

open

No. 3
2010/11

a sense of community

Copyright modernization

What does it really mean?

12 The brave new world of e-learning

*Athabasca University
leads learning technology*

32 After the earthquake

*Tales of an
AU student
living in Chile*

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Visit us at www.athabascau.ca for more information about Athabasca University. To find out what is happening at AU and meet some of our students, alumni and faculty, visit *Open AU* online at www.open-au.com.

Linda-Lee, AU student
Bachelor of management

Photo: Blaise MacMullin



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ABOUT THE COVER



Frederick, AU student
Master of science in information systems (MScIS)

"AU allows me to be able to work and study at the same time. I am able to directly incorporate what I learn into my work and also apply the experience I gain from work to my studies."

Photos: Blaise MacMullin

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Copyright modernization: What it means for students and faculty



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Beyond the shadows: Plato's Cave helps teachers understand Canada's media landscape

FROM THE EDITOR



Eva von Buchenroder

Welcome to the third annual issue of *Open*. This year, several of *Open's* articles reflect on life in the digital age. New technologies can introduce benefits as well as pitfalls, as Lynn Schlecker notes in her piece. But while Athabasca University is becoming more and more plugged-in, its projects are helping cohere the AU community. For example, Patrick Mears tells us about the Landing, a project AU is working on that draws on elements of Twitter and Facebook to create a social media site for AU students, staff and faculty. It's been termed "social glue" by Jon Dron.

Open's writers aren't the only ones aware of living in an increasingly digital world. The Canadian government is, too, and has taken steps to update the Copyright Act. Many of us at AU are worried about the effect Bill C-32 will have on teaching and learning, but it has implications for every Canadian. If you want to find out more, *Open* will fill you in.

Whether you're reading *Open* online or in good old-fashioned print, this year's issue boasts thought-provoking articles that will also inform about life in the AU community. Enjoy.

– Eva von Buchenroder, editor

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Open magazine is all about Athabasca University (AU)

We want to share with our cross-country community how AU has contributed for the past 40 years to lifelong learning through the quality and diversity of what we have to offer, the excellence of our education and the significant contributions those associated with AU are making in our own communities and around the world. *Open* is published and distributed through various national daily and regional weekly newspapers in the autumn of each year.

Share your comments and inquiries with Nancy Biamonte, creative director, at 780-421-5049 or email at open_magazine@athabascau.ca

A glimpse
at the people
who helped
make it happen

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AU STUDENTS' UNION CORNER

AUSU fears new copyright rules could cause problems for students

By Tamra Ross, executive director
AU Students' Union

Canada's proposed legislation, Bill C-32, beefs up protection for artists and owners of content, but Athabasca University Students' Union is worried about how these protections will affect students. In 2009 we polled members about electronic materials, and while students were polarized on the issue, most shared a concern about losing access to readings when a course ends.

Bill C-32 permits the educational use of copyrighted content, but there is a worrisome caveat: material protected by a digital lock can be subject to significant limitations as the bill makes it illegal to break or otherwise circumvent a lock. This would potentially make it illegal for users to edit offensive content out of material for their own use or to make backups of items they own. The application of locks is at the discretion of the vendor.

AUSU has additional concerns. If digital locks can prevent access after a pre-set expiration date, will materials become unreadable after the course ends? What if students extend the course? Also, will we see regional licensing? Students have likely already encountered online notices that certain content is not available in their area; how will AU serve students in more than 100 countries if licensing of course readings becomes locale-specific?

No one knows what limitations vendors will impose on the distribution of materials, but it seems certain that if digital locks are protected under legislation, vendors will find new ways to use these to maximize profits.

Concerned students are encouraged to learn more about Bill C-32, talk to their MP and let AUSU know where they stand on this important issue.

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY...in the news

By John O'Brien

Four hundred fifty courses going online

The Athabasca Advocate

Athabasca University Receives \$3.2 million in Federal Funding

Nov. 17, 2009

A \$3.2-million federal boost will help Athabasca University convert approximately 450 courses to an online format, said AU president Frits Pannekoek. "That's huge. It will make a huge transformation. We have about 700-800 courses, so this is actually going to make an incredible difference."



Alex Kondra

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Locking out progress

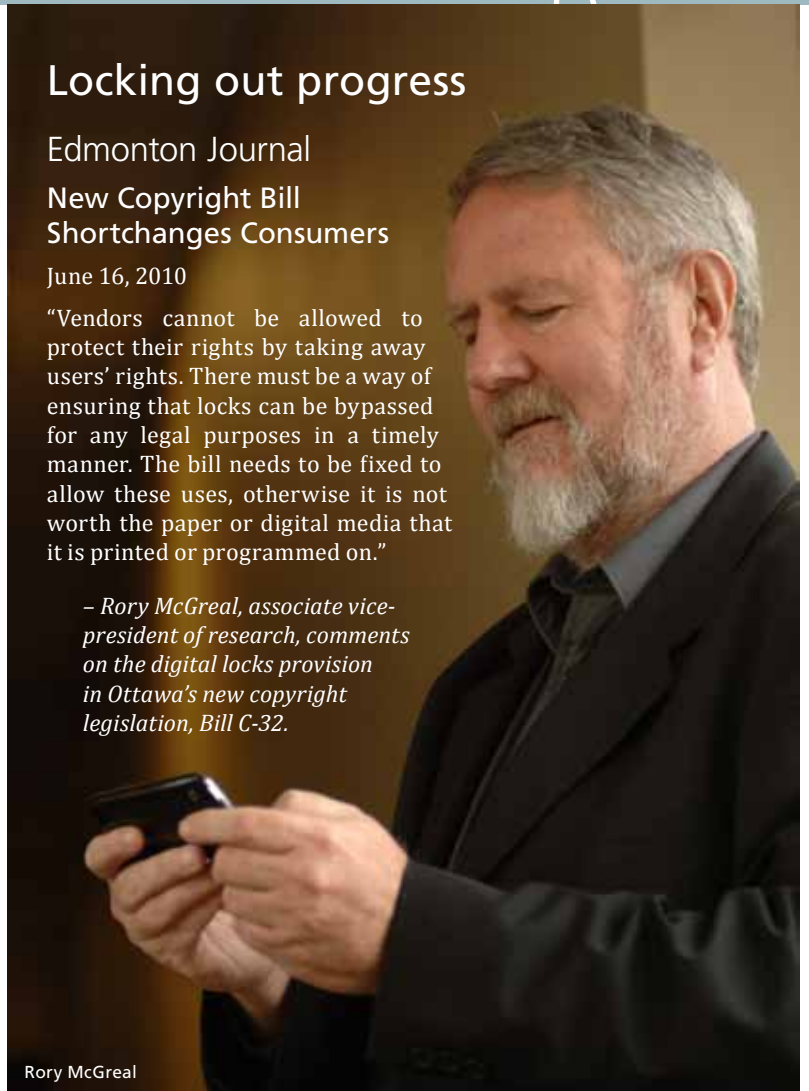
Edmonton Journal

New Copyright Bill Shortchanges Consumers

June 16, 2010

"Vendors cannot be allowed to protect their rights by taking away users' rights. There must be a way of ensuring that locks can be bypassed for any legal purposes in a timely manner. The bill needs to be fixed to allow these uses, otherwise it is not worth the paper or digital media that it is printed or programmed on."

– Rory McGreal, associate vice-president of research, comments on the digital locks provision in Ottawa's new copyright legislation, Bill C-32.



Rory McGreal

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Collaborative study

Financial Post

Logging On to Learn

March 9, 2010

"Self-awareness can be particularly important, especially as it relates to something like the financial meltdown of 2008. People talk about teaching ethics. Can you do that? I don't know. But I do think you can make people aware, and self-aware and the self-awareness of students is critical."

– Alex Kondra, dean, faculty of business, talks about the philosophy behind Canada's first fully interactive online executive MBA program.

Connecting Canadians

Radio Canada International

The Link

Nov. 4, 2009

"We knew we had an incredible resource here and our job was to make it accessible to everyone, especially researchers and people interested in the early Canadian immigrant experience. And we had to make it available online, in the original language."

– Steve Schafer, director of library services, speaks to RCI's Marc Montgomery about Connecting Canadians, a project that will see early immigrant newspapers digitized and made available online, free of charge, to everyone.



Steve Schafer

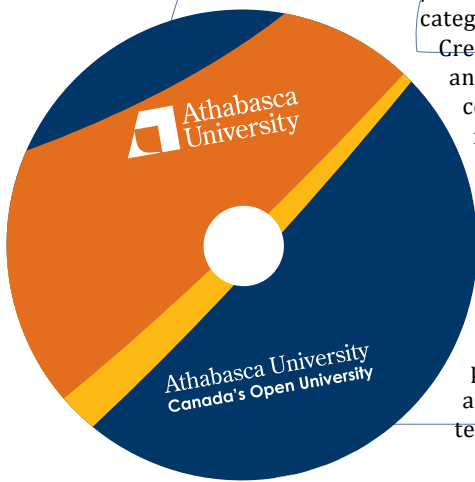
Award-winning video

Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals

Hermes Platinum Award - 2010

Athabasca University's new video *Where Do You Want to Be?* captured a 2010 Platinum Award in the video/marketing (service) category. The Hermes

Creative Awards is an international competition for creative professionals involved in the concept, writing and design of traditional materials and programs, and emerging technologies.



Learning on the road

Freedom 970 radio, Portland

AU and WHL announce partnership

Oct. 15, 2009

"Our new agreement will provide WHL players with improved access to fully accredited university courses delivered online through Athabasca University. This new mobile education initiative will allow us to remove any obstacle for players who wish to take university courses while playing in the WHL."

– Jim Donlevy, director, education services for the Western Hockey League.



Illustration: Christopher Hunt®



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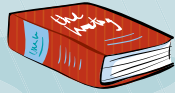


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Copyright modernization: What it means for students and faculty

By Rory McGreal

Do you see what I see in the new copyright legislation, Bill C-32? Amid all the noise about new rights for users, upon closer scrutiny, this bill, rather than granting new rights, can effectively block users from making use of any and all their rights, even existing ones. It is true that this bill now recognizes rights that we all thought we already had, like viewing our legally purchased Irish video in Canada, or playing our Leonard Cohen song on our CD and copying it to our iPod, or watching *Desperate Housewives* on Monday instead of Sunday evening. But even the new rights granted to instructors to use excerpts from 20th-century literature such as Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or video clips from the History channel are meaningless if vendors choose to use a digital lock.

For parents of young children, who would wish to cut exorbitantly aggressive, anti-religious or sexual content from a video, this option is now closed because of digital locks. Systems operators who suspect inappropriate use of the system such as viewing child pornography will not be allowed to break any locks that pornographers apply to their content. Nor would the systems supervisor even have the right to own the software that would break the lock.

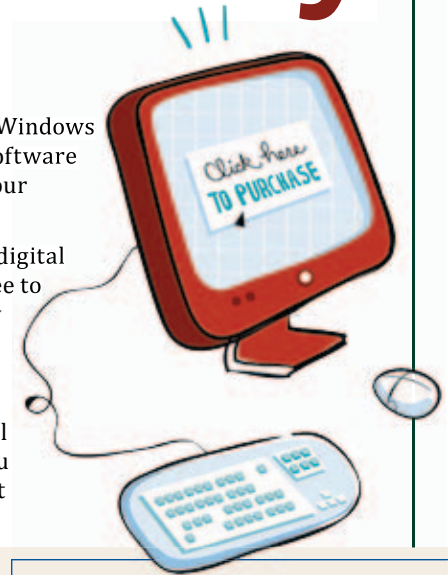
Does anyone doubt that vendors will apply the digital locks or TPMs (technological protection measures)? If they do this, the tourist who legally bought a *Boondock Saints* DVD abroad will no longer be able to play it when he returns home. You can forget about playing your CD music on your MP3 player. And you will be able to only dream of the days when you could time-shift your television shows.

Well, at least we should still be able to back up our work for protection, right? Sorry, this will not be possible if the vendor decides to add a digital lock. If you think you can freely read classical books and view the old movies that are in the public domain, think again. With digital locks this is not guaranteed. Vendors can lock them up and render them accessible only to paying customers. What if you want to play a DVD on your machine but don't use MS Windows? Too bad if the vendor

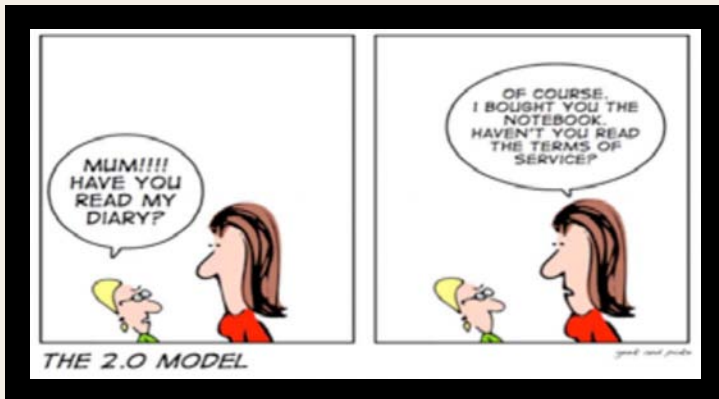
decides to limit your use to Windows because using decryption software to play your legal copy on your computer will be illegal.

Even without the locks, the digital licences that most of us agree to when using software legally limit all of our rights in any case. Most people never read these heavy legal treatises, and it's just as well because in many of them you agree to be spied on and just about everything else short of slavery. Last April 1, thousands of people even unknowingly agreed to sell their souls for the right to use Gamestation! When you pay for a digital movie, audio or textbook, you no longer have the natural right to lend it to your fellow students or even your spouse or friend, you cannot use it on another device, in other countries, nor can you resell it.

If you are a student, teacher or school principal, it is even worse. You must destroy what you paid for within 30 days of the final exam, even if it is a Biology I module that just might be useful when you are studying or teaching Biology II.



If you are a student, teacher or school principal, it is even worse. You must destroy what you paid for within 30 days of the final exam, even if it is a Biology I module that just might be useful when you are studying or teaching Biology II. If you are a researcher, you must make paper copies of all your documents and destroy the digital copies within five days.



Geek & Poke: <http://geekandpoke.typepad.com/geekandpoke/images/2008/01/05/20model.jpg>

You can hardly spend an hour without copyright when using Facebook, Twitter, email, texting, studying, reading e-books or many other applications.

If you are a researcher, you must make paper copies of all your documents and destroy the digital copies within five days. So much for sustainability! Researchers are forced to preserve, in mounds of paper, perfectly usable electronic documents. How much room do you have for filing cabinets? Libraries, too, will be severely restricted in their abilities to archive valuable historical documents that are locked. Our cultural heritage will be at risk.

These situations are all really possible. If digital lock supporters feel they are unlikely, that's the point. The bill is omnibus and universal, prohibiting all manner of reasonable activities whether they are likely or far-fetched. Vendors cannot be allowed to protect their rights by taking away users' rights. They demand full property rights while taking these rights away from the purchasers. Perhaps we need to plea for the basic property owners' right to make use of legally purchased content without undue restrictions. Surely, legal buyers have a right to own the content, not merely rent it with mammoth restrictions imposed by the control-fixated vendors. Isn't it a basic right to share, sell or give away what we have purchased? Vendors can now control how, when, where and with what specific devices you can use their content. They want you to pay, pay and pay again as you begin or finish courses, switch to different formats or devices, or move to different locations.

The overly ambitious digital lock provisions serve to nullify some very positive improvements proposed in the bill. The inclusion of education (along with parody and satire) in the list of fair dealing exceptions is of enormous benefit in clearing up a very grey area in favour of the free educational use of content in the classroom. It is now clear that the use of parts of copyrighted materials in the classroom is fair dealing. Access

Copyright, which recently applied for a \$45-per-student fee for this use, is now trying to have this inclusion deleted as their licence is no longer needed.

The free use of the Internet in classes will also now be clarified in favour of open use, along with recognition that electronic classes (distance education or e-learning) are to be considered the equivalent of face-to-face classes, enjoying the same rights. Another positive feature is the drastic reduction in statutory damages to an amount related to actual losses rather than the possible million-dollar fines that are in the present bill. This should provide an impetus to university librarians and their copyright officers to be more flexible in their interpretation of fair dealing, rather than creating overly strict restrictions because of the fear of being sued.

Today, more than at any time in the past, copyright is personal. Before it did not have a direct effect on too many people, but now it touches everyone – everything triggers copyright. You can hardly spend an hour without copyright when using Facebook, Twitter, email, texting, studying, reading e-books or many other applications.

So, what would be a balanced and reasonable solution? Certainly creators and publishers have every right to protect their intellectual property using locks. On the other hand, the Canadian Supreme Court has ruled heavily in favour of the rights of users to make fair use of the copies that they pay for. So with digital locks come digital responsibilities.

There must be a way of ensuring that locks can be bypassed for any legal purposes in a timely manner. The bill needs to be fixed to allow these uses, otherwise it is not worth the paper or digital media that it is printed or programmed on.



OPEN BOOK

from AU Press

By Tiffanie Regaudie

Over the past year, AU Press continued as an international leader in open access publishing, with Walter Hildebrandt and Kathy Killoh representing AU Press at the second annual Conference on Open Access Scholarly Publishing, held in August in Prague.

Awards and Recognition

Mobile Learning: Transforming the Delivery of Education and Training

Edited by AU professor Mohamed Ally
Award: Charles A. Wedemeyer Award

Imagining Head-Smashed-In: Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains

By Jack Brink
Award: Canadian Archaeological Association's 2009 Public Communications

Bomb Canada: And Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media

By Chantal Allan
Shortlisted for the first annual Alberta Readers' Choice Award

AU Press's expanded monograph program now includes labour history and legal studies. Our list of journals and web-based publications also now includes *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale*, the journal of the Canadian Oral History Association, as well as *Aurora: Interviews With Leading Thinkers and Writers*, while we continue to publish the esteemed journals *Labour/Le Travail* and the *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*.

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AU PRESS

New and upcoming:



Roy & Me: This Is Not a Memoir

By Maurice Yacowar

Maurice Yacowar challenges genre and form in *Roy & Me*, a cross between memoir and fiction, truth and fantasy.

Alberta's Daycare Controversy:

From 1908 to 2009, and Beyond

By Tom Langford

Alberta's Daycare Controversy traces the development of daycare policies and programs in Alberta that have provoked considerable debate and struggle among citizens.



ALBERTA'S DAY CARE
CONTROVERSY



Light From Ancient Campfires: Archaeological Evidence for Native Lifeways on the Northern Plains

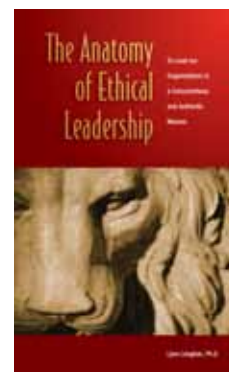
By Trevor Peck

Beginning with the earliest material evidence for a human presence in Alberta, author Trevor Peck embarks on a monumental archaeological survey of the region's original inhabitants.

The Anatomy of Ethical Leadership: To Lead Our Organizations in a Conscientious and Authentic Manner

By Lyse Langlois

Performance at all costs, productivity without regard to consequences, and a highly competitive work environment can generate moral dilemmas.



Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands

Edited by Sarah Carter and
Patricia McCormack

Recollecting is a rich collection of essays that illuminates the lives of late-18th-century to mid-20th-century aboriginal women.

student stories

By Eva von Buchenroder

CURRENT STUDENTS



Photo: Kate Szatmari

Angela Batsford

New learning possibilities

After completing an online master of education program in 2008, Angela Batsford was ready to move on to a doctorate program. But the closest university to her hometown that offered one was over three hours away, and the school where she'd done her master's degree didn't offer an online doctorate program. That's when she found AU.

"Without a distance education program at this level, I wouldn't have been able to continue my studies," she acknowledges.

Batsford, a teacher who also develops and administers courses at Keewatinook Internet high school, an aboriginal online high school, is using what she's learned to benefit others who know that getting an education

can be a challenge. Her students live in remote northern communities where traditional high schools and colleges don't exist. Prior to the KIHS program, 14-year-old students had to leave their parents to move to a city several hours away in order to attend high school.

Batsford wants her students to know they don't have to compromise to get an education. "There are options available to them," she affirms. She's certainly leading by example.

"Without distance education ... I wouldn't have been able to continue my studies"

Education with a little adventure



Matt Burnett

Photo: Ed Ellis Photography Ltd.

Matt Burnett is pursuing a bachelor of human resources and labour relations and working at SaskEnergy in the administration and business policy department. Previously a University of Regina student, Burnett appreciates the fact that he can now schedule school around his life. "This allows me to work enough to pay for school and do the majority of things that I enjoy," he says.

He picked the program, he explains, because he likes working with people. He adds, "I am constantly finding that the knowledge obtained in this program is very useful on a daily basis. Employment relationships are a huge part of every adult's life."

When he's not hard at work, Burnett welcomes the freedom being an AU student affords by travelling. "I've gone on ski trips and vacations to Jamaica and Mexico," he says. "It's nice being able to get away when the resorts are not packed with people."

AU has been such a perfect fit – he describes it as "the best thing that ever happened to me" – that Burnett doesn't plan to stop at just a bachelor's degree. "The way Athabasca operates works great with my life. I will definitely pursue my master's through Athabasca."

A beautiful future



Disha Sandhu

Photo: Kate sZatmari

Disha Sandhu doesn't dream small. The professional stylist and makeup artist has an image consulting business, ImageGen, and plans to own and operate an online retailing site specializing in women's skin and hair care products.

Her success so far is no accident. "Three years ago, I took a hard look at my life and contemplated on the question, what do I really want out of my career? My contemplations led me to the decision to acquire further training so that I could make a living doing work that I love."

Sandhu, who lived in a rural community in India before moving to Toronto, was unsure of her prospects at first. "As an immigrant newly arrived to Canada, I never thought it possible to complete any form of higher education due to time and financial constraints," she says. But after going to school for image consulting and completing training as a makeup artist, she enrolled in the B.Comm. program in 2009. Now, she's realizing her aspirations for the future.

"A large part of our life is (lived) at work, so having a job that brings you happiness is important.... Careers with meaning, with an abundance of positive human contact, are often recognized as the most fulfilling ones. This includes careers like the makeup artist, stylist or other jobs where you're working with others to improve their lives."

Sandhu concludes, "I'm able to develop deep and meaningful relationships with people, not the superficial ones that are so prevalent in everyday existence. There's deep fulfillment in knowing that the work you do helps to improve others' lives."

Someone to count on

For Mike Stewart, who is working toward his bachelor of arts degree in history, family is a very big priority. The transfer student from UBC and Briercrest College didn't initially plan on becoming an AU student, but ended up enrolling in the BA program so that he could be there for the people most important to him.

After Stewart's father was diagnosed with a rare blood disease, his parents moved to Vancouver to be near St. Paul's Hospital. The history undergrad has a younger brother, Scott, who was enrolled in high school in Kelowna. Stewart decided to stay behind with his brother and act as a parent in whatever capacity he could. He and his fiancée, Leah, who lives in Calgary, were also busy with preparations for their upcoming wedding. "Because of these factors," Stewart explained, "I am simply unable to attend scheduled classes."

These days, the resilient student is working hard as an irrigation foreman who even finds time to "chip away at assignments during my lunch break," and preparing for his nuptials by doing marriage counselling with Leah through his church. Despite the distance between them, the couple see each other regularly because Stewart is able to write his exams in Calgary.

He's still weighing his options for the future, but is thinking about either teaching elementary school or pursuing graduate studies. With the dedication he's shown to every commitment he takes on, he'd be sure to excel at either.



Photo: Ed Ellis Photography Ltd.

Mike Stewart

Course Digitization
for Online Learning

\$6.4 Million

This project is being
funded through the
Government of Canada's
Economic Action Plan
and the
Province of Alberta



PHOTO: Brian Stewart, vice-president of information technology (left) and Cindy Ives, director, Centre for Learning Design and Development (right) at the St. Paul partnering office for CAF Course Materials Digitization project. "The CAF and KIP programs are all about harnessing the learning potential contained in new technologies." – Cindy Ives.

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

New frontiers in e-learning

By Patrick Mears

**AU projects create jobs,
make school a leader in
learning technology**

A digital dawn is spreading across the horizon in Canada and around the globe as new educational technologies illuminate the landscape with rays of knowledge. Startling developments in information technology are beginning to impact upon education, and Athabasca University is at the forefront of a march into e-learning thanks to two innovative initiatives. AU's exciting Community Adjustment Fund (CAF) and Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) projects will ensure students get a world-class education that will equip them for the challenges posed by the 21st century.

More than 40 inventive projects are currently electrifying the virtual and brick-built corridors at Athabasca University, where dedicated staff are working diligently to turn a vision of e-learning into reality. The projects are in various stages of completion and each one focuses on differing aspects of learning. However, they have one major feature in common: they will all improve teaching at AU.

Director of the Centre for Learning Design and Development, Cindy Ives, said: "Athabasca University is becoming a centre of excellence for e-learning. The CAF and KIP programs will construct a virtual framework, which we can then build upon and improve as the years go by, leaving us in a great position to offer courses that will appeal to students in the digital age."

Under the CAF program, four projects will combine to digitize and enhance course content. And 33 Open Knowledge Environment

(OKE) projects will join forces to refine and recharge IT infrastructure at the university. In addition, another three part-KIP-funded projects will revamp capital infrastructure at Athabasca University.

Vice-president of information technology at AU, Brian Stewart, said: "We are inventing the future of e-learning, working in a consistent and systemic fashion to construct the whole methodology for creating and developing e-content. No one has done this before. This process will allow us to move into a space where we can make the most of existing technology and emerging technologies."

Collaborative work forms the heart of these AU programs. The CAF Course Materials Digitization project is fuelled by partnership work with schools and colleges in St. Paul, Grande Prairie and Athabasca and involves converting at least 450 courses into a format compatible with online learning. As part of the Showcase Courses project, up to 20 of the university's highest-enrollment courses will be enriched with digital enhancements such as blogs and podcasts. The Copyright Materials Digitization project is directing the digitization of 17 filing cabinets full of legal documents.

In total, \$6.4 million has been made available for the CAF projects through the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund (part of Canada's Economic Action Plan), Alberta's Access to the Future Fund and in-kind as well as private donations. And that money is funding another major chapter in the CAF story: the creation of jobs in rural areas of northern Alberta that were hit hard by the recent economic downturn. So far the project has created 69.42 full-time equivalent positions.

Ives said: "This is an important aspect of the CAF program. We want to strengthen the bond that already exists between the university and its surrounding communities."

Employed on the projects are young women taking their first steps up the career ladder, single mothers and those who are married with children, along with people from First Nations communities. Already, former employees have been able to advance their careers due to experience gained while working on CAF initiatives.

Digitizer Lilian Okocha, 38; who is married with four children, plans to enroll in AU's MBA program. She said, "I like the job because I'm learning about new software and I really believe this job is going to help me move my career forward."

Others also plan to enroll in AU courses. Madison Persin, 18, said: "I'm going to work for a year and take some Spanish courses through AU so that I can be a teacher. I want to go into modern languages."

"I like this digitizing job because I get more familiar with computers and it gets me used to working for a living."

AU's \$7.65-million Open Knowledge Environment project is being fully funded by money from the provincial and federal governments. This has helped to create 86 positions such as web developer, business analyst, project manager and programmer analyst, which has already created a deep pool of knowledge. The total includes contract positions.

Additional jobs – this time in the construction industry in northern Alberta – have been created by the ongoing building work at the main campus building in Athabasca. AU received \$3.6 million from the federal Knowledge Infrastructure Program to help fund the \$8.45-million capital infrastructure project that will expand and refurbish the science laboratory, renovate the library entrance and undertake roof repairs. The balance of the money will come from the university.

Stewart said: "The people we have hired have fitted into AU very quickly and have already made a substantial contribution to the KIP program. They are working very well with our permanent staff to provide imaginative and innovative solutions that will be vital for us in the future."

"They have hit the ground running from a standing start, enlivening the university and supporting our critical services as well as helping us to move the projects forward."

The OKE program comprises a number of projects which are extremely innovative. One of those projects is the Virtual Media Lab. The lab will be a dynamic space for teaching, mentoring, research, peer review, display and practice – a combination of the separate functions that university labs have traditionally performed.

The Landing project aims to create a social networking site for use by everyone at AU – academics, staff and students. It contains aspects of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook and houses them together under one roof. The main drivers of the Landing project are AU's social media expert George Siemens, Terry Anderson and Jon Dron.

Siemens said; "We are building our capacity as an institution to use distributed technology and social media in education."

"But the Landing also offers something further. My colleague Jon Dron calls it 'social glue.' Just like a university will have social spaces where students can interact, a distance learning institution like AU needs to have virtual social spaces where students can connect. The Landing creates a virtual social space for AU faculty, staff and students."

Among the other project pearls in AU's IT jewellery box is Desktop Virtualization, which will enable staff to access their virtual work desktops from any machine with an Internet connection. The Mobile Learning project will assess how learning techniques at AU can benefit from technologies like the iPad. And there are many other keystone projects which will boost IT infrastructure at the university, enabling the formation of firm foundations upon which the bricks of knowledge can be laid.

Ives concluded, "The CAF and KIP programs are all about harnessing the learning potential contained in new technologies."

"Our aim is to provide a learning environment that is both sustainable and as rich as possible for the thousands of students who rely on us for our distance and e-learning expertise, both in Alberta and around the world."

The digital age is changing the world in which we live. It's changing the way we read, the way we pay for the food we eat and the way we communicate with each other. It will continue to change the way we teach. But Athabasca University, through these innovative programs, is prepared and ready to break down the barriers to education for people in Alberta, across Canada and beyond its shores.



meet the teacher

By Patrick Mears

FACULTY PROFILES

Evelyn Ellerman Program coordinator helps bring university experience home

Breaking down the barriers to education for students with heavy domestic and work commitments is a subject very close to the heart of an Athabasca University communication expert. Evelyn Ellerman originated the communication studies program at AU and continues to coordinate the initiative today. However, when she joined the university in 1996, Ellerman was a single mother whose responsibilities made it difficult for her to work a traditional nine-to-five shift.

"After completing my post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Alberta, I applied at AU because it was a distance education university," said Ellerman. "At the time I was a single parent with a very sick child, and the opportunity to start up a new collaborative degree program while working from a home office seemed perfect to me.

"The students are the best part of the work. It is a privilege to be able to offer a university experience to so many people who otherwise would find it difficult or impossible to complete their degrees."

Born and raised in northern Ontario, Ellerman moved to central Alberta with her parents when she was 13.

"My parents were young during the Depression years, and like many people of their generation they were self-taught, so our home had books and intelligent conversation," continued the associate professor of communication studies.

"We went to the library every Saturday afternoon; it was like paradise. I loved to hold the books and I loved the smell of them. Each week I took home the maximum number allowed."

In those days, Ellerman says, the opportunities available for women were very different compared with those of the more enlightened times of today.



Evelyn Ellerman

Photo: Blaise MacVullin

"When I was a young girl, the only occupations we could aspire to were secretary, nurse or teacher. I knew that I would be hopeless at the first and dangerous at the second, so I opted for teacher."

Ellerman has been a teacher for most of her working life, although she did work for the federal government for a while and owned a communication company. She remembered, "In my early working life, I operated a general store in the country with my husband and parents – I was the butcher."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the former butcher's path to a master's degree did not follow a conventional route. Ellerman took an undergraduate degree and then went straight into a master's program. But she was burned out from studying so hard and dropped out of grad school. Then she worked at various jobs for 13

"Often when I look at the accomplishments of our students despite all sorts of impediments, I marvel at the human spirit."

years before returning to university for an MA and PhD in comparative literature.

The AU academic firmly believes in flexible learning. She said: "The program that I work with is a collaborative degree program, which is the sort of forward-thinking program that you would hope to find at an open university like AU. Over the years, I have seen the positive benefits of this program for students and I am proud to have been associated with it."

And it is teaching that provides Ellerman with those valuable moments of true inspiration. "Often when I look at the accomplishments of our students despite all sorts of impediments, I marvel at the human spirit," she said.

George Siemens

E-learning expert brings social media savvy to AU

As the earth spins headlong into the digital age, education is just one of many sectors affected by revolutionary new technologies. People are communicating through social media, and mobile developments are helping to move the CD player and the video recorder to the history books. To help Athabasca University students get the very best out of these new technologies, an e-learning expert is now filling the AU ether with innovative insights.

George Siemens joined Athabasca University in November 2009 and has spent much of the last few years analyzing how social media modelled on the likes of Twitter and Facebook could help educators provide students with top-class courses.

“The almost limitless potential of learning technologies to extend the reach of education and to shape the design of future learning institutions offers a rich soil for research and exploration,” Siemens explained.

“The value of social media – blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking – in learning is readily apparent. Any opportunity (or technology) that enables the formation of connections between learners and educators is worth exploring.”

Born in Mexico, Siemens moved with his family to Canada before he had any meaningful contact with technology. However, his

first encounter with a computer left a lasting impression, and he subsequently started working as an educator.

“My move into education wasn’t planned,” said Siemens, who is a social media and networked technologies strategist and researcher at the Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI) at the university. “However, once I started teaching with technology, I discovered so many new opportunities for improving the learning process that I was hooked.

“The possibility of opportunity and change is what evokes my passion. My particular areas of interest include learning analytics, e-learning, learning theory, social media, open education and networked technologies.”

Prior to moving to Edmonton, Siemens spent eight years at Red River College in Manitoba. In the late 1990s, his department was the first in Canada where students were issued laptops. The project provided a valuable opportunity to experiment with how technology influences teaching and learning. In 2007, he took up the position of associate director, research and development, for the Learning Technologies Centre at the University of Manitoba.

And now, at TEKRI, Siemens is helping to launch a public knowledge initiative to focus on further reducing barriers that exist between learners, academics and institutions (<https://tekri.athabascau.ca/content/public-knowledge-initiative>).

“Athabasca University has a strong reputation for researching and utilizing technology in teaching and learning,” said Siemens. “The opportunity to work with top researchers in the field, like Terry Anderson and Jon Dron, was significant in my decision to come to AU.”



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

George Siemens

“Athabasca University has a strong reputation for researching and utilizing technology in teaching and learning.”

Siemens has also helped to run open online courses for thousands of students and researchers across the globe.

“To date, open education has focused on making the artifacts of the scholarly process freely available. My interest is in making the process of scholarship itself open.”

And Siemens encourages everyone to embrace lifelong learning. He said: “Continual learning is critical in a field that is changing as quickly as this one. The opening of education provides educators with numerous learning opportunities. I’m constantly taking courses and engaging in informal learning through online lectures, conference recordings and podcasts. The barriers to learning are greatly reduced in a digital age.”

AU introduces our three newest honorary doctorates

By Cathy Nickel

AU's 2010 honorary degree recipients share a passion for justice and creative, solution-based thinking in showing us all how a better world is possible.



Lawrence Lessig

Photos: Blaise MacMullin

Knowledge for all

Simpler copyright rules could lead to a more educated population

At a time when technology has radically expanded the range of potential creators and educators, and more people than ever are drawing upon this creativity and education, copyright law is being interpreted in a way that imposes enormous burdens on creativity.

Professor Lawrence Lessig advocates widely for fair and balanced copyright legislation that will enable society to reap the benefits of advances in information technology. His efforts were recognized by Athabasca University on June 12, 2010, with the award of an honorary doctor of laws.

Lessig is director of the Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics at Harvard University and a professor of law in the Harvard Law School. Prior to this, he was a professor in the Stanford Law School and founded the school's Center for Internet and Society. He has been the Berkman professor of law in the Harvard Law School, a professor at the University of Chicago and a clerk for both Judge Richard Posner on the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and Justice Antonin Scalia on the United States Supreme Court.

"It is critically important that we establish the right baseline for this type of regulation," Lessig explains. "We can't over-regulate the spread of knowledge but we also must recognize that authors have a legitimate right to compensation." If the very act of using, creating or sharing information, such as an instructor creating a lesson plan, requires the involvement of a lawyer, he says larger institutions will be at an advantage relative to smaller ones because they can bear the cost more easily.

Ordinary users are already being alienated from the value of copyright. "The industry has created a generation that thinks copyright is idiotic. The vast majority of people think copyright serves no purpose and should be abolished. I don't agree, but we must back off from claims that are absurdly extreme and strike a balance. We need a viable system that encourages creation."



Governing Council Chair Barry Walker, AU President Frits Pannekoek and Lawrence Lessig

“The practice the university has demonstrated depends upon a broader, more balanced concept of copyright, and the university hasn’t been afraid to assert that.”

Building that system, he believes, will fall to educators, librarians and a new generation of creators, among others. “Teachers, parents and people in the innovation sector, in technology, understand there’s something wrong that needs to be fixed. The question is whether they’ll exercise their political and social power to do something about it. I’m relatively optimistic that the tide is turning in the right direction and we’ll see real progress, but it’s certainly taking longer than it should.”

Finding this new balance will be pivotal for institutions like Athabasca University. “AU is at the forefront of understanding how distance education can work,” Lessig explains. “The practice the university has demonstrated depends upon a broader, more

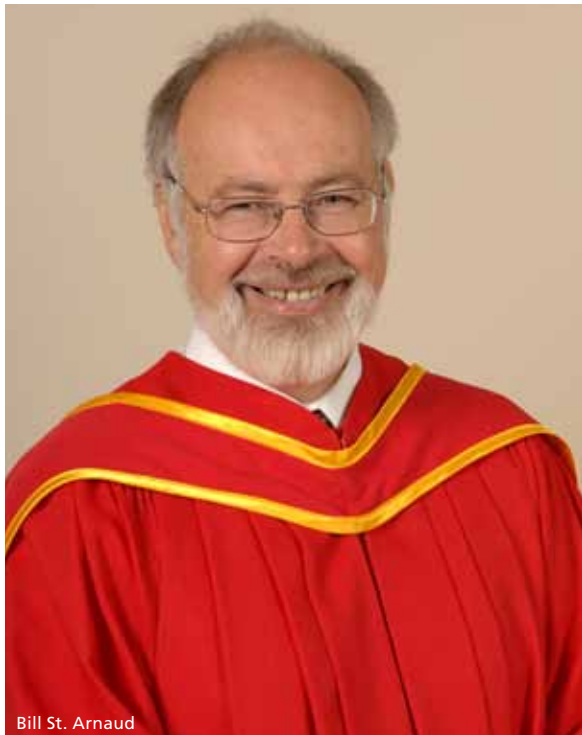
balanced concept of copyright, and the university hasn’t been afraid to assert that.

“We’re just starting to get over the notion that higher education is something that 10-20 per cent of the population is entitled to,” he says. “We should be moving to 70-80 per cent. To do that will require a simpler, more manageable system of copyright that won’t eliminate rights, but that will make it easier for rights to be negotiated and understood. This doesn’t mean abolishing copyright, but rather putting it in its proper place.

“New opportunities are being held back because of the backwardness of the existing regime.”

Technology’s green promise

IT consultant ponders environmental solutions



Bill St. Arnaud

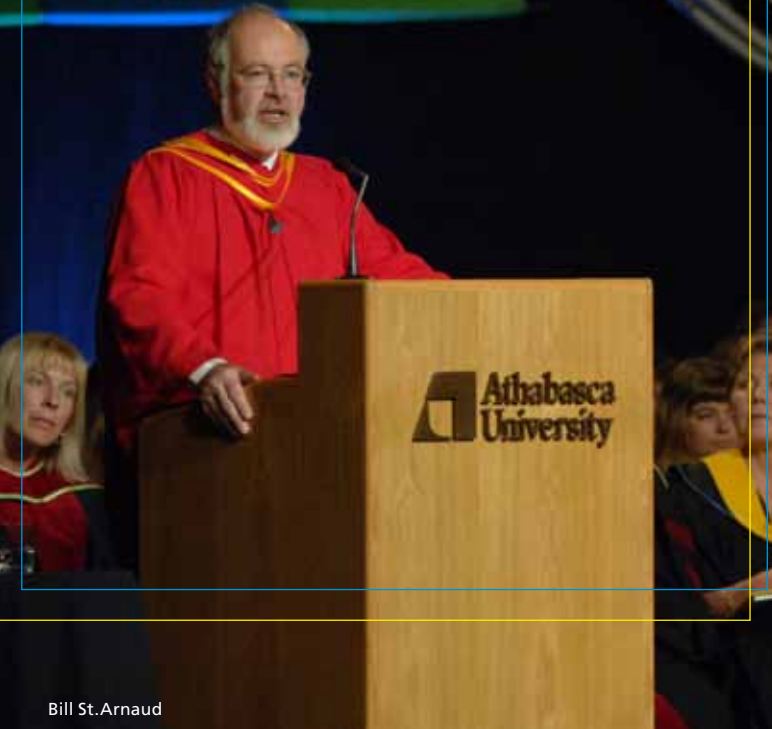
In the mid-’90s, when Bill St. Arnaud and colleagues created Canada’s online national research network, they couldn’t know how high their CANARIE would fly. Today, Canada’s Advanced Research and Innovation Network is a vital link among researchers and educators across the country and around the world. St. Arnaud’s key role in putting Canada at the head of the technology pack was recognized by Athabasca University on June 11, 2010, with the award of an honorary doctor of science.

St. Arnaud worked at CANARIE for 15 years, including as senior research officer, where his prime responsibility was developing an ultra-high-speed network hundreds of times faster than the Internet. The CANARIE network allows researchers to examine huge amounts of information, enabling significant discoveries. It is used by more than 40,000 researchers worldwide.

St. Arnaud left CANARIE last December and is now passionate about green technology. He’s an independent consultant advising governments and companies worldwide on the role technology can play in a more environmentally aware and responsible world. An institution like Athabasca University, he believes, which has a smaller environmental footprint because of its online delivery model, can be central to creating a “cap-and-reward” system.

“How people live and work is transforming,” he explains. “One day people will wake up and see runaway global warming.” He predicts society will get beyond today’s rampant “greenwashing” and seek real answers.

“Information Technology and education could be used to reward people for reducing the carbon footprint in their own work and home life.”



Bill St. Arnaud

“Information technology will play a key role in finding smart solutions, from smart cars to smart power grids. Clearly distance education can play a more important role as we move to a low-carbon environment.”

Traditional universities, he says, have some of the biggest carbon footprints in North America, as a sector generating some 5-10 per cent of carbon emissions due to their large campuses, flue stacks, computing and other activities – and this doesn't include student travel to and from campus. AU's model has a significantly smaller footprint.

He suggests that IT and education could be used to reward people for reducing the carbon footprint in their own work and home life. “Maybe we provide free Wi-Fi on buses or perhaps we offer people free education instead of making them pay a carbon tax. AU could be a global leader in providing distance education to people around the world in exchange for carbon offsets. We use a carrot instead of a stick.”

A challenge, he acknowledges, is that computers in general comprise the fastest-growing sector in carbon dioxide emissions, “not because they have tailpipes but because they usually use electricity from coal-generated power and their number is growing rapidly.” In a few years, he says, computers will be responsible for 12 per cent of CO2 emissions, “so we need to find ways to make computers less intensive in manufacture and in use.

“We need serious effort and radical solutions and serious thinking on a worldwide level,” he asserts. “Addressing the challenge of climate change is not a bad news story. We don't have to go back to living in caves. There are business opportunities out there and the people and organizations that are first to capture them will be the big winners going forward.”

Honorary doctorates 1979-2009

1979 Fernand Grenier	1990 Josephine M. Brown	2001 Maria Campbell
1979 The Lord Perry of Walton	1990 Brian Paisley	2002 James Shapiro
1980 T.C. (Tim) Byrne	1990 Anne Wheeler	2002 Joseph Schwarcz
1981 Anastasios Christodoulou	1991 The Honourable Marjorie M. Bowker	2003 Robert Stollery
1982 Pierre Berton	1991 Ted Harrison	2003 Vicki Gabereau
1982 Bakhshish Singh	1992 Michael J. Miller	2004 Tony Bates
1983 Dorothy Livesay	1992 David W. Schindler	2004 Pamela D. Wallin
1984 W.A. Samuel Smith	1993 Helen Mary Sabin	2005 Gwendolyn Hooks
1985 Northrop Frye	1993 Ian Tyson	2005 Frank Pierpoint Appleby
1985 The Honorable Ernest C. Manning	1994 Anthony Lindday Austin Fields	2006 Marie Smallface-Marule
1985 Clarence “Big” Miller	1994 Ernest J. Wiggins	2006 Marc Garneau
1985 Lois Hole	1995 Maureen Anne McTeer	2006 Peter Homulos
1986 Larry Denman Clarke	1995 Eric Newell	2007 Mandla Makhanya
1986 Chief Walter Patrick Twinn	1996 Moses Znaimer	2007 Johnsen Sewepagaham
1987 Maxwell William Ward	1997 Linda Hughes	2007 Albert Karvonen
1987 Madeleine Parent	1998 Sir John S. Daniel	2008 Patricia Anne Monture
1988 Bernard Trueman Keeler	1999 Gajaraj Dhanarajan	2008 Janice Morse
1988 The Royal Canadian Air Farce	2000 Stephen John Murgatroyd	2008 Mary Lou Jepsen
1989 Myer Horowitz	2000 Eleanor Wachtel	2009 Jean Linse Pettifor
1989 William Patrick Kelly	2001 Holger Petersen	2009 Neil Reimer
		2009 Ovide William Mercredi

Righting the wrongs of the past

Former citizenship judge helps build a united Canada

Raymond Lee is a proud Canadian who is equally proud of his Chinese heritage. His life's success in promoting increased understanding, openness and forgiveness among Canadians was recognized by Athabasca University on June 10, 2010, with the award of an honorary doctor of laws.

Lee has devoted more than 50 years to ensuring the Chinese community's significant contribution to Canada is recognized and appreciated. His efforts culminated in 2006 with two key achievements. He and others from across the country successfully secured a formal apology from the government of Canada for the wrongs committed as a result of the Chinese Immigration Act. Lee also enjoyed the distinction of becoming Alberta's first citizenship judge of Chinese descent. The timing was deeply symbolic, shedding light on a dark chapter in Canadian history and also reflecting Lee's passion and hope for Canada.

From 1885 to 1923, Chinese people were the only immigrants forced to pay a high head tax to move to Canada. Thousands of young men came to work in mines and build the railroad, but the tax all but prevented their families from joining them. From 1923 to 1947, Canada banned almost all Chinese immigration completely.

"It was important to right this wrong," Lee says of his two-decade effort to secure the apology. "It was very important to the Chinese community. To descendants of those who paid the head tax, it means we are Canadians, not hyphenated Canadians. It means we belong."

Lee is one of those descendants. His father paid the head tax in 1917 and raised a family in Crossfield, Alta., a quintessential prairie town where they owned a restaurant that became a hub of community life. That experience shaped Lee's perspective and the path he would follow in the future.

"We had to learn how to live as a minority in a primarily Caucasian European community," he explains. "So I have a totally different perspective of what it means to be of Chinese descent than more recent immigrants. It is important that these new immigrants know about the groundwork that was laid for them."

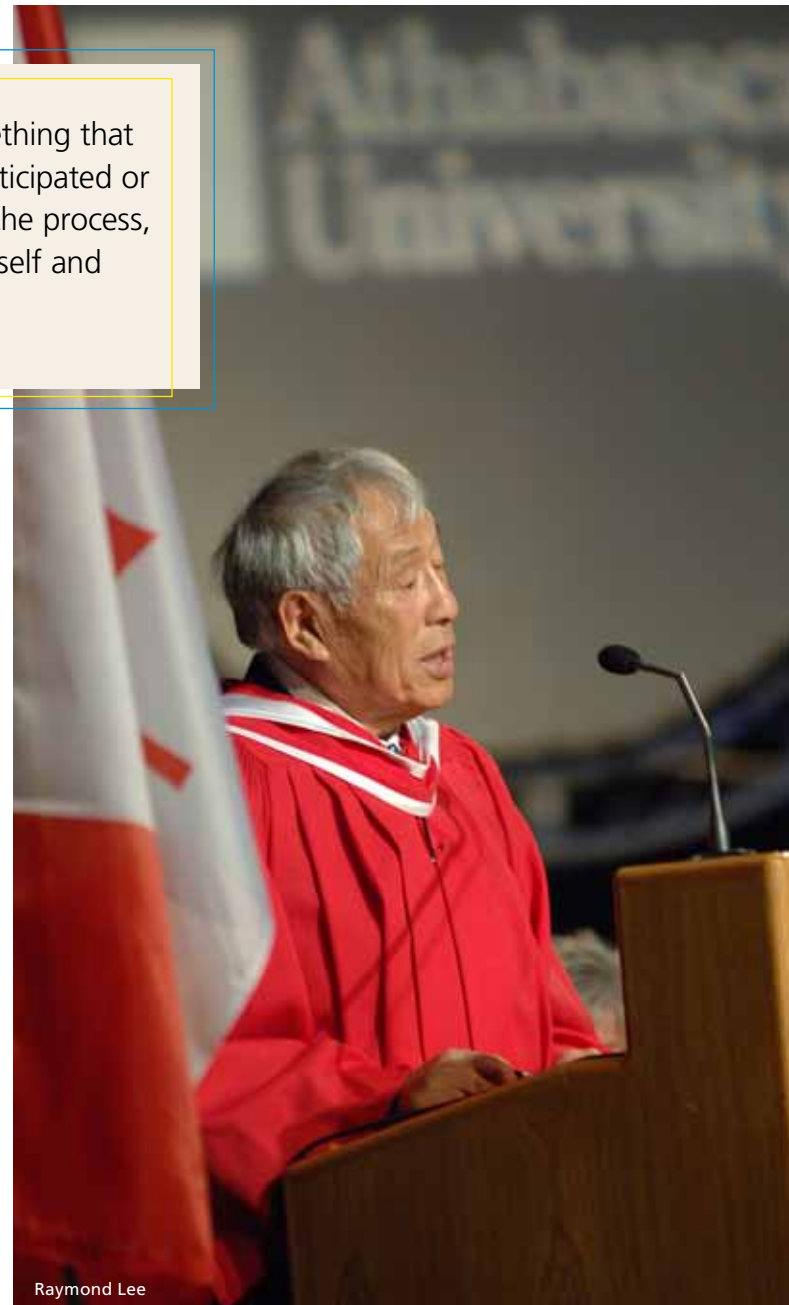
That groundwork includes the fact that today, Calgary is the only municipality in Canada to have a Chinatown identified in its bylaws. In 1968, Lee helped create the Sien Lok Society, in large part to oppose a city plan for a major expressway through Calgary's Chinatown that would have all but obliterated the community. The group was successful and is now well-known nationally for actively furthering Chinese culture and Chinese-Canadian history.

During his three-year term as a citizenship judge, Lee shared his appreciation for Canada with 40,000 or so new Canadians.

He made the citizenship ceremony relevant by taking it out of a government office and into the community, where citizenship comes alive. "We're great at making citizens, but not so good at making Canadians," he concludes. "We have to figure out what it means to be Canadian. This country is made up of so many cultures. Knowing more about ourselves and each other gives us a better understanding of our neighbours."

In his convocation remarks, Lee urged AU grads to make a difference in their communities. "Through your knowledge and leadership, you can transform the landscape.... You will achieve something that you may never have anticipated or expected. And during the process, you will ... inspire yourself and those around you."

"You will achieve something that you may never have anticipated or expected. And during the process, you will ... inspire yourself and those around you."



Raymond Lee

AU notable news



International Academy of
African Business and Development

Challenges in the Era of Globalization

May 17 - 20, 2011, Edmonton Canada

Founded in 1998, the IAABD has established itself as one of the world's leading organizations committed to fostering functional education, broadening global understanding of the challenges facing African development and business and advancing alternative solutions to Africa's business and economic challenges.

This conference is open to scholars, professionals, and students of any nationality who are interested or actively engaged in the teaching, research, performance or administration of business and economic development issues as they related to Africa.

For more information or to register visit
<http://iaabd2011.athabascau.ca>



Photo: Rob Koons

Rob Koons' photo tops thousands

A family bike ride, a tranquil lake and a perfect moment. When AU grounds technician **Rob Koons** came across the scene at Eleanor Lake in southeastern British Columbia, he knew he had a good photo opportunity. What he did not know at the time was that he also had a national award winner. "It was a spur-of-the-moment kind of thing; it looked like a great picture, so I snapped it," he said.

That picture, after having been judged the best of more than 10,000 entries, has won the grand prize in *Canadian Geographic's* 25th annual photo contest.

AU honorary degree recipient honoured

Dr. Janice Morse will be inducted into the new Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame in Orlando, Fla., in July. Morse was awarded an honorary doctor of science by AU at convocation 2008.

Morse, who holds PhDs in both nursing and anthropology, is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, a professor and holder of a presidential endowed chair at the University of Utah College of Nursing and professor emerita of the University of Alberta. She was the founding director of the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (1997-2007) at the University of Alberta, founding editor of the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* and since 1991 she has served as the founding editor of *Qualitative Health Research*.

The International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame honours nurse researchers who are Sigma Theta Tau International members, who have achieved long-term, broad national or international recognition for their work and whose research has impacted the profession and the people it serves.

Copyright conference at AU

Athabasca University hosted the ABC Copyright Group conference on June 21 and 22, 2010.

The ABC Copyright Group, a grassroots organization of people with daily involvement in various aspects of copyright, has been in operation since 2001. AU was one of the group's founding members. Advocacy and openness was the theme of the conference, and the keynote speaker was **Michael Geist**, a professor of law at the University of Ottawa and a Canada Research Chair in Internet and e-commerce law. He addressed the new Canadian copyright legislation, assessing both the legislative proposals and the Canadian "copyright" experience, in an effort to answer the question, why copyright?



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Schreiner named Outstanding New Professional

Heidi Schreiner, coordinator of AU's information centre, received the Outstanding New Professional Award at the Alberta Services for Students Conference (ASSC) on May 12.

Her being selected for the award is additional recognition by the ASSC committee that AU is doing really great things to advance its vision of excellence in student service, Schreiner said. "While there is so much good in what we do, there is always an opportunity to improve. If I can be a cheerleader in helping to bring those improvements to life, I will."



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Fraser receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Fil Fraser, an AU academic coordinator with the Centre for Integrated Studies, received a lifetime achievement award from the CaribbeanTales Youth Film Festival in Toronto.

Founded by award-winning filmmaker Frances-Anne Solomon, the CaribbeanTales Youth Film Festival screens Afrocentric films for audiences of high school and university students.

This year's festival highlighted the works of African-Canadian directors and producers and celebrated this burgeoning sector of Canadian film culture.

Among Fraser's numerous accolades and accomplishments is his induction as a member of the Order of Canada.

Mobile Learning receives Wedemeyer Award

Mobile Learning: Transforming the Delivery of Education and Training, edited by **Mohamed Ally**, director of the Centre for Distance Education, has received the prestigious Mildred B. and Charles A. Wedemeyer Award for its significant contribution to the field of distance education.

The award was announced at the University Professional & Continuing Education Association's annual conference, Leading Innovation in Higher Education, in San Francisco on April 8, 2010.

"The use of mobile learning in education is moving us closer to education for all," Ally said. "This book will help achieve this important goal."

Charles Wedemeyer (1911-1999) championed diversity in learning options and supported learner access and choice throughout his work as an author, researcher, instructor and administrator. In the mid-20th century, he outlined a vision for the use of telecommunications and media as instructional tools that would free teaching and learning from the confinement of the classroom and the clock. That vision had global influence and laid the foundation for much of today's distance education theory and practice. His wife, Mildred Wedemeyer, was his partner in advocating for the needs of all learners.



The benefits of freer trade

More than 70 academics, business leaders and government representatives gathered in Ottawa on April 11 and 12, 2010, for the second annual North American Alliance of Innovative Universities conference, Wealth Creation

Through Free Trade and Entrepreneurship.

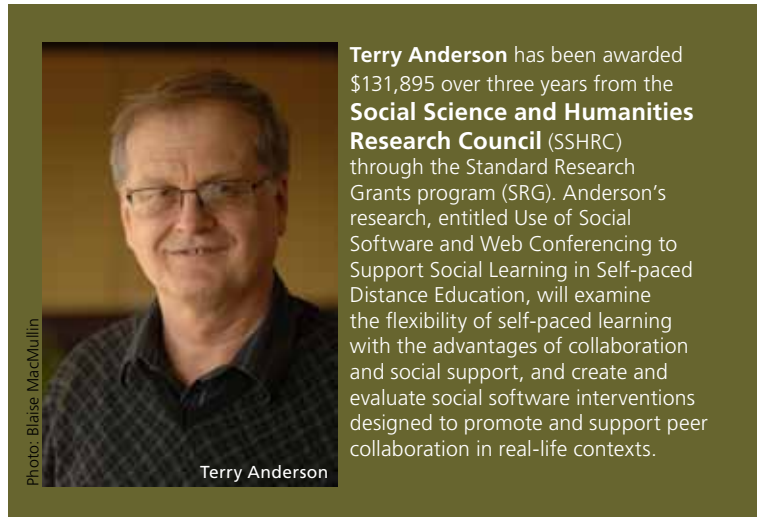
Conference delegates discussed a wide array of topics related to the NAFTA agreement, including labour mobility, security partnerships, protectionism, energy security and managing trade relationships.

The NAAIU is a partnership of three leading distance education universities: Athabasca University, the University of Maryland University College and Tecnológico de Monterrey. The next NAAIU conference will be hosted by Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico City in 2011.

Western Hockey League update: **2009 saw 42 AU registrations from WHL players.** That works out to almost two from each WHL team (there are 22)!

Projects and funding successes

Sherri Melrose, assistant professor, Nursing Centre for Nursing and Health Studies, has received funding from SSHRC (\$28,434 for one year) as part of the SRG program for her project, entitled *From Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse: Easing the Transition*. **This longitudinal educational research project will study the transitional experiences of vocationally educated licensed practical nurses enrolled in an online bachelor of nursing program to upgrade to the role of registered nurse.** The project will be conducted in two phases, with Phase 1 having commenced in April 2010 and Phase 2 expected to commence in April 2011.



Terry Anderson has been awarded \$131,895 over three years from the **Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)** through the Standard Research Grants program (SRG). Anderson's research, entitled *Use of Social Software and Web Conferencing to Support Social Learning in Self-paced Distance Education*, will examine the flexibility of self-paced learning with the advantages of collaboration and social support, and create and evaluate social software interventions designed to promote and support peer collaboration in real-life contexts.

A total of \$6.4 million has been made available for course material digitization projects through the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund (part of Canada's Economic Action Plan), Alberta's Access to the Future Fund and in-kind support as well as private donations. The CAF projects will significantly improve information technology infrastructure at AU.

Athabasca University received \$7.65 million from the Knowledge Infrastructure Program in support of the Open Knowledge Environment, an innovative online infrastructure system. AU also received money from the Knowledge Infrastructure Program to fund the \$8.45-million main campus building infrastructure projects.

AU is a distance learning facility and as such has different infrastructure requirements than traditional universities. **The funding will help AU achieve its aim of becoming a world leader in the use of new technologies for learning.** The KIP funding will help save time, money and effort and improve efficiency and boost student services at the university.

For the full story, see page 12, "New Frontiers in E-learning" by Patrick Mears



The NSERC Industrial Research Chair in adaptivity and personalization for **Kinshuk**, School of Computing and Information Systems, has been officially approved (\$760,000). This grant will further develop Kinshuk's research in the area of adaptation and personalization in informatics, funded through iCore/XEROX/Markin.

Dragan Gasevic, associate professor and Canada Research Chair in semantic technologies (principal investigator), and co-applicant **Ebrahim Bagheri**, assistant professor, School of Computing and Information Systems, have been awarded an NSERC Engage Grant for their industrial collaboration project with Professional Quality Assurance Ltd. in Fredericton, NB. Gasevic and Bagheri are AU's first award recipients under this new program. The Engage Grants program is intended to give Canada-based companies access to the unique knowledge and expertise available at Canadian universities. It is also meant to **foster the development of new research partnerships between academic researchers and companies that have never collaborated together by supporting short-term research and development projects aimed at addressing a company-specific problem.** Among other outcomes, the project will lead to the training of at least two graduate students and an undergraduate student in the general area of quality assurance for software-oriented architectures.

Ebrahim Bagheri, assistant professor, School of Computing and Information Systems, has received \$18,000 per year for five years (totalling \$90,000) from the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Discovery Grants RGPIN program for his study, entitled *Quality Engineering for Software Product Lines*. The primary **goal of this research is to focus on feature-modelling techniques as a widely used approach in software product lines.** Early-stage quality assessment, measurement and validation techniques will help to avoid costly problems in the late stages of the software development life cycle, which is now highly important to the service-based economy of Canada.

As a joint venture with the Alberta Women's Memory Project (AWMP), **Nanci Langford** and **Karen Langley** of Athabasca University archives recently acquired a grant of \$8,000 from the National Archival Development Program to digitize the Ruth Gorman collection that was acquired by Athabasca University in 2009. Ruth was a Calgary lawyer who worked with John Laurie to help secure the vote for the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada while still retaining their treaty rights. She was a major force in mobilizing public opinion across Canada in support of the aboriginal vote and she chronicled the events of that campaign in a book titled *Behind the Man*, edited by AU's president, Frits Pannekoek.

The AWMP has also received an Alberta Historical Resources Foundation grant to gather more new women's archival collections. They will be featured on the AWMP website and some will be donated to the AU archives.

How can collective deliberation by citizens, municipal and provincial governments lead to wise and timely climate change action? Over the next five years Alberta will be a testing ground for this very question through the Alberta Climate Dialogue (ABCD) project. **The ABCD project will convene groups of citizens within Albertan municipalities to shape policies on greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change**, and also build province-wide deliberation and dialogue on climate issues. Through this work, we will seek to show how citizens can lead effective responses to climate change, and how political leaders and institutions can skillfully engage with citizens to develop policy. The team undertaking the research includes AU's **Lorelei Hanson** and **Gloria Filax**, who will work with an international team of scholars, NGOs, businesses, and governments supported by \$1 million in funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and over \$3 million in contributions from other sources.

AU's **Sandra Collins** (co-applicant) and Nancy Arthur of the University of Calgary (lead applicant) have been awarded an SSHRC Standard Research Grant for their project entitled *Critical Incidents in Counsellor Education for Multicultural Counselling and Social Justice*. The overriding goal of this research program is to conduct research regarding **counsellors' views of their preparation for multicultural counselling and social justice** as well as investigating the barriers that counsellors experience in their professional roles and the ways that professional education has prepared them to address such barriers. This project has been funded (care of the University of Calgary) for a total of \$88,000 over the next three years.

In December of 2009, **Katherine Janzen** received the AU Excellence in Research Scholarship and the Alberta Heritage Graduate Scholarship for her research on mothers recovering from addictions who lose custody of their children. The goal is to better understand recovering mothers who find themselves in these circumstances. In April 2010 Janzen was also the recipient of the CARNA-TD Meloche Monnex Scholarship for professional and academic excellence (from the Alberta Registered Nurses Education Trust) and in 2010 received the AU Access to Research Tools Award and the Profiling Alberta's Graduate Students Dissemination Award. Janzen has been invited to share the results of her thesis in Washington, D.C., at the sixth international world mental health conference.

Martin Connors has been awarded \$1.3 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and Alberta Science and Research Investments Program for **upgrades to and relocation of the AU geophysical observatory**. AUGO has made significant contributions in the area of magnetic field studies through operation of its associated magnetic detection sites, development of new technologies in instrumentation and networking, and techniques for inversion of magnetic data. Construction will begin by December 2010.



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

In the information age, news is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Websites, newspapers, TV and radio companies race to be the first to trumpet the headlines. The sector has grown to such an extent that media education has been made part of the curriculum in Canada, but there is little training available for teachers. So Canada's leading media educators have teamed up with Athabasca University to deliver a breakthrough online course in media literacy.

Online and distance education experts at AU have joined forces with a group of educators assembled by John Pungente and Gary Marcuse, the originators of the award-winning Scanning Television teaching kit, to produce the powerful resource aimed primarily at teachers.

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave is made up of 13 online units that will make grades seven to 12 teachers proficient in helping their students to understand and appreciate a variety of media forms, genres and technologies. The units are highly interactive and will help teachers develop skills to adapt lessons to their students' needs and their own teaching situations.

Evelyn Ellerman, director of the communication studies program at AU, said: "The title is taken from the description of a cave in Plato's *Republic*. Plato described prisoners who only knew of the world from shadows cast on a wall. Plato used the cave wall shadows as a metaphor for the limits of human perception. The creators of Inside Plato's Cave selected the title to represent the need for universal media literacy in the information age."

Media literacy is a mandated part of the curriculum across Canada, yet there is very little training available at any level. While ministries of education have made an effort to include media literacy in their curriculum documents, the nation's faculties of education have not kept up. Teachers seeking media education professional development find little or no support and have often avoided teaching media studies due to this lack of training opportunity. The new course, which was launched this summer, will address that need.

Connie Morrison, a teacher in St. John's, said: "When I think about this project and the potential it has to change the way our students can be taught I feel as though a giant weight is lifted. This is just what our students need: teachers who have a grasp on the complex media machine and an understanding of how to teach about it. The potential for this project has me awake at night and dreaming of the possibilities."

As teachers work their way through the 13 units, they will encounter Canadian media texts and media theory. This will help them consolidate their new understanding. They will then apply the theory by developing lessons for their own students and teaching situations. Online mentors will be available to provide guidance and feedback.

The course was written and field tested by members of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO) working with Face to Face Media and the Jesuit Communication Project. The project, developed over the past six years, was produced with assistance from Citytv, CHUM Ltd. and the Virtual Teacher Centre.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time AU has ever entered into this kind of partnership agreement," said Ellerman. "The

group approached us last year and asked whether Athabasca University, as a leader in distance and online education, would be interested in delivering the course. We were delighted and agreed to take part," she continued.

"This is the foundation for a long-term partnership with this talented group of educators. In addition, I feel there are other courses that could be developed in this area that are needed by people in the teaching profession.

"We have now formed a joint committee which will review the course yearly to make sure the content is updated. Our partners, who will market the course to teachers across the country, brought all of the content to us along with the marketing infrastructure. We have vetted the content and placed the course into AU systems so students can use it in Moodle."

Also designed for parents and students of communication, the course recognizes that although the mass media has come to dominate many aspects of our society, children have few opportunities to develop media literacy skills in formal settings.

A basic assumption of the course is that media literacy helps children develop an informed understanding of the nature of the mass media, its techniques and its effects. More specifically, media literacy increases their understanding and enjoyment of how the media works – how it is organized and how it constructs reality. The course aims to provide the means by which teachers and others can foster media literacy in children so that they can critically analyze and evaluate the form and content of media, create media, communicate using media and understand its use and purpose.

The course takes a look at Canadian popular culture and includes information on advertising and marketing to teens. It also examines media values and analyzes media languages – how visual, auditory and structural languages combine to create meaning. Also under the microscope are the processes newsmakers use when choosing the day's top stories, movies, prime-time TV and popular music. Participants will also get the opportunity to study how technology is changing the communications industry.

Ellerman said: "Online technologies are leading us to all sorts of wonderful new and exciting possibilities and partnerships, and I'm hoping that we take part in similar collaborations in the future. Collaborations in the online environment allow us to experience new ways of developing and offering courses, helping us to break down the barriers to education and build on our reputation as a world leader in the use of new technologies for learning."

Understanding Media Literacy: Inside Plato's Cave is available from Athabasca University as a three-credit online course offered in two separate disciplines: educational studies and communication studies. The course, which is designated as EDUC 315 and CMNS 315, is suitable for undergraduate and graduate studies and for additional teacher qualifications in the area of media education. Please visit <http://salsa.athabascau.ca/cmns/mediaLiteracy.php> for more information.

This is just what our students need: teachers who have a grasp on the complex media machine and an understanding of how to teach about it.

Community support fuels advancement

By Cathy Nickel

Athabasca University serves a broad and diverse community. The financial support it receives from that community is equally so and is a much-appreciated and valued affirmation of AU's importance in providing open access to post-secondary education. Community support is essential to the university's continued evolution, enabling it to expand in new and different ways to meet changing needs. Everything from innovative programs to an enhanced student experience is made possible, in large part, because the community believes in what Athabasca University does. As the following stories show, support for AU is truly fuelling progress.



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

AU student Stephanie Wilkins reports from outside an Afghan village (actual location CFB Wainwright, Alta).

Broadcasting company opens new vistas for journalism students

Vista Broadcast Group, a leading western Canadian broadcasting company, is helping Athabasca University journalism students, especially those who may someday work in war zones, gain a valuable new perspective. Vista contributed \$75,000 to the Re-imagine Athabasca University campaign to support the Collaborative Journalism Residency Program, a joint project between the university and the Canadian Armed Forces' Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre (CMTC). The program aims to improve the ability of journalists and Forces personnel to work effectively and safely together when news is being reported from conflict areas.

"It's vitally important that people around the world understand what is happening in war zones, but getting the news out can be incredibly difficult," explains Terry Coles, Vista president and chief operating officer. "We're excited to support a project that will prepare journalists for the realities of working in conflict zones and enhance the quality of information people receive. This is an important investment in the future of news and in our industry."

Vista's support will help create a three-week practicum for senior students, to be operated by the CMTC during specific military exercises at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright.

AU community campaign raises nearly \$175,000

Athabasca University faculty and staff turned their pride in and support for the university into dollars recently, taking part in AU's first formal internal fundraising campaign. The effort was part of the university's larger, multi-year Re-imagine Athabasca University community campaign. Together, the family group raised almost \$175,000 in donations and pledges, surpassing the fundraising target. Of the funds raised, more than \$83,000 was dedicated to research and academic activities and more than \$55,000 went to student awards – both areas of high priority for the university. The campaign was co-chaired by three AU volunteers: Lisa Carter (dean, science and technology), Dianne Conrad (director, Centre for Learning Accreditation) and Murray Walford (director, financial services) and actively engaged more than 20 volunteers from across the campus.

"We are overwhelmed with the spirit of philanthropy that exists at AU," says Coy Beaton, senior institutional advancement officer, of the results of this inaugural venture. "We operate in the public interest and our interest is students. This sends a strong message to the outside community that those closest to our mission support the institution. We've proved that giving really does begin at home."



Re-imagine

Couple donates paintings tracing Athabasca's past

During the 20 years they lived in Fort McMurray, Alta., Joyce and Peter Hunt accumulated a wonderful collection of artwork reflecting the northern environment. Today, 20-some paintings call Athabasca University home following their donation from the Hunts.

"We felt this was a natural fit," explains Joyce Hunt. "Athabasca Landing – now the town of Athabasca – was the jumping-off point for early entrepreneurs who travelled the Athabasca River and its treacherous rapids to ship their equipment north. Athabasca University is an innovative institution and its (Athabasca River Basin Research Institute) is focusing on what the river means to the community."

The majority of the Hunt collection comprises works by E. Colin Williams, the first artist-in-residence at today's Keyano College. "Some of his pieces are of historic interest," Hunt explains. "*Winter Carnival* depicts activities in February and March when the winter carnival and dogsled races were held. In the lower right corner are shacks built by mixed-race families in Muskeg Flats. These were bulldozed in the 1970s, and the community destroyed, when Syncrude built high-rise apartments. Colin also captured the boats that plied the river and a section of Fort McMurray called The Prairie where the boats were pulled up every year for maintenance."

Peter Hunt worked with Great Canadian Oil Sands, now Suncor, while in Fort McMurray and has been in the oil and gas industry for 40 years. Joyce Hunt taught at Keyano and has a keen interest in the history of the Athabasca area. She is writing a history of the oil sands from 1870 to 1930 (scheduled to be released in spring 2011). The Hunts currently reside in Calgary.

Your support can make a difference. Find out more about the Re-imagine Athabasca University campaign, creating scholarships and other opportunities at www2.athabascau.ca/giving.

Scholarship fund to offer two \$1,000 awards each year

Barry Walker, Athabasca University alumnus and chair of the governing council, and his wife Valerie have established the Barry and Valerie Walker Scholarship Fund, an endowment that will see two \$1,000 scholarships awarded to AU students every year. In doing so, the Walkers have ensured their support continues for many years; the principal donation remains in place and only the interest generated is used for the scholarships. The funds can exist in perpetuity, helping many, many students over time.

"Endowments are investments that pay long-term dividends," says Thérèse Takacs, director of fund development and external relations. "They are vital for helping to reduce financial barriers that can make it difficult for students to pursue their post-secondary dreams. AU is committed to eliminating barriers, and the support of the community is greatly appreciated for helping us do that."



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Grants support four new AU Press books

AU Press has received two grants that will help it expand perspectives about Canada and affirm Athabasca University's important role in sharing these stories with a wide audience. As part of its public education mandate, Parks Canada provided \$10,000 to support publication of Alberta author Robert William Sandford's *Ecology and Wonder in the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site*, a beautiful full-colour book chronicling the history and ecology of the mountains. "It really is a must-read for anyone who appreciates Western Canada's breathtaking landscape," says Colleen Lathan, senior advancement officer, noting that the book addresses historical issues around water conservation and environmental sustainability. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts provided \$26,000 to support the publication of four books: *Bomb Canada: And Other Unkind Remarks in the American Media*, *Ecology and Wonder in the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site*, *Nightwood Theatre: A Woman's Work is Always Done* and *Letters from the Lost: A Memoir of Discovery*. Grants supporting publishing ventures, Lathan explains, help build the profile of AU Press, which is an essential component of Athabasca University and also Canada's first 21st-century scholarly press. The press reinforces the university's commitment to reducing barriers to knowledge by making works of interest to students, scholars and the general public available on an open access basis. For more information about works published by AU Press or to buy books, visit www.aupress.ca.

Nothing tells the story of Athabasca University better than the success of students and alumni, people who are making their mark on the job and in their communities, succeeding in their professional and personal lives. The 2009 AU Alumni Awards proudly recognized the achievements of four individuals who attest to the university's strong and continuing connection to community.

Distinguished Alumni Award: Corrine Scott

The superintendent of the Winnipeg Police Service, Corrine Scott, graduate diploma in management (2005), MBA (2006), has gone where no woman has gone before: she has held every rank from constable to superintendent, earning numerous professional honours, in her more than 25 years with the WPS. The founder of the WPS Policewomen's Network was the first female aide-de-camp to the Hon. John Harvard, lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, and actively promotes continuing education within the service. She was awarded the Order of Manitoba in 2009. "We live in a knowledge-based world and to be successful, education is important," she says. "This award reaffirms my belief in lifelong learning."

Rising Star Award: Derek Prue

Since founding SkyRider Developments in Stony Plain, Alta., in 2005, Derek Prue, BA (psychology, 1997), BA (English, 2001), MBA (2004), has carved a distinctive niche for his land development, project management and construction company. Its adaptability and flexibility have opened the doors to many projects and the company has earned a solid reputation for its work with First Nations communities. "AU let me move ahead with my education and business goals at the same time," he says. "This award aligns with what I've achieved in the corporate, personal and academic aspects of my life. I'm honoured to receive it."

Future Alumni Award: Teang Tang

Mingle Event Management Inc., a Calgary-based event-planning company that specializes in environmentally responsible events, was set up by president Teang Tang, B.Comm., while she was a part-time student at AU. "The university has given me the tools, skills and knowledge to create the life that I want to lead," she says. "It helped me develop my intrinsic motivation – a key factor in helping me succeed and be true to myself." Of receiving the award, Tang says that she is "honoured that AU has chosen me, proud that I have been recognized and empowered to continue with my business and scholastic endeavours."

Volunteer Service Award: Dr. James Pau

Dr. James Chi Ming Pau, BA (general studies, 1982), has spent the past 35 years helping marginalized people, especially seniors and those with drug addictions, living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. He blends Western and Asian principles to heal body and spirit and, as president of the North American Buddhist Order, is a passionate advocate for world peace and social justice. "I do it because I am human and we should live as a family and help each other," he says simply. "It is very inspiring to receive this award. Even though I have retired, it helps me move forward."

Do you know an AU alum who's making a difference? Send us your nominations by Dec. 31, 2010, by email to aualumni@athabascau.ca or call 1-800-788-9041, extension 7319, for more information about the awards and nomination process.

alumni events

Monday, Oct. 25

Toronto, Ont. 5–7 p.m.
The University Club of Toronto
380 University Ave.

Tuesday, Oct. 26

Ottawa, Ont. 5–7 p.m.
Canada Science and Technology Museum
1867 St. Laurent Blvd.

Alumni Relations is committed to keeping you informed and helping you stay connected. **Visit the AU alumni website at www.athabascau.ca/alumni often for news on valuable services, upcoming events and profiles of fellow alumni.**

Alumni events are held across Canada and all alumni and current students are welcome. We always look forward to bringing together our alumni, students, special guests and faculty. These events are a great opportunity to stay connected with the university and meet people who share a love of lifelong learning. And the food and refreshments are on us.

alumni stories

By Cathy Nickel

Photo: Blaise MacMullin



Amy Sovereign

Taking the career fast track

One of AU's youngest grads is already established in her field

Amy Sovereign was 16 and she had a dilemma.

Home-schooled since kindergarten, she had just completed high school but intuitively knew she wasn't quite ready to leave her Ontario country home for university. She also knew she didn't want to take a year or more away from her studies. Enrolling in Athabasca University proved the ideal solution.

In 2008, Sovereign became one of AU's youngest grads, completing her B.Comm. in accounting at the age of 20. She now works at a small accounting firm in Hamilton and is continuing studies toward her certified general accountant designation and public accounting licence, both of which she hopes to complete within the next 24 months.

Sovereign never questioned whether she would succeed with distance education. Because she was used to studying on her own, it was

a natural progression. "I knew I had the discipline. I took it seriously and tried to keep my AU work in line with what I'd be doing if I were in university – but I didn't give myself a reading break," she says with a laugh. She quickly learned to set a work schedule, get up at 7 a.m. to send emails and be an effective online communicator with professors and classmates.

She admits, though, that it was challenging at times to be out of step with friends her age. "That was definitely different," she says. "I was two years ahead of my friends. We'd be out together socially and I'd say 'I have to go home and study for an exam.' I was focused on university things while they were focused on high school things. Even now, they're in university, and I've been working full-time for two years."

In reality, Sovereign has closer to three years of work experience because she created her own co-operative education experience within the AU program, completing two four-month terms with different employers. "I just decided that it would add to my education, so I approached a number of companies during tax season, when I thought I'd have the best chance of getting a position," she explains. "The employers didn't have any problem with it at all. In fact, they saw it as a real advantage that I was completing my university education by myself and online, which translated into 'this person is disciplined and can motivate herself.'"

"But not many of them knew about AU, so every time I did an interview, I explained what distance education was all about. They were impressed when I showed them what I could do."

In all, the whole AU experience couldn't have fit Sovereign's life any better. "The program is very high-quality. It was a

"I knew I had the discipline. I took it seriously and tried to keep my AU work in line with what I'd be doing if I were in university."

lot of hard work, but I could still live at home," she explains, adding with a laugh, "and on days when there was a blizzard outside, I was quite happy to stay home, go upstairs and get to work without going outside."

She notes that AU offered more flexibility than a traditional class-based environment and she could work when she was most productive. Importantly, AU was affordable, enabling her to work about 30 hours a week on the family farm to help pay for university. "And I always had access to tutors and was able to build personal relationships with them," she says. "Now, when I hear about how my friends struggle to talk to their university profs and have to make appointments, I think how fortunate I was. Some of their profs are focused on research – mine were focused on teaching."

What she's learned in life and through AU she plans to put to work in her own career in the future. "My dream is to one day practice out of my home, work around my family and set my own hours," she says. With her proven drive and discipline, it's only a matter of time.

Finding the potential within

Student credits AU for boosting her confidence

Fermina Nurani, BA (psychology, 2008), celebrated her 15th birthday at 40,000 feet, somewhere over the Atlantic. She was alone, on her way from her native Kenya to a new life in Canada.

Ten years later, that ability to be independent and believe in herself has her on a path to becoming a family lawyer. She's currently working for an oil and gas company in Calgary to gain work experience while taking pre-law studies via distance learning. Thanks to her experience at Athabasca University, she's confident of success.

Nurani enrolled at AU to finish her degree after taking the first two years of the program at what is now Mount Royal University. "It was a big adjustment,"

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she says of the transition to distance education and independent study, but she quickly felt at home in AU's inclusive online community. "I love challenges and don't get bogged down easily. It was a great experience for me. It made me a more mature and developed person in many aspects of my life."

AU, she says, "brought out abilities I never thought existed. I became better organized, more efficient. AU touched a chord and brought out a potential in me that I didn't think I had. Without a doubt, Athabasca University has fundamentally changed me for life. If it's a new environment or a change in my comfort zone, I don't see the boundaries and barriers. I've developed more courage and tenacity."

Those same traits have been very much part of Nurani's life journey to date. Her drive and determination have led her to accomplish more than many people twice her age. She attended boarding schools for most of her early years and, at her parents' urging, moved to Calgary to live with an aunt. She quickly moved out on her own, paying her own bills while finishing high school and working at the same time.

"Without a doubt, Athabasca University has fundamentally changed me for life."

"I had to grow up," she says. "I had to act like a mother: cook, clean, pay bills, go to school."

Finding her career niche took some exploration and help from an AU counsellor – she was good at the sciences and originally planned on dentistry – and she says law is a perfect fit. "I have good writing and oral skills and would always voice my opinions. And," Nurani adds with a laugh, "I'm strong and stubborn." Given the current economic environment, few law firms are hiring first-year law students now, so in addition to her current employment, she is adding to her experience by volunteering as a legal counsellor on social welfare cases, frequently working with lawyers and going to court.

Nurani fully expects that what she learned through AU and the fact that she learned it via distance will be an asset in her future



Fermina Nurani

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

work with clients and in her personal life. "I've become more effective at what I do and how I do it," she explains. "There's more cohesion and structure, which will help me with professional and social relationships. It's a good foundation for the future."

Building a better future

First Nation chief puts AU learning into practice in her community

Photo: Blaise MacMullin



AU Registrar Jim D'Arcy and Deborah Chief

The Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, located just outside Winnipeg, has set economic development and business creation as its top strategy for achieving better living conditions and future self-sufficiency. In recent years it has completed a number of high-profile community and business enhancements – from new houses and a health centre to a new hotel and state-of-the-art water treatment facility and sewage system – and has just purchased 460 acres of land to create a new economic development zone.

Guiding the nation on its journey to greater opportunity and prosperity is Deborah Chief, MBA (2010), the first female chief elected in her community, the first woman from the community to earn a master's degree and the first chief in Manitoba to hold an MBA.

"My MBA degree will enable me to provide strong, reliable leadership for my nation," Chief says. "We've done many noticeable developments in our community and are in the planning stages of more business ventures. I attribute the success of our community to the knowledge I've gained at AU and the leadership skills I've acquired over the years."

Being a chief is a 24-7, 365-day-a-year job, which typically makes it incompatible with traditional models of higher education. AU's distance learning model, by contrast, offered the flexibility and support that enabled Chief to work at her own pace and to complete her MBA.

"I managed to persevere through many unplanned incidents in my community and my life," she says of the years spent working on her degree. "There were times where I just couldn't see myself finishing because there was always something

happening. It took many extra hours and late nights ... but it was worth every minute."

The impact of her academic pursuits was realized quickly, as Chief put what she was learning into practice. In her strategic management course, for example, she learned the importance of planning and resource allocation. "It was like a road map," she explains. "You know where you want to go and it's planning to get there. It was eye-opening from the very beginning."

Now that she has her degree, she says she has greater confidence that she can achieve her goals and dreams. "It has opened my mind for creative thinking and knowing that anything can be done with the right planning and education," she says. "It has opened up the world and the ability to recognize that which is in the best interest of my community."

Chief also says that she hopes the fact that she was able to complete her master's degree, despite the inherent challenges of being chief, will help young people in the community enhance their own education. "I am a firm believer that one needs to lead by example," she explains. "If I can show younger adults that you can achieve your dreams, then I am hopeful that they will choose to pursue their goals and aspirations. I'm constantly relaying the message that education is one of the most important aspects in life, especially for young people."

While her MBA has her name on it, Chief acknowledges that the accomplishment is as much about her community as it is about her own achievement. "My family, my council, my friends, the nation which sponsored me ... I am grateful for all the support I received along the way. Meeqwetch!"

Making learning enticing

Alberta's youngest MLA praises AU's open education model

Manmeet Bhullar, BA (sociology, 2005), believes in the power of an educated community – and he's putting that belief into action.

After more than a decade of community involvement and working with youth, Bhullar "went public" in 2008 and was elected member of the legislative assembly for Calgary-Montrose. At 28, he was then the youngest member of the Alberta legislature and the youngest

parliamentary assistant in the country, serving in that capacity for Alberta Advanced Education and Technology and for Municipal Affairs.

From personal experience, he knows that the one-size-fits-all traditional approach to higher education doesn't always work for everyone. "I'm a strong believer in open education," he says. "People want to better themselves, learn and grow, but there can be too many barriers at most post-secondary institutions. All people in our society need to be educated, not just the top performers. Arguably, those folks are already motivated. We need to give opportunities to all students and create a seamless transition from high school to post-secondary education."

For Bhullar personally, Athabasca University was "the perfect fit," enabling him to earn his degree without giving up his job or his extensive community work. Its open philosophy welcomes all students, not just those who score high marks. "Students like me rarely give 100 per cent to academics," he acknowledges. "I'm the type of person who needed to be enticed into post-secondary education. I saw AU's open university concept and thought it was brilliant."

"Now as an MLA, I see so many young people with so much potential, but they get hung up on a couple of small barriers and don't pursue higher education," he says. "My hope and dream is that we promote post-secondary education and continuous learning in every corner of the world. Every student, including those who never thought they were capable of higher education or never thought it was important, should get an education. Some students grow up in families where generation after generation hasn't completed any post-secondary education. I think that limits our potential as a nation."

He believes that far too often, conversations about increasing access to post-secondary education centre on costs. "But it needs to revolve around how we help people believe in themselves and take positive steps. For those who haven't been exposed to post-secondary education, it will require significant work on our part to say we're going to reduce barriers to help them get into the classroom. Society seems to think the only barrier is money. I'm one of those students who had other barriers."

As an MLA, Bhullar is in a position to promote change. He has championed Motion 508 (to create a provincial

education system that's innovation- and competency-based) and Bill 4 (which allowed Mount Royal and Grant MacEwan colleges to become universities) and is a member of the Province's Inspiring Education Committee.

"We need to shift our focus to say that education is about the empowerment of society as a whole," he says. "Alberta today is in a very good place. Our education system leads the world in many respects. But we need to look at some of the innovative pilot projects being done in the province and make them mainstream. They shouldn't be the exception but the rule – and these small steps can take us far."

"AU is an example of what we're doing right. It says, 'Come in, be educated, empower yourself.'"

"I love that principle." It represents my ideals of spreading education throughout every corner of society. It's not easy to do, but a little creativity and innovation can take us to a whole new level.

"Public education is the most important tool we have to ensure that all kids, and especially those growing up in environments where education isn't appreciated, can thrive. We have to make education more open so more people can get in.

"As a legislator, I'm working toward that."

"I saw AU's open university concept and thought it was brilliant."



Manmeet Bhullar

Photo: Government of Alberta

after the earthquake

By Lynn Schlecker

ALUMNI & STUDENTS



Photo: Ulises Cancino



Photo: Jane Friesen de Cansino

One week after I arrived in Santiago, Chile, an 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck at 3:34 a.m. and lasted 90 seconds – the longest 90 seconds of my life. It is said that this earthquake was so powerful that it shifted the Earth's axis by eight centimetres and may have shortened the length of our day by 1.26 microseconds. Santiago was displaced about 24 centimetres to the west. It didn't end there. Only 20 minutes later there was an aftershock with magnitude 6.2 on the Richter scale followed by two more within an hour measuring 5.4 and 5.6, respectively. By March 6, I had experienced 130 aftershocks, 13 of which were magnitude 6.0 and above. To put things into perspective, the Chilean earthquake was roughly 500 times more powerful than the earthquake that struck Haiti just a month before.

Living in a foreign country is a challenge at best. My Spanish (or lack thereof) has been a major barrier for me, as well as the cultural expectations that have not been met. I have travelled a lot through my work and I know that wherever I am, I will eventually have to deal with culture shock, a malaise set off by the loss of familiar signs and symbols. However, add to this the shock of an 8.8-magnitude earthquake and the loss of electricity, water, gas, communications and worst of all, confidence, and I faced a personal quake of a magnitude that was off the scale.

The day after the quake, I assessed the damage around me. My apartment was a disaster: furniture tipped over and my personal belongings,

some irreplaceable, were lying smashed on the floor. My computer, however, was safe and beside it was the package I had received from Athabasca University: Communication Studies 301. Little did I know how important this package would become to me.

In the next months I buried myself in the books and in the assignments, reading and writing much more than was required by the course. The work helped me cope with the destruction that surrounded me by forcing me to focus my attention on the beauty of the ideas I was studying. Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, Roland Barthes, Stuart Hall, Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan became my constant companions. Their ideas came alive, and I began to understand many more things about my Canadian culture and the other cultures in which I had been living and working for over the past six years.

The benefits of having my course at hand any time and anywhere helped me through some sleepless nights just because I felt connected to something finer than the chaos I was experiencing. I was able to learn in my own style, using the varied suggested resources available on the web, and to reread the material provided in the excellent study guide which is, in effect, a book of summary lectures.

My homework questions, which I answered every second week, were asked from a Canadian perspective. I found this doubly instructive as I could examine my Canadian answer with my Chilean answer. There were rarely fundamental differences; perhaps differences of tone and colour, but not substance.

Tales of an AU communication student living in Santiago, Chile

One such question appeared in Unit 1. We were to describe how technology can effect a shift in world view and how this shift has affected how we live, work and think. I ultimately wrote about Neil Armstrong becoming the first person to walk on the face of the moon and how globalization had become a bona fide shift. But my first thoughts went to the light bulb and all the technology that was subsequently made possible by this invention.

The computer with its seeming omniscience, on which I am now writing this piece, was once only a fantasy in science fiction tales. It is the progeny of the light bulb along with its older cousins, the radio and the television. These tools have made communication almost instantaneous and global; they have facilitated unprecedented economic growth in the last century; space exploration would have been impossible without them; a greater level of education has been made possible for distant communities. I buy books with Amazon, I pay bills with PayPal, I can buy and sell on eBay. From my apartment in Santiago, I can call my family with Skype using real-time audio and video. Facebook helps keep me in touch with the activities of my young nieces and nephews. It has reduced the world to a village.

I have the double privilege of having grown up on a farm in Alberta and being able to spend large amounts of time on a small family farm in the south of Chile. This jewel is owned by Lucho Perez and his wife Ana in the land of lakes, rivers and mountain ranges with active volcanoes, all breathtakingly beautiful. Lucho's farm is humble, not like those of some of his neighbours to the north who have accepted the North American blueprint of industrialized agriculture. Lucho and Ana work from morning's light until dark. They time their chores accordingly, following the rhythm of the days, followed by that of the seasons. Life is slow and relatively simple. Lucho and Ana get up with the sun and allow it to sink only hours before they retire

to bed. Their coal oil lamps do not shed the light necessary to do the rough work outside or the detailed inside tasks.

I remember when electricity came to the farm and when my father installed a lighting system in our barn. More cows could be milked for a longer period of time. The afternoon chores transformed into late-night chores that seemed to last forever. But it was my mother's life that changed the most. Her day now had no natural end. It was only when she turned off the lights that she took rest. My life patterns changed as well. I stayed outside to play under the yardlight, putting off my homework for later. I had, after all, a lamp on my bedside table. I was often tired when I did my homework, drifting off to sleep head on arms.

As soon as the sun sets on their Chilean farm, Ana lights the coal oil lamp. Its circular halo of light defines the distance of the relationship that Lucho has with Ana and that they have with me. Our faces glow with reflected light and we communicate with each other in close proximity, watching every facial nuance. We live as a family around that kitchen table, talking, playing games and singing to Lucho's guitar. Entertainment is in relating and joining in.

I remember when my father brought the television home. We started living a "modern" lifestyle. We started taking our plates in front of the television, sitting in a row on the sofa like birds on a taut wire. The warm yellow light of our lamp, the lamp so similar to Ana's, was now replaced with the bluish glow of the tube. My family stopped communicating with each other as we once did, and that inanimate electronic device took on excessive importance.

Lucho and Ana do not suffer any type of separateness in their lives. They do not have a computer; they do not have a home office where they work around the clock. They do not play poker with people in other countries, nor do they share their personal lives in chat rooms. They rarely eat apart;

they never play, laugh or cry alone. Unlike their neighbours to the north, they do not live alone inside a bubble of technology where communication with family means writing an email or sending a text message.

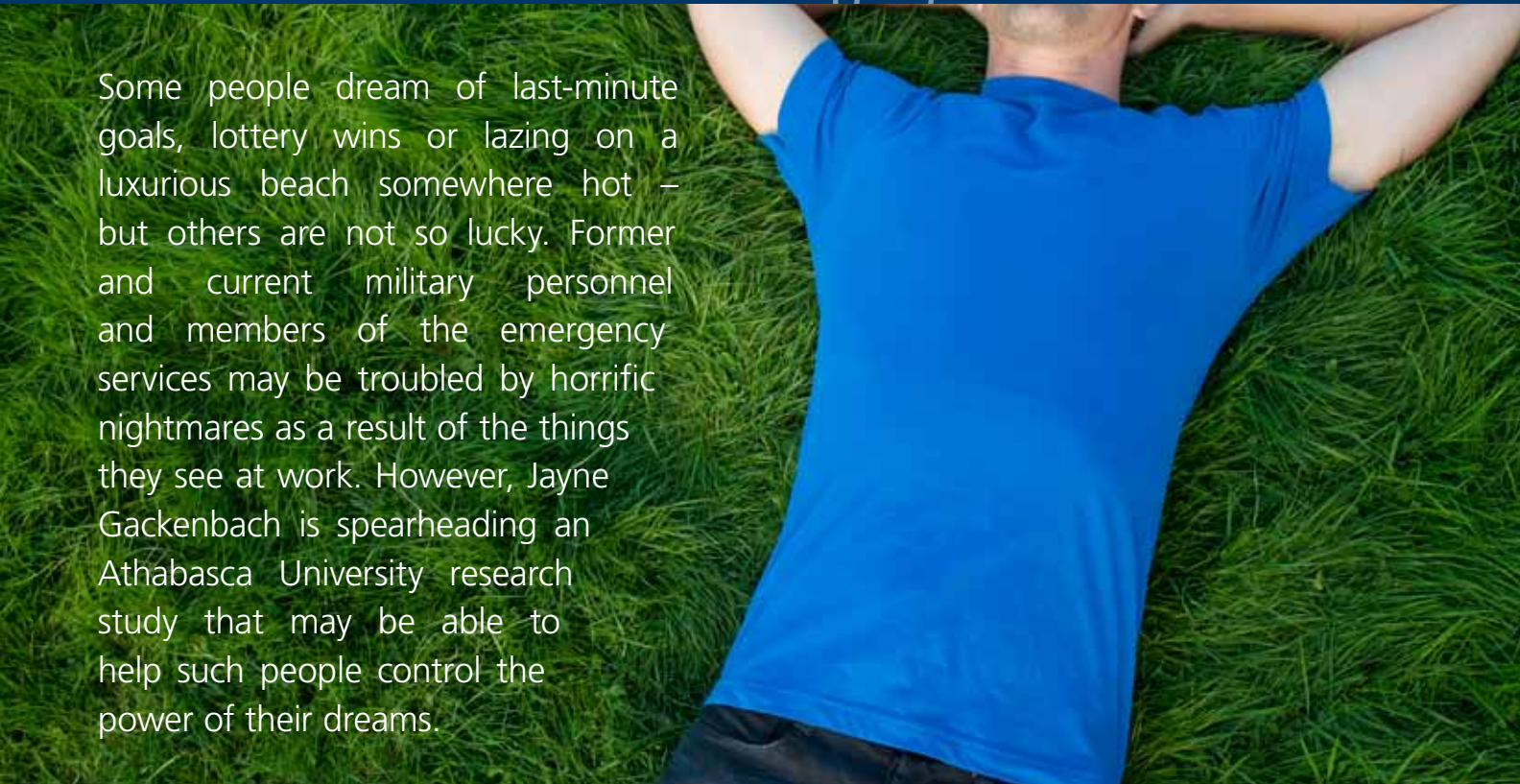
Up until now, I have misunderstood the significance and the consequences that the technological tools I have at my disposal have in my life. I live in Chile, yet I can call my family and friends to see what they are up to in Canada. I don't miss a thing. Or do I? The question asked of me in Unit 1 has forced me to ask a lot of other questions of myself, questions that Lucho and Ana have never asked of themselves. Where do I really live? Where do I belong?

Communication Studies 301 was my stanchion during the aftermath of the earthquake and now it was playing devil's advocate. I never thought a course could do all that. Neither did I think that a course could become a best friend, but it has. Like any good friend when times get tough, CMNS 301 pulled me through intact and with more confidence and understanding of myself and the world I live in. What more can one ask from a friend?



Controlling the power of dreams

By Patrick Mears



Some people dream of last-minute goals, lottery wins or lazing on a luxurious beach somewhere hot – but others are not so lucky. Former and current military personnel and members of the emergency services may be troubled by horrific nightmares as a result of the things they see at work. However, Jayne Gackenbach is spearheading an Athabasca University research study that may be able to help such people control the power of their dreams.

“Patients seem to be mutating into various different types of creatures; some can’t stop eating and are becoming huge, bloated mouths, while others are becoming batlike. I fight my way through the horde of creatures and help several survivors board up the ward. I’m then given documents and am told to warn the government. Throughout the dream I feel tenser, as I have to kill things to survive and climb things with ability beyond that of a normal human.”

The quote above is taken from research that AU communication studies tutor Gackenbach has been conducting into gaming and dreams. It comes from the dream of a soldier and shows how gaming can help people to fight back and become empowered in dreams. It is this aspect of gaming that Gackenbach feels may be able to help combat nightmares, possibly helping to alleviate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

“We have previously found that prolific gamers behaved aggressively in dreams,” said Gackenbach. “While such aggression was rare, when dream aggression did happen, it was more intense. Gamers were also less likely to experience misfortune in dreams. This combination of selective but strong aggression and the lack of misfortune suggested that gamers did not see the threat in a dream as frightening but rather as empowering.”

“The likely chain of events is that heavy gamers who play first-person-shooter- or action-adventure-type genres practice reacting quickly and violently to threat in a game. Thus, when they experience threat in a dream, rather than being intimidated by the threat, they fight back. It seems gamers have more control of their dreams and more control of terror when it comes. Fighting back leads to an improvement in dreams where many of us would feel victimized.”

Gackenbach’s current groundbreaking AU work involves a survey of current and former military personnel that is being carried out in the university’s developing virtual media lab. At the end of July, 69 former and current military service personnel had completed the study, called *Video Game Play as Nightmare Protection*. The research team, which contains a former AU student, has also been contacting Canadian commandants to ask whether any of their staff would like to contribute. Volunteers have been leaving brochures at military bases and calls for participants have been posted online at sites such as www.militarygaming.net.

Research assistant and current AU communication studies student Christie Hall, 32, said: “We are looking for past and current members of the military who enjoy playing video games to contact us so that they can take part in the study. People so

far have been really eager to share their experiences and their feelings and we would like to thank them for their help.

"I think this is very valuable research. It's fantastic to be able to take part in something that will have positive implications for the military. They are people who do an incredibly difficult job and anything we can do to support them is great."

In the AU study, emotional distress and emotional load are measured, the former using a personality analysis and the latter by a survey of trauma history and military deployment. Video game history across time and genre is also investigated. Finally, recent standout dreams are collected and questions answered regarding the collected dream.

Gackenbach, who has been an AU tutor for about 10 years, explained: "It is expected that those who have higher levels of emotional distress with a history of trauma will also report having more nightmare-like dream content. They will also be more likely to report nightmares after various types of life traumas. However, if they have a history of high video game play, especially of the first-person-shooter and action-adventure genres, then these effects are expected to be lessened."

It is this work which has helped thrust the 64-year-old Edmonton academic into the national spotlight. The communication studies tutor has been showcased on television, interviewed by newspapers across Canada and will now be featured

alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Christopher Nolan in a dream documentary which will be released with the DVD of the movie *Inception*. In the DVD Gackenbach talks about her research while DiCaprio and Nolan describe how dreams help to focus the creative process.

"The producers are hoping to get it on TV," she explained. "It's shot as a supplement to the main movie."

When the research is finished, the team will display the material in the virtual media lab, which is currently being developed using Knowledge Infrastructure Program money. Evelyn Ellerman, who is leading the lab project, said: "One of the things that we wanted to do with the lab was to have a research space. Jayne is using the lab as a base for conducting this project."

"We want to demonstrate to the world what AU is doing in learning research using digital techniques and we are hoping to work with other researchers in similar ways."

Gackenbach is keen to stress that people who are currently suffering from forms of trauma cannot take part in the study. Some past and former military personnel have not been able to complete the survey because the questions asked have shown that they are experiencing such stresses. However, Gackenbach says that in general, military personnel have been very supportive.

"We spoke to one Canadian commandant who says that he plays games all the time

and that there are huge advantages to be gained from gaming," said Gackenbach. "I know from the research we have already done that some military personnel who are involved in a war will come back to their bases and game. This enables them to engage these experiences."

Virtual reality simulators have already been used to help recovering PTSD patients, and if Gackenbach's hypothesis is correct, video games could become another arrow in doctors' armoury.

"I don't think anyone has as yet looked at whether there is a protective function," she continued. "It does sound logical but it's still a hypothesis."

"I know there are counter-arguments to gaming such as the risk of obesity and problems with addiction. Also, I'm not saying that gamers do not get aggressive but I am saying that there is a balance to be struck."

In short, dreaming is something that all of us do – rich or poor, men and women, and young and old. Similarly, most of us will have experienced nightmares at some point in our lives. However, this AU study may just help to ensure that more of us – particularly members of the military – have more control of the dream world when the lights go out at night.

Any current or former military personnel who are interested in taking part in the study should contact jayneg@athabasca.ca for more information.

AU's first writer-in-residence: Joseph Boyden



Internationally known novelist and short-story writer Joseph Boyden will share his perspectives with students and community writers as Athabasca University's first writer-in-residence.

A Canadian of Métis, Irish and Scottish descent, Boyden's experiences in northern Ontario aboriginal communities sparked his 2005 debut novel, the Governor General's Literary Award-nominated *Three Day Road*, and 2008's *Through Black Spruce*, which won the Scotiabank Giller Prize. Writing on the third instalment of the trilogy is under way.

"The sharing and analyzing of creativity is a wonderful two-way street," Boyden says of the one-year appointment, which began July 1, 2010. "Having taught creative writing for 15 years, I believe there are so many vital pieces of knowledge a writer in his mid-career can share with hungry young artists. I'm passionate about my own work and think it's absolutely vital to pass on this passion to others."

Boyden will continue to reside in New Orleans while working online with AU students from across Canada and beyond, primarily through the Centre for Language and Literature. He'll also travel to Alberta to present readings and lectures in Athabasca, Calgary and Edmonton, and to meet with community writers.

The one-on-one exchange of ideas and mentorship via virtual visits, online forums and in person will enhance students' communication skills. It is expected to facilitate partnerships with local and national playwrights, writers and writers' organizations and programs, and to increase knowledge and appreciation of Canadian authors through the Canadian writers electronic resource housed at AU.

Funding for the writer-in-residence has been provided by the Canada Council for the Arts.

...In the open

By Eva von Buchenroder

Copyright complications. Bill C-32 promises to make writing research papers even less fun

Copyright has been a hot topic at Athabasca University the last few months. As copyright legislation isn't everyone's idea of enjoyable reading, I thought I'd take a look at Bill C-32 to find out what it means for AU students. While Bill C-32 has many implications for this group, one of the things it will do if passed is make it quite difficult to write research papers.

The bill would restrict students' ability to reference readings from completed courses. Under the legislation, electronic copyrighted course material must be destroyed by the school and students 30 days after the course end date. Say you took a literary theory course last year. Now you're taking a film and genre course. You think readings from the first course could help you understand, and complete assignments for, the second. That's unfortunate, because you won't have those readings anymore. Kind of ironic, isn't it – aren't students supposed to constantly build on their knowledge?

The rules will also set up roadblocks for students who download online articles. The bill lets students receive digital copies of documents such as journal articles through interlibrary loans. But there's a catch. The library must prevent you from, among other things, using the digital copy for more than five days. Most papers and presentations take longer to prepare, so if you're gathering source material, you're going to have to make paper copies of everything. If you travel regularly, say for work, you'll have to carry around a backpack full of paper. Plus you lose the benefits of the digital format. Forget about doing keyword searches or copying and pasting quotes. The Canadian Library Association has expressed doubt as to whether it can even "apply the unreasonable restrictions required" by Bill C-32.

For these reasons alone, the bill sounds impractical. We need copyright legislation that balances the rights of intellectual property owners with those of students; unfortunately, Bill C-32 doesn't do that.



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