NOT HAVING A FETISH FOR MEASUREMENT SINCE 1918

SEPTEMBER 13, 2012 | VOLUME XCIV| ISSUE IV

Serving on UBC's unsung O-line

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THE UBYSSEY

DOOT DOO!

We turn the tables on Nardwuar

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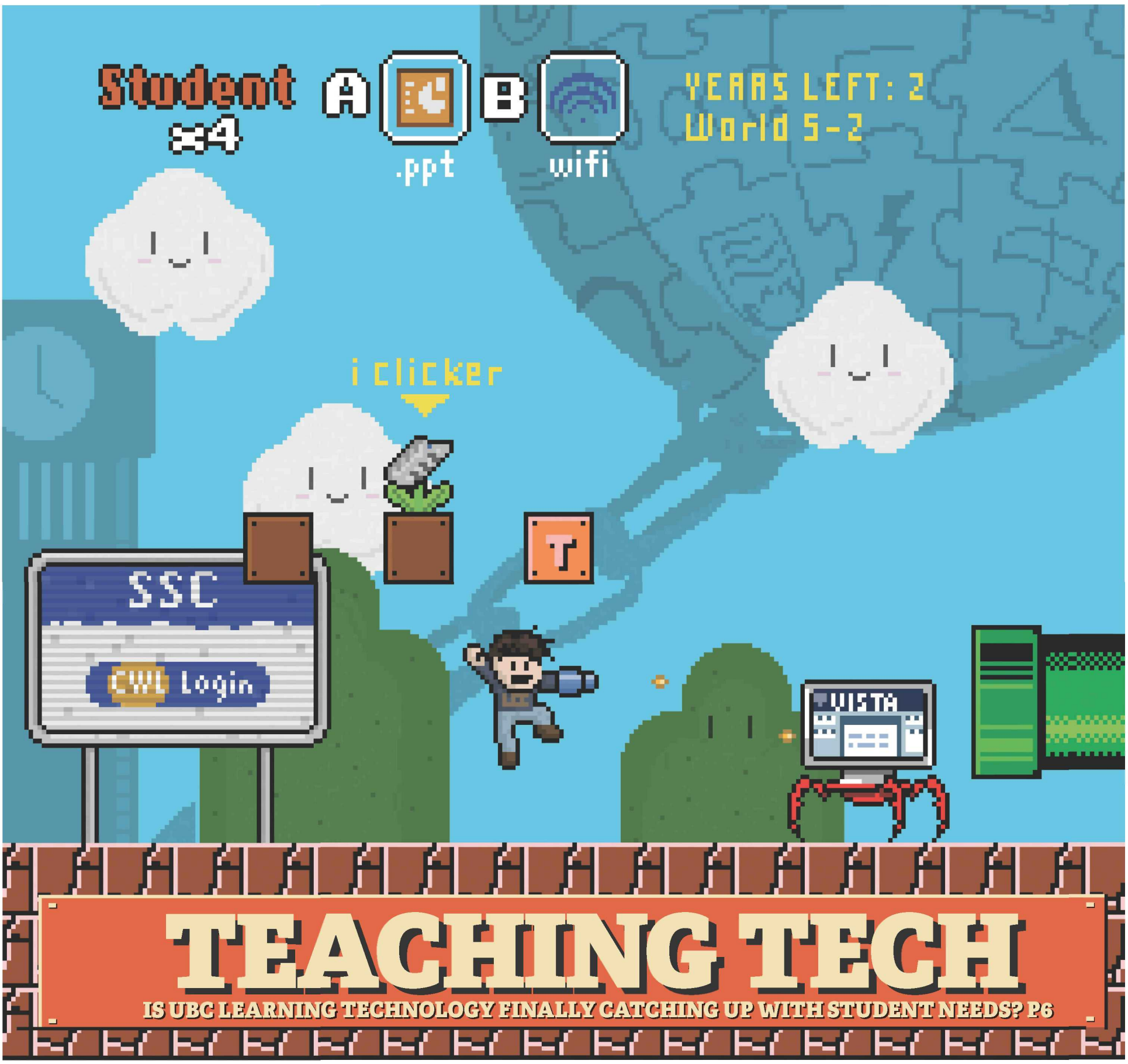

TEACHING TECH

IS UBC LEARNING TECHNOLOGY FINALLY CATCHING UP WITH STUDENT NEEDS? P6

What's on THIS WEEK, MAY WE SUGGEST...

13 THURSDAY — CONCERT »

Live@Lunch finale: 12 p.m.-1 p.m. @ SUB North Plaza
Wrapping up the Live@Lunch concert series hosted by CiTR, pop indie rocker Jay Arner will grace the stage. If you haven't shown up to any of the concerts yet, you should check it out! *Free.*

14 FRIDAY — FESTIVAL »

10th annual FarmAde: 3–8 p.m. @ UBC Farm
FarmAde is back! This all-ages event is for everyone looking to celebrate local food, music and community. Farm veggies, a beverage garden, henna tattoos, bands, square-dancing and more! *Free.*

15 SATURDAY — GREEK »

UBC sororities recruitment: 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m. @ Panhelenic House
Sorority recruitment kicks off with a full day tour. Don't miss the chance to chat with current members and get a better understanding of what each of the eight sororities is all about. *Register at ubcsororities.com.*

16 SUNDAY — OPERA »

Opera Tea in the Gardens: 2 p.m. @ the Botanical Garden
Enjoy some afternoon tea and the stylings of the UBC Opera Ensemble. From recitatives to arias, they will perform an assortment of pieces, all in the dreamy scenery of the lush Gardens. Light refreshments provided. *Tickets $15-20.*

17 MONDAY — GAME DESIGN »

Electronic Arts Employer Information Session: 5:30-7:30 p.m. @ CHBE building
Computer scientist/engineer interested in designing video games? Meet with company reps and get some information on what it's like to work for a gaming company. Discuss career opportunities with EA today!

Got an event you'd like to see on this page? Send your event and your best pitch to **printeditor@ubyssey.ca.**

Video content

Make sure to check out the refreshed Ubyssey Weekly Show, airing now at ubyssey.ca/video

THE UBYSSEY

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OUR CAMPUS

ONE ON ONE WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE UBC

KAI JACOBSON/THE UBYSSEY

UBC graduate Jason Kwan attributes his status as a world-class Tetris player to math skill and a healthy perspective.

Lining 'em up with the best

Arno Rosenfeld
Contributor

Do you ever finish an online game and wonder who the people behind those outrageously high scores are? In the case of "SirJeivus," one of the world's top Tetris players, the face behind the name is Jason Kwan, a recent UBC graduate.

Kwan is currently in the midst of a worldwide Tetris tournament. He's made it into the double-elimination round, and after losing to the No. 1 player in the world last Saturday, he's waiting to face his next opponent this weekend.

Kwan graduated from UBC in 2010 with a degree in chemical engineering. He's been playing Tetris since the beginning of high school. After the online Tetris client he played on was shut down, Kwan went on Tetris hiatus for several years until a cocky classmate compelled him to get back in the game.

"He was thinking he was top gun, so I decided to practice a bit," Kwan explained. Building on his previous experience, Kwan polished his skills and, after a few early losses, started beating his classmate. His past rival has since stopped playing the game, but for Kwan, it was just the beginning. He now ranks in the top 25 on many of the multiplayer games that are the core of the competitive Tetris world.

Kwan, who designs portable lubrication devices for balls and bearings at ATS Electro-Lube, is influential beyond individual games. He has worked with Tetris Online Inc. to detect bugs in the software and promote the game internationally, is planning a trip to Taiwan for a tournament in the near future and regularly posts videos of his gameplay on YouTube.

How did Kwan get to his current level? He says that an understanding of math is important, as well as utilizing all the features of newer Tetris games (like "T-Spins," a feature which lets pieces fit into tight spots).

Finding a good platform to play on is important, too. Kwan's preferred site is tetrisfriends.com because it doesn't suffer from lag time as much as other sites, like the Facebook Tetris client. That lag might not be noticeable to the average player, but when you're clearing 40 lines in 27.2 seconds like Kwan, speed is essential.

There's more to Tetris than what most people experience when they're looking for a quick distraction or study break. Kwan participates in Tetris "battles," where opposing players actively attack each other by sending lines of blocks into their opponent's game. He attributes Saturday's loss to Japan's hebo_MAI to poor defensive tactics, which become an issue in advanced Tetris play.

When he's not playing Tetris, Kwan likes to play other retro games like Super Mario. In his current Facebook profile picture, he pays homage to the game by sporting the Italian plumber's overalls and signature hat.

Despite his prominent status in the Tetris community, Kwan keeps a healthy perspective on life. "Even though I play Tetris competitively, I always maintain that you should play for fun," said Kwan.

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GOVERNANCE »

COLIN CHIA PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

The survey won't take place until after the UNA's annual general meeting and election on September 26 at the Old Barn.

UNA to survey residents on services, demographics

'Census' of UBC's residential neighbourhoods may not ask about governance void

Ming Wong
Senior News Writer

University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA) residents will soon get a chance to voice their opinion on a variety of topics, possibly including future UBC governance options.

The UNA is continuing with their 2011 plans to conduct a community survey of their constituents, including potential questions that ask residents to comment on future governance options. However, Kiran Mahal, AMS VP Academic, contends that it is not certain whether there will be governance questions at all.

"There has been no decision made that governance questions will in fact be asked," said Mahal. "If there ends up to be questions on governance, we don't know what they will be yet, so it's a little premature for us to see how this survey will impact the issue of governance moving forward."

The last time the UNA conducted a census-like survey was in July 2008, and the demographic data collected then does not reflect the current UNA population, which has grown to an estimated 6,000 residents.

Alongside any potential questions on governance, the survey will ask residents of the five UNA neighbourhoods to comment on their household compositions and level of satisfaction with community services and programs. Soon to be carried out by the outside market research firm Ipsos Reid, the survey will not move ahead until after September 26, when a new UNA board is elected.

Prod Laquian, the chair of the UNA, said that the data gathered will mainly be used to help with community management. According to Laquian, the data should be available to the board next year. Any questions on governance would be used to gauge UNA residents' opinions on potential governance options.

Students in accommodations outside the UNA jurisdiction, such as UBC Housing, will not be surveyed. Laquian said in an email that there might be future town hall meetings to discuss the results of the survey. "All stakeholders, including students, will be welcomed as participants in those meetings. There is no intention to limit anyone, certainly not students, in the discussions on governance."

Mahal said that the AMS does have a policy on governance and stands by the fact that students do have a voice in any future decisions.

"Students do need special representation ... on the campus, because it is a university," said Mahal.

Maria Harris, the director of Electoral Area A, which includes UBC, said she hasn't committed to any specific governance plan going forward.

"It's important to have a local government that's effective and legitimate in the eyes of the local constituents, but I'm open on what particular form it would take," said Harris.

Despite the fact that Metro Vancouver has previously expressed an interest in conducting their own survey on governance, Harris said the city is more concerned with regional issues than problems unique to UBC.

"Metro Vancouver's interests arise out of the fact that with the growing population at UBC, local decisions increasingly affect the region and regional decisions affect more and more people locally," said Harris.

Mahal added that the provincial government will be the ones to commission an external governance review, but before that could happen, there must be consensus between all parties that make up UBC.

Laquian said UBC is in a unique governance situation, and he doesn't know how the future will play out.

"All of us who are currently living on the UBC campus are engaged in an exciting experiment," said Laquian.

NEWS BRIEFS

CUPE 2950 prepares for strike vote in October

The union representing clerical workers at UBC's libraries and hospitals, CUPE 2950, has decided to hold a strike vote on October 25. The union has been in negotiation with UBC since 2010, but a new collective agreement has not yet been reached. Union President Nancy Forhan said that the union and UBC had already ironed out some non-monetary issues between the parties, but they are still stuck on negotiating pay increases. Forhan said that she was hoping the university would come back with another proposal before October, but she expects the strike vote to pass if it is held.

UBC to get electric vehicle charging stations

UBC will get 10 electric vehicle charging stations as part of a program partially funded by the province to put 450 charging stations across B.C. The stations are expected to be completed by March 2013.

Elie Wiesel awarded honorary degree from UBC

UBC granted an honorary degree to Elie Wiesel on September 10. Wiesel won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his global work in support of oppressed people, stemming from his personal experience during the Holocaust.

"In his quest for truth and justice, Professor Wiesel inspires the world to a higher moral vision," said UBC President Stephen Toope. "He bears witness for the defenceless and brings a message of hope."

TOWN HALL »

UBC prez talks transit, housing at annual town hall

Laura Rodgers
News Editor

In UBC President Stephen Toope's annual town hall Q&A on Monday, he was cautiously optimistic about the future of the university.

The one-hour event saw Toope touch on some of UBC's most prominent issues: government funding, student housing and rapid transit.

In an interview segment between Toope and Peter Klein, director of UBC's School of Journalism, Toope first discussed what's become the bane of many students this year: widespread construction.

Klein asked why, in a time when university funding is seeing a signficant crunch, there is ground being broken for so many new buildings on campus. Toope's quick response was that the capital funding for many of the new projects around campus was committed before the upcoming funding cuts.

Those cuts are expected to be one per cent less next year and two per cent less the year after for the entire provincial post-secondary budget. "There will be more financial pressure on the unversity," said Toope. But he also mentioned the volatility of the situation, given an upcoming provincial election in May. "Of course in the pre-election period, there are conversations happening with the official opposition," Toope said.

KAI JACOBSON PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

Stephen Toope answered questions from School of Journalism director Peter Klein.

He acknowledged that, although UBC maintains a large stock of student housing, it still isn't enough to meet the needs of students, faculty and staff trying to live in one of the least affordable cities in the world. "[Housing] is the single greatest issue in recruitment and retention of faculty and staff, and students," said Toope. He said UBC was "working hard on the student housing front" and noted the commitment to add 1,400 more student beds to campus by 2015.

Although he went into detail about housing affordability for faculty and staff, he focused his attention on the availability of student housing, not on its price.

On the topic of transit, Toope counted the high use of transit to and from campus as a success for the environment. But he was also aware of the amount of frustration over overcrowded bus lines. "We also know that, for many students, the U-Pass has become the Pass-U," he said. He added that he was in favour of rapid transit to campus, and planned to work with the City of Vancouver to develop solutions.

He also mentioned the limited availability of child care on campus. "We're trying to find new child care opportunities whenever we're building out in new construction," said Toope.

After the interview segment, Toope only had time to take two questions from the crowd. One was about the relocation of Acadia Park's student families to smaller housing units, which he dismissed by asking the questioner to "look at the bigger picture" — i.e., the fact that there is other student housing being built elsewhere on campus at the same time.

After a quick query about whether or not UBC's libraries should be centralized or not, the event ended abruptly with a student hoping to ask a question still waiting at the mic.

TRADES »

Students get hands dirty in new horticulture program

KAI JACOBSON/THE UBYSSEY

Will McDonald
News Editor

At UBC, a new technical program is growing.

For the first time, UBC is offering a one-year program in horticulture starting this September. There are currently 15 students enrolled in the program.

Students not only learn the science behind horticulture, but also take part in the physical labour required to grow plants.

Doug Justice, the program's director, said that graduates of the program have a variety of employment options. In the public sector, there are obviously gardens and parks. "At UBC, the Botanical Garden needs gardeners. Every city in the Lower Mainland has a parks board,... so there's a fair demand for gardeners there, but there's an even greater demand in the private sector."

Run through the UBC Botanical Garden, completion of the $5,500 program entitles students to enter Level 2 of the B.C. Provincial Horticulture Apprenticeship Program.

Justice said that he had to jump through a number of hoops before starting a vocational training program at UBC.

"UBC administration is not really used to vocational training, and this is something that is outside of the realm of education at the university," said Justice.

"Maybe it isn't a direct reflection of the university, but it makes the Botanical Garden a better botanical garden," said Justice. "[It] will ultimately reflect on the university, but maybe not in the way that the university sees itself in the world, which is as a research and teaching university."

Program director Todd Major said that he had concerns about whether the hard work of horticulture would appeal to young people.

"I've had people come to work for me and [say], 'Do I get an office? Is there a computer? Is there an app for that?' It's like, no, there's no app for that, it's called a shovel; you dig," said Major.

Major added that UBC is a school where most students use their brains, not their bodies.

"These people live in their heads; they just have bodies to carry their minds around," said Major. "The younger generation today is definitely technology-focused, and frankly, from my own experience, don't want to get their hands dirty and they are lazy. And if they're not in a white coat or a lab or a corporate office or a bank, they're not interested."

But, according to Major, if students can get past their aversion to manual labour, horticulture is a rewarding career.

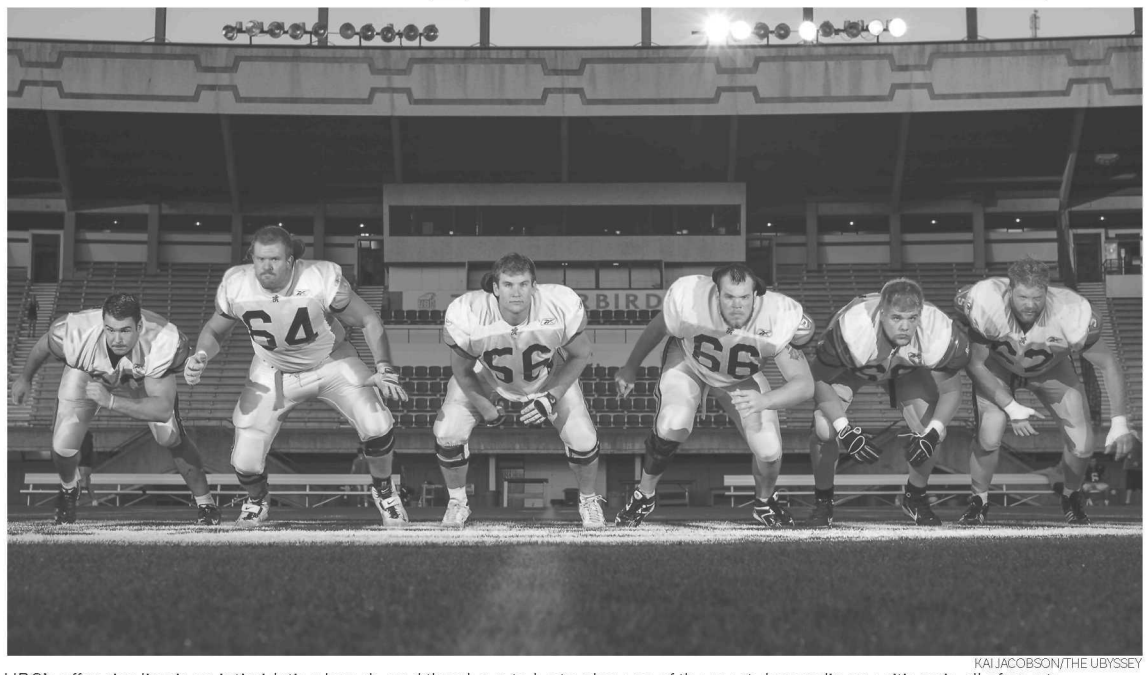
"I come home every night and I say to myself, 'I planted another tree, planted a shrub, everybody's breathing my oxygen.' You know, I sleep at night knowing I've done something good."

—With files from Christy Fong

FOOTBALL »

UBC offensive line paves the way to success

Zafira Rajan
Senior Lifestyle Writer



KAI JACOBSON/THE UBYSSEY

UBC's offensive line is an intimidating bunch, and they have to be to play one of the most demanding positions in all of sports.

They're the silent guys behind the scenes: the guys doing the jobs that no one wants to do. They're only noticed when something goes wrong, and they love it. That's the Thunderbirds' football offensive line for you.

"They are the heart and soul of the team, in the sense that they don't have notoriety about them," said head coach Shawn Olson. "They're usually working pretty hard, and are an anonymous group that often has to do a lot of the dirty work in situations."

Fourth-year offence player Kelly Kurisu agreed. "For us, there's just the expectation that we'll get our noses dirty, and it's part of the position. We love it and we embrace it."

That "dirty work" can only be successful if the team has built up a certain level of trust in and respect for each other, as well as confidence in the knowledge that they'll each make the plays they're supposed to out on the field.

Fourth-year Steve Zakrzewski reinforces this idea: "We're just such a tight-knit group, and it's not about individual glory. The majority of us have been working together for a long time, so that has built up some good chemistry.

"If the offensive line doesn't all do the right jobs, the play's not going anywhere, so we know how much we have to rely on each and every one of the five guys that's in there.... I think we really draw from a good dynamic."

The team has been working alongside each other for four years now, with the recent additions of first-years Gord Randall and Alec Pennell. "We're one big family," Pennell said.

"They were a really welcoming group of guys," added Randall. "It only took about two or three days of training for us to fit in, and I give full credit to these guys for welcoming us in so well."

Kurisu agreed. "Gordy and Pennell pick up what we're doing, and it's like they've been here the whole time. We're all really close, on the road and off the road; we go out to eat or for a beer together all the time."

A tight team often equals a good game, but even so, the guys on the offensive line rarely get any recognition. "Most people don't really see or appreciate them," Olson said. "They only see the people that throw or catch or score points,... but the offensive line are the guys who clear the space to make sure that that happens."

"It's pretty rough for us. We don't really have a lot of backups, so we're getting most of the reps in practice," second-year Ethan Schnell said.

"And none of the glory!" added player Donovan Gratton, amidst nods and laughter.

But it's not the glory that they need to keep going; they rely on each other for encouragement on the field. "I don't think it's the recognition from anyone else that motivates us," Zakrzewski said. "It's when we make a nice block and we all know that we did it together."

Pennell agreed: "We're not really huge talkers,... but when we make a nice block, we recognize each other and that fires it up!"

The offensive line carries certain stereotypes, but Olson adamantly pushes them aside. "Often they are quite big, so they have the reputation of just being the big fat guys, but they are actually very good athletes, and quite often have to block the best athletes on the defence," he said.

"In fact, they are probably the more intelligent members of the team, because they have to think very quickly, understand a lot of different schemes and angles, and know how to react on the run."

Each player said he enjoyed different parts of the game. For Kurisu, it's the competitive element, and Schnell relishes "the physical challenges of the game: it's either you or him, someone's going to win and someone's going to lose."

But the greatest feeling for them all? "There's nothing better than when it just comes down to pure man-on-man battle."

They love what they do and they're perfectly happy staying out of the limelight by giving each other the recognition they deserve. Together, they truly define teamwork and passion for the sport.

HANDBALL »

Handball-room blitz

Nic Roggeveen
Contributor

KAI JACOBSON/THE UBYSSEY

The UBC handball club features fast-paced games with no shortage of jump-throws.

While the Summer Olympics allow the masses to gawk at the incredible athletic feats of the Michael Phelps and Usain Bolts of the world, the quadrennial event also gives lesser-known sports a chance to shine on a global stage. One of the fastest, most physical, exciting and spectator-friendly of these sports is handball.

Paul Kim, co-founder and operations manager of the UBC Handball Club, hopes that his club can take advantage of the sport's recent Olympic exposure. Kim feels that this international recognition will help grow the sport and raise interest on campus. "I'm sure we'll see some more people ... asking a few more questions," said Kim.

Upon his arrival at UBC, Kim discovered that there was no club or organization on campus that would allow him to continue playing the sport he loved. "A bunch of my friends from high school and I came to UBC and we were looking for a UBC handball league," said Kim. "It was something we played in high school and we loved it."

Unable to find a league, he and his friends decided to make their own. The UBC Handball Club, now in its third year, was founded by Kim, Peter Deng and a few other friends in 2009.

In this team sport, six field players and a goalkeeper from each team are on the floor at once. The objective of handball is to dribble or pass the ball down the floor and throw it into the opposition's net (similar to basketball). Played at a breakneck pace, the game is all about offence; often, both teams score at least 20 goals each, and it is not unusual for teams to score upwards of 30.

The club plays what Kim described as a "watered-down intramural version" of handball, as opposed to the European version played at the Olympics.

"It is simpler, smaller, easier to pick up, easier to play, more of a friendly atmosphere and not nearly as competitive," said Kim.

More importantly, the club's version is designed to make the sport more accessible and attractive to novice handballers. In European handball, a player can take an unlimited number of steps with the ball if they dribble, whereas the intramural form limits the number of steps a player may take with the ball.

"A limited number of steps makes it so you have to pass, you have to play and use your teammates," said Kim. "Kind of an idea that being able to make new friends here is also a big thing."

Despite not playing the European version of the sport, the club still attracts a number of European exchange students. "Quite often we get a lot of attention from international sources," said Kim. "We had someone from Switzerland email, since they were thinking of coming out to UBC on an exchange and were wondering about handball."

The club is constantly looking for new members, and encourages people of all skill levels to join.

Drop-in sessions are on Tuesdays from 4–6 p.m. and Wednesdays from 2:30–3:30 p.m in the SUB Ballroom. Membership is $7 for one semester or $10 for all year.

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INDIANA JOEL ILLUSTRATION/THE UBYSSEY

Nardwuar the Human Serviette has been a DJ with CiTR since 1987.

CiTR »

Nardwuar instructs a new crop on rockin' in the free world

Rhys Edwards
Senior Culture Writer

Name a popular artist or band who has recorded in the last 20 years, and there's a good chance they've been interviewed by radio DJ Nardwuar the Human Serviette.

Nardwuar, who regularly hosts CiTR Radio, plays in two Vancouver bands and has worked extensively with MuchMusic, is infamous for his eccentric interviewing style and meticulous knowledge of his interviewees. On Monday night, Nardwuar visited the Norm Theatre to play clips from his video vault of interviews. The clips span his earliest days in high school right up to the present, but they comprise only a fraction of the hundreds of filmed interviews that Nardwuar has conducted over his career.

Highlights included GWAR frontdemon Oderus Urungus's opinion of Viagra, Snoop Dogg microwaving a blunt, and Blur drummer Dave Rowntree tearing up Nardwuar's notes and stealing his glasses. In the face of oft-unpredictable music personalities, how does the Human Serviette keep going?

"I've done the research and I want to ask the questions. I've spent a couple weeks researching these people, so I don't just want the interview to end.... Once the questions are over, I get the hell out of there," said Nardwuar, who lives by the mantra "always have an escape plan."

Nardwuar never studied in a formal journalism program; he got a history degree at UBC (his thesis: the assassination of President Kennedy). Instead, he threw himself headlong into CiTR, whom he credits for both his training and for providing the contacts that have led to many of his interviews.

> "Once the questions are over, I get the hell out of there!"
>
> **Nardwuar**
> The Human Serviette

"I love [CiTR].... The listeners on CiTR are unrelenting, they will phone up and say you suck. Even after I've been on the air all these years on the radio, they'll still phone me up and go, 'Nardwuar, you suck,' and I love that. I love being challenged constantly. Campus radio is the best. You get to learn right on the air."

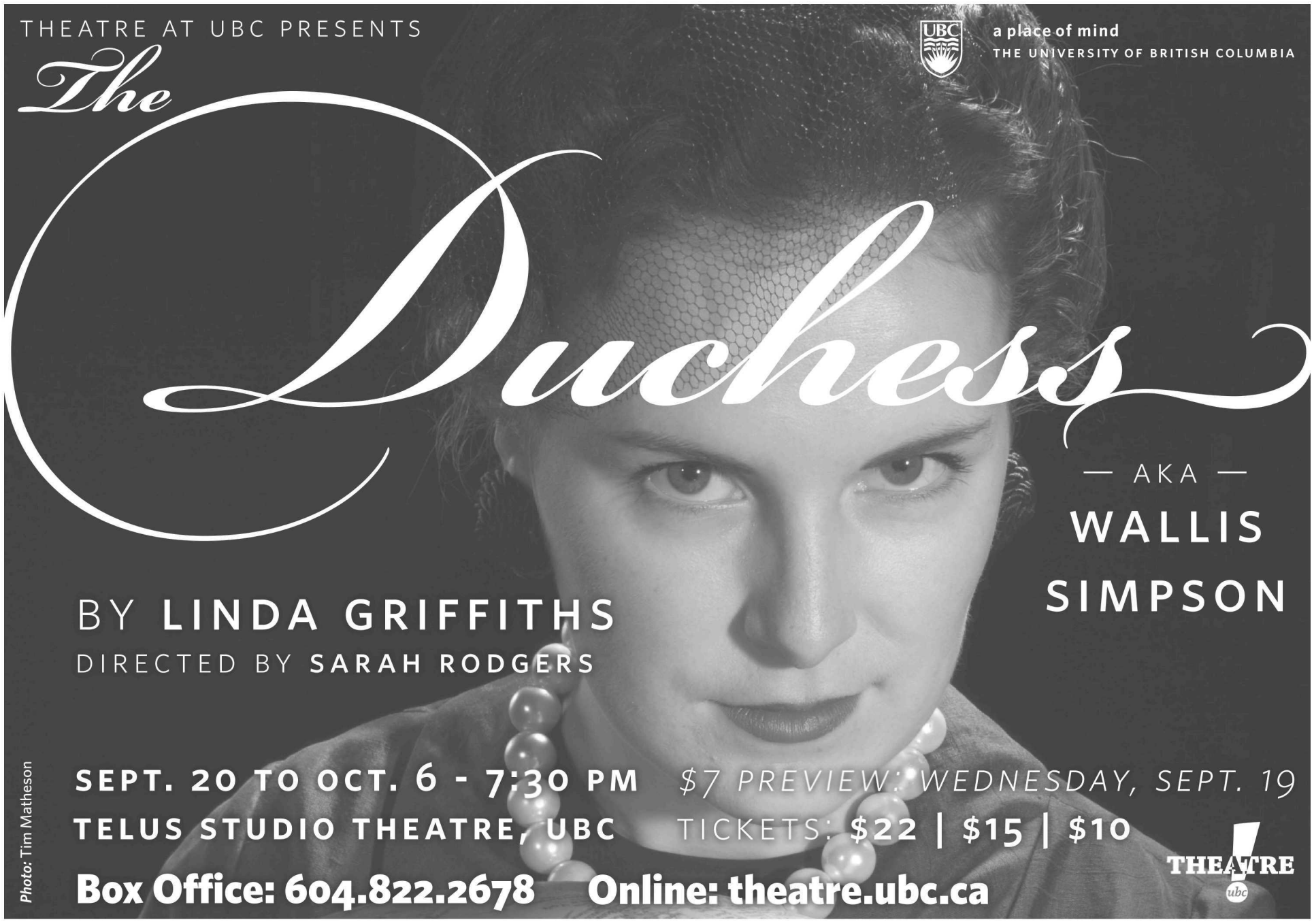
But decades before the Serviette became a recognized face, one of his most important mentors was his own mother, who coincidentally wrote a regular column for *The Ubyssey* in the late sixties. Said Nardwuar: "My mom totally inspired me, because she was a writer, so she got me into appreciating history and doing reviews and doing interviews and stuff." She later worked for the Toronto Star, and penned a history of Gassy Jack, Gastown's namesake.

As Nardwuar often presents objects of personal importance to his interviewees, we decided to pull a Nardwuar on Nardwuar, and give him some excerpts from his mother's writing. Just like most of his interviewees, he was both surprised and delighted.

The key to Nardwuar's ability to find good stories is not in his character or his taste in toques, but in his total commitment to learning, creating connections and asking unusual questions. Rather than treating interviews as a routine, Nardwuar actively provokes interesting discussion in whomever he speaks to, whether it's Mikhail Gorbachev or Skrillex. Perhaps most importantly, he never permits himself to believe he knows everything about his interviewees, or journalism in general.

"I think the day I learn how to do interviews is the day I should quit," he said, "because that means I won't know what I'm doing."

Nardwuar broadcasts every Friday on CiTR, 101.9FM, from 3:30–5 p.m. Also check out our extended video interview with Nardwuar online at ubyssey.ca



LEARNING LEVEL UP!

THE UBYSSEY'S LEARNING TECH SUPPLEMENT

If you're a student currently attending university, there's a high chance you grew up during the most recent tech boom. Though technology has permeated into the classroom over the past few decades, students currently entering academic institutions offer a unique perspective. Unlike those before them, the notion of using technology in education isn't novel, it's expected. From lecture capture to online office hours, tech tools are increasingly relied upon in higher learning. In this supplement, we look at how classroom technology is catching up with its students.

—Natalya Kautz, features editor

IS A TOTALLY VIRTUAL CLASSROOM SO FAR OFF?

Natalya Kautz
Features Editor

Open Firefox. Go to class.

With technological progress, the idea of the virtual classroom has gained momentum. As the days of squeaky chairs become passé, pressure mounts for online learning to offer a viable alternative.

"Over the past 16 years this has evolved, there's been waves of change that have come through. First,... the Internet being something where you're just delivering content. Then it became more lately around engagement and social," explained Michelle Lamberson, managing director of UBC's Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLC).

The online classroom has gone through many iterations. In 1996, UBC computer science faculty member Murray Goldberg designed Web Course Tools, or WebCT, which began a new way of thinking about online learning.

"It started as a place for people who are just looking to put up their PowerPoint notes, and now there's a much higher expectation, particularly when it's your classroom," said Lamberson.

With the phasing out of WebCT Vista, UBC hopes to meet those expectations. The switch to Blackboard Connect, which is planned for January 2013, is intended to create a more comprehensive online environment that encompasses much of a student's academic life.

Blackboard Connect aims to provide flexibility, though Lamberson feels there are always limitations.

"Making a one-stop shop for everything is almost impossible."

"'Virtual classroom' is a bit out of date, in a sense," said Novak Rogic, the manager of web strategy for the CTLT.

"It was something with the promise of digital, but then digital never really delivered on that promise and could never capitalize on its potential."

He feels that UBC's commitment to more open-source technology is critical for successful digital communities.

"With using open platforms, you can evolve your presence in a very rapid way, in a way that can never be possible in a closed system like Connect. It's not really a replacement for Connect; Connect does wonderful things," said Rogic.

"We cannot judge, we cannot say it's good or bad. It's happening, so we have to be innovative and bring new concepts and fight for our audiences."

UBC's extensive network of blogs and projects like the UBC Wiki are administered through the CLTC.

In the case of distance learning, the online environment is charged with providing the entire instructive experience. For the students enrolled in UBC's 120+ distance courses, that is their learning space.

"I teach EOSC 311, which is a fully online distance course, and I have to look at that as my classroom," said Lamberson.

UBC's distance program relies mainly on these learning management systems to create a sense of community, through tools like discussion boards, real-time chat and video. Even the traditional office hours are converted to an online format.

Jeff Miller is the senior manager of UBC's distance and blended learning program. He feels open platforms offer the potential for student interaction over great distances, but also over time.

"Whereas typically the learning space within the learning management system is set so that it is just open and available just during the life of the course, we have Wiki structures that might go back five or eight years, maybe 10 years," he said.

But the effectiveness of even the most advanced system ultimately comes down to its users. Miller felt at times the open structure made scheduled interaction difficult.

"Students are often working late into the evening; they're working on the weekend. They're in their courses all through the week, but typically not during the day," he said.

"There is a lot of flexibility, but they still need engagement. If students don't commit, they often end up in some difficulty."

For some, this difficulty is attributed to a perceived lack of rigour in online learning.

"In distance courses, people have said, 'There's more work here than you would expect for a distance course,' and I was like, 'What do you mean by that?'" recalled Lamberson.

She felt this perception was fundamentally misguided.

"The delivery process isn't what's controlling the level of rigour. It's how the course is designed, how the faculty member approaches it," she said.

"How the tools are used is very much a function of what the particular faculty member is using [in] that particular course environment."

For Rogic, the possibilities exist. It's what faculty and students make of them that counts.

"We have this technology framework where you can deliver any kind of experience you imagine. It's really up to the imagination of faculty members."

UBC EXPLORES ADOPTING LECTURE CAPTURE, EXAM DATABASE

Maityree Dhaka
Contributor

In the competitive world of higher education, students and schools alike are always looking for an edge.

Popular online resources like Open Course Ware (OCW), Coursera and the Khan Academy are allowing students unprecedented access to lectures and course material. At many institutions, the question is no longer if online resources should be part of teaching and learning practices, but rather when, and why not already?

But at UBC, many such resources have not been released. The promised exam database remains elusive, and the idea of lecture captures is still nascent.

Kiran Mahal is the VP Academic of the AMS; her job is to advocate for students' academic needs to university administration and organizations.

One of her current priorities includes the creation of an exam database for students. Though the idea of the database was presented to the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee last year, Mahal felt the issue has not been properly handled.

"They didn't quite understand what we were asking for. There was some miscommunication between what they thought we wanted and what we were asking for."

Support among students seems to be clear. In the recent AMS Academic Survey, close to 90 per cent of first-years indicated that the exam database would be a positive learning tool and would decrease stress before exams.

"It's not just about the exam, it's about having that confidence to know you're doing okay in your courses," explained Simon Bates, academic director of UBC's Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT).

"Notwithstanding issues over copyright and IP, I think it's a good idea and can understand the student's motivation."

Other Canadian institutions have already set the precedent for exam repositories. At McGill University, students have come to expect the resource.

"This was in response to student requests to have a choice of printed coursepacks or online resources that the library already had acquired distribution rights for," explained Laura Winer, associate director of Teaching and Learning Services at McGill University.

"The professors choose whether to make past exams available and they currently are actively inviting professors to contribute."

But at UBC, concerns over copyright still plague the proposal.

"Myself and my associate VP are writing a revised proposal. It's going to go to the Senate Learning and Teaching meeting in September or October. The proposal addresses concerns brought up by the committee and the deans," said Mahal, adding that it includes a letter of support from each of the undergraduate societies.

Aside from copyright issues, Mahal identified a lack of understanding that often exists within faculties regarding student demands. She hopes the revisions will work to bridge the gap.

Mahal noted that the administration's confusion over what students want is behind their slow movement to use other technologies that are already at universities like McGill, such as video lecture capture.

At McGill, Winer explained, faculty members are responsible for spearheading the online resource initiative.

"There has always been a core group of professors who are eager to experiment with new teaching and learning environments. Faculty members have always been involved in the selection and implementation of major systems."

McGill's lecture capture system currently makes recorded class lectures available online to students within 24 hours.

However, UBC faculty have raised concerns over lecture attendance and classroom engagement — concerns Mahal doesn't place much stock in.

"Across the board it has shown that it doesn't affect student attendance and students don't think it's a replacement for going to the lecture," she said.

"Studies have shown that students are more engaged in class because they feel less pressure to transcribe the entire lecture. They are more inclined to ask questions."

Bates agreed strongly with the research.

"Class time is a precious resource. We need to optimize it so students can extract the maximum amount of value," he said.

Bates believes lecture capture could be especially useful at UBC, where international students can encounter language issues.

"You won't have students saying, 'You speak faster than I can understand. If I can't follow the language, there's no way I'm going to be able to absorb the technical concepts.'"

However, Bates warned about rushing into technological progress.

"Lecture capture over the last five years has become quite the fashionable topic," Bates said. "They've gone and put the technology in, and in some cases spent an awful lot of money kitting out lecture theatres without really understanding what the education question is. It's the cart before the horse."

Despite the eventual success, Winer felt difficulties were inherent with transitions.

"The biggest challenge is time: time for training, time for development.

"The rationale for developments must always be framed in terms of their impact on teaching and learning.... Guidelines and policies need to be developed to provide guidance."

With this in mind, Bates defended UBC's caution.

"Faculty are conservative in the sense that they don't want to rush into things that may be detrimental to students, and sometimes it's really hard to change them," he said.

"It's not that there isn't a will to do it. Sometimes it just takes a longer time than from the perspective of an individual student."

Even so, Bates felt online resources had an unprecedented opportunity to benefit students.

"There will be 18-year-olds coming to this university who have never known anything other than technology. Then it's not about technology as a separate part of learning. Technology is learning."

DECORATING »

Making that 1-year lease feel like a home

Kayi Wong
Contributor

You might be living in your dorm or apartment under a one-year lease, but the effort you put into personalizing that space will pay off in the long run. Good decor can turn your home into an inviting, unique conversation starter. Use the tips below to embark on a mini home improvement project with a student budget.

Treat your wall like a blank canvas

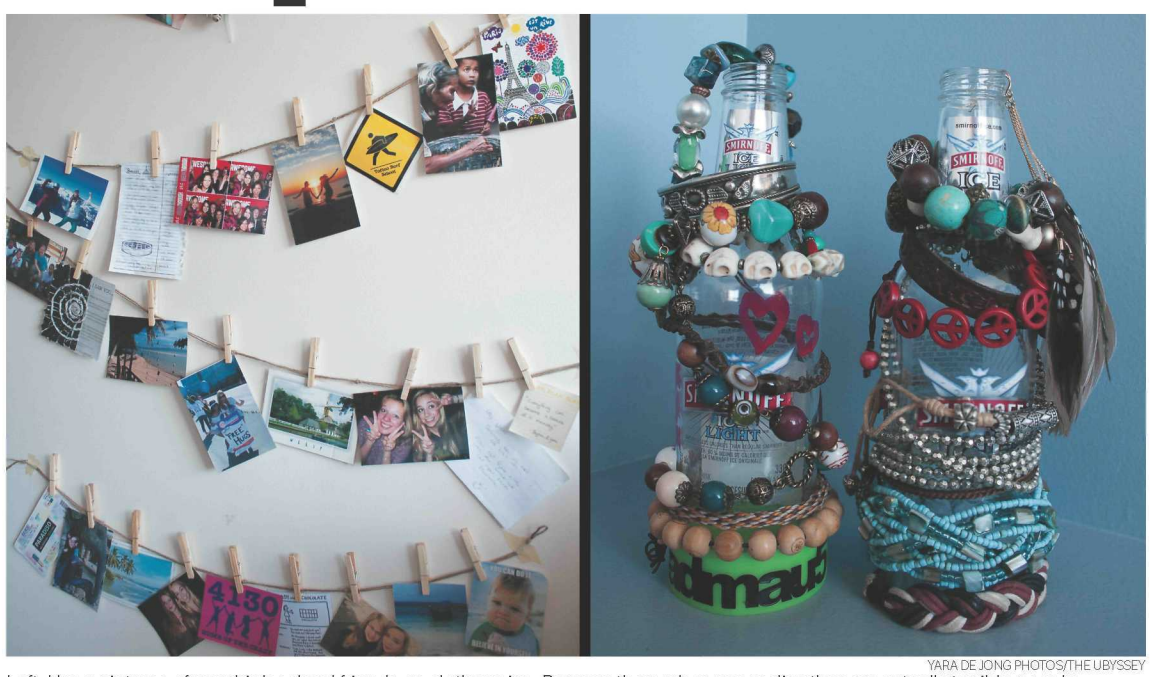
Simply taping up pictures of friends and family seems to be the standard in dorm room decor, but there are more sophisticated alternatives at your fingertips.

Start by browsing the magazine and photography sections at local thrift stores and secondhand bookstores. A two-page *Doctor Who* spread in a vintage magazine will be more original and way cheaper than a brand-new poster at the Imaginus poster sale in the SUB.

Next, get creative with how you display your clippings. Rather than using tape or tacks, consider hanging your fandom art from clothespins or wire clotheshangers.

For a slightly more ambitious project, you can make your room resemble an IKEA catalogue by hanging up 10-15 mismatched frames scrounged from a garage sale or Value Village. Just remember that square, rectangular or diamond shapes work best together.

Alternatively, find old maps at secondhand stores. They're beautiful on their own and look great on bare walls.



YARA DE JONG PHOTOS/THE UBYSSEY

Left: Hang pictures of your high school friends on clothes pins. Remove them when you realize they are actually terrible people.
Right: Class up your trophy liquor bottles with some bracelets.

Spell it out

If you are a lover of words and quotations, display your favourite film lines or Shakespearean quotes over your bed or desk. Vinyl stickers are the quick option, but they work better on windows or mirrors. Instead, cut out large letters from loose magazine pages or simply print them out on a computer for a more precise look. If you want to avoid putting a bunch of unnecessary holes in your walls, you can safely attach your cut-out letters with sticky tack. For a quick DIY project, you can also pull a thread through each letter and hang the quote as a garland.

Get creative with curtains

Nothing can change your room as significantly as your duvet cover and curtain. Be on the lookout for eye-catching top sheets, table linens, flags or even scarves. Use them as a top sheet or hang them over your dorm curtains. You can also use the same fabric as a curtain for an open closet or a spread for your couch. Remember: when the sun comes up, your room might turn into the colour of your new curtain, so don't buy fabric with a dominant colour that you hate waking up to.

Reuse and recycle in style

Save your old jam jars for multi-purpose storage that doubles as decoration. Fill the containers with pens, brushes, flowers, colourful buttons or even loose tea. There are also countless tutorials online for reusing containers as creative projects. Some of them include DIY snow globes, glitter jars and glowing firefly jars.

Old beer and wine bottles are ideal as vases, but they are also useful for organizing your accessories. Stack your watches and bangles around the neck, or hang earrings around the mouth. If you have Christmas lights, try sticking them into old glass bottles for some subtle decorative illumination.

Useful tools to have on hand

Sticky tack or painter's tape are a renter's best friend. Similarly, wooden clothespins are great for displaying photographs and postcards; just attach the clothespins to the wall using sticky tack.

As for storage, wine crates are the most aesthetically pleasing form of mobile shelving; stack them in any configuration you want. Find your neighbourhood wine dealer, as they might be selling them for cheap.

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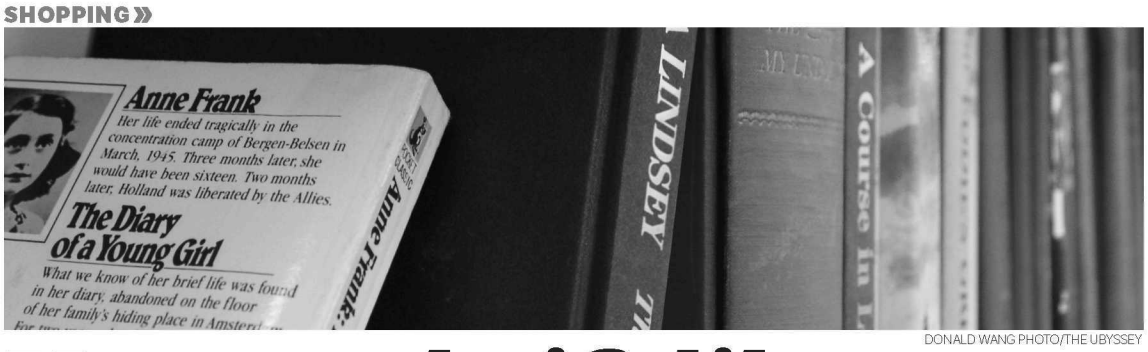

DONALD WANG PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

How to thrift like a pro

Kayi Wong
Contributor

If you want to decorate your dorm on a dime but lack supplies or ideas, hitting up the local secondhand scene may be just what you need to get started. But where to begin? Here are some of our favourite haunts for picking up pre-loved treasures.

ABC Book and Comic Emporium
1539 West Broadway

Along with comic books and literature of all genres, this secondhand bookstore (located conveniently along the 99 route) has a great inventory of old magazines. They stock both popular titles and niche journals, covering a wide range of interests and decades. Old issues of photograph-heavy publications, such as *LIFE* and *National Geographic*, are brimming with pages worthy of hanging or framing. The store will be going out of business at the end of November, so hurry over to score some discount lit while you still can.

Filmgo Sales
2741 Skeena Street

As its name hints, Filmgo often buys and sells secondhand film props. This large space has the hand-picked selection typical of vintage stores, but also the hodge-podge clutter of an antique flea market. Some notable sightings include a framed *New Yorker* print for 10 dollars, vintage board games and a Vancouver map from the seventies.

Vancouver Flea Market
703 Terminal Avenue

Their entrance fee of one dollar is reasonable compared to most antique markets in the city, which makes this a great indoor spot for some casual vintage shopping. Though not all of the stalls are true vintage vendors, there are several veteran stallholders that sell amazing vintage ephemera.

Common items you can find:

- aged black-and-white photos
- vintage postcards
- greeting cards
- brass skeleton keys
- working analogue cameras
- Ouija boards

It's a block from the Main Street Skytrain station and runs every weekend from 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Value Village
6415 Victoria Drive

Smaller thrift stores and markets are better for sourcing loose paper items, since Value Village sells them in bags that you can't rummage through.

However, this well-known thrift chain carries a broad range of furniture, and most of them do delivery.

You can also find cheap picture frames or pre-framed wall art of all kinds, from cross-stitching to Monet prints to paint-by-numbers.

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DONALD WANG PHOTO/THE UBYSSEY

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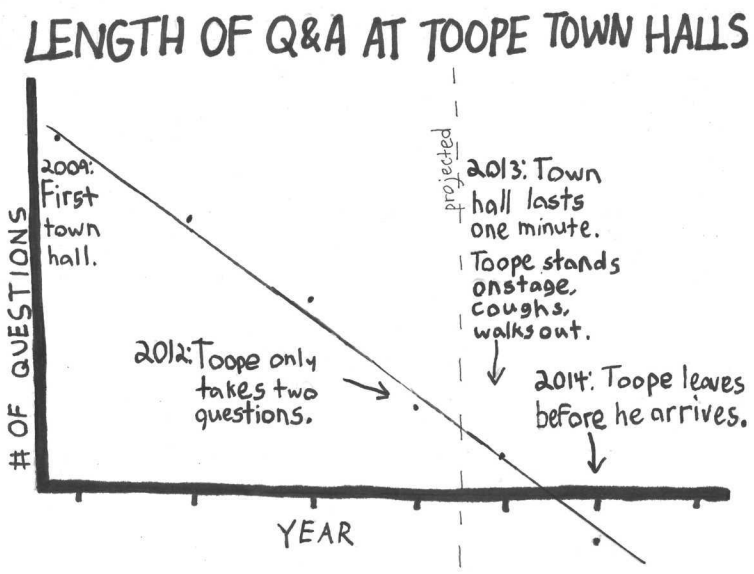


ANDREW BATES ILLUSTRATION/THE UBYSSEY

Come on, Toope. Make the "town hall" a real town hall

Last Monday's annual town hall meeting with UBC President Stephen Toope was a tightly produced one-hour event that went smoothly in general. But for people who think that town halls should be open, somewhat raucous affairs — a chance to really put a leader on the spot — this town hall did not live up to its name.

Actual questions from the floor were cut off after two speakers, and while there wasn't exactly a rush to pick Toope's brain, this might be because the past few meetings have taught people that this isn't an open forum. Toope promised to answer all further questions via email, but that's not the public exchange of ideas promsied by the name "town hall."

Almost all the time was taken up by a "thought-provoking interview," where the director of the UBC School of Journalism, Peter Klein, synthesized email questions into a bullet-point list of issues like "How do you feel about transit? child care? housing?"

It was a good way to get all of the simple issues taken care of, and Klein did well, but it allowed Toope to rely on researched answers and minimized the access people had to him. And when most of your presentation is choosing the email questions you feel like answering, what's the point of a town hall? If you have to cut other areas or make the whole show longer to fit in more Q&A, do it.

There is no election campaign where Toope has to be open to convince people to re-elect him, so this is one of the rare opportunities that an average person has to stand up, ask UBC's president a question and be guaranteed a response. It's a shame that the presentation seemed hellbent on limiting that opportunity as much as possible.

Toope's response to Acadia Park question cold comfort

Almost 500 Acadia Park residents had to relocate because their student family homes are being demolished for market housing.

One of those residents asked for some answers from Toope at his town hall.

This student talked about the sense of community in Acadia Park. Neighbours look after each other's children and there are parks close by. She asked Toope what UBC would do to replace the loss of student family housing at UBC.

Toope's response was that she needed to "put the whole thing in context" and not miss the big picture at UBC. He said the housing on Acadia was substandard and that the land in Acadia wasn't being used effectively, since it has the lowest density on campus. He also said there would be new graduate housing on Gage South, the area by the bus loop that was zoned for student housing last year. Previously, there was strong resistance from the university on that last point.

Toope's response came as cold comfort, seeming harsh and oblivious to the individual lives of students. Toope made it clear that when it comes to housing at UBC, it's about quantity, not quality. It's not only cruel to tell a student with a family who has just been forced to leave her home to think about the future density of Gage South. It's taking credit for something the university originally fought against tooth and nail.

Hopes for UBC line crumbling around us

Bad news for the UBC line.

The Globe and Mail recently ran an article in which Gordon Price, a former six-term Vancouver city councillor, states quite bluntly that he doesn't expect to see a Broadway rapid transit line within his lifetime. The guy is a relatively spry 62 years old.

He cites Surrey as next in line to get transit developments. Before anything is built, Broadway–UBC will probably have to wait for consensus between all parties involved: students, business owners, TransLink, et cetera.

A new transit report is supposed to showcase the different options for the corridor, ranging from an underground line to more frequent buses. But it's doubtful that anything is going to come to fruition soon, regardless of any sort of campaign or documentary the AMS or UBC hopes to run. Population growth is going to dictate the future of transit in the Lower Mainland over the next decades, and south of the Fraser is next in line. What's a student to do?

No one-size-fits-all solution for learning technology

Depending on what faculty, or even department, you spend most of your time in, you'll have very different interactions with learning technology. In some Arts classes, professors give old-fashioned lectures without the aid of PowerPoint or anything beyond a few barely legible scratches on a chalkboard. On the other hand, some Sauder classes require that all reading material be uploaded online. iClicker exams are ubiquitous in the Faculty of Science, while most Arts classes have no use for them.

UBC operates a few top-down tech initiatives, like the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology, which provides instructors with information on how new technology can be incorporated into their teaching. The much-lauded Weiman Teaching Initiative has been credited with making professors more responsive to student needs. These initiatives have been mostly hands-off though, since professors in some faculties can't be asked to drastically alter their teaching style.

Some might argue that since UBC hasn't aggressively moved to adopt new technologies like lecture capture, exam databases and massive open online courses, it's failed in some way. In some cases, this is true. But the path is littered with technologies that were once chic but have largely been discredited. PowerPoint, once touted as a revolution in teaching, has since become a punchline. A recent article in *Bloomberg Businessweek* argued that "no field of human endeavour can defy [PowerPoint's] facility for reducing complexity and nuance to bullet points and big ideas to tacky clip art."

While some of the technologies discussed can aid student learning and make knowledge collaborative, they can never be millenial. At the end of the day, the best learning happens when ideas are communicated clearly by someone who believes what they're saying. On that level, the technology itself becomes immaterial.

Don't buy the university rankings snake oil

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
by Jonny Wakefield

Oh no! UBC is no longer one of the top universities in the world! We've slipped to number 45 in The World University Rankings, a long way from last year's 22. Something has gone terribly wrong.

Well, not exactly. Those who saw the recent Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) university rankings might have been surprised to see UBC "drop" to number 45. Haven't we always been told UBC is in the top 30?

That top 30 figure that UBC always flaunts actually comes from a different ranking: the Times Higher Education survey. There are about six "reputable" world university rankings out there, and they're big business. When things go well, UBC plasters those numbers on their website and promo materials. When they are a little less impressive, well, things get swept under the rug.

The truth is, it's almost impossible to determine what makes a university "good." Hell, in Canada, we have no idea what we actually want universities to do. We want them to be producers of idiosyncratic research, but also drivers of economic innovation, and if they have any time left over, they're supposed to teach students how to be productive members of society. Oftentimes these goals are at odds. So with a mandate that's so confusing within a single country, how can you begin to look at how universities — especially public universities — stack up on the world stage?

Things get even fishier when you look at how these university rankings are actually calculated. Let's start with the recently released QS survey, which has received a bit of flak, including a recent paper out of Oxford essentially debunking their entire method. QS breaks their overall ranking into four separate chunks. Sixty per cent of the overall ranking is based on something called "research quality," determined by an academic peer review and the number of citations per faculty member.

This should raise a red flag for anyone who thinks universities ought to be about, you know, teaching people stuff. And to be fair, teaching quality is addressed in this survey, but it's only weighted at 20 per cent. (The rest of the equation is determined by "international outlook," or the number of students and faculty who claim overseas citizenship.)

In fact, none of the six major university rankings seems to evaluate the undergraduate experience beyond the almost meaningless ratio of faculty to students. The Academic Ranking of World Universities looks at things like the number of Nobel Prizes won by university employees. Another supposedly venerable survey looks at a university's web presence.

The point is, each ranking system picks different, subjective criteria on which to judge complex institutions that already have weird, conflicting mandates. But let's go beyond criteria and actually look at some of the methods.

The QS survey has been bungled so badly in the past, it's a wonder anyone still pays attention to it. That 60 per cent research quality rating? That was determined, at least in the 2006 system studied by the Oxford paper, by emailing a few researcher listservs and asking people to rank the top 30 institutions in the world for their disciplines. The response rate? Less than one per cent. Even if you discount selection bias, that kind of stat should be enough to scuttle any serious consideration of this survey.

But the sad part is the amount of play these surveys receive. University administrators fret over a bad score, and I imagine they pop a few bottles when the numbers go their way. Media report on them with much fanfare and little substance, and chances are your future employers will look at them, despite the fact that they probably give two shits about whether a bunch of academics liked your prof's paper.

In short, it's snake oil. Don't buy it.

Roundabouts unsafe for campus cyclists

LETTERS

I wanted to thank you for your article on UBC's roundabouts. It is alarming to think that UBC Campus + Community Planning is considering more roundabouts on UBC campus. As a cyclist, the mega roundabout at 16th Avenue and Wesbrook is challenging to enter and safely use. I often find myself squeezed between cars trying to desperately find my way out of the traffic circle. Using the suggested "bike route" which puts you up on the sidewalk and forces you to cross every entrance to the roundabout is not only dangerous, but it's simply impractical. We need motorists to understand that cyclists belong on the road, and forcing cyclists back onto the sidewalk as if they are pedestrians is not helpful. UBC has opted for a type of traffic device which appears more appropriate for suburban areas which see few pedestrians and cyclists, which perhaps is indicative of the type of development they are pursuing on campus. Even more alarming is that UBC Campus + Community Planning is ignoring the expert knowledge of their own faculty members who study population health, including Kay Teschke, who notes that roundabouts increase the risk for cyclist crashes and potentially pedestrians as well. It seems that UBC is using a one-size-fits-all approach to transportation infrastructure which is neither appropriate in the UBC context nor safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Andrew Longhurst
Geography, Arts

Want to rant or rave about something you've read in the paper? Send your letters to feedback@ubyssey.ca.

PIC OF THE WEEK

KAI JACOBSON/THE UBYSSEY

The UBC T-Birds offensive line after practice on Tuesday. From left to right: Gord Randall, Kelly Kurisu, Ethan Schnell, Donovan Gratton, Alec Pennell, Steve Zakrzewski.

HACKÉDEX

YOUR UBC WORD OF THE WEEK

uneCorn

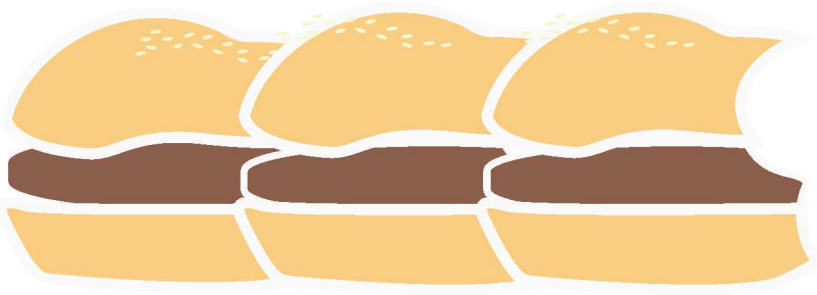
('yo onə kôrn, abrev.)

A semi-abbreviation for the Alma Mater Society's University and External Relations Committee (don't you get it now?!). They meet to determine the student government's stance on provincial and federal lobbying, and liaise with external bodies like TransLink and the University Neighbourhoods Association.

What I'm Eating Now

Mooch away!

SLIDERS
Source: AMS Council, every second Wednesday. AMS catering. White bun ft. meat product/ sauce.



Toope Talk

UBC President Stephen Toope has, shall we say, some verbal quirks. He's so well-versed in university-speak that some of his remarks can sound like they're from another planet. A selection from last week's town hall:

"We also know that, for many students, the U-Pass has become the Pass-U."

"Look at the bigger picture."
In response to a question from a woman who was evicted from the Acadia Park residences

"I don't think universities should have a fetish for measurement."

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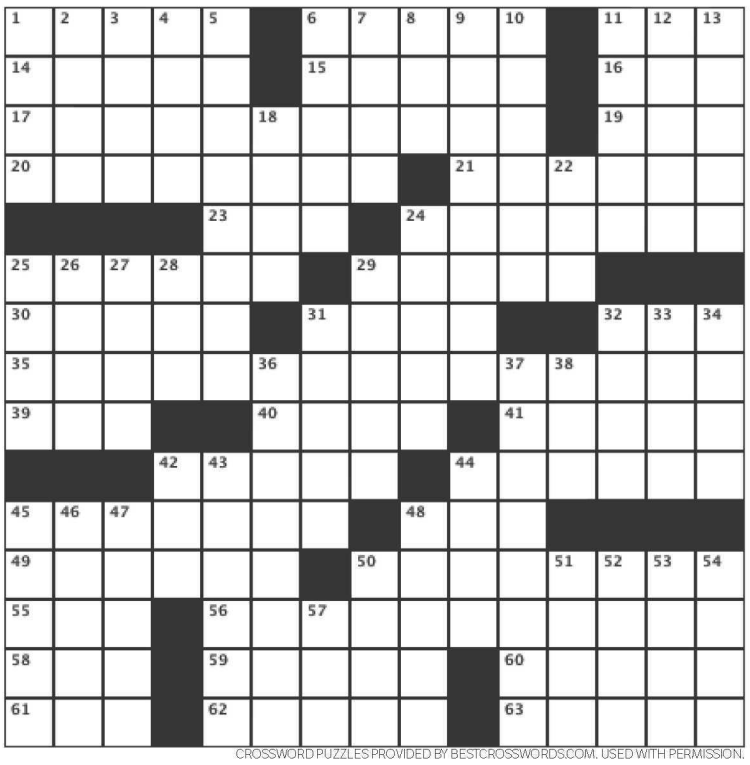

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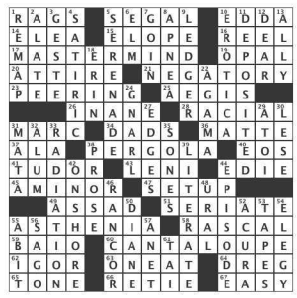
Across

1- Seraglio
6- Pundit
11- Believer's suffix
14- Valuable violin
15- Dovetail part
16- Cigarette ingredient
17- Indigent
19- Canonized Mlle.
20- Kitchen sideboards
21- Sailor
23- Surgery sites, briefly
24- Crown of ancient Egypt
25- Goober
29- Deli offerings
30- Surmise
31- Worm fibre
32- Narrow inlet
35- In spite of
39- Draft org.
40- Weed whackers
41- Tidal bore
42- Less covered
44- Small nautical flag
45- Vacuum bottle
48- Lush
49- Highly seasoned stew
50- Capital of Liberia
55- Anger
56- Fibrous quality
58- NFL scores
59- 1985 Kate Nelligan film
60- ___-foot oil
61- Cornerstone abbr.
62- 4th letter of the Greek alphabet
63- Synthetic fibre

Down

1- Clock pointer
2- From the U.S.
3- Speed contest
4- French summers
5- State of USA
6- Agitates
7- Dampens
8- Year abroad
9- Greek dish
10- Invertebrate creature
11- "Who's there?" reply
12- The devil
13- Lott of Mississippi
18- Spanish muralist
22- Sighs of relief
24- Raw hides
25- Fasteners
26- Slaughter of baseball
27- P.M. times
28- Fresh
29- Skinflint
31- Clogs, e.g.
32- Diana of *The Avengers*
33- About, in memos
34- *A Death in the Family* author
36- Strangle
37- Massless particle
38- ___es Salaam
42- Sis's sib
43- Entertained
44- Dull resonant sound
45- Hackneyed
46- Flax refuse
47- Excrete
48- Actress Braga
50- Aromatic herb
51- Doozy
52- Meat dish
53- Ratio words
54- Org.
57- Fam. member



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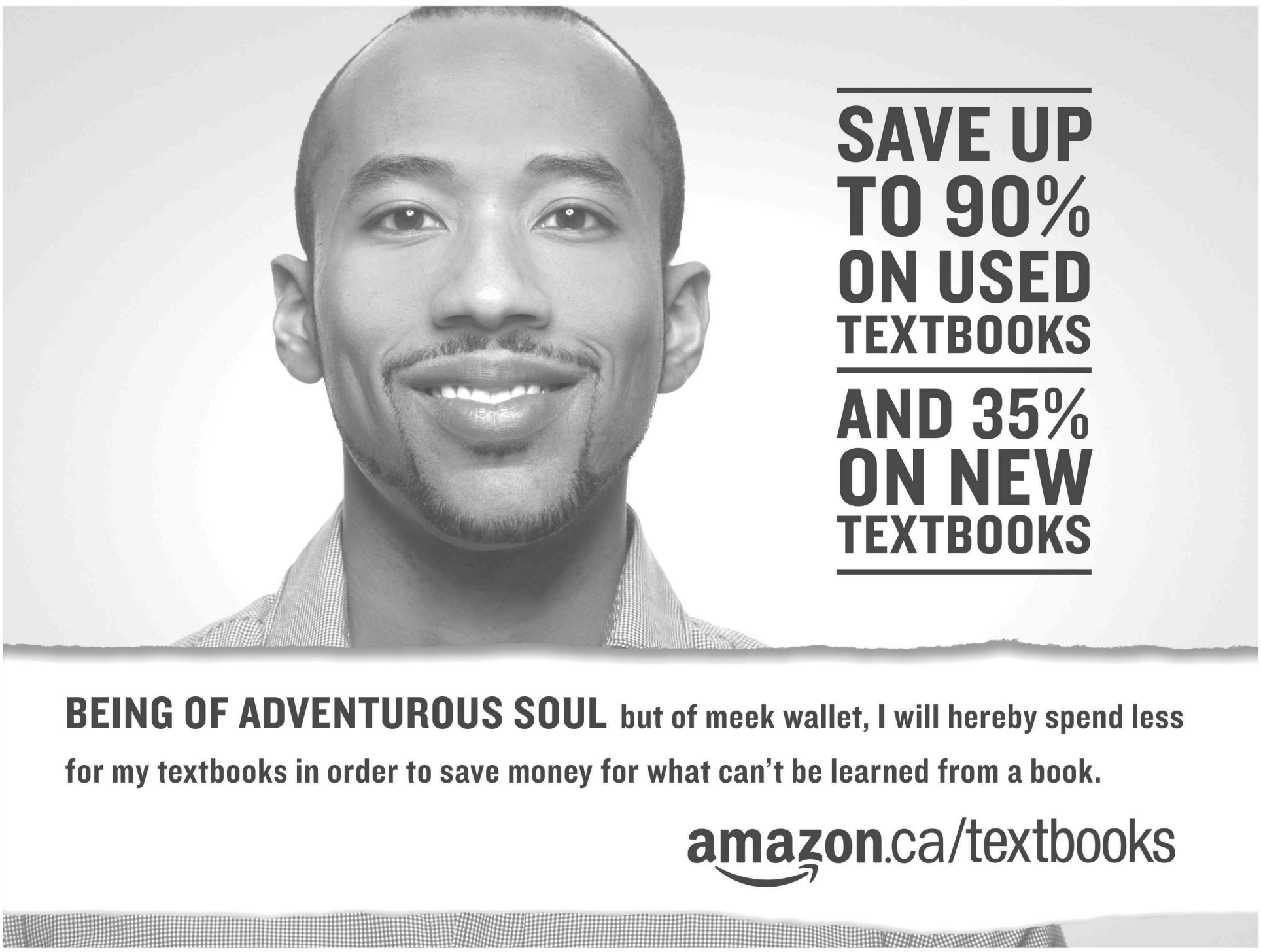
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