my parents not to invite Carol, but they said she is family and we should all try to accommodate her. Do you have any suggestions on how we could prevent this from happening so we could enjoy our times together as a family?

Miranda.

Hi Miranda:

It seems most families have at least one person whom we'll call a "drama queen" who wants, or needs all the attention. I agree with your parents to a point; however I don't believe everyone has to accommodate your sister. In order for there to be a blow up, your sister has to provoke a certain reaction from you and your siblings. I assume your sister has always been prone to the dramatics and through the years has obviously gotten the reaction she needed from others. You and your siblings are probably not as tolerant of her behaviour as you were previously, since you've put some distance between each other, and therefore react more negatively to the drama. As family members you all have a choice as to how you are going to react to this behaviour. When she attempts to create a scene, ignore the conduct and move on to something else. For example, if she begins to mock your brother-in-law's singing he could stop and calmly state that he will continue at a more appropriate time. Thus when your sister doesn't get the reaction she craves she may stop the attention seeking behaviour. I know it is difficult to do, as you will have to grit your teeth and turn the other cheek, but I'm sure you and your siblings can do this for your parent's sake. Don't forget, you are modeling this behaviour for your children, so if you don't want all the drama to be carried forth to the next generation make sure it stops now!

Email your questions to 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.

Comic

Wanda Waterman





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AUSU's AGM & April Council Meeting

AUSU will be holding this year's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 at 5:30pm MST.

The AGM is a great opportunity to attend an AUSU council meeting, take part in discussions, and vote on agenda items. The AUSU Annual Report is also presented at the AGM which reviews some of the projects that AUSU Council has completed over the past year and provides financial information for the last fiscal year. Please go to <http://www.ausu.org/> for the official notice and agenda.

All members are welcome to attend and take part. To receive call in information, please RSVP with our office by email ausu@ausu.org, by phone 1-855-497-7003, or through the chat feature on our website www.ausu.org.

Great AU Finds Online

Am I Ready? Counselling Assessments – A series of review modules to test your skill in a variety of subjects. Use these to determine if you need to brush up on a subject before diving in to a course, or just for fun. Also, Mapping Your Future help you choose an occupation. For links, see:

http://counselling.athabascau.ca/assess_yourself.php

AUSU Featured Groups & Clubs

Group Name: Athabasca University Faculty of Science and Technology

Where: Facebook

Members: 275 Likes

About: Posts related to the FST and its students

Activity: Regular posts each week or every two weeks.

IMPORTANT DATES

- April 3-6: Easter Weekend – AU & AUSU closed
- April 10: Last day to register for courses starting May 1
- April 21: AGM & AUSU Council Meeting
- April 30: Last day to extend courses ending May 30
- May 8: Last business day to register for courses starting June 1



This Week at lynda.com

lynda.com experts have curated playlists to get you started. With hundreds of lists on a variety of subjects, there is something for everyone. Visit the playlist center for more information and enter the playlist title. This week's featured list:

Increased Productivity

The following three video is essential for new students because distance education can be daunting. Setting small, reachable goals and learning how to boost productivity with time management are keys to a successful start.

Firstly, there is a short (just over 11 minutes) video about managing your time by Todd Dewett called Managing Your Time.

Secondly, if you are interested in a course about productivity and managing time, you could watch Enhancing Your Productivity, by Dave Crenshaw. This course discusses

1. Your most valuable activities
2. Building up coworkers
3. Having focus

Lastly, there is a course called Achieving Your Goals, by Dave Crenshaw, that explains how to set measurable and achievable goals.

Have you signed up for lynda? It's free for AUSU members. To learn more, check out ausu.org/services/lynda.php

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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