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INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

DEPT. _____ COURSE _____

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ARE EVALUATIONS A WASTE OF TIME?

FEATURE, pg 8

The Link

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ABOUT THE LINK

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THE LINK

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PHOTO of the WEEK



Two young canines embrace at the BCIT Student Association's Doggy De-stress event. More on page five!

Michael Berg

Submit the photo of the week and we'll pay you \$20

Send a horizontal photo that is related to campus life to contact@linknewspaper.ca. Include your name and a description of what you shot. If we print it, you make \$20.

CAMPUS QUERY

Do you think the instructor reviews are effective?



KENT LOWRY

Business IT Management

"I don't think they work. I think that if the teacher has been here long enough, that it won't really matter."



MANDEEP PARMAR

Civil Engineering

"Not really, no. I think they just read the reviews but they don't really talk to the instructors to fix it."



AMIR SHIRAZIAN

Civil Engineering

"To an extent, I think it's just something to make the students happy."



SIMI MANN

Marketing Tourism

"I think they're pretty effective... from hearing past things about teachers and then taking their classes, I've noticed improvements."

With 4,500 attendees, Big Info bigger than ever

February's Big Info session saw the highest number of attendees yet

MERIHA BEATON
The Link

February may be the shortest month of the year, but the recent BIG Information and Program Expo, or Big Info, was the largest the school has ever seen.

For the bi-annual event, there were approximately 1,000 more prospective students registered than in October.

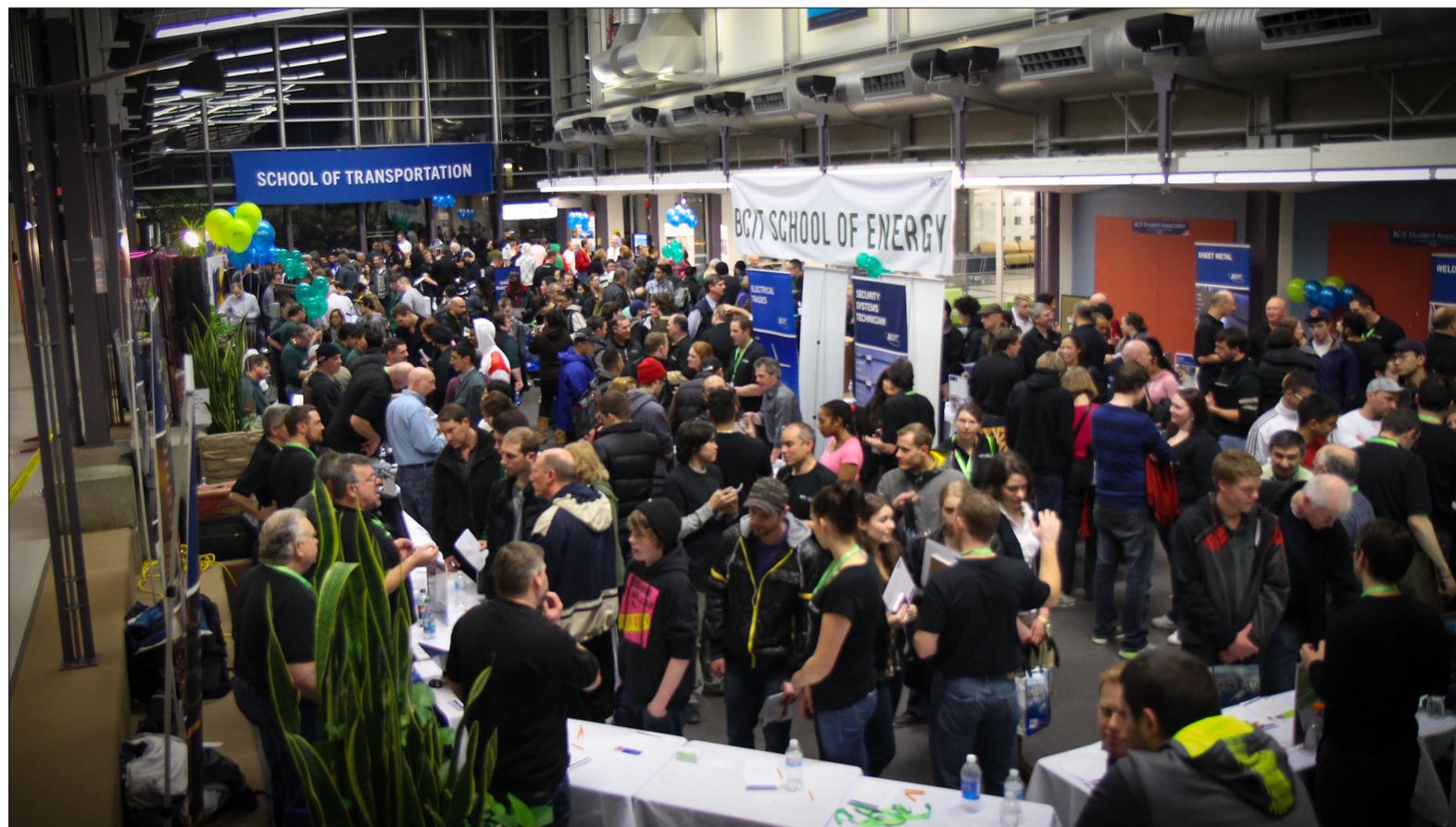
"We had just under 3,500 [registered] in the fall and 4,500 this year," said Michael Boronowski, chief organizer of the event. "It [was] our biggest Big Info ever."

Boronowski, who is also the manager of student recruitment and client services at BCIT, said the increase in numbers is due to how he and his team have promoted BCIT to prospective students. Organizers emphasized employment outcomes and starting salaries of BCIT graduates as the primary benefits of a BCIT education.

In addition, Big Info saw more focused prospective students coming to the event.

"Talking to our faculty who were there to speak with prospective students and their families, they said the quality of the questions they were getting were really good," said Boronowski in a phone interview with *The Link*. "They said there were people who have already done their exploration, they knew what they wanted to take; they knew that BCIT is probably where they wanted to go."

While it takes a few weeks for numbers to come in to determine which programs were the most popular at the biannual



Over 4,500 people visited Burnaby Campus to learn more about BCIT programs

Ervin Cho

recruitment event, Boronowski said he witnessed more mature students coming to the event and showing interest in BCIT.

“Organizers emphasized employment outcomes and starting salaries of BCIT graduates as the primary benefits of a BCIT education.”

"It's not that we [saw] less high school students com-

ing in but we [saw] more mature students coming to Big Info in February," confirmed Boronowski.

Andrei Balles, a 22-year-old university grad from the Philippines, found the information session so helpful that he ended up registering for two courses on the spot.

"Tonight helped a lot," Balles exclaimed excitedly. "Especially over at the student services area, the woman there was so helpful that I was able to register."

Balles is interested in entering the marketing management program in September and received advice on the steps he had to take to prepare for enrolment. He is excited to begin taking courses at BCIT in April.

"I have done the theory part [in university] and I want to do the application of those theories. I want to come to BCIT because everybody is saying that it is all about the application here," said Balles.

Meanwhile, 23-year-old Rachel Razon attended the Big Info session because she wanted to learn more about BCIT's health sciences programs.

"I have heard a lot about [BCIT] and one of my friends goes here and says it is really great. So she told me to come to the Big Info session to get more information about the courses I want to take," said Razon, with a BCIT course book clutched in her hands.

To promote Big Info, Boronowski said he and his team

did a lot of promotional work online and through social media. They also created an "Ask and Win" competition online. Participants were eligible to win \$1,000 towards their tuition.

"I think the team has done a really good job promoting it and getting the right message out to the right people at the right time," stated Boronowski.

The next Big Info session will take place next fall. And while it may be even bigger the next time around, the purpose of the event is unlikely to change.

"The number one thing our prospective students and our families enjoy," said Boronowski, "is having a chance to ask questions ... and get into a dialogue with our faculty and staff."

U-Pass renewal referendum passes

Students vote 91% in favour of continuing universal transit pass program

JOHN MORRISON III
Publications Manager

BCIT students have approved the renewal of the U-Pass program for another three years.

Despite initial technical difficulties, 91 per cent of those who voted cast their ballots in favour of the renewal in a referendum that took place from February 15 to 26.

2,561 students voted in the referendum, down from 3,367 when the U-Pass program was initially proposed in January of 2011. Despite the dip in voter participation, approval did climb

six points from 85 per cent.

BCIT Student Association VP-External Mike Hanson, who helped broker the deal, was pleased with the results over all.

"It is important that decisions like this, which impact students, can be made by students," said Hanson. "We would like to thank all those involved who made their vote count."

The referendum was originally

set to take place between February 15 and 22, but the voting period was extended after BCIT's voting system crashed several times.

The 400-450 students who voted in the first four hours after polls opened had to re-cast their ballots as a result of the system failure.

The voting system remained out of service for the weekend but went live again on Tuesday,

February 19, only to crash again the following morning.

Voting was extended four days to make up for lost time.

BCIT joins UBC, Douglas College, and Vancouver Community College, whose students renewed the program by overwhelming majorities (87 to 97 per cent) in their respective referenda, all of which took place at the end of January.

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Courtesy of Zac Dér

Shaved heads raise money for BC Children's Hospital

Sixteen students and staff lose their locks in the name of charity

ANGELINA THEILMANN
Assistant Editor

On the last day of February, sixteen students and faculty lined up in BCIT's Great Hall to say goodbye to their hair. In the process, they hoped those who did not voluntarily make that choice would benefit.

Notably, over \$3,000 dollars was raised for BC Children's Hospital's Balding for Dollars campaign.

Event organizer Zac Dér says money raised will go to the BC Children's Hospital Foundation to help children and their families who, together, are battling cancer.

Head shaving took place on a small stage, but Dér hopes the event will make a big difference to many.

The second-year environmental health student says he

hopes a little extra cash in hand will help families do things they couldn't otherwise do.

Since many children lose their hair while undergoing cancer treatment, money raised could go towards the Wigs for Kids program.

“Of the sixteen who participated, two were faculty members and one female student participated.”

According to the Balding for Dollars website, Wigs for Kids “could be helping a child receive a wig when their hair falls out, or helping families pay for the financial burden put on them with the cost of feeding supplies and medications not covered by health insurance.”

Aside from the financial

boost for families, the website says Wigs for Kids hopes to boost children's confidence and despite their illness, allow them to “experience life with fun and dignity.”

In total, nine students signed up in advance, and seven others joined in on the day of the event. Those who participated collected pledges.

Of the sixteen who participated, two were faculty members and one was a female student.

Dér highlighted that over and above the satisfaction that comes with helping a good cause, participating in the event brought together colleagues in his environmental health program.

Having exceeded the \$2,500 goal they set out to achieve, Dér hopes to see the event happen again next year.

According to the Balding for Dollars webpage, UBC and SFU are both set to hold their own version of the event in March.

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Speak Up Speak Out promotes mental health awareness

Awareness campaign informs students and reduces stigma associated with mental illness

ANGELINA THEILMANN & NAGIN REZAIEAN

The Link

In the name of mental health, the Great Hall at Burnaby Campus was full of energy and activity.

The second annual Speak Up Speak Out event—a BCIT Student Association (BCITSA) and BCIT student services joint initiative — took place in February, aiming to raise awareness about mental health.

All week, hundreds of students and staff on campus wore purple T-shirts that read “Speak Up Speak Out” in yellow and white.

Event organizer Karl Tegenfeldt says the event was working to create a dialogue about mental health issues he says are often swept under the rug. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) calls mental illness or disorders “the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide”. The Association estimates 10 to 20 per cent of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder.

According to the CMHA, 80 per cent of those affected by depression get back to their regular activities once it’s been diagnosed.

For student and co-organizer Zac Dér, the idea of creating a dialogue around mental illness really hits home. About three months ago, Dér’s 18-year-old cousin was

diagnosed with clinical depression. However, nobody in his family recognized there was a problem until it was almost too late.

“He ended up being in a psych ward. That was quite shocking to our family. We wanted to get in there and help him, but he didn’t share [his mental illness] until [the] moment he almost killed himself.”

The CMHA says suicide is actually the number two killer of youth aged 15 to 24 in Canada — the third highest rate in the industrialized world.

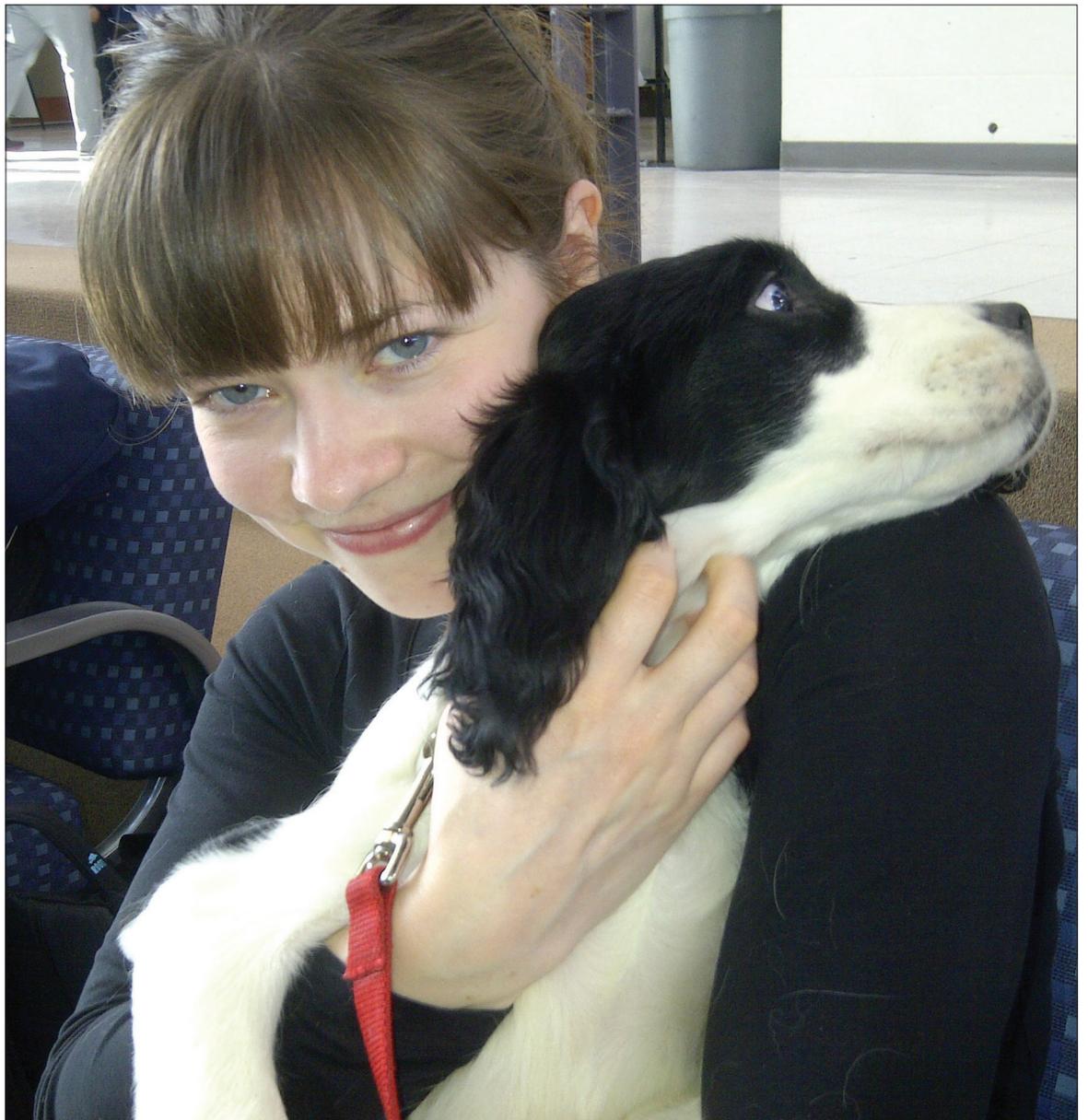
Dér says stress is one of the biggest causes of mental illness. He hopes providing an opportunity for students to talk about stress will stop them from succumbing to mental illness.

“The event was working to create a dialogue about mental health issues that are often swept under the rug.”

Students wrote what they would do to recognize mental illness on a pledge wall. One message read, “I will learn to recognize the signs”. Another said, “I asked my friends to get help”.

As well as creating an open dialogue about mental health, other activities included the Zen Lounge and Doggy De-stress.

For Doggy De-stress, BCIT-SA staff brought dogs to cam-



The BCIT Student Association brought dogs to the Great Hall to help students relax during midterm season.

Courtesy of Robyn Gilker

pus in order to give students an opportunity take a break from studies and cuddle with some friendly canines. At times, the event was so popular it was hard to even get close the dogs.

The Zen Lounge offered free massages and Reiki, which calmed weary and stressed students who might have otherwise

been cramming for exams or carting around heavy backpacks.

According to Dér, the event was an opportunity to find tools to make people feel better and supported even those not suffering from mental health issues.

Other offerings included breathing and mindfulness

sessions, as well as a roundtable, where students could discuss what the campus could do to support those suffering from mental illness.

Although organizers do not have exact participation numbers, they say the scale last year did not come close to what was offered this year.

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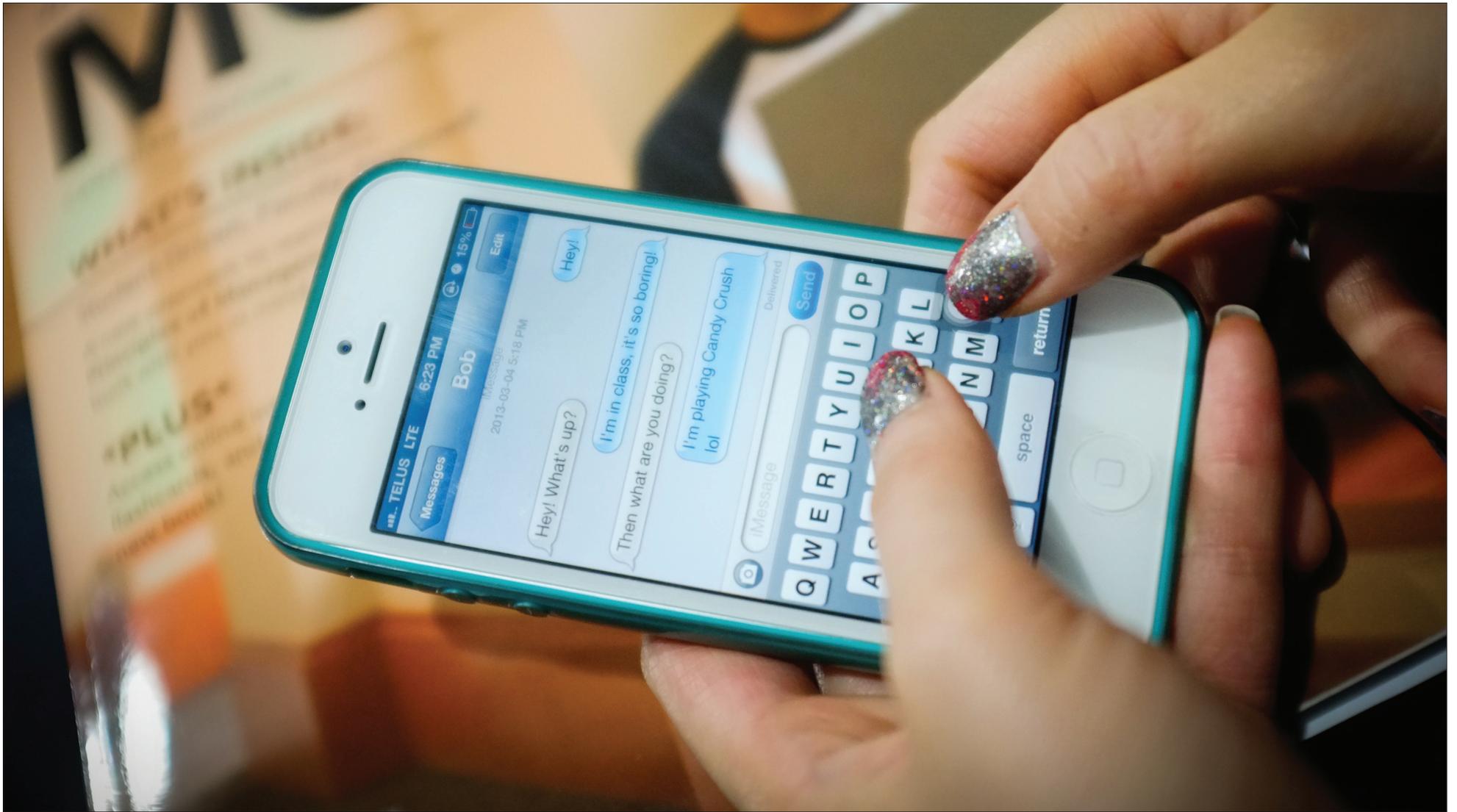
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BCIT Student Association's
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FRIDAY, MARCH 22





In her defence, she did get a high score.

Ervin Cho

Classroom distraction: the device vice

Combatting smartphones and laptops as distractions in the classroom

ANGELINA THEILMANN
Assistant Editor

Resistance is futile.

That's BCIT social media instructor Rebecca Coleman's advice to teachers.

She's talking about student use of electronic devices in the classroom for Facebooking, texting, or tweeting during class.

And according to Coleman, students' personal use of cell-phones and laptops to socialize in the classroom is here to stay, so teachers should embrace it.

"I think that social media is something we can integrate into all of our classes," she explains. "Every single class that I teach, I create a Facebook group for."

Coleman, who is also a social media strategist, tells a funny story:

"The other night I was teaching a class and one of my students [who I am also Facebook friends with] posted on

Facebook during my class ... and other people in the class were responding. I was kind of amused by it," Coleman recalls.

Coleman feels that since post-secondary students are grown-ups, it's up to them how they spend their class time.

However, if Coleman notices students on their devices for the entire class, she'll dock participation marks.

“Resistance is futile.”

— BCIT social media instructor Rebecca Coleman on combatting device distraction in the classroom

"I think as a teacher sometimes it requires that you either work harder to get people's attention and to make it interesting and engaging," says Coleman. "Or it requires you to put your ego aside because you're not getting 100 per cent of the attention focused on you all the time."

Joe Squire, a 32-year-old recent MBA grad from Vancouver Island University, says having a smart phone in class for today's

business students is disruptive but also critical. As a real estate agent, his phone allowed him to conduct business in school.

And Squire doesn't think it's a one-size-fits-all approach. For some people, phone or computer use in class for things other than note taking doesn't mean they're not paying attention.

"If [students] are playing on devices, they may still be listening, or just looking for a few seconds of a break," Squire argues, "Having the device might keep them in class and more engaged overall, despite the appearance otherwise."

To avoid abuse of devices in the classroom, one of Squire's professors sent out a technology agreement to students at the beginning of the semester. In the agreement students were required to list the devices they wanted to use in class, and the reason why.

And it's not just post-secondary instructors taking measures like these.

Christine Pogue, who teaches elementary school in Richmond, tried putting a technology agreement with her class

in place, too.

"This was experimental, with the intent of eventually allowing these devices to be used for other purposes such as calculators, calendars, research, email, et cetera," explained Pogue. "However, after only one week I caught several students texting each other during class. I immediately banned the devices."

“For some people, phone or computer use in class for things other than note taking doesn't mean they're not paying attention.”

She says at the end of the day, it comes down to trust established between students and teachers about device use in class.

Michael McBurney, a high school English teacher in Richmond, doesn't allow any electronic devices in his classroom, consistent with school policy.

And his students listen. At the beginning of this school year he told students if he caught them with an electronic device he'd take it away. By enforcing this policy he's had virtually no problem with students disobeying him.

However, McBurney does feel that there is a time and place for electronic devices in the classroom and says during a class discussion he may ask students to look things up for him.

McBurney also describes the disparity between the technology students own and that which the schools can provide.

"The computers that we have available in our labs are generally slower than the phones and iPods the kids have," said McBurney. "When we are doing research I will give students the option of using their phone."

So from the tween-aged texter to the thirty-year-old professional, teachers and students alike have some decisions to make about those darn devices in the classroom. And if anyone is unsure, there's always Rebecca Coleman for some device advice.

NO VALUE ADDED

Questioning the value of instructor evaluations

By Sarah Gray

At semester's end, relieved students grab a number-two pencil and fill out instructor review forms. From praise, to valid concerns, to outright complaints, they scribble furiously, hoping their comments will make a difference.

But instructors and administrators aren't required to even glance at these scantrons before tossing them in the trash. BCIT has no policy to ensure instructors include this valuable feedback in planning (or self-reflection), and the reviews aren't part of an instructor's assessment by management.

Unfortunately, few students understand that these reviews are basic administrative window-dressing.

Marwan Marwan, a second-year computer systems technology student, says the reviews are misleading.

"It doesn't allow for students to raise their concerns or views when they need to because the instructors are like,

'Oh, just wait until the end of the semester and then you can write it in the comment sheet,'" said Marwan. "I think it's a way to keep students from raising issues through the proper channels."

Few in the student body know that BCIT lacks an official policy for the reviews. Students who do know feel discouraged when they find out their feedback is the bubble-sheet equivalent of chopped liver.

Instructors and administrators aren't required to even glance at these scantrons before tossing them in the trash.

According to Executive Director of the Faculty Staff Association Paul Reniers, the

reviews are part of a Performance Development System (PDS) intended to highlight course material and teaching methods instructors should work on.

"With that intention in mind, it's a system that works pretty well when it's used purposely," Reniers told *The Link*.

However, he says the system isn't used as frequently as it should be. And with no mandate to ensure the reviews are used, Reniers says they can fall by the wayside: combing through the evaluations is an extra effort on top of an instructor's cumbersome workload.

Given that the reviews may not even be freed from their manila envelopes once they're collected, it's safe to say that voicing concerns on them may ensure the issue is never addressed. A disclaimer with this information might be a helpful tip to students who have immediate — or serious — concerns.

This evaluation venue is a veritable dead-end for stu-

dents hoping their feedback matters, but there is an instructor assessment process at BCIT (that varies in each faculty). Generally, a colleague sits in on a class in session to watch an instructor's performance. Information from these observations is used in a closed-doors meeting with management.

Processes for students to evaluate instructors vary across post-secondary institutions in BC, but most incorporate a student feedback form. Whether this feedback is used also varies across schools.

Like BCIT, SFU's instructors are not required to act on comments in student reviews. There's an understanding that students may use the anonymous forms to fulfill semester-long vendettas. SFU diverges considerably from BCIT in that the reviews are studied for tenure and returning sessional instructors (though it's not a key determinant).

Unfortunately, there's still a perception amongst SFU students that the forms have little impact on teaching quality.

Then there's UBC, where end-of-semester performance reviews are used to consider promotions and tenure. Now, a pilot project has been launched to add mid-term student evaluations to the mix.

UBC physics professor Simon Bates and Kiran Mahal, VP-Academic of UBC's student union, spearheaded a project that asked 22 faculty members from the faculties of arts, science, applied science and kinesiology to offer their students evaluations halfway through the semester. Many of the professors who included them said they were able to tweak their courses to accommodate students' comments and concerns.

Mid-term evaluations aren't yet mandatory anywhere at UBC except at Sauder School of Business. Overall, though, student response to mid-term evaluations in other faculties was positive, and project lead Mahal hopes their effectiveness will encourage more faculty members to offer them.

In sum, UBC students may eventually have an opportunity to evaluate their professors twice a term on review forms that will bear the scrutiny of their professors.

Students at BCIT may not necessarily have their concerns acknowledged by filling out performance reviews, but there are other avenues. One option is to talk directly to an instructor, which may not be a palatable choice if the problem is a personality conflict.

A preferred route might be to seek the advice of a pro-

gram head, and from there, it might be up to the instructor's manager to address the issue. Finally, BCIT offers counseling and mediation services, which could at least start a paper trail for concerns.

"I think it's a way to keep students from raising issues through the proper channels."

— computer systems technology student
Marwan Marwan

In reality, students may feel that putting a face to their issue will jeopardize their success in class. This is why anonymous performance

reviews can hold valuable information. If there's a repeated complaint within the reviews from a wide swathe of students, perhaps there's a legitimate need for a formal instructor review.

At the end of the day, instructors find feedback in performance evaluations useful for improving course quality. A 2008 study at the University of Toronto also suggested that the data is useful for making personnel decisions.

And why not? Students in post-secondary institutions are adults, paying good money to absorb an instructor's expertise. It's in their best interest to be honest about the quality of the instruction they're receiving — both for themselves, and for the reputation of the institution.

with files from Neetu Garcha



Ervin Cho

CO-MIX showcases best of Art Spiegelman

Largest retrospective of Spiegelman's work opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery

OLSY SOROKINA

The Link

Many Gen Y readers have been introduced to the work of Art Spiegelman though their academic curriculum. *MAUS*, Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel, is commonly discussed in high school history classes and college-level Holocaust studies.

MAUS marks only the tip of the iceberg of Spiegelman's contribution to the art world. *CO-MIX: A Retrospective of Comics, Graphics and Scraps* offers a detailed, chronological account of Spiegelman's work, and is open to the public at the Vancouver Art Gallery for the next four months.

The third floor of the art gallery has been transformed into the timeline of Spiegelman's artistic progress. While it is not as expansive as some of the other exhibitions, the displays take hours to explore.

Gallery walls bear frame upon frame of original panels from a collection of genre-defying comics. These panels are a treasure for fans of Spiegelman or any graphic novel enthusiasts, who can spend hours doing what they would never dream to do at an art gallery—reading comics.

The exhibition starts with Spiegelman's early work for Topps Chewing Gum Company. As the images he created for Topps are far from traditional cartoons, the job did not fulfill his artistic need, and he soon started drawing comics for various underground publications.

Bruce Grenville, the senior curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery, emphasized the importance of Spiegelman's contribution to the art of comics. Even the cartoonist's earliest panels were an act of resistance against the mainstream perception of comics as "nothing more than superhero stories".

"With his work, he was hoping to interrupt the notions that constitute the normal concept of topics appropriate for com-

ics," Grenville said about Spiegelman during a tour of the exhibition.

Spiegelman did more than interrupt; he raised the alternative comic movement to an international level.

In 1980, together with his partner Francoise Mouly, he published and edited *RAW*, an art magazine with sardonic issue titles such as "The Graphix Magazine of Abstract Depression-ism" and "The Graphix Magazine of Damned Intellectuals".

The magazine received attention from alternative comic artists from all over the world, and earned Spiegelman worldwide praise as an editor.

The exhibition provides a selection of highlights from Spiegelman's numerous creative ventures. There is a display devoted to his brief attempt at drawing kids' comics, the *Little Lit* anthologies, which are endearing and borderline disturbing at the same time.

The collection of iconic covers Art Spiegelman did for the

“*CO-MIX* offers a detailed, chronological depiction of Spiegelman's work.

New Yorker is another noteworthy section of the exhibition. Spiegelman's cover art offers clever visual commentary on current affairs to complement the writing style of the magazine.

Spiegelman's experimentation with form and content, as well as his interest in pertinent topics, truly make him one of the most important figures currently active in the art world. For those not familiar with his work, *CO-MIX* presents a great opportunity to study Spiegelman's portfolio, and offers a different perspective on a familiar artistic medium.

CO-MIX: A Retrospective of Comics, Graphics and Scraps runs to June 9, 2013, at the Vancouver Art Gallery.



The cover of *PRINT* magazine from May-June 1981

Art Spiegelman



Spiegelman's self-portrait from the cover of *The Village Voice* from June 6, 1989

Art Spiegelman

See more of Spiegelman's work in this article online at linknewspaper.ca



Longtime Radiohead album artwork collaborator Stanley Donwood lends his signature style to Thom Yorke's new band.

Courtesy of XL Records

Atoms for Peace debut a work in progress

Amok shows supergroup's potential

SARAH SANGHA
The Link

It's here. Sometime in 2009, Thom Yorke hinted at a musical union so powerful, it would transcend all realms of rock.

The group, consisting of Yorke, Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea, and Beck's drummer Joey Waronker accompanied Yorke on a tour for his solo album *Eraser*, leading to rumours of a potential album. Since then they've added Brazilian multi-instrumentalist Mauro Refosco and coined themselves Atoms for Peace.

At first listen, debut album *Amok* seems to be an electronic progression of Yorke's solo effort, and a riskier version of Radiohead's album *In Rainbows*. Yorke's voice is melodious and

really lingers on tracks like "Default" and rushes through under a layer of synth on "Before Your Very Eyes" just like he did on "OK Computer".

Yorke takes more of a gamble on his sound, something he may not feel able to do as part of Radiohead. *Amok* is full of Yorke's childlike lyrics, which flow particularly well in in "Stuck Together Pieces" as he laments,

*Why be rain when you could be sun?
Why tie yourself to anyone?
Why be here when you'd be somewhere else?*

The most intriguing part of the album is the nature of the relationship between Flea and Yorke. With his other band, the long-time Chili Peppers star is able to command an audience—even though front men are usually the favourites. Flea has a far quieter presence on the album, meaning no elabo-

rate riffs and no show-boating.

Instead, Flea shines when he offers up low, throbbing bass guitar, such as in "Dropped" which sounds very similar to some of his sound in the 90's. He blends perfectly into the amalgam that is Atoms for Peace.

Amok starts to click when you stop trying to compare it to anything that the musicians have done in the past. Perhaps people were expecting a super-hybrid of past projects: something containing weepy vocals, flashy guitar, and long drum solos.

“Yorke takes more of a gamble on his sound.”

Defying expectations, Atoms for Peace have offered up a heavily produced album with long streams of synth and

sometimes-distorted vocals, leaving the listener to wonder which sounds haven't been produced on a computer.

The group mentioned that a mutual love of 70's Afrobeat led to the album's conception and this is evident in the catchy "Before Your Very Eyes," a song which should be the groups next single.

Once the listener can comprehend that these rock demigods are mere mortals, who are still navigating to find their sound, *Amok* isn't too bad. The entire disc is filled with an entrancing sound, and the vocals on "Ingenu" in particular are luscious.

Nuclear power? No thanks. This group is filled with genius, with so much potential they just may need to run *Amok* a bit longer to find their true sound.

Songs to listen to: "Ingenu", "Default"

OVERALL GRADE: B-

LOCAL EVENTS

March 7-10

Vancouver International Women in Film Festival

Vancity Theatre

Coinciding with International Women's Day, this year's Women in Film is the seventh installment of the festival, celebrating women's involvement in the film industry.

Films selected for the festival feature women in at least three key creative roles: writer, producer, director, cinematographer, editor or lead performer.

The event highlights the best work produced under female supervision in genres that include documentary and animation. Most films will be followed by a Q&A period to open a discussion with film buffs of all genders.

March 9-17

CelticFest

Various venues

While many celebrate Celtic heritage by simply sipping a pint of green beer on St. Patrick's Day, Vancouver CelticFest offers numerous alternatives to explore the rich culture of the Celts.

The festival includes dance, comedy, even — wait for it — a real-life leprechaun! For the curious crowd, it features many interactive events, such as whisky tasting and a Gaelic trivia night.

Those interested in spending St. Paddy's in the most Irish of fashions will have a chance to do so at the ninth annual St. Patrick's Day Parade downtown.

March 15, 8pm

Impression Slam #2

The Rio Theatre

Do you pride yourself on being great at impressions, or know someone who does? See how you and your friends measure up to Vancouver's best impersonators at The Rio Theatre's second Impression Slam! For only two dollars, you can be thoroughly impressed by ten contestants, and vote for your favorite. But be quick — the last battle sold out fast.

This time, the organizers are throwing in an extra special showdown between last year's slam winner and a world record holder to vie for the title of the best impersonator.

— Olsy Sorokina

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2. Lonesome Dream - Lord Huron
3. Cough Cough - Everything Everything
4. Trojans - Atlas Genius
5. The Do Nothings - Fields Of Green
6. One Way Trigger - The Strokes
7. Night Eyes - Maurice And The Tough Lovers
8. Winter Skies - Community Trees
9. Stubborn Love - The Lumineers
10. Creatures Great And Small - Aidan Knight
11. Pick Me Up - Hollerado

12. Separate Ways - The River And The Road
13. Constant Conversations - Passion Pit
14. Inhaler - Foals
15. Headphones - Mounties
16. Unseen Footage From A Forthcoming Funeral - Nicole Sabouné
17. Call And Answer - Jordan Klassen
18. Breezblocks - Alt-J
19. Mein Deutches Motorrad - Corb Lund
20. Feels Like We Only Go Backwards - Tame Impala





Emily Tommolino
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Local comic redefines the class clown

English-teacher-turned-comedian discusses his jump from school to stage

JAMIE CESSFORD

The Link

It's rare to find a perfect marriage of passions. Often, we find ourselves scattered across a myriad of interests, rarely finding the time to focus on one. But for local comedian and English teacher John Cullen, it couldn't have been a more perfect fit.

"Every summer, I try to have a project," Cullen said in an interview with *The Link*, "or else I just get bored having ten weeks off."

In 2010, the naturally hilarious Cullen opted to develop his love for live comedy.

Citing his uncle, a professional comedian in Ontario, as a key influence, Cullen mentions that it was merely a matter of writing down many of the thoughts he'd dwell on throughout his day.

Soon his repertoire became large enough that he needed to perform live.

"I fully expected to just suck at it and never do it again. I just wanted to try it — see it from the other side," he explained.

Of course, Cullen killed it.

Garnering praise from a couple of local pros, it was immediately clear that Cullen was on to something. Soon, the success started to snowball and the writing process became less standardized.

"The more you do comedy, the more you want to be as clever or original as ever," he said, explaining his constant desire to improve.

Cullen has achieved much in the few years he's been in the scene. He's signed as a Yuk Yuks comedian, which provides him a larger, more frequent stage to hone his craft.

Unsurprisingly, Cullen's immediate successes aren't attributed to luck or fate, but to being a seasoned performer.

Although he dabbled in the Vancouver music scene with two now-defunct local bands, he is quicker to reference his teaching experience to explain his onstage comfort: "Comedy has always felt easier to me [than teaching]."

“Cullen is unsure whether following a teacher on Twitter is the lamest thing in the world or the best thing in the world.”

Despite the fundamental skepticism of undoubtedly his toughest possible audience, Cullen has managed to win over many of his students.

By bringing his relaxed, fun demeanor to Shakespeare and Steinbeck, the results have been almost as immediate as they were onstage.

"I have had quite a few students say that while they had fun in my class, they also learned a lot," he said, emphasizing that his goal is still to teach his students. "I think that's the best compliment that I could ever be paid."

Interestingly, while Cullen



Cullen, presumably about to take a student's lunch money

Courtesy of John Cullen

has started to garner a hefty reputation as a comedian in Vancouver, he has also established a fan-base amongst his students that rivals the comedy scene. Of his roughly 1,200 Twitter followers, the high school substitute instructor

points out that just under half of them are students.

Cullen is unsure whether following a teacher on Twitter is the lamest thing in the world or the best thing in the world.

Ultimately, his Internet popularity benefits him as an

educator because it humanizes him to his students. His relatable nature makes Cullen a good communicator — with any audience.

"I think comedy helped my teaching, but teaching really helped my comedy."



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Smoking versus Facebook

Is nicotine worse than obsessive-compulsive Facebook disorder?

ANGELINA THEILMANN
Assistant Editor

I can't tell which addiction is worse: Facebook or cigarettes. To set this controversial debate to rest, I will begin by logging myself into Facebook. Oh wait, I'm already logged in on two devices.

So far, this experiment is going smoothly. For cigarettes, I'll have to rely on observation, as I'm not actually a smoker. As a student, it would be fiscally irresponsible of me to invest in smoking right now, especially with the cost of a pack set to increase in April.

Facebook is a cheaper addiction. Scroll through your newsfeed 80 times a day if you want, you still only have to pay your monthly Internet fee. For less than a dollar a day, you can have unlimited Facebook.

Smoking, on the other hand, is marked up more severely than airport food. And it's not like they're even made with a secret recipe — we all know what's in them. As a self-proclaimed experimental cook, I'll bet you an overpriced pack I can perfect the concoction with four tablespoons of formaldehyde and a tray of sundried tobacco.

438 friends are interested in my day-to-day details. And it's easy to stay in touch with all of them. Friends and family scattered across the world? So,

what? Thanks to Facebook we are virtually part of their lives. We can share real feelings of jealousy when the hundreds we are closest to are doing cooler things than we are.

“Facebook forces you to remain hunched over. There is no respite from staring at your screen.”

In a way Facebook groups people just as smoking areas group people. If you're smoking at the same time as someone, a

conversation could occur. And unlike Friend #403 (your old roommate's ex-boyfriend who lives in Sarnia), you could actually have one of your fellow smokers over for dinner. Maybe smokers are onto something.

I suppose smoking is also a good break. I'm the first to admit it can get really stressful working at a desk all day. Even if one's willpower says, “Don't stop studying,” a nicotine craving yells, “GO SMOKE!” And you must go.

I thought Facebook was a good break, but maybe I was wrong. If you've been sitting at a computer all day, clicking through Facebook in your spare time forces you to stay put. Facebook forces you to remain hunched over. There is no re-

spite from staring at your screen. Gone is that tiny opportunity could have otherwise seized to get up and re-caffeinate.

I HAVE had fun times with that social media database. I've giggled out loud. I've absolutely spread the good word of memes and the latest in cute dog photos. But is it all for naught? Am I wasting my time on the wrong addiction?

Wait! I've got it! Facebook is good for procrastination! Constant status updates means it's always new and exciting. But maybe a nicotine rush is new and exciting every time...

I've got it! Smoking will kill me. So smoking is the worse addiction. No question. Sorry, hold on. I just got a Facebook message.

Razor wars, or why everyone you know is shaving their pubic hair

From being healthy to being hip, the evolution of public hair maintenance

ELIZABETH HAMES
The Ubysey

VANCOUVER (CUP) — It was death by Brazilian. After exerting its dominance over human genitalia for millennia, pubic lice wasn't killed by insecticides or chemical balms — it was killed by our own vanity.

Bloomberg announced earlier this month that in reaching for the wax en masse, we had effectively eliminated the bloodsuckers' natural habitat. With nowhere to live, they rarely show their microscopic faces in health clinics these days, doctors say.

It's not the first time genital grooming has worked to fend off pubic lice. In the Middle Ages, affluent men and women depilated their sexy parts to do just that. The only difference is, this time, we did it by accident.

Today, the approximately 80 per cent of college students who remove some or all of their pubic hair rarely do so for hygienic reasons. The number one reason women trim, wax or shave is because they want to look good in a bathing suit,

reports a 2010 study conducted by UBC researchers Lenore Riddell, et. al.

According to the Bloomberg report, “ever-shrinking bikinis” are indeed to blame for the Brazilian, the wax treatment that removes all but a thin strip of pubic hair. As legend has it, a beauty salon run by seven Brazilian sisters was the first to turn New Yorkers on to the hot wax technique. The “Brazilian” later gained international attention after it was referenced in an episode of *Sex and the City*.

“Pubic lice wasn't killed by insecticides or chemical balms — it was killed by our own vanity.”

Although they may like to view themselves as trendsetters, all those Brazilian-loving New Yorkers were preceded by their neighbours to the west: Los Angeles porn stars. A full bush was common in 1980s *Playboy*, and erotic dancers reportedly performed wearing pubic wigs called merkins to comply with laws banning full nudity. But it is rare to find even

so much as the Brazilian's signature “landing strip” in today's Internet porn.

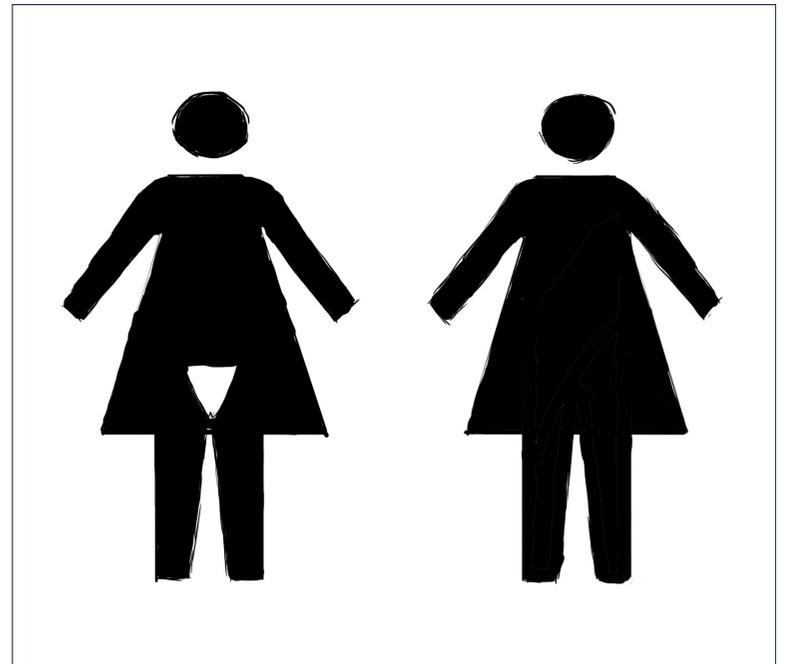
It's a phenomenon that has led some researchers to theorize that women who remove their pubic hair are striving for a “porn aesthetic.” In her 2009 article “Pubic Hair and Sexuality: A Review,” Scottish researcher Sara Ramsay suggests that the link between complete pubic hair removal and pornography “has led to a perception that bare genitals are more erotic.”

Becki Ross, UBC sociology professor, said the popularization of pubic hair maintenance can be compared to genital piercing, labiaplasty (surgically altering the vaginal lips) and vajazzling (bejeweling the vulva or pubic area).

“Behind it is this ideology of self-improvement,” Ross said.

Although such body modification treatments have often been criticized as promoting objectification and misogyny, Ross suggests pubic hair removal can be sexually liberating for many women.

Today's bare vulvas represent a “symbolic shift” in how society perceives this body part, she said. Whereas it was once seen as a source of a fishy smell best doused with Lysol (true story), it is



Kim Pringle / The Ubysey

today seen as a site of beauty and honour.

“If somebody can work their vagina to make it appear beautiful to them and they feel beautiful about it, aren't beautiful things then going to accrue?” she said.

Moreover, many women say a hairless vulva is a recipe for more and/or better orgasms, particularly during oral sex and heavy petting.

“This is about trying to get in touch with one's own sexual possibilities,” said Ross. “Why whack through the bush, if you will, if you can get there on a slightly smoother path?”

Although much of literature and discussion around pubic hair removal is female-focused, men do partake in genital grooming. A 2008 study by Australian researcher Yolanda Martins et. al. found that more than 82 per cent of homosexual men and 66 per cent of heterosexual men remove their pubic hair at least once in their lives.

Ross said men are likely removing their pubic hair for the same reasons as women: to feel sexually empowered or more attractive, or simply to have better sex.

But certainly not to remove pubic lice.

No easy answers when looking for love

Scarlet writes about sex and relationships. Have a burning question? Email scarlet@linknewspaper.ca

SCARLET DE SADE
The Link

Scarlet,

Just a quick question: how can I find a girlfriend in school?

— Love 2 Give

Dearest L2G,

Get ready to laminate this issue, L2G, because you'll want to cherish it as the defining article in your future love life's success (hopefully).

When you're looking for a potential girlfriend, a boyfriend, or even when you're looking for new friends, you'll have to put yourself out there for the world to see. Give up the idea of being afraid to fail, and come to terms with your bachelor status. Once you relax and begin being social with the intention of having fun, you'll

exude a confidence and self-sufficiency that most women — nay, most people — find very attractive.

Try to focus on meeting new friends, particularly female friends. This will allow you the opportunity to become more comfortable speaking with women, and give you the chance to understand how women think and feel in general. Approaching women on a consistent basis will also help you gain confidence and boost your ability to be yourself (which is important!).

Use your networking skills. This is BCIT, right? I think they encourage that sort of thing here. Join a club. Go to Mugs with your classmates, sign up for an elective, or study in the Great Hall with your group. Stop making your coffee at home and grab something from the Rix in the off chance you'll meet a brunette ordering a latte and get a moment's flirt in.

Don't be picky when expanding your network, either. A conversation today with the nice, old guy brushing up on his computer skills part-time

may be tomorrow's hot granddaughter with a stellar personality.

— Scarlet

Dear Scarlet,

I sometimes worry about how I taste and smell when the guy I'm with goes down on me. Is there anything I can do about it? I've never used a douche or anything before, is it worth trying?

— Funk Masta

Hey FM,

The truth is that even if your partner thinks you smell amazing, you won't enjoy the moment if you're worried about offending his nostrils. Your best bet is to combine a little self-esteem with a little pre-wash.

Cleansing your special places with soap and water before sex will hopefully boost your confidence — and allow you to focus on what your partner is doing. And hey, try having a



Stuart Conner

little fun with it: why not take a shower or bath together as foreplay? Many adult shops carry hypoallergenic soaps designed for this.

FM, even if you don't wash first, try to focus your attention on the sensations created by your partner, and spend less time thinking about his enjoyment level.

If he voluntarily heads downtown and stays there, there's a good chance he's not offended by your scent.

Finally: please avoid the douche. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), it

is recommended that women do not douche. Douching can change the delicate balance of vaginal flora (organisms that live in the vagina). In a healthy vagina there are both good and bad bacteria. Any changes can cause an increase in growth of bad bacteria which can lead to a yeast infection or bacterial vaginosis. In the off-chance you have a vaginal infection, douching can push the bacteria-causing the infection into the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, and then you'll be in a much worse spot than prior to douche.

— Scarlet

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