

# the insider

A newsletter published for  
everyone in the Athabasca  
University community

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*Sv. Mikuláš* by Robert Kessner is one of  
the paintings featured in E.D. Blodgett's  
*Praha*, new from AU Press (See page 8).



Posted on The Landing:  
<https://landing.athabascau.ca/>

Athabasca University 

# Canadian Film Going Online at AU

The history of Canadian film-making is largely unknown to Canadians, and information on the subject is scattered and fragmentary, but a new AU project will attempt to remedy this situation.

The Canada Interactive Fund has awarded AU's Canada Film Online Project \$330,627 to create a unique interactive resource highlighting the history of Canadian filmmaking since the 1960s, an era marked by the start of a new relationship between filmmakers and governments.

AU plans to increase its holdings of English and French language films by 50 films and to create a platform through which film students and members of the general public can interact. It will incorporate commentaries and interviews exploring and explaining the development of the Canadian film industry while focusing on people, trends and issues.

"We are committed to consolidating our role as Canada's Open University and as a national leader in e-learning," Dr. Evelyn Ellerman, the project lead, said. "As an open university, we are mandated to offer our students and all Canadians access to our resources. AU's extensive and expanding virtual infrastructure is ideally suited to aggregating, presenting and producing educational resources."

Through interactive tools such as wikis and GIS technologies, users of the new film platform will be able to track patterns of film development, employing the database to generate charts, graphs and timelines, to submit commentaries for review and inclusion, and to contribute to the information available on feature film-making during the past 50 years. The database will include production dates, funding sources and the names of producers, directors and actors.

To further the project goal of developing a comprehensive resource for film scholars, researchers will develop summaries of relevant federal and provincial film development policies and tax and other incentives with lists of the films funded under each and their dates of production.

AU will carry out this project in collaboration with the National Film Board, Library and Archives Canada, Telefilm Canada, the Directors Guild of Canada, the Canadian Media Production Association and L'Elephant, the project's counterpart in Quebec.

## Praise for MAIS

An anonymous recent MAIS graduate posted the following comment on the Online Degree Reviews website:

"I felt compelled to post a review here because this program in particular is truly outstanding. Everything, both the instructors and the courses, far exceeded my expectations for a master's-level degree program.

"I did an English honours program at a highly regarded university in Canada, and now I work in a social sciences/health-related research/writing area, and I can say that my educational experiences with the MAIS program were far and away superior to pretty well most educational offerings that I have had, whether my BA program courses or professional workshops or conferences. Overall, I highly recommend the MAIS program and Athabasca University generally. It is a high-quality institution with great instructors and administration."

The ratings (out of five) included:

Materials	4.5
Teachers	4.5
Institution	4
Support	4
Value	3.5
Technology	4.5

You can see the entire review at [Online Degree Reviews](#).

# Creating Rural Connections 2011

AU is a co-host of [Creating Rural Connections 2011](#), an April 12-14 Alberta Rural Development Network conference to be held at the Mayfield Inn and Suites in Edmonton.

The conference will feature an exciting array of speakers and interactive sessions and will give delegates the opportunity to connect with and learn from people and organizations involved in maintaining the vitality and well-being of rural communities.

Other co-hosting institutions are Grant MacEwan University, NorQuest College, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and the University of Alberta. Participants will include rural Albertans, representatives of community-based organizations, faculty members and researchers from post-secondary institutions and government representatives.

Delegates will hear about successful rural projects and about how partnerships between communities and post-secondary institutions have resulted in new insights and outcomes. Networking breaks will provide opportunities to discuss rural issues and community-based projects and to explore the potential for new projects and collaborations.

**Keynote speakers** will include Dr. Charlie French of the University of New Hampshire, an expert in economic development, land-use planning and community development; Mike Stolte, executive director of the Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership in Nelson, B.C.; and Jeff Dixon, assistant director of Queen's University's Monieson Centre.

Dr. Judi Malone, an AU tutor and a former member of Governing Council, will present a poster session, "Professional Ethics in Rural Practice: A Qualitative Research Overview," based on her recent doctoral study examining the unique context and ethical challenges of rural psychological practice.

The conference will also include a **trade show** at which organizations will showcase their products or services, and participants will have an opportunity to learn more about assistance available for rural communities and research projects.

Delegates will also have the opportunity to participate in a needs assessment workshop on the priorities for rural development research in Alberta. The results of this needs assessment will guide future Alberta Rural Development Network facilitated rural development projects.

The evening banquet and networking reception will feature entertainment by Jason – That Funny Magic Guy,

who will provide a unique mix of magic and humour.

Creating Rural Connections 2010, held in Lethbridge, led to more than a dozen collaborations among post-secondary institutions and between post-secondary institutions and rural communities. A panel session at the 2011 conference will highlight these and other partnerships, and reveal how these relationships were developed, the problems that were encountered and overcome and the resulting benefits.

A **preliminary program** is available online, and **conference registration** is open.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Athabasca University's Facebook page now has over 1,250 fans

# AU Celebrates Completion of CAF and KIP Projects

by Erin Ottosen



More than 150 people gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the CAF and KIP funded projects.

Staff, friends and partners of AU came together in Athabasca on March 11 to celebrate the completion of Community Adjustment Fund and Knowledge Infrastructure Program funded projects that are transforming the university. The CAF funded projects will finish March 31, and several of the KIP funded projects will wrap up by the end of March as well.

More than 150 people, including project staff members from work sites in Athabasca, Grande Prairie, St. Paul and Edmonton, gathered to celebrate the enormous amount of work that has been accomplished in support of AU's online teaching and learning infrastructure.

**"Transforming a university in transition from the print to the e-world is extraordinarily challenging,"** AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek said. "The university, as a result of this work, will truly be the envy of the rest of the world."

"The CAF and KIP projects are transformational because they're helping us become a predominantly online institution," Brian Stewart, AU's vice-president (information technology) and chief information officer, said.

Together, the CAF and KIP programs funded more than 30 projects. One CAF funded project, the Course Materials Digitization Project converted most

of AU's courses to a consistent online format that will help to streamline course development and delivery. A suite of KIP funded projects involving the Alfresco content management system upgraded the management of course materials and other documents. Another KIP funded project, the Moodle Analytics Project, has enabled AU to monitor how students interact with online courses, providing valuable data for improving online course design.

Because of the Government of Canada's decision to extend the completion deadline for KIP funded projects to October 31, 2011, some projects will continue past their originally scheduled March 31 completion date. Those projects will result in additional information and communication technology improvements in support of teaching, learning, research, student services and administration.

In addition to transforming the university, AU's CAF and KIP funded projects have stimulated northern Alberta's economy by creating more than 120 jobs, many of them in rural communities, for workers who, together, brought a wide range of skills into play.

Many regular AU staff members have also played a vital role in the projects. Dr. Dietmar Kennepohl, AU's associate vice-president (academic), thanked those staff

members for taking on the associated extra work. "Some folks at AU had to do their regular job and then some, and they did that for over a year," he said.

The Government of Canada's Community Adjustment Fund was launched in 2009 as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan to counteract the recession. All projects are required to wrap up by March 31, 2011. A total of \$6.4 million was made available for projects at AU through the Community Adjustment Fund, the Government of Alberta's Access to the Future Fund and other sources.

The Knowledge Infrastructure Program was also launched in 2009 as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan. AU received a total of \$7.65 million to fund improvements to the university's Open Knowledge Environment and \$3.8 million for building renovations and replacement of the science laboratory through KIP and other sources.

**"We're very grateful for the funding we received from both of these programs, because this work is critical and crucial to the ongoing success of Athabasca University,"** said Stewart.

Watch for more information on completion of KIP projects in future editions of *The Insider* and on [AU's KIP & CAF Projects website](#).

# AU's CAF Projects: The Results

by Erin Ottosen

- **Course Materials Digitization:** Over 480 of AU's 730 courses were converted to a consistent XML format that will help to streamline course development and delivery. This total surpasses the original project goal of converting 450 courses.
- **Copyright Materials Digitization:** Over 430,000 pages of course related copyright materials were digitized so that they can be accessed through a database, well beyond the original project goal of digitizing 200,000 pages.
- **Showcase Courses:** Twenty-three sub-projects developed interactive multimedia learning resources (e.g., learning trees and multiple choice exercises incorporating audio and animations) to enhance students' engagement with online courses.
- **Academic Centre Web Content Conversion:** The websites of nine academic centres were revamped and relaunched in AU's new web template. Counting websites within websites, this work involved about 40 websites in all and 700 web pages.
- **Calendar Web Content Conversion:** The undergraduate and graduate calendars, about 500 webpages in total, were converted to AU's new web template.
- **Syllabus Web Content Conversion:** About 700 online syllabuses were converted to XML files that plug into AU's new web template.
- **Over 90 jobs:** More than 90 positions (the equivalent of almost 80 full-time positions) were created. Over the course of the grant period, 123 people filled CAF funded positions in Athabasca, Grande Prairie, St. Paul and Edmonton.



## Recognize This Winner?

The winner of the Recognize This Contest from the February 28 issue of *The Insider* is MAIS student Bethany Tynes, who will receive a 4 GB iPod Nano for knowing that the sculpture shown in the photo can be found in front of the Hudson's Bay Company store on the Stephen Avenue Mall in downtown Calgary. The sculpture, *The Conversation* by William McElcheran, is part of Calgary's Gallery Without Walls Collection.

Twenty-five correct answers were received, and the winning entry was drawn by Amanda Demko of the Events Office.

Tynes is concurrently working on both graduate and undergraduate courses in order to complete her MAIS degree and to upgrade her three-year AU BA to a four-year BA with a major in English. "I've remained involved in student life throughout my time at AU and am currently serving as the VP External of AUSU," she said. "I always read *The Insider* to see what helpful information I can share with our council about what's going on at the university."

Just the kind of feedback we like to hear.

# Alberta Women's Memory Project Website Launch



More than 65 people attended the March 7, launch of the new and improved Alberta Women's Memory Project website, a teaching and public education resource hosted by Athabasca University. Attendees included archivists, academics, authors, researchers, graduate students, donors, and friends and family members of women who have donated materials to the website.

Project committee chair Donica Belisle opened the event, and former chair and current committee member Nanci Langford shared the history and key features of the site. Jean Crozier, another committee member, explained the memoir collection and introduced the memoir authors who were present. Ann Hanson discussed the collection of her mother, Helen Bentley, and its significance to the history of the province and the University of Alberta.

After the formal presentations, everyone networked and enjoyed delicious snacks and drinks. A table of artifacts from the Bentley collection and AU collections, and a number of books about Alberta women were on display.

Special recognition goes to committee member and AU archivist Karen Langley and Archives intern Ashley Eisen for organizing the launch, and to Jade Drewniak for her excellent work on development of the site.

Visit the [Alberta Women's Memory Project website](#).

# Course Digitization Project Offers Employees a Fresh Start

Before Becky Green was hired to work on the Community Adjustment Fund funded Course Materials Digitization Project, she was unemployed and looking for a fresh start. A single mom who had been a stay-at-home mom for some time, she felt a strong need to forge a new direction in her life.

“I needed a job that would accommodate my life situation and give me tools that would improve my resume and my confidence,” she said. “I needed to prove to myself that I had the ability to try something new, something that would challenge me and help me to grow. This project has given me exactly what I was looking for, a new start.”

A real highlight of the Course Materials Digitization Project is the impact it has had on the lives of the people who worked on it, project co-ordinator Cynthia Beuselinck said. “It’s amazing where they’ve come from and where they are today.”

The project was supposed to be relatively simple; the mission: to convert the course material files for 450 AU courses into a consistent XML format. As the project team soon discovered, however, the process was anything but simple. The team had to convert five different types of files, each with its own quirks, into the XML format, and the digitization process changed every few days as new issues emerged, eventually evolving to include three digitization phases and three layers of quality assurance. The manual documenting the process ended up filling 80 pages.

Some digitizers now say that if ads for their job had captured what the work came to entail, they would not have applied at all because they would have thought it beyond their abilities. But the team members repeatedly overcame the challenges that confronted them and digitized over 480 courses, surpassing the original goal of 450. Now, they are entering life after the Course Digitization Project having acquired higher-level computer and work skills than anyone anticipated at the beginning of the project, and many have newfound self-confidence.

“I am leaving here a different person,” said course materials digitizer Caroline Sanderson, who now plans to work in advertising. “I had wanted to do this for some time. I feel more confident that I can do it since I have been here.”

The support of the project team has played a big role in building her confidence, Sanderson said. “I was part of a positive team, very capable and able to push forward despite any circumstances. Support, care and understanding will raise people’s self-esteem. That is what I felt working here.”

The supportive work environment included initiatives to help staff members transition to other employment after completion of the project. Workshops were offered on resume writing and job interview skills, and team members were given the opportunity to participate in training for Word, Excel and other computer

programs. Several staff members took advantage of AU’s course allowance benefit and completed AU courses.

The three Course Digitization Project work sites in Athabasca, Grande Prairie and St. Paul also focused strongly on health and wellness. “Our staff got ergonomic keyboards, foot rests, good chairs, active breaks . . . whatever was needed to make sure they were well,” Beuselinck said. “The sites focused on it, and AU supported them.”

Staff at every work site also tried to have fun. “You can’t imagine what it’s like to digitize,” Beuselinck said. “It’s probably one of the most boring things I’ve ever seen, and they had to do it every day for hours and hours. So every site did something to keep everybody entertained with activities like potlucks, barbecues and yoga.” The activities gave the staff much-needed breaks that renewed their concentration and strengthened their team solidarity.

As the project progressed, several team members left for other opportunities. “The people who left us midway through moved on to permanent positions, which is really encouraging,” said Dr. Cindy Ives, director of the project and of AU’s Centre for Learning Design and Development. “We gave them skills to move on to different kinds of positions. Some of them have also gone back to school.”

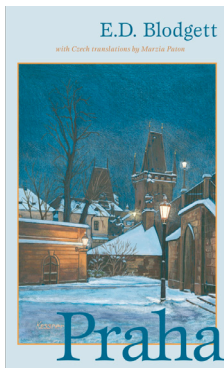
“I’m very grateful that so many of them stayed for the duration of the project,” Beuselinck said. “And I understand many of them have got jobs lined up, but not until the project’s over, which speaks to their dedication.”

Green is one of team member with a job lined up. She will begin work as an administrative assistant in AU’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on April 1. “This project was more than just digitizing courses,” she said. **“It was an opportunity to have people’s lives changed. We were offered employment at a time when things looked a little bleak. We were offered training in so many areas. We were part of something huge, and knowing that helps me to walk a little taller into my future. And I needed that.”**

Most of the Course Materials Digitization team began working on the project in the spring of 2010, and the project concludes on March 31, 2011, having employed 26 people in Athabasca, 26 in Grande Prairie and 29 in St. Paul.

# New Releases from AU Press

## Praha



Prompted by poet E.D. Blodgett's deep love for and intimate experience of Prague, *Praha* is a poetic homage to the legendary city's vital spirit. As they build on one another, the poems in the collection lift the reader over the threshold of purely mythic understanding and into the heart of one of Europe's loveliest and most venerable cities.

Each poem is accompanied by a translation into Czech by Marzia Paton, encouraging even those who do not know the language to immerse themselves in its sound. Superbly complemented by the mysteriously eloquent paintings of Czech artist Robert Kessner, *Praha* offers the moods of Prague in its many seasons and in all of its magic.

### An untitled poem from *Praha*:

holiness must have walked  
beneath these slow arcades  
  
going to and fro  
the measure of its pace  
  
unpredictable  
and those who bore it for  
a century or more  
must have whispered their  
anonymity  
against the stone that took  
all that was barely heard  
into a silence that  
seemed older than  
all the age that can  
be brought to mind and there  
holiness must have gone

Want more? Visit AU Press  
at [www.aupress.ca](http://www.aupress.ca) or:



## AWARD

AU Press congratulates the very talented book designer Natalie Olsen, whose cover and interior design for Maurice Yacowar's *Roy & Me* was chosen by the American Association of University Presses to be featured in the Book, Jacket and Journal Show 2011.







International Academy of  
African Business and Development

## Challenges in the Era of Globalization

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- ▶ The future of doctoral and post-doctoral business education in Africa in an era of globalization

For more information visit our website:  
<http://iaabd2011.athabascau.ca/index.php>

# moodlemoot\* 2011

May 1-5, 2011

Mayfield Inn,  
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**Open Learning  
Open Collaboration**

**Keynote speakers  
Stephen Downes and  
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Connect and share, virtually and in person, with practitioners, innovators, administrators, researchers and developers from across North America and throughout the world.

To register, please visit  
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For more information visit our website:  
<http://moodlemoot.ca/>

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Please send any information or photographs for inclusion to the [co-ordinator](#). If a photo opportunity presents itself, please contact [Blaise MacMullin](#). Due to FOIP regulations, a release form must accompany all photos. Please contact *The Insider* co-ordinator for a copy of the release form.

The next issue of *The Insider* will be published on Monday, April 11, 2011. The deadline for submissions is April 1.